

Visual Representations of the Numinous: a philosophical,
art historical and theological inquiry 1780-1880

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VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NUMINOUS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis embraces the disciplines of philosophy, art history and practical theology. It is concerned with the ways in which artists have endeavoured to express the numinous or point towards the Transcendent through landscape painting. The Transcendent is described as that recognition in mankind of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining a scientific knowledge of an order of existence *transcending* the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience.

This thesis will demonstrate that landscape drawing and painting can be a means of showing the viewer glimpses of that transcendent domain. Whilst paintings of theophanies and of biblical scenes have long been created by artists to produce works that are suitable for altarpieces, it will be my contention that depictions of landscape can be also be used as aids to devotion.

The period chosen for the study is 1780-1880 but for contextualisation I will at times discuss matters that lie outside these boundaries. This period covers the reawakening of the discipline of aesthetics, and the development of Idealism in Germany propounded by Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling, one of the consequences of which led to recognition of landscape painting as fine art.

I argue that some artists express their view of God through their images, producing hieroglyphs, divine images which can induce mystical experiences in the mind of the viewer and could be used as aids to devotion with some even being regarded as sacred. A discussion of religious experience and trigger factors is included, embracing the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto. The works of a number of artists have been considered but special emphasis is given to Samuel Palmer and Caspar David Friedrich.

PREFACE

I trained initially as an engineer at London University (1963) and Manchester University (1973) but always at the back of my mind was an interest in music and, in particular, church music. After establishing my career in engineering, I became organist at a village church in 1966 and at the same time began reading theology, studying initially H. A. Williams, Hans Küng and Don Cupitt. Later I tended to concentrate on the de-mythologizing and existential writers – Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Paul Tillich (1886-1965).

This interest in theology and church music eventually became more formalised with my becoming a Licensed Reader in the Church of England and studying for a University of Oxford accredited degree in theology which I attained in 1998. Following a move to Wales, I became involved with the Theology and Religious Studies Department of the University of Wales Lampeter (as it was then known), undertaking some lecturing in Science and Religion and becoming the Administrator of the Alister Hardy Trust (AHT) and the Religious Experience Research Centre. Work with the AHT has led to an increasing interest in religious experience.

My wife's interest in art and her gaining qualifications in fine art and art history at Aberystwyth University led to my widening interest in that discipline and eventually to the writing of this thesis. It is on a subject which embraces theology, art history and aesthetics in an endeavour to analyse transcendence in paintings and drawings – in other words, an examination of the way in which artists endeavoured to portray the numinous. The particular period in history chosen for the core of this study is approximately 1780 to 1880 – a period during the Enlightenment when there were many developments in theology with the much published work of William Paley (1743-1805) as well as the novel approach adopted by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). In philosophy there was the establishment in Germany of Idealism, and in art history with the development of landscape painting and its achievement of a position comparable with history painting and portraiture which had until this time been regarded as higher forms of art.

Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis I am particularly indebted to my supervisors at Aberystwyth University – Professor John Harvey and Dr Colin Cruise whose help and encouragement have kept me motivated throughout the long gestation period of a part time PhD. In addition I must mention

the help and support received from two fellow members of the AHT, a charitable organisation which, as mentioned above, exists to support research into religious experience. Marianne Rankin who, as well as writing on the subject of religious experience, is a specialist on the works of Caspar David Friedrich, has been very helpful in recommending appropriate books on Friedrich which are available in English. In addition, she has helped with the occasional need for the translation of German phrases. Secondly, the Revd Canon Professor Leslie Francis has been a strong supporter of my work from the outset and has helped with advice on those areas of endeavour which coincide with one of his special interests – that of practical theology.

Acknowledgements are owing to many writers particularly the late Robert Rosenblum, and Professor Emeritus William Vaughan as well as Cordula Grewe whose specialist writing on the Nazarenes (a grouping of German painters) has been particularly helpful. In addition I would mention especially Werner Hofmann and Joseph Koener whose extensive works on Friedrich have been influential as well as Rachel Campbell-Johnson and William Vaughan who have written very helpfully on Samuel Palmer. Finally I must single out for special mention those who have written specifically on theology and art – Professor Rowan Williams, Rt Revd John Drury and The Revd Canon Professor George Pattison – whose works have proved an inspiration in enabling me to complete this work. There are, of course, many other writers whose works have been helpful and influential and these have, I hope, been accorded full acknowledgement in the end-notes and bibliography.

Lastly I must thank my wife Juliet who has not only encouraged me throughout but exhibited great patience when I have had to retire to my study to do more work on ‘that PhD’.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will be concerned with the way in which the visible world (especially landscape) has been used by artists at a particular time to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world.¹ The research will be a multidisciplinary investigation crossing the boundaries between art history, philosophy and especially aesthetics, and theology. Although similar studies have been conducted in the past they have generally been undertaken by art historians. The distinctiveness of this examination will be that it has been conducted from the perspective of one who is primarily a theologian with a science background. This study will endeavour to establish that elusive quality or technique that enables us to understand why a particular work of art can be said to point us towards the transcendent.

Historical Background

While this thesis will, in the main, be concerned with a short specific period in history from 1780 -1880, mankind's need to worship some higher power and to try to focus that need by the use of some visual artifice is innate and has seemed to have existed from pre-historical times.² As there is really very little evidence relating to pre-history, this comment is speculative but it is supported by Ellen Dissanayake who has made a particular study of the evolution of art. I emphasise this because it sets a context within which my particular study will be seen as an investigation of part of a development that may have begun before the establishment of any known civilisations. As Dissanayake writes:

Intrinsic to the life of all higher animals are two complementary needs – for making order out of experience and for disorder, novelty or the unexpected ... In human beings in particular we find highly developed ... (a) proclivity, to experience something that is outside order and the ordinary-which we can call extraordinary.³

The need to make order out of experience can be met in many ways, for example, through a study of science or of philosophy, but until the establishment of those disciplines, drawing or

copying the existing physical world or nature was an early way of satisfying this requirement. In addition, it was through the expression of visual art that the earliest human beings began to articulate their dreams or visions, which were perhaps achieved or enhanced by ingesting particular semi-poisonous herbs. These dreams or visions would suggest some form of spirituality outside or beyond the known physical world. The earliest evidence for Dissanayake's statement that mankind has an innate need to acknowledge the existence of a spiritual world beyond the dimensions of the known physical world, can be found in the cave paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic period. While the subject matter of the paintings – mostly, as mentioned above, re-creations of nature - was not overtly religious, the atmosphere in which they were viewed in the very primitive flickering lights could well have induced mystical experiences with thoughts of that which lay beyond the cave and beyond the physical world. Paul Johnson takes this thought a stage further: 'precisely because of its non-material, its metaphysical qualities, (this cave) art became the father of religion'.⁴ Whether or not one could refer to a religion at this stage in human development is a moot point, as inherent in a religion is the concept of a God, of a community and of the need to worship, but this cave art provided the first evidence of the recognition of the possibility of something spiritual beyond the everyday physical world. As Professor H. W. Jansen wrote in connection with cave art: 'There can be little doubt, in fact, that [these images] were produced as part of a magic ritual, perhaps to ensure a successful hunt.'⁵

Whilst we can only surmise about the uses to which this early cave art was put, we can be rather more certain from Homer (eighth century BCE) writing at the time of the biblical prophets that the people of that time believed in a world of God or the gods as well as the world of the mortals.⁶ However, it was Plato (c. 429 –347 BCE) who first articulated the thought that there was both a physical world and a spiritual world, the world he described as the world of 'universals' or ideas.⁷ Plato was a rationalist inasmuch as he believed that the intellect alone could discern all that it was possible to know about the physical world and the world of the universals. It was his pupil Aristotle (383-322BCE) who suggested that experience would be of much greater importance in ascertaining knowledge of the physical and spiritual worlds.⁸ Christopher Watkin points out that this difference between the two philosophers is shown clearly in Raphael's (1483-1520) *School of Athens* fresco (1509-11) where 'Plato, on the left, is shown pointing to the sky directing our intellectual attention upwards, to the world of Forms, while the younger Aristotle, on the right, is pointing down to the observable world'.⁹



Detail from: Raphael , *School of Athens* (1509-11)

From the cave paintings we can only surmise that the earliest human beings thought in terms of a physical and spiritual world, but from the writings of the Greek philosophers we know that the people thought in those terms – that they believed that there was both a physical and metaphysical component to the universe in which they lived. I include this short description of the very earliest evidence of art and its possible use because it indicates that from the dawn of history art has been utilised in the acknowledgement of the metaphysical. Whilst endeavours to approach this metaphysical world have occupied mankind over the intervening centuries, this thesis will analyse with the way in which artists (painters and printers) have striven to help the viewer to appreciate the Transcendent, to try to gain a sense of that which lies beyond the veil.¹⁰

A single thesis cannot cover the whole period from prehistory to the present day; from cave paintings and megaliths, through the early biblical representations and cathedral art to abstract

expressionism and post-modernism. The period prior to the start of my study encompasses a wide range of art which needs to be understood in terms of the political and theological context of the times. Suffice to say that following the sculptures and hieroglyphs of the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, the conversion of the Roman Empire from paganism to Christianity led to the construction of churches which continued through to and beyond the medieval period. Visual art within the churches was devoted to the production of icons especially in the Eastern Orthodox churches, the icons being used as aids to worship.¹¹ In the Western Church, paintings tended to be those that both illustrated and interpreted scenes from the Bible with production being affected by prevailing attitudes regarding the inhibition placed upon such works of art by the injunction contained within the second commandment to avoid the worshipping of idols and graven images.¹²

With the arrival of the Reformation and the split between the Protestant and Catholic Churches, and the development of the printing press, the need for visual art to interpret the Bible became less crucial, particularly in the Protestant Churches.¹³ Up until the end of the sixteenth century, paintings had generally been historical, illustrating scenes from Greek mythology or the Bible, or portraits, but with the arrival of Peter Rubens (1577-1640) and Claude Lorrain (*c.* 1604-1682) the painting of landscapes began to come to the fore. Gradually landscape art came to be regarded as high art in the same way as the historical and portrait paintings. Following the works of Edmund Burke (1729-97) on the sublime and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) on the philosophy of art, landscape art achieved full status within the corpus of fine art. Landscape art arguably reached its apotheosis in the nineteenth century after which came the development of abstraction led by such painters as Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). Throughout the twentieth century visual art developed in many ways and forms, too many to enumerate here, suffice to say the Abstract Expressionists and especially Mark Rothko (1903-1970) endeavoured to express the sense of a greater power beyond, through their huge colour-field paintings.¹⁴

With such a vast range of art, much of which has a spiritual content, over a timescale of several thousand years, I have had to limit this study to a particular period and artistic genre. For the reasons given below, I have restricted this study to an examination of the way in which the visible world and especially landscape has been used by British and German artists to intimate

the spiritual world that may lie beyond the veil. I have also, in the main, limited the period to the years from 1780 to 1880, approximately embracing the age of Romanticism.

There are three main reasons for using this period. First it covers the revival of the discipline of Aesthetics and the development of Idealism in Germany. Secondly, this was the period in England when dissenters still had to travel abroad for a university education, often to Germany. Thirdly, as mentioned above, it was during this time that landscape art as distinct from portraiture, biblical illustration and historical painting, became recognised as of equal status within the discipline of fine art. Furthermore, as I shall be demonstrating, the relationship between art and philosophy in Britain and in Germany at this time was so close as to be almost symbiotic and I have, therefore, confined this study almost exclusively to those two countries. I have drawn on the works of two art historians working in this area. First, I have been influenced by the late Robert Rosenblum (1927-2006), whose book *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* (1975) argued the importance of the German contribution which in the past had been overshadowed by that of France. Secondly, William Vaughan, who has written widely on Romantic art and on the works of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), has been another scholar of particular influence. Both of these distinguished writers have taken the perspective of the art historian whereas my thesis will have the distinctiveness of having been written from the perspective of one whose background is in science and theology, art history having become a more recent specialism. In addition, I shall be referring to some of the more recent research undertaken by James Vigus of the Dr Williams Library (Queen Mary, University of London) into the contribution of Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867) to the British understanding of Kant and German Idealism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Finally I would mention with regard to existing literature, that there are a number of books, for example *Earthly Visions* by T.J.Goringe and *Painting the Word* by John Drury which describe and interpret pictures very well in terms of biblical exegesis, but which do not deal with the heart of the question – what exactly is it within this painting that suggests that it points to the transcendent? It is this subsidiary question that I will be attempting to answer in Chapters Five and Six.

A Priori Conditions and Methodology.

a) Concept of God

In writing this thesis I will make a number of assumptions that need to be aired in this introduction. The first is that I will be assuming that there is a God and that that God is a reality which is beyond time and space and almost beyond human capacity in its conception. This difficulty leads to God always being referred to by analogy – the most usual one being anthropomorphic. Although this analogy is essential when trying to speak of God to children, as one becomes more mature different concepts or word images are more appropriate. This subject has been treated in great detail by James W. Fowler who in 1981 published *Stages of Faith – the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*.¹⁵ The essence of Fowler's thesis is that faith develops in a series of stages, from zero at birth where it is undifferentiated to conjunctive at stage 5 and universalising-commonwealth at stage 6. It is the conjunctive stage, where one is open to the many possible approaches to the ultimate truth and accepts that there is no literal physical entity called God that I will be assuming in this investigation.¹⁶ An additional advantage of this approach to the meaning of God is that the apophaticism associated with God is implicit in this way of thinking about that Ultimate Reality. Whilst there is no need of the anthropomorphic approach, there is the need to attempt to describe God that is consistent with an image-less concept of God and the expression I use is the fifth dimension. (In these days of String Theory and the positing of multi-dimensional universes, the original idea of fifth dimension may seem outdated, but I think that except for theoretical physicists, the term still has the ability to suggest that which is beyond time and space and at the limit of that of which the human mind can conceive.) This term has also been utilised by the late John Hick (1922-2012) who has used it to provide a title to his exploration of the spiritual world.¹⁷ For completeness I should add that Fowler's stage 6 would be the stage reached only by the true mystic – for example Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) or Thomas Merton (1915-1968).¹⁸

The move away from the anthropomorphic approach to God questions the need for a concept of the interpretation of the incarnation. Whilst a detailed discussion of this theological issue is

beyond the scope of this thesis, a short answer to the question is that Jesus was part of the self-revelation of God. As John Hick writes: Jesus 'was a man marvellously open to God living consciously in the divine presence and responsively to the divine purpose. Out of his intense God-consciousness he was able to speak with certainty about (God), to convey the challenge of God's will and to declare God's judgement and forgiveness; and the divine power of life flowed through his hands in physical healing.'¹⁹

b) Worship

The second *a priori* statement which I would emphasise is that I am assuming that to worship God (Fowler's stage 5 meaning) is a human need. As Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) writes:

Worship is an acknowledgement of Transcendence; that is to say, of a Reality independent of the worshipper, which is always more or less deeply coloured by mystery, and which is there first. As Von Hügel would say it is 'rooted in ontology': or ... even on primitive levels it at least points to man's profound sense of dependence upon 'the spiritual side of the unknown'.²⁰

This ontological concept of worship is of importance within this thesis inasmuch as the study of a painting which induces a religious experience, could in the sense to which Underhill refers, be regarded as akin to worship. Exploring this human need to acknowledge a 'sense of dependence' still further, as I mentioned above it is plausible to suggest that worship took place in pre-historical times and that certain caves have been regarded as sacred.²¹ The sense of a place of worship being sacred will be mentioned in the thesis, but whilst all that might be said about the pre-historic cave rituals has to be regarded as speculative, it can be said much more positively of early Celtic Christian locations, e.g. particular wells, that they have become regarded as sacred. The human need to worship has persisted through the ages and will be considered in relation to the artists of the Romantic period to the extent of considering whether or not a work of art could be considered as a sacrament in a similar way to that of the oil of Chrism, which may be used in the services of baptism, confirmation or ordination.

c) Methodology

The main objective in examining the question of whether or not artists can use the visible world and especially landscape to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world will be to establish links between the disciplines of philosophy, theology, literature and art history as well as establishing the strong German and British cultural associations that appertained during the period of study.

The thesis question regarding the use of the visible world and especially landscape to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world needs to be analysed by breaking it into a number of component parts which can be set out as statements as follows:

i) Artists express their view of God through their images, with some artists producing hieroglyphs – images of the divine.²² All the artists mentioned in this thesis will be those whose works have generally been recognised by authorities such as Rosenblum as having the qualities that enable them to point towards the Transcendent – qualities that will be reinforced in this thesis.

ii) The form of these images (hieroglyphs) will be varied and I will be arguing that ineffability can be expressed very effectively through the depiction of landscape. From this starting point I will establish the subsidiary criteria that certain works of art must possess in order that they point to the Transcendent, and then demonstrate that such works can be regarded as sacraments, using as an example a work by Friedrich. It will be established that many of the works of art that are regarded as pointing to the transcendent will have some common characteristics which will be considered and identified.

(iii) It will be my contention that hieroglyphs can induce mystical experiences in the mind of the viewer – a specific chapter will be devoted to an discussion of the works of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and Frederick Crossfield Happold (1893–1971) as well the recent research undertaken by Marianne Rankin and the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

(iv) Works of art, and especially hieroglyphs, can be used as aids to devotion and some may even be regarded as sacred.

I shall be adopting the methodological approach of contextual art theology developed by Sigurd Bergmann which aims to ‘add the tools for expressing experiences with God, but also lays the ground for a richer and more complex view of the corporeality of both God and humans’ as well as demonstrating ‘the awareness of visual arts’ capacity for visualising and realising visions’.²³

In more detail the methodology of this multi-disciplinary inquiry will be to examine the various subject headings, embracing political, aesthetic, theological and art historical view-points during this period (1780-1880) of the Enlightenment, with references outside this period in order to highlight context. To aid contextualisation and to provide some consistency of approach, the content of each section of each chapter will generally follow a chronological progression. With regard to picture analysis itself, Bergmann recommends three possible approaches for the theologian: 1) a ‘semiotically oriented method which separates between the expression of the image and its meaning and content’, 2) an art historical method which follows ‘the figure of the undetermined surface and treats different aspects of the picture’s expression, artist, and context to co-evaluate these elements argumentatively and in terms of their value’ and 3) an analysis ‘in terms of the pictures space-dimension, line, form, colour, value and texture – the basic physical layers of the picture from which its meaning arises.’²⁴ In general, I have used method three which enables one to strive more easily for the ultimate meaning that may lie within the work of art under examination.

Chapter Content

The first two chapters entitled *The English and German Romantic Paradigm* and *A New Paradigm is Opened by Schelling* will begin by setting the aesthetical and philosophical background to the study, examining the contributions made by Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) and William Blake (1757-1827), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) to Friedrich Schelling and Philipp Runge (1777-1810). A number of theories of art will be examined within this section, with that of Michael Podro (1931-2008) being selected as providing a most useful set of criteria when considering art which may point towards the Transcendent. These criteria may be expressed and interpreted as follows.²⁵

- 1) Art reveals through the skill of the artist some aspect of a subject that would not be immediately apparent.

- 2) The artist's depiction of an object makes a reference to the perceptual process of the viewer which enables an understanding to be achieved through, for example, the use of analogy.

- 3) The artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art which may suggest a transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted.

This first chapter will continue with a description of the reawakening of the study of aesthetics which was begun by Baumgarten and continued by Kant who established precise criteria necessary to define the beautiful and the sublime. Kant set out in great detail a formal treatise on aesthetic judgement and established the subject as one worthy of consideration as a separate discipline. The major discrepancy in Kant's argument is that on the one hand he was saying

that the appreciation of beauty and the sublime was ontologically subjective, whilst on the other he was saying that beauty and the sublime have a quality of universality that ought to be recognised by everyone. This discrepancy was recognised by Schiller, who developed the concept of play-drive operating within the mind as a description of the interplay between the two natures of the rational and sensual parts of the mind which could lead to greater integration of the personality, leading to his suggestion that contemplation could be said to have a moral influence. This reading of Schiller would suggest that in spite of the creation of the play drive there is still too great a separation between art and reality, sensuality and reason, to enable art fully to describe truth and for a further development it is necessary to turn to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Schelling. I will suggest that Hegel concluded this paradigm with his development of the concept of the Ideal which 'is the first to afford the production and intuition of the completed Ideal, and to establish it as a realised fact', whilst the Romantic form dissolves this unity but in turn leads to 'concrete intellectual being which has the function of revealing itself as spiritual existence for the inward world of spirit'.²⁶ Hegel's comment that truth no longer found its expression in the visual arts determined this paradigm, leaving Schelling, Runge and Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869) to begin a new paradigm, the subject of Chapter Two.

Building on the work of his predecessors, Schelling developed further the concept of intellectual intuition which referred to the sensing of knowledge rather than the achievement of knowledge by rational thought alone. He concluded that painting was very well suited to express this transcendental knowledge, the infinite within the finite, but was dependent on the skill (genius) of the artist and receptivity of the observer. Schelling was a very major influence on Runge who summarised the theory of transcendental knowledge for students of art, combining an existential approach to the transcendent with some practical suggestions for its achievement. Chapter Two will continue by highlighting the work of Carus, who particularly stressed the thought that the divine could and should be expressed through landscape painting the name for which he preferred 'earth-life painting'. The chapter will conclude by summarising Chapters One and Two, stating that while a concept of the Absolute will always involve an element of faith, it can be said that an artist who achieves the goals set by Schelling, Runge and Carus will enable the receptive viewer to glimpse a revelation of that Ultimate Reality.

Examining the work of the German Idealists and the spread of that system of thought to Britain, will lead to Chapter Three of the thesis, entitled *A Qualitative Analysis of the Cultural*

Influences at play between German speaking and British people during the Romantic period which in turn have Influenced the Artists under Consideration. This deals with the social, political and theological context in Northern Europe with an analysis of British and German cross-cultural influences. These influences will be analysed through consideration of some of the transcendent works of Blake and Runge, Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), and Caspar David Friedrich.

While the production of works of art is a solitary occupation, this chapter demonstrates that the ‘interconnectedness of human existence’ must not be downplayed, highlighting especially the links between the German and British cultures, the artists and men and women of letters of those two countries.²⁷ The influence especially of Henry Crabb Robinson will be highlighted drawing on recent research by James Vigus. The political, theological and ecclesiological influences on the painters under consideration will be described and the chapter concludes by emphasising that the many theological and cultural links between Germany and Britain were at their height during the nineteenth century.

Chapter Four of the thesis will be concerned with defining the meaning of transcendence and the numinous. It will deal with characteristics of the religious experience and possible trigger factors highlighting the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, his influence on Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and the definition of the numinous. The particular factors which Otto ascribes to the expression of the numinous in art - great spatial distance, emptiness and darkness – will be identified, and the chapter will include consideration of mystical experience (including nature-mysticism and the work of F.C. Happold as well as the concept of eternity).²⁸ The trigger factors involved in invoking religious experience will be discussed and those occasioned by the exposure to sublime or beautiful examples of the natural world will be described in some detail. From this it will be argued that it is a short step from the natural world inducing a state of mystical feeling to such a response being induced by the representation of that world through the medium of visual art. This chapter will conclude by extracting a number of case histories from the archive of spiritual experiences held by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre. These case histories all highlight the evoking of a religious experience by an encounter with a work of art.

Section Two of the thesis will be opened by a short introduction entitled *Transcendence in the Iconography of Samuel Palmer and Caspar David Friedrich* to be followed by the fifth chapter on the *Iconography of Samuel Palmer – How Samuel Palmer endeavoured to portray the numinous*. The works of Palmer which could be considered as pointing towards the transcendent will be analysed and those common characteristics of far distant horizons, a strong contrast between light and dark and an effect which leads the viewer into staring at the horizon looking for something beyond the veil of the canvas, will be identified. There are other specific qualities identified in individual pictures which are suggestive of pointing towards the transcendent. In addition, the biblical symbolism in Palmer will be recognised with his evocations of Edenic spiritual paradise, emphasised by the juxtaposition of extracts from a Psalm with a specific painting. Palmer maintained the intention always to reflect the glory of God's creation in his work and in so doing provide works of inspiration for contemplation.

Chapter Six with the subtitle *An examination of transcendence in the works of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840)* will be similar in style to Chapter Five. It will place Friedrich in the context of German Romanticism and will analyse a number of his works which portray the numinous and hence signpost the Transcendent. Friedrich's characteristic leitmotif of placing the back view of a visitor to a scene will be examined in detail and it will be argued that this use of the *Rückenfigur* invites the viewer to share the experience of the traveller. Many of Friedrich's paintings use this technique which when combined with a misty scene encourage the viewer to stare into the picture endeavouring to discern that which lies deep within the painting, to the extent of trying to see that which may lie beyond the veil created by the canvas itself. As in the case of Palmer, all the Friedrich paintings analysed will meet the two criteria defined by Otto, of the contrast between light and dark and the suggestion of a tremendous distance or huge empty space. In addition the use of the lonely visitor icon in some paintings emphasises the insignificance of the human in the face of the forces of the natural world unleashed by the Creator. The divine gift within Friedrich enabled him to express for the receptive viewer something of the transcendence of that Divinity.

The final section of the thesis (Chapters Seven and Eight) will be concerned with practical theology. It will consider art as an aid to devotion and meditation and will postulate that certain works of art could indeed be regarded as sacred. Chapter Seven which will question whether or not a work of art can be considered a sacrament will begin by looking at the concept created by Archbishop William Temple (1881-1944) in the Gifford Lectures published in 1940 of a 'sacramental universe'.²⁹ The sacramental universe was described by John Macquarrie (1919-2007) as 'a world in which all manner of things may become signs of transcendence or means of grace'.³⁰ Expressed another way the most important and over-riding criterion required of a work of art - a hieroglyph or image of the Divine - to be regarded as a sacrament is that it should assist in mankind's contemplation of his or her relationship with the Ultimate Reality. From this starting point I will reiterate the criteria that certain works of art must possess in order that they point to the transcendent, and then consider whether or not that such works can be regarded as sacraments, using as an example a work by Friedrich.

Caspar David Friedrich was a Pietist Christian and endeavoured in his works to use his talents to create pictures or hieroglyphs, primarily of landscapes, which pointed to the Transcendent. It is apparent that Friedrich intended this in at least some of his works to signpost the³¹ transcendent with that intentionality being obvious. On the other hand Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), whose work will be amongst those considered in Chapter Eight – *Works of art as Aids to Devotion*, - was not overtly religious, but also created works which have many of the qualities identified in works of art created by Christian artists and I will assert that some of his works also could be said to point to the Transcendent. This immediately raises the question of whether or not an artist who is not religious can produce religious paintings. In other words is intentionality essential in the creation of such a work of art? In resolving this question I will invoke the work of Karl Rahner (1904-84) an existential theologian who in his systematic theology developed the concept of the anonymous Christian.³² This approach is compared to that of the philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) who argued that the artist need not necessarily be a Christian.³³

Finally Chapter Eight will be mainly concerned with the question of whether or not a work of art could be used as an aid to devotion or contemplation and will examine a number of works from traditional altarpieces to landscape paintings. This chapter will be more discursive and

wide ranging than previous chapters describing works of art that, whether in use as an altarpiece or as a small painting in a private chapel help the viewer towards an appreciation of that higher power or Ultimate Reality. Covering a wider period than the rest of the thesis the analyses will begin in the Renaissance with Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Raphael and will conclude in the twentieth century with a discussion of the colour field paintings of the abstract expressionist Rothko. The emphasis will be on the transition from the use of illustrations of biblical scenes to the use of landscape, highlighting the typological relationships that exist when interpreting such themes as the Noachide covenant. The chapter will end by drawing a number of parallels between works of art and the other artefacts used in church services, and will conclude with Friedrich Schlegel's (1772-1829) aphorism: "Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*." As a divine symbol the painting must take its place alongside the other consecrated artefacts utilised by Christians in their day to day worship.³⁴

The summary and conclusions to the thesis will indicate the extent to which each of the four propositions stated at the outset has been demonstrated and will point the way forward to the use of visual art in enabling the reinforcement of faith. In addition this conclusion will identify opportunities for further research in this subject area and will recommend extending the study into consideration of the possibility of some abstract art evoking the transcendent, as well as suggesting that records of accounts of religious experience could be researched to provide practical anecdotal evidence in support of the contentions set out in this thesis that the visible world (especially landscape) can be used by artists to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world. A suggestion will also be made that an investigation of the attitude of mind and beliefs of the viewer would offer an opportunity for a fruitful line of enquiry.

The thesis will end with a comprehensive bibliography, the notes and references having been included at the end of each chapter.

¹ Words such as transcendent, eternal and mystical will be discussed in detail in the body of this thesis, but for the purposes of this introduction, transcendent means that which is beyond normal human cognition, eternal suggests a timelessness where past, present and future are merged and compressed and mystical refers to an occasion when one experiences a sense of the transcendent and eternal.

² Archaeologist Sheila Coulson claims to have evidence that ritual worship took place 40,000 or even 70,000 years ago. http://www.world-science.net/othernews/061130_python.htm This was also reported as follows in *Science Daily*: Date: November 30, 2006, Source: The Research Council of Norway
Summary: A new archaeological find in Botswana by an archaeologist from the University from Oslo shows that our ancestors in Africa engaged in ritual practice 70,000 years ago, 30,000 years earlier than the oldest finds in Europe. This sensational discovery strengthens Africa's position as the cradle of modern man.
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/11/061130081347.htm>

³ Dissanayake, E. *What is Art For?* Seattle University of Washington Press 2002 p. 134.

⁴ Johnson, Paul *Art – A New History* London Weidenfeld and Nicholson 2003 p. 13.

⁵ Jansen, H.W. *A History of Art* London Thames and Hudson 1982 p. 24.

⁶ Bell, J. *Mirror of the World – A New History of Art* Thames and Hudson London 2007 pp. 62-3

⁷ Honderich, T. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Oxford Oxford University Press 2005 pp. 721a-722a.
⁸ Ibid. p. 56b.

⁹ Watkin, C. *From Plato to Postmodernism - The story of Western Culture through Philosophy, Literature and Art* London Bristol Classical Press (imprint of Bloomsbury Academic) 2011 p. 19. Incidentally, it should be noted that Aristotle developed the important concept in ancient aesthetics of mimesis – the hypothesis that by imitating nature, art represents the character and true nature of that which was being portrayed.

¹⁰ The metaphor of the veil which will be discussed in detail below, derives from *The Letter to the Hebrews* Chapter 6, verses 19 and 20: 'We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the veil, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek'. In the context of the Temple the veil hangs to separate the Holy of Holies from the body of the Temple.

¹¹ For a detailed study of the period before the Renaissance see, for example, Belting, Hans *Likeness and Presence: History of the Image Before the Era of Art* Chicago University of Chicago Press 1997.

¹² For a discussion of iconoclasm see, for example, Forsyth, P.T. *Christ on Parnassus* London Hodder and Stoughton 1915, Durand, J. *Byzantine Art* Paris Terrail 2004 or Hutter, I. *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* London Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1971.

¹³ The arrival of the printing press enabled the relatively easy dissemination of information. In particular the Bible became generally available and was widely translated. This enabled the Bible to be read in the vernacular lessening the need for visual interpretation, particularly in the Protestant Church where the proclamation of the revealed word of God became all important. However, in the Catholic Church Latin remained the language of choice.

¹⁴ See, for example, Harries, Richard *The Image of Christ in Modern Art* Farnham (Surrey) Ashgate 2013 and Clearwater, B. *The Rothko Book* London Tate Publishing 2006.

¹⁵ Fowler, J.W. *Stages of Faith – the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning* New York Harper Collins 1981 (first edition) Paperback edition 1995 pp. 122-211. The methodology of Fowler has been questioned – two criticisms being the omission of perception and volition from aspects of faith. (See, Astley, J. and Francis, L. (ed) *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development* Leominster (Herefordshire) Gracewing 1992 especially essay by Webster, D. p.77.)

¹⁶ Fowler, J. pp. 184-198

¹⁷ Hick, J. *The Fifth Dimension – An exploration of the spiritual realm* Oxford Oneworld Publications 1999 This will be dealt with in more detail in the introduction to section two of the thesis.

¹⁸ Fowler, J.W. p. 201.

¹⁹ Hick, J. *The Second Christianity* Xpress Reprints (SCM Press) London 1994 p. 27.

²⁰ Underhill, E. *Worship* London Nisbett and Co. 1936 p. 3. In this passage she is also quoting Baron Friedrich von Hügel and R.R. Marett (*Sacraments of Simple Folk*, p. 26).

²¹ This viewpoint has been examined in some depth by Karen Armstrong in *The Case for God* and in Chapter 1 – *Hominus religiosus* she presents a cogent argument for an inherent need in the Palaeolithic people to acknowledge in some practical way that which we now describe as transcendence and in so doing she persuasively dismissed the conjecture of some historians that the cave paintings had a practical rather than spiritual value. See: Armstrong, K. *The Case for God – what religion really means* London Bodley Head 2009 pp.13-24.

²² Hieroglyph was a term originally applied to Egyptian writing on monuments and records, and became to be used as a secret or enigmatic figure (Oxford Shorter English Dictionary). Overbeck (one of the artists considered in this thesis) stated emphatically that art should be hieroglyphic. For a detailed discussion see also Grewe,

Cordula, *Painting the Sacred in an Age of Romanticism* Farnham (Surrey) Ashgate 2009 pp. 180-186, as well as later in this thesis.

²³ Bergmann, S. *In the Beginning Is the Icon – A liberative theology of images, visual arts and culture* London Equinox Publishing Ltd 2009 p. 146 (First published in Sweden in 2003 by Proprius.)

²⁴ Bergmann, S. p. 26.

²⁵ Podro, M. *The Manifold in Perception – Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand* Oxford Clarendon Press 1972, pp 1-6

²⁶ Hegel, G.W.F. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* trans. By B. Bosanquet and ed. By M.Inwood.

London Penguin Books 2004. pp. 84-87

²⁷ This interconnectedness in the context of the ‘genius poets’ of the Romantic period is described by Dr Daisy Hay in *Young Romantics* London Bloomsbury 2010.

²⁸ Otto, R. *The Idea of the Holy* London Oxford University Press 1917 (1958).

Happold, F.C. *Mysticism – A study and an anthology* London Penguin Books 1964.

²⁹ Temple, W. *Nature, Man and God* London Macmillan 1940 p. 473.

³⁰ MacQuarrie, J. *A Guide to the Sacraments* London SCM Press 1997 p. vii.

³¹ Rahner, K. *Foundations of Christian Faith* New York Crossroad p.176f

³² Williams, R. *Grace and Necessity* Harrisburg (PA) Moorhouse 2005.

³³ Grewe, quoting Schlegel, p.305.

SECTION ONE

Setting the Context - Philosophical Background

Chapter One

The English and German Romantic Paradigm - An examination of Aesthetics from Baumgarten and Blake to Kant and Hegel - Beauty, the Sublime and the Transcendental

- Introduction
- Theories on the Purpose of Art
- The Re-introduction of the Word Aesthetics by Baumgarten (1714-1762)
- Blake and the Supremacy of the Imagination
- The Paradigm is continued by Immanuel Kant
- Schiller and his System of Drives
- Hegel concludes the Paradigm
- Summary

Introduction

This chapter will begin by setting out the development of aesthetics or philosophy of art from its origin with Baumgarten through to Hegel. It will summarise some of the basic theories of art after which there will be a description of the Kantian ideas on the use of the imagination leading to a synthesis of his views on taste and judgement. Theories on the purpose of art will be described with particular attention being given to William Blake and the modern art historian and theorist Michael Podro. The final section will suggest that Hegel closed a paradigm. A new paradigm would then be opened by Schelling which will begin the next chapter.

At the end of the eighteenth century art was beginning to be free from some of the conventions of the past, such as Renaissance art and Classicism with the break from the academic schools being led by William Blake amongst others. Blake, whose influence on Samuel Palmer will be described in a later chapter, was a poet, engraver and painter and could be said to be the forerunner of the age of Romanticism in Britain. Some artists, such as J.M.W. Turner and John Constable (1776-1837) were using this freedom to produce work that was free from history and produce works that ranged in subject from the political and the moral, to those which were required to produce records for the future (for example portraits). Artists such as Palmer, Philipp Runge and Caspar David Friedrich during the age of Romanticism, Stanley Spencer (1891-1951) and David Jones (1895 -1974) in Britain and Vasily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian in Paris and the abstract expressionist Mark Rothko during the early years of the twentieth century all endeavoured to produce works which revealed or at least gave a glimpse of that ultimate reality that we call the Absolute or God. According to John Harvey, within visual culture there is the encompassing of ‘a broad range of dynamic and interactive fields of knowledge’ subsuming ‘all artefacts, events and phenomena that convey ideas, and are experienced or intended to be apprehended visually’.¹ Within this broad definition, the first part of this thesis will begin by setting a framework examining the aesthetic and philosophical trains of thought that were being developed during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Two paradigms can be identified, the first from Baumgarten to Hegel being the subject of this chapter, and the second which opened with the approach to philosophy of art of Schelling will be the subject of Chapter Two.²

Whilst Baumgarten initiated a philosophy of aesthetics, claiming epistemological relevance for sensual perception it was Immanuel Kant’s development of the subject that has held sway for the past 200 years, and although his views have been challenged since, the Kantian approach was relevant for the development of ideas on the purpose of art for all the artists that are being considered in detail in this thesis.³ This thesis is concerned with the way in which the visible world (especially landscape) has been used by artists at a particular time to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world. To re-iterate, it is my contention that a paradigm can be traced from its beginning with Baumgarten, its development by Kant and others such as Schiller, to its end with Hegel, at which point Schelling began a new paradigm which continues to the present time. It should be noted that Kant’s views were subject to interpretation upon which unity could not be established – some of these variant analyses will

be elucidated with the exposition of Henry Crabb Robinson whose views were of considerable interest in Britain at that time, being given some priority.

These ideas were developed further by later philosophers, and their work will be described with the views of Crabb Robinson, Georg Hegel and Friedrich Schelling being given particular prominence. In addition to these philosophers, consideration is also given in this chapter to the following who, although outside the main theme of this paradigm, are crucial to the study of the beauty and the sublime: they are Edmund Burke (1729-1797), William Blake, and Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781).

Before Kant, René Descartes (1596-1650) had set scientific endeavour free from the tyrannical control of the Church by presenting a clear foundation for the advancement of philosophical principles with separation between mind and matter. Unfortunately Descartes died before he was able fully to develop his ideas on dualism but the general principles which he propounded were most influential in the foundation of the age of Enlightenment.⁴ By the time of the Romantic period, the situation had become much more subtle, with the boundaries between mind and matter, theology and philosophy becoming somewhat blurred. As the twentieth century philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997) expressed this paradigm shift:

At its simplest the idea of romanticism saw the destruction of the notion of truth and validity in ethics and politics, not merely objective or absolute truth, but subjective and relative truth also - truth and validity as such.⁵

To express this thought another way, I suggest that during the early period of Romanticism there was a burgeoning realisation that there may not be absolute solutions to problems of morality or indeed knowledge. It is the human mind or the imagination that creates or gives birth to reason which in turn leads to knowledge, usually with a degree of provisionality or limitation. Taking Isaac Newton (1642-1727) as an example, out of his extraordinary mind came theories on optics, gravity, planetary motion and the beginnings of the calculus, the latter being developed further by Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716) and others. At the time Newton was propounding his hypotheses and theories, he did not realise the limits within which they could be applied, and sometimes today one hears the suggestion that Newton has been superseded. This is not so; it is merely that we now know that his system of mathematics and mechanics cannot be applied to the very small (study of the performance of elementary particles) or the extremely large. That said, we only need Newtonian mechanics to enable us to design all that is necessary for mankind to travel to the moon. Thus there is a

provisionality of knowledge – knowledge which has limits within which it can be applied and which may or may not be known at the time of its discovery. This provisionality does not only apply to scientific endeavour but equally to the humanities where I would give as an example biblical hermeneutics. It is this provisionality applied to the philosophy of art and to the possibility of the suggestion of transcendence through art that will be examined in these first two chapters.

Theories on the Purpose of Art.

At the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth, there were a number of theories of art from, for example, William Hogarth (1697-1764), Blake, Lessing, Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), and Novalis (1772-1801).⁶ In addition more formal philosophies were developed by Hegel, Schelling and the Schlegel brothers (August, 1767-1845 and Karl 1772-1829). Furthermore, in respect of landscape art, Carl Ludwig Fernow (1763-1808) who influenced Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869) both produced theories specifically related to that genre; these ideas will be discussed in the next chapter in the section on Carus.

There are a number of models of an approach to a theology of art; Bergmann notes four – the ontological, the historical, the correlational and the social anthropological.⁷ The ontological method is based on the idea that one can have knowledge about ‘being’ that can be expressed through art. The historical method is an approach based particularly on an examination of art which is related to the historical and philosophical context of the time. The correlational model developed by Paul Tillich (1886-1965) is a method by which, in the words of Bergmann: ‘Art provides forms of expression for what is culturally salient in the situation, (with) the task of the theologian to relate these expressions to the Christian tradition’.⁸ The social anthropological method is concerned with cross-cultural comparisons between the attitudes to the relationship between art and religion. As this thesis develops, I shall be concerned with utilising a synthesis of the ontological, historical and correlational models, although, in the main, it will be the ontological method which will be generally applicable. However, these theories of art and models of approaches to art are extensive and detailed and

while some will be examined in this chapter, a more succinct theory of direct relevance to this study has been developed by Michael Podro.

As highlighted in *The Manifold in Perception* (1972), Podro suggests there are three basic criteria when examining the relationship between reality and art from which can be derived a concept of the usefulness or value of art.⁹ These criteria which fit with the ontological method described above, may be expressed and interpreted as follows:

1. Art reveals through the skill of the artist some aspect of a subject that would not be immediately apparent.
2. The artist's depiction of an object makes a reference to the perceptual process of the viewer which enables an understanding to be achieved through, for example, the use of analogy.
3. The artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art which may suggest a transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted.

The first of these criteria suggests something beyond copying or even mimesis – a word first used by Plato and, subsequently, by Aristotle to suggest representation or imitation.¹⁰ The thought behind this first criterion, however, is that the artist reveals something which would not be immediately apparent on first looking at the subject itself; the artist has to view the subject with such intensity that it adduces an inner subtlety which can then be conveyed to the viewer. Unless the artist achieves this, then the work could only be regarded, as Hegel suggests, as a mere copy where the main judgemental criterion becomes an assessment of the accuracy of the copy.¹¹

The second of these will most often convey a meaning by analogy. A good example of this might be Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509). In this painting concerning knowledge, there is a synthesis of the divine and the worldly with amongst others a portrayal of Aristotle and Plato located centrally under the main archway one (Plato) pointing to the sky (the divine) and the other (Aristotle) to the world around; and in the centre foreground is located one of the best artists of the age Michelangelo writing on, but not carving, a block of marble. While the painting is entirely imaginary, the meaning which it is intended to convey is that of the unity of divine knowledge and worldly knowledge – uniting the spiritual and earthly. This

was, of course, before Descartes argued for the separation of the two. Another example of this category and one which is more relevant to the period of this thesis is Palmer's portrayal of the *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* (c1824-8) where trees and shrubs are representative of the people concerned. (This painting will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Five.) A particular characteristic of these drawings or paintings is that a response is required from the viewer, where individuals will each have their own reaction or interpretation leading to an understanding personal to that individual. The ideal response will be exegesis (the objective taking meaning out of the text or image) but could also be eisegesis (the subjective putting meaning into a text or image).¹²

The third criterion leads from the second inasmuch as the work of art is intended to evoke an emotional response from the viewer or as Podro expresses it 'through our absorption with a work of art, we achieve an emotional equilibrium, a purging or poise or inward harmony, which we do not normally possess.'¹³ This response may be initiated by consideration of a work depicting the sublime, for example, one of John Martin's (1789-1854) apocalyptic designs or of the spiritual as in Palmer's *The Lonely Tower* (1879).

Podro's theory of the relationship between reality and art can be compared with Bergmann's approach to the concept of art as the language of religion, which is based on *aesthesis*, *poiesis* and *mimesis* – perception, creation and imitation.¹⁴ This approach is founded on that of the German Protestant theologian, Professor Rainer Volp who in turn based his ideas on Schleiermacher, who suggested that as language related to knowledge, so art relates to religion.¹⁵ His approach is more restricted than that of Podro inasmuch as Podro's theory is not limited in a way that almost suggests that the main purpose of art is to interpret religion. Podro has the advantage that it is more all-embracing, substituting the word reality for religion and furthermore is set out in terms that are more practical and readily appreciated by both the artist and theologian. Finally, I would argue that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, especially if one substitutes 'aid to the interpretation of religion' for the 'language of religion'. For these reasons, I will be referring to the Podro theory at appropriate junctures in this thesis.

The boundaries between the three categories of Podro, outlined above, are often blurred or overlapped but in the context of the examination of transcendence in art it is the second and third of these three types which are of particular concern and the following paragraphs will

expand on the approach to art and aesthetics adopted by the German and British artists and philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, beginning with Baumgarten.

The Re-introduction of the Word Aesthetics by Baumgarten

During the nineteenth century there was a burgeoning interest in a philosophy which could be said to have begun with the publication by Baumgarten of *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* in 1735.¹⁶ This work re-introduced the concept of aesthetics in philosophy, a subject which was further developed by Kant, whose theories were then interpreted and expanded by other philosophers including Schiller, Schelling, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Hegel.¹⁷ The essence of this philosophy, which was fashionable at the time of Palmer but would be questionable today, is that:

The work of art ... represents not the empirical object but its idea... every object is presented as the epitome of its existence, a state where it has reached its *telos*. Art captures the perfect moment and lifts the object out of the flow of time, allowing it to become eternal in its preservation through art.¹⁸

Two words here require particular elucidation – idea and *telos*. In this context, the ‘idea’ could be said to represent the interface between the experiencing mind, the subject and something in this world, the object. Hölderlin expressed this concept in these terms, relating idea to beauty: ‘the idea which unites everyone, the idea of beauty, the word taken in the higher, Platonic sense.’¹⁹ He continues: ‘One can be spiritually brilliant in nothing, one cannot even think about history – without an aesthetic sense. Here it should become apparent what those humans actually lack, who do not understand ideas – and are simple enough to admit that they are in the dark as soon as things go beyond tables and rosters.’ In other words the idea is a spiritual concept of reality and is expressed in Baumgarten’s philosophy in the work of art.

Turning now to *telos*, this is usually related to theology where teleology may be regarded as the study of divine design. This is sometimes referred to as the doctrine of final causes, where there is evidence of design in the final outcome or appearance and function of natural

objects. *Telos* is closely related in meaning to the anthropic principle, whereby it is considered that within the mathematical space-time singularity, that is referred to in the ‘big bang theory’ of creation, was everything that was necessary for the subsequent development of the cosmos as we know it today.²⁰ In *The German Genius* (2010) Watson expressed the concept of teleology in simple terms as ‘there is a continual process of creation, and its various levels are related to one another in a purposive manner’.²¹

Following Descartes’ pronouncements, there were two primary ways of looking at the world during the Enlightenment– by the use of the mind and pure logic or reason, as promoted by Kant and other philosophers, and, as for example espoused by William Blake, by the use of the imagination.²² As Watson puts it: ‘The rival ways of looking at the world - the cool detached light of disinterested scientific reason, and the red blooded, passionate creations of the artist - constitute the modern incoherence. Both appear equally true, equally valid at times, but are fundamentally incompatible.’²³ This is rather overstating the case to make the point – this is only true of a very reductionist approach to science, adopted by some but rejected by other scientists. This was no doubt the situation at the end of the eighteenth century as it is still in the twenty-first century. However, it should perhaps be added at this juncture that Blake was very anxious to ensure the separation between the arts and science, not because he took a particularly reductionist approach to science but because he wished to ensure that art did not become ‘an inferior category of science’.²⁴

Kant too, from a very different perspective, also disagreed with Baumgarten (with his emphasis on the use of the senses rather than the intellect) and would argue that:

For art to have any real meaning or insight, then the link between art and cognition must be broken – if this does not happen then artistic insight will always be seen as ‘inferior when its potential for cognition is compared with that of reason.’²⁵

As I mentioned above using the example of Newton, it is the mind that created reason. It is the artist who creates (into existence) and gives value, whilst the scientist examines that which already exists physically and uses this deductive knowledge to forecast future patterns of the behaviour of systems. In other words by the use of his or her imagination the artist creates, say, a picture, which evokes an emotional experiential response in the viewer which in turn could perhaps enhance the viewer’s appreciation of his or her psychological situation.

Whereas the scientist, through observation and a specific experiment, may discover a basic principle which could then be applied more generally in furthering scientific knowledge. For example, Robert Hooke (1635-1703) established rules relating to the extension and compression of elastic materials which have continuing application in, for example, motor vehicle design.²⁶

This approach to knowledge - with the somewhat artificial separation between rationality and imagination - existed at the time of Blake during the early part of the nineteenth century. This needs to be kept at the forefront of our thought as works of art of that period are interpreted, even though a more modern interpretation may well give greater recognition to Baumgarten's and Hölderlin's rather more inclusive approach to the relationship between art and reality. (These two contrasting approaches to the Enlightenment will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.)

The sections which follow will examine briefly some of the theories of art being propounded by artists and philosophers of the time, beginning with Blake.

Blake and the Supremacy of the Imagination

Blake's theory, falling initially into the first of the Podro categories outlined above concerned with mimesis, followed the classical theory which gives prominence to line over form or colour. In other words he belonged to the 'two dimensional linearists in the old esthetic battle between linear and painterly schools'.²⁷

In *Art - A New History* (2003) Johnson summarises the Greek aesthetic as consisting of 'flexible form, artistic responsibility and ocular realism'.²⁸ Flexible form and the emphasis on line develops, Blake suggests, from the evolution of the temple – the buildings which, for the Greeks, had considerable religious significance. The Greeks were also concerned with the ideal - that in the words of Aristotle 'Art completes what nature cannot bring to a finish.'²⁹ In discussing this statement Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) highlights in *The Nude – a Study of Ideal Art* Blake's comment that 'All Forms are Perfect in the Poet's Mind but these are not Abstracted or compounded from Nature, but are from Imagination.'³⁰ Summarising, Clark writes:

What both Reynolds and Blake meant by ideal beauty was really the diffused memory of that particular physical type which was developed in Greece between the years of 480 and 440 B.C. and which in varying degrees of intensity and consciousness, furnished the mind of Western man with a pattern of perfection from the Renaissance until the present century.³¹

Clark's and Johnson's views then coalesce with consideration of the Ancient Greek love of mathematics which is exhibited both in the Temple and in the proportions of Vitruvian Man drawn by Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) and by the architect Cesare Cesariano (1475-1573) in 1521. Whereas Clark was content to accept Blake's theory about art perfecting form and accepted that Blake had 'an exceptional power of secreting retinal images' he felt that Blake was unable to achieve that 'long and painful interaction between ideal form remembered and natural appearances observed, which is the foundation of all great drawing from Michelangelo to Degas'.³² At this stage in the development of Blake's theory, there is little to suggest that he would later break away from the views of the prominent art historian of the time, Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768), but whereas the latter was keen to ensure that rational thought would underlie his views on the Greek Ideal, Blake would depart from this attention to the rational, by giving much greater prominence to the use of the imagination.³³ Setting aside the question of Blake's practical ability and continuing to think in terms of Podro's categories Blake highlighted three different types of copying which take us from mimesis towards the spiritual. First there are the 'direct "servile" copies "both of Nature and Art" that are the musical scales of the visual artist, learning the "language of Art" by copying'.³⁴ The second form of copying is the imitation of nature, with the third being the copying of 'imaginative forms from the artist's own mind, which is the copying every artist should be trying to do'.³⁵ In Blake's own words:

The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life is this:

That the more distinct, sharp and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism and bungling. Great inventors, in all ages, knew this: Protogenes and Apelles knew each other by this line. Rafael {sic} and Michael Angelo, and Durer, are known by this and this alone. The want of this determinate and bounding form evidences the want of idea in the artist's mind, and the pretence of the plagiary in all its branches.³⁶

Although line, form and the approach to the ideal in art proposed by Aristotle were very important to Blake, the imagination, as mentioned above, was all important. Unsurprisingly Blake had his own very precise way of thinking about the 'Imagination', which is set out clearly by David Erdman (1911-2011) and summarised by Morris Eaves as follows:-

The imagination...is "the Man" who can know immediately:
[God =] Imagination or the Human Eternal Body in Every Man
[Spirit =] Imagination or the Divine Body in Every Man.

If this definition is placed within the comment above that 'All Forms are Perfect in the Poet's Mind but these are not Abstracted or compounded from Nature, but are from Imagination', then we can see that Blake is clearly referring to the art which falls into the third of Pedro's categories. To recapitulate, this is art which endeavours to express the concept of transcendence existing beyond the images depicted.

At this juncture it is worth highlighting the work of the art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) who suggests that in examining an image, there are three components to the analysis – representation, symbolisation and expression.³⁷ I would propose that in Blake's philosophy of art, symbolisation and expression are merged into one and are given precedence over representation by the artist. From this it follows that the personality and character of the artist attains an importance that would not apply to an artist working only in the area of copying that which he or she sees. The fine judgement that needs to be made by the viewer is to consider the extent to which transcendence has been revealed in a work of art; that is, in the interaction between the viewer and the artist there will follow an emotional response the value of which can only be judged by the viewer.

Later in this chapter I will present a summary of Kant's approach to aesthetics where contrary to the view expressed in the previous paragraph, Kant attempts to derive an approach to aesthetics giving rise to a common or universal appreciation of a work of art. But first I must give some consideration to an essay written by Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) which is regarded as one of the seminal works on the philosophy of art, and is relevant to the work of Blake as he was both poet and painter.³⁸

The essay – *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) which runs to 104 pages (without the concluding appendix dealing with the influential Winckelmann's

History of the Art of Antiquity) is reproduced in full in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*.³⁹ This essay examines the relative ability of painting and poetry to express that which Lessing considers to be the aim of art – to present to us appearance as reality, absent things as present. Lessing sets up two contrary hypotheses and examines each in considerable detail. The first, that the artists imitated the poets is considered in the light of the accepted conventions of the crafts of the time – the poet (Virgil) is permitted to enable Laocoön and his sons to be shown in extremis screaming as they are about to be killed by the serpent whereas the sculptor positions the serpent differently, Laocoön being permitted a resigned sigh. The second hypothesis – that the poet imitated the artist – is also considered but rejected on the ground that whilst Lessing could account for the deviations adopted by the artist from the poem, he regarded it as far less conceivable that the poet would have any reason to deviate from the painting or sculpture.

Essentially, the question that arises and needs answering for the purpose of this thesis is: Is the artist of the Romantic period constrained by convention from showing the truth as he sees it, even though the ugliness of a particular truth may awake aversion in the mind of the viewer? Whereas at the time of the sculpture (c. 100 BCE) the expectation might have been that the sculptor should display the male human form to its best advantage with the muscles being clearly delineated; whether or not the artist was influenced by the gladiatorial contests, we can only speculate. By the time of the Renaissance attitudes were beginning to change. Raphael's early work *Crucifixion with the Virgin SS Jerome, Mary Magdalen and John the Baptist* (c. 1503), for example, shows no signs of the real anguish but in his slightly later work, e.g. *the Death of Ananias* (1515) signs of the true horror are being shown. Closer to the time of Blake and Lessing, and later still, for example in the work of Hogarth, the full range of human emotion is displayed and in the twentieth century we see extreme anguish expressed in the work of Francis Bacon (1909-1992). I would therefore argue that whilst Lessing's thesis that the poet will be in the ascendant may well have been true in the period from Classical antiquity to later Renaissance, it did not have the same validity during the period being examined in this thesis (later than 1780). Lessing's essay is regarded of such importance that it needed to be discussed here, but as its relevance for the Romantic period is minimal, it will not be examined further in any detail.

Before returning to the paradigm that began with Baumgarten, it is essential to include a short discussion on the work of Edmund Burke whose *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our*

ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (second edition 1759) had considerable influence in both Britain and Germany.⁴⁰ Whilst the enquiry had great influence, it was not received with general acclamation – although Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) found in it ‘a source of imaginative stimulus, Blake, who read the work when he was young, re-read it feeling ‘the same Contempt and Abhorrence then that I do now’.⁴¹ Blake continued ‘They [Bacon, Locke, Burke and Reynolds] mock Inspiration and Vision’.⁴²

Burke was a man of the Enlightenment – always concerned to express his view in a language that is as precise and logical as possible. In essence, Burke defines the beautiful as that which induces the feeling of love, whilst the sublime induces the feeling of astonishment or even terror. The beautiful is to be found in small things, in things which are smooth (for example leaves which are smooth rather than jagged), in things in which shape varies gradually such that one part of a body flows into another without any sort of discontinuity. In addition beautiful objects will have delicacy rather than robustness and soft pastel colours which merge gradually from one to another rather than violent colours juxtapositioned in a way that clashes. As an example of an object exhibiting these characteristics Burke highlights the peacock.

With regard to the sublime, Burke lists the characteristics which can give rise to feelings of terror – obscurity (for example in darkness or in night) where an object may appear more terrible because it cannot be appreciated clearly, or suggestions of great power as in a tsunami, vastness and infinity. In addition, he accepts that things which exhibit magnificence, for example the night sky, and give rise to the idea of grandeur also fall into the category of the sublime. In comparing ‘Beauty’ with the ‘Sublime’ Burke wrote:

For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; ... beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions.⁴³

Burke, having set out these distinctions, then sets out to try to define in rational terms the causes of inducement of feelings of the sublime and the beautiful by, for example, analysing the physical cause of love, in a way some, including Blake, would find too reductionist

leaving working of the imagination out of the equation. It should however be remembered that Burke's essay was the first major work on the subject since Longinus (213-273 CE) and even if it lacked a certain sophistication, with a number of aphorisms just simply stated, it was of considerable influence at the time, particularly for Kant who introduced a greater subtlety with transcendence being established as a very significant parameter.

The next section of this chapter will therefore now examine Kant's approach to aesthetics and his attempt to derive an aesthetic giving rise to a common or universal appreciation of a work of art.

The Paradigm is continued by Immanuel Kant

Idealism

Kant, in his *Critiques of Pure and Practical Reason*, began the period of German Idealism 'which constitutes a cultural phenomenon whose stature and influence has frequently been compared to nothing less than the golden age of Athens'.⁴⁴ Essentially Kant argued that the human intellect is limited to the receipt of knowledge which can be derived using the logic of mathematics and reason on the one hand and which can be derived from empirical observation on the other. There is however a third branch of knowledge – the noumenal or transcendental – which may possibly be available through intellectual intuition.⁴⁵ This third type of knowledge has a nature which is more 'ideal' than the others – a designation that gave rise to Idealism. As Watson, points out Kant established his philosophy by considering the key concepts of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.⁴⁶ However, in order to keep this chapter within bounds, I will concentrate on aesthetics and consider first 'Beauty'.

The Beautiful

Aesthetics were referred to in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) where he included a section on Transcendental Aesthetics but it was not until the publication of the *Critique of Judgement* (1790) that his views became finalised.

The Critique of Judgement consists of a first part concerned with aesthetic judgement which is subdivided into two sections dealing with the analysis of aesthetic judgement and the dialectic of aesthetic judgement. The first section is then divided into two books analysing the beautiful and the sublime. The second part is divided into two sections concerned with the analysis and dialectic of teleological judgement. In the paragraphs which follow concentration will be given to the first part. It should be noted that the work of Kant and indeed Hegel and Schelling, is theoretical and cannot necessarily be considered in the light of the Podro categories outlined above, although it could perhaps be said that it applies more particularly to categories two and three.

Beginning with an examination of the beautiful, Kant divided the first book into chapters or, to use his term, moments (*Das Moment*) at the end of which he gave definitions of the beautiful.⁴⁷

The definitions:

Definition of the beautiful derived from the first moment:

Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion *apart from any interest*. The object of such delight is called *beautiful*. (§ 5)⁴⁸

Definition of the beautiful drawn from the second moment:

The *beautiful* is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally. (§ 9)⁴⁹

Definition of the beautiful derived from this third moment:

Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it *apart from the representation of an end*. (§ 17)⁵⁰

Definition of the beautiful drawn from the fourth moment:

The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognised as object of a necessary delight. (§ 22)⁵¹

In considering these definitions, it is important to remember that Kant's view of perceptual knowledge was that it consists of three components: sensibility (passive reception of sensory

stimuli), imagination (ordering of sensory manifold into a unity) and understanding (provision of a concept under which to subsume the results of imagination's activity).⁵² It is also important to remember the question that Kant endeavours to answer - Can the synthesis of imagination, thought and feeling of pleasure be regarded as of universal applicability in the case of a beautiful object?

In *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: the Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgement* Rudolf Makkreel sets out the above definitions in his own words and summarises the role of the imagination as established by Kant for judging beauty or taste.⁵³

The judgement of taste fulfils the requirements set forth in the four moments of the Analytic (of the Beautiful): (1) it must be based on a "disinterested satisfaction"; (2) it must be universally valid without being derived from a concept; (3) it may have "nothing at its basis but the form of the purposiveness of an object", i.e. it involves a subjective purposiveness that does not attribute any purpose to its object; finally (4) it should demand from others an agreement that is subjectively necessary.⁵⁴

This may seem a rather convoluted way of expressing Aquinas' definition of beauty as 'that which pleases in the very apprehension of it', but the essential difference is that Kant is endeavouring to derive a way of valuing beauty that although it is perceived by the individual's senses is valid quite generally. As Kai Hammermeister expresses it: 'whereas the pleasure of the agreeable is purely subjective, that of the beautiful is not, because it lays claim to a universal delight'. Suggesting yet an alternative view of the character of judgement, James Sallis writes:

In the case of a beautiful object, the apprehended form is referred to the cognitive faculties in such a way that a harmony is displayed and a feeling of pleasure produced...the harmony is pre-eminently one between the operations of imagination and of understanding.⁵⁵

In other words, a viewed object is not of itself or inherently beautiful – but can only be described as beautiful if it engenders in the viewer the sensation of pleasure that comes from the interaction of imagination and feeling. Aesthetic pleasure is derived then from the interplay between imagination and comprehension, even though one may only strive for understanding never actually attaining it, a thought which links through to Kant's definition of the aesthetic idea:

By an aesthetic idea I mean the representation of imagination that incites much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. *concept*, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible. – It is easily seen, that an aesthetic idea is the counterpart (pendant) of a *rational idea*, which, conversely, is a concept, to which no *intuition* (representation of the imagination) can be adequate. (§ 49)⁵⁶

Kant makes an important distinction between aesthetic pleasure and rational pleasure. Rational pleasure may, for example, be expressed in terms of one's preference for a particular food or drink over another, whereas aesthetic pleasure does not take an interest in the existence of the object itself. As Hammermeister writes (giving an alternative lead into the definition of the first moment).⁵⁷

The pleasure of beauty frees us from such longings and strivings... Despite beauty's power to "quicken" our faculties it also calms us. It is at the same time profoundly moving and deeply satisfying, stirring and quieting... Kant, thus, gives the first of four definitions: "Taste is the faculty of judging an object or a mode of representation based on pleasure or aversion, yet without any interest. The object of such pleasure is called beautiful... I have to take pleasure in a beautiful object purely for its own sake; to this end the lack of an exterior purpose must be replaced by an inner purpose; the object must be something perfect in itself."⁵⁸

In this first moment definition, Kant is saying that whilst pleasure resulting from one preference over another is personal and subjective, aesthetic pleasure has a universal applicability but is still ontologically subjective. Whilst normally in the exercise of judgement, the process of looking at an object is followed by the use of intellect and imagination leading to understanding, Kant argues that in aesthetic judgement the latter stage of understanding is never reached, there may be a 'free-play' of the faculties which try to achieve but never reach a stage of understanding – he is here expressing in another way the aesthetic idea referred to above.

Kant, in my view, struggles to demonstrate this universality, eventually in a circular argument, coming to define the beautiful as he does in the definition of the second moment as that which, without any concept, pleases universally. However, as Elizabeth Prettejohn has pointed out, if a judgement is purely personal then it does not meet one of Kant's other important criteria – that the judgement must be disinterested or unbiased – which is expressed clearly in the definition of the first moment.⁵⁹ But the question remains: it is ever possible for a judgement to be so free of all personal prejudices, likes and dislikes? In the third moment

there is the suggestion that beauty in itself has no purpose – no end in itself, apart from the representation itself. If it is remembered that Kant is almost certainly referring to natural objects, rather than man-made art, then indeed beauty in itself probably serves no purpose. Whilst one could perhaps suggest that the beauty in a male bird serves the purpose of attracting the female, the beauty in a flower (which Kant does quote) would seem to be purposeless except possibly in attracting pollinating insects. Regarding the definition of the fourth moment which is very similar to the second, Kant exhibits a weakness in the development of his argument inasmuch as he writes: ‘The assertion is not that everyone will fall in with (my) judgement but rather that everyone *ought* to agree with it.’⁶⁰

Kant then relies on an appeal to common sense and ‘attributes to it on that account *exemplary* validity.’⁶¹ This is then followed by a further weakness where Kant admits to not endeavouring to answer the question which remains open as to whether or not taste is a ‘natural and original faculty’ and the question as to whether or not the ‘ought’, the objective necessity of the coincidence of the feeling of all with the particular feeling of each, only betoken the possibility of arriving at some sort of unanimity in these matters,...’ (§ 22).⁶²

This difficulty of achieving pure objectivity was identified by Robinson, whose influence on Palmer and others was considerable, and who wrote endeavouring to explain the difficulty:

Tho’ it is the essence of beauty to be in itself complete and absolute; there are still many objects, whose acknowledged beauty is still dependent on their fitness to an end beyond themselves. Hence Kant distinguished between free beauty which is beauty *par excellence* and, dependent beauty. The former alone is the object of pure taste; And in the complication of human feelings perhaps rarely exists: But it nevertheless remains apart for the spectator. In judging of a building for instance, it is difficult if not impossible to form a purely aesthetical judgement of its form, without all reference whatever to the purpose of the structure.⁶³ (capitals Robinson’s)

I digress here by mentioning my own reaction to two situations. Considering Johannes Brahms’ (1833-1897) two great piano concertos, I find the first much more emotionally engaging than the second – perhaps because the first was written after the death in 1856 of Brahms’ friend Robert Schumann (1810-1856) and expresses his own and Clara Schumann’s (1819-1896) grief (particularly in the first two movements) and then in the third there is almost what could be regarded as a joyful celebration or resurrection, whereas the second equally large and difficult to play concerto may perhaps be regarded as pure music but leaves

me uninvolved. Is it the programme element in the first concerto that is necessary for my complete involvement or is it that the first work is subtly transcendental whereas the second is not? This question is unanswerable, but it illustrates the difficulty of trying to apply Kant's objective approach to those areas of artistic endeavour where the senses and emotions are involved.

Considering now the visual arts, I find a transcendental quality in Palmer's sepia drawings whereas I am unmoved by Rothko's colour field paintings. Other viewers, I know, will express the opposite point of view sometimes to the extent of having a religious experience when viewing a colour field, where the subtle variation in wavelength between the two colours gives rise to an apparent vibration along the line of colour change. This again illustrates the personal nature of artistic appreciation and I must therefore disagree with Kant that there ought to be a universal recognition of quality in art be it transcendence, or beauty.

Acknowledging the impossibility of truly summarising Kant's views on the beautiful as part of a chapter in a thesis, I will conclude this section on beauty by suggesting that whilst much of the deliberation around the subject is of value in helping us to understand the process of judgement, Kant's constant striving to demonstrate universality is a distracting weakness. I therefore much prefer his concept of beauty (as expressed in the definitions of the first and third moments) that it is the form of 'purposiveness in an object, insofar as it is perceived without representation of a purpose' (Hammermeister's translation) as well as being an object giving rise to aesthetic (but not necessarily rational) pleasure.⁶⁴

I shall be returning to consideration of the beautiful again in the section below on fine art, but it is necessary now to analyse Kant's approach to the sublime.

The Sublime

As mentioned above, the second book of the first part Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1781) deals with the sublime and whilst there are some similarities between the beautiful and the sublime, Kant highlights the main differences

The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form ... (If, as is allowable, we here confine our attention in the first instance to the sublime in objects of nature, (that of art being always restricted by the conditions of an agreement with nature,) we observe that whereas natural beauty (such as is self-subsisting) conveys a finality in a form making the object appear, as it were, preadapted to our power of judgement, so that it thus forms of itself an object of our delight, that which, without our indulging in any refinements of thought, but, simply in our apprehension of it, excites the feeling of sublime, may appear, indeed, in point of form to contravene the ends of our power of judgement, to be ill-adapted to our faculty of presentation, and to be, as it were, an outrage on the imagination, and yet it is judged all the more sublime on that account. (§ 23)⁶⁵

In this paragraph Kant is using the word sublime without describing the meaning for him and it is only later that he indicates that a feeling is sublime when the mind has been excited to 'abandon sensibility, and employ itself upon ideas involving a higher finality'.⁶⁶ In other words, the imagination is involved to an extent that approaches its limit and is not grounded as in the contemplation of beauty by externality but by an internal attitude of mind. Kant's final preliminary remark is that the theory of the sublime is 'a mere appendage to the aesthetic estimate of the finality of nature, because it does not give a representation of any particular form in nature, but involves no more than the development of a final employment by the imagination of its own representation.'⁶⁷

To take the analysis to the next stage, Kant divides the sublime into two types: First the mathematically sublime or absolutely great: we can, of course, always think of a number larger than any particular integer and it is necessary, therefore, to have a term which expresses a quantity greater than any number that could be thought of, leading to the concept of infinity which is essential in the mathematical discipline of the calculus. Without going into detail, an integer divided by zero would be fairly meaningless whereas an integer divided by a number which tends towards zero, becomes meaningful and would have a result that tends toward infinity. In graphical form such a relationship ($x=1/y$) could be plotted, with the resultant graph becoming asymptotic to, but never quite reaching – until infinity - the x axis as y reduces, and to the y axis as y increases.

Secondly, there is the dynamically sublime in nature: an experience of nature with fear attached – e.g. thunderstorms, earthquakes or majestic snow-covered heights with the

possibility of avalanche. In Kant's words 'nature considered in an aesthetic judgement as might that has no dominion over us, is dynamically sublime'.⁶⁸

The mathematical view of the sublime is concerned with magnitude. Kant highlights the impossibility of defining objectively any particular number – the concept of number is purely intuitive, enabling only a comparative magnitude to be measured. As magnitude is increased, there is a tendency towards the infinite or the sublime, where the limit of the imagination is reached, for example in contemplation of the outer reaches of the cosmos. There is a correspondence here with mathematics, where in order to deal with matters beyond normal physical representation abstraction into symbolism is employed as suggested in the simple ($x=1/y$) example quoted above. A more detailed exposition will be found for example in the works of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Leibnitz and Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827) and their interpreters.⁶⁹

Makkreel emphasises that for Kant whilst mathematical apprehension can go on towards infinity, for aesthetic comprehension there is a maximum beyond which that comprehension cannot go. 'When the imagination's capacity to intuit simultaneously a series of units reaches a limit, aesthetic comprehension encounters the immeasurable and the feeling of the sublime'.⁷⁰ In other words in contemplation of the sublime both apprehension and comprehension are at work, with the sublime itself being achieved when aesthetic comprehension reaches its limit. Kant expresses this quite succinctly in his final paragraph of § 25 when he writes: 'The sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense.'⁷¹

It is generally the second form of the sublime with which the artist is more obviously concerned – the dynamical. Instead of magnitude being the defining element, it is power (usually of nature) which is the object of contemplation. However, there is also a link to the mathematical concept of the extremely large – it being a characteristic of many works of art endeavouring to depict the sublime (for example, James Ward's (1769-1859), *Gordale Scar* (1811-15)) that one cannot absorb the whole of that work from one single standpoint unless one is considering the work from such a distance that no detail may be discerned.

While (natural) power is the object of contemplation, power alone is insufficient as an indication of the sublime as the use of the imagination may lead only to anxiety and not

necessarily transcending all senses. But there is always a separation of the human from the power of nature – an independence from nature which gives rise to the sublime experience which Kant sets out as follows:

The irresistibility of (nature) forces us on the one side to acknowledge our physical helplessness, but on the other side reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves independent of it. On this faculty rests a self-preservation of a very different kind as that which can be challenged and endangered by nature, so that humanity remains unhumiliated in our person, even though man would be defeated by that force.⁷²

Robinson expresses this sense of the sublime rather differently describing

(A) mixed feeling: in which painful emotions may be detected, tho' outweighed by a preponderance of pleasure. This arises from the double Nature of Man, who as a *sensible* being is oppressed by the might & greatness of nature, to which he is still superior as a *rational and moral being*. When we behold the sublime objects of Nature, such as Torrents, Mountains, Tempests, we are made sensible of our weakness, & feel too that we cannot even measure or comprehend these objects, but this Sensation is accompanied by another, which outweighs the first & converts the insipient pain into delight. We are led to feel more or less obscurely the higher worth & dignity of our moral and intellectual nature.⁷³

This view of the sublime rings a chord with Coleridge, as David Vallins writes 'even in these relatively early writings [of Coleridge] there is often an explicit sense that the sublimity associated with landscapes is due (as Kant most famously suggested) to the intuition of something that lies beyond or behind them and which the mind can never know or comprehend so clearly or directly as any part of the physical world'.⁷⁴ For example, one might think of Glen Coe (Scotland) in mid-winter during a period of deep snow when one would be aware of both the beauty of the scene and the danger from avalanche. These thoughts of the grandeur and danger of the creative power of nature (and God) may lead the viewer to contemplate death and eternity.

Relating this reaction to the sublime to art history, Caspar David Friedrich in his series of *Rückenfigur* paintings, gives examples in which the viewer of the painting is invited to share in the sublime feelings being experienced by the viewer in the picture.⁷⁵ There are a number of such paintings but in particular I would highlight *Woman in Morning Light* (c. 1809), *Two Men by the Sea* (c. 1817) and *Wanderer above the Sea of Mists* (c. 1818). In the first of these two examples, there is contemplation of the wonder of nature's light as the sun rises and sets

respectively and in all of the *Rückenfigur* paintings the viewer is invited to join the figure(s) in contemplation of the sublime scene – ‘contemplate in quasi-religious stillness the mysteries of nature’s most commonplace daily dramas.’⁷⁶ In *Wanderer above the Sea of Mists* (c. 1818) the mystery of the sublime is emphasised by both the aerial perspective where the view of the mountain tops seems to go on for ever and by the fog below the viewing figure which obscures the extent of the depths of the valleys below.

While it is probable that Friedrich was aware of Kant’s aesthetics, it is unlikely as Prettejohn suggests that Friedrich would have set out with the ‘specific intention of demonstrating Kant’s aesthetic philosophy. Had this been his aim, it would threaten the aesthetic credentials of the painting, which would then be tantamount to a logical treatise in visual form’.⁷⁷ Furthermore, if this had been the intention, it would then come up against Kant’s argument that there should be no intentionality or purpose in a beautiful or sublime work of art. It should be remembered that Kant was generally thinking of nature when discussing the beautiful and the sublime, but he was, of course, aware of the difficulty of endeavouring to create works of art without ‘purpose’, a difficulty which will now be considered.

The Difficulty of Creating Works of Art without Purpose – Kant on Fine Art

Kant endeavours to solve this problem in § 43 and the following paragraphs, with the introduction of the concept of genius. He explains:

Genius is the talent (natural endowment) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as an innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental aptitude (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art.⁷⁸

Fine art is a product which must be art and not nature, but ‘nevertheless must be clothed, with the aspect of nature’,⁷⁹ and which must appear to be ‘uncontrived, natural and effortless’ and to be totally original; it must therefore be the product of genius.⁸⁰ The genius artist must therefore be ‘an outstandingly talented person brought forth by nature so that he or she can in turn produce works of art.’⁸¹ As Prettejohn emphasises in respect of the *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*: The painting:

goes above and beyond merely realising its intention (to produce a representation of a landscape). It is a work of genius in Kant's sense, for it stimulates the observer's mind to range freely over the widest variety of further musings - above pictorial space, human perceptions of space, or natural space; about the relationship of human beings to nature, the spiritual dimensions of a sublime experience, or the presence of the divine in nature ...

Kant then explains that the innate talent or faculty within the artist (genius) is such as to enable him or her to present, through this talent, the aesthetic idea (see above). In other words the imagination is used to create 'a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature'.⁸² As Hammermeister points out, for Kant 'Fine art ... is a mode of representation that is purposeful in itself, and ... advances the culture of the mental powers in the interest of social communication.'⁸³ Art can therefore be regarded as good for a community or society and hence to symbolise a moral quality – a principle that Kant outlines in the concluding paragraphs of the *Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgement* (Second Section of *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*) § 59 – 'Beauty as a symbol of morality.'⁸⁴ This is a very complex part of the *Critique* but his argument is that all representation is either symbolic where the concept is the engagement of reason or schematic where the engagement is intuition involving the imagination. The imagination, Kant intimates is a uniquely human faculty and as Hammermeister suggests, Kant also argues that there is a hierarchy of beautiful forms at 'the top of which we can find the human figure as the ideal of beauty.'⁸⁵ The human figure achieves this superiority because 'an extra sensual element manifests itself visibly in the human body'.⁸⁶ Kant links this back then to § 29 where he writes:

Rather it is in human nature that its (judgement upon the sublime in nature) foundations are laid, and, in fact, in that which, at once with common understanding, we may expect every one to possess and may require of him, namely, a native capacity for the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e. moral feeling.⁸⁷

Kant then extends this thought to say that owing to the 'impossibility of subsuming the aesthetic idea under a concept symbolizes ... the complementary short coming of the concept of morality, namely, its indemonstrability. Thus, beauty hints symbolically at morality.'⁸⁸

This detailed argument is far from clear but, I would suggest that Kant could be interpreted as saying that Art has a purpose or function in the establishment of community and as a consequence has a moral function. In his concluding remarks, Kant refers to the fact that we call buildings 'majestic and stately, or plains laughing and gay; even colours are called

innocent, modest, soft, because they excite sensations containing something analogous to the consciousness of the state of mind produced by moral judgements'.⁸⁹

To conclude this section on Kant, it is appropriate to recapitulate his definitions of the beautiful with which I began, but using my own words:

1) *Taste* is the ability to estimate an object or its representation by means of a delight. The object of such delight is called *beautiful*.

2) The *beautiful* is that which viewed disinterestedly (i.e. without prejudice) pleases universally.

3) *Beauty* is the form of completion in an object but without any aim or purpose.

4) The beautiful is that which is recognised as an object of a necessary delight.

5) In consideration of the sublime, the imagination is involved to an extent that approaches its limit and is not grounded as in the contemplation of beauty by externality but by an internal attitude of mind.

Kant was the first philosopher to set out in great detail a formal treatise on aesthetic judgement and established the subject as one worthy of consideration as a separate discipline. As will be apparent from the above, there are a number of aspects of this disquisition which are open to question, to further consideration and indeed to amendment, but he did establish the agenda with which following philosophers and artists have been able to engage. It is the first of those following philosophers, Schiller, with whom this chapter now continues.

Schiller and his System of Drives

The major discrepancy in Kant's argument is that on the one hand he is saying that the appreciation of beauty and the sublime is ontologically subjective, whilst on the other he is saying that beauty and the sublime have a quality of universality that ought to be recognised by everyone. Schiller identified these two faults in Kant's argument as: 1) its subjectivism,

and 2) the rigid split between sensibility (or use of the imagination) and rationality. In addition Schiller saw the philosophy of aesthetics as a stepping stone in the route towards the achievement of a moral state.

Schiller's starting point, set out in *The Aesthetic Education of Mankind* is personality where his view is that man is both part of nature and also has freedom⁹⁰. Extending the Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) model of man's impulses, Schiller promulgates a system of drives. The first is the sense drive: determined by 'sensuality, perception and the primacy of the matter of the world over the ego'.⁹¹ The second is the form drive which results from 'the unchangeable part of man' (*compare facto*: Fichte's argument for pure ego, source for the direct intellectual intuition of things).⁹²

These two drives, - the first passive and concerned with reception the second rational and active, - are independent and 'the dependence of satisfactory experience upon their balance, has no special relation to aesthetic perception or to art'.⁹³ Schiller saw the solution here to be the postulation of a third drive – a unifying force which he called the *Spieltrieb* or play drive – and which I would regard as equivalent to the free play of the imagination referred to by Kant.

Schiller writes:

Reason demands, on transcendental grounds, that a partnership between the sense drive and the form drive should exist, namely a play drive, because only the union of reality with form, of contingency with necessity, of suffering with freedom fulfils the conception of humanity.⁹⁴

This is not easy to understand but Podro explains that, 'the active, rational part of the human mind, and its passive receptive aspect are thought of not simply as grounds or conditions of experience, but as two forces, the equilibrium of which is always likely to be disturbed'.⁹⁵

The *Spieltrieb* is the free play acting within the imagination or mind which is 'searching for a coincidence of the two demands of the mind'.⁹⁶

Hammermeister further defines the play drive as the aesthetic principle, with the term play referring to the contemplation of the 'beautiful that frees man both from the atemporality of

the law and sensual desire by situating him in between both'.⁹⁷ This concept is further explained by Podro who writes:

The harmony of the mind which is the object of the play drive thus has three conditions: first, that we do not simply impose our mental schemata on our observations without also remaining sensitive as to whether the material really fits our projection, secondly that we do try to project and third that the material does correspond to expectations that are initially set up.⁹⁸

Perhaps another way of looking at this is to think in terms of being involved in reading a novel, listening to a symphony or looking at a painting but also remaining outside or independent of that work of art. Another, and perhaps more appropriate, example from the art form of music would be one of the J.S.Bach's (1685-1750) 'Great' fugues for the organ, perhaps the one in C major. There are several ways of listening to this – one could adopt the technical approach and listen to the way in which Bach introduces the theme and then weaves it through the various voices to the climax on full organ (form drive), or alternatively one could allow the magnificence of the music as a whole to involve the emotions enabling one to become almost lost in the atmosphere of sound (sense drive). A third approach, engaging the play-drive, would be to permit the emotion to be involved but not to exclusion of an awareness of the interweaving of the theme between the voices. But even engaging the play-drive one still remains outside the music and independent of it. Thus, for Schiller, the aesthetic and the real domains have to remain separate.

Whilst this is so, it can also be argued that when contemplating a work of art, this interplay between the two natures of the rational and sensual parts of the mind can lead to greater integration of the personality and thus the contemplation could be said to have a moral influence.⁹⁹ On the one hand the separation between the aesthetic and the real will always leave open the possibility of the attainment of a better reality which, expressed in political terms, suggests that art can provide an alternative way of changing an unsatisfactory regime to a satisfactory system without actual revolutionary action.

While it could be said that Schiller has suggested a method which, with development, could point a way to uniting sensibility and rationality, his argument fails to be wholly convincing. Similarly his answer to the question of universality is incomplete but, again, he makes a useful contribution. The fundamental question though which must still be asked (and indeed

is implicit in Schiller objectives) is does Schiller help to point to a way in which art could be said to define truth? A reading of Schiller would suggest that in spite of the creation of the play drive there is still too great a separation between art and reality, sensuality and reason, to enable art fully to describe truth and for a further development it is necessary to turn to Schelling and Hegel.

Both Schelling and Hegel were exact contemporaries and influenced each other. Hegel was the philosopher whose views completed the paradigm which began with Baumgarten. There would therefore be logic in dealing with Schelling before Hegel; however as Schelling has written a specific philosophy of art, dealing with both theory and practice, and whose ideas flow more naturally into the work of Runge, Carus and, indeed the theme of this thesis, I will deal briefly with Hegel before in the next chapter examining the work of Schelling.

Hegel concludes the paradigm

Hegel's main claim to fame is probably concerned with social philosophy where his view of human nature was such that he believed that communities would eventually come together in a benign symbiosis. One of his pupils was Karl Marx (1818-1883) and it is unsurprising that the Hegel approach eventually found favour in the foundation of communism. However, in a series of lectures, he dealt quite fully with the subject of aesthetics. The essence of his theory is set out in *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, and for the purpose of this thesis I have used the Penguin edition¹⁰⁰

Hegel was influenced strongly by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) of whom he wrote:

by contemplation of the ideal works of the ancients, [Winckelmann] received a sort of inspiration, through which he opened a new sense for the study of art. He is to be regarded as one of those who, in the sphere of art, have known how to initiate a new organ for the human spirit'.¹⁰¹

Winckelmann endeavoured to write a history of classical art, and whilst he had available Pliny's list of artists of the time and would have been aware, from written histories of the time, of the contemporary social and political problems, his originality was in interpreting an ancient work of art purely from the work itself, without any accurate knowledge of the

context within the work had been produced.¹⁰² In essence Winckelmann identified two modes in the analysis of the Greek ideal – the beautiful mode and the high mode. The beautiful mode was concerned with sensuality whereas the high mode was concerned with austerity. Winckelmann inspired Hegel and others ‘because he succeeded in vividly presenting classic Greek sculpture as the visual embodiment of the larger values thought to be inherent in Greek culture as a whole’.¹⁰³

Perhaps because of this influence, Hegel is from the outset concerned with created fine art and as he states:

Fine art only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy, and has become simply a mode of revealing to consciousness and bringing to utterance the Divine Nature, the deepest interests of humanity, and the most comprehensive truths of the mind.¹⁰⁴

(This definition would conform to categories two and three of Podro’s theory outlined above.) Hegel’s approach is both scientific and historical – indicating that in ancient Greek civilisation art was the only discipline sufficiently developed to aspire to the qualities set out above. Thereafter philosophy and theology gradually became better established and able to express views about the divine without the need for visual artistic representation – a position achieved, in his view, at the time of his writing. But it was important Hegel emphasised for one to remember that the ‘truth of art remains in the senses; hence “appearance” does by no means signify a deception but, instead, the luminous emanation of the truth of essence ... This is indeed the only function of art: to be one stage of the development of absolute spirit and to be the truth of this stage.’¹⁰⁵ In developing his ideas Hegel refers to the work of Plato and his theoretical approach to the philosophic conception of the beautiful and indicates that its true nature must contain ‘reconciled within it, the two extremes...by combining metaphysical universality with the determinateness of real particularity.’¹⁰⁶ He then postulates his own system which is very well described by Inwood: ‘the philosophical system is concerned with logic, dealing with thought about the world; nature, dealing with thought about the natural world; and the philosophy of the mind or spirit’.¹⁰⁷ The philosophy of the mind is concerned with ‘individual psychology; objective spirit, i.e. morality, social and economic institutions, the state and political history; and art, absolute spirit, religion and philosophy.’¹⁰⁸

From the period of Greek civilisation onwards the last three have operated in parallel, with art, as mentioned above, originally in the ascendancy. In developing his thought, Hegel adopts a teleological approach where the artist in continuing the creative force of the Absolute is able, through his or her involvement with that force, to portray the development of that force. As Inwood suggests, ‘art does not simply reveal God: it is one of the ways in which God reveals, and then actualizes, himself.’¹⁰⁹ Hegel’s concept of God is worthy of note as it impinges very much on the role of the artist and I quote as follows:

The solid unity which the God has in sculpture breaks up into the multitudinous inner lives of individuals, whose unity is not sensuous, but purely ideal. It is only in this stage that God Himself comes to be really and truly spirit in His (God’s) community; for He here begins to be a to-and-fro, an alternation between His unity within himself and his realisation in the individual’s knowledge and in its separate being, as also in the common nature and union of the multitude. In the community, God is released from the abstractness of unexpanded self-identity, as well as from the simple absorption in a bodily medium, by which sculpture represents Him. And He is thus exalted into spiritual existence and into knowledge, into the reflected appearance which essentially displays itself as inward and as subjectivity. Therefore the higher content is now the spiritual nature, and that in its absolute shape.¹¹⁰

In this line of thought Hegel seems to be presaging the work of the twentieth century existentialists (for example, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), Tillich and Macquarrie) and of the concept of God developed by Karl Rahner who devotes many pages to the self-realisation of God.¹¹¹ To describe the existential approach in any detail is beyond the scope of this thesis but essentially in existentialist metaphysics God is realised through grace in the individual human being. Applying this to the visual arts, there is an ontologically dynamical relationship between the artist and God; as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) expresses it – ‘The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither *is* without the other.’¹¹²

Continuing this line of thought and returning to Hegel, the work of art embraces the Idea which he describes as both concept and the reality of the concept, and can be applied to man in his totality – body and mind, and to the unified universe itself. The idea, rather like the sublime, is very difficult to grasp at once, with its separate aspects emerging over time. As Inwood explains, ‘each of the art forms (symbolism, classicism and romanticism) ... corresponds to a different way of conceiving the Idea and, therefore the form in which the

Idea appears'.¹¹³ In order to clarify this, Hegel indicates that first the Idea gives rise to the beginning of Art (symbolic form); then Art in classical form fully embodies the Ideal – 'is the first to afford the production and intuition of the completed Ideal, and to establish it as a realised fact', whilst the Romantic form dissolves this unity but in turn leads to 'concrete intellectual being which has the function of revealing itself as spiritual existence for the inward world of spirit'.¹¹⁴ In summarising this, the essence of his philosophy of aesthetics, Hegel writes:

We may take in the abstract the character of the symbolic, classical, and romantic forms of art, which represent the three relations of the Idea to its embodiment in the sphere of art. They consist in the aspiration after, and the attainment and transcendence of, the Ideal as the true Idea of beauty.¹¹⁵

I cannot complete this short section on Hegel without reference to his postulation that at the time of his writing truth no longer found its expression in the visual arts - 'thought and reflection have overtaken beautiful art'.¹¹⁶ Perhaps this should be regarded as setting art free from the particular philosophical constraints placed upon it by Hegel – thus art could be used as a means of expressing any of the categories described by Podro, including mimesis. While theology and philosophy had achieved greater sophistication at the time of Hegel and continued to do so after his death, there is no reason why art should not continue to strive towards spiritual truths, evolving new modes of expression – eventually to include abstract expressionism.

However, it can be seen that Hegel has closed a paradigm concerned with an analysis of art which began with Baumgarten. A new paradigm was then opened up by Schelling, Runge and Carus, descriptions of whose work will follow in the next chapter.

¹ Harvey, J. *The Bible as Visual Culture* Sheffield Sheffield Phoenix Press 2013 p. 4.

² The word Paradigm is used by Thomas Kuhn to mean 'an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, which are shared by the members of a particular community'. In this thesis I am using the word to encompass a logical pattern of thought. See Küng, Hans *Christianity* London SCM Press 1994 (end paper note quoting Kuhn.)

³ Hammermeister, K. *The German Aesthetic Tradition* Cambridge CUP 2002, p. 4.

⁴ I should explain that the Enlightenment age begun in the seventeenth century (John Locke is usually quoted as one of the originators) and there is debate about when, or even if, it ended - some would say with the French

Revolution, others may argue that it ended with the advent of Post-modernism. The age of Romanticism is contained within the period of Enlightenment; Romanticism began with Rousseau, Kant and Blake and ended with the advent of Abstraction, although some would argue that it died out in at the beginning of the Victorian period. The Enlightenment (especially in England) was particularly concerned with rational thought whilst Romanticism gave priority to the imagination and experience. There is much more detail on this subject in Chapter Three.

⁵ Watson, P. *The German Genius* London Simon and Schuster 2010 quoting Berlin p; 193.

⁶ Novalis is the pseudonym of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg. (Google search)

⁷ Bergmann, S. *In the beginning is the Icon – A liberative theology of images, visual arts and culture* London Equinox Publishing 2009 pp. 66-70.

⁸ Ibid. p. 74. See also Tillich, P. *On Art and Architecture* Dillenberger J. and J. (ed) New York Crossroad 1989 'Contemporary art is more adequate to the world that has been transformed by the sciences and by technical processes. From the standpoint of the religious dimension of reality, let it be that way, because this period of history and the changes in which we find ourselves are a manifestation of the inexhaustible character of the ground of all reality.' (page 183).

⁹ Podro, M. *The Manifold in Perception – Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand* Oxford Clarendon Press 1972, pp. 1-6.

¹⁰ Plato used the term mimesis in a rather derogatory way suggesting that if the thing or person being imitated were bad then that characteristic could influence the actor or artist. 'To produce such representations, Plato says, one does not need knowledge of the thing being represented, but only how it appears' (Honderich, T. *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Oxford, OUP 1995 p. 603a) Later definitions suggest that mimesis means to convey the essence or unity of nature.

¹¹ Hegel, G.W.F. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (translated by Bosanquet, edited by Wood) London Penguin 2004 p.49.

¹² For a detailed discussion of the interpretation of text and image see Harvey, J. pp.11-13.

¹³ Podro M. p.5.

¹⁴ Bergmann, S. p.57.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.57.

¹⁶ 'Philosophical meditations on some requirements of the poem' mentioned in Hammermeister, Kai *The German Aesthetic Tradition* - Cambridge, Cambridge University Press page 4. Baumgarten also wrote *Aesthetica*, published in 1750.

¹⁷ The word aesthetics is derived from Greek usage of the word which meant perception and occurs in Plato (Republic) and Aristotle (Poetics). Although used also by Plotinus, Augustine and Aquinas it was Baumgarten who established the philosophy of aesthetics concerned with 'science of the conditions of sensuous perception' or the 'philosophy of taste or of the perception of the beautiful'. For a full discussion of the development of the word see the essay in Honderich, T. (ed) *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Oxford Oxford University Press 1995 (second ed.) pp. 9a to 16a and the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* C.T.Onions (ed.) Oxford University Press 1983, from which these two definitions have been taken.

¹⁸ Hammermeister, K. *The German Aesthetic Tradition* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 79.

¹⁹ Fragment of correspondence between Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling (1796) – written by Hegel but closest in concept to Hölderlin contained in Bernstein, J.M. (ed) *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 186.

²⁰ 'The anthropic principle begins by considering the fundamental constants of nature (e.g., the speed of light, Planck's constant) and the specific forms of the fundamental physical laws, such as relativity and quantum mechanics...What is surprising is that these constants and laws are precisely what are needed for the possibility that life will evolve in the universe, whether on earth as it has, or perhaps on many other planets in the universe.'

Peters, T. and Bennett, G. (ed) *Bridging Science and Religion* London SCM Press 2002 p 57.

In the philosophy of religion, this principle is one of the arguments advanced for God's existence – the argument for natural theology. For a more detailed exposition of the anthropic principle see: Alexander, D. *Rebuilding the Matrix – Science and Faith in the 21st Century* Michigan Zondervan 2001 pp.409-425.

²¹ Watson, P. p. 240.

²² Rene Descartes really established this duality in the seventeenth century which enabled religion and science to be treated as two separate disciplines and to progress with their separate lines of enquiry. This enabled the age of reason to develop rapidly without the scientists getting into the difficulties that befell Galileo and his predecessors.

²³ Watson, P. p. 195.

- ²⁴ Eaves, M. *William Blake's Theory of Art* Princeton Princeton University Press 1982 p. 26 (From the vast corpus of works relating to William Blake this volume deals quite explicitly with his theory rather than his practice of art and poetry.)
- ²⁵ Hammermeister, K p. 23.
- ²⁶ Robert Hooke is particularly renowned for his law which states that the tension in a lightly stretched spring is proportional to its extension from its natural length
- ²⁷ Eaves, M. P. 19. (Eaves quotes many sources in support of this statement.)
- ²⁸ Johnson, P *Art – A New History* London Wiedenfeld and Nicholson 2003 p. 51.
- ²⁹ Clark, K *The Nude – A Study of Ideal Art* London The Reprint Society 1958 p. 9. quoting Aristotle.
- ³⁰ Clark, K. p. 11, quoting Blake. To Blake form and outline were synonymous.
- ³¹ Ibid. p. 11.
- ³² Ibid. p. 207.
- ³³ A full discussion of the relationship between beauty and proportion, which was so important to ancient Greek philosophy, is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I would refer the reader to Clark's *The Nude* where a full disquisition can be found on pages 13 to 25 and indeed in the chapters beyond.
- ³⁴ Eaves, M. p. 28.
- ³⁵ Ibid. p.29.
- ³⁶ Myrone, M. (ed) *Seen in My Visions – A descriptive catalogue of pictures by William Blake* London Tate Publishing 2009 pp. 84-5.
- ³⁷ Gombrich, E. *Symbolic Images Studies in the art of the Renaissance* London Phaidon Press 1972 p 124
- ³⁸ For a full discussion setting out the importance of Lessing's Essay see Bernstein, J.M. (ed.) *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2003 pp. xii-xviii. Other essayists of note writing within the German Romantic period were Herder and Gerstenburg, but Lessing is particularly concerned with the visual arts compared with the literary. See introduction to *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst* edited by E.Purdie Oxford Oxford University Press 1964.
- ³⁹ Bernstein, J.M. (ed.) *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2003 p. 2.5
- ⁴⁰ Whilst it is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter to deal in great detail with the theories of Burke with regard to the beautiful and the sublime, a full commentary and reprint of the Enquiry itself will be found in the following: Burke, E. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* Edited with an introduction and notes by James R. Boulton London Routledge and Kegan Paul 1958.
- ⁴¹ Burke, E. p.lxxxii.
- ⁴² Ibid. quoting Blake p. lxxxii.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Watson, P. quoting Americks, K. p 138.
- ⁴⁵ The Kantian approach to a distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal is very succinctly expressed by L.W.Beck who writes in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (details see below): Kant called the determination of noumena and phenomena the 'noblest enterprise of antiquity' but in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he denied that noumenal as objects of pure reason are objects of knowledge, since reason gives knowledge only of objects of sensible intuition (phenomena). Noumena 'in the negative sense' are objects of which we have no sensible intuition and hence no knowledge at all; these are things-in-themselves. Noumena 'in the positive sense' (e.g. soul and God) are conceived of as objects of intellectual intuition, a mode of knowledge which man does not possess.
- ⁴⁶ Watson, P. p. 139.
- ⁴⁷ *Das Moment* = (deciding) factor, consideration, element, aspect.
- ⁴⁸ These definitions are taken from the translation by Meredith: Meredith, J. *Immanuel Kant – The Critique of Judgement* Oxford Clarendon Press 1952 (reissue of the first editions of the two parts issued as two books) part one, p 50.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. p 60.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid. p 80.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. p 84.
- ⁵² Hammermeister. K p. 29.
- ⁵³ It should be noted that Aristotle produced a theory of imagination – this will be dealt with later in the section on Hegel.
- ⁵⁴ Makkreel, R *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* Chicago University of Chicago Press 1994 p. 45-6.
- ⁵⁵ Sallis, J. *Spacings of Reason and Imagination In Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* Chicago University of Chicago Press 1987 p. 93.
- ⁵⁶ Meredith, J p. 174.
- ⁵⁷ Equivalent words to 'moment' would be chapter or section.

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- ⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 29.
- ⁵⁹ Prettejohn, E. *Beauty and Art 1750-2000* Oxford Oxford University Press 2005 pp. 46-7
- ⁶⁰ Meredith p. 84.
- ⁶¹ Ibid. p. 84.
- ⁶² Ibid. p. 85.
- ⁶³ Vigus, J. *Essays on Kant, Schelling and German Aesthetics by Henry Crabb Robinson* London Modern Humanities Research Association 2010 p. 53.
- ⁶⁴ Hammermeister p. 32.
- ⁶⁵ Kant p. 92.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 92.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 93.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 109.
- ⁶⁹ For example: Piaggio, H.T.H. *An elementary treatise on differential equations and their applications* London 1952 or any modern book on elementary calculus, for example Hogben, L.T. *Mathematics for the Million* New York Norton 1993.
- ⁷⁰ Makkreel p. 70.
- ⁷¹ Kant p. 98.
- ⁷² Hammermeister quoting Kant p. 34.
- ⁷³ Vigus, J. p.131.
- ⁷⁴ Vallins, D. *Coleridge's Writings volume 5 – On the Sublime* Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan 2003 p.36. Coleridge (1772-1834) who with Wordsworth (1770-1850), another dissenter, spent time studying in Germany and was influential, along with Robinson in bringing the German Idealist philosophy to Britain.
- ⁷⁵ Figure seen from the rear: Rücken – back, Figur – figure.
- ⁷⁶ Rosenblum, R. *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* New York Harper and Row 1975 p. 21.
- ⁷⁷ Prettejohn p. 56.
- ⁷⁸ Kant p. 168.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid pp. 166-7.
- ⁸⁰ Hammermeister p. 35.
- ⁸¹ Ibid. p. 35.
- ⁸² Kant p. 176.
- ⁸³ Hammermeister p. 37.
- ⁸⁴ Kant p. 221.
- ⁸⁵ Hammermeister p. 38.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid p. 38.
- ⁸⁷ Kant p. 116.
- ⁸⁸ Hammermeister p. 39.
- ⁸⁹ Kant p. 225.
- ⁹⁰ J. C. Friedrich Von Schiller (1759-1805): *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1794 now available on website: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/schiller-education.asp>
- ⁹¹ Hammermeister p 51.
- ⁹² Ibid p. 52.
- ⁹³ Podro p 49.
- ⁹⁴ Hammermeister quoting Schiller p. 53.
- ⁹⁵ Podro p. 48
- ⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 50
- ⁹⁷ Hammermeister p. 53.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 50.
- ⁹⁹ See comments above on § 59.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* trans. By B. Bosanquet and ed. By M.Inwood. London Penguin Books 2004. This translation was first published in 1886. The reasons for retaining this particular translation are set out in a forward by Inwood pp xli-xliii
- ¹⁰¹ Irwin. D. quoting Hegel in *Winckelmann Writings on Art* London Phaidon Press 1972 p. 50
- ¹⁰² For a succinct summary of Winckelmann's achievements see Prettejohn, E. pp. 15 to 22.
- ¹⁰³ Potts, A. *Flesh and the Ideal -Winckelmann and the Origin of Art History* New Haven and London Yale University Press 1994 p. 20.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid p. 9.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hammermeister p. 94.
- ¹⁰⁶ Hegel p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. xiii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. xiii.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. xviii.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 92.

¹¹¹ Sallis, J. *Spacings of Reason and Imagination In Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* Chicago University of Chicago Press 1987 See particularly chapter 2 – Man in the presence of Absolute Mystery which deals with Man's relationship to his Transcendent Ground. pp. 24-43.

¹¹² Macquarrie, J *Existentialism* London Penguin Books 1972. Macquarrie quoting Heidegger p. 267.

¹¹³ Hegel p.177.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p.84-87.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p.88.

¹¹⁶ Hammermeister quoting Hegel p. 102.

Chapter Two

A New Paradigm is opened by Schelling

- Transcendental Knowledge
- The Art Theory of Runge
- Carus and the Nine Letters
- Summary

Transcendental Knowledge

The German Idealists, as we have seen, referred to a third type of knowledge – transcendental knowledge – and it is this type of knowledge to which Schelling paid particular attention. In so doing he was following in the footsteps of Fichte, a student of Kant. In addition he considered the work of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), a Dutch philosopher who set out his thesis ‘the rational science of the absolute’, which developed the thought of Descartes, in a work entitled *Ethics* (1677).¹ Schelling developed his own ideas over a long period of correspondence with Hegel, Hölderlin, Schlegel and others. In deliberating how one may approach this transcendent branch of knowledge, Schelling considered the role of the mystic - who seeks ‘annihilation in an absolute (which) is beyond all individuality and subjectivity’.² But he rejected this approach as somewhat limited and saw a possibly more fruitful approach through consideration of aesthetics and art: ‘The complete solution to transcendental idealism’s highest problem is to be found, not in observation of nature, but only in observation of the work of art’.³

Schelling, one of the most influential philosophers of the Romantic period, produced few books and papers in his life-time and his son eventually produced *Sämmtliche Werke* (*Collected Works* in 14 volumes) in 1856-61, and *Die Philosophie der Kunst* (*The Philosophy of Art*) in 1859, and it is to this latter work and to Schelling’s elevation of the work of art that my attention is devoted. In the discourse which follows, the works of art to which reference is made would comply particularly with category 3 of the Podro categories outlined in

Chapter One, but first I must introduce the concept of intellectual intuition – a term used rather negatively by Kant but developed in a positive sense by Fichte and by Schelling. Essentially intellectual intuition refers to the sensing of knowledge rather than the achievement of knowledge by rational thought alone. The term is a difficult one fully to understand and but Henry Crabb Robinson writing in 1804 assists in this explanation.

Robinson was an enthusiastic follower of Schelling recording, almost verbatim, aphorisms of that philosopher and was influential within the literary and artistic scene in Britain at that time. One important source of this influence can be found in Robinson's lectures prepared for the author of *D'Allemagne* (1810-13), Madame Germaine de Staël (1766-1817), a writer who, initially, had difficulty in relating to Schelling, thinking him obscure and mystical, lacking the clarity she expected of all philosophers. Robinson refers to the negativity of the philosophy of Kant with its insistence that: 'all our knowledge is confined to that of things as they appear to us not as they are in themselves;' he then explains that Schelling reverses the system in which Kant becomes 'entangled in the snares of speculative reason, has recourse to practical reason and throws himself into the arms of faith'.⁴ I quote in full Robinson's explanation of the term intellectual intuition - a concept of which both Palmer in Britain and Friedrich in Germany would have been aware:

The Thing *as it is in itself* which Kant placed *before* him as the unattainable End of our Enquires, Schelling puts *behind* him as the starting post from which he sets out; pretending to *know* what Kant asserts can only be *believed*. Schelling calls it *the absolute* and *assumes* it, not as an abstract or general thought, but as a substance whose reality is immediately felt by the Mind. And he calls the consciousness of this being *intellectual intuition*. Schelling honestly declares I cannot prove this *absolute being*; it must be immediately felt ... All Notions (Ideas generales) are grounded *on* Sensations, tho' not, as erroneously thought by Locke and his disciples, arising *out* of them. The *conception* of the relations of things is accompanied by a *sense* of the Things in which the relation exists. Without the intuition or sense of space, the mathematician would be unable to think a single proposition: without an original organical Susceptibility of colour and sound, there could be no taste for painting and musick (sic). Love is pure Sense... There lies in the mind an infinity of sensations and notions undeveloped, and all education and all instruction instead of being as – commonly conceived communication *from without* is but the awakening that which is *within*. (Robinson's italics and capitals)⁵

Relating this theoretical approach to the more practical application, Schelling is suggesting that the universe is one coherent whole and that one great unifying law governs the process that maintains the continuing process of creation.⁶ This leads to one of the most important aphorisms of Schelling: ‘The first of the two unities, that which constitutes the informing of the infinite into the finite, expresses itself within the work of art primarily as sublimity; the other, that which constitutes the informing of the finite into the infinite, as beauty’.⁷ The genius of the artist is thus required to discern, through his or her intellectual intuition, the immensity of nature and to express that immensity in the work of art.

Hammermeister writes:

the work of art ... represents not the empirical object but its idea... every object is presented as the epitome of its existence, a state where it has reached its *telos*. Art captures the perfect moment and lifts the object out of the flow of time, allowing it to become eternal in its preservation through art.⁸

This concept of art as expressing the idea or essence of a subject is set out by Schelling at the end of his introduction to *The Philosophy of Art* where he writes: ‘According to my entire understanding here, art is itself an emanation of the absolute.’⁹ In Schelling’s philosophy the absolute is equated to God and the artist has a revelatory role as set out in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1804) whereby he or she is required to unite in a work of art, through inspired intellectual intuition, the objective and the idea underlining its existence. Alone amongst the philosophers of the period Schelling elevated art to its high point suggesting that it takes precedence over all other disciplines:

Art is therefore the Highest to the philosopher, because as it were it opens the most holy where in eternal and primary union burns as if in one flame what is separated in nature and history and what must flee each other in life and act as well in thought.¹⁰

This is similar to the idea that the artist can be regarded as co-creator or, as B.M.G. Reardon summarises very succinctly in an endnote in his *Religion in an Age of Romanticism*, emphasising Schlegel’s influence on Schelling ‘he (Schelling) treats of the metaphysical significance of art as the finite manifestation of the Absolute, for art, he maintains, is the eternal Idea pictorialized by the imagination.’¹¹

In other words truth in nature (science) and philosophy can only be found through the unifying influence of art – a synthesis of the real and the ideal. Here, there is a clear distinction (similar to that drawn by Robinson above) between Kant and Schelling inasmuch as Kant believed that the transcendental faculties of the mind are ‘not to be confused with the objects through which they become conscious of themselves’ whereas for Schelling the ‘ideal of absolute can and does appear within things in the world’.¹² In this way Schelling is very clear that there should be no distinction between Kant’s noumenal (things that are thought) and the phenomenal (things that appear). In this sense of the action of two forces which Hegel referred to as dialectic there is a link back to the philosophy of Plotinus (204-270 CE), a philosophy which the German Idealists called Neo-Platonism – the action of all things coming out of nature and of all things returning to nature.¹³ As Hammermeister emphasises:

Schelling’s Neo-platonic aesthetics define art and truth as two different perspectives on the absolute. An object is beautiful when it is so adequate to its idea that the infinite (the concept) enters the real. In fewer words, in beauty the real becomes ideal ... The work of art is not identical with the idea, but is the reflection of the idea. Its beauty is not an achievement of the artist; rather, it is due to the reflecting quality of the infinite that is characterised by truth and beauty.¹⁴

In this context beauty may be considered as the splendour of God. Examining that which is actually happening in this process, the artist’s sensual perception is encountering an emanation of the absolute and is then using his or her intellectual intuition to interpret in a work of art that transcendent force. Then the work of art in interacting with the receptive imagination of the listener (in the case of music) or the viewer (in the case of visual art) endeavours to reveal that transcendence. Whereas Schiller creates the concept of drives to endeavour to bring out the transcendent, Schelling insists that it is only the genius artist who is able to elucidate the eternal truths, and in a passage that has existentialist overtones he writes:

*This eternal concept of the human being in God as the immediate cause of his productions is that which one calls **genius**, as it were the daemon, the in-dwelling element of divinity in human beings. It is so to speak, a piece of the absoluteness of God. Each artist can thus produce only as much as is united or allied with the eternal concept of his own essence in God. The more within that essence in and for itself the universe is intuited, the more organic he is; the more he links finitude to infinitude, the more productive will he be. (Schelling’s italics)¹⁵*

Endeavouring to ground this philosophical language into the practice of art, Schelling devotes the second part of his *Philosophy of Art* to describing the ‘construction of the forms of art’.¹⁶

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to summarise the whole of this major work, but essentially it is concerned with the way in which the infinite may be expressed within the finite. He deals first of all with music, with harmony, melody and rhythm expressing the harmony of the whole cosmos suggesting that: ‘the forms of music as the forms of ideas viewed concretely are also the forms of the being and life of the cosmic bodies as such; hence, music is nothing other than the perceived rhythm and harmony of the visible universe itself’.¹⁷ This concept originating from Pythagoras (571-495 BCE), who was concerned to identify a link between music, mathematics and the cosmos, has been much used by composers over the ages – Handel’s (1685-1759) *Ode to St. Cecilia* (1739), Haydn’s (1732-1809) oratorio *Creation* (1796-8), Holst’s (1874-1934) *Planets Suite* (1914-6) come immediately to mind as well as some of the more modern pieces of music inspired by the prospect of space travel.¹⁸

Beginning his section on visual art, Schelling’s starting point is the nature of light and the effect that it may have on the body. He then makes the link between gravity and light: ‘It is gravity that reappears here in the higher potency, the absolute identity that, be it in reflection or in refraction unites light and corporeality’.¹⁹ (This may seem to be a linkage that is somewhat forced, but, of course, current thinking would see the link between the four fundamental forces of electromagnetism, weak and strong nuclear forces and gravity, so perhaps Schelling was ahead of time.)²⁰

Schelling’s next stage is to assert that light synthesised with corporeality is obscured light or colour which leads to his statement that: ‘Light can appear as light only in opposition or contrast to non-light, and hence only as colour.’²¹

Then, dismissing Newton’s theory of colour as largely irrelevant so far as the artist is concerned, Schelling highlights the dependence of painting on the demonstration of contrast and of space. The artist can ‘portray nothing without simultaneously portraying in the painting itself the space in which the object is found’.²² He compares the two arts of music and painting to arithmetic and geometry, with the latter requiring space external to the particular figure under consideration. He then develops the thought that in painting all the

forms of unity – the real, the ideal and the indifference of the two – occur and are represented in drawing, chiaroscuro and colouring. He emphasises the importance of drawing in elevating beauty above all sensuality – ‘only through drawing is painting actually art, just as only through colour is painting actually painting’.²³ Schelling highlights Raphael and Antonio da Correggio (1489-1534) as two of the greatest masters in drawing, in chiaroscuro and in their treatment of colour. In particular he draws attention to *La Notte* (1529-30) by Correggio where the magical use of chiaroscuro creates ‘an immortal light, emanating from a child, mystically and mysteriously illuminates the dark night’.²⁴ The fusing of light and dark is such that they become ‘one body and one soul’.²⁵ In this painting by the skilled use of light the artist is surely endeavouring to demonstrate both the immanence (through the mother and child) and transcendence (through the angels above) of the absolute – or, as Schelling would put it, expressing the infinite within the finite.

Schelling emphasises that art has a number of stages concerning the relationship of light to the objects portrayed – the stages are either ‘external, inflexible or inorganic or internal, flexible and organic’.²⁶ The first stage might be an inorganic still life where we may have insight into the mind or spirit of the person who decided upon the particular arrangement. The second stage where the colours are external and organic might be a flower painting where ‘to the extent that it were possible to express enough significance through the positioning of flowers such that an inner condition or disposition really were recognisable there, this kind of picture would be suitable for allegory’.²⁷ The third stage flexible, organic and external may well be animal painting where the artist can bring out ‘the symbolic significance of the figures themselves through energetic, strong portrayal, or through higher associations’.²⁸

Regarding his approach to landscape painting, where light is externally inorganic yet flexible and living Schelling writes:

Landscape painting necessarily concerns itself with empirical truth, and the ultimate of which it is capable is to use precisely *this* empirical truth itself as a covering through which it allows a higher kind of truth to manifest itself ... The true object, the idea, remains formless, and it is up to the observer to discover it from within the fragrant, formless essence before him ... It can awaken ideas, or rather spirits of ideas, and, often, before our very eyes, it lifts the *veil* that conceals the invisible world from us ... Everything in it depends on (light and) the

arts of aerial perspective and thus on the completely empirical character of chiaroscuro.’²⁹

Schelling then discusses modes of representation – to represent the absolute or infinite there are only two options either allegorical or symbolic. An allegorical representation would be a depiction of something under the guise of something else which is nonetheless appropriate as a means of conveying a message. By this means the artist can depict such sins as sloth or virtues such as generosity. An example Schelling quotes is *Slander by Apelles* (1494) – a theme depicted by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) in which Fraud, Conspiracy, Repentance etc. are all shown by representative people exhibiting traits from which can be deduced their names.³⁰ Another example from C.D. Friedrich would be *Morning in the Riesengebirge* (1810-11) where the woman representing faith is drawing the traveller up the mountain ‘along the narrow and difficult path which leadeth unto life.’³¹

A symbolic painting ‘not only signifies or means the idea, *but is itself the idea*’.³² The object portrayed can be either ‘something *universally human* that perpetually recurs and renews itself in life, or refer to completely spiritual and intellectual idea ... (such as) Raphael’s *The School of Athens*’ a painting to which reference has already been made.³³ Any image of Christ would be regarded as symbolic since it represents the ‘completely unique identity of divine and human nature’.³⁴

Schelling concludes his section on painting with a list of aphorisms which result from his consideration of the subject. Essentially his argument is that painting is very well suited to express the infinite within the finite but is dependent on the skill (genius) of the artist and receptivity of the observer.

He then turns his attention to the plastic arts – sculpture and architecture. This thesis is concerned in essence with the way in which the ineffable (the absolute) may be depicted in drawing and painting and I will therefore give only the briefest of summary of this aspect of Schelling’s analysis. Sculptors express their ideas through real bodily objects and within the real three-dimensional form portray the ‘essence and the ideal of things, and accordingly the highest indifference of essence and form’.³⁵ Sculptures are nearly always symbolic as they possess both form and essence (idea) and are therefore very well placed to express the unity of the absolute. Sculptures of the human figure have a particular symbolic significance – and

are 'a mediating agent insofar as he (the human being) originally was placed between fluid and hard elements'.³⁶ For example, Schelling suggests the head represents the heavens and particularly the sun, the breast the transition from heaven to earth and the cavity of the body the vault that heaven forms over the earth and so on. From this analysis he derives an argument that the human figure is an image of the universe and hence:

a perfect conducting medium of the expressions of the soul, and since art as such, and sculpture in particular, must portray ideas that are in fact elevated above matter, and yet must do so through external appearance, there is no object better suited to the formative arts than the human figure, the direct impression or copy of the soul and of reason.³⁷

This exultation of the human form is echoed in a later century by Kenneth Clark whom I have mentioned above and who refers to the nude 'as a means of expression...of universal and eternal value'.³⁸ In fact in *The Nude* Clark examines in some detail the way in which the human form has been used to express many of the conditions e.g. pathos, to which Schelling referred.

To summarise, then, in the stance of Schelling towards the importance and significance of art we have the opening up of a new paradigm compared with the position of Hegel whose work could be said to have closed the paradigm which began with Baumgarten. Far from the history of art coming to an end, in Schelling we have the importance of art, as a means of gaining insight into the role and purpose of existence, raised to heights anew.

Leaving Schelling we now come to the consideration of two artists who wrote in philosophical terms about their art, Philipp Otto Runge and Carl Gustav Carus. Runge has perhaps been remembered more for his philosophical writings 'as a non-philosopher' than for his artistic endeavour – although many of his works are worthy of much consideration as examples of attempts to portray the absolute. Carl Gustav Carus was a scientist (physician), amateur artist and friend of Friedrich who wrote on the subject of landscape art which he called *Erdleben-Bildkunst* (earth-life painting).

The Art Theory of Runge

Runge, a contemporary of Caspar David Friedrich was a significant figure in German Romanticism. He wrote extensively on art theory as well as producing a significant body of drawings and paintings. In this chapter I shall be concerned only with his theory – the iconography of Runge and Friedrich will be examined in a subsequent chapter. The extensive literature about Runge and, indeed his own writing is mainly available in the German language; however there is a detailed analysis of his work undertaken by Rudolf Bisanz published in 1970 and, in addition, there is a significant contribution on Runge included in William Vaughan's *German Romantic Painting* and in Rosenblum's work on the northern Romantic tradition.³⁹ The following analysis has been drawn mainly from these sources.

For Runge, his Protestant Christianity was of the utmost importance and he endeavoured to integrate in his work both mysticism and Christian thought. He was also very aware of the influence of Classicism in paintings of his time and endeavoured to effect a change towards 'non-homocentric or Christian landscape art, as he called it'.⁴⁰ This art 'would formulate a new animistic symbolism, one based on nature's own and universally known elements and standing in close analogy to the artist's personal, deeply felt, intuited wonder at God's creation'.⁴¹ In other words Runge wished to replace anthropomorphic Christian art by an art based on nature and landscape.⁴²

He was enthusiastic about the integration of the traditionally separate disciplines of science, philosophy and art and his art theory was designed for art students (not philosophers) as a pedagogical set of principles which embraced those disciplines. He summarised his ten point programme (or as Bisanz described it – manifesto) as follows:

- 1) Our presentiment of God,
- 2) the perception of ourselves in connection with the whole,
- 3) religion and art; that is to express our highest feelings through words, tones or pictures; and here then visual art seeks first:
- 4) the subject; then 5) the composition, 6) the drawing, 7) the disposition of local colour, 8) aerial perspective, 9) colour value, 10) tone.⁴³

As Vaughan makes clear this theory was not entirely original being influenced by both Johann Jakob Heinse (1749-1803) and Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) who wrote on burgeoning importance of landscape painting, and by the pantheistic writings of his teacher Ludwig Gotthard Kosegarten (1758-1818).⁴⁴ The originality came from the way in which he expressed his theory and his particular approach to the concept of God. In addition parallels can be seen with the Podro theory set out at the beginning of Chapter One, and especially criterion number one, the revealing of an aspect of a subject that would not be obvious. Examining first Runge's presentiment of God or 'consciousness of ourselves and our eternity', we have what would, I believe, later become to be identified as an existentialist view point. As Runge expresses it:

This deepest divination that God is above us, this living soul within us which derives from Him and returns to Him, this is the surest and most distinct consciousness of ourselves and our eternity.⁴⁵

The parallel here with the viewpoint of Schelling (see reference to the artist genius above) is quite marked and it unsurprising to learn that Runge maintained correspondence with that philosopher. In one such letter Runge writes after referring to the study of the ancients and development of all the stages of art that 'it cannot help the artist at all if he does not arrive at, or is not brought to view the present moment of his existence with all its pains and pleasures'.⁴⁶ This existentialist approach leads readily into point number two of the Runge programme which shows the influence of the sixteenth century physician and mystic Paracelsus (Auroleus P.T.B. von Hohenheim) (1493-1541) (who in turn influenced Jakob Boehme (1575-1624)), who developed a neo-platonic holistic system of mysticism which suggested that 'as we know nature since we are nature, we know God since we are God'.⁴⁷ Endeavouring to cut through the complexity and to a certain extent irrelevant writings of Boehme, Bisanz emphasises that it is the spirit of Boehme 'which makes all things possible to the imagination'. Runge in explaining his point two writes:

We feel that something relentlessly strict and terribly eternal is locked in the most violent battle with a sweet and infinite love, as something hard and soft, as rocks and water. The rougher this opposition becomes the farther away each thing departs from perfection and the more they unite the closer each thing comes to its perfection.⁴⁸

Runge is suggesting that the artist, when experiencing this moment of transcendence or ecstasy, should endeavour to capture and communicate that transcendence using the 'universal common mould of meaningful symbols.'⁴⁹

In point number three of the programme we have a uniting of points one and two – linking through to the practice of art as expressed in the remaining seven points which are all fairly clear with the possible exception of four, the choice of subject. Runge is emphatic that the choice of subject must be that of the artist and is all part of the communication of the transcendence of God.

Whilst it is acknowledged that much of the above has been expressed previously by, for example, Schelling, the significance is that Runge has summarised the theory for students of art, combining an existential approach to the transcendent with some practical suggestions for its achievement. Point three marks the transition from theory to practice and is, perhaps, the most difficult to elucidate but if combined with Schelling's concept of the genius artist and the thought that the artist could be regarded as co-creator, the process towards which Runge is leading us becomes somewhat clearer. It is not known whether or not Runge was read widely during the nineteenth century, but his programme could possibly have influenced Kandinsky and Mondrian who both wrote their own theories on the spiritual in art at the time of another significant change when art entered the world of abstraction.

This following quotation which demonstrates not only Runge's view of the eternal God but also illustrates his poetic use of language, needs no further comment from me and makes a fitting end to this section:

When the sky above me abounds with countless stars...and I fling myself upon the grass under the glittering drops of dew, each leaf and each blade of grass teems with life, the earth lives and stirs beneath me, all resounds together in a single chord, then the soul jubilates aloud and soars into the boundless space around me, and there is no below and no above, no time, no beginning and no end, I hear and feel the living breath of God who holds and carries the world, in whom all lives and works: here is the highest that we divine - God!⁵⁰

Carus and the Nine Letters

Carl Gustav Carus was a philosopher, scientist and amateur artist who, as a friend of Friedrich, became very interested in the use of landscape painting to express the ineffable, eventually writing *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* between the years 1815-1824.

Schelling, Carl Fernow and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) were major influences (as they were for Robinson and Coleridge) leading to Carus writing on philosophy and on Goethe himself. Most of Carus' extensive writings on *Nature and Idea*, *Symbolism of the Human Form* and a biography of Goethe, to mention but a few are only available in the German language. Fortunately *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* has been translated by David Britt (c. 1940-2002) and published with a major introduction by Oskar Bätschmann.⁵¹

Evidence of the influence of Schelling is immediately confirmed by Bätschmann who quoting from Carus' memoirs writes:

There appeared in these letters a curious blend of science and art, and it is this, if anything, that will give them a lasting place in literature. What Schelling was trying to express at that time through the concept of the *world soul* was precisely the cardinal point around which these thoughts revolved.⁵²

Carus studied medicine at Leipzig University where he became captivated by nature philosophy concerned with the 'ineluctable connection of the cosmic edifice into a single, endless, organic whole – in a word, the idea of world soul...'.⁵³ From his school-days, Carus was interested in painting and on submitting four paintings to the *Dresden Kunstakademie* in 1816 he met Friedrich for the first time. Friedrich became and remained a close friend. Carus was particularly struck by Friedrich's approach to landscape being especially impressed by its 'mordant melancholy' raising landscape painting to a new level and embracing a 'radiant poetic tendency'.⁵⁴ The other significant, though not greatly acknowledged, influence on Carus was Carl Fernow who wrote on landscape painting during the years 1803-06. Fernow's approach to landscape painting suggested that at its best it had poetic qualities and even akin to music and is not limited in the manner of history painting. Referring to this limitation of history painting or 'dramatic painting' that is of value for the onlooker only, Bätschmann writes that in landscape painting:

No such limitation exists; viewers find themselves inside the natural scene depicted, because the painting puts them into an ‘aesthetic mood’. Fernow ascribed this effect not to the content or the specific objects in the picture but entirely to the total ‘impression on the mind’. Herein lies the affinity between landscape painting and music: ‘a beautiful landscape is steeped in a harmony of colours that affects the mind in much the same way as melody and harmony in music’. The term ‘total impression’ was taken up by Humboldt and used by Carus, who also referred to the affinity between landscape painting and music without mentioning Fernow’s name.⁵⁵

The remainder of this section will be concerned with the Nine Letters themselves and for a short summary of Carus’ life, the reader is referred to Bättschmann’s introduction to the *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting*.⁵⁶

The Nine Letters fall into three parts identified in 1995 by Jutta Müller-Tamm; the first three letters are categorised as ‘early Romantic’ (a term with which I have sympathy, particularly in view of the flowery mode of expression, but with which Bättschmann disagreed), the next two are about style and the history of landscape painting with the final four being concerned with landscape painting of the future based on science under the new name of *Erdleben-Bildkunst* (earth life painting).⁵⁷ It should be remembered within the scientific world at this time there was interest in classification – of plants (begun in c. 1730 and completed in 1758) by Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) and of clouds (1802) by Luke Howard (1772-1864) and throughout the nineteenth century with the establishment of the periodic table of the chemical elements.⁵⁸ Carus entered into this methodological way of thinking when writing his letters and whilst this *Zeitgeist* permeates the letters generally, the particular interest in clouds classification comes to the fore in letter number six where Carus refers to Goethe’s papers on natural science and the anonymous poem *Howard’s Ehrengedächtnis*.⁵⁹

Taking the letters in the order in which they were written and highlighting those elements that are particularly relevant to this study, letter number one evokes the winter-time atmosphere in which it was written and is a Romantic Odyssean essay on the relationship between nature and science, between painting and poetry, architecture and the harmony of sounds. Carus summarises this letter as indicating that he traces the ‘free, poetic impulse at the point where it begins to assume a form and enter life as a work of art’ through to the point where it ‘expresses itself through the proportional relationships of speech music and solid mass’ (architecture).⁶⁰

In the second letter he examines in some detail the purpose and significance of landscape painting. He emphasises that landscape art can affect the viewer in two ways:

*First, through the nature of the object depicted, which will affect us in an image very much as it does in reality; and second, insofar as the work of art is a creation of the human mind, which, by truthfully manifesting its thoughts (just as in a higher sense, the universe may be called a manifestation of divine thoughts), elevates a kindred spirit above the common ground.*⁶¹ (Carus's italics)

By the use of the expression kindred spirit Carus is here expressing a view point which is very similar to the third criterion of Podro, set out above. The third and final 'Romantic' letter endeavours to summarise the first two and, engaging with his interest and expertise in psychology, provides an overall conclusion regarding the reception of a work of art by the viewer – the kindred spirit. This third letter is supplemented by three short essays on beauty. First, he defines beauty as that which makes us feel the divine essence in nature and the 'perfect interpenetration of reason and nature.'⁶² Secondly he writes on the inducing of particular moods and thirdly on the relationship between mental moods and natural states. Developing the ideas of the first two letters, he emphasises that the work of art is a product of the human creative mind, which translated to landscape painting means that the natural landscape must be 'apprehended and depicted from an aspect that coincides exactly with the inner mood in question' and as this 'meaning is conveyed solely through the depiction of objects, its articulation depends on the right choice of subject'.⁶³ Carus then concludes that the task of landscape painting is to represent 'a certain mood of mental life (meaning)' through the reproduction of a 'corresponding mood of natural life (truth)'.⁶⁴ This is very similar to the approach of Schelling referred to above - the idea of the artist's sensual perception encountering an emanation of the Absolute and then using his or her intellectual intuition to interpret in a work of art that transcendent force. Then the work of art in interacting with the receptive imagination of the viewer endeavours to reveal that transcendence. In these first three letters, I do not sense that Carus is extending the philosophy of Schelling but is expressing the Schellingian concepts in an alternative way which provides a useful perspective on that philosopher's approach to landscape art, and may well have been helpful to other artists of the time, although I have not come across any evidence of this influence other than the known discussions with Friedrich.

Letters four and five are concerned with style and history, largely factual and hence not essential for summary in this thesis and I will now progress to letter number six. This letter, as mentioned above, waxes loquaciously about the beauty and majesty of clouds and emphasises the advantage to the artist of being steeped in scientific knowledge of that which he or she is depicting:

Surely an artist steeped in the knowledge of the wonderful reciprocities of earth and fire and sea and air will speak more powerfully to us through his work; he will more purely and more freely unlock the viewer's soul ... (that the viewer) may understand that the motions of clouds and the form of mountains, the outlines of trees and the waves of the sea, are not random, chance events, but that all this has a higher, indwelling purpose and eternal meaning. For these things are the handiwork of that spirit who says of himself:

I ply the whirring loom of Time
And weave the living robe of God.⁶⁵

This is a very interesting statement as it invokes the question: is the artist who has no scientific knowledge less able to depict landscape in a way that suggests transcendence than one who has scientific knowledge? My own view is that the artist needs to have a feeling for, and love of, nature, but that a detailed knowledge is not nearly so necessary as the ability to convey that inner feeling or sense of the divine through the skill of his or her artistry. Furthermore, scientific knowledge as mentioned earlier always has certain provisionality, as I might suggest through the example of the atmosphere and cloud formation. Over recent years the Meteorological Office staff have developed computer modelling of the atmosphere to a level beyond that which may have been conceived even just 10 years ago let alone at the time of Carus. But even with the knowledge gained from this sophisticated equipment capable of undertaking millions of calculations a second, the behaviour of the atmosphere is still only partially understood with accurate forecasting limited to approximately one week. So, if I re-phrase the question would an artist-meteorologist be able better to portray the divine intelligence behind all creation than the non-scientist artist who nonetheless has an intuitive understanding of that Creative Force? I think the answer to this question can only be: probably not. Certainly we know that Friedrich was opposed to the thought put to him by both Goethe and Carus that he should study Luke Howard's classification of the clouds. His reply was that to 'allow himself to be coerced into such categorizations would entirely undermine the art of landscape painting'.⁶⁶ I believe that Friedrich was exaggerating here to emphasise his disagreement with the proposition – I fail to see how the acquisition of such knowledge would diminish the landscape artist's ability to depict his sensual perception

encountering an emanation of the Absolute. No doubt Blake, who felt that the artist only had need of his imagination, would have been in full agreement with Friedrich.

The theme of letter seven is to enhance the views expressed in letter six emphasising that Carus is not insisting that landscape should have a didactic purpose but that such works should have ‘a new and distinctive effect on the mind of the viewer’.⁶⁷ Following the quoting of a number of poetic descriptions of landscape, Carus then reveals his dislike of the word landscape suggesting that *Erdleben-Bild* or *Erdleben-Bildkunst* (earth-life painting or earth-life art) would be more appropriate. He feels that this expression gives a much better sense that such paintings should suggest a living world, a world populated by people and even suggests that these paintings should always include ‘human figures expressive of life in the midst of nature’.⁶⁸ Whether or not landscape paintings should always include human figures is debateable – Schelling refers to inclusion of visitor or autochthonous (indigenous) people in a landscape, combined in a way such that the ‘unique feelings attendant on our conceptions of such juxtaposition can be elicited’.⁶⁹ To take an example, Friedrich’s *Monk by the Sea* (1809) would lose most of its meaning without the lonely isolated person on the seashore, but on the other hand the empty *Landscape in the Riesengebirge with Mist Rising* (1820-21) is effective in endeavouring to suggest that which lies beyond the veil of mist. Before leaving letter number seven, one further stricture needs comment. Carus suggests that in order to avoid ‘an inner contradiction, earth-life paintings should not contain newly built, sharp edged or freshly painted buildings’⁷⁰. Friedrich seems to follow this suggestion with the exception of *Landscape with Pavilion* (1797), but in Carus’s favour I would say that the suggestion of transcendence is (rarely for Friedrich) not a strong feature of this painting.

In letter number eight, Carus begins with a diatribe against the poor rendering of landscape by the amateur, exacerbated by the lack of attention given to the subject by the Academy. He emphasises the need for the training of both the eye and the hand, as he writes, the eye ‘must be opened to the true and wondrous life of nature, and the hand must be trained to do the soul’s bidding, quickly, easily, and beautifully’.⁷¹ He sees the attainment of these qualities being achieved through the careful observance of shape and form on the one hand and of diversity on the other, and this observance he argues, is rendered easier by a scientific knowledge of the laws on nature. He justifies this approach by comparing favourably a mountain formation drawn by a geologist with that drawn by an experienced artist and he then emphasises that a drawing of any plant or animal will be better when produced by

someone who really knows that animal or plant. The validity of this stricture depends on the meaning ascribed to the word know. If we take the example of a horse, then one who looks after and rides that horse will develop and attain a natural affinity with that animal and will certainly know that animal. The question is whether or not a skilled artist can attain that same knowledge by observation alone; in answering that question I would say that if the resulting painting is going to convey some inner spiritual quality possessed by that animal then the owner/rider will have the advantage. But that owner/rider will also have to be a very competent painter in order to render the result meaningful. So, my argument would be that whilst scientific knowledge of the subject of a painting can be a great advantage, the attainment of a high level of competency in the artist is essential if a landscape painting is to exhibit those qualities of showing the divine essence in natural phenomena.

The remainder of this long letter consists of practical instruction that is necessary for the budding landscape artist in order that he or she may eventually achieve the desired result. Carus concludes:

When the soul is saturated with the inner meaning of all these different forms; when it has clear intimations of the mysterious, divine life of nature; when the hand has taught itself to represent securely, and the eye to see purely and acutely; and when the artist's heart is purely and entirely a consecrated, joyous vessel in which to receive the light from above: then there will infallibly be earth-life paintings, of a new and higher kind, which will uplift the viewer into a higher contemplation of nature. These works will truly deserve to be named mystic and orphic; and earth-life painting will have attained its culmination.⁷²

In the ninth and final letter, written nine years after the first, and returning in style to the rather flowery Romantic mode of expression of the first three letters, Carus refers again to his strong suggestion that the artist needs a scientific knowledge of the laws of nature. However, in this letter he expresses the view that the artist who expresses the numinous through his work is likely to be misunderstood and as he writes 'self-abnegation is the lot of any artist whose heart is in landscape painting, in the higher sense of the term'⁷³. Such an artist would be unable to derive a living from art alone and Carus recommends the development of another activity that could bring in an income, quoting Rousseau who copied music for just that purpose.

Carus closes this letter emphasising that the artist keep his art sacrosanct, quoting the words of Dante:

The highest good
Unlimited, ineffable, doth so speed
To love, as beam to lucid body darts,
Giving as much of ardour as it finds.

The sempiternal effluence streams abroad
Spreading, wherever charity extends.⁷⁴

To conclude this section on Carus, the most important and original contribution to the philosophy of art is his emphasis on the view that the artist really needs a scientific knowledge of the laws of nature if he or she is to produce earth-land paintings that depict his or her sensual perception encountering an emanation of the absolute. My view, as argued above, is that while this knowledge may well help the artist, for most this is an unattainable level of perfection – it is even more important that the artist has a sensitivity or feeling for nature that enables the suggestion of the divine essence to be intimated within the earth-life painting. Apart from this scientific emphasis the other themes of Carus's letters reflect the philosophy of Schelling but expressed in his own language which is, in itself, a valuable contribution to scholarship at that time.

At the time of their publication (1831) the *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* were not particularly well received, or, perhaps, understood. Bättschmann refers to the favourable reception by the theologian and art critique Karl Grüneisen (1802-1878), but even he felt that Carus had been unduly dismissive of the great historical landscapes.⁷⁵ I believe that if Carus had not felt the need to introduce the alternative (more scientific) name for landscape he would have been better received, because it is the use of this term which seems to detract from the important message of the Letters. The final ignominy came with the publication in 1848 of a caricature by Moritz von Schwind (1804-71) showing anthropomorphic trees and vegetation; thereafter earth-life as a concept seems to have been buried.⁷⁶ Carus's other publications on psychology and Goethe seem to have been well received, so perhaps it is because Carus was an amateur painter that his letters on the philosophy of landscape art were not well received. Bättschmann points out that *Psyche* (1846) which mediates between 'Schelling's world soul theory and the psychoanalysis of Freud' enabled Carus to be one of the precursors of depth psychology.⁷⁷

My concluding view is that Carus deserved (and still deserves) recognition of his opinions on the expression of the divine through landscape art; it is to be regretted that the only known influence that he had on art of the time is on that of Caspar David Friedrich's landscapes. Through the latter's friendship with Runge, it is possible that Runge was also aware of the work of Carus, but if so, then Runge was not sufficiently influenced to include appropriate references in his own works.

Summary

Chapters One and Two represent a very short summary of the currency of thoughts on aesthetics just before and during the period when Samuel Palmer and C.D. Friedrich were practising their art. Art at this time was beginning to be free from some of the conventions of the past, with the break with the Academy being led by *inter alia* William Blake whose influence on Palmer will be described elsewhere. Some artists were using this freedom to produce work that was free from history and produce works that ranged from the political, the moral, and the spiritual to those which were required to produce records for the future (e.g. portraits). Artists being considered in this thesis such as Palmer, Runge and Friedrich endeavoured to produce works which in the words of Schelling were 'united or allied with the eternal concept of his own essence in God'.

Following the acceptance of Descartes' postulation that philosophy should be separated from theology, Baumgarten established the discipline of aesthetics and a role for art. Blake (in England) and Kant (in Germany) then developed this discipline with Kant's views being the historically more influential. Blake was emphatic that for the artist imagination was of supreme importance – he did not decry scientific endeavour but it was not for the artist. Kant separated an approach to the beautiful from that to be adopted to the two types of sublime. Essentially he was concerned with the beautiful and sublime in nature rather than in created art, but concluded that fine art is a product which must be art and not nature, but 'nevertheless must be clothed, *with the aspect* of nature', and which must appear to be 'uncontrived, natural and effortless' and to be totally original; it must therefore be the product of genius.

Schiller identified two problems with the Kantian approach: its subjectivism and the rigid split between sensibility and rationality. He endeavoured to solve these problems by postulating a play-drive which represented the free interplay between the rational mind and the sensual mind. However, whilst this was a helpful concept, it was not totally convincing with still too great a separation between art and reality, sensuality and reason, to enable art fully to describe truth, and further developments were left to Hegel and Schelling. Both Hegel and Schelling had an existentialist approach and elevated the role of the artist to express the transcendental. Hegel expressed this as the artist continuing the creative force of the Absolute and through his or her involvement with that force, to portray the development of that force – in other words part of the self-revelation of God. Whereas Hegel saw the role of art at that time changing owing to the ability to express theology in words, Schelling saw a continuing role for art which would express the infinite through the finite. Finally in an examination of the art theory of Runge, and the letters of Carus, there is almost a reiteration of the existentialist philosophy of Schelling, but expressed in terms that were designed for the art student with an emphasis away from figuration towards non-homocentric Christian landscape art, or as Carus expressed it earth-life painting.

With Hegel, Schelling, Runge and Carus the art with which they have been concerned would fit almost exclusively into category three of the Podro theory of art (the artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art which may suggest a transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted), and in tracing these philosophers and artists there has been a tendency to move from category one (art reveals through the skill of the artist some aspect of a subject that would not be immediately apparent) through to category three.

But the fundamental question that remains to be answered is that of whether or not the genius artist is able to express the truth about the Ultimate Reality. A concept of the Absolute will always involve an element of faith, but I think it can be said that an artist who achieves the goals set by Schelling, Runge and Carus will enable the receptive viewer to glimpse a revelation of that Ultimate Reality.

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- ¹ White, A. *Schelling: An Introduction to the System of Freedom* New Haven Yale University Press 1983 p. 8.
- ² Ibid. p. 34.
- ³ Ibid, quoting Schelling. p. 69.
- ⁴ Vigus, J. quoting Robinson p. 125.
- ⁵ Ibid. pp.125-6.
- ⁶ Whilst this is my own interpretation of both Schelling and Robinson, it is also suggestive of the modern idea that there is a ‘Unifying Theory of Everything’ – a theory which scientists have sought throughout the past 100 years.
- ⁷ Schelling, F.W.J. . *The Philosophy of Art* (Edited and translated by Douglas W. Scott) Minneapolis University of Minneapolis Press 1989 page 85. (This work was published after Schelling’s death by his son.)
- ⁸ Hammermeister, K. *The German Aesthetic Tradition* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2002, page 79.
- ⁹ Schelling, F.W.J. p.19.
- ¹⁰ Hammermeister quoting Schelling *System of Transcendental Idealism* Hamburg Meiner 1992, p 475.
- ¹¹ Reardon, B.M.G. *Religion in an Age of Romanticism* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1985 (reprinted 2010) page 276, note 58.
- ¹² Schelling, F.W.J. *The Philosophy of Art* Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press 1989 p xi.
- ¹³ For a summary of the meaning and origin of Neo-Platonism see Honderich, T. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Oxford Oxford University Press 2005 (New edition) page 648b.
- ¹⁴ Hammermeister p. 81.
- ¹⁵ Schelling p. 84.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 107ff.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. p. 116.
- ¹⁸ For a detailed article on this theme see: Gillian More writing in the *Guardian* 3rd July, 2010.
- ¹⁹ Schelling p. 121. It should be noted that ‘potence’ is Douglas Scott’s translation of the German Potenz which as Vigus writes preserves but does not choose between its connotations of ‘potential, exponential and power’. Vigus continues ‘According to Schelling, the absolute is an indivisible essence. All specific, distinct phenomena are thus to be conceived not as component parts, but as potential manifestations of the one absolute. Schelling sometimes employs the image of emanation, developed by the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, to conceive this emergence of particularity from the one, undifferentiated absolute. Viewed in relation to the absolute, then, any particular phenomenon is something that is posited as a potency.’ (Vigus, J. *Essays on Kant, Schelling and German Aesthetics* by Henry Crabb Robinson London Modern Humanities Research Association 2010 p.64-5.)
- ²⁰ The link with light here is that as an electron moves from one energy level to another, light in the form of a photon is emitted or absorbed. For a detailed discussion of this see any book on modern quantum mechanics or, for an approach designed for the general reader see Miles, G *Science and Religious Experience* Eastbourne (Sussex) Sussex Academic Press 2007 p. 84ff.
- ²¹ Schelling p121.
- ²² Ibid. p. 127.
- ²³ Ibid..p. 109.
- ²⁴ Ibid. p. 137.
- ²⁵ Ibid. p. 138.
- ²⁶ Ibid. p. 143.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p. 144.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 144.
- ²⁹ Ibid. p. 144-5.
- ³⁰ See Calumny of Apelles (Botticelli) – Google images, and various web-based articles including a reprint of the description of the original painting.
- ³¹ Hofmann, W. *Caspar David Friedrich* London Thames and Hudson 2000 (first English edition) p 101,102 and 286. (Quotation to be found on page 286).
- ³² Schelling p. 151.
- ³³ Ibid. p. 151.
- ³⁴ Ibid. p. 151.
- ³⁵ Ibid. p. 162.
- ³⁶ Ibid. p. 185.
- ³⁷ Ibid. p. 187.
- ³⁸ Clark p. 7.
- ³⁹ Bisanz, R.M. *German Romanticism and Philipp Otto Runge - A Study in nineteenth century art theory and iconography* Illinois Northern Illinois University Press 1970.
- Vaughan, W. *German Romantic Painting* New haven and London Yale University Press 1982.

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- Rosenblum, R. *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* New York Harper and Row 1975.
- ⁴⁰ Bisanz p. 126.
- ⁴¹ Ibid p. 126.
- ⁴² In his practice Runge only partially achieved this change as will be discussed in a later chapter.
- ⁴³ Bisanz quoting Runge p. 52-3
- ⁴⁴ Vaughan p. 41-3.
- ⁴⁵ Bisanz quoting Runge p. 49.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid quoting Runge p. 48.
- ⁴⁷ Bowden, John *Who's Who in Theology* London SCM Press 1992 p 96.
- ⁴⁸ Bisanz quoting Runge p. 49.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. p.49.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid. quoting Runge p. 48.
- ⁵¹ Carus, C.G. *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* (Introduction by Oskar Bätschmann) Los Angeles Getty Publications 2002.
- ⁵² Ibid. p.1. Bätschmann quoting from *Lebenserinnerungen und Denkwürdigkeiten* Leipzig Brockhaus 1865-66.
- ⁵³ Ibid. p.1.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. p.3.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid. p.23 Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) was a geographer and explorer, who following his travel in South America published *Ansichten der Natur* (Views of Nature) (1808) which influenced Carus. The two eventually met in Dresden in 1826. (See Carus p.11.)
- ⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 1-47.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid. p.36
- ⁵⁸ The development of the periodic table was begun by Antoine Lavoisier (1743-94) in 1789 and 'completed' with the known elements of that time by Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907) in 1869. See Royal Society of Chemists website: <http://www.rsc.org/periodic-table/history/about>
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. p.113.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid. p .85.
- ⁶¹ Ibid. p .86.
- ⁶² Ibid. p. 92.
- ⁶³ Ibid. pp. 92-98.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid. p.95.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid. p.114-5.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. p 36.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. p.117.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid. p.119.
- ⁶⁹ Schelling, F. p. 146.
- ⁷⁰ Carus, C. p. 119.
- ⁷¹ Ibid. p. 125.
- ⁷² Ibid. p. 131.
- ⁷³ Ibid. p. 134.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 136.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 45.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 47 – Von Schwind was later to become professor at the Munich Academy.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid. p 51.

Chapter Three

A Qualitative Analysis of the Cultural Influences at Play between German-speaking and British People during the Romantic Period which in turn have Influenced the Artists under Consideration

- Introduction
- The Enlightenment and Culture
- Coleridge and Robinson
- The Influence of Carlyle
- Politics, Revolution and Nationalism
- Theological and Ecclesiological Considerations.
- In Summary

Introduction

The previous chapters considered the development of aesthetics to the extent that it provided the philosophical groundwork for the artists under investigation in this thesis. This development assisted in enabling artists of the Romantic period to produce works which pointed toward the Transcendent. In later chapters examining the works of Blake, Palmer, Runge and Friedrich it will be seen that there is a noteworthy similarity between say Blake's *Ruth's parting from Naomi* (1803) and Runge's studies for *Tageszeiten* and also between Palmer's *Coming from Evening Church* (1820) and Friedrich's *The Summerhouse* (1818) which, in turn suggests a cross-fertilisation of ideas between Britain and Germany. This is not to say that there will be the identification of particular evidence of derivation in the iconography of these artists, but I will be arguing that they

will have been influenced by the *Zeitgeist* which was created by the philosophy of Kant and Schelling, the latter having written *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800).¹ As René Wellek (1903-1996) emphasises, ‘Schelling’s general aesthetics ... were most influential not only in but even outside of Germany – directly for Coleridge and Cousin, indirectly for Emerson and others.’² This *Zeitgeist* has been expressed by Wellek in terms that understand the use of the imagination, symbol, myth and organic nature as part of the great endeavour ‘to overcome the split between the subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious. This is the central creed of the great Romantic poets in England, Germany and France’.³

There have been studies in the past which endeavour to explain how this influence between these nations came about, but most of these were related to the art of literature and discipline of literary criticism. These studies would include the long established *German Influence in the English Romantic Period* (1926) by F.W. Stokoe (b. 1882) and *The History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950* (1955) and *Confrontations* (1965) by René Wellek as well as more recent books by Rosemary Ashton and James Engell.⁴ Within the art-historical discipline, Vaughan’s re-written PhD thesis *German Romanticism and English Art* (1979) covers some of this ground although mainly concerned with a slightly later period and gives considerable attention to the Nazarenes.⁵ In addition a symposium held at Yale University in 1970 *Correlations between German and Non-German Art in the Nineteenth Century* examined these issues with Rosenblum’s paper mainly concerned with the comparison between Blake and Asmus Carstens (1754-1798) and with Victor Miesel’s paper on Runge and Friedrich being of particular interest. Whilst these two sources were written from the art-historical perspective, Morris Eaves has pointed out in his preface to *The Counter Arts Conspiracy* (1992), that traditionally art historians have not fully engaged with the cultural, political and social histories of their times.⁶ Two more recent books *The German Genius* by Peter Watson and *Noble Endeavours* by Miranda Seymour provide a history of Germany during the period 1740 to the present day and a description of the relations between Germany and England from 1613 to the present day respectively, but give scant attention to the artists of the Romantic period.⁷ Finally in this identification of background material, I would refer to the ecclesiological

studies by Hans Küng, and J.H. Moorman and especially the works on and by Schleiermacher.⁸ Much useful background information has been provided in all these sources which certainly engage with the cultural, political and social histories of their times and have proved helpful to this study. I have not engaged with the Journals and Reviews contemporary with the period under consideration for two reasons. First, they have been examined by commentators such as Wellek and Stokoe and, secondly, as Stokoe indicates: ‘The reviews, of German works at least, are for the most part expressions of opinion based neither on any particular knowledge of the subject nor on any well-defined standard of criticism ...’⁹

In this chapter, while I will not be able to cover all the deficiencies identified by Eaves, I will show how the transmission of philosophical, literary and religious ideas between the German and English speaking people has produced a discernible influence on the art-historical cultures of those two countries. In particular that influence has shown itself particularly in the iconography of those artists who endeavoured to produce works that pointed towards the transcendental.

At the outset, a definition of influence is required and I cannot improve on that provided by Stokoe: ‘Influence is a modification of consciousness by action from without; and such action, to become effective, must have had the way prepared for it by previous tendencies in the consciousness concerned’.¹⁰ Although the nature of this study is qualitative an endeavour will be made to identify the people and their ideas that have had influence over those artists who have attempted in their works to point towards the transcendental.

The Enlightenment and Culture

During the period under consideration in this thesis, 1780 – 1880, philosophers, writers and artists in Britain and Germany were working under the influence of the cultural revolution known as the Enlightenment. This could be said to have begun with René Descartes in France and with John Locke in Britain. Isaac Newton in England and

Gottfried Leibnitz in Germany were somewhat later and very influential figures. One of the best definitions of the Enlightenment is that of Kant who wrote that the ‘Enlightenment was the emergence of human beings from a tutelage to which they had voluntarily acceded’: ‘tutelage is the inability to make use of one’s understanding without being guided by another. *Sapere aude!* Have courage to make use of your own understanding! That is the slogan of the Enlightenment’.¹¹ This slogan, writes Hans Küng was addressed particularly to the ‘church authorities of all confessions’ who had been keen to keep to the superstitions, prejudices and dogmatics of the medieval period.¹² This cultural change, together with increasing use of the vernacular in church services as well as the gradual increase in the abilities of the bulk of the populations to read, led to profound changes in the churches and the beginning of enculturation or even, as some might suggest, the secularisation of the church. The practical effect of these changes was the development of textual and contextual analysis of the scriptures – a process known as historical-critical analysis – which continued as the main approach to biblical hermeneutics until the end of the twentieth century when the approach was broadened to include post-modern reader-response criticism.¹³

Apart from Newton’s forays into alchemy and an endeavour to date the universe from the Bible, this polymath was very much concerned with the development of physics, and pure and applied mathematics, establishing four fundamental principles of applied mathematics which still to this day underlie the basis of much engineering development. It is now known that his mathematics can only be applied within certain limits, but this does not mean that his work has been superseded.¹⁴ In addition, Newton developed the branch of mathematics known as the differential and integral calculus – it should be noted that Leibnitz also, and independently, developed the calculus. As one of the foremost thinkers during the Enlightenment in England, Newton’s emphasis was always on reason – every argument had to be firmly rooted in logic. This emphasis rather eclipsed his religious affinities and his belief in the Bible.¹⁵ William Blake in his philosophy was concerned to provide a counterbalance to this emphasis on reason; hence the importance he attached to the highlighting of the use of the imagination in both his written and visual work and would therefore have had a slightly greater affinity with the views of Leibnitz.

Leibnitz, was one of the foremost thinkers in Germany and was much more diverse than Newton in the way in which he developed his philosophy.¹⁶ Not only was he a great mathematician but he also embraced the subjects of philology, theology, medicine and politics to mention just four of the attributes that would enable us to describe him as one of the most significant polymaths of the eighteenth century. This much broader approach to thought within the period of Enlightenment meant that reason was not so predominant in mainland Europe in comparison with the attitude in England. Philology, for example, might be considered an unusual subject for one who is primarily known for his original work in mathematics – I highlight this interest because it has a significant bearing on Enlightenment thought in Germany. To understand this, it needs to be remembered that Germany in the eighteenth century consisted of a large number (some two hundred) separate states or electorates with a language which could be said to be common and German, but which in practice consisted of very many dialectical and linguistic variations. Leibnitz was keen to bring some conformity to this diversity to ensure that thoughts expressed in one part of the country could be fully understood in another, and indeed could be translated into other established languages.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Hans Sachs (1494-1576) had ‘taken the rough ores of the German dialects and pounded them into a language of beauty and strength’.¹⁷ During the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), development of the language languished but subsequently with the publication of *Nova Methodus* (1667) and *On the practice and improvement of the German language* (1697) by Leibnitz, the language to a greater extent was standardised. In addition, during this period interest in German thought burgeoned throughout Europe, including England.¹⁸ Furthermore, in an essay entitled *The Leibnitzian conception of sensation*, Jeffrey Barnouw argues that Leibnitz gives a richer form to Aesthetics than that defined by Baumgarten.¹⁹ While a detailed discussion of Leibnitz’s alternative methodology to the Cartesian approach to the thought process is beyond the scope of this study, for a full discussion of the subject, reference should be made to the article by Anne Wilson in the *Philosopher’s Annual No. 24* (2002) the details of which are given in endnote nineteen.

Mention is only made of Leibnitz's discussion of the thought process and sensation because it is consistent with the German approach to the Enlightenment.

In the German speaking world the Enlightenment was known as the *Aufklärung* and unlike the situation in Europe generally and in Britain in particular, the *Aufklärung*

attached less importance to deductive Reason, and more importance to 'instinct', sentiment, and sensual impressions. The empirical to them was as significant as the rationalistic: *Gemüt* (which is but approximately equivalent to our term 'Soul') became for them (the German speaking people) as sacred a word as 'Reason' became for the western rationalists. Romanticism, although it originated in England, was a plant that prospered lavishly in German soil.²⁰

The reason for this more diverse approach to the Enlightenment may be explained by the diversity of the many German states and with the states, the multiplicity of universities, most of which were very conservative in their approach and based on the core subject of theology. After the death of Leibnitz, two figures came to dominate philosophical and literary thought in Germany; they were Kant and Schiller both of whom have featured strongly in Chapter One of this thesis on philosophical development.²¹ As discussed previously, during this period Idealism (the word was first used by Leibnitz) came to the fore, with its emphasis that Materialism should be rejected in favour of a spiritual approach to life.²² Implicit within German idealism was Transcendentalism, defined as 'the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining a scientific knowledge of an order of existence *transcending* the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience'.²³

In Britain, the Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), although he was rather eclipsed by Locke, Burke, and Hume (1711-1776), was nevertheless influential and relevant with regard to artistic and cultural exchange between Britain and Europe. He lived for much of his life in the Netherlands, and became influential in the world of artistic endeavour when, as a philosopher, he published in 1711, *Characteristicks of Man, Manners, Opinions, Times*, a book which according to Nicholson became the 'manual of the age'.²⁴

Leibnitz, as well as a number of other German philosophers including Herder and Lessing, was much influenced by this work which was translated into German.²⁵ As Nicholson quotes, ‘The sum of Philosophy’, wrote Shaftesbury ‘is to learn what is just in Society and beautiful in Nature, and the Order of the World ...’²⁶ Vaughan indicates in *German Romanticism and English Art* (1979) that Burke as well as Diderot and Reynolds were strongly influenced by Shaftesbury in their explorations of the phenomenological problems of taste and sensibility.²⁷ Drawing on the work of Shaftesbury, Burke, in his work *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) established a line of thought in aesthetics that would be illustrated by the *Sturm und Drang* writers, and then be further developed (as shown in my earlier chapter one) by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Judgement* (1790).

Coleridge and Robinson

The fundamental question that must still be answered is: How were these important German works brought to Britain? The answer here lies with Henry Crabb Robinson and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Robinson was a friend both of William Blake and Charles Anders (1780-1846) (a trader who travelled frequently between Germany and Britain) and studied for a number of years in Germany.²⁸ As pointed out on the website provided by the Dr Williams’s Centre for Dissenting Studies at Queen Mary University of London:

Though best known for his interactions with most of the leading literary figures of his day, Robinson was an important writer and thinker in his own right, especially in the dissemination of German thought in England. Between 1800 and 1805, he spent three years as a student at the University of Jena, writing pioneering articles on Kant, Schelling, and the rapidly developing field of aesthetics for publication in London. Though he had briefly experimented with Godwinian scepticism in the 1790s, after his return from Germany in 1805 he identified himself as a ‘rational dissenter’, worshipping among the Unitarians.²⁹

Robinson, having spent time at Jena would have been very aware of the German approach to the Enlightenment and in his discussions with Blake, William Wordsworth

(1770-1850) and Coleridge (who himself was a visitor to parts of Germany) no doubt the emphasis of the *Aufklärung* on the use of the imagination would have struck a chord. As Vaughan emphasises, Crabb Robinson viewed Blake's works as more Germanic than English which accounts for Robinson writing about Blake in a German periodical – *Vaterländisches Museum* II, Heft I, p.108. – where the English man of letters compares the transcendental element in Blake with Novalis's 'transcendentalization of the everyday object.'³⁰ Vaughan then adds: 'If Robinson was no doubt referring here principally to the transcendental aspects of German Romanticism, he was also an agent in forging contacts between Flaxman, Blake and Palmer and certain German artists and connoisseurs interested in medievalism'.³¹ Furthermore it is known that Robinson spent time with Palmer and purchased at least one of Palmer's paintings.³²

Coleridge, regarded by some as a great philosopher and critic comparable with Longinus, certainly adopted the terminology of the German Idealists for 'they use the same dialectical method as he, the same epistemology and the same critical vocabulary.'³³ Although there appears to be only one known really long, significant visit to Germany when, possibly to avoid arrest in England as dissenting radical writers, Coleridge travelled there with Dorothy and William Wordsworth in 1798-9, where they became enthusiastic supporters of the *Aufklärung*.³⁴ Whilst studying at the university in Göttingen, Coleridge spent time re-defining an approach to the sublime and thoroughly immersed himself in German life, spending his leisure time enjoying the pleasures of skating about which he corresponded in glowing terms to the Wordsworths.³⁵ During this period he gained 'a permanent bent for German philosophy and criticism, and he was a means of passing this into the current of English thought and taste.'³⁶ He was obviously smitten by the culture; for example, he writes on language that:

It is hardly possible to conceive a language more perfect than the Greek. If you compare it with modern European tongues, in the points of the position and relative bearing of the vowels and consonants on each other, and of the variety of terminations, it is incalculably before all in the former particulars, and only equalled in the last by German.³⁷

Furthermore, he was very confident in expressing his opinion about the works of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller. For example, he writes ‘Goethe does not, nor ever will, command the mind of the common people of Germany as Schiller does’, of whom he opines:

Schiller as author of the “Robbers” – a piece which must not be considered with reference to Shakespeare, but as a work of the mere material sublime, and in that line is undoubtedly very powerful indeed. It is quite genuine, and deeply imbued with the soul of Schiller.³⁸

His enthusiasm for Schiller is then emphasised as he compares the German writer’s later and greatest work *Wallenstein* with the historical plays of Shakespeare. He does however admit that in his ballads and lighter lyrics Goethe is the master – ‘it is impossible to praise him too highly in this respect’.³⁹ With the exception of Schiller’s *Piccolomini* and *Wallenstein’s Tod*, Stokoe is rather dismissive of Coleridge’s ability to translate the German language into English and also expresses the view that there is little evidence to suggest a real influence of German poetry that is discernible in the writing of the English poet.⁴⁰ Aston, on the other hand, gives greater credence to the ability of Coleridge to bring German culture to England although admitting that his language skills were poor.⁴¹ She points out that Robert Southey (1774-1843) saw the influence of German sublimity in *The Ancient Mariner* and she is more generous in according Coleridge the credit of introducing German philosophy and literature to a sometime hostile English audience.⁴² While both Stokoe and Ashton acknowledge some influence of Crabb Robinson in assisting Coleridge with his understanding of both the German language and the philosophy of Kant, recent research by James Vigus of the Dr Williams Centre has emphasised the very significant contribution of Robinson.⁴³ Nevertheless, Robinson had considerable admiration for Coleridge describing him as ‘the only living poet of acknowledged genius who is also a good German Scholar’.⁴⁴

Although Stokoe indicates that there is little evidence for direct influence of German literature in the works of Coleridge, I consider that this is of little importance; the importance and undoubted enthusiasm which Coleridge had for the German philosophy, enabled him, I believe, to enthuse those around him including Robinson, Blake and John

Flaxman (1755-1826) with an ability to embrace that philosophy in their creative work. Another very important contact with regard to the promulgation of German literature and art in Britain was Charles Anders who was known to John Linnell (1792-1882), Palmer's father in law, and to whom Linnell introduced Palmer in 1824. Anders was a friend of August Schlegel and Tieck and hence imbued with the spirit of German Idealism and Romanticism with his home in London becoming a mecca for those with a penchant for German art. It was on one of these occasions that the young Palmer probably 'met Götzenberger, a pupil of Peter Cornelius, a leading figure among the Nazarenes'.⁴⁵ (The Nazarenes, whose iconography reflects the medieval period and about whom I write in a later chapter, were probably inspired by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798) who referred to the concept of artistic medievalism some ten years before the establishment of that movement.⁴⁶)

The Influence of Carlyle

It is interesting to note that aesthetics and idealism were not greatly considered by the prominent British philosophers of the period (for example George Berkeley (1685-1753), Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-73)) who continued to maintain the primacy of reason. It was very much left to men of letters and artists who in their separate ways promoted this branch of philosophy. In this connection the final figure to be mentioned and one of the most significant is Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Although he studied mathematics, theology and the law, he had an antipathy towards the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and 'fought against it from his first articles in the *Edinburgh Review* to the last lines of his old age'.⁴⁷ According to Wellek, Carlyle was the first British writer to use the terms 'a romantic', a 'Romanticist' and 'Romanticism' although such terms had been in use in mainland Europe since the 1827.⁴⁸ Carlyle was captivated by German literature, translating a number of German romances and eventually writing a history of German literature. The origin of a number of Carlyle's phrases has been traced to Goethe, Novalis, Schiller, Fichte and Jean Paul (1763-1825).⁴⁹ He became known in Britain as the *vox Germanica* of London, exhibiting 'a Germanic thoroughness and a Germanic interest in history'.⁵⁰ Perhaps, though, his most well-

known, greatest and certainly longest work is the hagiographic biography of Frederick II (1858-65) entitled *History of Friedrich II of Prussia called Frederick the Great*.⁵¹ Carlyle was not, perhaps, primarily a historian, being much more a man of letters. His early, and maybe, problematical study of Christianity led to a belief that saw God's presence in all things rather than a God who could be found only through revelation and the scriptures. This approach accorded well with the German transcendental Romanticism and to a ready appreciation of the writings of Goethe and, possibly, Schelling. He set out his concept of the German 'view of the world as nothing but the vesture of the divine'.⁵² As Wellek emphasises, his deepest roots were in the Reformation and as a Christian he was very much at the puritan end of the spectrum, a characteristic he shared with Caspar David Friedrich.⁵³ As John Clive points out, Carlyle's view of history was poetical rather than purely factual and, indeed his histories could almost rather be regarded as historical novels.⁵⁴

The way in which Carlyle promoted the *Aufklärung* was through his many translations of the works of the German philosophers and writers and through his correspondence. It is known that he lived in London and could have met Palmer and Robinson and, as a young man, Blake, but the only definite correspondence is with Robinson and Emerson who regarded Carlyle 'as the true inventor of the stereoscope', referring to the latter's style of writing when describing simultaneous events.⁵⁵ It is obvious from the correspondence, that Carlyle was a close friend of Coleridge and of Henry Crabb Robinson who was involved in helping him with his research.⁵⁶ In summarising Carlyle's contribution to the spread of German literature, Ashton writes :

Most of the increasing number of interested readers of German literature and philosophy declared their interest to have begun by reading Carlyle's works, though Coleridge, too, partly through what was Coleridgean in Carlyle, had his share of influence on the awareness of the Victorians of German culture.⁵⁷

Other British writers who were influential in translating German literature and promoting German culture included William Taylor, G.Lewis (a protégé of Carlyle) and John Black but they did not appear to be involved in the Blake, Robinson, Palmer circle of friends.⁵⁸

To summarise this section on the Enlightenment in Britain and Germany, it is emphasised that the approach of the two countries was quite different, with Germany adopting a much more open attitude with some prominence being given to the use of the imagination, whilst in Britain the preference was always to be for reason and logic to be predominant. The two different approaches were brought together by three men of letters – Henry Crabb Robinson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle – whose translations of the works of the German writers enabled the *Aufklärung* to be accessible to the artists of Britain who in their works endeavoured to point to the transcendental. Of the three, Henry Crabb Robinson was particularly influential on Blake and Palmer and, indeed on Coleridge whom he helped in his understanding of Kant.⁵⁹

Politics, Revolution and Nationalism

Blake, Palmer and Social Reform

On first sight the political environment of Britain and Germany seems to be of little importance to those painters who in their iconography were striving to point towards the transcendental. However, possibly owing to the different approaches to the Enlightenment, there was a marked difference between the situation in Britain and that on the mainland of Europe. In Britain, revolution was always kept at bay (although, at times it was of particular concern) with the two main Acts of Reform and lessening of the restrictions against Nonconformists and Dissidents acting as ameliorating changes in circumstances. In addition, the Industrial Revolution, the move of the large work force from the land to the towns and the formation of unions in support of the labouring classes all had permanent effects on the way of life in Britain.⁶⁰ However, apart from the well-known Peterloo massacre at St. Mary's Fields Manchester (1819) and Tolpuddle martyrs (Dorset) (1834), minor incidents such as the burning of hay ricks and damage to weaving machinery by the Luddites, revolutionary tendencies were generally kept under control. This was almost certainly by the combination of the exercise of a natural pragmatism and

a rational approach to the management of community politics, combined with repression as evidenced by the slaughter at St.Mary's Fields Manchester.

Both Blake and Palmer were affected by these changes in very different ways. Blake was a prominent dissident, being for a time a supporter of the religion of New Jerusalem founded by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Palmer was 'high' Church and very conservative in his outlook prompting him into an ill-fated attempt to support his Tory candidate for election to Parliament, by writing a pamphlet in which, in intemperate terms, he denounced those wishing for change.⁶¹ Palmer's resistance to change particularly in the farming world is highlighted by Vaughan:

Like many others of his persuasion, he (Palmer) felt the need to counter (these forces of progress) with a vigorous defence of the past. His motives were as much social as artistic. He felt deep concern for the condition of the poor, and believed they had been better treated in traditional society than in the modern world of laissez-faire economics. As he said in a letter of 1829: I ... as I love our fine British peasantry, think best of the old high Tories, because they gave most liberty to the poor, and were not morose, sullen and bloodthirsty like the Whigs, liberty jacks and dissenters.⁶²

This is a false view of the life of the labourer; although Palmer expresses the nobility of the labourer in his early iconography, those early works are much more effective in endeavouring to show that which may lie beyond the veil than in highlighting the plight of the labourer. As John Harvey writes 'The natural world was (for Palmer) like a transparent curtain through which vaguely, we might perceive the greater splendour of the heavenly or supernatural world.'⁶³ The reality was that following the beginning of the Enclosure Acts in 1702, peasant farmers previously in control of their own destiny, were forced either to become labourers working on the land or to migrate to the towns, where they would be welcomed by factory owners who saw them as cheap labour. The continuing Enclosure Acts, far from giving liberty to the poor, took away their freedom to earn a living from the land. Whether as a labouring farmhand or as a factory worker, life was extremely harsh, and there was little machinery to assist with the heavy manual work.⁶⁴ Whilst the hours of work in agriculture were considerably less than in the factories, the farm labourer had a very hard physical working life, working with heavy

horses and with heavy loads to lift – 100 kilogram loads being common - and with little opportunity to take shelter in bad weather . Even though the hours of work in the countryside were shorter, many chose to move to the towns and factories. Vaughan contrasts Palmer’s attitude with that of the concept of the ‘noble savage’ introduced by one of the philosophers considered to have initiated Romanticism – Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).⁶⁵

Mainland Europe

On the mainland of Europe, the atmosphere was quite different. Whereas in Britain scientific development and the emphasis on rationality had helped to maintain control over the liberating forces of the Enlightenment, on the Continent the much more open approach and the importance given to social idealism and the radical ideas introduced by Rousseau led to the unleashing of the forces of social unrest, particularly in France where those forces culminated in the French Revolution (1787-1799). L. Eitner discusses these differences in cultural policies for the arts in European countries, noting (in 1971) that:

In the arts, this process [of reform] can be followed in the progressive radicalisation of two main strands of thought, both of which had their roots in the philosophy of the Enlightenment: naturalism and idealism, the scientific and the ethical components of this philosophy, which were represented in the arts by the advocates of realism on the one hand and those of classicism on the other. What caused them to become revolutionary was their gradual dissociation from the rational framework of social function and their elevation to the level of absolutes.⁶⁶

This different attitude then gave rise in France to the revolutionary uprising, the beginning of which was the subject of a work by Jacques-Louis David (1748 -1825) with his painting of the *Oath of the Tennis Court* (1791) , and in Germany to the first of the so-called Coalition Wars when Prussia joined forces with Austria in endeavouring to contain the expansionist Revolutionary France. The many battles between France and the German states had a profoundly depressing effect on Caspar David Friedrich whose painting *Tombs of Ancient Heroes* (1812) is both a political statement as well as being a

painting with transcendent qualities. The picture shows two French chasseurs contemplating the entrance to a deep cave with a massive rock at the entrance – I would suggest that the rock could be a reference to the empty tomb (for example, as referred to in Luke, Chapter 24) – and perhaps wondering whether or not they should proceed further into the deep dark space. Friedrich is suggesting a resurrection of the German nation following the defeat of Napoleon I. Hofmann considers that ‘the finality of the place is like a magic spell weighing down on both the Germans and the French: on both the fallen warriors in their coffins and the two living dead at the cave entrance, who gaze at a sarcophagus as if it was meant for them’.⁶⁷ Both Hofmann and the commentator Axel Börsch-Supan highlight the role of the lifeless snake in the colours of the French tricolour which is wrapped around the gravestone marked with the name of the ancient hero of Germania - Arminius (18 or 17 BCE to 21 CE and also known as Herman or Armin) who defeated a Roman army at the battle of Teutoberg Forest in 9 CE.⁶⁸ Börsch-Supan also supports the view that possibly Friedrich was alluding to the tomb of Christ, but Hofmann points out that ‘in the final analysis the painter gives nature the decisive power over human destinies: ‘Arminius does not repel the invaders, they are swallowed by Nature (Helmut Leppien).’⁶⁹

Metaphysics was closely aligned within the nationalistic paintings of both Runge and Friedrich. As Miesel points out:

Both men thought in terms of a love of God and a love of fatherland which at times were closely related. Each was attached to the then popular notion of a Nordic-Germanic-Celtic cultural identity, with Runge going so far as to interpret Ossian ‘the Homer of the North’ as a complement to the Bible, a beautifully Nordic vision of salvation in nature (in contradistinction that is, to the anthropocentric emphasis found in the Scriptures). Thus it came about that Runge and Friedrich made pictures which were patriotic, but patriotic in a way which made these pictures revealing images of what may be called ‘romantic nationalism’.⁷⁰

Typical paintings by Runge of this type would be the Fatherland sketches – *Condition of the Fatherland, Distress of the Fatherland* (1809-10), whilst Friedrich demonstrated his nationalism through paintings such as the above mentioned *Tombs of Ancient Heroes* and

The Chasseur in the Woods (1814). All these paintings have in addition to their Germanic nationalistic content, a quality that points towards the transcendent – the quality that Meisel refers to as romantic nationalism.

The position in Britain

Whilst, as the above illustration demonstrates, artists in Germany and France were actively involved in support of their national identities, in Britain the situation was that as there was no immediate danger of either an invasion or wide scale revolution there was no particular requirement for British artists to produce works of a nationalistic nature. In Britain the significant debates centred on the ramifications of the beginning of the industrial revolution and the morality of slavery. Artists were involved in these matters and there are many paintings of Samuel Palmer which emphasise the need to maintain the status quo in the countryside, for example, *Oxen Ploughing at Sunset* (undated but possibly a late work) with regard to the resistance to change in the countryside, and the drawings of Blake railing against the practice of slavery, for example, Blake's drawings for Stedman's *Expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796).⁷¹ William Wilberforce (1759-1833) was almost an exact contemporary of Blake and, with the support mainly of the Quakers, worked from 1788 until 1807 to abolish the slave trade in Britain and subsequently sought to eliminate it abroad.⁷² An important characteristic of the works of Palmer and, to a lesser extent, Blake (in England) and Friedrich (in Germany) is that as well as making a political point an indication of the Transcendent is also present, demonstrating that the concept of Miesel's Romantic nationalism is as relevant to the English paintings as to the works of Runge and Friedrich.

Whilst war and revolution were reflected in the artists at work in mainland Europe, in Britain wars were fought overseas and limited in their effect on the soldiers themselves and on trade. Blake had a profound influence on Palmer and 'The Ancients' and was affected not only by the need in Britain to avoid revolution, but also by millenarianism - the thought that the second coming, with its suggestion of some sort of apocalyptic closure, was imminent.⁷³ However this did not mean that Blake (who was not

nationalistic in his personal outlook) did not produce works with nationalistic qualities and these fell into two categories – the fairly straightforward heroic battle field scene as in *War Song to Englishmen* (date unknown but around 1770) as well as the spiritual such as *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth* (? 1805). Of the latter work and its companion *The Spiritual Form of Nelson guiding Leviathan, in whose wreathings are enfolded the Nations of the Earth*, both inspired by visions, Blake wrote ‘(they) are compositions of a mythological cast similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo and Egyptian antiquity which are still preserved on rude monuments, being copies from some stupendous originals now lost...The Artist has endeavored to emulate the grandeur of those seen in his vision, and to apply it to modern Heroes, on a smaller scale’.⁷⁴

These influences led to Blake’s developing sympathy for the underdog and to an anti-establishment attitude. A writer who had influence on the visionary poet was Thomas Paine (1737-1809) who wrote *The Rights of Man* (1791) following his time in France ; this work came to be regarded as ‘the bible of the radical movement emerging in Britain in the 1790s’.⁷⁵ Other radicals who had an influence on Blake were Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and William Godwin (1756-1836).⁷⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the world’s first feminists who wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1793, was very keen that women should stand up for themselves and not be regarded as subservient to men. William Godwin began his life as a Dissenting Minister, but soon developed quasi-atheistic views allied with an increasing millennialist outlook.

German Influences

Turning now to the European (German speaking) influences on Blake there are two contemporary artists who need special mention – Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) and Asmus Carstens . Fuseli was born Johann Heinrich Fussli in Zurich, was a brilliant linguist, speaking six languages and, at the virtual insistence of his father was ordained in the Zwinglian Church⁷⁷. He studied classical literature – in particular Shakespeare, Milton and Dante – and after about 1780, he settled in London, changed his name to Henry Fuseli and became a close associate of Blake.⁷⁸ Whilst bearing some similarity to the

style of Blake (for example, *Allegory of Vanity* or *Isis from Plutarch's Isis and Osiris*), he was a poetic painter with his work mainly centred on the literature that he had read as a younger man.⁷⁹ Many of his paintings view the subjects from below, as though on a stage, perhaps reflecting his great love of the theatre.

Asmus Jakob Carstens was a German artist who was probably overshadowed by Fuseli and Blake, but nonetheless worked very much in the same vein. He had the same attitude to the Academy as Blake; writing to the Prussian Prime Minister of the time – ‘I must tell your excellency that I belong to humanity, not to the Academy of Berlin’.⁸⁰ For example, Carstens work *Night with her Children, Sleep and Death* (1794) – seems to me to be very Blakian in style and subject matter. In support of this viewpoint, Rosenblum writes:

Born only three years apart (Carstens 1754-98, Blake 1757-1827), both passionately individualistic and eccentric artists mirror a revolution against the artistic establishment that corresponds exactly to the drastic rearrangements of authority and patronage in the late eighteenth century ... (The letter of Carstens to the Prussian Minister at Berlin – Baron von Heinitz) typifies both his and Blake's attitudes toward their positions as artists belonging to the world, not to a particular patron or nation.⁸¹

This is in contrast to the nationalist Friedrich who was an enthusiastic supporter of the concept of a united Germany – a concept that would not come to fruition until 1871.

Theological and Ecclesiological Considerations.

As Miranda Seymour explains in *Noble Endeavours* (2013) the theological links between the German speaking states and Britain can be traced back to shortly after the Reformation when an alliance between the two main Protestant nations in Europe would be beneficial as a counterweight to the nations which had retained allegiance to the Catholic Church. This alliance was cemented by the marriage contract in 1612 between Prince Frederick, the elector Palatine (Palatine is a high-level official in a Royal Court), and Elizabeth, daughter of King James I, the marriage itself taking place in 1613.⁸²

Shortly after this the Thirty Years' War began – essentially a conflict between the states remaining loyal to the Holy Roman Empire and the Protestant states. This war ended with the peace of Westphalia, a series of treaties that left Germany almost bankrupt and fragmented. In the German speaking world only Austria, Hanover and Prussia were the really significant states.⁸³ Nonetheless, the links with Britain continued, being especially reinforced by the Elector of Hanover becoming King George I in 1714. Whilst in the German states the rivalry was between the Lutheran (and Pietist) and Catholic Churches, in Britain there formed a large number of Dissenting Groups generally against the links between Church and State and the clerical hierarchy.

It should be remembered that the effect of the Enlightenment in England was an emphasis on rationality and the Church of England was not immune from this process, being seen as an Establishment organisation, closely linked to the state. Gradually a significant number of the educated classes began to question this allegiance and wished to bring into prominence an appreciation of the spiritual qualities that they saw as essential to a worshipping community. Although they had a number of different approaches to bringing about this change, they were known collectively as Dissenters. To explain in more detail the higher echelons of the clergy were appointed by the state, with the lower echelons, the parish priests, being appointed by their patrons – often the local squire. As J. Steven Watson highlights:

The bishops were an important voting force on the government side in the House of Lords: necessarily therefore these high ecclesiastics had a large proportion of the worldly wise in their ranks, those who knew how to make powerful friends and to please the government of the day. The lower clergy had more often a grumbling dislike of it. The High Church party of the period was so called not for its spiritual doctrines or its ceremonies, or for its vestments, but for its conviction that the church was superior to the state, was in fact independent (except formally and in office temporal affairs) of the state ... (With regard to parish life) the squire would appoint ... someone in sympathy with his own views to the parish living. The dependence of the parson not upon the royal government or the bishop but upon the squire was of particular importance at a time when the pulpit was unrivalled as a propaganda agency and when the church was the only centre of village life and of village politics.⁸⁴

Out of this separation between the upper and lower clergy and the great diversity of opinion, the established church became the object of criticism by the Dissenting Groups among whose prominent members in the world of the arts were Blake, Flaxman, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Robinson. The Dissenters were a major influence on Blake, whose parents, radical (anti-establishment) in their political outlook, were supporters of that movement. The Dissenters were prohibited from taking part in much of the official life of England and were forced abroad – often to Germany – for a university education. As the eighteenth century progressed the Dissenting Groups became gradually more accepted with the growing prominence of John Wesley (1703-1791) an Anglican Priest, who became disillusioned with the Established Church and, whilst a fellow of Lincoln College Oxford, founded with others the Methodist denomination in 1726.⁸⁵ The origin of Methodism which started as a group within the Anglican Communion, lay in the need to counterbalance the ‘upper class’ bias within the Church of England when John Wesley felt the need (after reading Martin Luther and being influenced by the Pietist Moravians) to preach to the ‘lower classes’ both inside the church buildings and in the open air. Eventually, after Wesley’s death the Methodists split from the Church of England – a split perhaps encouraged by the more formal organisation in America which had been set up with an episcopal constitution, the appointed bishops being outside the formal ‘apostolic succession’ characteristic of the Catholic and Anglican Churches.⁸⁶

This acceptance of Dissenters was eventually marked by the passing of the *Act for the Relief of Dissenters* (1779).⁸⁷ Further relief would be provided for dissenters in 1828 with the repeal of the *Test and Corporation Acts* which removed the necessity of receiving the ‘Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as a Qualification for certain Offices and Employments’ including that of being a Member of Parliament.⁸⁸ With the foundation in 1826 of the University of London (eventually to become University College, London) it would at last become possible for Dissenters to receive a university education in England.⁸⁹

In the German-speaking world the situation was rather different. The peace of Westphalia gave rise to a vast number of governing entities some too small to be accorded the name state, which eventually evolved or amalgamated into a number of

prominent states, for example Brandenburg-Prussia, which were able to rival the nine million strong Hapsburg Austria and pre-eminent part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Whilst the Catholic faith was practised in parts of Germany the predominant faith was the church of Martin Luther. During the eighteenth century there emerged a form of Protestantism – somewhat akin to the Puritans in Britain – which in Germany originated in Dresden and was known as Pietism.⁹⁰ Whilst Pietism was first established in the Netherlands, in Germany it was formed by Philipp J. Spener (1635-1705) whose essential belief was that the church must be understood ‘not as an institution for salvation but as a community of re-born brothers and sisters’.⁹¹ Essentially, Spener wanted a change of attitude within the Lutheran Church where he wished to propagate ‘a new life, a radical change of existence, “a piety of the heart” lived out in practice and a commitment in the social sphere’.⁹² The Pietists were keen, nevertheless, to embrace the original principles set out by Luther. Watson writes:

These early Pietists sought a return to Luther’s “pristine simplicity” by “stressing the priesthood of all believers against the hierarchy, the inner light against doctrinal authority, the religion of the heart against the religion of the head...and practical acts of charity, not scholastic dispute”.⁹³

Pietism evolved through its development in the Universities of Halle and Göttingen, with the fundamental principle being set out by Spener’s pupil Professor August Francke (1663-1727) that ‘vocational labour must become the main sphere of activity through which Pietists could serve their fellow citizens ... (Francke) justified such activism by arguing that the Creation “could be improved upon”, moreover that this improvement must form the central plank in the individual quest for salvation’.⁹⁴ Thus we have a very clear statement of the development of the protestant work ethic in Germany. This period of Pietism coincided as we have seen with the development of the Dissenting religions and formation of Methodism with its Pietist influence, in Britain.

While Blake followed the Dissenters in Britain, Caspar David Friedrich followed the tradition of Pietism, with asceticism and the Protestant work ethic thoroughly engrained in his approach to life and work. In addition to this Friedrich was influenced by the theologian Daniel Friedrich Schleiermacher who visited the artist on a number of

occasions. As Küng emphasises, Schleiermacher was a theologian who embraced the modernity of the age.⁹⁵ He was a formidable biblical scholar writing major works on the Pastoral Epistles and on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. He was very aware of the cultural influences current in Europe and ‘in the closest contact with writers, poets, philosophers, artists and political enthusiasts of every kind’ all of which enabled his writing to achieve ‘a broad horizon and finally succeed in combining the Romantic religion of feeling with scientific culture’.⁹⁶ Peter Watson quoting the theologian writes that poets and artists ‘convey the heavenly and the eternal as an object of pleasure and unity (and who) strive to awaken the slumbering kernel of a better humanity ... (artists and poets) are the higher priesthood who transmit the most inner spiritual secrets, and speak from the kingdom of God’.⁹⁷

Schleiermacher, like Franck, was a professor at the University of Halle and was concerned to bring both national and church unity to the German speaking world. Many of his works are only available in the German language but his major work *The Christian Faith (or Dogmatics)* (1821 second edition 1830-1) was of such significance that it was translated into English in 1928.⁹⁸ Indeed, the work has been considered to be of singular importance as a systematic theology that it can be set beside the *Summa Theologica* (1265-74) of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).⁹⁹ This is not the place to summarise Schleiermacher’s *Christian Faith*, but essentially he regarded piety as considered ‘in itself neither a Knowing nor a Doing, but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness’.¹⁰⁰ Feeling in this context needs further definition:-

Feeling is not to be understood in a restricted psychological sense as Romantic enthusiastic emotion, but in a comprehensive, existential way as a sense of being encountered at the centre, as immediate religious self-awareness. (Ebling compares this function with that of the conscience in Luther.) Schleiermacher would later make this notion more precise... (writing in *The Christian Faith*) of religion as the feeling of ultimate dependence.¹⁰¹

In other words, in matters of theology he gave preference to the primacy of religious experience. John Bowden (1935-2010) refers to his definition of religion ‘as ‘the feeling

of absolute dependence', in which he sought a middle course between orthodoxy and natural theology'¹⁰² As Marianne Rankin writes, Schleiermacher emphasised 'that religion was not about doctrine or philosophy, but based on feeling and intuition.'¹⁰³ She then quotes Schleiermacher in terms that would seem to be very much in agreement with Blake: 'To be one with the infinite in the midst of the finite and to be eternal in a moment, that is the immortality of religion.'¹⁰⁴

In a sense, this view prefigures Rudolf Otto's, whose definition of the non-rational part of religion – the numinous – will be considered in the next chapter. But returning to Schleiermacher's influence on Friedrich, the latter may have been aware of the work of the theologian as early as the late 1700s but it is known that they met in 1810 and probably again in 1818¹⁰⁵. Schleiermacher's views would have accorded well with the German view of the Enlightenment referred to above which gave some preference to the imagination over rationality. As Vaughan writes:

Schleiermacher concentrated on a subjective approach to the mysteries of divinity, thus appropriating the secular mysticism of the Romantics and reapplying it to conventional faith. For him, religion was 'feeling' – the sense that God lives and works in us as finite human beings. This was, it could be argued, exactly what Friedrich sought to achieve in his landscapes. He was using a modern art form, based on the fashionable taste for nature, to engage the spectator in spiritual experience commensurate with traditional belief.¹⁰⁶

Hofmann takes this a stage further and is quite specific stating that although we have no written evidence of the influence of Schleiermacher, he seems to have visited Friedrich's *atelier* in 1818, and there is little doubt that they both shared a state of mind, 'each working autonomously in his own field and determined to take on the highest degree of creative responsibility'.¹⁰⁷ Both had the same approach to the Enlightenment which acknowledged the scientific development but accepted that an approach to the spiritual could not be based entirely on rationality. Hofmann makes an interesting comparison between the outlook of Blake and that of Schleiermacher:

William Blake, writing in 1788... concluded that 'All Religions are One – a heretical proposition that relativized the status of Christianity.

Schleiermacher argued much the same. Blake based his authority as a poet and visionary on the belief ‘that the poetic Genius is the true Man’ and he may well have agreed with Schleiermacher’s assertion that ‘everyone with eyes to see is a new priest, a new mediator, a new organ’. Just as the church with its institutions and its dogmatic structures had become unnecessary, so its servants and officiants had become superfluous; the same was true of those teachers of art who held official appointments and devoted themselves to academic regimentation. Like Blake, Friedrich claimed for art the freedom that Schleiermacher saw realised in true religion.¹⁰⁸

Unlike Runge, Friedrich did not enjoy expressing his views in words but at times, particularly when defending some of his works against the critics of the time, especially Basilius von Ramdohr (1757-1822), he had to use the arguments of Schleiermacher, refined in discussion with other followers of that great theologian. To quote one such aphorism of Friedrich will suffice to demonstrate the similarity of argument:

Preserve a pure, childlike understanding within yourself and follow the voice of your inner self unconditionally, for it is the Divine in us and does not lead us astray. Regard every pure mental impulse as holy, honour every devout presentiment as holy, for it is the art within us! In the hour of inspiration it takes on visible form, and this form is your picture.¹⁰⁹

This engagement with spiritual or religious experience was, of course, the objective of all the artists considered in this thesis – including the Nazarenes in Germany and Blake’s ‘Ancients’ in Britain – but I have concentrated on Friedrich and Blake in this chapter as typical of those artists who gave primacy to the use of their imagination or their visions in expressing their inner religious convictions.

In Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the theological commonalities between British artists (many of whom were Dissenters) and German artists arose because of the more rigid approach to rationality and owing to the Establishment/Church of England which led those artists, for example, Coleridge and Wordsworth, to seek education in the German-speaking lands of Europe. In particular Coleridge and H.C. Robinson became very enthusiastic supporters of the German approach to the Enlightenment and on

returning to England began to have a significant effect on the British artists such as Blake. Whilst there may be little direct derivation visible in the iconography of the artists being considered, my argument is that in the many discussions that took place between those who visited Germany and Britain and the artists under consideration it would have been almost impossible for those artists not to be influenced by the *Zeitgeist*.

In a discussion and subsequent e-mail exchange with Miranda Seymour we agreed that this particular time in the Romantic Period with such a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the two countries represented a high point in the cultural relationship between the German-speaking world and England. This view is confirmed by Martin Brecht who, when writing on the importance of the work of Herman Gundert (1814-1893) and its relationship to the missionary work being undertaken by the English and Pietist churches in India, and answering the question regarding the importance of Gundert in the narration of contacts between Germany and Britain, writes:

The Christian Mission was only able to succeed within a framework of supranational co-operation. At the same time it set in motion a process of mutual acquaintance and exchange between German and British Protestantism. In this regard, the fact that such a process might possibly have been more advanced in the nineteenth century than it is today should give us food for thought: historical research both reminds and rebukes us today.¹¹⁰

Whilst this particular quotation related to mission and the English and German Churches, rather than philosophy and art, it provides further evidence of the many theological and cultural links between Germany and Britain during the nineteenth century. In summarising the lasting legacy of this interchange of culture between the German Idealists, I would refer to the interpretation found in the use of the term 'nature' by Coleridge, an interpretation which accords well with Schelling's view of the essential role of the artist. Wellek writes a fitting conclusion which applies to those artists in both Germany and Britain who, in their works, endeavoured to point towards the Transcendent:

Nature is sometimes the spirit of nature, *natura naturans*, the creativity of nature. ‘The artist must imitate that which is within the thing, which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols – the *Naturgeist*, of spirit of nature’. This ‘productive power which is in nature, as nature, is essentially one with the intelligence which is in the human mind above nature’. Art is not imitation but self-revelation, as mind and nature are profoundly identical.’¹¹¹

I have referred above to the idea of the non-rational component within any description of a religion and especially to the emphasis placed by Schleiermacher and Friedrich on the need to feel – to receive a sense of the spiritual through experience. The next chapter will be examining through the work of Rudolf Otto this sense of the non-rational, to which he gives the description the numinous.

¹ Wellek, R. *Confrontations* Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press 1965 p. 159. It should also be noted that through the work of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and a number of American poets, this German philosophy translated to America as Transcendentalism. See also, Ashton, R. *The German Idea* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1980 pp. 18-20. Full details of these books are included in the bibliography

² Wellek, R. *History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 – The Romantic Age* (Vol.2) London Jonathan Cape 1955 p. 75.

³ Wellek, R. (1965) p. 4.

⁴ Vigus, J. *Henry Crabb Robinson Essays on Kant, Schelling, and German Aesthetics* London The Modern Humanities Research Association 2010 p. 9.

⁵ Vaughan, W. *German Romanticism and English Art* London Yale University Press 1979. The Nazarenes also known as the Brotherhood of St. Luke was a group of artists who developed ‘out of the general interest in primitivism around 1800, which is evident in the works of Blake, Carstens, Flaxman, Les Primitifs’ and Ingres – a literal attempt to revive the spirit and art forms of the late Middle Ages’. p. 2.

⁶ In the preface to *The Counter Arts Conspiracy*, Morris Eaves states that “Even histories of key institutions such as the Royal Academy have been one dimensional because it was apparent in advance that the findings would not repay the time of an expert historian of art working under the traditional covenant ... As a reminder of how little engaged traditional English art history has been with the issues of theory and cultural history, one only has to read, at the risk of belabouring the obvious, the eighteenth and nineteenth-century volumes in the *Oxford History of English Art*.” In the main part of this work Eaves endeavours to place Blake in the context of the political and industrial developments of the times – a study on which he spent some ten years. See: Eaves, M. *The Counter Arts Conspiracy – Art and industry in the age of Blake* Ithaca (New York) Cornell University Press 1992 287 pp.

⁷ Watson, P. *The German Genius - Europe’s third renaissance, the second scientific revolution and the twentieth century* London Simon and Schuster 2010 963 pp. and Seymour, M. *Noble Endeavours - The life of two countries, England and Germany, in many stories* London Simon and Schuster 2013 502 pp. Both of these books contain references and an index and are serious cultural studies and whilst the former contains a comprehensive historical development within defined categories, the latter is, by its nature, anecdotal in its treatment of the subject.

⁸ Full details will be included in the bibliography.

⁹ Stokoe, F.W. *German Influence in the English Romantic Period* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1926 p. 33.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.vi.

¹¹ Küng, H. *Christianity – Its Essence and History* London SCM Press 1995 (First published as *Christentum. Wesen und Geschichte* by Piper Verlag, Munich in 1994, translated by John Bowden) p. 684. In the version of the definition quoted, Küng has used the word *tutelage* for *Unmündigkeit* that is often translated as self-imposed immaturity or self-imposed nonage or minority. (Mautner, T. *Dictionary of Philosophy* London Penguin Books 2000, p. 168b.)

¹² Ibid. p. 685.

¹³ The first treatise on this historical-critical analysis of the Bible was written by Johann S. Semler (1725-71) who produced in 1771-5 a *Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon*. See Küng, H. p. 691 See also the website: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100454243>

¹⁴ It is important to remember that the work of Einstein did not supersede that of Newton – it defined the limits within which the principles of Newton could still be applied. Essentially the principles of Newton do not apply when dealing with the extremely large and the extremely small.

¹⁵ Descartes as the father of modern philosophy had proposed a separation between science and religion which enabled both subjects to be studied independently albeit often held in contention.

¹⁶ Leibnitz was regarded by Herder as ‘the greatest man Germany ever possessed’ – Peter Watson quoting Herder in *The German Genius*, published in London by Simon and Schuster in 2010, p123.

¹⁷ Nicolson, Harold *The Age of Reason (1700-1789)* London Constable and Co. Readers Union edition 1962 p. 330.

¹⁸ *Nova Methodus* set out Leibnitz’s theories on metaphysics and ontology and *On the practice and improvement of the German language* argued the case for the use of the German language for the expression of philosophy, science and theology rather than Latin or even French which were generally considered to be the lingua franca of intellectual expression. For further discussion see Nicholson, H pp 330-333.

¹⁹ Mattick, Paul (ed) *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2008, containing the essay *The Leibnizian conception of sensation*, by Jeffrey Barnouw p. 82. For a detailed discussion of Leibnitz views on the thinking process, mind, perception, representation and re-presentation see Anne Wilson’s article in Final draft in *The Philosophical Review*, 110, no. 1 (January, 2001). Reprinted in *The Philosopher’s Annual XXIV*, 2002. Available: <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/PR%20Changing%20the%20Cartesian%20Mind.pdf>

²⁰ Nicholson, H., p. 331. To argue that Romanticism originated in England is very questionable but this caveat does not alter the thrust of the argument concerning reason and the imagination. (The word ‘Romanticism’ was first used in Germany in 1827, many years before its subsequent use by Carlyle in Britain.)

²¹ Johann G. Herder should not be forgotten in this context. He was much influenced by Leibnitz and studied under Kant and was particularly concerned to promote the view that it was only by conscious development that humanity could attain its fulfilment. Thus he saw *Bildung* (approximately translated as the inner development of the individual) as a task. As Watson points out concept of ‘*Bildung* as a task dominated the philosophy of the majority of subsequent German writers ... *Bildung* as a task comes from the recognisably Pietist lineage and looks forward to Weber’s concept of the Protestant work ethic’. Goethe was also prominent during this period but his work is beyond the scope of this thesis.

²² Goethe in particular, is noted for having been the most renowned writer of the *Sturm und Drang* period – a period in the literary and artistic life of Germany which lasted approximately from 1770-1780, whilst Kant achieved as a philosopher in Germany the status that had been accorded to the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke, Burke and Hume in Britain.

²³ Transcendentalism is difficult to define in precise terms but as a philosophical term a good description is included in a thesis written by Henry D. Gray entitled *Emerson – A statement of New England Transcendentalism as expressed in the philosophy of its chief exponent*, published in California by Stanford University in 1917. In a footnote transcendentalism is defined as ‘the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining a scientific knowledge of an order of existence *transcending* the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience’. Gray, page 9, footnote 8.

Rosemary Ashton emphasises the important distinction ‘between ‘transcendental’ (of our application of a priori categories of the understanding to experience) and ‘transcendent’ (beyond experience and for Kant explicitly illegitimate in the field of knowledge)’. See Ashton, R. p.38.

²⁴ Nicholson, H., p137.

²⁵ Fowler, Thomas; Mitchell, John Malcolm (1911). *Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of* p. 765. Reference: In Chisholm, Hugh. *Encyclopædia Britannica* 24 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 763–765.

²⁶ Ibid p.137

²⁷ Vaughan, W *German Romanticism and English Art* London Yale University Press 1979 p. 66.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 20.

²⁹ This extract was obtained from website www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/research/crabb/html

³⁰ Vaughan, p. 20 and note 66; p. 82 and notes 65 and 66

³¹ Ibid. p. 20. The artists interested in medievalism would have been members of the St. Luke’s Brotherhood, known also as the Nazarenes.

³² During one of Palmer’s excursions into Wales (in 1836) he fortuitously met H.C. Robinson with whom he struck up a friendship and who eventually purchased one of Palmer’s Welsh scenes. As Rachael Campbell-Johnson points out in *Mysterious Wisdom – The life and Work of Samuel Palmer* London Bloomsbury Publishing 2011 page 168:

He (Palmer) encountered the journalist Henry Crabb Robinson who, taken by Palmer’s ‘eye of deep feeling and very capacious forehead’ invited him on a day trip to some nearby falls. The outing for both of them must have been pleasurable. Perching on rocky outcrops that projected high above the torrent, they might have discussed Goethe, with whom Crabb Robinson was acquainted, or talked of the poetry of Coleridge or Wordsworth or gossiped about their mutual acquaintance, Blake. (The quotation is taken from Robinson’s letter of 4th August, 1836).

Whilst the reference to Goethe and the English poets is speculative, it is entirely consistent with the known character and interests of Palmer.

³³ Wellek, R. (1955) p.157.

³⁴ He made a short subsequent visit with the business man Charles Anders in 1828 - Seymour, M. p. 25. In addition, with Wordsworth he made a trip along the Rhine in 1828 and met August Wilhelm Schlegel at Bad Godesberg where they discussed Shakespeare. See Wellek 1965 p. 7.

³⁵ Fulford, T. writing in *The Modern Language Review* Volume 91, part 4 (October, 1996).

³⁶ Thorne, J.O. and Collocott, T.C. (ed) *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* Edinburgh W and R Chambers 1982 p. 295a.

³⁷ Stephen Potter (ed) *Coleridge Select Poetry and Prose* London Nonesuch Press 1971 p. 499.

³⁸ Ibid. p.505.

³⁹ Ibid. p.506.

⁴⁰ Stokoe, F. Generally pp. 89-143 and specifically summing up on pp. 142-3.

⁴¹ Ashton, R. pp. 27-66.

⁴² Ibid. p. 66.

⁴³ Vigus, J *Henry Crabb Robinson* London Modern Humanities Research Association 2010

⁴⁴ Ibid p.65.

⁴⁵ Campbell-Johnson, R. pp. 86-7. It is also known that Anders and Coleridge visited Germany together in 1828. See: note 32 above.

⁴⁶ Wellek, R. (1955) p. 90.

⁴⁷ Wellek, R. (1965) p. 34.

⁴⁸ Wellek, R. (1955) p. 111.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 37.

⁵⁰ Watson, P. p. 315.

⁵¹ For a short summary of the life of Carlyle see Thorne, J.O. and Collocott, T.C. (ed) *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* Edinburgh W and R Chambers 1982 p. 229a -230a and for the life of

Frederick the Great see Carlyle, Thomas *History of Friedrich II of Prussia called Frederick the Great* in the abridged version edited and with introduction by John Clive Chicago University of Chicago Press 1969.

⁵² Carlyle, Thomas *History of Friedrich II of Prussia called Frederick the Great* in the abridged version edited and with introduction by John Clive Chicago University of Chicago Press 1969 pp. xviii-xvix

⁵³ Wellek (1965) pp. 80-1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p xxxvii.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. xxxv.

⁵⁶ Thomas Carlyle Letters online: <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/cgi/recipient/start?coll>

⁵⁷ Ashton R. p.104. The great influence of Crabb Robinson on Coleridge would not have been thoroughly established at the time of Ashton's research.

⁵⁸ Watson, P. p. 314.

⁵⁹ Readers may be surprised that in this section on the Enlightenment, I have not mentioned Johann J. Wickelmann the art historian whose main claim to fame is, perhaps, the publication of the first history of ancient art. The important pamphlet *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture (1755)* was regarded as of major importance and translated by Henry Fuseli. (For more detail see Eitner, L. *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850* London Prentice-Hall International 1971 pp. 4f.) Important though he was, his work and influence was almost exclusively concerned with the influence of ancient Greek art and its influence on history painters such as Michelangelo and Raphael. Had this chapter been about the Nazarenes and the British history painters of the time then Wickelmann would be been very relevant, but his influence on the transcendental painters and particularly those who like Runge, Friedrich and Palmer, were endeavouring to express fundamental truths through the pictorial representation of landscape, seems to have been minimal.

⁶⁰ It could perhaps be argued that Britain had its revolution at the time of Cromwell and the Civil War, a period of instability that ended with the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

⁶¹ The Tory candidate came last in the election and Palmer was never again tempted to take part in the political life of the country. (Palmer was absurdly naïve in his views on the life of the rural working class and probably never realised the extreme hardships under which they worked.) As Campbell-Watson suggests, Primarily Palmer was arguing for the maintenance of the status quo particularly the continuing influence of the Church, local squires and yeoman farmers. For example he writes: 'Farmers of Kent – we are tempted with a share of the promised spoliation of the CHURCH! – There was a time when every Kentish yeoman would have spurned at the wretch who should have dared to tickle him with such a bait – to offer him such an insult! But piety and honour are in the sepulchre.' (Campbell-Watson, R. quoting Palmer page 152.)

⁶² Vaughan, W. writing in the foreword to *Samuel Palmer – The sketchbook of 1824* London Thames and Hudson 2005 p. 8.

⁶³ Harvey, John *The Bible as Visual Culture – When text becomes image* Sheffield Sheffield Phoenix Press 2013 p. 59.

⁶⁴ Whitlock, R. *The English Farm* London J.M.Dent and Sons 1983. See especially chapter 9, the Agricultural Revolution pp.143 – 175.

⁶⁵ Vaughan, W. (2005) p.8-9.

⁶⁶ Eitner, L. p. 71.

⁶⁷ Hofmann, W. *Caspar David Friedrich* London Thames and Hudson 2007 pp. 88-92.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.92 and <https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Arminius.html>

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.96.

⁷⁰ Miesel, V.H. *Philipp Otto Runge, Caspar David Friedrich and Romantic Nationalism* Paper presented at a symposium marking the exhibition celebrating German Painting of the 19th Century at Yale University in 1970. The papers were published as: Rollins, C. *Correlations between and Non- German German Art in the Nineteenth Century* New Haven Yale University Art Gallery 1972. Paper presented at a symposium marking the exhibition celebrating German Painting of the nineteenth century at Yale University in 1970. The papers were published as: Rollins, C. *Correlations between and Non- German German Art in the Nineteenth Century* New Haven Yale University Art Gallery 1972. The Miesel paper is to be found on page 37, this quotation taken from page 40a.

⁷¹ <https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/4147>

⁷² Blake was an advocate of the abolition of this trade as evidenced in the above-mentioned engravings for his friend Captain Stedman's book describing an expedition in Guiana in 1796. Blake had chosen, for example, in his engraving *Group of Negroes, as Imported to be sold for Slaves* (1796) to show his concern for the plight of the negroes by showing them in "graceful classical postures" See: Vaughan, W. *Romanticism in Art* London Thames and Hudson 1995 p.20. It is clear from Blake's writings that he was concerned about the de-personalisation that was likely to occur with the rise of industry and factory production – the meaning of "dark satanic mill" referred to in the hymn Jerusalem is disputed but surely does not refer just to the building as Saree Makdisi makes clear but is "a figure not just of the organisation of production in early industrial society; it is a figure of the social, political, and religious constitution of the individual psychobiological subject, determined – produced – by social and political circumstances, rather than being by the laws of nature and nature's god." See: Williams, N.M. *William Blake Studies* Basingstoke Palgrave-Macmillan 2006 (Williams quoting Makdisi) p.189. My own view is that there is a parallel here with St.Paul's "principalities and powers" to which there is reference in the *Letter to the Ephesians* chapter 6, verse 12.

⁷³ The Ancients was a name given to a group of artists under the leadership of Palmer who came to be strongly influenced by Blake. They were called the Ancients because like the *Lukasbund* of whom they must have been aware, they dressed in clothes of an earlier period and had an enthusiasm for the Gothic and the works of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden. See Vaughan, W. *William Blake* London Tate Publishing 2008 p. 68. Millenarianism is a belief by people of that persuasion that a major social change is shortly to occur. Millennialism is the suggestion that that change will occur at 1000 year intervals

⁷⁴ Blake, W. (edited by M. Myrone) *Seen in my Visions – A descriptive catalogue of pictures* (a facsimile edition of the catalogue prepared by Blake for his 1809 exhibition.) London Tate Publishing 2009 pp. 45-6.

⁷⁵ Eaves, M. (ed) *Cambridge Companion to Blake* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2003 p. 134.

⁷⁶ Williams, N.M. *William Blake Studies* Basingstoke Palgrave-Macmillan 2006 p. 215.

⁷⁷ Zwingli (Huldrych Zwingli 1484-1531) was a leading theologian of the Reformation, differing from the more widely known Luther and Calvin in his approach to the Eucharist and transubstantiation. He regarded the consecration of the elements as a spiritual symbol rather than a physical transformation.

⁷⁸ In particular, he shared Blake's concern for the abolition of slavery.

⁷⁹ Keay, C. *Henry Fuseli* London Academy Editions 1974 pp. 65 and 79.

⁸⁰ Vaughan, W. *Romanticism and Art* London Thames and Hudson 1995 p. 71. This quotation is also to be found in Rosenblum (see note below).

⁸¹ Rosenblum, R. *German Romantic Painting in International Perspective*. Paper presented at a symposium marking the exhibition celebrating German Painting of the nineteenth century at Yale University in 1970. The papers were published as: Rollins, C. *Correlations between and Non- German German Art in the Nineteenth Century* New Haven Yale University Art Gallery 1972. The Rosenblum paper is found on pp. 23-35 and the particular reference on p. 23.

⁸² Seymour, M. *Noble Endeavours – The life of two countries, England and Germany, in many stories* London Simon and Schuster 2013 pp.10-11.

⁸³ For a succinct summary of this period of German and British history the reader is referred to Barraclough, G. (ed.) *The Times Atlas of World History* London Times Books 3rd edition edited by Norman Stone 1989 p.190-1.

⁸⁴ Watson, J.S. *The Reign of George III 1760-1815 (Part XII of the Oxford History of England Series)* Oxford Clarendon Press 1992 p.41.

⁸⁵ Moonman, J.H.R. *A History of the Church in England* London A&C Black 1986 p. 297.

⁸⁶ Küng, H. *Christianity – Its Essence and History* London SCM Press 1995 pp. 600-602. For a full development of Methodism see Moorman, J.H.R. pp. 293-332.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p.312.

⁸⁸ <http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/academies/timeline.html> Academies for dissenters (e.g. Coward College in Bloomsbury and Warrington Abbey) had been set up after the enactment of the 1662

Act of Uniformity but these were mainly for the training of non-conformist ministers. For further information see the Library of the Dr Williams Centre for Dissenting Studies and *The History of the University of London*. The University was reputedly founded as a result of a letter to *The Times* from the poet Thomas Campbell, who following his visit to the non-religious Bonn University, was impressed by the attitude of the German Universities which existed to educate those of any religious denomination or none. The new London University was opposed by the Church of England, but this opposition was eventually overcome and the first degrees were awarded in 1836.

⁸⁹ ‘Following the Reformation in England the universities (of Oxford and Cambridge) largely became “finishing” schools for Anglican gentry... For a long time Oxford and Cambridge colleges remained closed against all who were not prepared to claim to be Anglicans.’ Thompson F.M.L. (ed.) p.151. (See below) This led to the founding of the Dissenting Academies, the first in Britain being started in about 1700. The need for these academies ceased with the foundation of the University of London (in Gower Street – later to become University College, London). For further information on the education of Dissenters, see Thompson, F.M.L. (ed.) *The University of London and the World of Learning 1836-1986* London Hambledon Press 1990 especially pages 150-153.

⁹⁰ The writings of John Bunyan and Richard Baxter reached mainland Europe with some 1661 English treatises translated into German having been recorded – See Küng, H. p. 624. For more details on Pietism the reader is referred to Fulbrook, M. *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia* Cambridge 1983. (Taken from Robbins, K (ed) *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, C 1750-1950* Oxford Blackwell 1990 p.79, n.1).

⁹¹ Küng, H. p. 625.

⁹² Ibid. p. 625

⁹³ Watson, P. *The German Genius* London Simon and Schuster 2010 p. 46. In this passage Watson is quoting Richard Gawthorp who wrote *Pietism and the making of Eighteenth-century Prussia* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1993 pp.1 and 2. This book originated in the essays of Carl Hinrichs who argued that the source of the Prussian service-state ideology can best be understood as the fruit of the Pietist movement (Watson p.45).

⁹⁴ Watson, P. p.47. (Watson quoting Gawthorp p.145.)

⁹⁵ Küng, H. p. 695.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 695.

⁹⁷ Watson, P. p.200.

⁹⁸ Schleiermacher, D. F. *The Christian Faith* Edinburgh T and T Clark 1960. (Many translators, edited by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart). The sub-title Dogmatics has been used but essentially Schleiermacher was against the setting down of dogmatic doctrine.

⁹⁹ Küng, H. p.709.

¹⁰⁰ Schleiermacher, D.F. p.2.

¹⁰¹ Küng, H. p. 699-700

¹⁰² Bowden, J. *Who's Who in Theology* New York Crossroad 1992 p.111b. Schleiermacher did not always achieve the approbation accorded to him by Küng. Writing in 1936, Professor H.R. Mackintosh (whom I suspect was a strong supporter of Barth) wrote ‘Schleiermacher’s failure to take Revelation seriously creates all kinds of perplexity for the student of his system, and gives rise to the natural accusation that for him theology is less concerned with God than with man’s consciousness of God ... In page after page of his main work, his method is to proceed by introspection rather than listen to the voice of God speaking in His Word’. See: Mackintosh, H.R. *Types of Modern Theology* London Collins (Fontana) 1964 p.96. (This work was first published in 1937.)

¹⁰³ Rankin, M. *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* London Continuum 2008 p. 241.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.241. One could imagine Blake making a similar statement which would be in accord with his view that everything could be in harmony and all religions as one.

¹⁰⁵ Vaughan, W *Friedrich* London Phaidon 2004 p. 73 and Hofmann, W. *Caspar David Friedrich* p.

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¹⁰⁶ Vaughan, W 2004 p. 73

¹⁰⁷ Hofmann, W. p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p.50.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.51.

¹¹⁰ Essay included in Robbins, K (ed) *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, C 1750-1950* Oxford Blackwell 1990 by Martin Brecht *The Relationship between the Established Protestant Church and Free Church: Herman Gundert and Britain.* p. 151.

¹¹¹ Wellek, R. (1955) p. 173. The Coleridge extracts in this passage are taken from *Biographica Literaria* of 1847.

Chapter Four

The Characteristics of the Religious Experience and Possible Trigger Factors

- The Numinous
- Variations within Descriptions of Religious Experience
- The Mystic Experience
- Trigger Factors
- The Archive of the Religious Experience Research Centre
- Summary

The Numinous

The previous chapter ended by highlighting the influence of Schleiermacher upon Friedrich and with a description of the former's approach to religion where feeling and intuition were of paramount importance. Schleiermacher was a major influence on Rudolf Otto who will be the focus of this chapter concerned with religious experience and the non-rational part of any description of God¹. The chapter will conclude with extracts from accounts of religious experiences associated with the creation or the viewing of a work of art.

In discussing God there is a tendency to intuit or express in words the rational part of the ultimate Being; to discuss God in the terms of the ineffable or non-rational part is difficult. This is because we do not have the words or the language easily to write about that which is beyond – the non-rational. There have been over the years a number of attempts to prove the existence of God; they have all failed because the nature of God is indefinable in its totality. We can suggest definitions such as Ground of all Being or 'something than which nothing greater can be conceived' (Anselm 1033-1109) but they all fail in their endeavour to define or even prove the existence of God because of the use solely of rational argument without reference to the non-rational component of the Ultimate Being.²

Otto endeavoured to overcome this limitation by acknowledging the role of 'feeling' in the perception of the Transcendent. This approach is fully developed in *The Idea of the Holy* (1923) where he introduces the word numinous to describe the holy (or sacred), ignoring the

latter's normal attributes of moral goodness and rationality. Schleiermacher emphasised that the peculiar feature of religion is 'a mysterious experience; it is being moved by the world of the eternal'.³ This missing mysterious component in the idea of the holy or sacred is that which expresses the 'living force' or 'unique original feeling-response which can be in itself ethically neutral and claims consideration in its own right'.⁴ Otto endeavoured to develop the thoughts of Schleiermacher and overcome the limitation of writing of the non-rational by acknowledging the role of 'feeling' in the discernment of the transcendent. Otto then speaks of the numinous as a category of value and as a state of mind found wherever the category is applied. Otto, in order to explain further, then writes

This mental state (the numinous) is ... irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined. There is only one way to help another to an understanding of it. He (or she) must be guided and led on by discussion of the matter through the ways of his (or her) own mind, until he (or she) reaches the point at which the numinous in him (or her) perforce begins to stir, to start into life and into consciousness ... In other words our X cannot strictly speaking, be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes of the spirit must be awakened.⁵

In a curious development, Otto then invites the reader who has not had a deeply felt religious experience to read no further as it is not easy to discuss religious psychology with those who cannot recall any intrinsically religious feelings. This seems to me to be rather defeatist, inasmuch as this attitude seems to rule out the possibility of an academic or theoretical discussion of religious experience.⁶ (It would have been interesting to discuss with Otto the German Idealist's conception of intellectual intuition and its relevance to the idea that the numinous cannot very meaningfully be discussed with one who has not had such an experience.) Notwithstanding this reservation, Otto attempts to describe (in the context of a religious service) religious experience as the 'emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures'.⁷ This sentence illustrates again the difficulty of describing God – because Otto is falling into the trap of speaking of an entity (compared with creatures) 'supreme above all creatures' or maybe he intended the meaning to be 'above creatures *per se*'. Perhaps the sentence would read more accurately by just referring to that which is supreme above all.

This numinous experience is capable of further analysis which suggests elements of Awe-fulness (*compare facto* the sublime), Mysteriousness or unapproachability (*compare facto* mysticism/devotional contemplation) to which can also be added a sense of Fascination –

where, in spite of the fear of the awe-fulness and the unapproachability, one is nonetheless drawn almost inexorably towards something which is fascinating. This then leads into one of Otto's most important statements:

The daunting and the fascinating now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts, and the resultant dual character of the numinous consciousness, to which the entire religious development bears witness, at any rate from the level of the 'daemonic dread' onwards, is at once the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion... the 'mystery is for him (or her) not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him (or her); and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he (or she) feels something that captivates and transports him (or her) with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication; it is the Dionysiac-element in the numen.⁸

If this language seems a little overblown for the twenty first century, Otto is describing what I would consider to be the ultimate in religious experience as seen today in such phenomena as the Toronto Blessing and in the twentieth century by a number of revivalist meetings where religious fervour has been achieved by the oratory of a gifted preacher. In addition Otto's thoughts are quite close to those of Sir Alister Hardy (1896-1985) who described religious experience as 'a deep awareness of a benevolent non-physical power which appears to be wholly or partly beyond, and far greater than the individual self'.⁹

Variations within Descriptions of Religious Experience

It is interesting at this juncture to consider the views of William James whose Gifford Lectures of 1901-2 were published in book form as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.¹⁰ The approach adopted by James was that of the psychologist who proposes as an hypothesis that 'whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on the *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life'.¹¹ In other words he is suggesting that the external power to which the theologian refers is validated or felt in the controlling of the higher faculties of the hidden mind – leading to a 'sense of union with the power beyond us (which) is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true'.¹² Taking this a further step on the farther side, leads to the need to question how far this trans-marginal consciousness can be carried forward. As James writes here 'over beliefs begin: here mysticism and the conversion-rapture and Vedantism and transcendental idealism bring in their monistic interpretations and tell us that the finite

self re-joins the absolute self, for it was always one with God and identical with the soul of the world'.¹³ This view of religious experience, although expressed from the point of view of the psychologist is not inconsistent with the position adopted by the theologian Otto. One can even see consistency with the description of religious experience by Hardy who expressed much the same idea in the language of some 70 years later, the main difference being the emphasis on the benevolence of that power beyond.

The Mystic Experience

Having considered the approaches to religious experience of three authorities, all of whom were invited to give the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, and established some common ground, the next question to be considered concerns the inducement or triggering of such experience. In discussion with Marianne Rankin (author of *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* 2008) she emphasises that from her researches she has established that religious experience can rarely be self-induced. Even if one places oneself in the same situation (as far as one is able) in which such an experience had previously been encountered it would be most unlikely for that experience to be repeated. This is consistent with Otto's view that the nature of numinous consciousness is such that it cannot be taught or transmitted. It must be 'awakened from the spirit ... which can only be induced, incited and aroused'.¹⁴ He cites the only direct means of experiencing the numinous as possibly being through reading, suggesting that for example that unless one feels a sense of the numinous when reading of Isaiah's call vision then one is very unlikely to be made aware of the numinous by instruction.¹⁵

At this stage in the development of the concept of religious experience, I would cite two other authorities – John Macquarrie (an established existentialist theologian, born in 1919 and who died recently) and Frederick C. Happold (whose book on mysticism first was published in 1963, is still available (3rd edition 1991) and is quoted by the specialist in Social Science and Theology, the Revd Canon Professor Leslie Francis). Happold lists a number of features which are characteristic of the mystical state.¹⁶

These include the quality of ineffability which Happold defines, in terms with which Otto would be in entire agreement, as defying 'expressing in terms which are fully intelligible to one who has not known some analogous experience'.¹⁷ Whilst acknowledging that the mystical state is one of feeling, there is also a suggestion of the appreciation of some inner

knowledge to which Happold (and William James) give the name noetic (from the Greek *noesis* – intellectual comprehension).¹⁸ Such states of experience very rarely last long in time leading to another essential characteristic in religious experience, that of transiency.¹⁹ Entirely consistent with the researches of Rankin, another feature highlighted by Happold is that of passivity where the one receiving the experience is unaware of any activity on his or her own part to achieve that experience. A further significant characteristic is that of oneness or sense of wholeness, as Happold writes:

In theistic mysticism God is felt to be in everything and everything to exist in God ... God is to be found, said Nicholas of Cusa, beyond the ‘coincidence of contradictories’. There can, however, be no escape from duality through sense perception, for sense perception is conditioned by the presence of polar opposites, not through discursive thought, which is bound by the same dualism. In mystical experience the dilemma of duality is resolved. For to the mystic is given that unifying vision of the One in All and the All in One.²⁰

The two final characteristics that Happold identifies are a sense of timelessness and the loss of the sense of ego. Expressed differently, in a mystical state one may experience that which has been described as the ground of the spirit or spark of the soul, for the experience of which Happold quotes Meister Eckhart (1260-1327):

For the power of the Holy Ghost seizes the very highest and purest, the spark of the soul, and carries it up the flame of love ... The soul-spark is conveyed aloft into its source and is absorbed into God and is identified with God and is the spiritual light of God.²¹

A number of these features are picked up by Macquarrie – direct relation to God, cognition, self-knowledge, passivity, and a sense of wholeness.²² With regard to the characteristic of ineffability, Macquarrie discusses apophaticism – expressed simply this means that we can only speak of God in terms of what God is not, sometimes referred to as negative theology. This theology emphasises that while we cannot apply any characteristics directly to God we can do so only by the use of analogy or symbol. In discussing passivity, the existentialist approach is much to the fore in Macquarrie’s writings where we are thrown into existence, able to think and to be aware of and wonder at the fact of our own existence. Indeed this might be, as Macquarrie expresses it that:

the basic fact that we exist (may be) the strongest evidence for the reality of God and our right to speak of a knowledge of God ... This is not another fallible argument for the existence of God, but an insight given in and with the gift of existence. It is the cosmos coming to thought in us at its growing edge. Perhaps this is what the ‘ontological’ argument of Anselm was driving at.²³

Trigger Factors

At this juncture it is appropriate to examine the ways in which a religious experience or mystical state may be induced. The most likely way of experiencing the numinous is through some external trigger factor, for example music or a religious service. Rankin in her *Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* devotes some 40 pages to describing trigger factors dividing them into religious and non-religious categories. The religious factors would range from worship and prayer through contemplation and meditation to pilgrimages and the effects of sacred places.²⁴ The non-religious triggers range from medical conditions, for example depression to experiences encountered in the outdoors by particular scenery, by music, by the paintings or by sounds.²⁵ It is on these latter factors that I will now concentrate.

Relevant to this thesis are mystical states or religious experiences which have been induced by external factors – music, literature or the visual arts or indeed directly by nature itself. These inducements form a totally different category of stimuli from those which are occasioned by deep involvement of one's own psyche. Considering first music, prior to the composing of programme music such as Ludwig van Beethoven's (1770-1827) *Pastoral Symphony* (1808), we had that which we might describe as pure and which complied with the rules of harmony. A typical work of this nature would be J.S.Bach's (1685-1750) *Well Tempered Clavier* (1742) which consists of 48 Preludes and Fugues utilising all the major and minor keys. These rules which usually led to any dissonance being resolved into consonance gave to music a form (for example the fugue or sonata form) which provided stimuli to the listener. Depending upon the susceptibility of the listener at that time, such music could have the effect of changing the mood of the listener or even inducing a mystical state. A multi-part setting of a Psalm may have this effect or more likely (but never to be guaranteed in accordance with the passivity criterion) a part of a setting of a mass or, for example, Bach's setting of the *Passion According to St. John* (1724). A period of silence in music can have a significant effect, as Otto writes

Even the most consummate Mass-music can only give utterance to the holiest, most numinous moment in the mass – the moment of transubstantiation - by sinking into stillness: no momentary pause, but an absolute cessation of sound long enough for us to 'hear the silence' itself; and no devotional moment in the whole Mass approximates in impressiveness to this 'keeping silence before the Lord'.²⁶

If we now think of the music of the Romantic period, the situation is slightly different where, for example, one may be triggered into some form of transcendental state by thinking of the same place or activity that had inspired the composer to write the piece of music. Music such as Richard Strauss' (1864-1949) *Alpine Symphony* (1915), Felix Mendelssohn's (1809-1847) Overture *Fingal's Cave* (1830) or Ralph Vaughan Williams' (1872-1958) *Symphony Antarctica* (1952) might all be appropriate candidates.

Macquarrie highlights the Romantic period when feeling, imagination and personal experiences were beginning to have some priority over impersonal rationality, and when nature-mysticism began to be recognised. He quotes a defining moment when the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge were published in 1798 and when Wordsworth wrote *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (1798) 'in which he traces the development from a youthful sympathy with nature to a more mature mystical sense of divine Presence'.²⁷

Macquarrie emphasises that this nature-mysticism is not some higher form of pantheism,

But in true mystical fashion (Wordsworth) is looking for a deeper reality in or behind or beyond these physical phenomena, and apparently finding that deeper reality, not so much perhaps in any particular natural phenomenon as in the way that all together they constitute a unity so harmonious that it strikes us with awe. This is what permits him to speak of a Presence in Nature.²⁸

This statement, of course, accords not only with the 'awe-fulness' component of Otto's numinous but also with the idea of the sublime discussed in Chapter One above. Indeed, Otto suggests that the sublime is the most effecting means of representing the numinous – quoting in particular the giant megaliths that have been erected in the past as well the more recent architectural possibilities of representing the sublime. Otto advocates furthermore that the numinous can be evoked especially by the Gothic – he cites the art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) who in his work *Probleme der Gothik* (1930) shows that the impressiveness of the Gothic lies not only in its expression of the sublime but also in its suggestion of something beyond.²⁹ Worringer uses the word magic which Otto rightly criticises as too low a word: 'the tower of the Cathedral at Ulm is emphatically not 'magical', it is numinous'.³⁰ I can understand that contemplation of the architecture in some of our great cathedrals could give rise to a moment of appreciation of the sublime but find it difficult to believe that the same feelings could be induced by contemplation of a megalith.³¹ Perhaps megalith was an ill chosen subject, because I can certainly understand the contemplation of

some truly natural features of landscape inducing a sense of the sublime, for example Aysgarth Falls in Wensleydale, Yorkshire.

It is a short step from the natural world inducing a state of mystical feeling to such a response being induced by the representation of that world.³² Rankin quotes William Rothenstein (1872-1945) who writing in *Men and Memories* (1931-2) records ‘that one’s very being seems to be absorbed in the fields, trees and the walls one is striving to paint ... At rare moments while painting, I have felt myself caught, as it were, in a kind of cosmic rhythm; but such experiences are usually all too brief’, an example of the mystical state being achieved whilst contemplating the natural world.³³ It is also noted that the twentieth century painter Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) refers to painting and religious experience as being the same thing.³⁴

The exact qualities in a work of art that give rise to the evocation of the numinous will be examined in a later chapter, suffice to say at this stage that Otto particularly suggests darkness, perhaps emphasised by the showing of the last vestige of light as in the last moments of a sunset:

The darkness must be such as is enhanced and made all the more perceptible by contrast with some last vestige of brightness, which is, as it were, on the point of extinguishing; hence the ‘mystical’ effect begins with semi-darkness ... The semi-darkness that glimmers in vaulted halls, or beneath the branches of a lofty forest glade, strangely quickened and stirred by the mysterious play of half lights, has always spoken eloquently to the soul, and the builders of temples, mosques, and churches have made full use of it.³⁵

The other particular feature to which Otto draws attention is emptiness which he describes as horizontal sublimity and for which evidence he cites oriental art – ‘the wide stretching desert, the boundless uniformity of the steppe, have real sublimity (and) they set vibrating chords of the numinous’.³⁶ All these features will be examined in detail in Chapter Five when a number of particular paintings will be analysed in terms of those qualities which point to the transcendent, but in a chapter devoted to Otto and the numinous it would be a justifiable criticism had they not been mentioned here.

The third of these non-religious trigger factors is sound or its counterpart silence. Rankin highlights the effect of shamanic drumming as used to induce a spiritual journey as well as citing the case of the effect of the sounds from large gongs which gradually built up to become louder and louder eventually causing the listener to have an experience which may

eventually have led to a near-death experience.³⁷ However, most sounds are related to music and the relationship between the notes of the music and the spaces or silences between. Examples of music from the Classical and Romantic repertoire have been quoted above to which I could add music from the Modern period twelve-tone repertoire (originator Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and his acolyte Anton Webern (1885-1943)) where the silences between the notes are particularly significant, and the piece of music from the *avant garde* American composer John Cage (1912-1992) entitled *four minutes thirty three* (1948) which consists only of silence and is intended to emphasise the role of silence within music leaving only the sounds of the environment. I suggest that the location of the performance would be all important and that it would be the chosen environment that would be the deciding factor in the resulting experience – numinous or otherwise.

The Archive of the Religious Experience Research Centre

An alternative source of material relating to experiences which are outside the norm is housed by Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) at the Lampeter Campus of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. This centre was originally set up (in Oxford) by Sir Alister Hardy when he retired from his post as Linacre Professor of Zoology at the University of Oxford. He had had a life-long interest in spirituality, having had such experiences in his youth. As mentioned above Hardy describes religious experience as ‘a deep awareness of a benevolent non-physical power which appears to be partly or wholly beyond, and far greater than, the individual self’.³⁸ For the details of the history of the archive and the development of the Centre, the reader is referred to books by Rankin, Hay and Franklin.³⁹ In essence, the archive of accounts of religious experience has been established (now numbering over 6000 accounts) and is continuing to develop as a result of answers to the question: ‘Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’⁴⁰ A number of these accounts contain references to the ability of art to inspire such awareness and selected below is a small collection of such accounts.⁴¹ The usual social science methodology used in analysing such accounts would be an empathetic ethnographic approach where items of interest in an account would be identified and the respondent then questioned about those items, the eventual aim being to establish a common core related to a particular type of experience. The RERC digital database has been rendered anonymous and hence there is no opportunity to follow this methodology and the extracts from the accounts given below have

been chosen as evidence of the occurrence of the phenomena of an experiences outside the norm which have been occasioned by an encounter with art. I have not undertaken an exhaustive search of the database which could itself be the subject of a separate thesis, but included below are a few extracts from the archive which are relevant to the subject of art and experience.

The first, sent in to the centre in 2005 is from a female artist aged 49 who finds that the act of creating a work of art is akin to meditation and is consistent with the thoughts of William Rothenstein and Ben Nicholson mentioned above. For this respondent there is a sense of oneness between her creative self and the material world around, referring to an experience of unity with the forces of both the material world around and the spiritual world within. In writing that she feels ‘ continuously a part of the material and spiritual world’ she is surely expressing a sentiment that is very similar to that description of the mystical state expressed by Happold and Nicholas of Cusa (1400-1464) – ‘unifying vision of the One in All and the All in One’. This is an experience which has resulted from the act of creating a work of art and from her description would appear to be a rare example of an experience that can be induced and, indeed, can be repeated. She does not make it explicit that the experience is the same each time she sets out to work but the suggestion of repeatability is implicit. She writes:

What is Creativity and what is the Creative Process Like? My route into this subject is through art. Or more precisely the experience of producing art. A Buddhist colleague at work recently said, "Art is like meditation; it's a change of awareness". I agree with that. The experience starts with the drive towards the natural concentration you have as an artist to represent the natural world as you see it. So you start off this way with the concentration and focus. I always work outdoors, just wherever you are. I don't believe in the "studio picture". You sit in one position and you try to get on with it. Then your concentration builds as you are trying to see what is out there in the natural world, adopt the best artistic conventions and techniques, and then reconcile all the aesthetic issues in order to complete the finished result. And it ends with an intense awareness of the unity of all material and spiritual things. Also your awareness is that all is continuous. And that there is an extreme continuity between you and the material world around you. You have an extremely heightened awareness of your material surroundings, the ground around your feet, the grass just next to you, the shells on the beach, the interaction of earth, air, ground, sky and water, and the sea rolling in miniature tidal waves onto the beach. Not only are your senses heightened. But also it seems to be beyond that, also an experience of unity with the forces of both the material world and the spiritual world within that. It is not a precise, illuminating sort of experience. It is rather more generalised. You could not say from this experience that life had a special meaning and purpose. You could only say: "Life has a meaning, and it is this: We are continuously a part of this material and spiritual world". It is not that, "There is a transcendent world. And I have

discovered and know about that which will come in the future". I don't think we need to go so far as to say this is a vision of a new world, nor of a new heaven and earth. In fact, as an artist, I would not worry about that aspect. We don't have to look at future aspects nor where we will be after personal death. What is important is the enhancement of creativity and awareness in the moment. The reason we don't have to do that, "transcendent-for-evermore" bit, is because, by this means, we can have great, great eternity in one great, great, moment. "Eternity in the palm of your hand... Heaven in a wild flower". Time and space seem to spread out sideways indefinitely to the extent of an awareness of great vastness and great and endless time...⁴² (The above is a short extract from the much longer account.)

The next short extract, from an account reported by a 69 year old male writing in 1970, also relates to the experience of creating art but, in addition, is suggestive of a dreamlike state.

Later in the account the respondent refers to a Jungian state of mind:

A painter friend of mine of some note said that in forty-odd years he had thoroughly mastered the techniques involved. He could let his brushes 'sing his song' for him, and his best work was when he was in a state of complete abstraction - the moment he started to think about what he was doing then or in the next moment, the painting remained adequate because of his skill but was not good. More and more I see dreams as the linkage between the conscious and the sub- or un-conscious world of the individual.⁴³

The third extract is taken from a 1500 word account written as a letter to Hardy in which numinous experience played a significant role in guiding the respondent (a Christian male) to a career as an artist and ordained minister. The letter was written in May 1974 and although the artist's age at the time of writing is not known the reference to war service suggests that he was in his middle fifties. He would certainly have been a most interesting subject to have interviewed at the time of his writing, but if enquiries were made at this juncture as to his identity, he may well be too old to wish to get involved.

Painting and 20th cent(ury) art movements absorbed all my thought, and I had the inevitable fantasies of becoming a successful artist. At about 16 I was working hard to develop my work and also was striving to grasp the significance of the work of the most admired artists such as Picasso and the Surrealists. One evening I was drawing, struggling with perhaps more than my usual intensity, and feeling that I didn't really know what I was doing, when, quite suddenly, I had a totally new sensation that I had broken through a kind of barrier of incomprehension. I had a surge of elation that I was getting through my problems. I felt everything was going to be alright, though I equally realised that the drawing I was doing was nothing very wonderful. The strangest thing to me then was that I found myself praying, thanking God for my experience, - the God who had, in the previous three years or so, completely disappeared from my life After war service I attended College of Art full time, and qualified as an art teacher, and, while training, I many times had the feeling that my best work, especially abstract

work, came, as it were, 'out of the blue'. I would literally clear my mind of previous ideas and try to work almost without conscious control, and there was growing in my mind the notion that one had to have a kind of humility and honesty for whatever 'design' was emerging to have its fullest realisation. I would not suggest, nor did I then think that the resultant work was 'received' in the sense of a Christian fundamentalist's view of the scriptures, but rather that the need for an openness and honesty came from outside one's general understanding of the requirements of artistic training and were not normally expected in the usual modes of artistic development. A quotation in your article in the 'Times' speaks of 'the humility of helplessness' and of responding 'to this power'. I would say, looking back, that that expressed my feelings at that time very closely. While at School of Art my religious awareness was also developing and eventually I was ordained...

I based my 'college sermon' on the relationship between the roles of the prophet and the artist, since it seemed to me that in both cases there was a quality of revelation in their inspiration and work. It seems to me that both for the 'true' artist (as against one working for commercial ends, or the amateur artist whose art is a mode of escape), and the man of religion, he has to see himself as a vehicle, expressing in words or visual imagery, concepts that come from right outside himself, apparently. Both have to be honest and humble enough to reject any previously held ideas and modes of expression, if they do not seem appropriate to the new idea that is borne in upon him. In this context Roger Fry said somewhere that the art critic has to be prepared to abandon any or all previously acquired notions when faced with some new form of art. And both prophet and artist may find themselves having to reflect or comment on aspects of life around them that will not readily be accepted by their audiences. Thus the artist, like the prophet, may not just be a 'barometer' of the contemporary scene and its ethos, but also finds himself creating an ordering of reality unrealised by others who are totally immersed in living through the seeming shapelessness {sic} and meaninglessness of day-to-day life...

The 20th cent. artistic scene may in one sense reflect only the dehumanising of man and the breakdown of all accepted values and traditions, and yet some abstract work, as you suggest, does seem to have a 'Mystery', a timeless quality of underlying order, and that is not without precedents. Looking back on the many aspects of art of the past that seemed important to me at various times, I now find only a very few things that have these qualities, and which suggest that the artist was motivated by more than merely fulfilling a commission or giving a slightly new expression to some well worked style from the past. I think now of some Byzantine work, some Russian icons, some portraits by Rembrandt, and some of his drawings and etchings, Piero dell Francesca's 'Resurrection', and some of Blake's works, and all have in one way or another a quality of abstraction, I find. They have, too, I think, an ability to point one outside themselves and outside one's own personal and artistic consciousness. They seem, in short, to point one towards what may be called religious experience.⁴⁴

The next experience from a Christian female relates to the lasting effect of viewing a portrait of Christ, the crucifixion and the dramatic sense of absolution which is achieved one year later:

My First Experience, in January 1968 I was on a short course at Cambridge which was held in one of the men's Colleges. All meals were taken in the huge panelled dining hall from whose walls hung portraits of the previous masters. It was a lively course and I was enjoying myself immensely. On the last day I went early to lunch ... I sat quite alone at the extreme end of one of the long sides of the middle table. The waiter brought my soup & disappeared. Later he returned with the second course and went away. As I helped myself & began to eat I was wondering how I could visit "The Backs", which I had been told was a "must", and catch a certain train. Also my luggage was a problem too. I was deep in superficial thoughts. Then I glanced up and the portrait on the wall before me caught my eye. It was a good face. I could see wisdom, charity and humour in it. Suddenly the head moved and inclined itself towards me. There was a compassionate half smile as he spoke. "Carry on." He said no more and receded into the background of the portrait. I fought back the tears, hurriedly finished my lunch and went out into the cold rain and wandered through some of the College buildings and grounds crying quietly to myself. This incident was followed by months of suffering but always, when I was very near to despair, I would see in my mind's eye the Master's face and hear his gentle voice, "Carry on". I did, and I have come through. My Second Experience, in June 1969. One June evening the School concert was to take place. My husband was torn in his loyalties, ought he to stay with me or attend the concert with my daughter? I assured him I would be all right and I saw them off. It was a lovely evening, the sun low in the sky and the air warm & still. So I sat by the back door on a garden seat & looked down the sloping lawn to the trees in the valley and the hills beyond. A blackbird rang loud & clear from the top of a nearby tree. "This is my concert", I thought. Then I strolled down the garden and paused to look at the wide spreading apple tree. Suddenly I was aware of something rushing towards me. An inner voice said, "Turn". I turned towards whatever was approaching. From the lighter sky a long dark beam was coming straight to me at a great rate. It passed straight through me & out from between my shoulder blades. In the instant of passing through my body I saw Jesus on the Cross, head down & his body writhing in agony. For a brief instant I felt that agony. Then all was normal and I felt at peace. As I thought about this strange happening I suddenly realised that Christ's Crucifixion is symbolic of our suffering through life. He suffered and came through, so I must do the same. Always now, at the mention of the Crucifixion I see it in a three dimensional way. It is much more real and I believe I understand so much more. One must suffer in life and come through without bitterness.⁴⁵

The following extract is from a male aged about 40 and involves inspiration from viewing Claude Monet (1840-1926) (paintings and garden) and an abstract work of art by Robert Delaunay, (1885-1941), which then led to a feeling of 'all is one and one is all' which is of course so similar to the quotation from Happold above and the first of the extracts I have quoted from the archive:

We had gone to Paris with a group to study the impressionists. Our leader was an artist who spoke in very abstract language. Understanding came slowly if at all. The first day we visited the Museum of Marmottan to see Monet's paintings which were fascinating. The second day an outing had been arranged to Monet's

house and garden near Vernon on the Seine. The house and garden have been restored almost exactly as the artist knew them and one can see the waterlilies, the wisteria, the roses, the Japanese bridge just as he painted them. But I was still a long way from understanding. The next day we were to see an exhibition of Manet's work but the coach made a detour via the Marmottan for those who had missed it on the first day. Quite suddenly, I knew I had to see those paintings again. I left my wife and friends on the coach and my journey had begun. The paintings were even better than the first time because I was now seeing with two eyes; what I had seen that Monet saw and what I saw that Monet had seen. Excited, I left the Marmottan and walked towards the city. I passed the Museum of Modern Art. I went in and wandered around unseeing until I came to a huge gallery. It was quite dark, a concrete structure, and empty. On the walls were some enormous abstract pictures by Sonia Delaunay. For about twenty minutes I must have lain on the floor in front of one of them. A circular motif in many bright colours, black and white. Was that the first intimation to me that all is one and one is all? Unaware and excited I left the gallery. The museum which held the exhibition of Manet was on strike. At first cross and then undismayed I left and went back to the streets where I bought myself a picnic and carried my prize triumphantly until I came to the river Seine. The river was in full flow and I perched myself on the river wall with my feet dangling just inches above the water. To this day I shall bless the French chefs who use their art so magnificently to delight the senses which are nearest to my heart. I was very happy. A sparrow came and stood close to me. I threw her some bread but she was not hungry. She merely flew away thanking me before she went. The sparrow was free. And in an instant I too was set free. Like an arrow loosed in flight, it knows not where, I was flying free above the rolling waters of the Seine. And beneath me I could feel the great hand of God and the tears were coursing down my cheek and I did bless the Lord. I got up; found, by a miracle or so it seems, the coach; told the driver I was going back; took the Metro back to the Hotel where we were staying; bought myself a strawberry tart (I am pretty well ruled by my stomach) got my colours and disappeared into the beautiful garden to paint. And the trees, the buttercups, the heat of the sun came flooding through me onto my paper. That was the start of my journey to the knowledge and love of God. I am not there yet but the light grows clearer and my step firmer. The distractions of thought still surround me but occasionally I am able to see. I have joined the Society of Friends and I find their communion of great value and help. May I give to them as much as they give to me. It is a wonderful thing to have so many fine companions on the great journey. We all stumble and feel tired and have to sit by the wayside but there will always be a Friend who will come along, take you by the hand and together with a great throng we shall walk towards the light wherein lie truth and peace. Praise be the Lord. Fruits (from questionnaire): The growing realization that I can go free.⁴⁶

The next account is of a woman in despair who has a quite extraordinary religious experience when viewing a print of *The Last Supper*. Although the experience faded over two or three days the effect of the experience was life changing. The date of the experience was March, 1956 with the account being sent in to the RERC in December, 1997:

Sepia print of 'The Last Supper'. I stopped to study this. I stopped actually crying and I noticed, with a curiosity, that it seemed the artist had depicted the faces of all the disciples as care-worn and lined with the tribulations of humankind. But the face of Jesus looked unlined, pure, and I wondered at this. I must have turned to the right, towards the toilet, for I know the picture was on my left, and it was then that it happened. Emanating from the face of Christ (I sensed from my left) there was a force coming from him which utterly encompassed me. I became no longer aware of where I was. I believe I cannot adequately describe this. I was aware that this force was of the purity which had come from Christ. I could think 'how strange' - I had always thought purity a rather sterile, cold quality, almost a negation of life. But the power of this force was quite different. It was vibrant and of staggering power but yet (how could I tell this?) I knew it was disinterested - not indifferent - but disinterested in that it had no selfish motive whatever. I was standing before this - it was all I was aware of. I'm not sure now of the order of events, but they were all caused by the recognition that what I was seeing was the absolute Truth. It brooked no questioning. It was self-evidently all that we reverence and acknowledge good, above us, perfect, [?]holy - our innermost hearts' desire. As I stood before this, I had a strange sensation. It was as though my body was encased in quite a thick coating of plaster-of-Paris. And suddenly this developed cracks all over, and it fell from me. I was freed from all the little prejudices, the mistaken, narrow thoughts that I had created in my mind. I became aware of the self-pity I had been indulging in, and saw how paltry and worthless that was. For the first time I understood what 'awe' and 'humility' were. I felt naked before this light, but now frightened, not guilty, just amazed and glad at being given these new perceptions. I saw that my husband too really wanted a good relationship. That love, which was also what this purity comprised, was all that he really wanted. That this love was what all of us really wanted and needed. Then I was back in the passage. I don't know how long I was there - it was timeless - but I was a different person. The crying had ceased, I felt a peace and confidence unbelievable compared to my previous state. And physically it was as though every cell, every molecule, atom I daresay, of my body was alive, radiant. I'm afraid this state did not last for more than 2 or 3 days. The problems were still there. But the memory, over the years, has helped and altered my outlook. Perhaps the reason I wrote, later, a few verses of which I enclose herewith, the last. The light exists So bright and wonderful We too, becoming translucent Can shine from every soul Not a reflection of the great Another burning whole Additional flame Till the vast shadow Our greedy ignorant wants create Can lose validity Be seen to be the shifting insubstantial groping Of insatiable hunger Which cannot be assuaged By our own seeking to appease For it does not exist. It's only absence [absence] from the light From which we suffer. We make the cloud And live in shade That we have made. Fruits [from Text]: I'm afraid this state did not last for more than 2 or 3 days. The problems were still there. But the memory, over the years, has helped and altered my outlook.⁴⁷

The account below is of an experience (recorded by a female of unknown age writing in February 1991) induced by seeing pre-historic cave paintings in two locations and separated by many years. The experiences of viewing these paintings seemed to have enabled the

respondent who had read Blake and Kathleen Raine (1908-2003), fully to appreciate the meaning of spirituality:

I read widely: mysticism, Eastern religions, the strange and inexplicable, and poetry - Blake, who said that the world of imagination was the real world and perception was infinite; Emily Dickinson, who expressed so concisely her contact with that wider universe of awe; and Kathleen Raine, who actually wrote about experiences like my own of expansion and awe, evoked by contact with nature. Eventually I came to realise that the 'scientific' and 'spiritual' perceptions give different views of the world which are complementary and not in opposition. They are describing the world from different aspects and each is true in its own realm; the external scientific view for the world of practical action, and the spiritual view for inner understanding of the inter-connectedness and unity of the universe. I had experienced a little of this inter-connectedness in contact with nature; but I also felt drawn to the past, to the roots and this is the context of the following experiences. Many years ago I had a very vivid experience in the prehistoric painted caves in Altamira in Northern Spain. In spite of the guided tour and the other tourists I felt linked, over 20,000 years, with the painters of these images; I was filled with a great sense of the wholeness of human life, of expansion and freedom, and a feeling that I can only describe as love, not for any individual but for the whole of humankind. I remained exultant for three days after this. It was a joyful experience very much connected with human life. Many years later in Ireland I visited the Celtic and prehistoric remains at Tara. There, peering into the carved chamber called the 'Tomb of the Hostages' I had a vivid impression of the huge figure of a woman giving birth. It occurred to me that these carved chambers (officially called 'tombs') may have been birth chambers in the days when birth was revered. What could be more sacred than the bringing forth of new life to be celebrated with reverence and awe? These experiences were both joyful and life-affirming. In contrast with many religious philosophies which oppose the carnal and the spiritual they were experiences of reverence for life on the earth. It is this reverence for life which I find lacking in religious systems which see the physical world as an inferior realm to be overcome in the search for 'spirituality'. Such beliefs have led to the exploitation of the earth and to the denigration of women who make men aware of their bodies and, in the process of birth, bring new flesh into the world. I have never felt drawn to religions with an external 'heavenly father' but find the holy within all life. Spirituality is then a spontaneous consciousness of living, a joy in life, not in withdrawing from the world which is seen as a prison for the soul. I see spirituality as including a responsibility for my own integrity, a recognition of myself as part of the whole of humankind and the living earth, a reverence for the holy in oneself, others and the world which makes the whole of life a sacrament.⁴⁸

The next two accounts relate to paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. The first of these extracts refers to experiences involving Friedrich and poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins(1844-1889) leading eventually to a conversion to the Catholic Church:

Sunday School once a week because it was the 'done thing'. I viewed religion and the church with mistrust and dislike. At the age of 14 I was introduced to a

Baptist church, formed social ties, stayed, and after a year or two became a member. But throughout my late teens and early twenties my only religious feelings were induced by certain paintings, poems, and some music, and were strangely alien to Baptist attitudes. I remember being deeply moved by seeing illustrations of paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, and by reading some Japanese Haiku poems, and the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and many other things that seem to be associated with an ecstatic approach to nature. The things that I really found that I associated with a religious stirring were the commonplace romantic trappings of snow, pine-trees, the moon and the sea, and these I could in no way equate with formal Christian teaching, although at the same time I held Christian views on ethics and social matters. Slowly I drifted into a quiet chaos of the mind. I could never decide between two alternatives; one, that I was willing 'victim' of the emotional power of much Romantic or Eastern art, or two that these things were an expression of something much deeper and much more fundamental that I shared with these artists. Finally I drifted away from the Baptist church, and after several years in a sort of spiritual vacuum, have finally resolved my problem by becoming a member of the Catholic Church. This I find gives direction to my ethics and is broad enough to allow my particular 'religious nature'.⁴⁹

This next extract is a much shortened account which expresses a vision inspired by nature and a painting (possibly *The Wanderer above a Sea of Mists* (1818) or of those of the *Chalk Cliffs on Rügen* (after 1818)) by Friedrich:

After the good God had become for me without a dwelling-place, I often felt how strongly life pulsates in nature, in gentle moods as well as in thunderstorm and tempest, by day and by night, through thoughtful solitude as well as when two are together, in myself, too, when a rhythm carried me away. I do not hesitate to regard such an experience as r e l i g i o u s. Beauty is something originally divine and a heart that beats in tune with nature with its harmonies as with its contrasts, is bound up with everything that comes to pass in blossoming and flourishing, in the love dance as in the struggle of rivals, in dying as in being born. The daily course of the sun with its rosy dawns, with its shining high noon, with its crimson evening symphonies, is for me a religious manifestation, and I experience the work of Nolde, which gives expression to this motley colouring, as a religious empathetic collection and re-creation of a high order. Clouds wander and somewhere there is a lake or the sea, and the sun and the moon are mirrored in their infinite depths. Yonder is a mountain or glacier, and my eye ranges over the world of mountain, over everlasting snows and peaks, and I lapse into contemplation as to the fascination itself. Another time I travel in a storm across the black sea, everything is tossed up, and the ship is snatched down into a valley in the waves and hurled up onto a foamy peak. There are the dunes, like waves benumbed they stand in the sun, like phantom images of sand they dream beneath the moon. Up above the stars twinkle, the big yellow-golden ones, the little tiny white ones, they are ordered in galaxies, they are clustered in nebulae. And then someone stands before it like Caspar David Friedrich in the great silence of the chalk cliffs and contemplates the vault of night, and the friends both feel the same thing, their hearts pound their way into this holy outflow. It is a song without

words, that they repeat within themselves, a blissful hymn before the horizon back there, which delimits their view, lest they become giddy with delight.⁵⁰

The following account is in the form of a letter to Hardy which muses on art, beauty and visions and the paintings of Samuel Palmer:

003641 9th December 1975 Dear Professor Hardy, The Church Times invites us to write to you about "religious experience". In spite of my academic background (MA Oxon Theology 2nd Cl. 1936) religious experience is for me not intellectual at all but visual. Austin Farrer had pointers to this approach in his Bampton Lectures, "Glass of Vision", but that is only rationalising what is to me real and direct experience. By "visual" I mean two different things: A. Sudden unplanned visualisations during periods of quiet or prayer. One, of a splendid bird, came years ago as a message from outside self of the fact and truth of God - the Spirit, perhaps - caring "even for me" that left me in its grip for longer than I usually meditated. Similarly an actual vase of flowers, "Those flowers are praising God by their nature, as I long to do, though I shall have to will to do it - they just do it!" These have lived powerfully as memories. B. Is a long term result (perhaps) of interest in art, or was it vice versa? A watercolour, if I can see it, remember it, or paint it myself, which conveys a sense of light (from mystery) is a real religious icon. I have only pulled this off two or three times in my own work, but Turner had it supremely. Such pictures stay with me as a central focus in the mind of all I most deeply experience. The Samuel Palmer drawings in the Ashmolean strike me as evidence that he knew my experience from within, though as icons Turner is nearer my own visual imagery. This is not just "an interest" but a way in which "God" lives as truly Wonder. I believe this experience to be quite common, though not readily articulated. I mix much in Isle of Wight art circles and find ordinary people readily know. I am due to talk to a young group in Shanklin next Sunday after church by invitation. Do I articulate it as I do because I am a theologian? (I do local ordination training.) How can one tell. There are visual memories of wonder with me from early childhood. Perhaps all I have done is to treasure and preserve something from preverbal {sic} experience? I would discard my library rather than lose it. Mostly the visualisations are not in the least ecclesiastical. I am also a fly fisherman with a reputation for skill in that sport - the sense of direct contact with beauty and the mystery of underwater life convey the same things in the silence the sport demands. This is terribly ordinary - but life itself to me.⁵¹

This next account which is much shortened related to a visionary dream which was inspired by Pre-Raphaelite art and El Greco (1541-1614). The respondent was male and of unknown religious allegiance. Many of the experiences described took place when the artist was a young man and were written down in 1980 when he was 45 years old:

1953 Dreaming suddenly this dream opened out into another reality. Colours so bright that shadows seemed to be complimentary colours, so clear and real that as I write this, I would not say this is the ultimate reality but that other world I saw was. A brightly lit figure was standing in front of me. He/she spoke to me but I was more interested in looking around me visually than listening. Three other

figures were on my left about 10-15 ft away. As my attention wandered from speech {sic} this other reality closed up and I returned to my previous dream then woke up almost immediately. My body felt intensely alive, deep pleasant emotions, almost as if I was on fire. The only words I remember were "Beware of the Church of the East". From that day I became a Christian believing that I had seen Christ (one of the figures to the left). I had been studying Hinduism at the time. I later on discovered pre-Raphaelite and El Greco which seemed in tune with the reality I saw. Pre-Raphaelite for clarity and colour (the more photographic) El Greco for the self-illuminated visionary figures I saw. The connection with actual painters and styles comes later. However, the attitude towards the "dream" is obviously fundamental to my nature. For Art (visual world put first) after this dream in dream I thought God's purpose best served by me painting for others plus religious poetry. [marginal note "About 1964"] But I later on discovered that people and ideas meant more to me than visual world, so for a time, despite success (exhibitions, Durham University Mural, Peterlee Crucifixion {sic}, work on T.V.) I gave up painting (save occasionally for a friend or to return a favour) to write about education and to study sciences (Field Sciences: Geology, Botany, Natural History etc).⁵²

The next account is particularly interesting inasmuch as it involves a Jewish woman who through an experience of the encounter with two Christian iconic paintings gained an impression of the soteriological quality of the life of Christ:

The Pieta of Michelangelo, the painting The last Supper would arouse in me feelings which were vaguely familiar, as though {sic} I had been there. I was stirred by this Jesus, the man himself seemed so close, so real to me, and yet everything I had ever been taught was a complete contradiction of what I was feeling. To some it would appear that I had suffered some sort of hallucination, or was in a temporary state of insanity, but this experience will never leave me, the knowledge of Christ's {sic} existence his love and compassion for all life and the reason for his birth and death will be with me for as long as I live, and for as many lives as I have to live to complete my fulfillment {sic}.⁵³

This final extract looks forward to one of the later chapters in this thesis when I shall be examining the role of paintings as aids to devotion and their use within a church service. The female Christian respondent clearly found in her experiences a profundity that was akin to worship. The respondent also wrote a poem on the experience on viewing a grave and noble landscape by Jacob van Ruysdael (c. 1628-1682):

Other instances that come to mind are the overwhelming sight of Tintoretto's Crucifixion in San Rocco in Venice; & the Giotto frescoes in the {unreadable name looks like Scwegian} Chapel in Padua were almost a parallel to the Revelation of St. John - a new experience of worship. I have present in mind, always ready, the experience of Klemperer's conducting of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis & of Britten's {Benjamin Britten} War Requiem & the Church Dramas, especially the Prodigal Son - One could mention many other instances which

have opened another world or a moment of great intensity & complete self-forgetfulness & absorption.⁵⁴

Summary

In this chapter a disquisition has been developed showing a progression of an approach to intuition and religious experience which begun with Schleiermacher and developed to a further and more disciplined stage by Otto. Practical examples of religious experience were then recorded by James with the analysis being given an academic social science authority by Happold. The work of Hardy was then highlighted with the chapter ending with extracts from a number of accounts of religious experience, sent in to the Religious Experience Research Centre at Lampeter, and which relate to either the experience of creating or viewing a work of art. This chapter closes the part of the thesis concerned mainly with theology, philosophy and the philosophy of art. The following chapters will be set mainly in the discipline of iconology and will examine in detail some of the artists and their works which I consider to be such that in the appropriately susceptible viewer, that viewer may be induced to reach a state of experience which approaches or equals that of the mystical state described above.

¹ Schleiermacher was promoted in the twentieth century by Otto with references scattered throughout *The Idea of the Holy* (see note 4 below) and, by the editor, in the introduction to Schleiermacher, F. *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1966 (page xxxii and note 58). The editor, Richard Crouter refers to the fact that Otto himself published an edition of *On Religion* and wrote a supplement to *The Idea of the Holy* which includes a chapter entitled ‘How Schleiermacher Re-discovered the *Sensus Numinis*’.

² Tillich, P. *Systematic Theology Volume I* London SCM Press p. 156. This book was first published in 1951 by the University of Chicago. Davies, B. *An introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* Oxford Oxford University Press 1993 (2nd edition) pp. 55 and 239, quoting Anselm who writes in the *Proslogion*: *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*.

³ Küng, H. *Great Christian Thinkers* London SCM Press 1994 (Translated by John Bowden from the German edition published by Piper GmbH in 1994) p. 166.

⁴ Otto, R. *The Idea of the Holy* Oxford Oxford University Press 1958 p.6.

⁵ Ibid. p. 7.

⁶ John Macquarrie has written an introduction to mysticism without admitting to ever having had a mystical experience and emphasises that he is not a mystic. See *Two Worlds are One* by Macquarrie, J. London SCM Press 2004.

⁷ Ibid, p. 10.

⁸ Ibid. p. 31.

⁹ Rankin, M. quoting Hardy in *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* London Continuum 2008 p. 5. (taken from *Spiritual Nature of Man* (1979) by Alister Hardy reprinted 1997 Religious Experience Research Centre, Lampeter, Ceredigion).

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- ¹⁰ James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* London Collins (Fontana Library) 1971.
- ¹¹ James, W. p. 487.
- ¹² Ibid. p. 488.
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 488.
- ¹⁴ Otto, R. p. 60.
- ¹⁵ Isaiah's 'call vision' is to be found in Chapter 6, vv 1-8.
- ¹⁶ Whilst Happold refers to a mystical state, I would equate this with a numinous or religious experience of the type that is being considered in this thesis as being induced by nature or a particular type of painting.
- ¹⁷ Happold, F.C. *Mysticism – A Study and an anthology* London Penguin Books 1964 p. 45.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p. 45.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p. 46.
- ²⁰ Ibid. pp. 46-47. Nicholas of Cusa (Nikolaus Krebs) was a Neoplatonist, Roman Catholic bishop, philosopher, reformer and one of the great German thinkers of the 15th century who lived from 1401 to 1464. For more detail see: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cusanus/>
- ²¹ Ibid. p. 49. – Happold quoting Eckhart
- ²² Macquarrie, J. *Two Worlds are One* London SCM Press 2004 pp. 1-34.
- ²³ Ibid. p 27.
- ²⁴ Rankin, M. pp. 53-77.
- ²⁵ Ibid. pp. 78-92.
- ²⁶ Otto, R. p.70.
- ²⁷ Macquarrie, J. p. 216. See also the website: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174796>.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 217.
- ²⁹ Otto, R. p. 67. For details on Worringer, see: Sorensen, Lee. "Worringer, Wilhelm." *Dictionary of Art Historians* (website). www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/worringer.htm
- ³⁰ Ibid, p. 68.
- ³¹ On looking around Stonehenge (in the days when one could freely wander around the monument) I could appreciate the amount of work that went into their erection and maybe think of druids and pagan worship, but, maybe because of my Judeo-Christian background, the experience could certainly not be described as appreciating the sublime, mystical or any way other- worldly.
- ³² In an earlier chapter Kant's appreciation of the beautiful in nature is indirectly compared with Schelling's appreciation of the beautiful through contemplation of the representation of that beauty.
- ³³ Rankin, M. quoting Alister Hardy, quoting Rothenstein. p. 87.
- ³⁴ Rankin, M. p. 87.
- ³⁵ Otto, R. p. 68.
- ³⁶ Ibid. p. 69.
- ³⁷ Rankin, M. pp. 89-90.
- ³⁸ Ibid. p.5 Rankin quoting Hardy.
- ³⁹ Rankin M. quoting Hardy *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* London Continuum 2008. Hay, D. *God's Biologist A life of Alister Hardy* London Darton Longman Todd 2011. Franklin, J. *Exploration into Spirit* (The History of the AHRERC) Lampeter Alister Hardy Society 2006.
- ⁴⁰ Rankin, M. p. 3.
- ⁴¹ The archive has recently been digitised and is available on-line to members of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience and the Alister Hardy Trust. The search process at present is a fairly elementary single word search on subject and text and it is anticipated that a more sophisticated search process will be introduced in the future.
- ⁴² Account no. 200025 in the Alister Hardy Archive of Religious Experiences held at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. (Account from 49 year old female, no religious allegiance reported in 2005.)
- ⁴³ Ibid. Account no. 000652 Christian male aged 69 reporting in 1970.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid. Account no. 003163 Christian male reporting in May 1974, age at the time of writing unknown but possibly of around 50-60 years.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid. Account no. 000863 Christian female aged early 50's writing in 1969.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid. Account no. 004319 Society of Friends males aged 40s.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. Account no. 300137 Christian (female) account sent in 7-12-97. Dare of the experience 1-3-57. Age of the respondent unknown.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Account no. 005067 Female unknown age – account sent in 23-2-91.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Account no. 000760 Male. Age of first experience 14years. Account sent in 1-3-70, but the first experience was written down in much earlier, the first experience being at the age of 14 in 1929. Christian (Catholic).

⁵⁰ Ibid. Account no. 003733 Account sent in from Germany. Christian respondent of unknown gender. Date of writing: 1977. Age at time of writing :82 years.

⁵¹ Ibid. Account no. 003641 Christian male writing in December 1975 at the age of 59 years.

⁵² Ibid. Account no. 003880 Male writing in 1980 at the age of 45 years. No particular religious allegiance noted.

⁵³ Ibid. Account no. 003071 Female Jew writing in 1973 at the age of 46 about an experience which occurred at the age of 44 years. (The typist reproduces the account accurately including spelling mistakes.)

⁵⁴ Ibid. Account no. 003436 Female Christian of unknown age writing in November 1974 N.B. The chapel at Padua is almost certainly the *Cappella degli Scrovegni* which contains probably the greatest collection of Giotto frescoes. See: <http://www.cappelladeglisrovegni.it/index.php/en/>.

SECTION TWO

Transcendence in the Iconography of Samuel Palmer and Caspar David Friedrich

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with signposts which point to the Transcendent – particularly those which are mediated to us through the iconography of particular artists. For those signposts to be effective there needs to be a two-way process between the artist who through divine inspiration (defined in this thesis as meeting the Podro criteria set out in Chapter One, and the Otto criteria for expressing the numinous as set out in Chapter Four) communicates with the viewer. The viewer in turn needs to have an appreciation of the idea that there is thought to exist a spiritual dimension beyond the physical constraints of the cosmos. In over-simplified terms one could say that both the artist and the viewer need to believe in God.

There are many analogies or models of that Ultimate Reality that we call God, ranging from the idea of an ever-loving Father as used in the Bible, the Ground of all Being suggested by Tillich through to the fifth dimension which is used by John Hick and me. James Fowler, theologian and social scientist has set out the stages of faith through which many will travel, with loving father conforming to stage 3 – synthetic-conventional faith, and the fifth dimension, which aims to express that which lies beyond the boundaries of space and time, conforming to stage 5 – conjunctive faith.¹ It is possible that Palmer and Friedrich both regarded the biblical loving father analogy as the most useful, but they would both have been open to other possibilities. Palmer read widely including Milton and Bunyan and would have been influenced by William Paley. Friedrich was influenced by Schleiermacher with his experiential approach to faith, an approach which left him (Schleiermacher) open to the criticism that he did not give priority to revelation.

The earlier models of God suggest that there are two components to that Reality, the Transcendent, being defined as that part which is wholly other in the sense that it is unlike its creation and stands beyond the created order, and the Immanent where God is regarded as everywhere present in nature and the lives of people.² John Macquarrie produced an interesting development of this model in which he associated immanence with the timeless, the impersonal and the mystical, and transcendence with the eschatological, the personal and the rational, with both coming together in what he describes as existential-ontological theism, an example of which would be Christianity.³ On the theme of the mystical, in a succinct summary of Evelyn Underhill, Rankin highlights the difference between immanence which sees humans and the universe as infused with the divine and emanation which envisages the divine as completely separate from the human.⁴ While the Bible does not make specific reference to immanence, there are a number of verses in, for example, the Book of Job which could be read as indicating immanence, one of the most appropriate being verse 4 of Chapter 33: ‘The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.’ Similarly for transcendence there are verses which are suggestive of this characteristic, for example, in Isaiah, Chapter 55, verse 8 there is: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.’

However, the symbiotic relationship which must be effective between the viewer and the artist is, I feel, not assisted by a model of the ultimate Reality which suggests a split between inner and outer components; I see the process of communication, if established, being continuous and without any artificially created boundaries. However, if we were to apply the Transcendent/Immanent or Emanation/Immanent models then the Underhill definition of Immanent would most certainly apply both to Samuel Palmer and to Caspar David Friedrich.

The definition of transcendentalism that has been used in this thesis - ‘the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining a scientific knowledge of an order of existence *transcending* the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience’ - which comes from Emerson, and was developed during the age of German Idealism can be applied independently of any particular religious context. As

explained in Chapter Three the *Zeitgeist* of German Idealism would have been familiar to both Palmer and Friedrich. Indeed this definition of transcendentalism is sufficiently general to be applied to any of the art forms – visual art, poetry, literature or music – in which the artist is endeavouring to express their intuition of that spiritual force which is beyond the reach of our physical senses. While German Idealism would have been the philosophy applied by the artists of the period under consideration, today we could be looking at the refinement of that philosophy – critical realism which in turn has been derived from Oxford Realism of the 1920s. Oxford Realism is defined by Alister McGrath, quoting Pritchard as: ‘knowledge unconditionally presupposes that the reality known exists independently of the knowledge of it, and that we know it as it exists in this independence.’⁵ In a development of this, the ‘critical realist principle – that there are realities external to us, but that we are never aware of them as they are in themselves, but always as they appear to us with our particular cognitive machinery and conceptual resources is ... a vital clue to understanding what is happening in different forms of religious experience’.⁶

When analysing the iconography of both Palmer and Friedrich there are two ways of approaching the analysis. The works of art could be examined in a way that would be appreciated by contemporaries of the artists or they could be analysed in a way that would apply to a viewer of the post-modern period. For example, Palmer would not be applying a critical realist principle but could well be applying the principle of the naïve realist. John Hick quotes as an example of naive-realism the visions of Christ experienced by Julian of Norwich in which she really believed ‘that the living Christ was personally present to her, producing the visions that she saw, and uttering in Middle English the words that she heard’.⁷ The critical realist would say that she was having a transcendent experience but clothed in a Christian form’. (Exactly the same argument could be applied to Blake’s visions when, for example he claimed to have had a conversation with St. Paul that morning.)

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) and Blake would have been imbued with a sense of the immanence of God – when they had their transcendental experiences, it could almost be

said that the transcendent component was breaking through the veil and joining with the immanent.

Thinking along these lines highlights the problem of speaking of God within a framework of language that ideally needs to be non-spatial and without any limitation of time.

H.A. Williams deals with this problem in the *Joy of God* when he suggests that:

Christian orthodoxy has always asserted, if God is transcendent He is also immanent. In fact, when you look at it, you find that transcendence and immanence are one and the same thing. Professor Ninian Smart has summarised this very clearly:

If transcendence means that God is not spatial, and yet is distinct from the cosmos while sustaining it, so to say, from behind, then there is no strong reason to distinguish this account of transcendence from one main meaning of immanence. The belief that God works *within* all things merely uses a different spatial analogy from the belief that He is behind or beyond the cosmos.⁸

This suggests that endeavouring to define clearly the boundary between immanent and transcendent is not always fruitful, with the immanent being lost in the transcendent or the transcendent being lost in the immanent. This explains why Hick in his book on religious experience hardly ever uses the word immanent but uses transcendent throughout. As he writes:

The fifth dimension of our nature, the transcendent within us answers to the fifth dimension of the universe, the transcendent without. In speaking of this, the limitations of language create a problem to which there is unfortunately no satisfactory solution. We want to refer to that which, according to the religions, is the ultimate object of human concern. In a western context we speak of God. And it is possible to use this familiar term with the stipulation that it points to the ultimate reality without however defining it, and so without prejudging whether that reality is personal or non-personal or even such that this duality exists. But in practice the long established associations

of the word as referring to an infinite divine Person are generally too strong for this stipulation to be effective. And so we resort to such terms as the Ultimate, Ultimate Reality, Absolute Reality, the Real, the Transcendent, The Divine, the Holy, the Infinite (and) the Eternal.⁹

At this distance in time and without specific statements of letters, it is difficult to know exactly how Palmer and Friedrich would have defined God. But it is known that from Palmer's Baptist background and from Friedrich's Pietist background that both would have had engrained within them a thorough knowledge of the Bible and would probably have had a fairly conservative approach to the Bible which would have been typical of the time. But they would have also been aware of other influences and other approaches to spirituality which would, or, at least could, have informed their iconography. For Palmer these would have ranged from Blake and his visions through to the allegorical approaches of John Bunyan (1628-1688) and John Milton (1608-1674) as well as the quasi scientific approaches of the supporters of natural theology and teleology such as Paley.¹⁰ In addition Palmer would have been subject to the views and philosophies coming from the German speaking part of Europe as mediated through Crabb Robinson and Coleridge. For Friedrich the influences would have been from German Idealism, especially as mediated through Schelling and Schleiermacher. Many of these influences have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

I will not, therefore, in the analyses that follow be utilising an exegetical pattern that might be appropriate when interpreting the Bible - that is: an analysis that would be correct within the life and times of the period and then an analysis that would be appropriate today taking into account all the scientific and philosophical changes that have occurred during the past two thousand years. The following iconographical analyses will identify those particular characteristics which the artists have included in their paintings and which ensure that for the sensitive viewer, the painting as a whole could be said to point to the Transcendent. The identification of those characteristics would have been just as relevant at the time of the production of the paintings as at the present time. Where appropriate, reference will of course be made to the Bible but this will not be a universal feature of the analyses.

While Palmer and Friedrich have not written down their understanding of the Ultimate Reality, they have expressed their understanding of the Divine through their art and the next two chapters will, in a series of case studies, analyse the way in which they have portrayed the numinous, producing works which point towards the Transcendent. These case studies will be contextualised where necessary by highlighting the influences – political, literary and theological – that were at work at the time of the production of the various paintings.

Chapter Five

The Iconography of Samuel Palmer

How Samuel Palmer endeavoured to portray the numinous

- Introduction
- Palmer in the Context of the Philosophy of the Age –A Short Recapitulation
- The Early Influences
- A Brief Dalliance with Politics
- *The Valley Thick with Corn* (1825)
- *Late Twilight* (1825)
- *The Flight from Egypt* (c1824-8)
- The Work Completed at Shoreham
- Palmer's Later Work

Introduction

From an early age, Samuel Palmer showed signs of considerable sensitivity. At the age of three he was standing one evening with his nurse looking out of the window when the rising moon cast a shadow of an elm tree onto a white wall. As the branches moved in the wind and his nurse, Mary Ward, recited this couplet from Edward Young's *Paraphrase of Job*:

Fond man, the vision of a moment made,
Dream of a dream, and shadow of a shade¹¹

According to David Cecil, Samuel Palmer then:

responded to both the spectacle and the words...He recognised the visual beauty that enraptured him as charged with a spiritual and moral significance. This recognition was to exercise an influence on him for the rest of his life. His memory of the moon and its shadows sank down to the deepest level of his consciousness, to abide there, a permanent and living symbol of spiritual glory.¹²

This chapter will begin by setting Palmer in the milieu of Romanticism including some brief biographical notes to set his work in context, after which it will examine the way in which he endeavoured to create within some of his paintings and drawings of nature, characteristics that point towards the Transcendent. A sense of the Transcendent may lie deep within the psyche or it may in some other way be existent but beyond our ability to detect using either the five senses or any instrumentation currently available. Palmer tried to express the immanence of God, the God within, to show the glory of God and he would have been quite content with the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey's (1904-1988) suggestion that 'Man exists to glorify his Creator'.¹³ It is important to highlight that Glory is a biblical word with a special meaning, which Ramsey defines as follows:

To glorify God is to reflect the radiance of God like a mirror, in a life of righteousness, justice and compassion. But the nearer to God man comes in so reflecting him, the more he is aware of his creaturely dependence, his unworthiness, his need for forgiveness, and the more he finds his joy in God himself in praise and gratitude.¹⁴

While Palmer would have been unaware of this definition it epitomises my understanding of his artistic aims; this essay will argue that Palmer used his talent to fulfil this objective to glorify God and in so doing produce paintings which point to the Transcendent.

Palmer in the Context of the Philosophy of the Age –A Short Recapitulation

Samuel Palmer stood at a pivotal point in the age of Romanticism. The age of Reason could be said, as mentioned in Chapter Three, to have begun with Isaac Newton and David Hume during the first half of the eighteenth century. As a counterpart to this emphasis on scientific reason which it was thought could lead to the absence of any need for religion, William Blake (1757-1827) was emphatic in the need for the continuing use of imagination, an emphasis which was one of the characteristics of the age of Romanticism. This is summarised by the historian Jacques Barzun (1907-2012) who states ‘The deism and atheism (of the Enlightenment), its scepticism and materialism left many earnest souls seeking an outlet for piety, a surrogate for the *infâme* church that had been discredited’.¹⁵ The philosopher most associated with the beginning of this age is Jean-Jacques Rousseau who moved in his thought from ‘a Platonic position involving a theoretical condemnation of art’ to a position where the artist expresses his or her creativity through nature’.¹⁶ As we have seen in earlier chapters the German Idealists (for example Schiller, Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel) endeavoured to bridge the gap between Reason and Romanticism and were rather more open-minded in their thought, with Schleiermacher regarding the Universe as Divine. ‘You lie directly in the bosom of the finite world. In that moment you are its soul. Through one part of your nature you feel, as your own, all its power and its endless life.’¹⁷

A similar view is expressed by Schlegel: ‘The Universe we can neither explain nor conceive, but only contemplate and reveal.’¹⁸ Schlegel saw philosophy

as ‘logical beauty’ and the way to knowledge therefore as through art. The artist is himself a mediator of truth, aesthetic truth, with the power at his command of reconciliation and unity: (The artist) is the higher organ of the soul, where the living spirits of all outer humanity meet and in whom the inner man acts immediately.¹⁹

This is not altogether surprising because there are some obvious similarities between art and religion in terms of inspiration and contemplation. As Gordon Graham indicates when discussing art and religion in relation to the philosophies of Søren Aaby Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900):

There is a good case to be made for thinking that Art and Religion are closely allied in some way or other. In their most developed forms both make important use of three concepts, namely 'creation', 'inspiration' and 'contemplation'. God is a creator, and his creative acts both invite our contemplation and inspire us. Something very similar is said of art and artists - that artworks are also the outcome of creativity and objects worthy of studied contemplation. They are also commonly said to be both inspired and inspiring.²⁰

The Romantics and idealist philosophers regarded experience as very important: as Reardon points out – 'faith has its roots in feeling and intuition, of which theological doctrines can never be more than an imaginative symbolism, historically determined.'²¹ This viewpoint is very much in accord with Schleiermacher – 'in neither the Bible nor the doctrinal tradition does the ultimate authority reside, but in the vital momentum of religious experience itself.'²² In summarising Schleiermacher's influence, Reardon states the logical development of this idea – 'immanentism brought the divine into the world – process itself, God, man and nature coming together in a cosmic harmony in which each blends with the other in the soul of the believer.'²³ To quote Barzun again, he emphasises that the 'power of art to evoke the transcendent... is what has led artists and thinkers in the last two centuries to equate art and religion, finally to substitute art for religion'.²⁴

There were two main philosophical approaches to the way in which art may represent the numinous. The philosopher Hegel 'forecast the very evolution of art from the time that it assumed the role of religion ... and proclaimed in his own day by Blake, whose figurative art results from the conviction that nature and the senses are a veil that conceals the Divine.'²⁵ We have seen that Wordsworth, Schubert, Goethe, Friedrich and Runge all endeavoured in their work to show that the representation of nature could embody the divine. This was the philosophical and theological background of the world into which

Samuel Palmer was born. He occupied a position where he was influenced by Blake, but expressed his own ideas through the depiction of nature. The spirit of this age is very well summarised by Warner:

The yearning for faith remained; it simply became a hopeless yearning. Art responded by becoming a religion of its own, its sacred object not the God who may or may not be there in the darkness above the great world's altar stairs, but a deity created in the beholder's own eye, beauty. Almost all the best of Victorian Art could in some sense be called religious, a sign of anxious, doubting, times, constantly aspiring to the condition of faith.²⁶

The Early Influences

The Dissenters and the High Anglicans

Palmer was born into a Baptist household; two great influences were his father (who became a Baptist preacher on his retirement from bookselling) and his nurse (his mother died when he was twelve). He was also influenced by his grandfather, another staunch Baptist. However, in spite of this background, from an early age (around 12 years) Palmer developed a 'passionate love...for the traditions and monuments of the [Anglican] Church; its cloistered abbeys, cathedrals and minsters which (he) was always imagining and trying to draw.'²⁷ The reason for this allegiance to the Anglican rather than Baptist Church is not known (many of his early letters and papers were destroyed by his son A.H. Palmer) but possibly he was influenced by his short spell at the Merchant Taylors School, or maybe it was owing to the earlier family background where his great grandfather and grandfather were Anglican Priests. David Cecil suggests that the

English Baptist Church in the early nineteenth century was not a congenial place for an artist, especially one with a romantic sense of the past. It was too bleak, too puritan, too unfurnished with historical associations. The Church of England, on the other hand was ancient and sacramental: its music and ceremonies and magnificent liturgy were the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual sense.²⁸

While this this argument has some merit, is not totally convincing since John Linnell who became Palmer's father-in-law, was a very determined Baptist and, of course, Blake came from a dissenting family and was happy to remain in that tradition. In addition, John Milton with *Paradise Lost* and John Bunyan with *Pilgrim's Progress*, both of whom came from the Puritan Tradition, were two very great influences in Palmer's life, a subject which will feature later in this chapter. The importance of the Bible must also be emphasised – his father read extracts to him every day and encouraged him to remember many significant passages.²⁹

Perhaps then the key to Palmer's belief was that 'the deity he prayed to was not a featureless spirit but the post-resurrection Jesus.' Cecil quotes John Betjeman who suggests 'That God was Man in Palestine/ And lives today in Bread and Wine'.³⁰ Palmer, then, with his appreciation of drama would feel at home in a Church where this life today 'in Bread and Wine' was celebrated, as in the High Anglican Church, by the involvement of all the senses rather than the one sense as in the dissenting churches, where the emphasis was placed on listening to the Word. However, as emphasised by Harvey, 'in the home, nonconformists hung embroideries, decorative crockery, and prints that incorporated the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and pious verses: these are pictures of Scripture in a literally literal, rather than a figuratively illustrative, sense'.³¹

Palmer showed his talent at an early age and, following instruction in painting from William Wate (d.1832), he had reached such a standard that he was able to exhibit four paintings at the British Institution.³² Whilst this early success should have boosted his confidence he still experienced feelings of inadequacy:

I cannot execute at all...I feel ten minutes a day, the most ardent love for art, and spend the rest of the time in stupid apathy, ...and restless despondency; without any of those delicious visions which are the only joys of my life – such as Christ at Emmaus; the repenting thief on the cross; the promise to Abraham; and secondary visions of the ages of chivalry, which are toned down with deep gold to distinguish them from the flashy and distracted present.³³

Perhaps Palmer's feeling of frustration at his inability to express the sense of the God within was, in part, owing to his very limited knowledge of art history and particularly the lack of opportunity to visit the art galleries in the company of one who was knowledgeable about the artists whose works were on show. In answer to this, in 1822 'It pleased God to send Mr. Linnell as a good angel from Heaven to pluck me from the pit of modern art'.³⁴ Linnell introduced Palmer to a much wider range of art than he had previously experienced – German, French and early Italian works, with Palmer being, like Blake, particularly impressed by Albert Dürer. These older artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'wonderfully express the spiritual and the supernatural,' their angels and saints being 'more convincing than those of later artists'.³⁵ These Renaissance artists were a considerable influence on Palmer who eventually was able by the use of his imagination to express his visions of that which lay 'beyond the veil' through his images of nature rather than via biblical illustration. In addition Linnell was influenced by the works of William Paley and would have passed this influence on to Palmer.³⁶

The Important Roles played by William Blake and John Bunyan

In 1824, Linnell introduced Palmer to Blake, who would become perhaps the most important mentor and influence in his life. (At the time of this introduction, Blake was working on his drawings for the *Book of Job* – the importance of which fact would, in time, become significant.) Although in his depictions of his visions Blake painted very much from the imagination, he nevertheless helped Palmer in his quest to use nature as a way of expressing the glory of creation. As Vaughan points out

Palmer ... was fascinated by Blake's powers. He believed, moreover, that they were relevant for landscape. Accepting – like Wordsworth and Linnell – that nature provided the visible proof of divine creation, he felt that it could be further used to provide an intimation of the 'higher reality' beyond it, if viewed with the transforming powers of the visionary.³⁷

The significance of the Book of Job is that it contains a number of references to God's immanence – the most direct of these is Job, Chapter 33, verse 4 'The spirit of God has

made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life'.³⁸ In deriving a meaning from Evelyn Underhill, Rankin defines immanence as seeing 'humans and the universe as infused with the divine', a quality which would surely apply to Palmer.

At this time Palmer was reading Bunyan's allegorical *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Virgil's *Geogics* (c. 30 BCE), Milton and Shakespeare and it is almost certain that Blake would have helped in the interpretation of these works. Indeed, Palmer and some of his friends soon began to regard Blake as the 'Interpreter', a reference to the guide to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*.³⁹

Such was the importance of Bunyan on the formative years of Palmer's creativity that consideration must now be given to that poet in this chapter. Bunyan was a Dissenting preacher whose major work *Pilgrim's Progress Part I* was published in 1678, sometime after his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. Part II* of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, a much happier work, was published 6 years after *Part I*. Bunyan's reputation varied over the years; in his own time his work was regarded as not intellectual by the educated theologians of the day – 'Bunyan's was the work ...fit only for "Maids and Apprentices"'⁴⁰ During the eighteenth century his reputation seemed to follow two parallel paths with his being despised and admired equally. By the end of that century his position was much more secure – he was enthusiastically supported by Blake, Crabbe Robinson, Wordsworth, Keats, Hazlitt and Emerson.⁴¹ The works of Bunyan and, indeed, John Milton, another influence on Blake and Palmer, came from a Puritan Tradition. Referring to the tradition

Geoffrey Nuttall (historian and Congregational minister (1911-2007)) stressed the immediate and 'experimental', the 'enthusiastic' nature of the Puritan religious experience, opened the way to relate, rather than oppose, Conventicle and Parnassus, by pointing out that the inner certitude of the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a consciousness of the difficulty of describing and validating such a personal conviction to others.⁴²

Pilgrim's Progress is a long narrative poem – an allegory for the relationship between mankind and God - describing Christian's route via many vicissitudes to salvation; it is

based on many of Bunyan's own difficulties occasioned by his living at the time of the Restoration and of the 1662 *Act of Uniformity* (which effectively denied the Dissenters their existence and led indirectly to the imprisonment of Bunyan).⁴³ The experiential 'quality of Bunyan's belief is reminiscent of Luther who suffered a similar crisis of despair and forgiveness, and it is not surprising that reading Luther in translation was one of the formative theological influences in Bunyan's life'.⁴⁴ One thinks perhaps of the Puritans and Dissenters taking a very literal view of the Bible, but it is interesting to note that Bunyan comes to a more relaxed attitude when he learns that 'the Bible is not to be naively interpreted. 'Was not God's Laws...in olden times held forth by Types, Shadows and Metaphors?''⁴⁵ However, Bunyan was very clear that the 'Spirit worked through Scripture using ignorant men...and (he) had not much time for the intellect and the reason'⁴⁶ This was of course in the period before the Enlightenment, but one sees a close parallel here between this expressed opinion and Blake's view and indeed that of the Romantics generally that the imagination, both visual and literary, was all important and was in the eighteenth century becoming rendered much less important by the emphasis on reason. With all this influence from the puritan and dissenting tradition derived from parents, friends and reading, it is perhaps indeed surprising that Palmer became a member of the high Anglican Church – a Church which at that time espoused the views of the latitudinarians – 'religion is about two things, reason and morality'.⁴⁷ Maybe Palmer was able to bring the 'enthusiastic nature of the Puritan religious experience' referred to by Nuttall above to the drama of the High Anglican services. In addition the Anglican Church would have suited Palmer's conservative attitude, opposed to the Acts of Parliament giving relief to Dissenters, and 'a political conservative who deplored the *Reform Bill* of 1832'⁴⁸

The Influence of John Milton and *Paradise Lost and Regained*

Another very important influence on both Blake and Palmer, and indeed other artists of the period, for example John Martin, was Milton – to the extent that Blake wrote his own versions of some of Milton's works, endeavouring to make them relevant for his own age: *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) and the long narrative poem *Milton*

(1811).⁴⁹ In *Milton* Blake introduced the land of Beulah – ‘a place where Contraries are equally true...It is a pleasant lovely Shadow where no dispute can come’⁵⁰ Beulah, according to Sloss and Wallis was ‘either as something a little lower than the perfection of Eternity, or, though less distinctly, as the proximate highest, if not the highest mode of communication possible to mortals.’⁵¹ Beulah is a Hebrew word meaning ‘Married’ and occurs in the Bible – Isaiah, Chapter 62, verse 4 (see note 38 below). Blake elaborated this concept of Beulah in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and doubtless influenced Palmer with the image of Beulah in *Milton*.⁵² The images conjured up by the phrases ‘moony habitations of Beulah’ and ‘Beulahs moony shades and hills’ must have exerted a power on Palmer, as one can trace this influence within many of the works of Palmer completed during the period while he was in thrall to Blake and in the time when he was at Shoreham. There is inadequate space within this thesis fully to discuss the influence of John Milton’s narrative poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), concerned with the age-old battle between good and evil and told through a reinterpretation of Genesis and the Fall followed by the story of coming of the Messiah, his death, resurrection and ascension. For a helpful commentary on Milton see Corns, T. (ed) *A Companion to Milton*, edited by Thomas Corns and published by Blackwell.⁵³

Palmer’s move to Shoreham - Early works - The Oxford Sepia Series

Some three years after Palmer’s meeting with Blake, ill health forced a move into the country and having visited and been inspired by the Darent Valley, he chose to live in the nearby village of Shoreham. Coincidentally, at this time (1827) Palmer received a significant legacy from the estate of his grandfather which enabled him to work free of the need to produce an income. This was a very formative period in his life when he was able produce work that had only to satisfy himself and to enjoy a life of sketching, painting and discussing the meaning of life with a group of friends of much the same age as himself (known as the ‘ancients’) all of whom had been influenced by Blake and all of whom lived for a while in Shoreham.

The result of Palmer's fascination with Blake, Bunyan and Milton was the series of brown ink and sepia mixed with gum arabic studies of pastoral twilight or dawn scenes produced in 1825.⁵⁴

A very clear link with these writers was given by Palmer who inscribed the mounts of these works with appropriate quotations. In addition to these writers an extract from the Harvest Festival Psalm 65 appears appropriately on *The Valley Thick with Corn* (1825). A common theme in these Sepia works was that of the moon – usually it was drawn, often as a sickle shape, low down in the sky where its size was very dominant. Possibly Palmer was exaggerating the optical illusion one has when seeing the moon low down, near the horizon, where it is seen amongst trees or buildings and appears very much larger than when it is high in the sky with no land based reference points. For Palmer the moon was very significant and even personified – ‘Sometimes the rising moon seems to stand tiptoe on a green hill top to see if the day be going and the time of her vice regency be come’.⁵⁵ Vaughan in his comments on *Late Twilight* (1825) suggests that the moon is a common symbol for Christ – but I have found no other evidence for this beyond a comment at a conference when it was suggested that this was a Catholic symbol.⁵⁶ While there are certainly references to the Sun and Moon being worshipped, and the moon features strongly in weather lore, the moon as a symbol for Christ does not seem to appear amongst theological references.⁵⁷ However, I have found references to the moon being used as a symbol for Mary but these are rather obscure and I would suggest that ‘the moony habituations of Beulah’ are the more likely origin of the significance of the moon in these studies.⁵⁸

Palmer was totally enraptured by the countryside around him and from the way in which he expressed his love of that countryside one could deduce that his relationship with the scenery around was akin to that of a religious experience. For example he writes: ‘How happy are those who find Him and adore Him everywhere, as they investigate His beautiful creation’.⁵⁹ As Rachel Campbell-Johnson points out he saw nature as evidence of the divine presence in the world – a presence which he expressed in words as ‘the translucent amber...the purple sunset blazoned with gold’ and so on.⁶⁰ In expressing these

views Palmer may have been referencing William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802) where he presents the teleological basis for the existence of God. While all such proofs are now discredited, Palmer would have been influenced by the satisfaction expressed by Paley that whole of nature was interdependent and designed to realise an overall state of well-being.⁶¹ A logical conclusion to be drawn from Paley is that his conception of God is such that God lies outside time and space and hence is transcendent. It is the immanence of God – the God within – that enables Palmer to give suggestions of what might lie beyond the veil to those whose beliefs and cultural background would enable them to detect such connotations.

A paragraph from one of Thomas Traherne's (1636-74) meditations seems very relevant to the style and content of the Palmer Oxford Sepias, particularly *A Rustic Scene* (1825) or *Early Morning* (1825):

The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which should never be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting ... all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifested in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared. I saw all in the peace of Eden...All time was Eternity and a perpetual Sabbath.⁶²

The divine presence, the ultimate reality or God cannot be pictured because, unless one uses the anthropomorphic image or metaphor for God as the Father, God is not a picturable object. One can only suggest from one's experience a signpost pointing towards that reality that one senses but cannot prove. Palmer's solution to this problem as set out in the Oxford Sepias is to create a veil (the 'something infinite behind' of Traherne) by making some of his images of nature less clear, placing them in the evening with the characteristic large moon or church steeple pointing towards the infinite. In this way he is presenting the viewer with a signpost which suggests a Transcendence which can then be perhaps instrumental in furthering the faith of a receptive viewer. In addition, if one looks at the *Lonely Tower* (1879), a work which was produced towards the end of his life he is suggesting the limitlessness of the ineffable in the way in which he combines the idea of a veil with the infinite immensity of the night sky. As Harvey suggests:

For Palmer, the natural and the supernatural were almost indivisible, as they had been in Eden. The natural world was like a transparent curtain through which, vaguely, we might perceive the greater splendour of the heavenly or supernatural world.⁶³

Of this period in Palmer's life Grigson suggests 'The three years in which influence in the form of borrowing from Blake are visible, as distinct from an enlargement and energizing of spirit, are 1824, 1825 and 1826 – naturally enough.'⁶⁴ These works point towards the transcendent and could be regarded as sacramental inasmuch as they assist the receptive viewer towards a closer relationship with the Ultimate Reality.

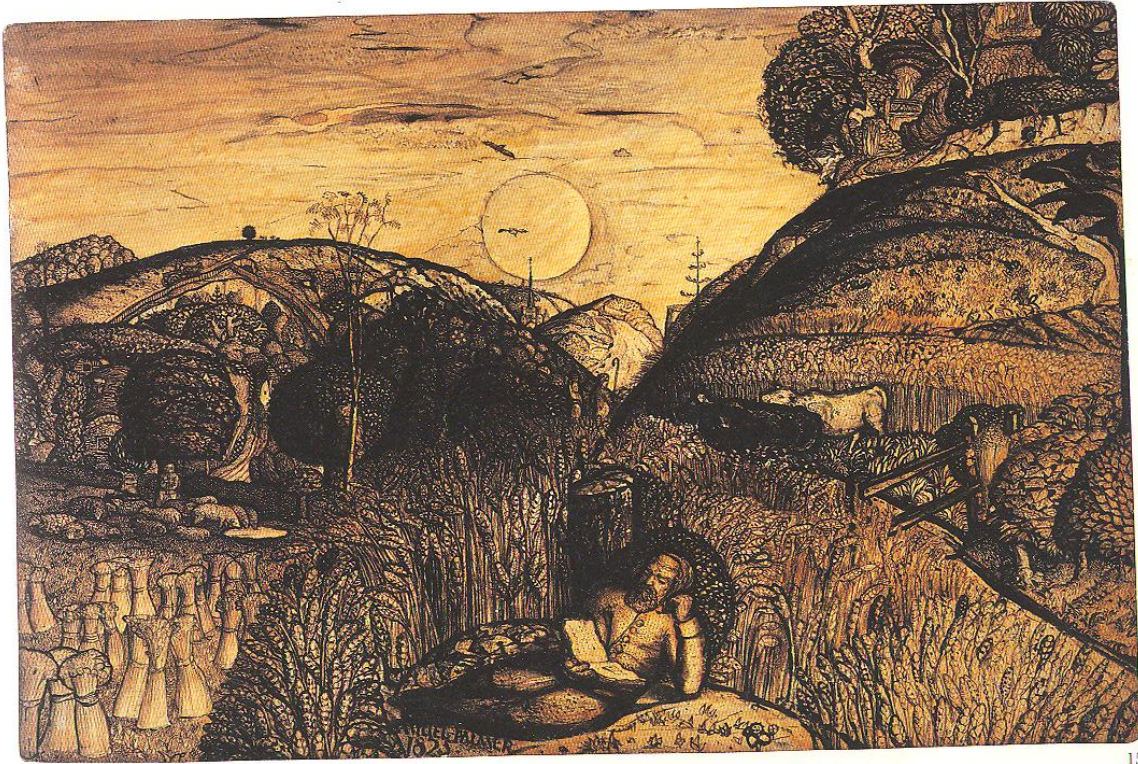
A Brief Dalliance with Politics

After about 1832, there became a lessening of intensity in his work; it was a period when, on a personal level, Palmer had to start thinking about the need for an income, and for a while he became involved in politics. The country was in turmoil with Corn Law problems and with consideration of the Reform Bill, and in the religious domain there were many changes, the most significant of which was the tolerance being shown to those of a Dissenting faith on the one hand and the Catholic faith on the other.⁶⁵ Palmer was very conservative in his views, even to the extent of being concerned about the Acts of 1828 and 1829 granting relief to the dissenters and Catholics. In a letter to George Richmond he refers to thinking the 'best of the old high Tories, because I find they gave most liberty to the poor, and were not morose, sullen and bloodthirsty like the Whigs, liberty jacks and dissenters'.⁶⁶ It seems that Palmer was able completely to separate the visionary views of the Dissenters and their tremendous influence upon him, from their political views. Indeed so concerned about the political situation was he that he wrote an extreme paper – *The Address to the Electors of West Kent* – in support of the conservative position. His beloved countryside was in turmoil, ricks were being burned and the Anglican Church, whilst remaining the established church, no longer held the position of exclusive authority in matters of religion. While Harrison notes, 'the political changes profoundly affected Palmer's art, as religious subjects gave way to the pastoral' and there

are no longer the obvious references to Bunyan, a similarity with the more obvious visionary works can still be seen in such paintings as *Moonlight: a Landscape with Sheep* (c1831-2), *The Golden Valley* (c1833-4) and *A Pastoral Scene* (1835) where surely Palmer is still 'reflecting the radiance of God'⁶⁷. After 1835, Palmer began to travel and in 1837 went with his new wife to Italy and as a consequence his work changed radically with his focus from this time on and for the next thirty years or so being on earning a living. Transcendence and the attempts to capture the Glory of God were no longer uppermost in his thoughts. However, as Cecil suggests, his faith was always informing his art. 'Certainly it was his faith that vitalized his art. For, as he saw it, it was his faith that made his vision imaginative and therefore aesthetic.'⁶⁸ In addition, Blake was always in his thoughts; in a letter to Alexander Gilchrist in 1855, Palmer writes of Blake 'In him at once you saw the Maker, the Inventor...He was energy itself, and shed around him a kindling influence, an atmosphere of life, full of the ideal. To walk with him in the country was to perceive the soul of beauty through the forms of matter...'⁶⁹ In 1864, Palmer again writes of looking again (with the Gilchrists) at a number of Blake's drawings: 'and were so riveted and unaware of the time, that a first look at the watch told three in the morning!'⁷⁰

The remainder of this chapter will examine as case histories, a number of works by Palmer, analysing those aspects of the iconography which suggest a pointing towards the Transcendent, beginning with two of the Sepia Series.

The Valley Thick with Corn (1825)



15

Valley Thick with Corn (1825) 18.4 2 × 7.5 cm Dark Brown ink and Sepia mixed with Gum

This small painting is annotated with an extract from one of the traditional ‘harvest’ psalms – no.65. ‘Thou crownest the year with thy goodness...’ In Palmer’s sketchbook there is reference, in a sketch of the harvest moon, to Psalm 104.⁷¹

In the immediate foreground there is a figure reading (or at least contemplating the book as the light comes only from the rather exaggerated moon) connected vertically above the reader by the stems of the remaining standing corn leading the eye to the church the steeple of which points to the (harvest?) moon. So far as the identity of the reader is concerned there has been much speculation – Harvey suggests it is Palmer himself with a copy of the Bible, another school of thought suggests that he is Bunyan reading *Pilgrim’s*

Progress, others have speculated that he is a Shakespearian character or even Shakespeare himself.⁷² Harvey agrees strongly that with the typological influence evident in the painting there is much to support his view regarding identity with the artist but knowing of Palmer's interest in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the suggestion of Bunyan is not unreasonable. Vaughan suggests that owing to the style of the dress, the suggestion that this figure is Christian from *Pilgrim's Progress* has much to commend it.⁷³ He writes:

Malins has associated the figure with Christian, the protagonist in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, dressed in his new coat, resting and reading in the 'arbour' halfway up the hill called 'Difficulty'. Even though certain other features in the landscape (such as the gate and the two paths to the right) could be related to this interpretation, it seems difficult to match the details exactly. The general inspiration of the landscape invested with religious meaning that Bunyan's book provided for Palmer is not in doubt...⁷⁴

This is speculation and many hills are shown, any of which could be the Delectable Mountains overlooking Beulah. To the left of the figure above the stooks of corn there is a shepherd (an allusion to Christ the good shepherd, as exemplified particularly in Psalm 23) watching over his flock, beyond which there is a wooded area and, in the far distance, a horse and cart presumably returning to the farm. The road beyond the cart disappears over the brow of a hill beyond which there is another wooded hill: overall there is a suggestion of tremendous distance which is reflected also on the right hand side of the painting where there is a road leading to a high cliff which takes the eye through a bridge, a wood and out of the picture. Returning to the centre of the picture there are two farmworkers pausing to look at the cattle on their way back to the village, represented solely by the church the steeple of which, as mentioned above, leads the eye upwards to the moon and the sepia sky with its hovering birds, which following a reference to Palmer's sketch book could be owls.⁷⁵ In this particular work there is religious or spiritual significance and the influence of Blake, for as Vaughan observes:

The reclining figure in a landscape, with head resting on arm (as the reading figure in this work is so doing) is a traditional image of melancholia. Palmer may be alluding to this tradition and perhaps revising it in the Blakean manner as a means of returning imaginatively to the times of plenty in olden days through reading the Bible.⁷⁶

While there cannot be a definitive answer to the identity of the book which is being read, perhaps there is further evidence in support of the Bible from Palmer's 1824 sketch book. Wilcox refers specifically to the reclining figure in the pastoral sketch on p.9 of the 1824 book where quite clearly the book being read is the Bible, and there is, as mentioned above, reference to Psalm 65 in a sketch of the harvest moon with reclining people and the open Bible with the extract from that psalm visible.⁷⁷

The enthusiastic nature of religious experience is clearly evident in Palmer and he is surely endeavouring to overcome the difficulty of validating that conviction through his presentation of such scenes as this. To examine the iconography in more detail, the composition creates an impression of a tremendous expanse (meeting one of Otto's criteria) encouraging the viewer to contemplate the far distance as well as the bounty provided by the God created world; Palmer 'fuses the real (Shoreham) with the ideal (the Promised Land).'⁷⁸ The approach to the perspective is generally accurate, with the church steeple and the receding hills all shown in their correct relationship. The only obvious distortions are for the birds which are not directly overhead but shown to be in the distance but rather large for that distance, and the exaggerated moon. The moon in reality always appears to be large when close to the horizon where it is seen in relative close proximity to trees and buildings, but even taking this into account Palmer is making a point to emphasise the importance of the moon, possibly (according to Vaughan) intending it to be a symbol of Christ (or Mother of Christ), an intention made even clearer by the ploy of highlighting it with the steeple. So by the use of perspective Palmer is highlighting Christ or Mary and linking this image to the infinite-beyond as suggested by the vast panorama which can be inferred from the visible tops of the hills receding into the distance. This is speculative and, as mentioned above, I support the reference to the 'moony habitations of Beulah'. As Colin Harrison writes: 'the literary sources, in Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* and the Book of Isaiah, were well known to Palmer and to Blake, and it is possible that all six of these (sepia) designs were intended to be evocations of specific passages'.⁷⁹

The use of light and dark is interesting inasmuch as the moon has been given prominence but there is obviously still much light coming from the setting sun. The light from the sun is clearly shining on the stooks, the front of the person reading, the book, the hill in the central background and the white cow. It is obviously late in the evening because work has stopped and the people are going home (during harvest time this would not happen at the end of the afternoon or early evening) and I doubt that in reality there would be as much light as Palmer has suggested. This tactic certainly leads to a very strong contrast with the deep shadow which suggests mystery or, perhaps, shows that the artist discerns mysticism within the scene that he depicts. This contrast is, of course, a characteristic which has been highlighted by Otto (see Chapter Four) as indicative of the endeavour to portray the numinous.

Palmer has used dark brown ink and sepia mixed with gum arabic. As well as enhancing the air of mystery or even mysticism, this medium when the picture itself is viewed (rather than as a print in a book or on the screen) has a solidity, and a three dimensional quality which enhances the perspective discussed above. This three dimensional quality almost suggests that the ink and sepia has been applied to a shallow ivory carving of the scene.

The *Valley Thick with Corn* achieves the objective of pointing to the Transcendent, not through the size of the work but with subtlety through its representation of the mystical through symbolism, particularly the church steeple pointing to the moon. The abundance of God's creation is represented by the harvest scene itself aided by the inscription from Psalm 65. Thoughts of 'what lies beyond?' are induced by the use of perspective and the far distant hills. The reading figure suggests contemplation – the book is not known but both the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* would be consistent with the interpretation that this is a work of art that points towards the Transcendent. The painting as a whole could be an allegory representing Christ's care for his flock, symbolised by the shepherd and his flock, with the idealised rural scene providing a symbol for the Kingdom of Heaven. Transcendence is being suggested in three ways; first by great distance to the horizon encouraging the viewer to think of that which may lie beyond the veil. Secondly there is

an evocation of the past by the presentation of a current scene with allusions to history, and thirdly by recalling a biblical quotation that has resonance with the depicted harvest scene.

Late Twilight (1825)



13

Late Twilight (1825) 18 2×3.8 cm Brown ink and Sepia mixed with Gum

Most of the above comments could be applied to all six of the Sepia Series, but to examine one further drawing in more detail, I have chosen *Late Twilight (1825)* – (Plate II above). Instead of a biblical quotation, this is inscribed with a quotation from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (misattributed by Palmer to Milton) which reads *The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day (Macbeth, Act 3, Scene 3, line 5)*.

In comparison with the previous work, the moon is shown with sickle shape, on this occasion with a halo usually indicative of an approaching warm front some 400 miles distant with its approaching rain. It is late summer with stooks of corn standing in an enclosed field. Maybe this scene is, again, representative of John Bunyan's Beulah – the land that lies beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death.⁸⁰ As mentioned above, Blake was working on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* at the end of his life and could very well have influenced Palmer's evocation of that imaginary land. It is very late in the evening with the sun having just set, and with a fog having settled in the valley beyond the cottage and suggestion of a village just discernible in the centre of the picture. A particular and unique characteristic of this Sepia is the use of the fog which, to invoke an element of eisegesis, could be indicating a separation between heaven and earth, encouraging the viewer in contemplation of what may lay beyond.

In terms of composition, the moon is central, above figures of people presumably returning home and in the left foreground there is a figure of a shepherd (the usual symbol for Christ) resting with his sheep one of which has a rather owl-like face, perhaps representing wisdom. The village is just discernible in the gloom, the church with its spire pointing directly to the moon – a typical Palmer iconographical motif – and in this case pointing to heaven above the sea of fog. Although not easily discerned in reproductions, there is an owl on the fence, maybe representing wisdom and there is a shepherd lying with his sheep, possibly a reference to the Gospel of John, Chapter 10 which describes the shepherd acting as the door to the fold, the better able from there to defend his sheep against intruders.

Although the pictures are very different, it is interesting to note that Caspar David Friedrich uses fog as a means of pointing towards the transcendent in *The Wanderer above a Sea of Mists* (1818). Both achieve the effect of requiring the viewer to look ever more closely at the picture endeavouring to see beyond the veil, the very ground upon which the pictures have been painted. In the *Late Twilight* and *The Valley Thick with Corn*, there is a narrative which can help to focus the mind of the susceptible viewer on thoughts of that which lies outside and beyond the scene depicted. But the strongest

characteristic of this work is its contrast between light and dark, with the whole scene about to be plunged into absolute darkness, with the sun having set and the moon about to dip below the western horizon. In addition to this shadow/light contrast there is in this painting the suggestion of vast space, tremendous distance across the fog, another characteristic which Otto states is indicative of the numinous.

The Sepia Series are all imbued with a sense of the numinous created by the effects of the contrast between light and dark as well as with the sense that the viewer has to look ever deeper into the depths of the painting, an effect created by the far distant horizons. In addition most of the drawings connote particular passages from the Bible. As Harvey writes: 'The biblical ethos is evoked when the formal and intrinsic aspects of the drawing(s) intersect with the requisite biblical texts to enable the subject to transcend the genre of rural landscape.'⁸¹

The Flight from Egypt (c.1824-8)



Rest on the Flight into Egypt or *The Repose of the Holy Family* 31 x 39 cm. (Oil and Tempera) (1824-28)

This significant painting is very different from the Sepia Series which he completed while *The Repose of the Holy Family* was still in progress. This painting demonstrates that to produce a work of art that points towards the Transcendent does not necessarily need to conform to the Sepia Series pattern. The analysis will be split into sub-sections as follows: The biblical context, artistic influences and the analysis of the painting itself.

a) The Biblical Context

The flight into Egypt and return occurs only in the gospel according to Matthew as part of the infancy narrative, Matthew, Chapter 2, verses 13 – 23. The infancy narratives

themselves which occur in Luke as well as Matthew are contested, with many scholars regarding them as symbolic rather than literal history. There are a number of reasons for this scepticism but one difficulty is the comparison of the timing of the flight from Egypt in Matthew with the return to the house at Nazareth in Luke.⁸²

As Vaughan suggests, while this narrative is probably apocryphal it is nonetheless important for the messages that it contains.⁸³ First of all the writer of the Gospel has Joseph warned in a dream to travel to Egypt to avoid the possibility of Herod's stated intention to murder babies aged below two years. (There is a tradition in the ancient world of God speaking to men through the medium of dreams.)⁸⁴ There is also a tradition of Jews escaping to Egypt to avoid persecution and it would have been quite logical therefore for Joseph to take his family to one of the Jewish enclaves in an Egyptian city. The writer links this story to fulfilment of the passage in Hosea, Chapter 11, verse 1 'When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son'. Whilst this has no reference to Jesus, it does emphasise the deliverance of God's chosen people out of slavery in Egypt. It has a typological application where the writer of The Gospel of Matthew is making use of an Old Testament prophecy to comply with his narrative. Matthew, writing for Jews 'knew that almost the only way to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Appointed One of God was to prove that he was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy'.⁸⁵ Regarding the intent of the passage, deliverance is the main theme – in another dream Joseph is advised by God not to travel back to Bethlehem where Herod's equally ruthless successor, Archelaus now ruled, but to Nazareth in Galilee where Herod Antipas, a much more benign king reigned. This move to Nazareth established Jesus as a Nazarene, the detailed derivation of which can be found in Laymon's single volume commentary on the Bible.⁸⁶

Although the infancy narratives are no longer regarded by most scholars as historical truths, the question of interest in the context of Palmer is whether or not they were considered true in his day when research into the historical Jesus was only just beginning.⁸⁷ The extent to which Palmer would have been aware of this research much of which was being undertaken in Germany is difficult to assess but he would probably have

been aware of the work of such influential theologians such as William Paley writing on the way in which he viewed God as the designer creating Nature.⁸⁸ The idea of God in Nature (the whole of the natural world) is a theme which seems to be prevalent in the early works of Palmer, only a few of which are directly linked to the biblical narrative. There were, of course, at this time those who would take a very conservative if not literal view of the truth of the Bible, an example being Renan who saw in the Bible an infallible authority which must be never to be seen to be in error, 'for if the basis of the church's dogma is detected to be thus insecure what can be said for the security of the superstructure itself?'⁸⁹ This does not seem, though, to be the approach of Palmer, most of whose works employ the imagination in the representation - his works are certainly not literal illustrations of biblical passages.

So far as a non-biblical reference is concerned, Palmer, together with many of the other artists who have depicted this scene refer to the Qur'an suras 19-24 which describe the collection of dates from the palm tree 'and if you shake the trunk of this palm tree it will drop fresh ripe dates in your lap. Therefore rejoice. Eat and drink.'⁹⁰

b) Artistic Influences on Palmer's *Holy Family's Flight into Egypt*

This narrative of the *Holy Family's Flight into Egypt* has been selected for depiction by many artists, one of the earliest being Giotto di Bondone (c. 1300) with Sydney Nolan (1917-1992) and John Swanson (1938-) providing more recent images.⁹¹ The artists have very different approaches to the prominence of landscape in paintings that are essentially family scenes or portraits, with perhaps Claude (1600-82), who may well have influenced Palmer, placing the emphasis very much on landscape, particularly so in his version of 1666.

In an interesting essay, essentially on the subject of ecology, Kate Rigby argues that not only was the painting of landscape (nature) providing an antidote to the "modern constitution" inaugurated by Bacon and Descartes which severed the human from the non-human and determined their relationship in terms of mastery and possession, but also

led to a rebirth of nature through the deployment of poetic imagination'.⁹² Neil Everden argues that even before Bacon there was this change in the attitude towards nature which began with Leonardo who regarded 'the artist as "Lord and Creator"', a person who is able to constitute an ideal world and from whom 'abstraction' and 'vision' collaborate intimately.'⁹³ As Everden continues

The artist presents an ideal world that can be taken in by the viewer in 'a single glance' through a 'proportioned harmony'. Leonardo gives the viewer *a whole landscape* as a visual object. As E.H.Gombrich notes, Leonardo's landscapes are conceptual, owing less to the painter's eye than to the imagination. Leonardo directs his viewer's eye to the beauty of his *abstraction*, and away from a world 'contaminated' through *empathy*.⁹⁴

This is very much in accord with Palmer's own view. 'Sometimes landscape is seen as a vision, and then it seems as fine as art. But this is seldom, and bits of nature are generally improved by being received into the soul.'⁹⁵ For Palmer, the new vision he sought might open the door to some hoped-for synthesis of earthly nature with the continuing worship of God. This longing or nostalgia, perhaps best articulated by the Welsh word *hiraeth*, for an idealised countryside, is expressed by Palmer in the form of an earthly Kingdom of Heaven. Transcendence is at work in the mind of Palmer as he tries to express the Kingdom in terms of an idealised, imagined countryside which contains the lush pastures of Kent with the palm trees of the Middle East.

Apart from the influence of the Bible and the Qur'an, Palmer was certainly influenced by the artists Blake and Claude both of whom had produced works on this subject of the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. Claude's influence in general is highlighted by Lister and of course the influence of Blake is very well known, as is that of his contemporaries known as 'The Ancients'.⁹⁶ The influential nature of the engravings of Bonasone is also mentioned by Lister.⁹⁷ One of the 'Ancients', Calvert could almost have been echoing Palmer when he wrote 'Earth spiritualised, not Heaven naturalised...I feel a yearning to see the glades and nooks receding like vistas into the gardens of Heaven'⁹⁸.

c) Analysis of the painting

Palmer's painting gives almost more prominence to the landscape than to the family, but his landscape is clearly not that of the Middle East, but of Kent, probably the area around his cottage, but with the addition of a large palm tree. The work was begun in 1824 and was for Palmer experimental; it was only completed after further experimentation and advice from the Blakes which resulted in *In a Shoreham Garden* (1829). 'Quite suddenly, Palmer found he was able to complete his oil and tempera painting of the Holy Family (laid aside in 1824) with an ideal background which he found about a Shoreham paddock.'⁹⁹ Harrison quotes evidence of Palmer's despair in 1825 – 'I have laid by the Family in much distress, anxiety and fear: which had plunged me into despair but for God's mercy ... but rather, distress (being blessed) was to me a great arousal; quickly goading me to deep humbleness, eager, restless inquiry, and diligent work.'¹⁰⁰ The landscape is imaginary, very much in accordance with the words of Leonardo mentioned above. There is a cave in the middle distance on the left which possibly suggests an allusion to the legend of the Holy Family resting overnight in a cave. A spider weaves a dense web over the entrance to the cave and when Herod's men go past looking for the Family, they ignore this cave because of the web covering the entrance suggesting that no one could have entered recently. The use of a dark cave is an established pictorial iconography which occurs frequently in the works of Palmer. The presence of a palm tree is a reference to the Qur'an suras 19-24, the tree being a source of food for the journey.

Many artists have based their works closely on the literal biblical narrative, whereas others have tended to paint their interpretation of the narrative using their imagination and skills of exegesis. Palmer is to be counted among this latter group where the work as a whole, although based on a biblical story, has been constructed out of Palmer's imagination, where the English countryside has been conflated with Palestinian or Egyptian scenery.

So far as the interpretation of the work is concerned, there is consistency with the biblical theme of deliverance. Palmer is almost wrapping the Holy Family in the embrace of the landscape – God’s creation, and God’s providence in supporting the family with food (the palm tree) and shelter (the cave and the cottage with its warmth). It would seem that this interpretation comes very close to meeting Schelling’s ideal that art should be an emanation of the absolute (God). Regarding the Holy Family itself, both parents are concentrating although in a rather dream like way, upon Jesus, with the donkey quietly grazing beside them. The whole scene suggests a relaxed, restful security – security provided by God. Without too great a stretch of the imagination, one could suggest an ecological interpretation, along the lines of the interpretation of the Covenant with Noah – if mankind looks after the natural world to the best of its ability then God will never again flood mankind out of existence. Whilst this may be an interpretation that could be placed on the work in the twenty first century, this would not have been an approach that Palmer would have recognised. His own view of the land was a very conservative one, concerned with the preservation of what he saw as a way of life in the countryside that should not change - faith in an unchanging landscape and faith in God. This is what he endeavoured to express in his art.

This work certainly points towards the Transcendent. First, although the countryside is based on Shoreham, it has been extended by the addition of distant mountains inviting the viewer to look into the far distance, thus meeting the ‘great distance’ criterion of Otto. Secondly, although the light/dark contrast is not so marked as in the Sepia series, there is a significant contrast between the bright clothing - especially the cloth upon which Jesus is lying - and the darkness of the valley below-thus meeting the second of Otto’s criteria. In addition to meeting these two criteria, a sense of mystery and the supernatural has been invoked by the extraordinary juxtaposition of the Shoreham landscape and the features of the Middle East – the palm tree and the distant mountain.

The Work Completed at Shoreham

During the time spent at Shoreham, Palmer produced some of his best works and certainly those which, as has been shown, enable the sensitive viewer with a cultural background in Christianity to discern something of the numinous. An indication of Palmer's thoughts at this time can be gleaned from the following extract from a letter which he wrote to John Linnell at the end of 1828. From this extract it can be seen that Palmer saw the glory of God reflected in nature, and endeavoured through his art to meet Ramsey's injunction mentioned above to 'glorify his Creator'.

Every where curious, articulate, perfect and inimitable of structure, like her own entomology, Nature does yet leave a space for the soul to climb above her steepest summits: as, in her dominion she swells from the herring to the leviathan ... so divine Art piles mountains on her hills, and continents upon those mountains.

However, creation sometimes pours into the spiritual eye the radiance of Heaven: the green mountains that glimmer in a summer gloaming from the dusky but bloomy East; the moon, opening her golden eye or walking in brightness among innumerable islands of light, not only thrill the optic nerve, but shed a mild, a grateful, an unearthly lustre into the inmost spirits, and seem the interchanging twilight of that peaceful country, where there is no sorrow and no night. After all, I doubt not but there must be the study of this creation, as well as art and vision; tho' I cannot think it other than the veil of heaven, through which her divine features are dimly smiling; the setting of the table before the feast, the symphony before the tune, the prologue of the drama; a dream of antipast and proscenium of eternity.¹⁰¹

Palmer, in this passage gives an insight into his understanding of the Immanent (manifestation of the divine in the material world) and its relationship with the Transcendent (the sense of the divine being beyond the veil of heaven). This letter, perhaps more than many others in his extensive correspondence with John Linnell and the members of the 'Ancients', particularly George Richmond, gives an insight into the thought processes underlying the work of Palmer. These thoughts are brought out very strongly in the two Sepia Studies discussed above as well as being characteristic of many of Palmer's works during the period 1824 to 1834 - the moon, the lustre, the green hills in the summer gloaming and the interchanging twilight of that peaceful country. Whilst many of Palmer's letters contain rather mundane details of daily life in Shoreham in one,

written this time in 1834 to George Richmond, there is an interesting statement which rather confirms Palmer's own relationship to Christ:

I have a slowly but steadily increasing conviction that the religion of Jesus Christ is perfectly divine but it certainly was not only intended to be enthroned in the understanding but enshrined in the heart, for the personal love of Christ is its beginning and end ...¹⁰²

Whilst this was probably Palmer's thinking since his teenage years, there is a parallel here with Blake's emphasis on the imagination being given precedence and not usurped by the need to understand by rational thought and logic – very much the characteristic of the British approach to the Age of Reason. Perhaps Palmer's thoughts as a young man were confirmed and reinforced by his contact with Blake.



30

Ruth returned from Gleaning (c.1828) 29.4 x 39.4 Ink, Wash and Gouache over graphite

Palmer's work became rather more diverse during the Shoreham period, but strangely, in view of his feeling towards painting the human form ('the great edifice of the divine human form') there are very few drawings or painting involving primarily the human. A notable exception is *Ruth returning from the Gleaning* – produced around 1828. This ink, wash and gouache over graphite work is based on the story in the book of Ruth (Ruth, Chapter 2, verses, 17-18). In this story, Ruth (a gentile) worked so assiduously and humbly that she was actually given grain from one of the sheaves as well as the gleanings that were traditionally gathered by the poor – eventually Ruth is accepted into the Jewish community. Ruth eventually marries Boaz, gives birth to a son Obed, the father of David, ancestor of Christ. In the painting Ruth is shown walking back home with half a bushel of grain. In Shoreham, at the time, Palmer would have observed gleaners working in the fields and although they were unlikely to have been as well built as Palmer's Ruth and carrying as much grain – he may have been trying to say to the poor that if they were humble and conscientious, then God would provide and they would become as fit and healthy as Ruth. He may also have been keen to make a statement with regard to the changes in agriculture at that time, leading to greater efficiency and less gleanings, as well as drawing attention to the controversies regarding the Corn Laws, but it is more likely that Palmer is expressing the idea that the divine is immanent in the excess corn left over from the harvest. Vaughan makes a comment that 'The exaggerated forms of this figure emphasising power suggest Palmer's admiration for Fuseli, Michelangelo and the Italian mannerists.'¹⁰³ This exaggerated strength is also present in Blake's *Joseph of Arimathea* (1773) – maybe another example of Blake's influence.

Throughout this period at Shoreham, Palmer continued to create paintings and drawings which indulged his own almost child-like sense of wonder and awe (cf. *Fascinens* etc. in *The Idea of the Holy* by Rudolf Otto) in the panorama of nature which had been provided by the Creator. As Honour notes in respect of an inscription by Calvert 'Seen in the Kingdom of Heaven by vision through Jesus Christ Our Saviour', these same words might 'equally well have been written by Palmer on any of his paintings and drawings of his Shoreham period'.¹⁰⁴

Palmer's Later Work

After 1860 and the personal tragedy of the loss of his son, Thomas More, he became a rather solitary figure and his work began to express a deeper vision – but a different vision from his Blake/Shoreham period. ‘In the place of ecstasy and enthusiasm there was a more careful, meditative and richly laboured work’.¹⁰⁵

Three significant events occurred at the time which probably contributed to this return to visionary or more overtly transcendent art. First, with the death of Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, Palmer was involved in corresponding with Mrs. Gilchrist not only in empathising with regard to grief and mourning, but also in helping with the completion of the Blake biography, although in connection with the latter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) was the greater contributor. Secondly, he received a commission from Leonard Valpy to produce drawings to illustrate Milton's *Il Penseroso* (the contemplative Man) and *L'Allegro* (the Cheerful Man)¹⁰⁶. Thirdly, while living at Redhill, his final residence, he had many discussions with a clerical family the Wrights, one of whose sons became a Prebendary at Hereford Cathedral. Whilst they did not frequently discuss art, they did discuss theology and morals.¹⁰⁷



*The Lonely
Tower* (1879)
36.3 × 50 cm
Etching

Il Penseroso is an 'invocation to the goddess Melancholy, bidding her bring Peace, Quiet, Leisure and Contemplation. It describes the pleasures of the studious meditative life, of tragedy, epic poetry, and music. L'Allegro is an invocation to the goddess Mirth to allow the poet to live with her, first amid the delights of pastoral scenes, then amid those of 'towered cities' and the 'busy hum of men'.¹⁰⁸ (It is said that *Il Penseroso* influenced the 'graveyard poets', one of whom was Edward Young whose extract from *Paraphrase of Job* had, as mentioned above, such an impact on the four year old Palmer.) This incident with the shadow was of such significance in the work of Palmer that writing to Frederick Stephens (1818-1907) (Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood founder member and art critic) in 1871 he quotes the famous couplet and then writes 'I never forgot those shadows, and I am often trying to paint them.'¹⁰⁹

Palmer produced eight watercolours for these two works and became so obsessed by them that, like his early visionary works they were financially very unrewarding. As Lister remarks after some fifteen years after the awarding of the commission, 'the finest fruits of the venture were a couple of etchings, suggested by the watercolours, *The Bellman* and the *Lonely Tower*, the latter being Palmer's masterpiece in this medium.'¹¹⁰ Later in his biography of Palmer, Lister refers to the *Lonely Tower* as 'one of the greatest works ever made in this medium by an English artist.'¹¹¹ This view is corroborated by Vaughan who quoted Yeats's (1865-1939) view of Palmer that 'The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved/An image of mysterious wisdom won by toil'¹¹²

The theme of the lonely tower occurs in at least two watercolours, the first (51cm x 70.5 cm) with a slightly different arrangement of landscape and figures being produced in 1867-68, and the second much smaller (16.5 x 23.5 cm) with an identical arrangement of figures as the etching, being produced later and probably just after the etching.¹¹³

In the etching, there is the crescent moon low down in the centre of the picture, with the lonely tower lit from within through one window, located on a high bank to the left of the etching. On the right hand side of the picture is a flock of sheep overlooked by a reclining couple gazing at the tower which is surrounded by the stars of Ursa Major,

whilst on the left there is a wagoner with his ox cart negotiating a narrow stone-built pathway on the edge of a chasm which separates the roadway from the hill on which the tower has been built. Trees to the right of the picture and one tree in the foreground complete the composition.

The water colour (shown in 1868) on which this etching is based was accompanied in the exhibition by a quotation – this time not from the Bible but from *Il Penseroso* (Thinking Man) by John Milton. In this narrative poem set in his mind, Milton embraces the goddess Melancholy and asks her to take him on a journey where he may find peace and quiet and the opportunity for contemplation. The extract from the poem with which Palmer annotated this painting is:

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
with thrice great Hermes.¹¹⁴

Edward Cummins interprets this passage as meaning: ‘There, he would contemplate the constellation known as Ursa Major (commonly called the Bear or the Plough) or consider the profound views of Plato. There he might also reflect on a great tragedy, such as that which befell Troy or that which was enacted on the stages of ancient Greece.’¹¹⁵ This is the background, also, to a number of other paintings produced at this time (for example *The Prospect* (1881), and *The Bellman* (before 1881)) all based around Milton’s poem. One can perhaps assume that Palmer was contemplating the end of his own life at this time which may explain why he has returned to the style that he departed from at the time of his marriage and very close relationship with his father-in-law John Linnell.

As with *The Valley Thick with Corn* the moon features strongly being shown symbolically (because it is below the line of the horizon in the painting based on the etching) in the middle distance, and in the right hand foreground there is a shepherd and (presumably) his wife or lover contemplating the scene and looking towards the tower. On the left hand side there is a bullock cart being led homeward along a stone-flanked

road leading upwards and out of the picture. As the eye is taken upwards along this lane it is turned inwards towards the tower itself with a very bright line burning within. The prominent stone wall on the left is balanced by the hay rack on the right and the tower on the left by the prominent group of trees on the right. In the immediate centre foreground there is a stream visible below the stone walling which is flowing into the valley in the middle distance and then away into the very far distance beyond the moon. In the centre of the painting there is a rather short (and hence symbolic) length of fencing preventing the sheep falling into the stream below. The hill which is surmounted by the tower forms a diagonal which leads the eye down towards the sheep lying at the base of the group of trees. Many stars are shown shining quite brightly suggesting that it is quite late in the evening, although this is not consistent with the bright light coming from behind the viewer and illuminating the backs of the lying sheep and particularly the white shirt of the shepherd's companion. The constellation Great Bear (Ursa Major) is shown prominently picking up the reference in the extract from *Il Penseroso*. Finally mention should be made of the Palmer bird – presumably an owl - to the left of the centre foreground. Some commentators have suggested that the Tower is the tower located on the top of Leith Hill in Surrey which is very close to the farm where his son Thomas Palmer is buried. This, of course, fits with the overall theme of melancholy, death and resurrection.¹¹⁶

There does not appear to be any distortion in the perspective with the foreground figures and receding sheep all shown to their correct scale. As with *The Valley Thick with Corn* there is the impression of a tremendous distance to the far horizon – an effect emphasised by placing the bottom of the moon below the line of the horizon. If one assumes that the moon is the symbol for Christ (or Mary) then the positioning of the moon suggests that the Saviour is coming towards the painter – maybe an allegorical rendering of the resurrection. The message here is that Palmer is contemplating a distance far beyond the moon, possibly even a world beyond death, Palmer's vision of heaven. The brightly lit tower is surrounded by sky and replaces the church steeple shown in a number of other Palmer paintings, a feature in the painting that takes the eye upwards perhaps in contemplation of heaven.

Aerial perspective is apparent, particularly emphasising the far distant horizon and encouraging contemplation of the world beyond. The clarity of the foreground is contrasted with the mistiness of the distant horizon, but the tower which is some distance away from the foreground is also shown in sharp focus, confirming the importance Palmer is attaching to the significance of that tower. The use of very dark shadow gives rise to a sense of mystery, but the light brings particular attention to the crescent moon, the distant horizon and the light in the tower. The foreground is sharply in focus and quite bright with the source of this light being unexplained. Examining the shadows in the painting in more detail, inconsistency is apparent; for example the shepherd's back is in deep shadow when with the same angle the nearside edge of the hay rack and the stone wall are very clearly lit from this unknown source of light. Palmer, one can only assume, is using this light to draw particular attention to those parts of the painting he wishes to emphasise – those parts which point towards the Transcendent, namely the moon, the tower, the wall leading to the infinity beyond edge of the painting and the infinity of the universe beyond the Great Bear.

While the colour range of the painting is greater than that of the *Valley Thick with Corn* – the palette is still limited with the overall effect being sepia. The other main colour is the blue of the sky which is reflected in the stream and the accoutrements of the shepherd and his companion. These dark colours are then contrasted with the bright white on the moon, the shirt of the companion and the bullock being led out of the picture. In the etching the deep shadows are emphasised but the unknown light coming from behind the viewer adds a symbolic mystery to the picture.

The overall theme of the painting and the etching is contemplation – of life and death, of the firmament and of resurrection. The quotation from *Il Penseroso* points the viewer in this direction, reinforced by the special effects discussed above. The positioning of the moon gives it tremendous importance and the lighting-effects all contribute to a sense of transcendence. The use of young people adds a more positive outlook to what could otherwise be a rather melancholy picture. The eye is taken into three directions – upwards

towards the sky, to the left with the roadway, and outwards into the distance beyond the moon – and this constant looking outwards and beyond is the main characteristic pointing to the transcendent.

At the end of his life Palmer had returned to the visionary work of his youth – perhaps not with the same energy but with a more mature, considered expression of his vision as can be seen in the *Lonely Tower* and in his other Milton etching *The Bellman* – a mature depiction of Shoreham and its countryside conflated with the Land of Beulah. In writing to fellow artist Philip Gilbert Hamerton (1834-1894), Palmer wrote of *The Bellman* ‘It is a breaking out of village fever long after contact – a dream of that genuine village where I lost, as some would say, seven years of musing over many strings, designing what nobody would care for, and contracting among good books, a fastidious and unpopular taste’.¹¹⁷

To the end of his life, Palmer maintained that intention always to reflect the Glory of God’s creation in his work – to provide works of inspiration for contemplation. His God-given talent was his ability to draw, to paint and, at the end of his life, to etch. That his extraordinary ability to depict his visionary outlook was not recognised during his lifetime was disappointing and for him rather disheartening, but he did not allow this lack of recognition to detract him from his purpose.

As Cecil points out:

To respond to life was, for him, to respond to God as the author of life. This meant that religious experience was the mainspring of his creative vitality ... His faith was strengthened by the habit of religious practice. He recognised this and drew his conclusions. Palmer was a religious existentialist before his time, who discovered that the best way to maintain his faith was to act on it.¹¹⁸

In conclusion one can surely say that the words which Palmer applied to Claude apply equally well to Palmer himself: he should be considered the ‘genius, equally tender and sublime, who re-opened upon canvas the vistas of Eden.’¹¹⁹

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- ¹ Fowler, J.W. *Stages of Faith – The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* New York Harper One 1981 pp.151-198.
- ² For a paper on this approach see for example this website article:
http://www.apptoteach.org/Theology/God%20and%20Angels/pdf/302_Imm_and_Transcendence .
- ³ Macquarrie, J. *Principles of Christian Theology* London SCM Press 1966 pp.150-155.
- ⁴ Rankin, M. *Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* London Continuum (Bloomsbury) 2008 p. 244.
- ⁵ McGrath, A. *The Intellectual World of C.S.Lewis* Chichester (West Sussex) Wiley-Blackwell 2014 p.38.
- ⁶ Hick, J. *The Fifth Dimension – an exploration of the spiritual realm* Oxford One World 1999 p.41.
- ⁷ Ibid. p.42.
- ⁸ Williams, H.A. *The Joy of God* London Mitchell Beazley 1979 p. 26. Quoting also Smart, N. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Volume 2, Talk of God* London Macmillan 1969 p.78.
- ⁹ Hick, J. p. 8-9.
- ¹⁰ This subject was discussed through to the twentieth century when for example William Temple entitled his Gifford Lectures – *Nature, Man and God*, published in book form in 1934. See:
<http://www.giffordlectures.org/lecturers/william-temple>) This book is still available, published in London by Macmillan in 1951 (reprint).
- ¹¹ Fond man, the vision of a moment made,
 Dream of a dream, and shadow of a shade - From Edward Young's *Paraphrase of Job*.
- ¹² Cecil, David *Visionary and Dreamer Two Poetic Painters: Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones* (The A.W.Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1966) Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press 1969, p. 10.
- ¹³ Ramsey, Michael *Canterbury Pilgrim* London SPCK 1974 p. 56.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Jacques Barzun *The Use and Abuse of Art* (The A.W.Mellon Lectures in the fine Arts – 1973) Princeton Princeton University Press 1974 p. 27.
- ¹⁶ For a full treatment of the philosophy of Rousseau see Brome, J.H. *Rousseau – A study of his thought* London Edward Arnold 1963. For the relationship between Rousseau's thought and art see pp. 183-207.
- ¹⁷ Reardon B.M.G. quoting Schleiermacher in Reardon, B.M.G. *Religion in the Age of Romanticism* Cambridge Cambridge University Press First published 1985 Reprinted 1989 (digital transfer 1999) p. 4
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p19.
- ¹⁹ Ibid p19.
- ²⁰ Graham, G. *The Re-enchantment of the World* Oxford OUP 2007 p. 17.
- ²¹ Reardon B.M.G. p29
- ²² Ibid p. 56.
- ²³ Ibid p. 58. This was not a universally accepted viewpoint and Karl Barth was opposed to the liberal theological views expressed at this time – referring to this liberal era 'Schleiermacher's century'. However the views of Schleiermacher would have the support of de-mythologising theologians such as Paul Tillich
- ²⁴ Barzun, J p. 26.
- ²⁵ Ibid. p. 30.
- ²⁶ Warner, Malcolm *The Victorians – British Painting 1837-1901* Washington DC National Gallery of Art 1997 p. 39.
- ²⁷ Grigson, Geoffrey *Samuel Palmer The Visionary Years* London Kegan Paul 1947 p. 5.
- ²⁸ Cecil, David, p. 16.
- ²⁹ Campbell-Johnson, R. *Mysterious Wisdom – the Life and Work of Samuel Palmer* London Bloomsbury Publishing 2011 p. 17.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Harvey, J. *The Bible as Visual Culture - When Text Becomes Image* Sheffield Sheffield Phoenix Press 2013 p. 181.
- ³² Grigson, Geoffrey, p. 6.
- ³³ Grigson, Geoffrey (quoting Palmer), p. 17.

³⁴ Vaughan, William quoting Palmer in *Samuel Palmer Vision and Landscape* London British Museum Press 2005 p. 11b.

³⁵ Cecil, David p. 19.

³⁶ Campbell-Johnson, R. p. 44 The works of Paley would have been *Moral Philosophy and Natural Theology*.

³⁷ Vaughan, William page 12a.

³⁸ Job 33:4. In this passage Elihu appears to be acting as interpreter or intermediary and tries to explain God's behaviour - defending 'the pedagogical value of suffering, and praising the omnipotent wisdom of God' - Odelain, O. and Séguineau, R. *Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible* London Robert Hale 1991 p. 112b.

³⁹ Grigson, Geoffrey, p. 19.

Palmer and his friends, as they got to know Blake in those three years, came to know his rooms as "The House of the Interpreter". In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian came to the House of the Interpreter and knocked: "Sir, said Christian, I am a Man that am come from the City of Destruction, and am going to Mount Zion, and I was told by the Man that stands at the Gate, at the head of this way; that if I called here, you would shew me excellent things. Such as would be a help to me in my Journey." How exactly that describes how Palmer came, knocked, and saw, and felt about things – the excellent things which he was shown, things which would be a help on the journey of the next few years.

⁴⁰ Keeble, N.H. (ed) *John Bunyan Conventicle and Parnassus Tercentenary Essay* Oxford Clarendon Press 1988 p. 247 Keeble quoting John Arbuthnot in an essay *Bunyan and His Reputation* .

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 254.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 262. quoting Geoffrey F. Nuttall – *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 2nd edition Oxford 1947 – especially pp. 7-8,49-57 and 134-149.

⁴³ Furlong, M. *Puritan's Progress – a Study of John Bunyan* London Hodder and Stoughton 1975, p. 86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 141.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* quoting Bunyan, p. 94.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 148

⁴⁷ Keeble, p. 69. Rivers, I *Essay Bunyan and Restoration Latitudinarianism* .

⁴⁸ Yorke, Malcolm *The Spirit of Place* London Constable 1988 p. 110.

⁴⁹ Kitson, Peter writing in Corns, Thomas *A Companion to Milton* Oxford Blackwell 2001 page 472: The most rigorous rewriting of Milton's work was, however, that of William Blake. His *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) arguably demonstrate the pattern of Natural Supernaturalism, placing Eden and the Fall in symbolic states of the human mind. For Blake redemption is available in this world and the divine attributes are found in human forms ... These ideas are given a more complex form in Blake's poem *Milton*, which adapts his mythological system of division, dispersal and reorganisation, as enunciated in the Four Zoas, to personal and narrative concerns.

⁵⁰ Bindman, David, *William Blake The Complete Illuminated Books* London Thames and Hudson in association with The William Blake Trust pbk ed 2001 (reprint 2004) page 441.

⁵¹ Grigson, Geoffrey p. 144, note 51.

⁵² Bindman, David p. 441: But Beulah to its Inhabitants appears within each district
As the beloved infant in his mother's bosom round encircled
With arms of love & pity & sweet compassion, But to
The Sons of Eden the moony habitations of Beulah,
Are from Great Eternity a mild and pleasant Rest.

⁵³ For a short summary of *Paradise Lost*: Drabble, M. (ed) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* Oxford Oxford University Press 1994 p. 736b.

For the full poem: Lewalski, B. *John Milton Paradise Lost* Malden, Massachusetts Blackwell 2007 pp. 5-332. Each part of the poem (book) is preceded by Milton's helpful statement of the argument.

For helpful commentary on Milton: Corns, T. (ed) *A Companion to Milton* Oxford Blackwell 2001.

⁵⁴ These are now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and are known as the Oxford Sepia Series.

⁵⁵ Cecil, David (quoting Palmer) p. 30.

- ⁵⁶ Vaughan, William p. 91c.
- ⁵⁷ *Palmer Volume I, 1814-1859*, Oxford Clarendon Press 1974 pp. 456-7. When Richard Baxter arrived at his Kidderminster parish ... he found some of his flock so ignorant that they ‘thought Christ was the sun...and the Holy Ghost was the moon’ (G.F.Nuttall *Richard Baxter* (1965), p. 46). For moon references in weather lore see Inwards, Richard *Weather Lore* London Rider and Co. (reprint) 1950, pp. 87-98
- ⁵⁸ The crescent moon has been used as a ‘favourite symbol of Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception, as early as the fifteenth century. The representation is based on the passage "Who is she that comes forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon under her feet" (Rev. 12:1). Combined with the crescent moon, the Cross depicted the Christian victory at Lepanto gained by Mary's intercession’ . <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=32873> (Extracted from Fr. John Hardon's *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, © Eternal Life. Used with permission).
- ⁵⁹ Campbell-Johnson, R. p. 155 (quoting Palmer).
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 129
- ⁶¹ An on-line version of *Natural Theology* can be found at <https://archive.org/details/naturaltheology00pale>
- ⁶² *Theology* January/February 1996 Essay by Reginald Askew – *The Church in Constable's Landscape*, quoting Traherne. Whilst the subject of this essay was Constable, the quotation applies equally to Palmer.
- ⁶³ Harvey, J.. p. 59.
- ⁶⁴ Grigson,,Geoffrey p. 25.
- ⁶⁵ Dissenters permitted to stand for Parliament and the formation of the Oxford movement in 1833.
- ⁶⁶ Grigson, Geoffrey (quoting Palmer) p. 103.
- ⁶⁷ Harrison, Colin writing in Vaughan (note 10 above) p. 137b.
- ⁶⁸ Cecil, David (see note 2 above) p. 90.
- ⁶⁹ Abley, Mark *The Parting Light –Selected writings of Samuel Palmer* Manchester Carcanet Press Ltd. and Mid Northumberland Arts Group 1985 p. 179.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 205
- ⁷¹ Butlin, Martin *Samuel Palmer The sketchbook of 1824* London Thames and Hudson in association with the William Blake Trust 2005 p. 206: (referring to sketch book p. 39) ‘The moon also to rule by night for his mercy endureth for ever’ Ps. 104: 9 echoed by Palmer’s words about the moon’s vice regency on p. 2’ (of the sketchbook).
- ⁷² Harvey, J. p. 62.
- ⁷³ Vaughan, William, p. 93b
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 93 b and c.
- ⁷⁵ Butlin, M. sketchbook page numbers 9 and 39.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 93c.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 63, 206, 41 and 202. Referring to sketch book original pages nos. 9 and 39. See also Wilcox, T. *Samuel Palmer* London Tate Publishing 2005 pp.13-17.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p.60.
- ⁷⁹ Harrison, C. *Samuel Palmer* Oxford Ashmolean Museum 2010 p. 24.
- ⁸⁰ Beulah first occurs in Trito-Isaiah 62: verse 4 referring to the marriage between Yahweh and Zion and the land that they will occupy being no longer desolate or abandoned but called Married (Heb:Beulah). In Pilgrim’s Progress, the “Pilgrims were in sight of the Heavenly City, ‘they heard continually the singing of birds and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth.’ Beulah is also used in a similar sense by Blake, to represent a state of Light (often associated with the third state of vision and sexual love): its symbol is the moon”. Drabble, Margaret (ed) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* Oxford OUP 1994 (fifth edition reprinted) entry on Beulah page 97a.
- ⁸¹ Harvey, J. p. 60.
- ⁸² For further details see for example the website:<http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t94/e939>
- ⁸³ Vaughan, W, writing in *Samuel Palmer 1805-1881* by William Vaughan, Elizabeth E. Barker and Colin Harrison published by the British Museum Press to accompany the exhibition of Palmer Works held in 1995 and 1996 in the British Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York). This book was published in London 1995 and the reference is to be found on page 106.
- ⁸⁴ For a more detailed exposition see Barclay, William *The Gospel of Matthew* Edinburgh Saint Andrew Press 1991 p. 33.
- ⁸⁵ Barclay, W. *The Gospel of Matthew* Edinburgh Saint Andrew Press 1991 p. 36.

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- ⁸⁶ Laymon, Charles E. *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* Nashville Abingdon Press 1992 p. 612a.
- ⁸⁷ The quest for the historical Jesus could be said to have begun in earnest in 1778 with the publication of works by G.E. Lessing. The quest has continued since that time with a major study produced by Schweitzer in 1906 and currently with works published by Ludemann.
- ⁸⁸ Paley, William *Natural Theology* London 1802.
- ⁸⁹ Rearden, B.M.G. *Religion in the Age of Romanticism* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1985 (Transferred to digital printing 1999 – this edition 2010) On Ernest Renan p. 253.
- ⁹⁰ *Qur'an (Koran)* Translated by Dawood, N.J. Harmondsworth Penguin Books first published 1956 (4th revised version, reprinted 1981) p. 33.
- ⁹¹ www.textweek.com/art/flight_into_egypt.html
- ⁹² Rigby, K. *Topographies of the Sacred - The poetics of place in European Romanticism* Charlottesville 2004 p. 4 and p. 23.
- ⁹³ Everden, N. *The Social Creation of Nature* Baltimore John Hopkins University Press 1992 p. 64.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 66.
- ⁹⁵ Moore, J.M. *The Green Fuse – Pastoral Vision in English Art* Woodbridge (Suffolk) Antique Collectors' Club 2007 p. 30 (Moore quoting Palmer).
- ⁹⁶ Lister, R. *Samuel Palmer and his etchings* London Faber and Faber 1969 p. 30.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 30.
- ⁹⁸ Lister quoting Calvert, *Ibid.* p. 29.
- ⁹⁹ Moore, J.M. *The Green Fuse* p. 55.
- ¹⁰⁰ Harrison, C. *Samuel Palmer* Oxford Ashmolean Museum (Ashmolean Handbooks) 1997 (reprinted 2010) p. 12.
- ¹⁰¹ Lister, Raymond (ed) *The Letters of Samuel Palmer Volume I, 1814-1859*, Oxford Clarendon Press 1974, p. 50 – Letter to John Linnell dated 21st December, 1828.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Page 63 – Letter to George Richmond dated 14th October, 1834.
- ¹⁰³ Vaughan, William, p. 115c.
- ¹⁰⁴ Honour, Hugh. *Romanticism* London Allen Lane (Penguin Books Ltd.) 1979 p. 86.
- ¹⁰⁵ Vaughan, William p. 224a.
- ¹⁰⁶ http://www.yorku.ca/jprs/pdf/Allan_Life_with_Page_Life_28.pdf. For details of the commissioning by Valpy.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lister, Raymond *Samuel Palmer – a Biography* London Faber and Faber 1974 pp. 257-8.
- ¹⁰⁸ Drabble, Margaret (ed) (see note 26 above) pp. 492a and 545a
- ¹⁰⁹ Abley, Mark p. 220.
- ¹¹⁰ Lister, Raymond p. 266.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.* page 273
- ¹¹² Vaughan, W. quoting from W.B. Yeats *The Phases of the Moon*, (1919) p. 224a
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 233c.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 232a.
- ¹¹⁵ Cummins, Michael J. Study Guide to Milton's poem *Il Peneoso* available on line: <http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides8/Penseroso.html> .
- ¹¹⁶ Vaughan, W. Barker, E.E., and Harrison, C. *Samuel Palmer 1805-1881 – Vision and Landscape* London British Museum Press 2007 p.232.
- ¹¹⁷ Abley, Mark p. 230.
- ¹¹⁸ Cecil, David p. 90.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* page 90.

Chapter Six

The Iconography of Caspar David Friedrich - an examination of transcendence in the works of Caspar David Friedrich

- Place of Friedrich within German Romanticism
- Friedrich's Iconography – Some general comments on the characteristics of his system
- The *Rückenfigur* Paintings
- *The Abbey in the Oak Wood* (c1809)
- *The Large Enclosure* (c1833)
- *The Stages of Life* (1834-35)
- Placing Friedrich in a Theological Context
- Summary

The previous chapter analysed a number of the works of Palmer that signposted the Transcendent. Caspar David Friedrich was one of his contemporaries in Germany and although there is no evidence that they met, they were subject to many of the same influences, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Three. Both produced work that pointed towards the Transcendent and both regarded their Christian faith as fundamental to their way of life. While Palmer's churchmanship was influenced by both Baptism and High Anglicanism, Friedrich came from a Pietist background, an influence that remained with him throughout his life. This chapter will analyse a number of Friedrich's works that point towards the Transcendent, including biographical notes as appropriate to establish the context within which he was working.

Place of Friedrich within German Romanticism

Around the time of the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, artistic creativity in the German-speaking part of Europe was very dominant. As has been shown in Chapter Three, German philosophers were in the ascendancy, to which can be added musicians, for example Haydn, Beethoven and Weber, and artists, for example Friedrich, Runge and Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867). Germany at this time consisted of a large number of independent states and although unification in the form of a German Empire did not take place until 1871, the process could be said to have begun in the time of Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740) and developed by his son Friedrich the Great (1712-86), both of whom concentrated on developing a nation, where conscientiousness and hard work became very important characteristics.¹ During the same period Pietism, the religious movement which sought to return to the values espoused by Martin Luther, was gaining influence, an influence that would have a profound effect on Friedrich.

The origins of Pietism can be traced back to the followers of John Huss (*c.* 1372-1415) who led a reform movement just before Luther came to prominence. This reform movement flourished until the middle of the seventeenth century when it weakened under the influence of the Counter Reformation.² The actual beginning of Pietism itself is difficult to ascertain but the two most prominent leaders were Philip Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663-1727). Spener called for 'Bible study, better theological education, lay activity, ethical awakening, and lessened polemics'.³ Pietism was established in Eastern Germany by Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) who had encouraged a number of Moravian families to join him on his estate in the early years of the eighteenth century. Under his leadership, the Moravian Church became recognised as a rather outspoken form of European Protestantism which nonetheless was not only noted for its support of great creativity in music and liturgy but also for its support of ecumenism.⁴ The movement which embraced many of the ideas of the Moravian Church, emphasised the work ethic and the concept of the 'priesthood of all believers', advocating the importance of undertaking good works in the present life on earth and that such good works would be taken into account on the day of judgement. Pietism became prominent

throughout Northern Europe and its influence can be seen in the work of the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who, as we saw in Chapter Four, regarded intuition and religious experience of being of much greater importance than dogma.

Another force for creativity in Northern Europe and a strong influence on Friedrich was Romanticism. This movement began with Rousseau, Kant and Blake, and ended with the advent of abstraction at the end of the nineteenth century, although some would argue that it died out at the beginning of the Victorian period. A characteristic of the Romantic movement was the regard paid to nature poetry as well as a feeling for the spiritual life, countryside and landscape, as exhibited in the poetry of Wordsworth and Schiller, the landscape paintings of Turner and the spiritual works of the German artists Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869) and Cornelius as well as, of course, Friedrich and Runge. The movement was also exemplified in the *Sturm und Drang* literature in Germany and in the apocalyptic paintings of John Martin in Britain. Romanticism must be seen within the context of the Age of Enlightenment which begun in the seventeenth century and continued until at least the French Revolution, or as others may argue, the advent of Post-modernism.⁵ An important characteristic of both Romanticism and Enlightenment was the separation between that which might be described as the rational and that which would be described as spiritual. An interesting definition was produced by Novalis:

By giving higher meaning to the mundane, a mysterious appearance to the ordinary, the distinction of the unknown to what is known, the guise of infinity to the finite, I romanticise it. The operation is reversed for those which are higher, unknown, mystical and infinite: they are elucidated by the association, gaining a colloquial means of expression.⁶

The objective, therefore, for the creative artist in the Romantic period was to capture, or elucidate from within, the sense of the numinous, rather than to produce a straight forward representation or copy of nature. In Chapter One this distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal was described in some detail and will not be reiterated here suffice to say that in Germany the noumenal was referred to as the ‘conception of a *Bildungstaat* – a state whose main ideal was to enrich the inner life of man’.⁷ Some

Enlightenment scientists would, of course, have concentrated on the rational sometimes to the extent of a reductionism that could lead to a restricted view of the totality of knowledge, but as shown in Chapter Three this was more of a problem in Britain rather than the mainland of Europe.

This then was the atmosphere into which Caspar David Friedrich was born in the Baltic port of Greifswald in the western part of the State of Pomerania on 5th September 1774. Greifswald was a town under Swedish control and enjoying a period of peace and relative prosperity – Friedrich’s father was soap boiler and chandler and had by the time of Friedrich’s birth achieved a moderate wealth.⁸ The town had a university with a poor reputation, but, nonetheless, Friedrich benefited for four years from the instruction of one of its drawing instructors, Johann Quistorp (1755-1835), a radical who allied himself ‘to the Storm and Stress movement with its valorisation of originality over imitation’.⁹ Whilst studying with Quistorp, Friedrich came under the influence of Gotthard Kosegarten a poet and theologian who preached ‘a particular theology of the heart, in which the subjective experience of nature’s primal, and therefore divinely created, beauty leads to a direct experience of God’.¹⁰ This relationship was to endure, with Kosegarten becoming one of Friedrich’s earliest collectors. Some of Friedrich’s paintings (for example *View of Arkona with Rising Moon, 1805-6*) could be regarded as illustrating some of Kosegarten’s sermons preached on the shore of the island of Rügen.



View of Arkona with Rising Moon (1805-6) 609 ×1000 mm sepia over graphite

It is not known whether or not Friedrich actually corresponded with or even met the philosopher Schelling, but there seems to be an accord between Schelling's statement that 'in landscape painting only subjective representation is possible, since landscape has only a reality in the eyes of the beholder' and the work of the artist who stated that the 'painter should not paint merely what he sees in front of him, but also what he sees within himself'.¹¹

The *Zeitgeist* for Friedrich would have been rather puritanical with a strong work ethic but also permeated with a sense that the emotions or feelings could have full expression through the creative art of painting. As we shall see through this chapter all of these characteristics can be seen contained within the work of Friedrich, and enable him to be described by Rosenblum with some hyperbole as embodying the 'German contribution to European Romantic Art'¹².



Rocky Cellar in Woods (1824) 286 × 210 mm Oil on paper laid on cardboard

However, in assessing Friedrich's position within German Romanticism one needs to mention, at least briefly, his contemporaries. First, I would highlight Philipp Otto Runge whose work and ideas were similar to Friedrich, but whose technical accomplishment, with the exception of *Times of the Day*, did not reach the standard of Friedrich. However, Runge's great achievement as shown in Chapter Three was to write the manifesto for romantic art which helped to establish an understanding between philosophy and art history.

Next, I would mention the work of Friedrich's pupil and friend Carl Gustav Carus, whose subjective experiential aim within his art was similar to that of Friedrich – works here that I would highlight would be *Felsenkeller im Grünen* (1824) (Rocky cellar in the woods) which bears some similarity with the work of Samuel Palmer, and as an example of a *Rückenfigur* painting *Fenster am Oybin bei Mondschein* (1820) (Monastery window in the Moonlight).¹³ Ernst Ferdinand Oehme (1797-1855) would be another important artist in this genre whose *Gotische Kirchenruine im Walde* (1841) (Ruined Gothic Church in the Woods) shows a strong Friedrich influence, but although these two artists were working within the framework of the Romantic ideal, they did not attain the stature of Friedrich¹⁴. Another contemporary from the German speaking world to whom reference should be made is Johann Heinrich Füssli (born in Switzerland, practised in Berlin and then in London); he established himself as a significant artist and teacher with highly imaginative paintings that had more in common with William Blake than with the particular romantic tradition espoused by Friedrich. Finally, Friedrich Overbeck and Franz Pforr (1788-1812) founded the *Lukasbund* (St. Luke's Brotherhood also known as the Nazarenes) to be joined later by Peter von Cornelius; they were contemporary with this period of German Romanticism but expressed their spiritual ideals through a style of painting that would be similar to the medieval religious paintings. As Rosenblum wrote:

The artists who by and large pursued these Romantic goals [to reconstruct the heavenly in the earthly] most passionately, even desperately, were artists of the Northern and especially Northern Protestant origin, artists who seemed to work, like Friedrich Blake and Runge, not in the art-for-art's-sake ambience of Paris but in the art-for-life's-sake ambience of a private world in which the

making of art a means of communicating with the kinds of mystery that, before the Romantics, were located within the public confines of religion.¹⁵

The following pages will demonstrate that Friedrich was a fine exemplar of the artists of whom Rosenblum writes.

Friedrich's Iconography – Some general comments on the characteristics of his system

Before examining some of Friedrich's paintings in detail, there are a number of characteristics which can be highlighted and applied to many of his works. In terms of the geometry of his works, often they are divided by a vertical axis and by horizontal bands. The vertical axis or axes usually divide the painting into halves, or thirds – in the latter situation there is a suggestion of the triptych as in *Garden Terrace* (1811-12) or sometimes, as in the case of the *Monk by the Sea* (1809) the vertical figure is placed at the position of the Golden Section (roughly, just less than two thirds of the way across the picture).¹⁶ Another characteristic arrangement of form which occurs frequently is the painting divided by an inverted 'V' or circumflex accent with the arms extending from the lower corners of the painting and a 'V' with the arms extending downwards from the upper corners of the picture. Examples here would include the *Cross in the Mountain* (1811-12) where the mountain forms the circumflex accent and the rays of the sun the 'V', and the *Chalk Cliffs on Rügen* (after 1818) where the composition includes the 'Vs' but in a reverse formation. Another frequent composition characteristic is the lack of continuity between the foreground and the distance – again illustrated in the *Chalk Cliffs on Rügen* where the effect is to emphasise the height of the cliffs and the precipice beyond. Instead of the eye being led gradually through a painting there is this discontinuity which forces the mind into contemplating either the infinite distance or a seemingly bottomless chasm. As Hofmann indicates, by the use of these unconventional techniques, by not conforming to the modes of expression (Phrygian, Doric etc.) and avoiding the negativity associated at that time with Mannerism, Friedrich raised the status of landscape painting.¹⁷



Chalk Cliffs on Rügen (1825-6)

317 × 252 mm pencil and watercolour

So far as the colour palette is concerned, Friedrich began by using sepia (interesting comparison here with Palmer) – described by a correspondent as ‘light, beautifully poetic, drawn with the utmost delicacy yet profound’ - before eventually moving to oils (1806) when he could be assured of a market for his works.¹⁸ Sepia is a brown ink wash and can be very appropriate when line and form are of a major consideration. It was inexpensive and was popular in Dresden, not a wealthy town, in the early part of the nineteenth century.



The Garden Terrace (1811-12)

535 × 700 mm oil on canvas.



Cross in the Winter Landscape (1811) 330 × 460 mm oil

When Friedrich moved on to oils, blues, greens and browns generally predominated in his palette. Many of his works depict winter scenes and for those in particular, lead white, red earth and smalt predominate. Smalt is a 'glass-like material which is used on its own in shades that range from pale, translucent grey to deep blue. A few particles of red earth pigment have been added to greyish smalt and white to make the pale mauve of the sky.'¹⁹

Smalt was used in Germany and in Dresden in particular during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and from Friedrich's point of view the transparent translucence enabled him to achieve the effect that he desired as, for example, in the *Cross in the Winter Landscape* (1811) sometimes known as the *Cross and Cathedral in the Mountains*. As Aviva Burnstock writes, particularly in respect of *Winter Landscape* (1811)

The physical characteristics of smalt in oil and the use of stippled brushstrokes, especially in the hills and sky, enhance the transparency and light scattering of the paint surface. This technique effectively creates the texture of a shimmering, bleak misty landscape, in which hills and sky merge into the space beyond the church. Stippled paint appears in paintings throughout Friedrich's career, for example in 'The Cross in the Mountains' in the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf (Fig.6) painted in about 1811 and the later and much larger 'Riesengebirge' (1830–35) now in Berlin. Stippling is used in

translucent parts of the painting, especially in the skies and grey-blue parts of the landscape. The paint in these areas may contain smalt, although no analysis is known to have been done. Friedrich is likely to have adopted the technique of stippling in order to achieve effects which would be similar to his early sepias.²⁰

The pigment cobalt blue was developed at the time and can be found in some of Friedrich's later paintings possibly as a replacement for smalt. Many of Friedrich's works have been underdrawn, with pen and pencil being clearly visible when paintings are viewed under infra-red lighting.²¹

People were very important in Friedrich's landscapes and should not be regarded as mere staffage. They fall into two categories, autochthonous where they are indigenous to their surroundings or as visitors or wanderers, recognisable, as Schelling points out, 'by their general disposition, appearance or even clothing, all of which is alien in relationship to the landscape itself'.²² Autochthonous has a Greek derivation which suggests 'son of the soil' and a good example by Friedrich is *Summer (Landscape with a Pair of Lovers)* (1807) where the two lovers blend so well into the scenery, whilst the visitor category could be represented by the *Wanderer above a Sea of Mists* (1818) (sometimes called ...*Sea of Fog*) which will be the subject of detailed analysis later in this chapter.



Summer (Landscape with a Pair of Lovers) (1807) 714×1036 mm oil on canvas

To Friedrich, Schelling's observation that the people (autochthonous or stranger) in a landscape allow themselves to be 'combined in the landscape in a different sense, and the unique feelings attendant on our conception of such juxtaposition can be elicited'.²³ A final, general, point should be made regarding Friedrich's depiction of clouds. Unlike Constable, who made such a careful study of clouds that had been classified by Luke Howard that they were used as illustrations to identify the particular cloud types, Friedrich's representation of clouds was much more vague, but his intention was not to show scientific accuracy but to add an ethereal quality to the landscape or to symbolise a mistiness between heaven and earth.

The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with the analysis of some of the works by Friedrich. These represent some of his mystical paintings as well as those which demonstrate one of the attributes of his genre – their capability of being interpreted in many different ways. By selecting mainly the *Rückenfigur* paintings I will be omitting from this chapter discussion of perhaps Friedrich's most well-known painting – *The Cross in the Mountain (The Tetschen Altar)*; however this has been subject to so much analysis elsewhere that there is very little that I could add and I wish to draw attention to many other equally worthy works.²⁴ Where paintings, many of which were not named by Friedrich himself, have been given two possible titles I will initially mention both titles and then continue with the one which has the greater usage.

The *Rückenfigur* Paintings

Whilst the use of the back view of figures was not an innovation, the way in which Friedrich used them was quite novel. In previous uses of the back view, for example, Raphael's *St. Paul Preaching at Athens* (1515) where the emphasis is on St. Paul preaching to the crowd or in Jan Luyken's (1649-1712) *The Rainbow*, or Daniel Nicolas Chodowiecki's (1726-1801) *Affected Feeling* (1780) where the emphasis is on the reaction of the person depicted to that which they are seeing, the concern is with the intention of the person in respect to their position in the painting. Often such figures

would be standing to one side of the landscape, perhaps gesticulating to draw attention to a particular feature, whereas Friedrich's figures are often placed in the line of sight of the viewer and undemonstrative in themselves but inviting the viewer to join in the contemplation. The use of a figure or figures looking out of a window was perhaps more frequent – van Eyck's (1389-1441) *Madonna of the Chancellor Rolin* (c. 1435) or Tischbein showing *Goethe at the Window of his Lodgings in Rome* (1787) and the concept of showing the artist in a corner of a painting sketching the scene, for example, van Everdingen *The Draughtsman* (1640), were all showing the back of a figure, but with a different purpose from that of Friedrich.²⁵

Vaughan quotes Friedrich speaking to a visitor to his studio saying about his *Rückenfiguren* that he 'liked the device because "in Life it deceives the least"'.²⁶ Vaughan suggests that the intention behind Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren* is to stress 'what you see before you is dependent upon what is within you' which is, of course, very consistent with the artist's stated view that he tries to portray the inner man.²⁷ Prettejohn rightly emphasises that the *Rückenfigur* is 'unlike any previous figure in the history of art in one crucial respect: he ... is not just a represented object in the picture, but also the embodied subject of the aesthetic experience of the picture - we look *with* rather than merely *at* the *Rückenfigur*'.²⁸ She draws out here the consistency with the Kantian viewpoint and the aesthetic experience but carefully and correctly points out that Friedrich would not deliberately have set out to demonstrate that theory; it should be remembered that Friedrich, unlike Runge, was not keen on philosophising about theories of art.²⁹ Although he was not prepared to place theories around his approach to art, one can see in Friedrich's art a consistency with the views expressed by Schelling in the latter's approach to landscape and nature and also, as we shall see when examining the *Monk by the Sea*, existential tendencies.

I should at this juncture introduce the concept of *Eigentümlichkeit* – applied often to the German Romantics. Essentially it means a unique approach to one's identity. In the words of Koerner *Eigentümlichkeit*: 'locates truth as property of the unique, particular, experiencing, and radically autonomous Self'.³⁰ In a rare statement of his approach to

aesthetics Friedrich wrote of a Temple of *Eigentümlichkeit* whose power is essential to creativity:

The spirit of nature reveals itself differently to each individual, and for that reason nobody can burden anyone else with his own teaching and rules as if they constituted an infallible law. No man is the yardstick for all, each is the yardstick only for himself and for minds more or less kindred to his.³¹

In addition to this quotation, the statement emphasises the need to listen to the God within, and to adhere to the Ten Commandments. In a sentence that would resonate with William Blake, Friedrich writes:

Beware of the superficial knowledge of cold facts, beware sinful ratiocination, for it kills the heart, and when heart and mind have died in a man, there art cannot dwell. Preserve a pure and childlike understanding within yourself, and follow the voice of your inner self unconditionally, for it is the Divine in us and does not lead us astray.³²

The rule of life expressed here is very much in accord with Friedrich's friend and confidant Friedrich Schleiermacher who wrote that:

It necessarily follows that the ground of our feeling of absolute dependence, i.e. the divine causality, extends as widely as the order of nature, and finite causality contained in it; consequently the divine causality is posited as equal in compass to finite causality. And further, the feeling of absolute dependence stands in exactly the same relationship with the partial dependence-feeling as with the partial freedom-feeling, and so in that relationship the antithesis between the two last disappears; but finite causality is what it is only by means of its contract with finite passivity, so it is to be inferred that the divine causality is contrasted with the finite.³³

In a coincidence of thought with Friedrich and Blake, Schleiermacher is emphasising the duality within all human beings – freedom and dependence on the God within – and Friedrich is saying make sure that it is the God within that is being followed. Perhaps surprisingly these statements of Friedrich and Schleiermacher accord well with the view of the pre-Enlightenment Leonardo da Vinci, who, writing 300 years earlier, stated that:

‘the divinity which is the science of painting transmutes the painter’s mind into a resemblance of the divine mind’.³⁴

It is my contention that in the *Rückenfigur* paintings Friedrich is inviting the viewer to look with the *Rückenfigur* at the scene or landscape and then have their own experiential relationship with the scene presented. This view, which I would describe as a sense of quiet contemplation of the depths of existence, resonates with the concept of *Innigkeit*. Vaughan describes this expression as a process of contemplation seen as ‘being typically German in its inwardness and depth’.³⁵

In the following paragraphs I have included a number of *Rückenfigur* paintings to be analysed in detail, each of which lends itself to a different approach:

- a) *The Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* (1818)
- b) *The Monk by the Sea* (1809)
- c) *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (c. 1819-20)
- d) *The Chasseur in the Woods* (1814)
- e) *The Stages of Life* (1834-35)

a) *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* or *Mists*(1818) (The title is apocryphal)



The Wanderer above a Sea of Fog
(1818) 748 × 948 mm oil on canvas

Examining first the composition, the picture exhibits the V formation with a strong verticality established by the figure himself.³⁶ There is a very strong inverted V formed by the rock in the foreground which has no linking with the middle or background other than via the figure which stands at the apex of the mountain. This lack of linking emphasises the precipice on which the wanderer is standing – he can go no further. In the middle ground there is a shallow V formed by the distant hills which just rise above the fog with both arms of the V meeting just below the heart of the figure. The background is formed from another inverted V mountain, offset to the left of the figure, balanced by a stack on the right above which is the horizontal banding of the clouds.

The emphasis is very clearly on the figure; he divides the picture both vertically and horizontally with the diagonals of the picture crossing at the centre of his waist. He is dressed in the uniform of the volunteer rangers ‘detachments called into service by King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia to war against Napoleon’.³⁷ Some historians have suggested that the wanderer was Colonel Friedrich Gotthard von Brincken of the Saxon Infantry, but Friedrich has rendered him anonymous by virtue of his placing within the painting, which indicates a more general representation and an encouragement to the viewer to place him or herself as the wanderer. The date of the painting is around 1818, which is after the defeat of Napoleon when anti- French feeling in the German speaking world was running high but before movement towards building a truly unified German nation had really become established.³⁸

There are three main interpretations of this painting – as representative of the sublime, of the leap of faith and as representative of a political force for a unified German nation. Looking first of all at the sublime there are two techniques in use here: there is the precipice over which the figure is looking into the unfathomable depths and there is the fog itself giving an ethereal quality to the painting overall with a suggestion of limitlessness both in the horizon and in the depths. Although there are no linking pathways taking the viewer onto the distance there is a considerable variation in detail of

the vegetation which gives an indication of distance. There is significant detail in the painting of the trees to the left and immediately beside the figure; to the right there is less detail and on the two hills which seem to radiate out from the figure there is even less detail; and finally in the far distance there is no detail at all. The ethereal quality of light depicted in the fog and the sky is very much in line with the statement from Schelling that ‘the true object, the idea, remains formless, and it is up to the observer to discover it from within the fragrant, formless essence before him’.³⁹ The use of the *Rückenfigur* in this landscape enhances the encouragement of the viewer to try to see beyond the veil towards the ineffable. In her discussion of this painting, Prettejohn draws a parallel with the Kantian aesthetic experience highlighting the uncanny symmetry around the figure and the inability to measure the space in terms of post-Renaissance perspective ‘but only in relation to the figure itself’.⁴⁰ However, whilst agreeing that this is so, as Kant’s remarks were concerned more with nature in reality rather than in representation I see an even closer accord with Schelling than with Kant. In Kantian terms, for the sublime truly to be represented by the work of a creative artist, that artist needs to be a genius – maybe Friedrich can be regarded as such, but Schelling does not demand such a quality from the artist endeavouring to elucidate in a work of art, the Divine mind from within the self.

Koerner rightly compares the insubstantiality and obscurity in the representation of the landscape in this painting with Edmund Burke’s aesthetic of the sublime where he ‘valorised obscurity and strength of expression over the Neo-classical ideal of clarity, precision and adherence to rule’.⁴¹ He continued ‘Burke argued that terror, the passion associated with the sublime, is best aroused by things ‘dark, uncertain [and] confused’, while vastness and infinity, the chief attributes of the sublime in nature can only be elicited by obscurity’.⁴²

Friedrich himself said:-

When a landscape is covered in fog, it appears larger, more sublime, and heightens the strength of the imagination and excites expectation, rather like a veiled woman. The eye and fantasy feel themselves more attracted to the hazy distance than to that which lies near and distinct before us.⁴³

Here the actual feeling of the sublime is located in the viewer and is not an objective characteristic of the landscape itself – or as Kant would have said, the sublimity is located in the mind of the beholding subject. The Wanderer, with his feet planted firmly on the ground, is so prominent in this painting that he is perhaps helping to mediate between the insubstantiality of the landscape and the artist himself who may be the *Rückenfigur*. Is the Temple of *Eigentümlichkeit* located within the Wanderer who invites the viewer to ascertain the ‘truth as property of the unique, particular, experiencing, and radically autonomous Self’? The answer here can only be – perhaps, but I do consider that the *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* must be one of the greatest works by Friedrich to attempt to induce the feelings of the sublime within the viewer.

This picture poses, with its subject poised on the edge of a chasm, another question – is the Wanderer contemplating a leap of faith, the Kierkegaardian leap? To digress, one can view an approach to belief in God in perhaps three main ways. First there is the propositional (or strong fideist) approach where one’s belief derives from dogmatic statements. Secondly, a faith can be derived from a particular experience like the Damascus Road commissioning and thirdly there is an approach derived as far as possible from rational or logical deduction, sometimes called the cultural-linguistic approach.⁴⁴ These approaches span the spectrum of religious thought from the evangelical to the liberal or even radical – in Christian terms the evangelical could be represented by Billy Graham and his successors and the radical by Don Cupitt.

Wherever one places oneself on this spectrum there is at some stage in the attaining of a religious conviction, a leap of faith, referred to as the Kierkegaardian leap. With those of a fideist persuasion there is an acceptance of the proposition without any need for further discussion or consideration, for the one persuaded by a religious experience, there is a personal awakening or realisation, whilst the cultural-linguist approach will require much reading and developmental thought prior to making that leap.

In the history of the philosophy of religion many attempts were made to prove the existence of God , (Anselm probably produced one of the better attempts but, nevertheless, was unsuccessful) but eventually the impossibility of the task became recognised. God then became described as, for example, the Ultimate Reality, the Ground of All Being and Fifth Dimension – descriptions which each in their own way try to describe that which is beyond time and space and beyond the comprehension of the human brain.⁴⁵

As a mystic and painter who endeavoured to represent the ineffable, Friedrich would have been well aware of the concept of a leap of faith and this is evident in a number of his works, not only the *Wanderer above a Sea of Mists*. For example, the Kierkegaardian leap can be discerned in other works from early paintings such as the *Tetschen Altarpiece* (1807-8) where the chasm is shown just beyond the frame with the mountains rising in the centre of the scene to his later works such as *Two Men at Moonrise* (1835-7) where the leap would be from the rock on which they are standing across the sea to the rising moon. This contemplative work in sepia was one of his last and the rising moon was possibly meant to represent the risen Christ or the Holy Mother, with Friedrich maybe thinking of his own immanent death with its hope of redemption and salvation.

The idea of viewing across a chasm occurs many of Friedrich's works but the *Wanderer above a Sea of Mists* and the other two paintings highlighted above would be typical of the way in which Friedrich expresses the pointer towards Transcendence, towards Ultimate Reality.

I will now consider briefly, because this thesis is primarily concerned with portrayal of the ineffable or numinous, the third interpretation of *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* - as representative of a political force for a unified German nation. At the time this painting was produced, Germany, if one can really describe it as that, consisted of some 200 individual states – some, such as Pomerania being very large and others such as Lippe, very small.⁴⁶ Although the German nation was dispersed, there was a strong sense of nationalism within Friedrich – enhanced by the dislike of France through the Napoleonic

Wars and indeed the actions within France of Napoleon himself to which reference has already been made. A political interpretation of the *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* can then be established in which the Wanderer can be seen as representative of the German people contemplating the future of their nation – is the nation going to fall into the abyss or is it going to soar into prominence as it moves as it moves into the middle distance and beyond into the infinity of the future? The relationship with France will be explored in more detail when *The Chasseur* is examined, but the *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* was regarded as of such political importance that it was taken out of context by the magazine *Der Spiegel* (8th May 1995 edition) and modified to show the Wanderer contemplating Germany's past – concentration camp barbed wire, uniformed soldier jumping over barbed wire to freedom and a group of soldiers marching out of the picture.⁴⁷ The message here was clearly to look to a future of freedom whilst not forgetting the past. The future that this wanderer would have been contemplating would have been one, approximately five years after re-unification day, when the topic of conversation in Germany was whether or not normality in the German context could ever be achieved or indeed even be desirable. In this context, normality meant on the one hand establishing a good relationship with the Jews and on the other the reinstatement of a 'positive German national identity'.⁴⁸ Of the former, there was no doubt that this should be promoted and achieved, whilst for the latter there were mixed views, with a number of politicians and philosophers concerned about the possibility of the rise of an aggressive German nationalism. The ramifications of German politics are clearly outside the scope of this thesis but for more information the reader is referred to Peter Watson's *German Genius*, details of which are given in the bibliography. It is however, interesting to note the similarity between the political interpretation of the *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* in 1820 and the interpretation of the same painting in 1995 – a nation contemplating its future.

b) Monk by the Sea (c. 1809)



The Monk by the Sea (c 1809) 1100 × 1715 mm oil on canvas



The Monk by the Sea (Detail)

This large painting shows the lone figure of a monk, deep in thought with his chin resting on his hand, standing on a shallow cliff looking out to a sea surmounted by a very dark stormy sky in the distance, with blue sky immediately overhead. The *Monk by the Sea* was one of two landscapes sent to the Prussian Royal Academy exhibition in 1810 as ‘landscapes in oils’ and named subsequently.⁴⁹ The composition of the painting shows a strong horizontal emphasis with five bands, one representing the land, one the sea and three the clouds and sky. Whilst horizontality is the prominent compositional characteristic, there is also a typical Friedrich V structure present but only lightly stressed. There is the very shallow inverted V of the land, possibly sand dunes or more probably rounded grey rock and then a slightly more prominent inverted V formed by the boundary between the grey and white clouds. There is infinity of space between the apices of the two shallow triangles, with just the faint line of the horizon being visible between the almost black sea and the very dark clouds.

The monk, a lone, isolated figure located 64% of the distance from the right to the left of the picture – close to the dimension of the golden section, is the sole vertical element in the work other than the vertical brush strokes of the very heavy clouds on the horizon. Above the horizon the very dark clouds merge into a band of much lighter clouds which then dissolve into the deep blue sky above the monk. The choppy sea is shown to be black, reflecting the storm clouds which themselves fade from black on the horizon up to grey, then white where they are gradually replaced by the blue of the clear sky. There is some vertical striation in the rendering of the clouds and sky which takes the eye up and down the picture. The monk is shown standing at the apex of the shallow triangle formed by the cliff with his back to the viewer staring out to sea. The monk is shown as a very small isolated figure emphasising the huge scale of the sea and sky.

The effect here on the viewer is that one is sharing the viewpoint of the monk staring into the scene as though one is looking for a vanishing point. It is this encouragement to try to look further and further into the painting that is one of the elements that points towards the Transcendent – one is constantly trying to see beyond. The effect of this dark colour scheme in the lower part of the picture is to bring the horizon with its dark storm cloud

forward towards the monk, whilst the aerial perspective of the light cloud gives the effect of tremendous expanse of sky and cloud stretching towards infinity. There is a tremendous contrast between light and dark in the painting. There is the brightly lit cliff-top beneath the bright sky immediately overhead. This is contrasted with the black sea, painted even darker than the storm clouds which have been painted to have the effect of blurring the horizon in the middle distance and reducing the horizon on the right and left hand wings of the picture. This treatment elicits a similar reaction in the viewer to that of the aerial perspective inasmuch as it encourages the viewer to look deeply into the picture in an endeavour to discern that which lies beyond. In a similar way to the works of Palmer which point towards the transcendent, Friedrich meets the two Otto criteria of the contrast between light and dark and the suggestion of a tremendous distance or huge empty space.

In addition, two other features stand out in this picture that characterise a pointing towards the transcendent – first, the loneliness of the monk and his insignificance in the face of the storm brewing in the distance and secondly, the treatment of the horizon which encourages the viewer to stare into the distance wondering what it is that could lie beyond. These features combined with the size of the painting would give an impression of the sublime and would emphasise the power of nature very much as Ward achieves with *Gordale Scar* – the insignificance of the powerful bull contrasted with the power of the Creator can be compared with the insignificance of the monk set beside the awesome power of the storm and its effect on the sea. The characteristic Friedrich discontinuity between the horizontal banding stops the eye of the viewer from roaming through the picture from foreground to background with this spatial banding forcing the viewer to pause with the monk in viewing the vastness of the sky and contemplating the minuteness and insignificance of the monk himself. This work is surely intending to represent mankind considering his own insignificance when compared with the God-created universe, a universe which Friedrich is suggesting lies beyond that which is attainable by the monk alone – in other words the kingdom of heaven itself. The art critic Kleist, a contemporary of Friedrich wrote of this work:-

There can be nothing sadder or more desolate in the world than this place: the only spark of life in the broad domain of death, the lonely centre in the lonely circle. The picture with its two or three mysterious subjects, lies there like an apocalypse, as if it were thinking Young's *Night Thoughts*, and since it has, in its uniformity and boundlessness, no foreground but the frame, it is as if one's [the viewer's] eyelids had been cut off.⁵⁰

It is interesting that Kleist quotes Young's *Night Thoughts* as this work was of considerable inspiration to the artist Samuel Palmer, the subject of the previous chapter.⁵¹ Kleist equates this work with sadness – I am not convinced of this and would argue that first, this work represents another example of the German *Innigkeit* - deep thought but not necessarily sadness. Secondly, if he is a monk contemplating the infinite mystery of the Divine and the possibilities after death, then he may well be excited and fearful at the contemplation of this sublime inducing view but not necessarily sad.



Kersting *Friedrich in his Studio* (c. 1812) 510 x 400 mm oil on canvas

One obvious question to be asked in connection with this work is the identity of the monk – is he Friedrich himself. Friedrich kept his studio very much like a monk's cell (as shown in the portrait by Kersting (1785-1847) – *Caspar David Friedrich in his Studio*) and at times wore clothing that was not dissimilar to that of a monk. Koerner remarks: 'For along with the cell-like bareness of his atelier, Friedrich's travelling cloak evokes both a sense of penitent self-denial for the sake of art and a notion of the artist as purgatorial wanderer, never at home and always in transit, even when he stands in his own studio'.⁵²

This coupled with his feeling for Pietism does give credence to the view that the *Monk by the Sea* is a self-portrait, the painter-monk contemplating the unfathomable, the immanence and transcendence of the Ultimate Reality. Koerner suggests that the artist represents in this canvas that which is 'not quite the structure of transcendence, but rather transcendence as the dissolution of structure...the distant horizon transformed into an all too close surface of paint'.⁵³ In addition to expressing a oneness with God, Friedrich is also highlighting the aloneness of the human – who not only as other creatures, is alone, but also knows that he or she is alone.

As Paul Tillich writes:

God himself cannot liberate man from his aloneness: it is man's greatness that he is centred within himself. Separated from his world he is thus able to look *at* it. Only because he can look at it can he know and love and transform it. God, in creating him the ruler of the earth had to separate him and thrust him into aloneness. Man is also therefore able to be spoken to by God and by man.⁵⁴

In this painting, the painter-monk is fulfilling the role of priest by attempting to bring a concept of the Ultimate Reality to mankind – an eternal presence informing the lone receptive human being, and to give existential meaning to his or her life.

Writing on the Tate Gallery website, Beat Wyss comments:

Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* is a metaphor for the defenceless, top-speed collision between the ego and the cosmos, subject and substratum. But this alone is not enough for Friedrich. In putting it to us he also shows us how we should view the world. He challenges us to do as he does without bothering him. We are to stand there and gaze at his painting just as the monk is gazing at the sea. The monk looks as though he is completely absorbed in his own thoughts, but he only looks as though he hasn't seen us. In fact, by his demeanour he is saying: "Follow me; feel what I feel. Somehow you will know what I feel. And if you don't, then you're just bothersome, and you're not equal to myself. In which case, turn away and leave!" The Romantic artist does not have a message for all of us. He reveals himself only to those who know they are his kindred spirits.⁵⁵

While one may not agree with all that Wyss writes (the clash between the cosmos and ego is perhaps a little overblown) but the valid point is made is that the effects of pointing towards the Transcendent are only going to be realised in those viewers who are susceptible to that experience – who are indeed 'his kindred spirits'. Another writer, Marianne Rankin, who uses Friedrich as an exemplar of those who endeavour to portray the numinous suggests with regard to the *Monk by the Sea*:

The palette is limited but effective – pale hues for the sand and clouds, blues ranging from deep, dark tones of the sea and nearer sky with lighter blue for the more distant scene. The light is muted, suggestive of evening. There is movement in the sky and sea. One can feel the wind, the cold of the evening and the aloneness of the figure on the shore. The emptiness of the painting appeals to me, it seems to enable the imagination to run free. There is more to it than just the natural scene.

The monk stands on the empty sea-shore gazing out at eternity and as he is turned away, we look out with him. So we too contemplate infinity - the empty sand, dark sea and scudding clouds in the vast sky.⁵⁶

At the time of this painting, *the Sorrows of Werther* by Goethe had just been produced which contains the passage: 'It is night; I am alone, forlorn on the hill of storms...no hut receives me from the rain; forlorn on the hill of storms'.⁵⁷ Hofmann emphasises the influence of Burke: What Burke says there (in his *Philosophical Enquiry...*) about the 'uniformity', 'vastness' and endlessness of deserts, seashores and threatening clouds read like commentary on *The Monk by the Sea*.⁵⁸ Hofmann highlighting these two characteristics then writes, beginning by quoting Schiller:

It is a compound of unease, expressed in the highest degree as terror, and joy capable of intensifying to delight, and although it is not really pleasure, it is much preferred to any pleasure by fine souls. This compounding of two contradictory sensations in one single emotion is an irrefutable proof of our moral independence'.⁵⁹

This independence is demonstrated when, instead of experiencing the sublime as a physical threat, we create it as the object of our own imagination, in an act of 'free contemplation'. Friedrich does this when he paints his alter ego as a monk by the sea, exposed to the dangers of nature. When Schiller says that a person approaching the 'terrifying images of his own imagination' does so 'fearlessly with horrified pleasure' it applies to Friedrich, both as painter and monk. And it follows in Schiller's words 'that we ourselves stand in two different relationships to the object, and therefore that the two opposing natures must be united in us.'⁶⁰

Thus in this picture there is not only the suggestion of pointing toward the transcendent, but also there is a real insight into the personality of the painter himself. This insight into the creative forces at work within Friedrich is very much in accord with the concept of the artist described by C.S.Lewis as adopting the role of Co-Creator.⁶¹



JWM Turner *Off the coast: Seascape and clouds* (nineteenth century) oil on canvas

The style of the *Monk by the Sea* is not unique to Friedrich and with this painting there is a resonance with J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) that cannot be overlooked, as, for example

in Turner's *Venetian Festival* (1846) or *Off the Coast: Seascape and Clouds* (unknown date but nineteenth century). The ethereal, impressionistic treatment is apparent in all these works. In both *Monk by the Sea* and *Seascape and Clouds* one can see that there is a suggestion of the colour field paintings developed by the Abstract Expressionists in the twentieth century. Indeed, Rosenblum draws a very precise link between the *Monk by the Sea* and Mark Rothko's *Green on Blue* when he writes:

If these paintings look alike in their renunciation of almost everything but a sombre, luminous void, is this merely an example of what Edwin Panofsky once called 'pseudomorphosis', that is the accidental appearance at different moments in the history of art of works whose close formal analogies falsify the fact that their meaning is totally different. Or does this imply that there may be a true connection between Friedrich and Rothko, that the similarity of their formal structure is the result of a similarity of feeling and intention and that, indeed, there may even be a tradition in modern painting that could bridge the century and a half that separates them?⁶²

From his few writings, it is known that Friedrich believed in expressing his religious feelings or experiences through his art – 'Regard every pure mental impulse as holy, honour every devout presentiment as holy, for it is the art within us' – very much as a modern icon painter would regard it as essential to pray his images into existence.⁶³ Whilst it may not be possible to prove that there is a similarity of feeling across the century and a half or even beyond, I would suggest that there is a similarity of intention that can be traced over the centuries of artistic endeavour. That endeavour to 'transmute the painter's mind into a resemblance of the divine mind' exhibited itself in many different ways as time elapsed from the early medieval paintings with their images of Christ and Biblical scenes, through landscapes of Runge and Friedrich, to the colour fields of the twentieth century that I would suggest that there is indeed a similarity of feeling and intention rather than a spurious serendipity.

In summary, three features stand out in this picture that point towards the Transcendent – first, the loneliness of the monk and his insignificance in the face of the storm brewing in the distance, secondly the contrast between light and dark and thirdly, the treatment of the

horizon which encourages the viewer to stare into the distance wondering what it is that could lie beyond, ‘beyond the veil’.

These features combined with the size of the painting would give an impression of the sublime and would emphasise the power of nature very much as Ward achieves with *Gordale Scar*. This painting can be interpreted as an allegory for the power of the Creator and, furthermore, illuminates aspects of Friedrich’s personality that may not be at all obvious



James Ward *Gordale Scar* (1812-14) 3327 × 4216 mm oil on canvas

c) *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (c. 1825-30)



Two Men Contemplating the Moon (c. 1825-30) 349 × 438 mm oil on canvas

There are a number of paintings with the back view of two men contemplating the moon or just looking at the landscape or seascape in the moonlight – the one I have chosen is generally called *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (c. 1825-30). This is the third version which Friedrich painted, the first having been produced in about 1819.⁶⁴ There is also a similar work depicting a man and a woman contemplating the moon (late 1820s) set in an identical landscape but with the latter depicted in silhouette.

Beginning with an analysis of the composition there is a very strong V formation created out of the shape of the tree to the right of the picture merging into the hill on the left. This is sitting in another flattened V formed by the heavy rocks in the foreground between which lies a pathway upon which the two men are standing. The path curves out of the picture at the place where the men are standing. The moon is located at the intersection of the two diagonals which is at the same height as the waists of the two men. There is a distant inverted V formed by the hill on the right fading into the misty background. The vertical elements are formed by the two men located on the left some three quarters of the way from the right hand border of the painting.

The Friedrich characteristic of looking over a chasm is achieved by there being nothing visible between the tree with its exposed roots and the moon, the pathway having curved

out of the picture in the foreground. The leap of faith as described when discussing the *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* is a possible interpretation but in this particular painting the air of mystery is created by the strange arrangement of the central tree which is shown with the roots half exposed. Aerial perspective is achieved by the lightening of the mist around the moon which emphasises the distance – unlike Samuel Palmer who produced many ‘moony’ pictures, the Friedrich moon has not been exaggerated in size. In fact the smaller moon has the effect in this picture of exaggerating the horizontal distance towards the far horizon hidden by the mist, but hinted at by the row of evergreen trees on the right hand side of the picture. This, as with many of the paintings considered here, asks the viewer to look very deeply into the picture trying to discern what may lie beyond. The comment on the Metropolitan Museum of Art website offers a rather wider role for the moon and summarises the Rückenfigur motif rather simplistically:

The mood of pious contemplation relates to fascination with the moon as expressed in contemporary poetry, literature, philosophy, and music. Both figures are seen from the back so that the viewer can participate in their communion with nature, which the Romantics saw as a manifestation of the Sublime.⁶⁵

So far as the figures themselves are concerned it has been suggested that the larger figure is Friedrich himself with a student (August Heinrich (1794-1822)) leaning on his shoulder. It has also been suggested that the uniform of Friedrich is that of the *Lützower Corps* (freedom fighters in the War of Liberation).⁶⁶ It has been reported by the Dresden poet and translator Karl Foster (1784-1841) that when visiting Friedrich’s atelier, with the highly respected but arrogant Peter Cornelius, a member of St.Luke’s Brotherhood, they were told by Friedrich that the two figures were ‘at their demagogic machinations’ – an illegal activity at that time when Metternich was anxious to subdue those not in favour of the settlement achieved at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which left Austria and Prussia as the two most powerful states in the German speaking world.⁶⁷ This is a different approach to the interpretation of this work from that of Foster who said that Friedrich always knew how ‘to place his figures in a meaningful relation to the landscape [succinctly suggesting] contemplation of the infinite’.⁶⁸ It is just possible that Friedrich was endeavouring to fool Cornelius who was initially so dismissive of Friedrich, but

knowing of Friedrich's political views, I would say this was unlikely and that the latter was being quite serious. As Keorner remarks: 'Demagogue was a derogatory term used by conservatives for someone who espoused the ideal of a unified German state established by constitution and governed with the consent of its citizens'.⁶⁹

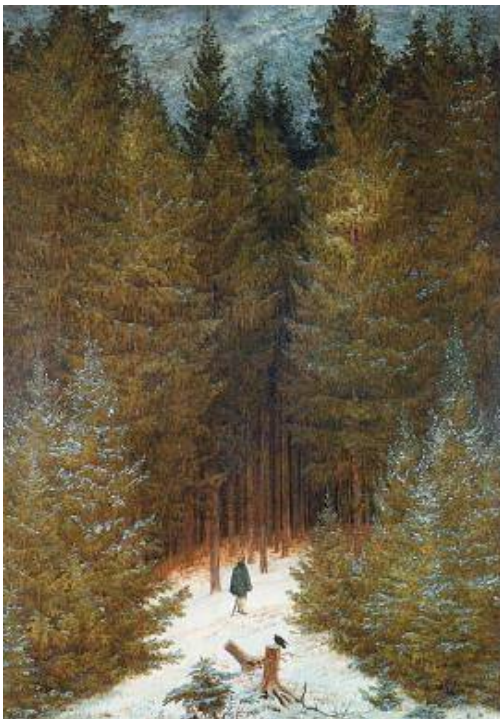
Friedrich was very keen on the establishment of a Unified Germany and I would suggest therefore that the anti-*demagogenverfolgung* (persecution of the demagogues) importance of this painting is paramount, indicated by Friedrich's own comment when he usually carefully refrains from giving any indication of the possible interpretations of his works.⁷⁰ Napoleon had been defeated and the returning soldiers were no longer particularly loyal to their old states and they might have expected the King of Prussia and the leaders of the other states would have been keen to support the unity of Germany. This was not to be, which led those in favour of unity to form nationalistic bands 'or 'German societies' with names like Teutonia, Vandalia, Germania and Arminia.'⁷¹ Members of the societies wore clothes which resembled the attire (*altdeutsch* clothing) worn by German speaking people of the Middle Ages when there was strong support for a unified Germany: this out-dated attire is reflected in *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* and the other paintings of similar titles. This movement was a threat to the privileged establishment and following a decree from Wilhelm III declaring that the Napoleonic War was a 'War of liberation rather than a Freedom War, so as to discourage any analogy to the American and French revolutions,' a further decree was promulgated in 1819 which effectively outlawed the German freedom societies and forbade the wearing of the *altdeutsch* costume.⁷² There is thus a sadness about this painting and some of the other *Rückenfiguren* where Friedrich was expressing the collapse of hope for a new future as indicated by the fallen tree and the *altdeutsch* clothing.

However apart from historical-political connotations, there is an intimacy about this picture both in the viewer feeling that he or she may be taken into the confidence of the two speakers and in the close relationship of the speakers to the surrounding nature. There is the closeness of the gnarled roots immediately in front of the two men and on the right of the picture, the mossy pathway and the overall mistiness which almost enables

the viewer to feel and smell the atmosphere and to share that close relationship with nature.

Whether or not the moon which is sometimes used as a symbol of the risen Christ should be interpreted as such in this case remains open but a possibility. If so, then it would reveal an additional dimension to the painting of consideration of the future – be it a personal future beyond death or the two men contemplating a future Germany where the individuals were free from any sort of oppression. Koerner suggests that the ‘*Rückenfigur*’ transposes the metaphysical yearning for union with nature into the contemporary political imperative of a unified state.⁷³ I may be guilty of unjustified eisegesis, but I think the *Rückenfiguren* are open to a wider interpretation than this with the invitation being to the viewer to join with the figures in contemplation of God’s created world – both the world of nature and the world of human interactivity. It is true that there is evidence of much decay but decay in nature always leads to a nurturing of new growth, although for Germany that growth or resurrection was not realised until 1871 (or even as some would argue 1989), but that growth or resurrection did eventually arrive.

d) *The Chasseur in the Woods* (1814)



The Chasseur in the Woods (1814)

657 × 467 mm oil on canvas

The composition takes the familiar Friedrich arrangement with an inverted V of the grass in the foreground which has been rendered yellowy-white by a recent slight snowfall a slightly shallower inverted V formed by the sky at the top of the picture.⁷⁴

In the centre there is a strong vertical stress produced by the fir trees and the lone figure of the French soldier who is placed at the centre of this symmetrical composition. This vertical symmetry is emphasised not only by the two V formations but also by the identically snow covered Christmas trees placed on the right and left of the foreground. Tremendous depth is given to this painting by the linear perspective achieved by the arrangement of the tall fir trees leading the eye through a tunnel to total black obscurity in the distance towards which the horseless *Chasseur* is looking. A significant difference between this and many of the *Rückenfigur* paintings is that the eye is actually led through the picture rather than given pause for thought at a chasm. In the foreground there are two tree stumps and a black bird the significance of which will be examined shortly.

There are two main interpretations of this work. First there is a visual essay in existentialism, the lone stationary figure contemplating his future - whether to return along the path already taken back to a land which is no longer what it was or to continue forward into a life perhaps of utter darkness. Friedrich would have been very familiar with the Psalms and one of the Psalms of Lamentation could well be appropriate here, for example in Psalm 25 we have the poet having suffered at the hand of his enemies saying 'for I am alone and in misery...O keep my soul and deliver me.'⁷⁵ This painting represents the epitome of the pain of loneliness. In his interpretation, Koerner sees himself standing in place of the chasseur and seeking:

to stand where the turned traveller pauses, I will feel looked at from behind ... Autoscopy is somehow always implied by such turned travellers in Friedrich's paintings, for in their faceless anonymity they mirror our act of looking in an uncanny way. During the experience of autoscopy, we read, [quoting Maurice Merleau-Ponty 1908-1961] the subject is overcome by a feeling of profound sadness which spreads outwards and into the very image of the double ... Friedrich's paintings are strangely sadder and lonelier when they are inhabited by a turned figure than when they are empty. Who is this sole self who halts before wandering into the painted world, and who, as

Friedrich's contemporaries interpreted *Chasseur*, hears his deathsong sung by the raven sitting in the margin that separates him from ourselves?⁷⁶

This represents different route to the Transcendent; as well as the viewer straining to see beyond the veil (by staring into the utter darkness of the forest) he or she is almost entering into the mind of the traveller, in this case the *chasseur*, and sharing his existential angst. The *chasseur* has lost his horse, emphasising defeat and has been placed by Friedrich, alone in a foreign forest awaiting his end and the final judgement. Friedrich invites us to empathise with that cavalry man as he awaits his fate - death from hypothermia and starvation or, possibly, capture by an hostile indigenous population.

Secondly there is the political interpretation – the Napoleonic retreat from Moscow had taken place two years ago and at this time France had had to give way to Germany. (The painting was produced in the early Autumn of 1814, when the defeat of the French in March of that year would have been uppermost in the thought of Friedrich.) The two tree stumps could represent the defeated France. Regarding the black bird, Hofmann quotes an article in the newspaper *Vossische Zeitung*: ‘A French Chasseur walks alone through the forest of snow-covered fir trees, and a raven on a tree trunk sings him his death song’.⁷⁷ Whether or not the black bird is a raven is open to question, but if one regards this painting as concerned with the death of France then the raven with its, admittedly disputed, symbolism of representing a black hole of the universe or death, would seem to be an obvious choice.

Unlike some of the other *Rückenfigur* paintings we are rather more restricted in seeing the viewpoint of the wanderer figure; by his having been placed further into the picture we cannot be absolutely sure of that which he is seeing. Can he see something down the dark pathway into the forest which we cannot see? Is he contemplating whether or not to take the higher or lower path, both of which to the viewer's eye seem to be leading into the ever darkening, cold and inhospitable forest and to a quiet death from hypothermia? So, in summary, this picture is obviously nationalistic and is also, but less obviously, inviting the viewer to contemplate aloneness with very few possibilities of avoiding that loneliness before God, death itself.

e) *The Abbey in the Oak Wood* (c. 1809)



The Abbey in the Oak Wood (c. 1809) 1104 × 1710 mm oil on Canvas

Departing now from the *Rückenfiguren* this large picture is divided into two halves by the presence of the entrance to the ruined Abbey tower in the centre foreground with on both sides a group of four aging, bare oak trees. On the right hand side only there is evidence of more of the ruined Abbey, with one of the oaks almost appearing to be growing out of the structure. Visible through the doorway in the tower is a simple crucifix which seems to have survived in spite of the decay which has occurred throughout the remainder of the Abbey. In the immediate foreground there are on the left groups of black clad people (mourners?) and on the right there is one conventional cross marking a grave with a number of markers with simple two-pitch roofs as well as on the extreme right a metal cross surmounted by a semi-circle, together with a small notice or marker. The cross is almost identical to the cross at the top of the window in the Abbey tower. The addition of pitched roofs to grave crosses seems to be a tradition in this part of Germany as it is shown in other Friedrich paintings, for example *Graveyard under Snow* (1826-7). In the middle distance through the mist there is the suggestion of many more trees sloping down

the hill into the mist and away from the viewer. The ground around the Abbey is uneven, uncultivated and untended.

The upper branches of the oak trees are silhouetted against a bright sky gradually darkening to the point of being dark sepia immediately above the viewer. There is a crescent moon showing with the vague outline of the full moon. The misty horizon is shown at about one third of the way from the base of the picture.

The overall mood depicted is one of gloom and decay imbued with mystery. The dark sepia of the land around the Abbey is very similar in form to the *Monk by the Sea* (both of these large pictures were, and probably still are, exhibited together) with its dark blue foreground. The similarity is carried upwards with the light middle and dark upper part of the painting – again almost suggesting the colour field paintings of the twentieth century. Such is the similarity that these paintings could be called – study in blue and study in sepia. The picture raises many questions, the main one being the activity of the people. The use of the many autochthonous, spread out, black-clad figures invites the questions of the viewer: what are they there for, what are they doing thus adding to the enigmatic atmosphere. If they really were a mourning party then would they not be grouped around a grave? But then, would an Abbey in such a state of ruin still be used for funerals? Perhaps a more plausible explanation is that the mourners were attending the Abbey on a day of some significance when they were remembering the dead of the past – perhaps the dead of the fourth and fifth coalition wars. The ruined Abbey could be said to represent the Catholic Church - in decline and in Germany being replaced by the Lutheran Church with its emphasis on the word rather than on the sacramental services conducted in grand churches or cathedral buildings. The retention of the crucifix, however, suggests that in spite of the decline of the Catholic Church, the Cross is still there to be followed but within the context of the Lutheran or Moravian Churches.

Perspective is emphasised by the diminishing size of the oaks, beyond the eight oaks in the foreground. It is also evident from the diminishing size of the people and the grave markers. The overall effect of this is to give great depth to the picture. There is a general

air of mistiness about this painting which is achieved by a combination of aerial perspective and the depiction of mist in the distance, lower down the slope. With regard to the use of mist (and this applies equally to *The Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* as mentioned above), Friedrich wrote, and I repeat:

When a landscape is covered in fog, it appears larger more sublime, and heightens the strength of the imagination and excites expectation, rather like a veiled woman. The eye and fantasy feel themselves more attracted to the hazy distance than to that which lies near and distinct before us.⁷⁸

The overall effect of this combination of mist and aerial perspective is to imbue the picture with mystery. The lower third of this picture is dark, the remainder being light, punctuated by the eight oaks and with the exception of a small triangle of dark cloud in the top left hand corner. The light sky emphasises the detail of the oaks and the cross in the window of the tower. This light contrast realises one of the characteristics that Otto highlighted as necessary to indicate a suggestion of transcendence. The unanswered questions in this picture highlights its ambiguity which is brought out well in an ekphrastic sonnet by the Dresden poet Karl Theodor Körner (1791-1813) which begins:

The fountain of grace flows in death,
And those there are comrades in bliss,
Who pass through the grave into eternal life,

and ends:

Here I can boldly trust my heart;
Cold admiration I shall not have – no, I feel,
And in feeling art completes itself.⁷⁹

In this sonnet Körner is moving from an interpretation which sees this painting as pointing towards the Transcendent to a position where as Koerner emphasises that by elevating ‘us to the eternal, Körner argues, Friedrich’s canvas justifies our faith in the redemptive powers of art per se, and in our subjective capacity to feel those powers’.⁸⁰

Thus, although not so overtly as in the *Chasseur*, there is the suggestion in this work of art that the viewer is being invited to partake of the existential angst of the participants in the painting. Whether or not one can agree with Koerner's suggestion that what Friedrich has created in his works can be translated into the redemptive power of art in general is open to question – I would argue that it is only true of those works which specifically include those characteristics which originated with Otto and have been refined further in respect of the paintings analysed in this thesis.

This particular painting certainly exudes an air of mystery, of the sublime and of transcendence. There is the decaying old Abbey indicating not only that the Church of Rome has been replaced but also that the church building itself is not essential to the worship of God or the experience of the ineffable. The minute figures in this very large painting emphasise the inconsequentiality of mankind in comparison with the Creator, a characteristic common to many of the works which point towards the Transcendent. The sense of something beyond death can be inferred from the dying oaks in the foreground set against the younger vegetation in the middle distance and justifies Körner's ekphrasis.

Regarding the relationship of this painting to the *Monk*, not having seen the picture in the National Gallery in Berlin, I am at some disadvantage but I can imagine that this picture shown beside the *Monk by the Sea* will have an effect greater than the viewing of just one alone. Both paintings with their blocks of dark and light tones, point towards the colour field works of the twentieth century; both have an indistinct horizon encouraging the viewer to peer into the distance trying to see that which lies beyond and both emphasise the insignificance of man compared with the creative power of the God.

f) The Large Enclosure (c. 1832)



The Large Enclosure (c1833) 735× 103 mm oil on canvas

In this evocative painting of the River Elbe, near Dresden, Friedrich has taken the viewer into the very centre of the picture by an extraordinary use of distorted perspective, almost to the point of achieving a view of the Transcendent itself. Not only is the horizon located very close to the point of the golden mean, but also there is an hyperbolic effect created by the curving lines which emerge from the two foreground corners of the painting and then meet in the centre with the curve of the clouds just above the horizon completing the effect. Just above this meeting point there is the low point in the curving horizon created by the rising hills to the right and the rising trees to the left. Vaughan refers to the ‘strange urgency to this picture [given by] the oddly distorted perspective, the ‘fish-eye’ view that the artist appears to have taken of the scene, so that, when standing before the actual canvas, we have to get very close indeed for it to fall into place’.⁸¹ Werner Hofmann takes a more scientific approach to the hyperbola effect referring to:

the curves [which] do not lie two-dimensionally within the picture plane but bend through space. They correspond, but do not create any linear axes of central perspective. Friedrich leaves a gap to peer through (an isomorphic, Euclidian space, to be more precise), and invents an airy space which moves simultaneously towards us and away from us.⁸²

Friedrich certainly achieves the two Otto criteria for producing an atmosphere in which the viewer may appreciate the numinous by creating the effect of a huge space as well as the light/ dark contrast (chiaroscuro) of the water and the marshy grass. As well as meeting the Otto criteria, Friedrich also in this painting emphatically meets the third Podro criterion (see Chapter One): ‘The artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art which may suggest a transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted’.⁸³

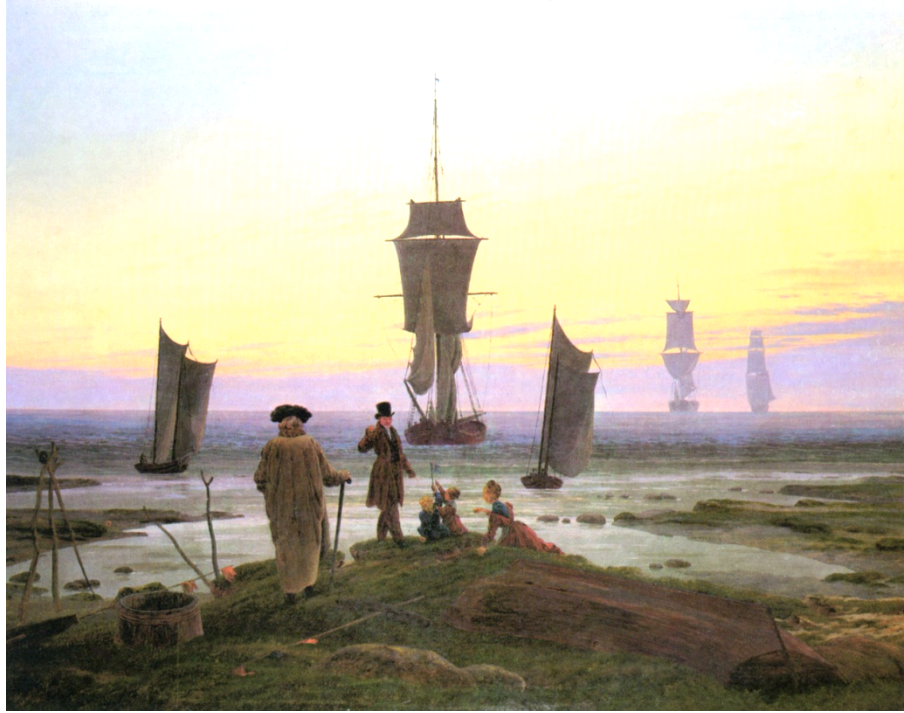
In summary, this is a picture of a desolate huge landscape demonstrating, once again, mankind’s infinitesimality in the face of God’s creative power, mankind being represented by the small boat which is sitting on the mud bank, perhaps awaiting the rising tide or perhaps abandoned forever. In the ethereal nature of this work Friedrich is articulating that inner sadness, hinted at in many of his earlier works, with a strength that comes with knowing that his own departure from this world cannot be long awaited. Friedrich is here expressing ‘the tragedy of landscape’ a phrase from a comment by David d’Angers (1788-1856) which I believe so often underpins the works of Friedrich, for the artist seems to have found it impossible to come to terms with the death of his brother – without whose action Caspar would not have survived.⁸⁴

In similar vein, Hofmann writes:

Man has shrunk to a marginal element in this dialogue, and the sailing boat stranded in the shallow water ... serves only as a reminder of human insignificance. The painter, however, marrying the earthly with the cosmic, is excepted from that marginality, as are we who follow him in experiencing the two-fold wake of the double [hyperbolic] curve. Friedrich takes us into the

picture, but does not build up any confidence in the world we see there. Instead he uses perhaps the most paradoxical of all his special constructions to create his fundamental theme: withdrawal from the world.⁸⁵

f) Stages of Life (1834-5)



The Stages of Life (1834-35) 725 × 940 mm Oil on canvas

This painting was completed in 1835, just before Friedrich suffered a stroke from which he only partially recovered, producing only one major picture in oil (*Seashore by Moonlight* (1835-6) and a few pencil and sepia drawings the most evocative of which were *Landscape with Grave, Coffin, and Owl* (1836-7) and *Window and Garden* (c1837), thereafter.

The composition of *Stages of Life* is typically Friedrich with a strong vertical symmetry about the mast of the tallest ship placed exactly in the centre of the painting. The horizon is placed 59% of the distance from the top of the picture, very close to the dimension of the golden section – the divine proportion.⁸⁶ The V formation is provided by the land in the foreground, with an upturned boat on the right being balanced by the open barrel and

fishing tripod on the left. An inverted V can be seen in the arrangement of the various ships' masts with the angle formed by the masts of the ships on the right with the mast of the largest ship exactly equalling the angle formed the mast of the ship on the left with the mast of the centre ship. Asymmetry is created by the ship nearest the shoreline, by the single ship of the left and by the people themselves.

The location has been identified as Utkiek, near to Greifswald and the children depicted as Friedrich's son Gustav Adolf and daughter Agnes both about the same age, with the elder daughter Emma looking on.⁸⁷ The suggestion is that the man in the top hat is Johann Heinrich (Friedrich's nephew) and surely the older man with the stick is Friedrich himself.⁸⁸ Friedrich has placed himself in the line of the mast on the ground with its pinnacle flag pointing to the figure in a way which encourages the viewer to join with the *Rückenfigur* in surveying the scene. Atypically the scene is not melancholy, with childhood represented by the two youngest, adolescence by the older daughter, young adulthood by Heinrich and the elderly adult by Friedrich himself even though he was only 60 at the time. The two youngest children are playing with the Swedish flag. Mystery is provided, first, by the five ships all sailing towards the harbour at Greifswald, leaving the viewer to decide what they are carrying, secondly by the inclusion of the nephew who to me would seem to be fill the gap between adolescence and mature adulthood, and thirdly by the inclusion of the Swedish flag. An interpretation of the significance of the Swedish flag is given by Vaughan who suggests that 'Friedrich and his family – like so many Pomeranians – retained a sense of loyalty to the Swedish crown'⁸⁹. There was a tendency for the people within the various states to retain an allegiance to their state rather than to the new post-Napoleonic Prussia and it is therefore possible that Friedrich was expressing this tendency, although, given Friedrich's lifelong wish for unification, I feel that this is unlikely. My belief is that Friedrich is expressing a nostalgic yearning for his very early happy life prior to the death of his brother, and he would, naturally locate such a painting in the land of his childhood.

The setting sun is perhaps being seen by Friedrich as his own life coming towards its end; although there is no obvious evidence that he had had a premonition of the stroke he was

about to suffer, the end of life at the age of 60 years would not have been unusual for the early part of the nineteenth century. Whilst there is no obvious premonition apparent in this picture, as mentioned above, *The Large Enclosure* is imbued with a sense of an impending end, so I don't think one can rule out the possibility that death would have been significantly, if not uppermost, in his thoughts at that time.

Certainly, once he had had the stroke Friedrich did not expect fully to regain an active life. He went to Teplitz to try achieve some sort of cure but it is indicated in a letter to Zhukovsky that he did not entertain a 'hope ... of ever recovering from the paralysis'⁹⁰ However he wasn't too depressed because after receiving 10 bottles of wine he expressed the hope that the effect of the grape would lead to 'new pictures, as different from those I have done up till now as wine is from beer'.⁹¹



Seashore by Moonlight (1835-6) 1340 × 1692 mm oil on canvas

It was not to be – he produced, as mentioned earlier, just one significant oil painting – a very dark, brooding picture with an extremely thin bright light of the rising moon seen as a slit between the black sea and the heavy blue black clouds above. This arrangement reminds me of the dark tunnel ending in a bright white light so typical of Near-Death

Experiences – except that in this case the tunnel is flattened and round light becomes a slit of light.

In summarising the meaning of *The Stages of Life*, I suggest that Friedrich is looking back over his own life, thinking about the happiness prior to the death of his brother, considering the sadness of his young adulthood which was then transformed into delight after his marriage and the arrival of children whose play he enjoyed. His attitude to hard work, his support of Pietism and his determination to represent the Ultimate Reality through land and seascapes was always uppermost in his mind when he was painting, leading to his setting his own painting of the Ages of Man, in a scene with a distant horizon and vast sky suggesting the infinite and eternal spiritual life.

Placing Friedrich in a Theological Context

Contemporary theologians of note working at the time of Friedrich would have been Schleiermacher, to whom reference has already been made, and Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian who spent his life in Copenhagen. Whilst it is impossible to summarise Kierkegaard's philosophy in a short chapter, John Bowden gives the essence of his thought as 'taking his focal point that of the individual in his existence, relegating reason to the lowest level of human activity'.⁹² It is known that Kierkegaard visited Berlin and listened to lectures by Schelling who in turn may well have attended sermons or lectures by Schleiermacher. Both Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher were keen to establish a form of Christianity that followed what they regarded as the essence of the religion without the Catholic emphasis on ritual. Private contemplation and an experiential approach would have been espoused by both of these theologians. This way of thinking would of course have resonated well with Luther and Pietism. It was an approach that combined both existentialism (although not known by that name at the time) and ontology, a system that would eventually, via Bultmann, Rahner and Tillich be written up formally by John Macquarrie as a methodology known as the existential-ontological interpretation. Explaining this methodology in a little detail, it is derived from phenomenology, a school of thought taught by Husserl (1859-1938), and is, in the words of Macquarrie 'letting us

see that which shows itself ... by removing, as far as possible, concealments, distortions, and what ever else might prevent us from seeing the phenomenon as it actually gives itself'.⁹³ The advantages of this method are first that the phenomenon itself is the starting point, secondly that the system leads to clarity of thought and thirdly, 'that in proceeding by description rather than by deduction [phenomenology] moves upon a more secure ground'.⁹⁴ If we then apply this methodology to theological interpretation or hermeneutics and especially endeavouring to analyse revelation, two processes come into play. First there is an experiential component – feeling - gained as a result of meditation or contemplation and secondly there is the need to express logically, and carefully articulate, theological thought in a wholly coherent language. In setting out a systematic theology, Macquarrie argues that it is necessary to 'illuminate the symbolic language of revelation with an existential-ontological language drawn from contemporary philosophy'.⁹⁵ It may perhaps help to illuminate this if we think in terms of the self comprising of both a temporal and an eternal component.

I am aware that with Macquarrie I have jumped over 100 years into the middle of the twentieth century but I consider that in the theologians Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher, we have the expression of thought which logically can be developed and expressed as above and, indeed, an expression of thought that resonates well with Friedrich. It is known from the few writings that have come down to us that Friedrich felt intuitively that he had two poles of duality – 'two poles of knowing and of feeling'.⁹⁶ As Hofmann writes:

In one of his maxims [Friedrich] expressed a wish for himself: 'One painter knows what he is doing; another feels what he is doing. If only it were possible to make a single painter from the two!' In this statement he was expressing two factors, consciousness and unconsciousness, which dominated contemporary discussion of the preconditions and genesis of the creative act. Schiller, for example, invoked them in a letter to Goethe of 27th March 1801, with reference to Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling's transcendental philosophy. Schiller disagreed with the 'idealist' Schelling's thesis that things in nature 'begin in unconsciousness and are raised to consciousness, whereas in art one proceeds from consciousness towards the unconscious', and asserted the contrary: 'In practice, the poet too begins with the unconscious alone ...'⁹⁷

At least they both agreed that there was interplay at work between the unconscious and the conscious. Expressing the principle another way, Friedrich wrote that the painter should be ‘bringing what you saw in the dark into the light, so that it may have an effect on others as it shines in from outside.’⁹⁸ I see a parallel between this duality expressed by Friedrich and the existential and the ontological which combine to make the theological methodology described above. The next step is to develop this argument further and make the claim that the art of Friedrich represents a form of symbolic theology. It is a truism that all imagery of the Ultimate Reality is analogous; the distinction between Friedrich and his predecessors is that whilst the latter used the imagery expressed in the Bible – Creation stories, Annunciation, Crucifixion etc. – Friedrich used the imagery of God’s creation combined with an ethereal, enigmatic form of painting that expressed something of the infinite, eternal quality of that Ultimate Reality.

Vaughan highlights the curiousness of Friedrich’s position ‘that someone so committed to the understanding of nature as a manifestation of divine creation and so full of the hope of eternal life should find more to mourn than to celebrate on the landscape’.⁹⁹ The explanation offered is that the ‘mourning’ is owing to the death of his brother. While this is part of the explanation, surely the representation of the sublime (often an important component of paintings which point towards the Transcendent) will always contain that element of the danger associated with dramatic landscapes exhibiting elements of menace or peril either from the landscape itself or from the natural phenomena (for example thunderstorms or torrential rainstorms) that may be induced by the geological or topological characteristics of the landscape. One can see, therefore, how it is that Friedrich’s landscapes with their tragic overtones have been linked to nascent existentialism – evidenced especially in the work of Friedrich’s friend Schleiermacher which was discussed in Chapter Four.

Summary

This chapter began by establishing Caspar David Friedrich within the context of the German Romantic movement. Whilst he was the premier romantic artist working in Germany, he certainly had his equal in France and Spain. His distinctive style and composition in general was analysed in Section Two which included a short discussion of the paint and materials that he used. The bulk of this chapter was taken up with a discussion of the *Rückenfigur* and other significant paintings including iconographical analyses. Attention was drawn to the multiple interpretations that can be given to his paintings – in the examples given, these ranged from the nationalistic and the political to the theological. As this thesis is concerned particularly with representation of the ineffable, attention was given especially to the theological interpretation. Finally, the chapter ended by placing the work of Friedrich in the theological context of the time with the overall conclusion being that many of his works expressed both the Immanence and the Transcendence of the Divine. In other words the Divine gift within Friedrich enabled him to express for the receptive viewer something of the Transcendence of that Divinity.

¹ Watson, P. *The German Genius* London Simon and Schuster 2010 pp. 43-49 and Stone, N. (ed.) *The Times Atlas of World History* (3rd Edition) London Times Books 1989 pp. 216 –7.

² Ibid. p. 493a.

³ Crim, K.(ed.) *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions* San Francisco Harper and Row 1981 p. 568a.

⁴ Ibid. p. 493b.

⁵ John Locke is usually quoted as one of the originators of the Enlightenment Movement.

⁶ Hofmann, W. *Caspar David Friedrich* London Thames and Hudson 2000 (reprinted 2007) quoting Novalis, p.244.

⁷ Watson, P. p. 77, quoting Walter Hofer.

⁸ Koerner, J.L. *Caspar David Friedrich and the subject of Landscape* London Reaktion Books 1990 p. 76.

⁹ Ibid. p. 76.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 77.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 74.

¹² Hofmann, W. quoting Rosenblum p. 15.

¹³ My translation – taken from Kaiser, Konrad *Carl Gustav Carus und die Zeitgenossische Dresdner Landschaftsmaierei* Schweinfurt 1970. pp. 29 and 47 and plates 4 and 7.

¹⁴ My translation. Kaiser plate 47.

¹⁵ Rosenblum, R. *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* New York Harper and Row 1975 pp. 70-71.

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- ¹⁶ The precise ratio is 1:1.618; for a full derivation of the theory involving both Plato and Euclid see the *Oxford Companion to Art* (ed. H. Osborne), Oxford University Press 1970 pp. 488a - 489a and for a very full discussion of the subject see Hemenway, P. *The Secret Code* Köln Evergreen 2008.
- ¹⁷ Hofmann, W. p 24. 'Friedrich wanted to erect a bridge between simple imitation and style, in order to depict nature as a place for subjective experience, while simultaneously conveying the sense of the sacred. Although he was building this bridge he was not a Mannerist except in the positive 'neutral meaning it had for Poussin.'
- ¹⁸ Vaughan, W. *Friedrich* London Phaidon Press 2004 pp. 82 and 95. The correspondent was Duke Emil August of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg writing to the Dresden artist Winckel (1779-1867).
- ¹⁹ Leighton, J. and Bailey, C.J. *Caspar David Friedrich - Winter Landscape* London National Gallery Publications 1990 pp. 52-3 (Essay by Aviva Burnstock).
- ²⁰ Taken from National Gallery Technical Bulletin Volume 13, 1989 *A 'Winter Landscape' by Caspar David Friedrich* John Leighton, Anthony Reeve and Aviva Burnstock Introduction by John Leighton
- ²¹ Ibid. pp. 53-4.
- ²² Schelling, F.W.J. *The Philosophy of Art* (trans. D.W. Scott) Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press 1989 p 146.
- ²³ Ibid. p.146.
- ²⁴ Significant commentaries on *The Cross in the Mountain (The Tetschen Altar)* are to be found in Hofmann, Koerner, and Vaughan. It will also be discussed briefly in Chapter Eight.
- ²⁵ More details on the back view figures will be found in Hofmann. pp. 256-7.
- ²⁶ Vaughan W. p. 178.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p.203.
- ²⁸ Prettejohn, E. *Beauty and Art (1750-2000)* Oxford Oxford University Press 2005 p. 57.
- ²⁹ 'It was not thought but feeling that lay at the heart of Friedrich's concept of art. The notion that a work was a concretion of thought represented precisely the intellectualized approach to art that he so opposed.' Vaughan W. p. 243.
- ³⁰ Koerner, J.L. p. 59.
- ³¹ Extract from *Friedrich's Journal (1803) – On Art and the Spirit of Art* contained in Hofmann, p 269.
- ³² Ibid. p. 269.
- ³³ Schleiermacher, F. *The Christian Faith* (English Translation edited by Mackintosh, H.R. and Stewart, J.S.) Edinburgh T and T Clark 1928 (reprinted 1960) p. 201.
- ³⁴ quoted by Rachel Campbell-Johnston in *The Times*, 5th November, 2011.
- ³⁵ Vaughan, W. p. 178.
- ³⁶ Picture is taken from http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/resourcesd/fri_wand.jpg .
- ³⁷ Koerner, J.L. p.179.
- ³⁸ Prior to the establishment of Napoleon as Emperor of France, there had been sympathy in the German speaking states for all that was happening in France after the Revolution but prior to the Terror, with Napoleon being regarded possibly as a saviour of the people. However, after Napoleon appointed himself Emperor, he lost credibility – the most famous example of this probably being the removal by Beethoven of his dedication of the 3rd Symphony to Napoleon - leaving the symphony (the Eroica) simply dedicated to Heroism.
- ³⁹ Schelling, F.W.J. p145.
- ⁴⁰ Prettejohn, E. pp 55-6.
- ⁴¹ Koerner, J.L. p 180.
- ⁴² Ibid. p 180.
- ⁴³ Koerner J.L. quoting Friedrich. P181. The quotation appeared in Hinz, Sigrid *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen* Munich 1968 p. 123.
- ⁴⁴ The Damascus Road commissioning which describes the commissioning of St.Paul can be found in Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9 verses 3 to 19 and Chapter 22, verses 6 to 16.
- ⁴⁵ With current era's consideration of multi-universes and up to 11 dimensions, the concept of the Ultimate Reality as Fifth Dimension loses its force, but I have assumed for the purposes of this work the conventional idea of three linear dimensions and time.
- ⁴⁶ Stone, N. (ed.) *The Times Atlas of World History* (3rd Edition) London Times Books 1989 pp. 216 – 7.

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- ⁴⁷ Hofmann, W. pp. 9-13.
- ⁴⁸ Watson, P. p. 783.
- ⁴⁹ This image was taken from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/whispering-zeitgeist>
- ⁵⁰ Hoffman, W. quoting Kleist. p. 56.
- ⁵¹ Young, E. *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality: In Nine Nights* (A very long narrative poem). The Revd. Edward Young lived from 1681 to 1765.
- ⁵² Koerner, J.L. p. 72.
- ⁵³ Ibid. p. 120.
- ⁵⁴ Tillich, P. *The Eternal Now* London SCM Press 1963 (2002 edition) p. 4.
- ⁵⁵ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/whispering-zeitgeist>
- ⁵⁶ From private correspondence..
- ⁵⁷ Hofmann, W. quoting Goethe. p. 58.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 58.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 58-60.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 60.
- ⁶¹ This is implicit within C.S. Lewis' approach to the myth. See McGrath, A. *The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis* Chichester (W. Sussex) John Wiley 2014 pp. 55-74.
- ⁶² Rosenblum, R. *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition Friedrich to Rothko* New York Harper and Row 1975 p. 10.
- ⁶³ Hofmann, W. p. 269 Quoting from Friedrich's *On Art and the Spirit of Art* written in his journal in 1803. Aidan Hart speaks of praying his icons (images of Christ and his saints) into existence.
- ⁶⁴ This image has been reproduced from the website: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2000.51>
- ⁶⁵ <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2000.51>
- ⁶⁶ Vaughan, W p. 158.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 155 and Koerner, J. pp. 239 to 243.
- ⁶⁸ Koerner, J. p. 241.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 241.
- ⁷⁰ Vaughan, W. p. 158.
- ⁷¹ Koerner, J. p. 242.
- ⁷² Ibid. p. 243.
- ⁷³ Ibid. p. 243.
- ⁷⁴ This illustrated image has been taken from : http://wessweb.info/index.php/Into_the_Imagined_Forest
- ⁷⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer for Use in the Church in Wales* Cardiff Church in Wales Publications 1984 pp. 473-4.
- ⁷⁶ Koerner, J. pp. 161-2. Merleau-Ponty was a philosopher, following in the existentialist mould of Husserl. He is particularly renowned for his work on the phenomenology of perception and has written *The Visible and the Invisible*. For more detail see the article on website: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/#pagetopright>
- ⁷⁷ Hofmann, W. p. 96.
- ⁷⁸ Koerner, J. p. 181.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid. pp. 109-110. Karl Theodor Körner who was born on Sept. 23, 1791, in Dresden, Saxony and died in battle on Aug. 26, 1813, at Gadebusch, Mecklenburg, was a German patriotic poet of the war of liberation against Napoleon in 1813 whose death in Lützow's volunteer corps made him a popular hero. His father, Christian Gottfried Körner, was a friend of Friedrich Schiller. Körner grew up in a house frequented by writers and scientists. He studied philosophy in Berlin, where he attended the lectures of the famous philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schleiermacher. By 1812 the Vienna Burgtheater had produced three of his dramatic works, the most ambitious of which, *Zriny* (1812), with its glorification of love for the fatherland, made him famous throughout Germany. His dramas, however, are now largely forgotten. After his death at age 22, his father collected the best of his militantly passionate patriotic poetry in *Leyer und Schwert* (1814; "Lyre and Sword") Taken from : <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/322517/Theodor-Korner>
- ⁸⁰ Koerner, J. p. 110.

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- ⁸¹ Vaughan, W. p.290.
- ⁸² Hofmann, W. p.236.
- ⁸³ Podro, M. *The Manifold in Perception – Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand* Oxford Clarendon Press 1972, pp. 1-6.
- ⁸⁴ Vaughan W. (2004) p. 295. Friedrich's brother died while rescuing the young Caspar from a frozen lake – a tragedy which surely contributed to Friedrich's melancholic outlook on life.
- ⁸⁵ Hofmann, W. p. 237.
- ⁸⁶ Hemenway, P. *The Secret Code* Köln Evergreen 2008 pp.11-27
- ⁸⁷ Vaughan,W. p. 297.
- ⁸⁸ Hofmann, W. p. 240 and Vaughan W. p. 297.
- ⁸⁹ Vaughan W. P. 297.
- ⁹⁰ Hofmann, W. p. 287.
- ⁹¹ Ibid. p. 241.
- ⁹² Bowden, J. *Who's Who in Theology* New York Crossroad Publishing Co. 1990 p. 70b.
- ⁹³ Macquarrie, J. *Principles of Christian Theology* London SCM Press 1966 p. 31.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid. p.32.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid. p.34.
- ⁹⁶ Hofmann, W. p. 26.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 26.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 26.
- ⁹⁹ Vaughan, W. p.295.

SECTION THREE

Chapter Seven

A Work of Art as a Sacrament

An examination of the question as to whether or not a work of art could be regarded as a sacrament

- The Meaning of Sacrament
- Acts of Worship and the Numinous
- Sacramental qualities of Works of Art
- The Conducive Properties necessary for a Work of Art to have Sacredness
- Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and *The Cross in the Mountains*
- Summary

The Meaning of Sacrament

The word sacrament is imbued with a number of meanings – an ecclesiological term, a term within the discipline of natural theology, a term of signification and an oath or pledge. In this chapter these terms will be analysed in terms of whether or not a work of art could be likened to the sacred or be regarded as a sacrament.

First of all and dealing with the ecclesiological term, the Church is an organisation which on the one hand is concerned with celebrating divine action in the world – God’s revelation and grace – and on the other fulfilling a community or social function.

Services of worship can be of many different forms and held in many different places but generally in each service there is a reading from Scripture (the Word) and in some there is a celebration of Holy Communion (the Eucharist). Within this context the sacraments are signs of grace – ‘ritual acts which both express and bring about a spiritual reality’.¹ Expressed another way, the sacraments help to enable that Ultimate Reality called God to be become manifest in human beings – ‘the growing points...at which the divine grace sanctifies the Church and conforms its life to Christ’.²

In formal ecclesiastical terms there are seven sacraments; two primary or dominical sacraments that are said to have come directly from Christ – Baptism and the Eucharist, and five lesser sacraments. The five lesser sacraments are confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance or sacramental confession and unction or healing with oils. So, strictly, within this precise category, a work of art cannot be regarded as a sacrament.³

If, however, we examine the origin and derivation of sacrament then there is at least a discussion to be sustained. The Latin word *sacramentum* which originally meant oath was introduced into theological use by the early Latin Church fathers where its meaning became changed from entry into military service to entry into a mystery religion. The Greek Church fathers used the Greek equivalent of the word – *mysterion*, secret. The first recorded church uses are by Tertullian (*sacramentum*) and Gregory of Nyassa (*mysterion*) who employed the term when initiating believers into the Church with the rite known as Baptism. Other Church fathers also used the word *sacramentum* to suggest a sign, or that which signifies, and eventually it became applied to the Eucharist and the Incarnation. Thereafter the sacraments became more closely defined with Peter Lombard (c. 1095-1169) listing the seven sacraments in a summary of doctrine which became accepted as standard. Thomas Aquinas’s (1225-1274) *Summa Theologica* left the definition of the sacrament unchanged. This restricted definition of the sacraments persisted until the twentieth century, when a major contribution from the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*) stated that the Church itself is in the ‘nature of a sacrament, “a sign and instrument, that is of communion with God and of unity among all men”’.⁴

Setting aside this strictly ecclesiological meaning, within the discipline of natural theology there is an even broader approach to the use of the word sacrament, a meaning which was developed by Archbishop William Temple (1881-1944) in his Gifford Lectures of 1932 and 1934.⁵ In these lectures Temple promoted the concept of a sacramental universe which John Macquarrie links to a definition in the Anglican catechism where a sacrament is said to be ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof’.⁶ By the use of the words ‘inward and outward’ we have here the suggestion of both God’s immanence and transcendence. It was, Temple said, in things of this world that the reality of God was revealed, ultimately in the incarnation of Jesus Christ in human flesh, but also in the Scriptures and in the Church. Materiality was not the initiative of humans but the initiative of God. For Temple, the material was given a place of respect since it was created and used by God. All this affirms the idea that we live in a sacramental universe. Earlier Anglican thinkers had said much the same thing. George Herbert, a priest and poet (1593-1633), had spoken of this sacramental principle in one of his well-known hymns. Herbert urges us to sing:

Teach me my God and King
in all things thee to see.

Herbert is here expressing a sacramentality which suggests that God is to be found and seen in all ‘things’, including the material things of this world. Very appositely, Temple uses the analogy of an artist when referring to the creative power of God, comparing the relationship of God to the world with the relationship of an artist to his or her work of art. Macquarrie emphasises the relevance of this analogy and in so doing comes close to defining immanence:

The artist certainly transcends his work, for it is the artist who created it. But the artist is bound to the work so created and has poured something of his or her self into it so that from the work or through the work we can have a relation to the artist. Something of the artist is present in the work and revealed in the work. Clearly, the artist is not identical with the work or a mere aspect of the work, just as God is not identical with the world or a

property of the world-process...as Thomas Aquinas expressed it ‘God exists in all things by presence, power and substance’.⁷

This viewpoint was also expressed by John Keble (1792-1866) – a believer in nature-mysticism and joint founder of the Oxford Movement – who wrote poetry to suggest the idea that God is to be found not only in ‘the depths of the human soul (as in Augustine, Teresa and John of the Cross to name three examples) but in the natural world.’⁸ A short extract from one his poems reads:

The works of God, above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that book, to show
How God himself is found.⁹

In summarising Keble’s mysticism, Macquarrie writes:

If there is a word which best describes Keble’s mysticism it is, I think, the word ‘sacramental.’ For him, the whole creation was a sacramental world. The material creation is not to be despised, for matter too belongs to God and owes its existence to God: it can be a vehicle for God’s presence. In this matter, we can see Keble in the spiritual line of John of Damascus, who defended the icons against their detractors.¹⁰

If this argument is accepted, then all works of art have the potentiality of becoming sacramental, the question then remaining being that of the achievement of that potentiality. One needs to be careful to distinguish between the idea that everything in the world is a sacrament and those artefacts through which we can begin to have some appreciation of God’s presence leading to the third meaning of sacrament expressed in the first paragraph of this chapter – a term of signification or signposting. The previous two chapters have examined, in case studies, how the artists have given a suggestion of that which lies beyond the veil – signifying that ‘outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace’ referred to by Macquarrie above. In some cases such as Palmer’s *The Bright Cloud* (1833-4) the artist could be described as presenting the viewer with a vision of one of the traditional theophanies described in the Bible – Exodus, Chapter 24, verse 15 ‘...he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.’ There are, of course other traditional theophanies described in the Bible which are clearly intended to demonstrate

the presence of God – for example, the pillar of fire (Exodus, Chapter 14, verse 24) and these have been portrayed in art.



Palmer *The Bright Cloud* (c 1833-4) ink and watercolour on paper

The contributions from Temple and Macquarrie enable a wider interpretation to be granted to discussion of the sacrament, even to the extent of returning to the line of thought prevalent as described above in the patristic period, and it is to this wider interpretation that attention is now directed. Suffice to say at this stage that the relationship is between the artist and the viewer in much the same way as the relationship is between the priest and the communicant in the service of the Eucharist.

To examine this thought further, a church service will normally be conducted by a minister using a particular form of liturgy. Liturgy is difficult to define but a good description is that of J.D.Crichton:

Liturgy is the communal celebration by the Church, which is Christ's body and in which he with the Holy Spirit is active, of the paschal mystery. Through this celebration, which is by nature sacramental, Christ, the high priest of the community, makes present and available to men and women of today the reality of his salvation.¹¹

In general, a liturgy consists of both the ministry of the word and the sacraments and the relationship between these two aspects of a service is extremely important. In both Protestant and Catholic worship the two are considered essential and complementary. A Belgian Catholic theologian who has written widely on the subject of the sacraments, Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) stated:

At its peak the word itself becomes sacrament ... Because the sacrament is entirely fruitful only in the one who receives by faith the gift which Christ makes of himself in the sacrament, the ministry of the word (whose internal effect is the obedience in faith to the salvation brought to us by God in Christ) is necessarily directed towards the ministry of the Sacrament. What is begun in the word is perfected in the sacrament.¹²

Until relatively recently, Protestant worship, in addition to accepting a much wider variation of the liturgy compared with the Catholic, gave more prominence to the word inasmuch as communion services were held less frequently than services of the word alone (for example, Matins or Evensong).¹³ However in the last 30 years or so the Eucharistic service has come into prominence with the dual proclamation of God's presence being given in the two forms of 'preached and signified'. J-J von Allmen references back to the Patristic years when he writes that divine worship is an eschatological event in which:

its whole procedure is a sort of echo of the incarnation and a prefiguration of worship in heaven. It is an echo of the incarnation in that it includes ... what one could call a 'Galilean' moment-centred on the sermon - and a 'Jerusalemite' moment-centred on the on the Eucharist.¹⁴

This revised approach to worship and the sacraments enables greater flexibility to be adopted in the definition of sacrament and, in addition to the seven formal sacraments to which reference has been made above, alternatives can be considered, providing that they have the essential defining factor of assisting in communicating the ultimate spiritual reality. Looking at this another way the essential feature common to all sacraments is that they assist in making that link between the Ultimate Reality and the human being; expressed in theological terms, the sacraments have both an ontological as well as

existential characteristic. This duality is shown most clearly in the Eucharist where there is a genuine re-presenting by the celebrant of Christ's work which has an effect on the participant which is individual to that participant and usually has an element of mystery. But this is only one way in which the relationship between mankind and God can be maintained, and following the concept of sacramental universe the possibility remains of establishing that relationship in a myriad other ways, including ways beyond the confines of church authority.

So the question concerning a work of art and the sacraments, need not be concerned with whether or not such a work fits into one of the seven formal definitions given above, but can be rephrased in other ways as follows. In this more general approach the sacrament could be regarded as enabling the presence of God to be perceived, with that perception being established through a work of art that would be acting rather like a conduit, permitting the viewer or communicant a sense of the spiritual realm that lies beyond the veil. It is to this proposition that the remainder of this chapter will be addressed, first examining the work of art in relation to the numinous and then examining, as an example, some a work by Caspar David Friedrich.

Acts of Worship and the Numinous

To reiterate the meaning of numinous, as explained in Chapter Four, this is a word introduced by Rudolf Otto in his book *The Idea of the Holy* and is intended to refer to the non-rational component in the concept of God. (The rational component derives from the fact that the concepts of God, for example creator, can be considered and defined in a way that is intellectually coherent.) The non-rational in religions is very rarely defined but in the words of Otto it can include:-

The empirical in contrast to reason, the psychological in contrast to transcendental fact, that which is known *a posteriori* in contrast to that which is determinable *a priori* (...) the obscure forces of the subconscious in contrast to insight, reflection and intelligible plan; mystical depths and stirrings in the soul (...); or, in general, the uneasy stress and universal fermentation of the time, with its groping after the thing never yet heard or seen in poetry or the

plastic arts – all these and more may claim the names ‘non-rational, irrational
...¹⁵

In refining the description of the non-rational when applied to the conception of God, Otto introduces three terms which taken together add up to that for which he has introduced the term numinous. The three terms are *Tremendum* which implies awfulness (that held in awe), majesty and energy; *Mysterium* – the mystery inherent in any concept of God, meaning blank wonder, stupor or astonishment; and *Fascinans* referring to the ‘bliss which embraces all those blessings that are indicated or suggested in a positive fashion by any “doctrine of salvation”... more than the intellect can conceive in them or affirm of them’.¹⁶ So, the numinous is a term which refers to the bliss, the awfulness and the mystery involved in any appreciation of that Ultimate Reality the ‘Ground of All Being’ that is generally known by the name God.

As worship is the ‘response of the creature to the Eternal’, it follows that the experience of the sense of the numinous could be felt in an act of worship.¹⁷ As Otto writes, in devotional worship there is the ‘numinous silence of Sacrament’.¹⁸ For example in an act of worship practised by the Quakers, the first part of the service is concerned with ‘the instant when “God is in the midst”, experienced as “*numen praesens*”... ‘the experience of the transcendent in gracious intimate presence, “the Lord’s visitation of His people”’.¹⁹ This moment of transcendence or ‘numinous silence of sacrament’ can occur in many different types of service – a time of silence in morning prayer, when the minister invites the congregation to join a moment of silent contemplation, in the Eucharist at the time the celebration or in the Catholic Mass at the time of consecration..

If we accept Otto’s concept that there exists the numinous silence of sacrament, then if it can be shown that a work of art can help to focus the congregation by signifying the presence of God then it can be argued that such a work of art could, in itself, be regarded as a sacrament. The radical theologian Don Cupitt argues that the ‘major artists of Modernism and after – roughly, since the 1860s – can be viewed as prophets of a new religious order’ and that in the ‘Abstract Sacred we find an art which is both genuinely modern and genuinely religious.’²⁰ The previous chapters and this chapter are concerned

with the question of the sacramental or numinous qualities of painters in particular who were of the pre-Modernist period influenced both by natural theology and revealed theology, and by the grandeur of the nature around them.

Sacramental qualities of Works of Art

Images have been used as an adjunct to worship since the time of pre-history – cave paintings have been found in France which are thought to be about 30,000 years old and were probably used as a basis for nature worship. However, if we concentrate on the Christian era, then from the earliest days of worship in church, painted images have played a part. Hans Belting, in his book *Likeness and Presence*, makes the distinction between narrative images and Holy Images, with only those images ‘that were lifted by an aura of the sacred out of the material world to which they otherwise belonged (taking) on real power’.²¹ Such images or icons – usually showing the face of Christ or a saint – became widely used in worship, particularly in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Belting creates a further distinction in stating that:-

Every *theology* of images possesses a certain conceptual beauty, surpassed only by its claim to being a repository of faith. This claim distinguishes it from the *philosophy* of images, which since Plato, has concerned itself with the phenomena of the visible world and truth of ideas; in this perspective, each material image is the possible object of a linguistic or mental abstraction. The theology of images, however, even if it engaged extensively in this discussion, always had a practical end in view. It supplied the unifying formulas for an otherwise heterogeneous, undisciplined use of images.²²

Macquarrie draws a parallel between the Eastern Orthodox ‘appreciation of icons and the Western practice of praying in the presence of Christ in the reserved (sacrament or) eucharistic body. In both cases, a physical object, in the one an icon, in the other the consecrated bread, awaken(s) the spiritual susceptibilities of the worshipper.’²³

The question of from whence did the image, or, more pertinently the icon, gain its power remains open; Did iconicity gain its sacred power from the spiritual qualities inherent in the artist, or Did the image have to be consecrated by a priest from whom it would then gain its authority? It should, of course, be noted that nearly all works of art when

installed in a church building are dedicated – by a theologian, sometimes a priest or with even higher authority, a bishop. However, the church authorities would have had to be satisfied that the work of art had those qualities that were appropriate for its use in the enhancement of worship. Therefore that work of art would have had to have had the inherent sacredness prior to its dedication or consecration. By common consent, the icons or holy images, produced in the early years of the church and through to the present day had the quality of sacredness, but the question remaining is whether or not narrative images, images of nature or indeed abstract works of art could have that quality or conducive property.

The Conducive Properties necessary for a Work of Art to have Sacredness

As John Bowker has pointed out, developments in neurophysiology will in time enable us to tie together in an objective way perception, emotion and rationality and hence be able to define the conducive properties of a work of art that can lead to consistent judgements of value. The conducive properties of a work of art could be mimesis, synecdoche and maybe moral uplift.²⁴ As an example of the use of a conducive property, Bowker quotes an anecdote that when Pope Benedict XI sent out emissaries to find the best artist for St.Peter's in Rome, Giotto

drew for them only a circle. The Pope and his emissaries saw in it both skill and beauty...the unbroken circle is endless, a conducive property leading into the recognition of the infinity of God – a property so much within the circle that it was able to be developed and exploited in subsequent art, literature and theology.²⁵

John Bowker then continues:

This is the truly important conjunction in art, between skill and its competence to bring into being the conducive properties that evoke in the observer the emotion and the judgement of beauty or of other satisfaction ..., in the case of theology of contemplation because it is this that creates a real distinction between art and mere artefact.²⁶

The need therefore is to identify those conducive properties that imbue a work of art with sacredness, to identify how it is that an artist can achieve such a depth of expression that it can lead to the work being appropriate to be venerated in an act of worship. Peter Forsyth, in a series of lectures which eventually came to be published under the title of *Christ on Parnassus* and now established as a classic, gave us a clue to identifying this characteristic when he derived an argument for the importance of art in the worship of the Creator.²⁷ He emphasised that in Christian art the artist is able to achieve a depth of expression or transcendence of matter by soul that is greater than that of the Jew or Greek – it is a spiritual gift that is ‘something fuller, more precious in every way. It is not transcendence, and it is not immanence. It is the immanence of the transcendent.’²⁸

The emphasis that Forsyth is placing on the artist being a Christian can be contrasted with the view expressed by Peter Fuller (an atheist) in *Theoria* (an accepted standard work setting out Ruskin’s views on art) that a work of art can have a ‘spiritual orientation, a spirituality without God’.²⁹ Whether or not this is really the view of Ruskin, who was a committed Christian, will be discussed in a later chapter in the context of Turner’s works of art. However, this view does accord with that of the philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) who argues that ‘an artist is not called upon to love God or the world or humanity, but to love what he or she is doing.’³⁰

Finally, in these general comments I would refer to the theologian and artist Paul Tillich. While, as we shall see later in this thesis, Tillich was emphatic that Expressionism was the style that was best able to elucidate mankind’s relationship with the Ultimate Reality, nevertheless naturalistic forms of art were also able to stimulate the religious experience as can be seen from his dramatic encounter with Botticelli’s *Madonna with Singing Angels*:



Botticelli's *Madonna with Singing Angels* : (1478) tempera on board

Gazing up at it, I felt a state of approaching ecstasy. In the beauty of the painting there was Beauty itself. It shone through the colours of the paint as the light of day shone through the stained-glass windows of a medieval Church ... As I stood there, bathed in the beauty its painter had envisioned so long ago, something of the divine source of all things came through to me ... That moment has affected my whole life ... I compare it with what is usually called revelation in the language of religion.³¹

Clearly for Tillich, the encounter with this work of art created an experience in which he felt closer in his relationship with the Ultimate Reality and for him its power was such that it must have ranked on a level with the sacraments. Summarising this I suggest that the criteria or conducive properties required for a work of art be viewed as a sacrament are the intention of the artist, the content of the picture and the experiential effect on the viewer. It may be that not all these properties are required but I suggest that it is probable that at the very least one will be required if the work is to meet the overall requirement that the work will assist in mankind's contemplation of his or her relationship with the Ultimate Reality.

This broad claim will be examined through the work of C.D. Friedrich, concentrating on his altarpiece *The Cross in the Mountains*

Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and *The Cross in the Mountains*

This artist is the subject of a previous chapter and it is clear that Friedrich regarded his religion as of the utmost importance, even arranging his atelier in a manner that resembled a monk's cell. I will therefore avoid any discussion of the religiosity of the artist and begin immediately with a discussion of the work I have chosen as a possible sacrament – the *Tetschen Altar* or *Cross in the Mountains*, 1807-8. This is located in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemaldegalerie, Dresden but may be viewed on line at www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/f/friedric/1/103fried.html .



The Cross in the Mountains (1807-8) 1150 x 1100 mm oil on canvas

This work is one of the most important produced by Friedrich and helped to form his reputation as one of the foremost painters in the German speaking world. Recent research (1977) has shown that the work was originally produced for King Gustav IV of

Sweden in honour of that king. Gustav IV was a pious evangelical Christian in the Protestant denomination and this work of Friedrich ‘*The Cross in the Mountains* may have been designed to reflect and encourage Gustav’s renewed piety’.³² The work was intended as an altarpiece and, given the pietistic outlook of Friedrich (described in detail in the preceding Chapter Six), there is little doubt that the intention of the artist was to provide a work of art that would provide a signpost to the sacred. This is further emphasised by Friedrich himself whom I quote below in the analysis of the content of the altarpiece.

Analysing the content of the picture, in composition the *Cross in the Mountains* is slightly asymmetrical about the central axis and follows the Friedrich trait of a triangular arrangement with the cross forming the apex and slightly offset to the right hand side of the picture. The carved frame designed by Friedrich and carved by the sculptor Gottlieb Kühn is an essential part of the work as a whole. (Incidentally, there is some similarity with the *Sistine Madonna* inasmuch as the latter has symmetry about the central axis, has a triangular format with the Madonna at the apex and has a partial frame – not carved but curtains painted within the picture.) The perspective of the Cross in the Mountains is rather but not exactly like that of a traditional icon as the ivy entwining the distant cross is as sharply focussed as the trees in the foreground and there is no aerial perspective indicated. The sun’s rays are shown symbolically as emerging like the rays of several search lights located at the centre of the eye of God which has been carved into the centre of the bottom of the frame. The frame is of such importance that I will quote Friedrich’s own words:

At the sides, the frame has two Gothic columns. Palm branches rise from them and form a curve above the painting. There are five angels’ (or putti) heads in the branches, all looking down at the cross and worshipping. The evening star stands above the middle angel in purest shining silver. At the bottom, in an oblong panel, is the all-seeing eye of God, enclosed by the holy trigon, surrounded with rays. Ears of corn and vines on either side bow to the all-seeing eye and signify the body and blood of Him who is fixed to the cross.³³

Friedrich added a further explanation relating to his thinking behind this picture:

With the teachings of Jesus, an old world died, the time when God the Father walked directly on earth. The sun went down and the earth could no longer grasp the departing light. The Saviour on the cross shines in the gold of sunset with the purest, noblest metal, and reflects the light onto the earth with a gentler gleam. The cross stands on a rock, as unshakeably firm as our faith in Jesus. Fir trees grown around the cross, evergreen and everlasting, like the hope of men in Him, Christ crucified.³⁴

Thus in this picture, there is an interplay between the frame and the painting as well as between the sky and the mountain and between the trees, the cross and the light of the setting sun within the painting itself. The clouds follow Friedrich's predilection for the triangle format with the dark triangular bands of clouds rising higher and higher in the sky eventually to disappear behind the putti at the top of the frame – perhaps suggesting a distance stretching towards the infinity of the heavenly realm. As Koerner remarks 'the crucifix itself, composed of a vertical crossed with a horizontal, has always uncannily embodied the intersection of heaven and earth, God and man'.³⁵ The triangle itself as mentioned earlier could be said to be representing Christ and the Trinity. Another characteristic of Friedrich is the suggestion of an abyss in the immediate foreground which Koerner posits is to articulate the disjunction between 'the finite and the infinite, the material and the spiritual, earth and heaven, or indeed between the whole host of opposing contraries whose synthesis was the stated task of Romantic art and the Idealist philosophy of identity'.³⁶ I would argue therefore that not only is there in this quotation a reinforcement of the intention of the artist to produce a work of art that signposts the Transcendent but also by its content there is the suggestion that salvation is available to those who accept the grace of God. This proposition, regarding the soteriological quality of the picture, is underscored even more strongly when it is recognised that Christ is presented looking towards the eternal light which he reflects and, in Friedrich's words: 'He beholds the light face to face ... to us. He imparts but a reflection of the same! Thus as herald of the salvation that awaits us, He becomes simultaneously mediator between earth and heaven.'³⁷ Friedrich then continues to explain: 'Here I felt the need to celebrate that commemorative rite which, itself a secret, is symbol of another: the Incarnation and the Resurrection of the son of God'.³⁸

The picture departed from the landscape tradition established by Claude Lorrain and aroused controversy when it was first shown – one critic F.W.B. von Ramdohr (Chamberlain at the court of the King of Saxony) was so vehement in his criticism that it became known as the Ramdohr dispute. The whole of this critique is set out as an appendix in *Casper David Friedrich* by Hofmann and will be quoted here only when it is relevant to the discussion of the sacredness of Friedrich’s work.³⁹ Answering Ramdohr’s criticism of the lack of perspective, Friedrich acknowledged that he did not follow the exact perspective of the icon makers and could not therefore take every advantage of the illusion caused by that effect – the effect which has been described by Panofsky as ‘where the work of art itself works the miracle’. Instead, he painted the symbols themselves where they were available for meditation by the viewer. In this way, Hofmann writes ‘Friedrich gave the (Tetschen) *Altar* access to “the realm of the dogmatic and symbolic”...The noble human being [the painter] finds God in everything. He [Friedrich] goes on to explain that the sun is to be understood as the ‘image of the eternal Father, giver of all life’⁴⁰ – a resonance here with the view of Turner, about which more in the next chapter.

It is clear from all the above that the intention of Friedrich was that the work should be regarded as enabling landscape and the symbols of the Eucharist to be used as the icons of the middle ages would have been used. Perhaps, even further, Koerner is correct when he suggests that Friedrich, in vowing to infer the celebration of the mass, presents us with the *Cross in the Mountains*. ‘Through its symbolic frame and planned chapel setting, the natural scene evocative of the Eucharist’s meaning becomes an actual altar for the sacrament’.⁴¹ Whilst that was his intention, the question that must now be answered is: to what extent was Friedrich’s ambition achieved?

At the time Friedrich was painting, there was considerable turmoil within Christianity – with the effects of the Reformation and the need to come to terms with the scientific endeavour of the Enlightenment still much in evidence. Expressed another way there was one school of thought which espoused the idea that rationality must be applied to religion even to the extent of trying to prove the existence of God, and another which espoused

the idea that religion and belief should be based on intuition and the experiential dimension. In addition, Friedrich saw the influence of the formal doctrines of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy in decline and reflected this in his paintings. He would have supported the concept of a priesthood of all believers and (as explained in Chapter Six) was influenced by Schleiermacher who promoted the experiential nature of religion and who saw an important role for art within religion, without going so far as some contemporaries who might have suggested that art could replace religion. As Schleiermacher wrote in the third of his *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers*:

The greatest work of art is that whose material is humanity that the universe forms directly and the sense for this must soon open up in many. For even now it is creating with bold and powerful art, and you will be the modern Caryatides when new structures are set up in the temple of time ... Let past, present and future surround us, an endless gallery of the most sublime works of art eternally reproduced by a thousand brilliant mirrors.⁴²

The suggestion here is that the greatest art can be like columns supporting the whole of religion. As David Klemm writes 'for Schleiermacher art is a medium for religious communication, but it is distinct from the substance of religion itself ... Art therefore, plays its appropriate role in culture by evoking and sustaining religious apprehensions'.⁴³

Two of the criteria - the intention of the artist and the content of the work - for a painting to be regarded as a sacrament have clearly been met in *The Cross in the Mountains* and I would assert that this particular painting could be equivalent to a sacrament inasmuch as it assists in mankind's contemplation of his or her relationship with the Ultimate Reality.

There is however the third criterion, that of the experiential effect on the viewer, which is almost impossible to judge without undertaking the ethnographical research which is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, there is some evidence, the quotation from Tillich above, and, for example, in the case histories taken from the Alister Hardy archive of accounts of religious experience and described in Chapter Four, that for the viewer with some religious susceptibility that the viewing of works of art such as *The Cross in the Mountains* could well assist them in their relationship with that Ultimate Reality.

Thus, to reiterate, in considering *The Cross in the Mountains*, the three criteria or conducive properties for sacramental equivalence are met – intentionality, content and probable experience felt by the viewer – and hence the work of art would help to communicate the sense of the Ultimate Reality to the communicant, worshipper or, indeed, anyone open to spiritual experience.

Summary

This chapter began with a discussion on the meaning of sacrament, ascribing to the word a much wider meaning than the strictly ecclesiological approach. In the context of art, it was argued that a work of art, which assists in helping the human being become closer in his or her relationship with the Ultimate Reality, could be regarded as a sacrament. The particular characteristics required of such a work were then evaluated, with the conducive properties of intentionality, content and experiential effect on the viewer, being the salient criteria.

Finally in this chapter, as an example, the only work which Friedrich actually designed as an altarpiece was examined, the conclusion being that *The Cross in the Mountains* did indeed meet all the criteria for a work of art to be regarded as a sacrament.

¹ For a good summary of the development of the definitions of sacraments see: Crim, Keith (ed) *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions* San Francisco Harper and Row 1989. For this particular quotation see p. 636 a.

² Macquarrie, J. *Principles of Christian Theology* London SCM Press 1966 p. 364

³ For completeness I include a definition of sacrament that would be used in the science of anthropology. For anthropological purposes a sacrament may be defined as ‘any rite which by way of sanction or positive blessing invests a natural function with a supernatural authority of its own ... Of all ritual forms the sacrament is the most dynamic, coming to the aid of a given activity, at the point at which it finds itself baffled by nature in the shape of the contradictions of the sense world, so as to turn it into a super-activity by bringing into play the latent energy of the moral personality’. Taken from Marrett, R.R. *Sacrament of Simple Folk* London Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1933 p. 1.

⁴ Crim, K. p. 636 b.

⁵ These lectures were written up in *Nature Man and God* by William Temple, published in London by Macmillan in 1940.

The idea that we live in a sacramental universe has been expressed by many Anglican thinkers, especially in their reflection on the sacraments as we use them in our liturgical life. Archbishop William Temple expressed this view in his Gifford Lectures of 1932-3 and 1933-4. Temple argued that ‘Christianity is the most avowedly materialistic of all the great religions’ (p. 478). By this he meant that the goodness of

creation and the idea of a sacramental universe was God's chosen way and not that Christians were merely addicted to material things.

<http://www.anglican.org.au/articles.php/21/do-we-live-in-a-sacramental-universe>

Although the idea was current in the time of Plato, in the context of the nineteenth century, natural theology involved the study of nature in relation to the logic of continuing a belief in God (carried to extreme, this theology proposed that the existence of God could be proved by logic), whereas revealed theology accepted that not all truths could be ascertained by reference to logic, but could only be revealed by the Ultimate Reality. (For more detail see any book on the philosophy of religion.)

⁶ Macquarrie, J. *A Guide to the Sacraments* London SCM Press 1997 p.4.

⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

⁸ Macquarrie *Two Worlds are Ours – An introduction to Christian Mysticism* London SCM Press 2004 p. 217.

⁹ Ibid. p. 220.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 222-3.

¹¹ From an essay by J.D.Crichton in Jones,C., Wainwright,G. *et al. The Study of Liturgy* London SPCK and New York Oxford University Press 1992 p. 28.

¹² Ibid. p. 38 (Essay by Carol M.Norén quoting Schillebeeckx)

¹³ This emphasis given to the word in protestant services can be traced back to an error in a development from John Calvin, whose intention was always to regard the word and sacrament as complimentary, but actually referred to the sacraments as *verbum visibile* thus giving rise to the prominence of preaching in Protestant services. For a more detailed description of this see Macquarrie, J. pp. 399-400 and many other references.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 41

¹⁵ Otto, Rudolf *The Idea of the Holy* London Oxford University Press 1958 p. 58.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 33-4. For a detailed description of each of these terms the reader is referred to pages 12 to 40.

¹⁷ Worship, as Evelyn Underhill writes is the 'response of the creature to the Eternal...is rooted in ontology (Von Hügel)...(and) is an acknowledgement of Transcendence; that is of a Reality independent of the worshipper which is always more or less deeply coloured by mystery.' For a full treatise on Worship, the reader is referred to Underhill, Evelyn *Worship* London Nisbet and Co. 1936 Chapters 1 to 9.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 211.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 211. In the religious context, transcendent suggests the idea of 'something beyond'. There is: 'a passing beyond all media in the approach to the Deity containing an effort to establish by a discipline of the intuitive faculty, direct intercourse between the soul and God.' Gray, H.D. *Emerson* (thesis) Stanford (California) Stanford University Press 1917 (quoting from *Conversations with Ralph Waldo Emerson* by C.J. Woodbury p. 110) p. 9, note 9.

²⁰ Cupitt, D. *Radicals and the Future of the Church* London SCM 1989 p. 26 and Beckett, W. *The Mystical Now: Art and the Sacred* New York Universe 1993 p.1 (quoting Cupitt).

²¹ Belting, H. *Likeness and Presence - A History of the Image before the Era of Art* Chicago University of Chicago Press 1996 p. 7. (It is thought that Holy Images was first introduced by Edwyn Bevan in his book entitled *Holy Images*- London 1940- Belting p. 3.)

²² Belting, H. p. 3.

²³ Macquarrie, J. 2004 p.105.

²⁴ Bowker, J. p. 64. Here John Bowker is referring to a work by Holman Hunt.

²⁵ Ibid. p.51.

²⁶ Ibid. p.51.

²⁷ Forsyth, P. *Christ on Parnassus – Lectures on Art, Ethic and Theology* London Hodder and Stoughton 1911.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 82.

²⁹ Fuller, P. *Theoria – Art and the Absence of Grace* London Chatto and Windus 1988. This particular quotation is taken from Pattison, G. *Art, Modernity and Faith* London SCM Press 1998 p. 73 It should be noted that Peter Fuller does not give a description of the God in which he professes an unbelief.

³⁰ Williams, R. *Grace and Necessity – Reflections on Art and Love* Harrisburg PA 17112 Morehouse 2005 p.15

³¹ Pattison, G. quoting Tillich. p. 101. For an interesting paper on Tillich and Art and especially his reaction to the Botticelli *Madonna and the Singing Angels* see <https://tsd.academia.edu/davidgreenwood>

and *Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art: Forming a Relationship to Healing Grace* Submitted By: Michael T Santini (michaelsantini@comcast.net) Submitted To: Dr. Alejandro Garcia-River 2009 Graduate Theological Union. Michael Santini concludes his paper on Tillich with these words:

The calming beauty of *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels* brought Paul Tillich healing grace because the beauty was of an eternal quality. In encountering various creative art forms of culture, all peoples can experience the same transforming splendor. The impact of the art form to the individual can be in the religious, spiritual or theological dimension, and provide God's healing grace in an uncomplicated and tranquil manner The key is in acknowledging the fundamental ability of the arts to become a source of grace through encounter.

³² Koerner, J. *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* London Reaktion Books 1990 p. 50. It should be remembered that Friedrich was born in Greifswald, Pomerania which at that time was intermittently under Swedish rule. Gustav came under the influence of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf who proselytised the Moravian Church's kind of Protestantism, and referred to faith as 'not in thoughts nor in the head, but in the heart, a light illuminated in the heart'. It is known that Friedrich was influenced by those who introduced this particular style of religiosity to Gustav and it is therefore very plausible that Friedrich would wish to honour this king with a work of art that fitted in well with 'the 'theology of the heart' of the Moravian brotherhood. In the event, the politics of the area changed with the advance of the French into Pomerania and with the overthrow of Gustav by his own forces, and the intention then became to install the work in the chapel of the Tetschen Castle – hence the alternative title of *Tetschen Altar*. However, even this plan was thwarted and eventually the work finished up in the bedroom of Countess Maria Theresa where it was located alongside a number of other works including an engraving of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1512-3). It is apposite, though probably quite co-incidental, that these two paintings should be shown in the same room because it is thought that the devotional style and composition of the Sistine Madonna had an influence on Wackenroder, the Schlegel brothers, Runge and almost certainly Friedrich.³² Indeed the Raphael work was said by Runge to mark the end of a particular Renaissance religious style, whilst the *Cross in the Mountains* was the first 'to fashion a new landscape for a new epoch, in which history, meaning, allegory and the idea are not only in the figure of Christ on the cross but also in the spirits of the clouds at sunset' (Koerner p. 53.).

For a detailed description of the relationship between Friedrich and King Gustav IV and of the politics of the time see Koerner pp. 47-51.

³³ Hofmann, W. (Trans. Mary Whitall) *Caspar David Friedrich* London Thames and Hudson 2007 p. 44 (quoting Friedrich) (I assume that the holy trigon being a synonym for triangle is a reference to the Trinity.)

³⁴ Hofmann, (quoting Friedrich) p.44.

³⁵ Koerner p. 142.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 128.

³⁷ Koerner (quoting Friedrich) pp. 128-129.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hofmann, (quoting Ramdohr) pp. 276a -280a.

⁴⁰ Hofmann p. 45.

⁴¹ Koerner p. 129.

⁴² Schleiermacher, F (Trans. Richard Crouter) *On Religion - Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1996 p. 71 The Caryatides were the columns (six elegantly draped female figures) who hold up the entablature of the porch of the Erechtheum in the Athenian Acropolis (note 25).

⁴³ Marina, J. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2005 (an essay by David E. Klemm) p. 267.

Chapter Eight

Art as an Aid to Religious Contemplation

- Introduction
- Two Devotional Works by Dürer and Raphael
- Claude Lorrain and *Landscape with Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Sylvia*
- Romanticism, Typology and the Nazarenes
- Samuel Palmer and the Bright Cloud motif
- Do the Paintings of J. M. W. Turner Signpost the Transcendent?
- Mark Rothko , *Untitled (1969)* and *Black on Maroon*
- Reflection and summarising thoughts

Introduction

From the age of the painted icon (approximately 400-1300 CE) to the present day, art has been used as a medium in which to express the relationship between mankind and God. From around the fourth century, icons were produced as an aid to worship – to concentrate the mind on the Divine. As Paul Johnson emphasises in *Art- A New History*, (2003) ‘the icon, a comparatively cheap and small representation of the everyday form of Orthodox devotion constituted the commonest form of art throughout a vast region embracing nearly twenty modern countries’. Johnson continues:

It is important to grasp ... that (the icon) is a physical part of the act of worship, like the altar furniture, vestments, banners and sacred vessels. Painting is thus itself a spiritual act. The painter realised the divine within himself and re-created, in a real sense, the image of Christ or the events depicted: the Incarnation, the Nativity, the visit of the Three Kings.¹

The icon continued to have a major role in worship, particularly in the Orthodox Church up to the beginning of the Renaissance, when that form of art began to give way, for example, to paintings with much more diverse scenes and more particularly large altarpieces displaying events such as those mentioned above. However, icons are still produced today and the modern painter, for example Aiden Hart, at a lecture given in 2008 referred to ‘praying an icon into existence’.² In addition during the pre-Renaissance period, following the Dark Ages, art endeavouring to express the spiritual was exhibited in architecture in the building of the great cathedrals, in sculpture, in needlework and in the production of beautifully illuminated manuscripts and printed editions of the Bible.³ All of these forms of visual cultural production were aimed at aiding devotion and assisting in the contemplation of the divine.

The previous chapter developed the argument that works of art could be regarded as sacraments, using as an example a work by Friedrich. In this chapter I will be examining the development of the changing subjects chosen for devotional art from the depiction of biblical scenes through to the use of landscape and eventually through to the use of abstraction. This is a vast subject and I will be restricting my consideration to a small number of artists who may be said to represent some of the various types of art that could best be said to point towards or suggest a timeless transcendence, ultimately to induce in the sensitive viewer a religious experience. Religious experience was defined by Ninian Smart as: An experience [which] involves some kind of ‘perception’ of the *invisible* world, or involves a perception that some visible person or thing is a manifestation of the invisible world.⁴

William James endeavoured to be more specific in relating religious experience to salvation when he refers to a two part process of experience. First there is a lack or uneasiness that there is something missing in an individual’s life and secondly that there is a solution whereby the individual has some connection with a power beyond or outside him or herself. James summarises this in terms of a man who identifies his real being as follows:

He becomes conscious that this higher part is coterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck.⁵

The analyses which follow will describe works of art that, whether in use as an altarpiece or as a small painting in a private chapel help the viewer towards an appreciation of that higher power or Ultimate Reality that was described in some detail in the introduction to Section Two of this thesis.

The earlier chapters of this thesis are particularly concerned with the Romantic age. This chapter will be more discursive and will follow a chronological order; while still focussed on artists of that time, to aid contextualisation reference will be made to painters both before and after that specific period.

My starting point is the period when the approach to perspective had been explored and established (fifteenth century).⁶ Two of the greatest artists of this period who created sacred art to be used as aids to devotion were Dürer and Raphael and one work from each of these artists will be examined. Then, with Rubens and Claude Lorraine we move to the period in which landscape became acceptable and indeed began to be used to suggest the sacred and an examination of one of each of their paintings will be included. Then within the period of Romanticism the works of the Nazarenes including Johann Overbeck and Ferdinand Olivier (1785-1841), as well works by Palmer (in England) and Caspar David Friedrich (in Germany) will be discussed. The last three of these artists expressed the idea of transcendence entirely through the use of landscape. A section then follows on the position of J.W.M. Turner an artist of no particular religious persuasion but whose works could be considered as pointing towards the transcendent. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an examination of the work of Mark Rothko who in the twentieth century developed landscape to a point of almost abstraction and in so doing concentrated the energy of the viewer into a meditation on that which may lie beyond the dimensions of the physical world.

Two Devotional Works by Dürer and Raphael



Albrecht Dürer *The Adoration of the Magi* (1504) (100 x 114 cm.)

The story that this painting depicts occurs only in Matthew, Chapter 2, verses 7 - 11. The legend has been considerably elaborated over the centuries – with the Magi being established as three in number (the Bible does not give a number) and even given names – Balthazar, Melchior and Gaspar (or Caspar). Even later legends gave the three Magi descriptions of their physical appearance with Balthazar being black with a newly grown beard, bringing the gift of myrrh, Melchior being very old, grey and bearded and bringing the gift of gold and Caspar being young, beardless and very swarthy and bringing the gift of frankincense. For a full description of the legend, the reader is encouraged to read a

good commentary, but suffice to indicate here the significance of the gift is that gold is for a king, frankincense is for a priest and myrrh is for one who is to die.⁷

This later description can be read into the picture by Dürer, although Gaspar has been given a beard and is not very swarthy, and Balthazar has no beard. Some versions of the legend have it that the three came from Persia (Iran) whilst others suggest that they came from further afield with one of the Kings representing India. Closest to the biblical version is that they were wise men who came from Persia and were invited to interpret dreams, this latter version being consistent with the need to interpret Joseph's dreams.⁸

Looking at the picture itself, possibly the central panel of a polyptych, it shows the human characters all exquisitely drawn with Melchior and Gaspar wearing very expensive decorated clothing emphasising the importance of their status, with Balthazar dressed more simply. Mary with Jesus is sitting just outside the stable with a cow and a donkey clearly visible. There is a controversial opinion that Joseph was once included in this picture and subsequently removed. Beyond the significance of the aforementioned gifts, there is much additional symbolism in this picture. Butterflies have been included to represent the soul or spirit. Two crosses have been included as part of the crumbling structures above one of which Dürer has included two doves of peace. The crumbling building itself could be said to suggest the beginning of the end of the Old Covenant. So far the description has been confined to the foreground of this painting – on the right hand side in the middle distance we have various people on horseback waiting around – presumably these are the servants or guards who would have accompanied Melchior and Gaspar on their journey with Balthazar's turbaned assistant just on foot carrying a bag which could have contained their provisions. Further into the background there is a steep hill rising from presumably the Dead Sea although the latter is about 25 km from Bethlehem. However, most importantly there is a city on this hill stretching upwards right to the pinnacle of the hill which I would suggest is the Kingdom of Heaven – that eternal state which is available to all who are willing to accept the gift of the grace of God. Finally, we come to God which is represented traditionally in the form of the rising

cumulus cloud – the Shekinah - that symbol for God which reaches back to the giving of the Law to Moses described in the Book of Exodus.

So in this picture we have an elaborated Biblical illustration with the story of the Magi with added symbolism extended to the point of the suggestion of transcendence with the inclusion of the Heavenly City and the cloud representing God all set in the far distance away from the immediate focus on the birth and significance of Jesus and the future role he is to perform.

As a focus for devotion this picture offers in the immediate foreground a Biblical story with much detail upon which the eye can rest as well as having the tremendous depth through to the Heavenly City all of which gives great opportunity for meditation on both the physical as well as spiritual world.



Raffaello Sanzio (Raphael) and *The Sistine Madonna* (1514-15) (265 cm high x 196cm)

This picture is known correctly as *Virgin, Child appear to the Saints Sixtus and Barbara*, but is also known as *La Madonna di San Sixtus* and generally referred to as *The Sistine Madonna*. It was commissioned by Pope Julius II for the abbey church of the Benedictine convent dedicated to St. Sixtus and is one of the greatest of Raphael's later works.

The composition of this painting is that of a triangle in the foreground formed by the heads of the three main characters, with distance only being suggested by the building just discernible on the right of the painting behind Barbara. The palette is limited being mostly blue for the Virgin's and Barbara's dresses and the curtains, and white and gold the traditional colours for a pope.

The painting is possibly the result of a dream and shows the Virgin Mary located at a position between heaven and earth supported by clouds (meaning that she is upheld by God). She is accompanied on her right by St. Sixtus I, a Roman who lived around the turn of the first century and whose papacy lasted about ten years.⁹ On her left she is accompanied by Saint Barbara, patron saint of artillerymen.¹⁰ The usual position of the putti has in this picture been reversed with Raphael locating them grounded at the foot of the painting in the central foreground.

Examining the painting in more detail, it was designed to be placed above the high altar in the Abbey which supposedly contained the relics of both Sixtus I and Barbara; this could explain why Raphael placed them both in a position suggesting the spiritual world. The faces of both the Madonna and Jesus look troubled – the reason for this being a source of controversy for many years. The most plausible explanation for this was produced by A. Prager who is quoted as follows on the Safran Arts website:

As recent research by A. Prager has shown, the key to the mystery (of the troubled expressions) lies in the position in which the altarpiece originally stood. Taking again the intriguing question of what the Pope is pointing at and what the Mother and Child are looking at, the answer is as astonishing as

it is persuasive. It has long been forgotten that, as in many churches, opposite the altarpiece in S. Sisto and above the rood screen at the far end of the chancel there stood a crucifix. The expressions of horror on the faces of Mother and Child are thus their reaction to the sight of death. It is interesting to note that, long before this successful interpretation, it was a writer, and not an art historian, who came closest to understanding the mystery: R. A. Schröder saw the "deepest horror" written in the face of the child, "before which even Death itself is frightened to death".¹¹

It is intriguing to note that Raphael has given Pope Sixtus I five fingers as well as a thumb. The pointing finger is of considerable importance inasmuch as it is indicating the future destiny of the future Christ – perhaps in adding this finger as an extra finger he is suggesting the role beyond the human one within the physical world – in other words he is using this feature to emphasise the Divinity of Jesus. As the picture is no longer in the position for which it was commissioned, it is possible that the figure was designed to point to something within the church, for example to the crucifix to which reference has already been made. The Pope has left his mitre on the ground, perhaps suggesting that he is leaving the signifier of his office back in the physical world.

The faces within the clouds maybe represent all those who have passed beyond the half opened veil. The use of the veil in this way suggests that there is a spiritual world beyond, the world which the putti seem to be so seriously considering. There is therefore much to contemplate in this devotional picture; as with the Dürer picture described above there is an immediacy of the three pyramidal figures in the foreground and there is the suggestion of transcendence in the array of faces in the clouds and in the idea of glimpsing the whole scene through a veil which has been temporarily drawn back. This painting can have a profound effect on those who view it but I will leave the final comment with the English essayist Henry Crabb Robinson who was contemporary with many of the artists and philosophers considered in this thesis: it was after listening to a lecture from Schelling which included the subject of Raphael that Robinson visited the Dresden Gallery and on viewing the Sistine Madonna wrote:

Of all the Paint[ing]s I have ever seen none equals the Paint[in]g by Raphael representing the virgin with Jesus in her Arms. 2 side figures And below 2

Angels look[ing] upwards – The latter par[ticu]larly had on their count[enance]s such an expression of devotion and love[...]¹².

As James Vigus writes this painting and many others in the Dresden gallery were ‘a source of inspiration for many of the early German Romantics’.¹³

Landscape Painting achieves parity with portraiture and history painting



Peter Paul Rubens and the *Landscape with a Rainbow* (1636) (135 cm x 235 cm) oil on oak board

This was one of a pair of paintings which, towards the end of his life, Rubens painted for his own pleasure, both to be hung in his country house home called Het Steen in Belgium. The other painting forming the pair is called *An Autumn Landscape with a view of Het Steen* (1636), now hanging in the National Gallery, London, could also be said to have qualities which suggest the transcendent but for this chapter I will confine my comments to the picture with the more obvious biblical and typological connections.

To begin by setting the biblical context, there were three covenants which are set out in the book of Genesis, between God and Noah, between God and Abraham and between God and Jacob. I am going to leave the latter two which are not relevant to this painting and follow the theme by considering just the covenant with Noah. After the story of the flood we have God speaking ‘Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the birds, the cattle and every beast of the earth with you as many as came out of the ark’.¹⁴ Later on referring to the rainbow, we have God speaking again: ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth’.¹⁵ The interpretation of these passages is that the essence of this covenant is that humankind is required to exhibit a basic reverence towards all life and, in return, God promises never again to flood creation out of existence. There is a typological link here with the New Testament book of Revelation where the writer (possibly John the Apostle) states ‘And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald’.¹⁶

Returning now to this painting, unlike the two earlier paintings considered above, the *Landscape with a Rainbow* (1636) was not designed as an altarpiece, but the question nonetheless can be asked – could it be used as an altarpiece? Whilst the link with the New Testament is fairly tenuous, the modern interpretation of the Genesis creation stories together with the Noachide Covenant suggests a concern for stewardship of the world (first creation story) and care for all living creatures (second creation story) which is entirely consistent with the overall message of the New Testament which is that one should worship the one true God and love one’s neighbour. I will therefore argue that this painting is certainly capable of being used as an aid to worship in a church building and could even be used as an altarpiece.

First, the painting is a celebration of rural life and the bounty that is provided by mankind acting as a steward on behalf of God. A storm has just passed emphasising the need for water (rainfall provided by God) to encourage the crops to grow – haymaking which has halted for the rain is about to re-start with the workers building ricks in the middle

distance. The cows are being moved perhaps towards a milking point in a field as they are accompanied by the milkmaids; this perhaps highlights the need for careful husbandry of the cattle in order to ensure an ample supply of milk.

However, more important than all of this detail there is the significance of the rainbow which was painted to provide a bridge from the dark brooding woods into the much lighter distance – a area of the countryside whose distance is emphasised by the aerial perspective and perhaps represents, or, at least could, represent the heavenly kingdom. It must be remembered that this picture was painted about thirty years before Newton established precisely the colours of the rainbow, and hence the rainbow at that time would have been regarded as a sign from God. In the particular reproduction that I am examining the colour green is prominent and it is possible that Rubens is alluding to the above mentioned passage in Revelation but whilst some of the colours appropriate to jasper have been reproduced there is no suggestion of the red of carnelian, so one would have to be cautious about reading a reference to Revelation in this painting, particularly as in the other Rubens pictures showing rainbows, the colour scheme is the same with the predominance of yellow and/or green. I suggest a more plausible typological link with the rainbow is with that of Pentecost. Just as the Passover has always been linked with the Exodus, then the rainbow, the covenantal sign, has been associated with the Feast of Weeks which occurred 50 days after the harvest; hence the name Pentecost when the *Paraclete* (Comforter or Holy Spirit) which had been promised by Christ just before his ascension, actually arrived. The possibility that this painting has a connection to the promised Holy Spirit cannot be ruled out and gives a further reason for the use of the painting to assist with meditation or devotion. John Drury has a rather different interpretation of the detail of this picture and summarises the painting as follows:

This is a picture which implies God as an appreciative spectator within it of his latest artefact, the rainbow, and of his whole creation. It is also Ruben's own offering of thanks for his fulfilment as painter and *parvenu* landowner, in a country restored to economic prosperity under benevolent Christian regents after war and depression. As spectators we stand before it as receivers of blessings. We should hesitate to advance and tangle with the cows. Better to stand still and let all this abundance pour into our laps – or rather eyes.¹⁷

I agree with many of Drury's comments but would disagree with his first sentence. I see God as the Creator and Rubens the spectator bringing God's creation to the attention of the viewer. The concept of God as spectator almost suggests God as a physical reality somewhere 'out there' rather than as a spiritual reality, beyond time and space and greater than anything of which we can conceive. Certainly as spectators we stand before this painting as receivers of God's blessing and for this reason, if not for a number of others, I would argue strongly that this picture could easily serve its purpose as an artefact to inspire devotion in the viewer.

As this painting and its companion piece the *Autumn Landscape with a view of Het Steen* were painted towards the end of his life, one can speculate on whether or not the change of scene signified a change of outlook in Rubens. Many of his earlier works were of traditional altarpieces but maybe by this time in his life he wished to express that which Drury argues was the mind-set of a devout Christian in the mid-seventeenth century when, as he writes:

In the two-world structure of apocalyptic cosmology and in paintings based upon it, heaven was the predominant realm of value and the fulfilment of vision, earth a subordinate place. Rubens could do that too, whether with a moral generosity or a bourgeois biddability to aristocratic commands ... But in the freedom of his final years the balance was, without the least trace of apostasy from the Catholic Church, the other way. If cosmologies and systems have their day and cease to be, love, as St. Paul taught, abides. Its descent into mundane existence is the dynamic of Christ's story, the Christian arch-myth with the world as its destination. Taken on by Christ's followers, it survives and finds plenty of work to do in our world ... In Christian doctrine and devotion, dying (metaphorically including any kind of loss) is a gate to new life when love is its motive. It applies as much to Christianity itself as an historical phenomenon as to the individual Christian such as Rubens.¹⁸

To examine this quotation in more detail, at the time of Rubens heaven would by most people be seen as a physical place above the sky, (it must be remembered that it was in 1632 that Galileo was imprisoned for supporting the Copernican view of the universe), which explains Drury's use of the phrase two-world structure of apocalyptic cosmology.

This, of course, is consistent with Rubens painting the two worlds (earth represented by the dark woods and the foreground subjects, and the kingdom of heaven towards the distant horizon) joined by the rainbow. The word love needs explanation for it is a translation of the Greek word *agape* – Christian love, which I always equate with the concept of wanting the best for one’s fellow human being – and it is not to be confused with *eros* or *philiōs*, sexual love and parental love respectively. Drury is extending the use of love (which is sometimes used to define God) into the idea of human destiny being to look after the world to the best of our ability – acting as regent or steward on behalf of God and of being ‘in Christ’ to use St. Paul’s expression.¹⁹ If we accept this argument, then it follows that Rubens was - by using his God-given talent and experience – ‘infused with the divine’, expressing the ensoulment of creation in his landscape paintings and particularly in *Landscape with a Rainbow*.²⁰ It is then a very small development of the concept of ensoulment to suggest that the painting has just as much relevance to be used for devotional and meditational purposes as the traditional altarpieces depicting the Madonna or Christ.

Claude Lorraine and *Landscape with Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Sylvia*



Lorraine *Landscape with Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Sylvia* (1675-76) 1200mm x 1500 mm oil on canvas

It may seem somewhat superfluous to include Claude (1600-1682) in a chapter concerned with sacred art when he is not renowned for his religious or transcendent works of art. However he is considered of major importance when the development of landscape art is being considered, and for this reason I am including the artist in this section. Whether or not his great skill in landscape painting derived from the fact that he found such trouble in figure painting, it is difficult to say, but certainly he was one of the earliest artists in which the landscape came first and the staffage second. The very accurate treatment that he gives to clouds has some similarity with John Constable and as Paul Johnson writes ‘Claude looked forward to the eighteenth century, its serenity and stasis’.²¹ More importantly, from the perspective of this thesis Claude had an influence on Palmer who wrote in connection with the endeavour to achieve timeless transcendence in his own works that:

I do not think that it is either the truth of his colour or the charm of his trees (unrivalled though they be,) or the gold of his sunshine, that makes CLAUDE the greatest of landscape painters, but that Golden Age into which poets minds are thrown back – on first sight of one of his ... pictures.²²

To emphasise, this timeless quality in Claude Lorrain, Palmer writes (to L.R.Valpy) that: ‘ordinary landscapes remind us of what we see in the country; Claude’s of what we read in the greatest poets and of their perception of the country, thus raising our own towards the same level.’²³

Turning now to the chosen picture, whilst this scene is a representation of the story in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which the shooting of the stag eventually leads to the Trojan Wars, the depiction of the landscape itself was of equal importance because as mentioned above it was with Claude’s paintings that landscape was no longer just a background in which to set human figures. In more detail there are two aspects in landscape paintings for which Claude is particularly renowned – his ability to create an extraordinary impression of light and his approach to composition. With regard to the latter John Barrell remarked that Claude’s compositions offered ‘a grammar, as it were, of landscape patterns and structures, established so thoroughly in [the connoisseur’s] language and imagination that

he became less and less able to separate any one landscape from any other, because he applied the same visual and linguistic procedures to them all'.²⁴

Examining the composition of this particular painting on the left hand side there is the main scene of Ascanius taking aim with his bow, with his companions and their dogs standing by and watching. Even though Ascanius is drawn to be a somewhat oversized dominant figure he is dwarfed by the building which surmounts the hill on which they are standing.²⁵ The columns of the building reach out of the top of the picture, possibly a reference to reaching towards heaven. The trees are leaning inwards over the valley in a threatening attitude which according to the Ashmolean picture description suggests an indication of the violence to come. The rotunda beyond the building helps to continue the dominance of landscape over the relatively small humans.

In the centre of the picture there is the deep rift of the valley through which the river runs, with the immediate foreground indicative of great depth and darkness, maybe even suggestive of the underworld. The (not particularly well drawn) stag rests on a level piece of ground which balances that of the ground on the other side on the river on which the hunters are standing. The buildings on the left are balanced on the right by the castle on a hill in the middle distance. In the centre of the picture the eye is drawn towards the distant mountains and far horizon by the packhorses crossing over the bridge. It is on the horizon that the characteristic light of Claude can be seen – the sky gradually lightens from the threatening clouds immediately overhead to the distance horizon to this light which almost requires the viewer to try to glimpse that which lies beyond, or at least to peer into the apparently infinite distance.

Regarding the palette which Claude has used, the overall effect is of silvery blue tones, but with the use of brighter colours on the significant characters in the story – red (now probably faded) on the huntsman's jacket and fawn the colour of the stag.

Whilst probably not intended by Claude, one can perhaps discern a suggestion of transcendence in this painting – particularly light on the distant horizon which is

suggestive of straining towards something beyond, a characteristic of later drawing which will be considered in which the viewer is encouraged almost to see beyond the canvas itself.

Romanticism, Typology and the Nazarenes

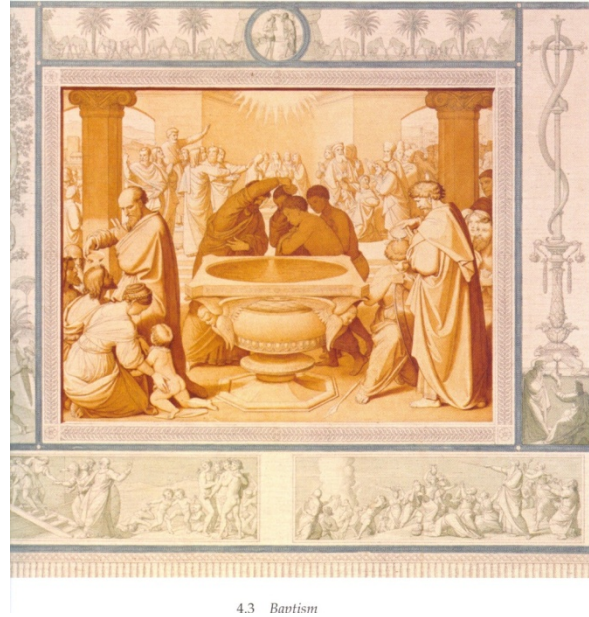
Entering the period of Romanticism and particularly German Romanticism, a time begins in which art was influenced by the aesthetics philosophy of Baumgarten, Kant and Schelling discussed earlier in this thesis. Two schools developed in Germany – that which was dominated by Caspar David Friedrich and Philippe Otto Runge which remained in Germany and the Nazarenes or *Lukasbrüder* formed by Johann Overbeck and Franz Pferr. The Nazarenes moved to Rome to work and were later joined by others including Peter von Cornelius and J.H. Ferdinand Oliver. The Friedrich School developed a type of landscape painting which, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, expressed the relationship between mankind and his Creator, whilst the *Lukasbrüder* aimed for the style of late medieval and early renaissance painters, being particularly influenced by Dürer and Raphael. Whilst most of the Nazarenes produced works that were similar to the altarpieces of the early renaissance, they also endeavoured to include references to typology in some of their works.

In this particular chapter I will be examining one of the *Seven Sacraments* by Overbeck, and a landscape painting by Oliver which will enable an interesting comparison with a Samuel Palmer work which will be included in the next section.

Friedrich Johann Overbeck and *The Seven Sacraments* (1865) – *Baptism* (copies: 67cm x 76 cm. The original pictures are over 400 cm. wide.

At the time of their production *The Seven Sacraments* were regarded as very Catholic in orientation, having been accepted by the Pope and highly regarded by the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna. As such, they were not so acceptable to those who were strongly influenced by the Reformation. The acceptance of this set of cartoons is very thoroughly described by the Nazarene scholar, Cordula Grewe in her book *Painting the Sacred in the*

Age of Romanticism, to which the reader is referred for more information.²⁶ *The Seven Sacraments* have been produced as an illustrated commentary or sermon and throughout Overbeck maintains strong Christological connections even though only two of the sacraments (Baptism and Eucharist) are regarded as major (see Chapter Seven). A simple description of sacrament would describe them as visible and outward signs of God's inward and spiritual grace which have been given to us.²⁷



4.3 Baptism

Friedrich Johann Overbeck and *The Seven Sacraments* (1865) – *Baptism* (copies: 67cm x 76 cm).

All of these seven cartoons were produced for the edification of the viewer and the first of them, Baptism, based on the Acts Chapter 2, shows the descent of the Holy Spirit or in other words the day of Pentecost. The two main features, which describe the arrival of the Holy Spirit, are that it comes with a sound like a mighty wind and the appearance of tongues as of fire, settling over the eleven apostles (Acts Chapter 2, verses 2-3).

Obviously, Overbeck could not show the sound but he has given due prominence to the tongues of fire shown hovering above the apostles, confirming that it is indeed Pentecost that this picture is illustrating.

There are many typological links with the Old Testament, some of which have been shown in the border surrounding this picture. As mentioned above, the Festival of Pentecost has its parallel in the Feast of Weeks which is associated with the day when the law was given at Sinai and described in Deuteronomy Chapter 16, verses 9-12, Exodus Chapter 23, verses 16; and Leviticus Chapter 23, verses 15-22.²⁸ The use of analogy (wind – *pneuma*) for the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2, verses 2-3 indicates that it is a supernatural occurrence with which we are dealing. As Howard Marshall writes:

The symbolism is reminiscent of Old Testament theophanies: wind is a sign of God's presence as Spirit. (The) second symbol was fire. A flame divided itself into several tongues, so that each rested on the persons present. Again the description is analogical – *as* of fire. And again we are reminded of Old Testament theophanies, especially of that at Sinai.²⁹

One of the most important theophanies was the *Shekinah* (which means abiding or dwelling) and is the cloud of glory within which God may be considered to be found; the purpose of the *Shekinah* was to guide and defend the people of Israel – references to the Theophany will be found also in the New Testament one of the most significant being at the Transfiguration of Christ.³⁰

Having given the biblical background, I will now examine how many of these references can be found in the painting itself. The action takes place in Jerusalem – presumably in the Temple and in the centre of the main picture foreground there is a very large and totally dominant font around which three people are being baptised – three other people are being blessed by the apostles. There is an unclothed child – possibly a symbol of purity and heaven looking up to one of the apostles, his line of sight following along the arm of the apostle pointing upwards, emphasising the heavenly reference. One of those being baptised looks like a Moor which highlights the idea that baptism is for all – further emphasised by the large crowd in the background. The tongues as of fire are represented by a symbolic sun at the top of the painting with the tongues generally pointing towards the crowd who are waiting to be baptised (Acts Chapter 2, verse 38). Examining the attitude of the crowd it is not difficult to imagine that they have been filled with the Holy

Spirit and are speaking in many tongues (Acts Chapter 2, verse 4) but the symbolism is such that one could not be certain that this was what Overbeck was intending to indicate.

Turning now to the borders of the painting, at the top immediately above the sun and tongues as of fire we have Jesus being baptised by John (Mark Chapter 1, verse 9). This scene is set in a circle and on either side there is a collection of trees and animals representing the desert. On the left hand side panel there is a drawing of Adam and Eve being driven from the Garden of Eden, watched by the serpent which is slithering down the tree of knowledge. This panel represents the fall of man, after which mankind could no longer approach God directly thus requiring God to solve the impasse by means of the incarnation and a route to salvation through Christ, the new Adam (Genesis Chapter 3, verse 24). The cherubim referred to in verse 24 are represented by a single cherub holding the flaming sword which guards the tree of knowledge.

The right hand panel shows the brass serpent located on a cross made by Moses just before the Israelites reached Sinai where they were to receive the law. Grewe writes of this panel that the cross is lifted high on an elaborate altar cross. She continues:

Once made by Moses to save his people from the lord's wrath (Number 21:5-9) the Brazen Serpent foreshadows the redemption of man's sin through the death of Christ on the cross. Overbeck's solution is remarkable for doubling and yet truncating the typological scheme. On the one hand he traces the lineage of sin and redemption within the Jewish Scriptures by pairing a negative type, the Expulsion from Paradise with a positive, the Brazen Serpent. On the other hand the true anti-type, the Crucifixion, is missing.³¹

Overbeck resolves this by showing at the base of the brass column, a scene from the Gospel of John, Chapter 3 – Jesus's discourse with Nicodemus, in which Jesus emphasises the need for baptism before one could enter the Kingdom of God. (Verse 5 reads 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'.) Thus again Overbeck focuses on the main theme of baptism.

It is in the predella that reference is made to the two Old Testament themes highlighted in the paragraphs above. In the right hand panel there is a scene in which the cloud of glory (the *Shekinah*) is guiding Moses and the Israelites through the Red (probably Reed) Sea and onward to receive the Law at Sinai. In the left hand panel there is reference to Noah where he is shown saving people and animals by ushering them into the ark, after which there is signed the Noachide covenant and eventually by a combination of the Law and the covenant we reach the Festival of the Fields as a thanksgiving. It is interesting that the painter does not explicitly link this Festival to his picture of the Day of Pentecost because from a typological point of view this is, I would argue, the most important connection. However, while Overbeck does not highlight this festival in any obvious way, perhaps by indicating references to Moses and the Law and to Noah he could be pointing the way to that festival as the foreshadowing of the Day of Pentecost. Perhaps this is another example of that which Grewe refers to as truncated typology but in this case it remains unresolved.

This picture, then, shows one of the Nazarenes producing a work of art that is totally grounded in both the Old and New Testaments and, with so much to contemplate, obviously could be used an altarpiece typical of the many produced in the late medieval or early renaissance periods. This painting and the those depicting the other six sacraments could all be used as aids to devotion and prayer.

The next member of the *Lukasbrüder* to be examined has an entirely different approach and continues the theme of landscape initiated by Claude Lorrain and Rubens.

J.H.Ferdinand Oliver and *Friday - Meadow outside of Aigen near Salzburg* (1822)



J.H.Ferdinand Oliver and *Friday - Meadow outside of Aigen near Salzburg* (1822)
(Lithograph produced from two plates, in black and tan inks, overall size 370 mm x 525 mm)

Ferdinand Oliver often expressed the relationship between mankind and God through pictures of idyllic rural scenes. Some, such as *Friday*, show workers taking their time tending the crops and presenting a very relaxed view of working in the countryside which is actually very far from the truth. In this respect Oliver demonstrated a kinship with Samuel Palmer who in his time at Shoreham produced similar idyllic scenes (as has been demonstrated in Chapter Five). Other paintings by Oliver such as *On the Frauensteinberg at Mödling* (1823) and *St Peter's Graveyard in Salzburg* (1818) show a similarity with the work of Friedrich but without the melancholy which is such a characteristic of the latter's work. Although he spent most of his time in Germany rather than Italy, Oliver

was a member of the *Lukasbrüder* and most of his works have a Biblical, Catholic reference, his views are much more in accord with that Brotherhood than with the Friedrich-Carus grouping in Dresden.

Returning to *Friday*, this is part of a series of days of the week entitled *Seven Places of Salzburg and Berchtesgaden, arranged according to the Seven Days of the Week, linked by Two Allegorical Sheets*. The two allegorical plates are significant with the first and more important called *Dedication* showing a tree depicting the history of art in Germany, beneath which are situated a number of figures and an inscription from the Gospel of John, Chapter 11, verse 25 – ‘I am the resurrection and the life’. This provides an introduction to all that follows with the inscription on the second allegorical plate (known as the *Keystone*) reading ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe’.³²

Concentrating now on *Friday*, the picture shows three workers in the right hand foreground balanced by a tower in the left foreground. In the middle distance there are three more workers, possibly taking a crop of hay, beyond which there are a number of trees dotted about as in parkland and in the far distance there are the mountains of the *Salzkammergut*. The sky is shown with a very high thin stratus cloud indicative of fair weather.

The tower is particularly important as it links this ‘Garden of Eden’ scene to Christianity. The tower emphasises the Cross, with a simple cross showing in the brick or stone work at an intermediate level above which there is enclosed a crucifix with two people with heads bowed at its base. The space containing the crucifix is built with four columns and lintels, the whole being surmounted by a pitched roof at the pinnacle of which there is a further simple cross. The disposition of the workers is such as to suggest with a reference to Genesis 3: 24 that they are tilling the ground from which they were taken. The whole scene is one of an elegiac, utopian existence where there is a simple Pietist pleasure in looking after the land which God has created. Grewe interprets this timeless, peaceful scene:

The topographical exactitude contrasts to a strange, lyrical sense of timelessness, which extracts a sensation of permanence from the season’s

never ending cycle of change. Signs of popular piety, such as the wayside cross ... underscore the religious air of Oliver's invention and create such an acute sense of symbolism that the viewer feels compelled to read all of nature as a Christian metaphor.³³

In addition to this one could add the thought there is in this timelessness a feeling of renewal or resurrection, particularly in view of the crucifix scene enclosed at the top of the tower, and, of course, the inscription on the *Dedication*. Contemplation of this Christian metaphor would surely enhance an act of devotion in a viewer or worshipper who is susceptible to communication with the Ultimate Reality through the depiction of the created world.

Before leaving discussion of the Nazarenes, it is appropriate to quote once again from Cordula Grewe who summarised the aspirations of the Lukasbrüder as follows:

The individual (art)work served as an expression, a vessel of the artist's own religiosity. Making art was synonymous with praying, it was a personal and private form of divine service. Moreover, the artwork was a devotional tool meant to serve the devout in their need for reminders, instruction and confirmation in the teachings of Bible and Church. Third, it was a missionary device in place to convert the unbelievers. Through these ... stages, art helped to form the artist's identity, re-enchanted society, and ultimately bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. This, at least, was the Nazarene ideal.³⁴

As artists began to express themselves more through landscape, it was necessary to consider the place of landscape within the panoply of fine art because at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries landscape painting was still rising to the level accorded to history painting. The scientist and artist pupil and friend of Friedrich, Carl Gustav Carus (see Chapter Two), in addressing this point, endeavoured to raise the reputation of this form of art by creating a new title for this category – earth-life painting or earth-life art. Carus writes:

When the soul is saturated with the inner meaning of all these different (organic) forms; when it has clear intimations of the mysterious, divine life of nature; when the hand has taught itself to represent securely, and the eye to see purely and acutely; and when the artist's heart is purely and entirely a consecrated, joyous vessel in which to receive the light from above: then

there will infallibly be earth-life paintings ... These works will truly deserve to be named mystic and orphic; and earth-life painting will have attained its culmination³⁵.

Such a description could be applied to many of the works of Palmer, Friedrich and Oliver, including this particular scene of the Salzkammergut. But it is to the English artist Samuel Palmer that attention will now be turned.

Samuel Palmer and the Bright Cloud motif

As Oliver spent most of his time in Germany, he would have been aware of the principles being espoused by Schelling and the way in which the latter was promoting the use of landscape as a means of signifying the relationship between mankind and his or her Creator. While Palmer did not spend any great length of time in Germany, he was at times in close contact with Coleridge and with H.C. Robinson both of whom spent time in Germany studying philosophy and aesthetics and, as has been analysed in an earlier chapter of this thesis, he would have been imbued with the notions of that time.

Samuel Palmer would have been close in theological outlook to Ferdinand Oliver and both expressed their relationship to the creator through the depiction of idyllic landscapes. Both chose to ignore either through ignorance or deliberate intention the hardship and drudgery of farm work in the nineteenth century and expressed a benign outlook that would invoke in the viewer the encouragement to praise God and give thanks for such a wonderful creation. Oliver's and Palmer's works are too small to be used as altarpieces in a church or cathedral but both would be appropriate in a small side chapel or monk's cell and most certainly could be used for devotional purposes when the viewer would contemplate the Creation.

The cloud motif was an important one for Palmer, emphasised in this extract from a letter to his friend John Linnell: 'Nor must be forgotten the motley clouding, the fine meshes, the aerial tissues that dapple the skies of spring; nor the rolling volumes and piled

mountains of light.' He saw in the treatment of clouds in Linnell's own paintings 'how the elements of nature may be transmitted into the pure Gold of Art.'³⁶



Palmer *The Bright Cloud* (1833-4) 233 x 320 mm Oil and tempera on mahogany board

This motif is included in two paintings by Palmer produced towards the end of his time in Shoreham – *The White Cloud* (1833-4) and *The Bright Cloud* (1833-4) – as well as the earlier sepia *Valley with a bright Cloud* (1825) – all of which have those characteristics which point towards the Transcendent. They are small paintings but certainly could be used in a side chapel or small chamber as an aid to contemplation of the numinous.

While the two 'cloud' paintings are almost mirror images of each other, *The Bright Cloud* has some similarity with the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (Chapter Five) inasmuch as it shows what could be a biblical scene set in the countryside of Kent.

But both paintings show this tremendous building of cumulus cloud located such that it could almost be a representation of the *Shekinah*. One is reminded of the transfiguration passage in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 17, verse 5 'when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son with

whom I am well pleased””, as well as the popular Advent hymn by Charles Wesley which Palmer would probably have known: ‘Lo! He comes with clouds descending ...’³⁷



Palmer *The White Cloud* (1833-4) 222 x 267 mm Oil and tempera

Although Palmer did not set out to produce meteorologically accurate cloudscaapes *The White Cloud* is a good representation of a cumulus cloud building eventually to become a towering cumulo-nimbus – the thunder cloud.



Palmer *The Valley with a Bright Cloud* (1825) 184 x 278 mm pen an brush in dark brown ink mixed with gum

It is surely not taking eisegesis to an unreasonable length to suggest that the white cloud is representing a theophany – the *Shekinah*. Writing about the earlier sepia – *The Valley with a Bright Cloud* (1825), Vaughan suggests: ‘The ‘Bright Cloud’ was to become a favourite theme of Palmer’s during his later years at Shoreham and seems to suggest – as poetry referring to it then indicates – the image of a higher reality beyond the vale of comfortable rural peace’.³⁸

This particular painting was unusual for Palmer in not including any staffage but he may have intended the picture to show paradise with God being represented by the church for he has written:

Landscape is of little value, but as it hints or expresses the haunts or doings of man. However gorgeous, it can be but Paradise without an Adam. Take away its churches, where for centuries the pure word of God has been read to the poor ... and you have a frightful kind of Paradise left – a Paradise without a God.³⁹

Although no people, he has shown a church in the background and has annotated the picture with the comment ‘This is our life, exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in ye running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. *As you like it.*’⁴⁰ While the church symbolism is strong, once again it is the bright cloud which dominates the picture and is to me the representation of God – the *Shekinah*.

To summarise, these cloud works of Palmer are small but I would argue could be used in a similar manner to the icon of the Eastern Orthodox church and while not maybe venerated in the same way as the traditional icon, they could certainly be used as aids to devotion.

Do the Paintings of J. M. W. Turner Signpost the Transcendent?

As this artist has not featured in this thesis so far, I begin this section with a short introductory note. While the religious and spiritual aspects of the lives of all the other artists considered in this thesis are readily ascertained, those of Turner are difficult to determine. The usual sources of information, for example biographies, have had to be treated with care. In the early part of the twentieth century there were no reliable biographies of Turner – Sir John Rosenberg remarked ‘there is to this day not even a biography of him that is both reliable and organised as a readable life’.⁴¹

One gleans some information from Ruskin’s *Lectures on Art*, but rather more from Dinah Birch’s *Ruskin on Turner* - where we receive both the distilled thoughts of the famous art critic as well as extracts from *The Works of Ruskin*.⁴² From this latter work, it can be learnt that Ruskin ‘sees Turner’s paintings as an expression of natural truth, so faithful that they almost transcend art, and become facts of nature in themselves ... Ruskin brooded on him as the great painter of human mortality’.⁴³ Furthermore, Turner had a particular affinity for the poets of the Romantic period; as Birch writes ‘Turner’s deference to the spiritual grandeur of nature must be seen as a Romantic phenomenon, one which grew out of a new kind of contact between the intellectual ambitions of poets and painters’.⁴⁴

Assessing Turner through Ruskin is fraught with difficulty because Ruskin has an almost hagiographical view of the artist, but we can perhaps assume that Turner’s influence was so great we can derive some of Turner’s thought from Ruskin’s *Lectures on Art*.⁴⁵ In his particular lecture on the relation of Art to Religion, Ruskin asserted that the great arts have ‘three principal directions of purpose: - first, that of enforcing the religion of men; secondly, that of perfecting their ethical state; thirdly, that of doing them material service’.⁴⁶ He concluded that particular lecture with the hope ‘That we *may* have the splendour of art again, and with that, we may truly praise and honour our Maker, and with that set forth the beauty and holiness of all that He had made.’⁴⁷ Birch emphasises that modern scholarship has ‘made it clear that Turner’s interest in non-Christian

religions was one of the most radical dimensions of his work' but unfortunately she does not give any references to back up this assertion.⁴⁸ It is certainly true that Turner avidly studied the subject of mythology a topic which could be said to be means of expressing the worship of nature.⁴⁹ This is an idea which as Birch describes, had taken a new direction in the nineteenth century when the sun, 'as the source of all life, could be seen as the central divinity, taking various guises, of primeval religions'.⁵⁰

To complete this investigation into the spirituality or religiosity of Turner the question of whether or not it is possible to apply the concept of the anonymous Christian – a concept devised by the theologian Karl Rahner – to the artist must be considered. Essentially Rahner postulates that the spiritual self-communication is an act of God's freedom – that is, an act of giving himself in 'free and absolute love'.⁵¹ We can see here a link with Christianity with its concept of the unmerited grace of God being available to sinful persons. In Rahner's view this free and unmerited grace is available, as an offer, to absolutely all people and is present in all people as an existential of their concrete existence, 'and is present prior to their freedom, their self-understanding and their experience'.⁵² The acceptance of this grace, i.e. the acceptance of God in the living out of the human existence in the concrete world, is itself an act of God's self-communication, for, if it were not, God would be in danger of being reduced to a level of finiteness. 'God in his salvic will has offered and destined this fulfilment not only for some, but for all people, a fulfilment which consists in the fully realised acceptance of this divine self-communication'.⁵³ The alternative view expressed by the twentieth century philosopher Jacques Maritain is that 'the artist as artist is not called on to love God or the world or humanity, but to love what he or she is doing. In a rather extended sense, the activity of the artist does have a serious moral character simply because it pushes aside the ego and the desire of the artist as individual'.⁵⁴

To summarise this short investigation into the inherent spirituality of Turner, it is clear that in Ruskin's view Turner was a painter of 'the truths of nature' and that in his final volume of *Modern Painters* he expresses the view that the truths of nature were 'also spiritual in a sense still wider and deeper than could be contained within Christian

tradition'.⁵⁵ This does give some credence to the quoted, but possibly apocryphal, deathbed words of Turner that 'The Sun is God'.⁵⁶ So, at the very least, it could be said that Turner was a follower of Heliolatry and, possibly by Rahner's criteria, an anonymous Christian.

I will now analyse the sacramental qualities of the two late paintings of Turner referred to above: *Shade and Darkness – the Evening of the Deluge* (exhibited 1843) and *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) – the Morning after the Deluge – Moses Writing the Book of Genesis* (exhibited 1843). For the purposes of considering their qualities as aids to religious contemplation, I will regard the two paintings (which were painted as a pair) as a diptych, and for simplicity I will refer to them as *Shade and Darkness* and *Light and Colour*. Both paintings are available in the Tate Collection and can be viewed on line at www.tate.org.uk.

These two pictures were painted as Turner was endeavouring to formulate a response to Goethe's theory of colour (that colours come out of the interaction between light and darkness and were as a result of perception by the viewer).⁵⁷ However my concern is how these paintings might function in a church or chapel setting.

As Lindsay emphasises, one of the paintings shows Goethe's negative colours whilst the morning picture shows the positive colours, expressing says Goethe 'warmth and gladness'.⁵⁸ In the *Shade and Darkness* painting we have the use of dark browns and reds surrounding a central area of white light painted in the form of a vortex. The eye is led into the vortex, perhaps emphasised by the birds, to which Turner refers in the poem, at the top of the picture. The eye is led so far into the depth that one might believe that Turner is endeavouring to show the physical world dissolving into a distant metaphysical realm. As Lindsay confirms 'the dynamic colour elements ... merge man and nature in the concrete sphere of immediate experience'.⁵⁹ The painting is certainly an example of Turner's depiction of the sublime, where the catastrophic forces of nature, perhaps in the form of a tsunami are shown with the utmost dramatic force.



JWM Turner: *Shade and Darkness : Evening of the Deluge* (1843) 787 x 781 mm oil on canvas

In Goethe's terms the colours here 'produce a restless, susceptible, anxious impression', with the cold blue contrasting diagonally across the painting with the dark brown almost black, suggestive of absence of light before, in the corner of the picture there is just a lightening of the scene with a small area of shades of pale yellow. The effect of the darkness is to highlight the effect of the white vortex and add to the creation of the appearance of a tunnel preceding the movement through into the metaphysical world beyond.

The poem accompanying this work is:-

The morn put forth her sign of woe unheeded;
But disobedience slept; the dark'ning Deluge closed around,
And the last taken came: the giant framework floated,
The roused birds forsook their nightly shelters screaming
And the beast waded to the ark.⁶⁰



JWM Turner: *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) Morning after the Deluge Moses writing the book of Genesis* (1843) 787 x 787 mm oil on canvas

In *Light and Colour*, Turner makes a reference to Moses writing the Book of Genesis which to the modern eye seems strange but at the time when Turner was working it was probably still the accepted view that Moses wrote parts of that book.⁶¹ The colour scheme here is positive with warm reds, orange and dark shades of yellow, with the only negative colour being reserved for the brazen serpent in the centre rising towards the back of Moses who is facing into the depths of the picture. The context of this part of the story is that at the end of the deluge a covenant was established between God and mankind such that if mankind looks after and nurtures the world then never again will God flood mankind out of existence. The sign of this covenant was the rainbow and why Turner chose not to include this phenomenon in the painting is an unanswered question, particularly intriguing when the splitting of light through a spectrum into the colours of the rainbow was an important feature of Newton's theory of light. The nearest there is to

the rainbow is the suggestion that the bubbles in the vortex surrounding the sun are themselves edged with the colours of the rainbow.

This prismatic effect is emphasised in the poem which accompanies this work:-

The ark stood firm on Ararat; th' returning Sun
Exhaled earth's humid bubbles, and emulous of light,
Reflected her lost forms, each in prismatic guise
Hope's harbinger, ephemeral as the summer fly
Which rises, flits, expands, and dies.⁶²

As with *Shade and Darkness*, *Light and Colour* has a very large central light, almost certainly the sun, with Moses sitting at the centre and writing, suggesting a calmness that is not present in the more obvious tunnel and vortex in the former work. The importance of the sun is emphasised in Turner's poem by the use of the capital letter and is entirely consistent with Turner's deathbed words 'The Sun is God' referred to earlier.

This reference to Turner as a follower of heliolatry leads on now to consideration of whether or not these works of art could be regarded as sacraments. These pictures are both small (787 x 781 mm and 787 x 787 mm) and could be placed one on each side of an altar. They are both using the 'symbolising power of colour to designate the Qualities of things' and they are both tending towards the Abstract Sacred to which the radical theologian Don Cupitt refers in his book *Radicals and the Future of the Church*.⁶³ These two paintings are both works that seem to proceed from the physical world and point to the metaphysical. They both utilise a prominent circle or vortex – a symbol for God according to Giotto and Pope Benedict XI (as mentioned earlier in this thesis). The use of the serpent symbol in *Light and Colour*, suggests either, the Fall of Man and the need for redemption or the alternative interpretation of the second Creation Story that on eating from the tree of knowledge Mankind has become sufficiently mature to leave the Garden of Eden and fend for him or herself. The caption to the picture in the Tate Gallery suggests that the brazen serpent is symbolising the cure from the plague and eventual salvation.⁶⁴ (This is a reference to the passage in Exodus Chapter 4, verses 3-7, when after touching the serpent Moses is cured of leprosy – whether this was intended by

Turner is conjecture.) Moses as the agent for the establishment of the moral code, the Decalogue, symbolises the need for men and women to worship God and to live in harmony with one another. In more general terms one could see in *Shade and Darkness* (located on the left of the altar) a metaphor for the wrath of God and in *Light and Colour* a metaphor for the glory of God. Alternatively, a typological application, placing the works in a New Testament context, one could see a metaphor for the Passion of Christ on the left, with the resurrection being suggested by *Light and Colour*.

So, in both pictures we have some of the most powerful themes of the three Abrahamic faiths – the fall of man, the need for redemption; the need for adherence to the law; death and resurrection. In addition to these themes of revelation, there is also the strong suggestion of Transcendence – moving through the vortex to something beyond in *Shade and Darkness* as well as being aware that there is something beyond the blinding light of the sun in *Light and Colour*. As Lindsay writes:

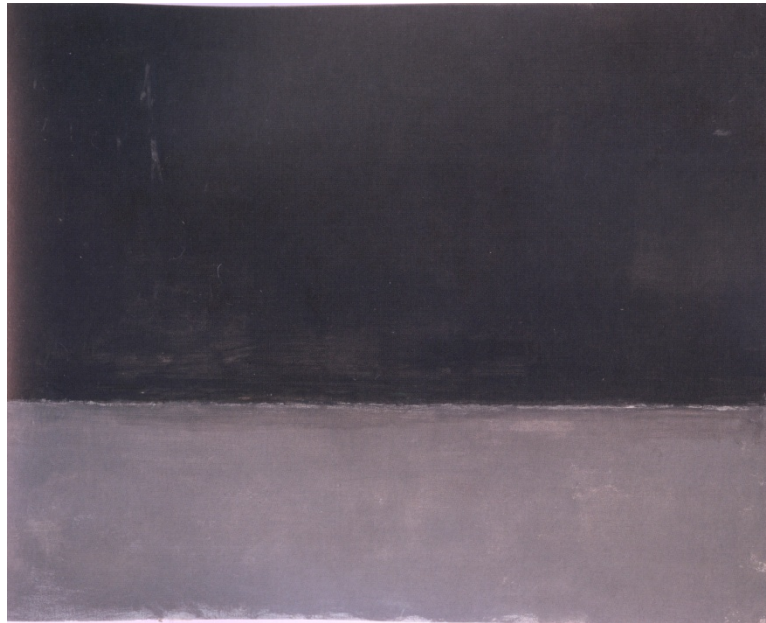
The summoned carrion birds flitter in out of the upper whirl: and we feel at once the blessing of the sun that shines on good and evil alike, and the curse of light upon man who has alienated himself from nature by his violence and corruption. The sun is both creator and destroyer. The painting is Turner's final judgement on life and on death.⁶⁵

Werner Hofmann writing as part of an analysis of *Light and Colour* highlights the particular talent of Turner when he states: 'In Turner's liquefaction, the artistic subject - the testing and mixing of colour – is balanced by cosmogonic claims: the artist relates and gives new meaning to both the Creation as well as the dissolution of the world.'

In my view these two paintings assist in mankind's contemplation of his or her relationship with nature. If we then accept that nature is God's creation and think in terms of the Natural Theology that was both prevalent at the time of the Romantic period and is still current today, somewhat in the guise of Green Theology, then we are able to say that the contemplation of these works of art (by viewers susceptible to the visual imagery) would assist in bringing us closer to that Ultimate Reality. In other words these two

paintings of Turner fulfil the criteria required to enable them to be dedicated or consecrated for use in the worship of that ultimate reality that is called God

Mark Rothko, *Untitled (1969)* and *Black on Maroon*



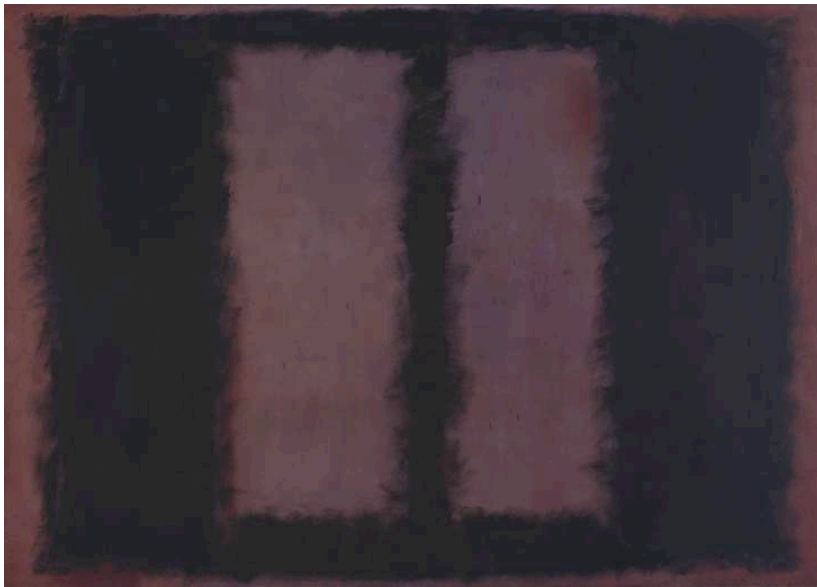
Rothko *Untitled* (1969) acrylic paint on canvas 1772 x 2972 mm

Having mentioned colour field paintings in earlier chapters, this picture makes for an interesting comparison, particularly with the *Monk by the Sea* (see Chapter Six). This very large painting produced a year before Rothko's suicide is a study in grey and dark brown. The grey field occupies approximately 35% of the lower part of the picture with dark brown occupying the remaining 65%. The two colour fields are not uniform in colour, the grey being flecked with white along the 'horizon' dividing the colour fields and with the field itself being filled with random 'smudges' of lighter shades of grey. The brown colour field is more uniform with some patches of lighter brown near to the 'horizon' and to the right of the picture there is just one patch of light brown. Perspective and aerial perspective are imagined rather than shown in any mechanistic way in the painting – it is very easy to imagine the grey foreground as very flat land looking out to a distant horizon above which is a very dark sky – indeed it is possible that Rothko

regarded his colour field paintings as landscapes rather than as examples of abstract art although in some cases he has stressed that he painted a completely black sky to avoid the possibility of the painting being described as landscape: 'It has been said that Rothko placed the darker colour at the top of the painting in order to prevent it being read as landscape, a reference which he wished to avoid.'⁶⁶

This inconsistency suggests that while it is not unreasonable to regard this painting as a landscape it may not be what Rothko intended. To achieve an effect by comparison of light with dark is the *raison d'être* of this painting. In particular the use of small flecks of white (presumably un-painted canvass) on the horizon encourages the viewer to strain to look, to stare at that horizon to try to see if there is anything that can be discerned beyond the wall of canvass. The effect of the dark brown sky is to bring the eye down to that horizon. The colour grey is not dissimilar from the colour that Friedrich uses for the foreground in the *Monk by the Sea* (Friedrich uses a much lighter grey). The writer Pico Iyer refers to visiting an exhibition of Mark Rothko paintings when he 'felt myself drawn beneath the surface to a stillness that seemed bottomless and rich with every colour'.⁶⁷ With some of Rothko's colour field paintings where the colours are of the same hue but slightly different shade there is an apparent vibration that can be seen at the junction of the two shades. That does not apply in this particular Rothko work where the effect is achieved by the white flecks. It is the sense of trying to look beyond the horizon in this picture which particularly gives it the quality of signposting the transcendent.

In *Black on Maroon*, Rothko has created a panel with a black window frame painted over a maroon background. As Harvey writes: 'Dark colours, Rothko reasoned, were more sublime than bright ones [and] his paintings after 1949 seem to absorb rather than emit light.'⁶⁸ This produces an effect of drawing the viewer into the picture very similar to those effects identified in Chapters Five and Six as characteristics of paintings pointing



Rothko *Black on Maroon* (1958), oil on canvas 2667 x 3812

towards the Transcendent. There are no overt references to the Bible in Rothko's colour field paintings. However in an application of eisegesis Harvey sees that:

the double and single rectangular forms that fizzle and hover like presences in the uncertain space behind the picture plane summon associations with the Shekinah and pillars of cloud and fire that went before the Israelites in the wilderness. The paintings' palette of deep reds, crimsons, maroons, and black resonate with some of the predominant colours mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and used in the design of in the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon, an allusion made all the more plausible in the context of the Rothko Chapel (dedicated in 1971) at Houston, Texas.⁶⁹

While this is the interpretation of one commentator, Rothko's vision was a 'focus on the modern sensibility's need for its own authentic spiritual experience' with the image of his work being the 'symbolic expression of that idea' which suggests that this thought-provoking interpretation warrants commendation.⁷⁰ Furthermore the theologian Don Cupitt, writing in 1989 on the subject that religion is a human construct, expressed the view that 'Rothko (for example: he is by no means the only one) just invented works of art that are great religion.'⁷¹ Cupitt then argues that the major artists of the modern and post-modern periods could be viewed as 'prophets of a new religious order.'⁷² Their dedication to this task and their creativity, he argued, enabled the viewers to gain the same sort of experiences that 'earlier generations once got from icons and the cult of saints.'⁷³ It is noteworthy that these two commentators with very different theological persuasions both view the contemplation of Rothko's works as likely to induce a

religious experience that is either reminiscent of biblical accounts or of the religious icons of an earlier age.

In addition it is interesting to note that Rothko was influenced by Kierkegaard and, in particular, the book *Fear and Trembling* which deals with the story about the preparedness of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis Chapter 22, verses 1-19).⁷⁴ Rothko emphasises that his paintings have intimations of sacrifice and death and could be regarded like facades of a building with just one door or maybe a window or two open.⁷⁵ The clearest evidence that Rothko considered his pictures to be as works of art with a religious context, can be gleaned from the fact that it is known that when he was given a commission to produce a series of paintings for a restaurant he 'immediately envisioned the refectory of the San Marco church with the wall painting by Fra Angelico'.⁷⁶

It would appear from his various statements that his paintings were intended to provide pointers to transcendental truth and the fact that his paintings are known to have induced religious experiences in some viewers suggests that these colour field paintings could indeed point to the Transcendent. It is the sense of trying to look beyond the horizon in his pictures which particularly gives them these qualities. There is no sense of the sublime unless by the use of imagination one places oneself or a figure in the foreground which would give the painting scale and suggests its category as 'landscape'.

Untitled (1969) and *Black on Maroon (1958)* are two of a number of paintings any of which could be used as an altarpiece. At the recent exhibition in the Tate Britain Gallery the Rothko colour fields were set in a room devoted to his paintings alone and the atmosphere created in that room by the lighting and the paintings rendered it such that it could easily have been considered to be a chapel, and hence most appropriate for spiritual or religious contemplation.

Reflection and summarising thoughts

The above represents a short survey of paintings which endeavour in very different ways to signify the relationship between mankind and the Creator God. The origin of this

objective can be traced back to the hieroglyphs – (Sacred Egyptian carvings). Grewe highlights the way in which the hieroglyph has been transformed into symbolic pictography, writing of Schlegel who ‘presented the hieroglyph as a form of shorthand through which God could at once reveal and conceal his mysteries from man.’⁷⁷ She continues: For Schlegel, this encrypted mode constituted the essence of pictorial representation: “Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*.”⁷⁸

The early Renaissance pictures whether or not used as altarpieces were nonetheless illustrations of biblical scenes involving different levels of interpretation. It should be remembered at this time that the church services were not held in the vernacular and only few of those attending (outside Italy) would have understood the Latin used for all Roman Catholic services and hence biblical illustration was necessary as an aid to understanding. Even so, as I have demonstrated above, in the examples of Raphael and Dürer multiple layers of interpretation can be applied to these paintings giving them characteristics both illustrative as well as suggestive of transcendence.

It is with the Rubens work that we begin to depart from works which are clearly illustrative to those which are symbolic and analogous. In her discussion of the symbolism of the Nazarenes, Grewe evokes the work of art critic and symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) quoting from his controversial poem *Fleurs du Mal* (1857):

Nature is a temple whose living colonnades
Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;
Man wanders among symbols in those glades
Where all things watch him with familiar eyes

... And of an infinite pervasiveness,
Like myrrh, or musk, or amber, that excite
The ecstasies of sense, the soul’s delight.⁷⁹

Rubens with his late works including the *Landscape with a Rainbow* is foreshadowing this view expressed so eloquently by Baudelaire as well as the words of Schelling who

wrote in 1859: 'The inclination unique to Christianity is that from the finite to the infinite ... inclination (which) suspends all symbolic intuition and comprehends the finite only as the allegory of the infinite'⁸⁰. So, in the Rubens, we have both a symbolism derived from the Bible (the rainbow and the Noachide covenant) as well as a transcendent symbolism with the rainbow pointing from the physical world to the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we look at the world of the Nazarenes, we see here a very clear attempt to root their work firmly into the Bible requiring in many cases to apply a typological understanding in order fully to appreciate the depth of meaning contained within the works of those painters. In other words one could approach most of the Nazarene art on two levels – first there is the superficial appreciation of a biblical scene and then as one contemplates and analyses the paintings in more depth other possibilities of theological understanding begin to be discerned. There is the danger, of course, as of all applications of eisegesis, of trying to read too much into a single painting almost to the point of creating a far-fetched interpretation, but as I hope the above analyses have demonstrated, the application of logic helps to determine when the interpretative destination has been reached.

The works of Oliver and Palmer can be considered to parallel in paintings that which Baudelaire expresses in poetry. The symbolism in these paintings is such as to enable us to view the whole of nature as a Christian metaphor - the scenes are so idyllic so as to suggest so strongly the Kingdom of Heaven. A more realistic, less naïve, view of nature is taken by Friedrich whose works (discussed in Chapter Six) symbolise the insignificance of mankind compared with the awesome power of the Creator and symbolise both the uncertainty and longing that dwell within the mind of those contemplating making the leap of faith necessary to attain that which St. Paul described as living 'by the power of the Holy Spirit (and) abound(ing) in hope'⁸¹. In Rothko one can see a development from Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* to the colour field paintings where by the removal of people from the picture, the artist leaves more scope for the viewer's imagination and interpretation to develop to a greater depth, the contrast between alienation and union with a life in Christ, and the need to overcome the leap of faith necessary to achieve the latter.

Grewe has argued very cogently that the works of the Nazarenes endeavour to signpost without being able to represent that which lies beyond. She writes: 'If the Nazarenes pursued a single absolute and fixed meaning, it was with the awareness that such meaning always lies beyond the powers of human signification and is thus inaccessible.'⁸² She then develops this line of thought:

Nazarene art is about signification. It does not simply represent; it reflects on the conditions of representation. This self-reflexivity is key to the structure of its pictorial theology. The acts of meditation on the divine subject and on the possibilities of signification converge in the act of looking. It is this innate self-reflection, this meditation on the conditions of art-making that distinguishes Nazarene art from other forms of Religious art as essentially Romantic and modern.⁸³

It is my contention that many other artists and groups of artists achieve that which was the aim of the Nazarenes and realise that objective through their own and very different styles of artistic endeavour. Whilst I would hesitate to disagree with the Very Revd John Drury, who received his doctorate of divinity from the Archbishop of Canterbury for his work on religious art, I cannot wholly agree with his statement that painters 'have to go a good way further than theologians down the ethical road of incarnation with the ... obedient humility and love for the world of mortal appearances which it demands, if they are to make the mystery of things visible'.⁸⁴ My disagreement is that it is an unattainable goal to make the mystery of the spiritual realm visible – the greatest that they can achieve is to point the way to the transcendent Truth. However close they may get to that Truth, they can never, by definition, achieve that end. Expressed in mathematical terms, the best that can be achieved by the artist (poet or painter) is to produce a poem or painting which could be considered asymptotic to that Truth.⁸⁵ While this is the best that can be achieved I would argue that it has been achieved by a much wider range of artists than the Lukasbrüder. If we accept that this 'best' has been achieved by some artists, can the thought be developed to another stage where perhaps we should regard these paintings – hieroglyphs – to use Schlegel's expansion of the term, as sacraments in themselves? In other words, can a modern theory of the hieroglyph be developed?

I have argued throughout that all of these paintings and, no doubt many others not considered, could be used as altarpieces and/or aids to devotion or contemplation. As Cupitt has suggested these paintings can give the viewer ‘the sort of charge that earlier generations once got from icons and the cult of saints.’⁸⁶ In other words all the works considered in this chapter could certainly be used, by the predisposed viewer, as aids to religious contemplation. Furthermore, I would contend that it would be entirely appropriate for art – be it sculpture or painting – to be used in a similar way to the anointing oils or to the bread and wine in the Eucharist. There are three types of oil used; to anoint the sick, to prepare for Baptism and for Extreme Unction, all of which become Holy when they are blessed by the Bishop on Maundy Thursday. Similarly, the unleavened bread and wine become holy when blessed by the priest in the service of Holy Communion. The uses of these artefacts, which take on a special symbolic significance after they have been blessed are an aid to affirming faith and I would argue that appropriate works of art could take their place alongside these consecrated elements as contributors to and additional to sacramental liturgy.⁸⁷

As the philosopher Roger Scruton says in his recent book *Our Church*:

The essence of the faith is the sacrament, which renews us not only in the spirit of love and forgiveness but also the ‘peace of god which passeth all understanding’...This membership (‘of the communion of the saints’) is offered in the Communion service as a transcendent ideal ... In the same way that we are joined to the unborn and the dead by those sacrifices that have created our country, and which are commemorated by the monuments that lie all around, so we are joined to them by that greater sacrifice that shines its light down the centuries, through the Church that Christ himself founded as a perpetual memory and re-enactment of his presence⁸⁸.

Whilst I might argue with one or two of the thoughts in this paragraph, I very much agree with the central thrust of the thesis – that the sacrament is a gift to those who have chosen to accept it. I see a valid comparison here between the acceptances of the sacrament with the acceptance of the experience of the Transcendent that may be induced by consideration of a hieroglyph. I would therefore postulate that a hieroglyph which has

been blessed by a Priest or Bishop should attain the same status as the bread, the wine or the anointing oils and become an integral part of the service as an aid to devotion and worship.

There is a further parallel. Although the gift of the sacraments through justification is available to all to choose to accept the grace of God, not all choose to do so. In the same way whilst many would accept the suggestion of the transcendent Truth that is induced by these hieroglyphs not everyone is affected in the same way or even affected at all. Furthermore, another parallel that can be drawn is that of religious experience itself – some may have an experience that is initiated by a particular activity or by nature or by a particular piece of music or by celebration of the Eucharist. Just as these experiences (including Out of Body and Near-Death Experiences) have been shown by the many records of such experiences collected by the Alister Hardy Trust to be very personal, so I would suggest that the experience of the transcendent or mystical induced by a particular work of art is a personal one dependent not only on the characteristics of the work of art but also on the perceptibility of the viewer.⁸⁹ With all these parallels between works of art and the artefacts used in church services; between the acceptance of the sacraments or oils by penitent communicants and the experience of viewing a hieroglyph by those who are open to receiving such experiences, I suggest that the proposition to regard blessed hieroglyphs in the same category as the consecrated elements is strong indeed.

As Schlegel wrote “Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*.” As a divine symbol the painting must take its place alongside the other consecrated artefacts utilised by Christians in their day to day worship.⁹⁰

¹ Johnson, P. *Art - A New History* London Wiedenfeld and Nicolson 2003 p. 113.

² Hart, A. Lecture given in 2008 at the School of Art, Aberystwyth University.

³ In addition to Johnson, P. *Art - A New History*, pp. 153-182, see also De Borchgrave, H. *A Journey into Christian Art* Oxford Lion Publishing 2001 which includes a succinct summary of Christian Visual Art prior to the Renaissance (pp. 9-40).

⁴ Rankin, M. *Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* London Continuum 2008 p.12, quoting Smart, N. *The Religious Experience of Mankind* New York Scribner's Sons 1984 p. 20.

⁵ James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* London Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy 1971 (The Gifford Lectures delivered at Edinburgh 1901-2).

⁶ Osborne, H. (ed.) *Oxford Companion to Art* Oxford Oxford University Press 1971 p. 840b.

⁷ An example of a good commentary would be *The Gospel of Matthew* Vol. 1, by William Barclay published in Edinburgh by the Saint Andrew Press in 1991 – with the legend of the three magi being on pp. 31 to 33.

⁸ <http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-906514>

⁹ http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=917 The inclusion of this saint was a requirement of the commission.

¹⁰ Barbara was reputed to be a virgin-martyr who may have lived in the second century CE. Legend has it that she converted to Christianity and decided to live in her father's bath house. Whilst he was away she asked the workman to install a third window to represent the Trinity. Her father was furious at her conversion to Christianity and threatened to kill her. Instead he handed her over to a judge who then condemned her to death (this was the time of the Maximian persecutions). As Farmer writes:

Her father was then struck by lightning and died. This was the basis of her patronage of those in danger of sudden death, first by lightning, then by subsiding mines or cannon-balls. Hence her patronage of miners and gunners. (Farmer, D.H. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* Oxford Oxford University Press 1997 page 39a.)

¹¹ <http://www.safran-arts.com/42day/art/art4mar/raphael/sismadon.html>

¹² From notes on Schelling's aesthetics by James Vigus writing about Robinson, with this particular quotation taken from Robinson's travel diary dated 29th September, 1801. See: Vigus, James *Henry Crabb Robinson – Essays on Kant, Schelling and German Aesthetics* London The Modern Humanities Research Association 2010 p. 65. Robinson's *The Travel Diary* June 1801 to January 1802 is in four parts and can be found in Dr William's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁴ Genesis, Chapter 9, verses 9 and 10.

¹⁵ Genesis, Chapter 9, verses 12 and 13.

¹⁶ Revelation Chapter 4, verse 3.

¹⁷ Drury, J. *Painting the Word – Christian Pictures and their Meanings* New Haven and London Yale University Press 2000 p. 151.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 153.

¹⁹ Whole treatises have been written on Christian love, particularly in connection with God loving the world so much that he sent his only son to expiate for the sins of the inhabitants of the world. See, for example the first letter of John Chapter 4, verses 9 and 10: 'In this the love of God was disclosed to us, that God sent his only son into the *kosmos*, that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son as a *hilasmos* for our sins'. *Kosmos* relates to the whole of the sinful community whilst *hilasmos* refers to forgiveness, but with also a sense of sacrifice. For a more detailed exposition see, for example, Grayson, K. *Dying, We Live - A New Enquiry into the Death of Christ in the New Testament* London Darton, Longman and Todd 1990 pp. 276-282.

²⁰ Oskar Bätschmann introduces the concept of ensoulment when he refers to Gustav Carus's description of the ultimate in landscape painting when 'science and art combine to produce an image that aims at nothing less than the all-embracing ensoulment of nature'. See: Carus, C.G. *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* (Introduction by Oskar Bätschmann) Los Angeles, CA The Getty Research Institute 2002 p.7.

²¹ Johnson, P. *Art: A New History* London Wiedenfeld and Nicholson 2003 p.338

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- ²² Letter to F.G.Stephens, quoted in Moore, J.N. *The Green Fuse – Pastoral Vision in English Art 1820-2000* Woodbridge (Suffolk) Antique Collectors Club 2007 p.72.
- ²³ Ibid. p.72.
- ²⁴ Bindman, D (ed.) quoting Barrell *The History of British Art 1600-1870* London Tate Publishing 2008 p.130a.
- ²⁵ Whether or not this oversizing and incorrect proportion was deliberate or an example of the difficulty Claude had in drawing figures, we can only speculate.
- ²⁶ Grewe, C. *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism* Farnham, Surrey Ashgate Publishing Limited 2009 pp. 149-163
- ²⁷ See Meakin, T. *A Basic Church Dictionary and Compendium* Norwich Canterbury Press 1992 pp. 26 and 27.
- ²⁸ For a full discussion of ritual festivals in Leviticus, the reader is referred to: Budd, P.J. *Leviticus* Marshall-Pickering London 1996 pp. 314-330.
- ²⁹ Marshall, I.H. *The Acts of the Apostles – an Introduction and Commentary* Leicester Inter-Varsity Press 1989 p. 68.
- ³⁰ Lindsell, H. *Eyre and Spottiswoode Study Bible (RSV)* London Eyre and Spottiswoode 1980 p. 101n.
- ³¹ Grewe, C. p.168.
- ³² Gospel of John, Chapter 20, verse 19.
- ³³ Grewe, p. 262.
- ³⁴ Ibid. p. 301.
- ³⁵ Carus, C.G. *Nine letters on Landscape Painting* (Introduction by Oskar Bätschmann) Los Angeles, CA The Getty Research Institute 2002 p.30. Batschmann quoting Carus.
- ³⁶ <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/palmer-the-bright-cloud-n03312>
- ³⁷ *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised* London William Clowes c1950 hymn 51, p. 56
- ³⁸ Vaughan, W. *Samuel Palmer – Vision and Landscape* London British Museum Press 2006 p.89
- ³⁹ Harrison, C. *Samuel Palmer* Oxford Ashmolean Museum 2010 p. 18.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid. p.18.
- ⁴¹ Lindsay, J. *J.M.W.Turner – His Life and Work* London Cory, Adams and Mackay 1966 quoting Rothenstein p. 9 The first reliable biography seems to be that of A.J. Finberg but even here there is a lack of personal information about Turner and the first accurate, detailed critical biography seems to be that of Jack Lindsay details of which are included under footnote 20. More recently there is the research undertaken by the late John Gage who ‘transformed Turner scholarship and greatly deepened our understanding of the role of light and colour in Western culture. His second book...revolutionised Turner studies with its detailed examination of many aspects of the artist’s work’. (*The Times* February 2012 obituary of John Gage (1938-2012)) Gage published the *Collected Correspondence of J.M.W.Turner* in 1980 and a critical biography in 1987. A detailed study of Turner’s correspondence reveals nothing about his spiritual life or indeed his philosophy and the two above mentioned biographies have very little information about his religiosity or lack thereof.
- ⁴² Birch, D. (Professor of English Literature at Liverpool University) *Ruskin on Turner* London Cassell 1990 including extracts from Cook, E.T. and Wedderburn, A. (eds.) *The Works of John Ruskin, 39 vols.* London 1903-1912.
- ⁴³ Birch, D. p. 10a.
- ⁴⁴ Birch, D. p. 10b.
- ⁴⁵ Ruskin, J. *Lectures on Art – Delivered before the University of Oxford in Hilary Term, 1870* London George Allen and Sons 1910. Birch gives some substance to this assumption when she writes ‘What Ruskin wrote about art – not only Turner’s art, but all art – is deeply informed by what Turner had taught him’. Birch, D. p.17b.
- ⁴⁶ Ruskin, J. p. 43-4.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. p.77.
- ⁴⁸ Birch, D. p.12a.
- ⁴⁹ For a detailed study of Turner and mythology see: Nicholson, Kathleen *Turner’s Classical Landscapes – Myth and Meaning* New Jersey Princeton University Press 1990.
- ⁵⁰ Birch, D. p. 80b.

⁵¹ Rahner, K. *Foundations of Christian Faith* New York Crossroad Publishing 1995 p. 123

⁵² Ibid. p. 127.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 129. Contemplation of the discovery of this self-communication leads us to the interpretation of transcendental experience which is offered by Christianity, salvation history and the history of revelation. A person can then legitimise their existentiell decision and accept the theological interpretation of the situation provided by Christianity. Thus the holy mystery can be experienced in a hidden closeness, 'a forgiving intimacy, a real home that it is a love which shares itself, something familiar which he can approach and turn to from the estrangement of his own perilous and empty life'.⁵³ As Rahner sees it the self-communication of God is universal and the offer to accept the grace of God is there for all. Inasmuch as it is accepted by Christians that God's self-communication reaches its acme in Jesus Christ (the objectification of that self-communication), and that it is possible for someone who has had no contact with the teaching of Jesus to receive and accept the offer of God's self-communication (the justifying grace of Jesus), then that person 'has accepted what is essential in what Christianity wants to mediate to him: his salvation in that grace which objectively is the grace of Jesus Christ'.⁵³ That person could then be regarded as an anonymous Christian. The question then is whether or not this applies to Turner. Whilst he obviously had knowledge of the Bible (which perhaps he treated in the same manner as he would a work by the Latin poet Ovid), and it is difficult therefore to say that he had absolutely no knowledge of the teaching of Jesus, it is possible to argue that he accepted the grace of God inasmuch as he used his God-given talent (God's self-communication) to reveal the truth of the created world.

⁵⁴ Williams, R. *Grace and Necessity – Reflections on Art and Love* London Morehouse 2005 pp. 15-16.

⁵⁵ Birch, D. p. 81.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 81.

⁵⁷ An explanation of Goethe's Colour Theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, but essentially, whilst Newton in his study of optics described light in terms of the wavelength produced when light strikes an object, Goethe was much more concerned with the relationship between the object and its perception by the viewer. The following is extracted from the website referred to below: 'Goethe realizes that the sensations of colour reaching our brain are also shaped by our perception — by the mechanics of human vision and by the way our brains process information. Therefore, according to Goethe, what we see of an object depends upon the object, the lighting and our perception. Goethe seeks to derive laws of colour harmony, ways of characterizing physiological colors (how colors affect us) and subjective visual phenomena in general. Goethe studies after-images, coloured shadows and complementary colors.' (Taken from website: www.webexhibits.org/colorart/ch.html)

⁵⁸ Lindsay, quoting Goethe, p. 212.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 21.

⁶⁰ Gage, J. *J.W.M. Turner A Wonderful Range of Mind* London Guild Publishing by arrangement with Yale University Press 1987 p. 222 quoting from *Fallacies of Hope*. The Tate Britain gallery caption reads: Pair to 'Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory), The Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis'. In these companion pictures, Turner opposes cool and warm colours, and their contrasting emotional associations, as described by Goethe in his 'Farbenlehre' (Theory of Colours). Turner has chosen the biblical Deluge as the vehicle for these ideas, returning to the Historical [Sublime](#) he had mastered in some of his earliest exhibition pictures. Originally painted and framed as octagons, this pair carries two of Turner's last and most inspired statements of the natural vortex, while the allusion to Goethe adds a gloss of recent science and theory to a lifetime's preoccupation with elemental forces. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-shade-and-darkness-the-evening-of-the-deluge-n00531>

⁶¹ The narrative of the flood has now been shown from Old Testament scholarship to consist of a combination of the P (Priestly) and J (Yahwist) traditions and not written by Moses. Much of this research was undertaken between 1850 and 1880, with Wellhausen being the prominent scholar in this area.

⁶² Lindsay, quoting Turner, p. 212 – *Fallacies of Hope*.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 212. Cupitt, D. *Radicals and the Future of the Church* London SCM Press 1989 p. 26.

⁶⁴ The display caption in Tate Britain reads: Pair to 'Shade and Darkness - The Evening of the Deluge'. This triumphant explosion of light brilliantly exploits the warm side of the spectrum. It celebrates God's Covenant with Man after the Flood. The serpent in the centre represents the brazen serpent raised by Moses in the wilderness as a cure for plague. Here it symbolises Christ's redemption of Man in the New Covenant.

Turner's verses rather undermine the optimism of the religious message by emphasising the transience of the natural phenomena engendered by the 'returning sun'. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-light-and-colour-goethes-theory-the-morning-after-the-deluge-moses-writing-the-book-n00532>

⁶⁵ Lindsay, J. p. 213.

⁶⁶ <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rothko-untitled-t04149>

⁶⁷ Iyer, Pico *The Sunday Times Style Supplement* 23rd November, 2014 p.72. See also Iyer, P. *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere* London Simon and Schuster 2014.

⁶⁸ Harvey, J. *The Bible as Visual Culture* Sheffield Sheffield Phoenix Press 2013 p. 121.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Clearwater, B. *The Rothko Book* Tate Publishing 2006 p.190 Quoting Crehan writing in *Art Digest* in 1954

⁷¹ Cupitt, D. *Radicals and the Future of the Church* London SCM Press 1989 p. 26.

⁷² Ibid. p. 26.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 26.

⁷⁴ Borchardt-Hume, A. (ed) *Rothko* Tate Publishing 2008 p. 91. This information was given in a talk by Rothko to the Pratt institute in 1958.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 95.

⁷⁷ Grewe, C p. 305.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 305.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 306. Charles P. Baudelaire was a poet who spent much of his time in middle life with the artists Delacroix, Manet and Daubigny 'His masterpiece is a collection of poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal* for which author, printer and publisher were prosecuted for impropriety in 1864, but which earned the praise of critics and was to exert an influence far into the 20th Century ... His was the dilemma of a religious nature without religious beliefs, a continued search for the good and significant with which every flower, every smell, every colour, every part of life was imbued.' Thorne, J.O. and Collott, T.C. *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* Edinburgh W and R Chambers Ltd. 1982 p.99a.

⁸⁰ Schelling, F.W.J. *The Philosophy of Art* Minneapolis University of Minnesota 1989 p.75.

⁸¹ Letter to the Romans Chapter 15, verse 13.

⁸² Grewe, C. p. 304.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 304.

⁸⁴ Drury, J. p.181.

⁸⁵ An asymptote is a line or curve that approaches ever nearer to another line or curve but never actually reaches it.

⁸⁶ Cupitt, D. p. 26.

⁸⁷ As J.D.Crichton makes clear in Chapter One (a theology of worship) of *The Study of Liturgy* edited by Jones, C, Wainwright, G et al published by SPCK in London and Oxford University Press in New York in 1992: The ultimate subject of liturgical celebration is ... Christ who acts in and through his Church. Obviously his action is invisible, but the people of God, his body, is a visible and structured community and over the whole range of its liturgical action, which, to repeat, consists of both word and sacrament, manifests Christ's presence, shows forth the nature of his activity, which is redemptive, and by his power makes his redeeming work effectual and available to men and women of today. The liturgy then is essentially and by its nature sacramental. ... It addresses a word to us but it *embodies* this word in actions, gestures and symbols; and if 'the supernatural saving reality, veiled in historical events and surrounded by the darkness of mystery, is present to us only in earthly form (*sacramentum*), and demands the revealing word' [Schillebeeckx –The Sacraments: an Encounter with God, in *Christianity Divided*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1961 p. 246] the gesture or thing (water, bread, wine) forces us to attend to the word, enables us to grasp its import and to appropriate its content. ... To say that the liturgy is sacramental is to say that it is symbolic, though its symbols are not merely decorative but purposeful. (*The Study of Liturgy* edited by Jones, C, Wainwright, G et al published by SPCK in London and Oxford University Press in New York in 1992, p.23)

⁸⁸ Scruton, R. *Our Church – a personal history of the Church of England* London Atlantic Books 2012 p 184.

⁸⁹ The Alister Hardy Trust is responsible for a collection of over 6000 accounts of religious experiences which are currently held in the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED. (see Chapter Four)

⁹⁰ Grewe, quoting Schlegel, p. 305

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter One began by examining a number of theories of art, establishing for the purpose of this multi-disciplinary thesis the theory of Michael Podro which suggested that there were three basic criteria to consider when examining the relationship between reality and art, the first of these being that art reveals through the skill of the artist some aspect of a subject that would not be immediately apparent. The second emphasised that the artist's depiction of an object makes a reference to the perceptual process of the viewer which enables an understanding to be achieved through, for example, the use of analogy. The third criterion suggests that the artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art which may suggest a Transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted. In examining the ways in which artists have endeavoured to portray the numinous or point towards the Transcendent it was the second and third of these criteria which were particularly brought to bear, particularly in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis.

This first chapter continued with a description of the reawakening of the study of aesthetics which was begun by Baumgarten and continued by Kant who established the precise criteria necessary to define the beautiful and the sublime. Kant set out in great detail a formal treatise on aesthetic judgement and established the subject as one of worthy of consideration as a separate discipline. The major discrepancy identified in Kant's argument was that on the one hand he was saying that the appreciation of beauty and the sublime was ontologically subjective, whilst on the other he was saying that beauty and the sublime have a quality of universality that ought to be recognised by everyone. This discrepancy was recognised by Schiller, who developed the concept of *Spieltrieb* - play-drive operating within the mind as a description of the interplay between the two natures of the rational and sensual parts of the mind which could lead to greater integration of the personality. This, in turn, led to his suggestion that contemplation could be said to have a moral influence. This reading of Schiller suggested that in spite of the creation of the play-drive there was still too great a separation between art and reality, sensuality and reason, to enable art fully to describe truth and for a further development it was necessary to turn to Hegel and Schelling. Consideration of the work of Hegel suggested to me that he concluded this paradigm with his development of the concept of the Ideal which 'is the first to afford the production and intuition of the completed Ideal, and to establish it as a realised fact', whilst the Romantic form dissolved

this unity but in turn led to ‘concrete intellectual being which has the function of revealing itself as spiritual existence for the inward world of spirit’.¹ Hegel’s comment that truth no longer found its expression in the visual arts determined this paradigm, leaving Schelling, Runge and Carus to begin a new paradigm, the subject of Chapter Two.

Building on the work of his predecessors, Schelling developed further the concept of intellectual intuition which refers to the sensing of knowledge rather than the achievement of knowledge by rational thought alone. He concluded that painting was very well suited to express this transcendental knowledge, the infinite within the finite, but was dependent on the skill (genius) of the artist and receptivity of the observer. Schelling was a very major influence on Runge who summarised the theory of transcendental knowledge for students of art, combining an existential approach to the Transcendent with some practical suggestions for its achievement. Chapter Two continued by highlighting the work of Carus, who particularly stressed the thought that the Divine could and should be expressed through landscape painting the name for which he preferred ‘earth-life painting’. The chapter concluded by summarising Chapter One and Two by stating that while a concept of the Absolute will always involve an element of faith, it could be said that an artist who achieves the goals set by Schelling, Runge and Carus will enable the receptive viewer to glimpse a revelation of that Ultimate Reality.

While the production of works of art is a solitary occupation, Chapter Three demonstrated that the ‘interconnectedness of human existence’ must not be downplayed, highlighting especially the links between German and British culture, the artists and men and women of letters of those two countries.² The influence especially of Henry Crabb Robinson was highlighted drawing on recent research by James Vigus. The political, theological and ecclesiological influences on the painters under consideration were described and the chapter concluded by emphasising that the many theological and cultural links between Germany and Britain were at their height during the nineteenth century.

Chapter Four dealt with the characteristics of religious experience and possible trigger factors highlighting the theology of Schleiermacher, his influence on Otto and the definition of the numinous. The particular factors which Otto ascribed to the expression of the numinous in art - great spatial distance, emptiness and darkness - were identified. The trigger factors involved in invoking religious experience were discussed and those occasioned by the exposure to sublime or beautiful examples of the natural world were described in some detail. From this it

was argued that it was a short step from the natural world inducing a state of mystical feeling to such a response being induced by the representation of that world through the medium of visual art. The final part of this chapter set out a number of case histories from the archive of spiritual experiences held by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre. These case histories all featured the evoking of a religious experience by an encounter with a work of art.

Chapter Five began Section two of the thesis – a detailed analysis of the iconography of the two main artists under consideration – Palmer and Friedrich. Works of Palmer which could be considered as pointing towards the Transcendent were analysed with those common characteristics of far distant horizons, a strong contrast between light and dark and an effect which leads the viewer into staring at the horizon looking for something beyond the veil of the canvas, being identified. There were other specific qualities identified in individual pictures which were suggestive of pointing towards the Transcendent. In addition, the biblical symbolism in Palmer was recognised with his evocations of Edenic spiritual paradise, emphasised by the juxtaposition of biblical quotations, for example from a Psalm, with specific paintings.

Chapter Six was similar in style to Five, placing Friedrich in the context of German Romanticism and analysing a number of his works which portrayed the numinous and hence signposted the Transcendent. Friedrich's characteristic leitmotif of placing the back view of a visitor to a scene was examined in detail and it was argued that this use of the *Rückenfigur* invited the viewer to share the experience of the traveller. Many of his paintings used this technique which when combined with a misty scene encouraged the viewer to stare into the picture endeavouring to discern that which may be located deep within the painting, to the extent of trying to see that which may lie beyond the veil created by the canvas itself. As in the case of Palmer, all the Friedrich paintings analysed met the two Otto criteria of the contrast between light and dark, and the suggestion of a tremendous distance or huge empty space. In addition the use of the lonely visitor icon in some paintings emphasised the insignificance of the human in the face of the forces of the natural world unleashed by the Creator.

Chapter Seven, which began the third section of the thesis, was concerned with practical theology and argued that in certain circumstances a work of art could be regarded as a sacrament akin to the bread and wine, or as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and

spiritual grace'. Summarising this, I suggested that the criteria or conducive properties required for a work of art be viewed as a sacrament were the intention of the artist, the content of the picture and the experiential effect on the viewer. This claim was then examined through an analysis of two works of Turner and one painting by Friedrich.

The final Chapter Eight was more discursive and wide ranging describing works of art that, whether in use as an altarpiece or as a small painting in a private chapel, help the viewer towards an appreciation of that higher power or Ultimate Reality. Covering a wider period than the rest of the thesis the analyses began in the Renaissance with Dürer and Raphael and concluded in the twentieth century with a discussion of the colour field paintings of the abstract expressionist Rothko.

This thesis was concerned with the way in which the visible world (especially landscape) has been used by artists at a particular time to suggest an invisible, transcendent eternal world; the main problem was to establish that elusive quality or technique that enables us to understand why a particular work of art can be said to point us towards the Transcendent.

The philosophical background to aesthetics enabled the methodology to be established with a number of criteria to be used in the subsequent analysis. Drawing and painting are the media through which artists express their innermost thoughts and sensations or feelings. A number of artists identified in this thesis have directed their art to expressing their concept of the Ultimate Reality and, in spite of the difficulty of articulating in words that which the artists have communicated visually, a number of features of those works which signpost the Transcendent are identified. These are first of all a strong contrast within the painting between light and dark – chiaroscuro. The second feature is that of an effect, created by a distant horizon, distorted perspective or the use of aerial perspective, which leads the viewer into staring at the horizon looking for something beyond the canvas itself – a sensation of trying to see beyond the veil. These two features were common to most of the pictures which portrayed the numinous or pointed towards the Transcendent but there were a number of other features that were identified but which applied only to specific paintings.

These were, first, the use of staffage shown as minute in comparison with the scale of natural features, or in some cases, in comparison with the forces of nature which could be unleashed by the Creator. The second feature was the huge physical size of the canvasses in some cases, for example Friedrich and Rothko, which contributed to the conveying of a sense of the sublime, but that characteristic needed to be combined with the common features above,

before the picture could be said to signpost the Transcendent. Thirdly there was the signposting in some of Turner's paintings created by the use of a vortex which had the effect of drawing the viewer into the picture, leading to the effect, mentioned above, of trying to see beyond the veil of the ground or canvas. Fourthly, biblical references when included, as in the case of Palmer, helped to create a narrative to focus the mind of the viewer on the Transcendent. The fifth feature was the inclusion of symbols, such as a church steeple pointing towards a harvest moon (Palmer), could help to create the effect of signposting the Transcendent, but these needed to be examined on a picture by picture basis to establish their relevance. The sixth feature was the use of mistiness and a great expanses of land leading to a distant horizon, a characteristic of a number of Friedrich's paintings, which helped to draw the viewer into the painting. The seventh feature which was a particular characteristic of many of Friedrich's paintings was a lack of movement or a stillness suggestive of, perhaps Psalm 46, verse 10: 'Be still and know that I am God.' The eighth feature was the use of typology, as for example in the works of Overbeck; this was an important feature in some paintings in helping to create a biblical narrative which in conjunction with the common features above emphasised the portrayal of the numinous.

Finally these analyses have shown that it was difficult to put into words precisely that which it is in a painting that establishes it as one which points towards the Transcendent; it should always be emphasised that the artists are not expressing their concept of God in words because it is through their art, and in most cases only through their art, that they can convey their concept the Divine to the susceptible viewer. However while the recognition of the common and specific characteristics above do help to identify a picture pointing towards the Transcendent, it is the skill of the artist in the use of those characteristics that enables the picture truly to be one which portrays the numinous.

I suggest that rather like faith, or more particularly religious experience, the effect, be it from an exquisite work of Palmer or the huge canvas of a Rothko colour field, has to be felt to be recognised. Whilst one can rationalise theology in great detail, demythologising religion wherever possible, narrowing the leap of faith to be taken, but in the end that leap has to be taken – with faith, a faith that may ultimately be affirmed in the sacraments.

This comment leads into the final section of the thesis which dealt with the practical application of the use of this particular iconography. It was my contention that some works of art could be regarded as almost equivalent to a sacrament, but for such a picture to be so

regarded would depend on the intention of the artist, the content of the picture and the experiential effect on the viewer. Furthermore an important practical role for paintings which signpost the Transcendent is as an aid to religious contemplation and final chapter concluded that all the pictures considered in this thesis would be suitable for this purpose, be it in use as an altarpiece in a church or cathedral or as a small framed picture on a shelf in a chapel.

The thesis finished by drawing attention to a statement of Friedrich Schlegel that “Every *true* painting ought to be a hieroglyph, a *divine symbol*.”³ As a divine symbol the painting must take its place alongside the other consecrated artefacts utilised by Christians in their day to day worship.

On working through this study over a period of some seven years, a number of additional areas of research have been identified but which could not be pursued as part of this investigation as they would detract from the main area of research and reduce the cohesiveness of the thesis. I would identify these areas for future investigation as follows:

First, it would be very interesting to apply the methodology of this thesis to later artists – say Stanley Spencer and David Jones (1895-1974) who had very different approaches to the production of works of art which express their view of the Divine. In addition another interesting pairing would be to examine the works of Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian. Both of these innovative artists were working during the period of the establishment of abstraction and indeed were instrumental in its development. Furthermore both of these artists wrote on the subject of the spiritual in art and it would be fascinating to examine their works in the light of their written dissertations.

Secondly, recent advances in laser-induced fluorescence spectroscopy have enabled very detailed analyses of the pigments used in paintings.⁴ It is possible that such detailed analyses of the works considered in this thesis could reveal additional characteristics of such paintings which distinguish them from those paintings which do not point towards the Transcendent, for examples of which one might suggest paintings produced for historical reference or portraits. This type of analysis is described by Dr Joyce Townsend in *William Blake – The Painter at Work* - and includes liquid and gas chromatographical methods.⁵

Thirdly, several times in this thesis I refer to the ‘susceptible viewer’. There is an area of research into perception to be undertaken here, perhaps developing the work of Merleau-Ponty who in his *Phenomenology of Perception* built upon the work of Husserl.⁶

Fourthly, another possible area of research I wish to highlight moves firmly into the realm of social science with an empathetic ethnographic investigation of those Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre accounts of religious experience which have been induced by a work of art. The database of these accounts is anonymised, which means that the original correspondent would need to be contacted by the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David to establish the originator's willingness to be interviewed and questioned by a researcher. Assuming that there are sufficient numbers (out of 6000) of accounts relating to art and a willingness on the part of the correspondents, there is an opportunity for qualitative research utilising appropriately devised questionnaires. This work could be combined with a study into perception as suggested above.

Finally, in the field of practical theology I would suggest that there is an opportunity for research into the use of art as a preaching aid. This could build on the work both in this thesis and on the work of Richard Harries who in his latest book has examined the way in which the image of Christ can be discerned in modern works of art which vary from the early paintings of Stanley Spencer to the *Resurrection Spirit* sculpture of Maggi Hambling.⁷

¹ Hegel, G.W.F. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* trans. B. Bosanquet and ed. By M.Inwood. London Penguin Books 2004. pp. 84-87.

² This interconnectedness in the context of the 'genius poets' of the Romantic period is described by Dr Daisy Hay in *Young Romantics* London Bloomsbury 2010

³ Grewe, C. *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism* Farnham, Surrey Ashgate Publishing Limited 2009 quoting Schlegel, p. 305.

⁴ <http://www.opticsinfobase.org/as/abstract.cfm?uri=as-50-10-1331>

⁵ Townsend, J. *William Blake – The Painter at Work* London Tate Publishing 2003 pp .45-51.

⁶ Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception* Delhi Motilal Banarsidass 1996.

⁷ Harries, R. *The Image of Christ in Modern Art* Farnham (Surrey) Ashgate 2013.

Glossary

Autochthonous: In art historical terms this word refers to figures in a painting that would naturally appear in that scene. Schelling makes the point that figures in a landscape must always be shown ‘either as indigenous or as autochthonous, or they must be portrayed as stranger or visitor’.¹ The word derives from the Greek ‘one sprung from the soil he inhabits’ or ‘son of the soil’.²

Hieroglyph: This is a word applied to an image which suggests that that image or painting is endeavouring to portray, or point to, the numinous or the divine. It is derived from the Greek meaning sacred image and used to be applied especially to Egyptian logographs (collection of symbols representing spoken words).³ Cordula Grewe highlights the way in which the hieroglyph has been transformed into symbolic pictography, writing of Schlegel who ‘presented the hieroglyph as a form of shorthand through which God could at once reveal and conceal his mysteries from man’.⁴

Immanence: It is commonly said that the deity is both immanent and transcendent (see below). Derived from Latin – *manere* - translated as dwell, the word means in-dwelling and is referred to as the God within and present to the universe, in contra distinction from transcendent meaning the God beyond.⁵ God has to be dimensionless and be outside any spatial concept in order that the cosmos could be regarded as having been created out of nothing by God, but then having created the Cosmos it can be said that God is maintaining a creative role by pervading all things and indwelling human beings who continue that process by acting as God’s stewards on earth. In other words immanence refers to the universe and humans as being imbued with the divine. (For a detailed discussion on this term and transcendence see pages 111 to 118 of the thesis itself.)

Ineffable: A synonym for numinous (see below), ineffable literally means that which cannot be expressed in words.⁶ Probably its most well-known use is in the hymn written by Sir R. Grant (1785-1838) which itself is based on psalm 104 probably translated by W. Kethe, a Bible translator who died at the end of the sixteenth century.⁷ The hymn is ‘O worship the King all glorious above...’ and contains the line in verse six describing God: ‘O measureless Might, ineffable Love’.⁸ While the hymn is based on Psalm 104, the word ineffable does not appear in that Psalm in the RSV version of the Bible.⁹ The word is derived from Latin: *in*

(not) – *effabilis-effor* (to speak).¹⁰ In this thesis, for consistency, the word numinous is generally used rather than ineffable.

Mystical: This word is an adjective used to describe that which has a spiritual connotation associated with experience of union or unity with god or with that which lies beyond human understanding. John Macquarrie describes theological mystery as ‘a religious truth revealed by God that man cannot know by reason alone and that once it has been revealed it cannot be completely understood.’¹¹ The concept of appreciation of that which cannot be understood by reason alone is dealt with by Rudolf Otto (the subject of a significant part of Chapter four of this thesis). Otto describes the noun mysticism as ‘the stressing to a very high degree...of the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion; and it is only intelligible when so understood’.¹² When the adjective is applied to a person it suggests that that person has almost identified his or herself with the transcendent reality – such a person would have reached stage six on the Fowler Stages of Faith scale, examples of whom would be Julian of Norwich or Meister Eckhart (Eckhart von Hochheim O.P (1260-1328)). Persons achieving Stage six – Universalizing Faith – would be extremely rare and would be ‘heedless of self preservation’ and their leadership qualities would often involve ‘strategies of non-violent suffering and ultimate respect for being’; they ‘frequently become martyrs the visions they incarnate’.¹³ The word mystic is derived from the Latin *mysticus* – mystery, and when related to a human being suggests a revealing of the mysteries associated with God¹⁴.

Numinous: This word is derived from the Latin - *numen* – divinity or divine presence and coined by Otto to refer to the mysterious object of a numinous experience that transcends rational thought, and can only be ‘evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes ‘of the spirit’ must be awakened’.¹⁵ The main focus of this thesis is to consider the way in which this evocation or awakening can be triggered or stimulated by works of art and especially through depictions of landscape. (A full discussion of the meaning of the word numinous can be found on pages 89 to 91 of the thesis.)

Paradigm: Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) defined paradigm as ‘An entire constellation of beliefs, values techniques which are shared by the members of a particular community’.¹⁶ The word is used in this thesis to mean the development and conclusion of a consistent, coherent, framework or train of thought, for example from the development of a theory of aesthetics with Baumgarten to the concluding thought from Hegel that suggests that a phase in the history of art has been concluded. A feature of Kuhn’s position is that there need not be

any logical reason for a change of paradigm.¹⁷ Paradigm is derived from a translation of the Latin paradigm meaning beside from which a dictionary definition of paradigm becomes ‘that which is placed *beside one to shew the way*’.¹⁸

Sacrament: Essentially, it is through the use of a sacrament that God’s grace is mediated or made known. Within the context of the Church there are seven sacraments: the two major sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the five minor sacraments of confirmation, ordination, marriage, anointing and sacramental confession. The word is derived from the Latin – *sacramentum*, an oath of allegiance which, in the Latin version of the Bible, has been translated from the Greek *mysterion* meaning something hidden.¹⁹ In this thesis a wider approach to the meaning of sacrament has been adopted – an approach initiated by Archbishop Temple in his Gifford Lectures. Temple referred to the sacramental universe which John Macquarrie linked to a definition in the Anglican catechism where a sacrament is said to be ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof’.²⁰ In this more general approach the sacrament could be regarded as an expression and vehicle of the divine and therefore as enabling the presence of God to be perceived, with that perception being established through a work of art that would be acting rather like a conduit, permitting the viewer or communicant a sense of the spiritual realm that lies beyond the veil. (This topic is discussed in detail in the thesis on pages 206 to 212.)

Sacramentality: The principal of sacramentality affirms that the presence of God can be revealed by studying and exploring the physical universe including works produced by human hands, for example icons and paintings. In other words the principle would suggest that all human experience has the potential to reveal something of the hiddenness of God.²¹

Staffage: This is a technical term used in Art History to denote small figures and animals in a painting. These figures are not usually central to the message of the painting, and in the late Renaissance period the staffage were often painted by the primary artist’s assistant. The word is derived from the German - *staffieren* which means to garnish.²²

Sublime: Derived from the Latin –sub-limis, meaning the threshold, the sense in which it has been used in the thesis has been taken from Kant who divides the sublime into two types. First the mathematically sublime or absolutely or numerically great: we can, of course, always think of a number larger than any particular integer and it is necessary, therefore, to have a term which expresses a quantity greater than any number that could be thought of,

leading to the concept of infinity. Secondly, there is the dynamically sublime in nature: an experience of nature with fear attached – e.g. thunderstorms, earthquakes or majestic snow-covered heights with the possibility of avalanche. In Kant's words 'nature considered in an aesthetic judgement as might that has no dominion over us, is dynamically sublime'.²³ In Britain, Edmund Burke was developing (in 1757) his ideas of the sublime which closely align with Kant's 'dynamically sublime' inasmuch as they focus on 'on such terms as darkness, obscurity, privation, vastness, magnificence, loudness and suddenness, and that our reaction is defined by a kind of pleasurable terror'.²⁴ While Kant was writing almost exclusively about the sublime in nature, the definition applies equally well to works of art which depict the sublime in nature. (For a detailed discussion of the sublime see pages nineteen to twenty-three.)

Transcendence: The Latin origin of this word is found in *trans* + *scandere* – literally meaning to climb over.²⁵ Transcendence is applied to the description of anything (usually a god) which is transcendent. Theologically it means beyond the known physical cosmos, being particularly applicable to the doctrine of creation ex-nihilo (creation out of nothing). From this it follows that God is transcendent 'in being different from and thus "beyond" any physical entity and thus 'wholly other' as well as being immanent (see above) within every being including ourselves. In philosophical terms Kant applied the words to transcendental knowledge: 'I call all knowledge *transcendental* if it is occupied, not with objects, but with the way that we can possibly know objects even before we experience them'.²⁶ Ralph Emerson (who introduced the ideas of Kant (as interpreted by Coleridge, Wordsworth et.al) into Massachusetts in 1836 defined the transcendent as 'a passing beyond all media in the approach to the Deity containing an effort to establish by a discipline of the intuitive faculty, direct intercourse between the soul and God.'²⁷ In this thesis a simplified approach to defining the transcendent with regard to the visual representation of the numinous would be to suggest that in endeavouring to look deep into the canvass, to try to see beyond the veil, is to try to glimpse that which we describe as the transcendent.

Transcendentalism: Emerson is usually attributed with the distinction of being the prime mover behind the introduction to Massachusetts of the Kantian approach to the transcendent (as interpreted by the Romantics, e.g. Coleridge or Thomas Carlyle). Kristen Bennett makes the point that 'in his translation of ideas presented in the writings of Kant, Coleridge,

Wordsworth and Carlyle, (Emerson) effectively *transcends* transcendentalism. His *going beyond* of his influences is not limited to thematic content, but extends to the manner in which the rhetorical imperatives in his writing demands that his readers – friends and countrymen alike - aspire to maintain a kind of *perennial* transcendence'.²⁸ In other words, transcendentalism became rather more of a social rather than philosophical concept. There is, however, an alternative view that suggests that the American form of transcendentalism grew out of a reaction against Puritan orthodoxy and became an important feature of Boston Unitarianism, but to discuss this is outside the scope of this thesis.

¹ Schelling, F. *Philosophy of Art* Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press 1989 p.146.

² Onions, C.T. and others (eds.) *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Oxford Booj Cub Associates by arrangement with Oxford University Press 1983 Vol.1 P.135a.

³ Ibid. Vol.1 p. 1233b.

⁴ Grewe, C. *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism* Farnham, Surrey Ashgate Publishing Limited 2009 p. 305.

⁵ Onions, C.T. Vol. 1 p. 1024c.

⁶ Ibid. Vol. 1 p. 1062c.

⁷ http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/k/e/t/kethe_w.htm

⁸ Dykes-Bower, J. et al. (eds.) *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised* London William Clowes 1950 p. 221.

⁹ Lindsell, H. *The Holy Bible – Revised Standard Version* London Eyre and Spottiswoode 1980

¹⁰ Donald, J. *Chambers's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* London W. and R. Chambers 1872 p. 258b

¹¹ Macquarrie, J. *Two Worlds are Ours – An Introduction to Christian Mysticism* London SCM Press 2004 pp. 1-2.

¹² Otto, R. *The Idea of the Holy* London Oxford University Press 1958 pp. 21-22.

¹³ Fowler, J.W. *Stages of Faith* New York Harper One 1995 p. 200.

¹⁴ Donald, J. p. 335b.

¹⁵ Otto, R. P.7

¹⁶ Küng, H. *Christianity – The Religious Situation of Our Time* London SCM Press 1999 front end-papers, quoting Thomas S.Kuhn.

¹⁷ For more detail on Kuhn, see Honderich, T. *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Oxford Oxford University Press 2005 p. 482b.

¹⁸ Donald, J. P. 362a.

¹⁹ Meakin, T. *A Basic Church Dictionary and Compendium* Norwich Canterbury Press 1992 p. 26.

²⁰ Macquarrie, J. *A Guide to the Sacraments* London SCM Press 1997 p.4.

²¹ For an discussion on this subject see: www.gannon.edu/Student-Life/A-Catholic-University/.../Sacramentality and for an essay: www.academia.edu/8503272/The_Principle_of_Sacramentality

²² Schwarz, C. (ed.) *The Chambers Dictionary* Edinburgh Chambers 1994 p. 1678a.

²³ Hammermeister, K. *The German Aesthetic Tradition* Cambridge CUP 2002. p. 109.

²⁴ www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/art-and-sublime

²⁵ Onions, C.T. p. 2345a

²⁶ [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Transcendence_\(philosophy\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Transcendence_(philosophy)) quoting from Kant's *Critique of Pure Judgement*.

²⁷ Gray, H.D. *Emerson* (thesis) Stanford (California) Stanford University Press 1917 (quoting from *Conversations with Ralph Waldo Emerson* by C.J. Woodbury p. 110) p. 9, note 9.

²⁸ www.rwe.org/.../728-from-kant-to-emerson-a-transcontinental-exploration Kristen Bennett UMASS (Boston)

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