CONTEMPLATION

IN ART AND

AESTHETIC AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis starts with a broad introduction to definitions of art and aesthetic awareness, out of which emerges the concept of contemplation as a recurring feature in the philosophy of art. It is claimed that, despite its presence in so many definitions, contemplation is not an essential component of aesthetic awareness nor a necessary requirement in the observer of a work of art. A definition of aesthetic awareness is therefore adopted which excludes reference to this feature. It is recognized, however, that there is a sub-category of art to which contemplation does apply and which may be called contemplative art.

In order to determine a meaning for the term, contemplation is examined as the appropriate perception of and response to the world in Pre-Socratic and Platonic philosophy. The three major and consistent qualities perceived by these early philosophers to be inherent in the cosmos, which they also believed to be sought by the artist who wishes to produce beauty and the man who seeks virtue, are found to be i) order, balance and good proportion, ii) harmony, often necessarily achieved through conflict and the tension of opposites, and iii) love. In the context of Greek thought these three qualities all appear to involve an acceptance and celebration of reality. Defining contemplation in these terms necessitates an examination of what is meant by perception and how contemplation differs from other forms of perception.

It is argued that Plato's criticisms of art stemmed from his
realization that the nature of art was changing from its roots in contemplation towards mimesis, which aims at deception rather than truth. What Plato refused to accept was that the concept of art itself was expanding beyond the metaphysical understanding which rooted the whole realm of art in man's contemplative response to the world. However, the total demise of contemplative art, which he feared, did not occur, for the tradition of contemplative art has continued to this day.

Since the early Christian church was a major producer of the arts and the cradle of much philosophy, the assimilation and integration of Greek philosophy by the patristic and mediaeval philosophers is examined and assessed, in chapter 5. One feature which developed in this period was 'light' which can be accommodated within the earlier requirements, as also can the growing interest in the experience of timelessness associated with contemplation. It is also suggested that the growth of empiricism towards the end of the Middle Ages has a bearing on the appreciation and celebration of reality.

But the usefulness of the concept of contemplation would be limited if it depended entirely on a model of the world posited by the archaic Greeks or a theistic interpretation of events accepted by the early church. This problem is solved by an investigation of Kant's 'judgements of taste', which are seen to delineate a similar area to that under discussion in terms of contemplation. Kant's theory of the Imagination is clarified and offered as the vital link which allows us to use the word 'contemplation' without necessarily having recourse to a particular metaphysical belief system.

These ideas are then examined in the light of more recent philosophy, art, physics and contemplative practices, to clarify and develop such concepts as 'love', 'truth', 'light' and 'timelessness'
and to render them more useful in our approach to, and understanding of, art and aesthetic awareness. The thesis finishes with a more general discussion of some examples of contemplative art forms in relation to the features which have been outlined.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION.

In approaching the realm of activities and artefacts which bear the name 'Art' many have attempted to define this concept. The task is difficult in that 'art' is used to describe vastly different objects, sounds and events in the world and the attempt to define it is dangerous in that even if a definition were found which embraced the whole world of experience that constitutes the various arts there is no guarantee that it would allow for future development. Either one closes the class of 'Art' and defends oneself against future experimentation or one is committed to adapting the definition each time a new work of art is created.

In the absence of a satisfactory definition of art a number of modern philosophers of art have approached the concept through our experience when confronted with art, suggesting that we should call those things 'art' to which we respond in a certain way; this 'certain way' being denoted by such expressions as 'aesthetic awareness' or 'aesthetic experience'. I have found it interesting that the word 'contemplation' occurs so frequently among the requirements for this response, in the same way as it has done throughout history in various attempts to investigate the nature of man's response to art and beauty. Having outlined, briefly, some of the definitions of art which have been proffered, I shall concentrate on this concept of contemplation in an attempt to understand what it means and why it has merited such a time-honoured position in art.

There are two philosophically distinct methods by which
philosophers have attempted to define art: the enumerative and the definitional. The enumerative method has appeared in several forms and its most simple version is exemplified experimentally by Richard Wollheim at the beginning of 'Art and its Objects' where he sets out the following questions and answers:

"What is art?"
"Art is the sum or totality of works of art."
"What is a work of art?"
"A work of art is a poem, a painting, a piece of music, a sculpture, a novel...."
"What is a poem? a painting? a piece of music? a sculpture? a novel?..."
"A poem is..., a painting is..., a piece of music is..., a sculpture is..., a novel is...,"

and he suggests the possibility that by filling in those last gaps we could find a definition of art. However, recognizing that the traditional question has demanded a unitary answer which this method does not provide, he abandoned the method of enumerating instances of acknowledged art.

R.G.Collingwood, in 'The Principles of Art' uses a different sort of enumeration. He admits to the method by saying:

"Secondly we must proceed to a definition of the term 'art'. This comes second and not first, because no one can even try to define a term until he has settled in his own mind a definite usage of it: no one can define a term in common use until he has satisfied himself that his personal usage of it harmonizes with the common usage."

But Collingwood's method of enquiry is more to explore the things we do not mean by art and hope to come by elimination to what we do mean by art.

Art, says Collingwood, is not craft of any sort, be it technical skill, psychological stimulus, or artefacts produced solely or primarily for utilitarian purposes; something that is a craft may also have artistic aspects, but in so far as it is a craft it is not a work of art. This distinguishes art from two different kinds of activity.
First, and most obviously, it is distinguished from the production of beautiful artefacts by potters, weavers or carpenters and secondly it indicates that the feature residing in a work by virtue of which we call it art is not and should not be confused with technical skill. Taking the elimination of craftsmen as creators of art may seem at first glance to be obvious, but it is quite difficult to insist on the claim that art must not be useful and there do seem to be cases where pieces of craftwork do deserve the name of art, one famous example being Cellini’s salt cellars. And is architecture to be denied the status of art because the finished buildings are useful for living in, or worshipping in or ruling from?

Collingwood claims that whereas craft involves a distinction between means and end, in art these are intimately connected, and also that craft, but not art, involves a distinction between planning and execution. The craftsman knows exactly what he wants to make before he begins, while for the artist the discovery of what it is that he is creating is part of the process of art. Further, in craft some sort of material is worked upon and transformed, while in art the material is a more integral part of the whole conception: it is in a conceived medium.

These distinctions would seem to work when looking at fairly mass-produced craft items such as Kate Weaver pottery goblets or Harris tweed, but leave one with problems in such cases as the Cellini salt cellars. Also the distinctions would certainly appear to exclude architecture from art, which I would have thought was an unrealistic exclusion. However, these are more questions as to whether some things are both art and craft rather than whether craft items are all works of art or all works of art are the results simply of craftsmanship.
Art is also not beauty, Collingwood asserts next, although much that is art may be beautiful. By tracing the word back to its origins in ancient Greece he suggests that "beautiful" should mean "admirable", but takes insufficient notice of later and contemporary use of the term. The concept of beauty obviously has intimate connections with that of art, but similarly it is clear that there are many beautiful things that we do not call art. In any case the idea of beauty is at least as problematical as that of art; suffice it to say that there are several works of art which we would not call beautiful and many beautiful things which we would not call art.

Another concept which Collingwood discounts as art is representation, because representation is a craft and he has already established that art is not a craft; "a representation may be a work of art; but what makes it a representation is one thing, what makes it a work of art is another". Certainly theories about art being representation create enormous difficulties in the case of much music and literature: what could a Mozart sonata be said to represent?

Art is in some ways connected with magic, for it has been used for magical purposes for as long as man has had any form of art. Art, however, is not magic because the apparent art in magic is a means to achieving a preconceived end, which is normally the arousing of emotion. Although Tolstoy, to whom we shall come later, would probably call magical practices such as rain dances true and good art, Collingwood insists that to the extent that these things are magic they are not art. Although something may perhaps be both magical and art, the magical part has nothing to do with its being art and is, in fact, contrary to it. Yet it does seem that the effects of art, the intensity of feeling it arouses and the strangely nebulous qualities
which divide the works of art one finds inspiring and inspired from others which one views dispassionately are only really explicable in terms of something surprisingly akin to magic.

It is perhaps easier to accept that art is not amusement; there is a species of activity which may be termed amusement art, but this immediately differentiates it from art proper and although art may to some extent amuse, amusement can never of itself constitute art. Collingwood claims that what Plato was objecting to in art was amusement art. Indeed, according to Collingwood, Plato's attacks could be said to be attacks on amusement rather than attacks on art. He differed from Aristotle mainly in that he believed that amusement art arouses emotions which are not then directed to any outlet in practical life and he imagined that its excessive development would breed a society overcharged with purposeless emotions. Aristotle, on the other hand, saw that this did not follow since the emotions generated by amusement art are discharged by the amusement itself. He therefore saw art as cathartic, allowing the release of pent-up emotion in the experiencing of the work of art. Both Plato and Aristotle were at this point proferring a stimulus/response attitude to art, seeing its positive or negative value in terms of the effect it has on people.

Having whittled away what art is not, Collingwood then turns to tackle the question in a more positive fashion, claiming that

1. there is in art proper a distinction resembling that between means and end, but not identical with it,
2. art has something to do with emotion; what it does with it has a certain resemblance to arousing it, but is not arousing it,
3. art has something to do with making things, but these things are
not material things, made by imposing form on matter, and they are not made by skill. They are things of some other kind and made in some other way.

From here Collingwood goes on to differentiate between expressing emotion and arousing emotion and comes to the first positive contribution, namely that art is expression. Turning to the creative aspect he concentrates on the pro-creative meaning of the word and reiterates that works of art are created but are not made as means to an end; are not made according to any preconceived plan; and are not made by imposing a new form upon a given matter. The essential work of art is a product of the imagination, which should not be confused with make-believe, and a work of art is in itself a total imaginative experience.

These soundings of Collingwood's do not of course constitute a definition and he goes on, in 'The Principles of Art' more to explore the role of art than to find a slick definition. Following the trend away from definitions I would like to turn next to Wittgenstein's family resemblances, which some feel may be applied successfully to the question "what is art?" The strict Wittgensteinian family resemblance theory asserts that although we can recognize faces as belonging to the same family, there may be no one feature which is similar in all the faces. Extended to art this theory advocates that there may be no one feature or factor necessary to a thing's being a work of art and yet because of a number of relatively minor resemblances between one work and another we ascribe them to the same family of art. In terms of resemblances it would be difficult to relate the Brandenburg Concertos, Westminster Abbey and Andy Warhol's 'Marilyn Monroe' other than by saying that they are all called works
of art: to make this the qualifying feature for their inclusion in the
category of art would therefore be circular and invalid, for by that
token there would be nothing to stop us calling anything else a work
of art if we so chose, thus ensuring a place for it within the corpus
of art. No one could ever be mistaken in ascribing the term 'art' to
an object since by so ascribing it they would qualify that object for
inclusion.

The more general theory, which Wittgenstein used in defining the
concept of a 'game' accepts that while there is nothing which all the
items in question have in common, each is related to at least one
other by means of some resemblance which differs from the resemblance
relating each with some of the others, so that over the whole range
there is a coherent web of relationships. So although there is no
apparent resemblance between chess and football which would justify
both being termed 'games', each has a place in a web of relationships
so that a coherent train could be traced from one to the other.

"Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean
board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games and so on. What is
common to them all? -- Don't say: 'There must be something common, or
they would not be called 'games'" -- but look and see whether there is
anything common to all. -- For if you look at them you will not see
something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships and a
whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! -- Look
for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now
pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first
group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we
pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is
lost... And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in
the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear.
And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of
similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes over-all
similarities, sometimes similarities in detail." (Philosophical
Investigations, 66).

By analogy, there seems to be nothing that is common to
everything we call art in virtue of which we call it art, but there
are resemblances which connect all works of art as a family. In an
extended human family Uncle may resemble Grandfather, Father may resemble Uncle and Sister may resemble Father and yet there be no resemblance at all between Sister and Grandfather. So in art, a) may resemble b) in that they were composed to be sung, b) resemble c) in that they express grief, c) resemble d) in that people derive much pleasure from looking at them, and d) resemble e) in that they are both sculpted out of marble, and so on. This process will not lead to a definition of art, but will it lead to an understanding of what art is? Clearly there are weaknesses: it does not give a hard and fast rule for deciding what is not art, but perhaps this is not as important as has sometimes been supposed; there will be cases where a resemblance will appear to bring in what is obviously not art, but then if it is obviously not art it is not a difficulty and need not be cause of concern, and if it is a very marginal case that might and might not be art, it may not matter all that much if we ascribe it wrongly to art or non-art. In other words, if we adopt Wittgenstein's family resemblance system as a criterion, we would be forced to sacrifice any hopes of a rule by which we could say of certain aspiring works of art "that is not art, it is something else" and perhaps we would appreciate art as a whole world of activity, including many things which we refuse at present to call art. We would no longer be able to say, as some have wished to do, that there is no such thing as bad art, only good art and non-art, for we should suddenly find ourselves faced with the things we have refused to call art and the only path left open to us if we wished to damn them would be to call them bad art. This might lead to more healthy criticism as critics would be prepared to explore a wider field of subjects without fear of looking at something which other critics do not consider art.
However, one still feels that even if there is no one thing that makes something a work of art, it must be possible to put some fences, albeit flexible ones, around the activity we call art and Wittgenstein's family resemblances cannot help here. The other disadvantage of the family resemblance theory is that it enables one very easily to relate any one thing to any other, whereas it does seem probable that there is a more interesting and immediate relationship between Bach’s ‘St. Matthew Passion’ and Leonardo’s ‘Last Supper’, or between Debussy piano music and Monet paintings, than between despair and a bowl of apples, or playing football and looking at a clock.

Among philosophers who started with common usage and worked to a definition of art from there, the only one to provide a viable criterion is Collingwood who asserted that art expresses emotion, not just of the artist but, prophetically, of the whole people and that it is a total imaginative experience. It is not clear to me how it therefore differs from the activity of dreaming or whether it would include or exclude fairy stories, legends and nursery rhymes.

Tolstoy, whom one might hesitate to call a philosopher, adopted a more definitional approach to the question of what art is. He insisted that one should start with a definition, going on from there to say what common usage should be, even if it means changing the common usage to fit the definition. He was determined to find a definition which was correct in itself since he felt that to rely on usage was to allow corruptions of the word to creep in. In ‘What is Art?’ he first investigates and unconditionally rejects the metaphysical and experimental definitions which state that art is that which makes beauty manifest and beauty is that which pleases without exciting desire. The trouble with this definition is that what pleases
a person depends on taste and a search to discover the meaning of
taste is fruitless, for we can give very little reason for the fact
that what pleases one person displeases another. Tolstoy therefore
comes to the conclusion that the usual theory of art as founded on
beauty only sets up as good that which has pleased and does please a
certain class of people, so that it is necessarily bound to a class
system and therefore not worth pursuing. It is tempting, though
perhaps a little uncharitable, to observe that it is only if it is
tied to the upper classes that Tolstoy will not find it worth pursuing
and that if he were to find a form of art which is tied to the working
classes it would immediately be taken up and praised by him as true
and great art. Ignoring the fact that people do differ, intellectually
and emotionally, and might therefore have different needs and
appreciate different art, he wants to take the lowest common
denominator and make all art acceptable to one particular section of
society. However, he was right in pointing out that the concept of
beauty is almost as nebulous as that of art itself and so abandonning
that path. Also, once again the fences that definition would erect do
not delineate satisfactorily the area of activity we call art, for if
someone asserted, as is quite possible, that he found automation, or
the concept of automation, beautiful one would have to accept, on
Tolstoy's definition, that a car, which exemplifies automation, is a
work of art.

On the positive side Tolstoy says:

"To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and having
evoked it in oneself then by means of movements, lines, colours,
sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that
others experience the same feeling — this is the activity of art. Art
is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by
means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has
lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also
experience them."

Art, then, is for the handing on of certain feelings; but this still allows too many things to be classed as art so Tolstoy, wishing to narrow the field down much more, insists that good art is indicated by religious feeling of one sort or another and that art for the sake of pleasure is decadent. He asserts that if art is dictated by religious feelings we will be constantly advancing towards better feelings and art will never grow stale, for "religious perception is nothing else than the first indication of that which is coming into existence, namely, a new relation of man to the world around him" and this will lead to an endless flow of fresh feeling which can all be expressed by art. Art should unite all men and only two kinds of feeling, according to Tolstoy, unite all men: first, feelings flowing from a perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man; secondly, the simple feelings of common life accessible to everyone, such as merriment, pity, cheerfulness, tranquility etc., but far from limiting the scope of art, Tolstoy saw these two kinds of feelings as providing a never-ending supply of material which will lead to good art. By 'religious' he meant the religious feeling that is relevant to the particular time and circumstances of each person, so that in religious feeling would be the feelings that sprang from the very earliest or most primitive religions for, he would say, the religions were in advance of the rest of the culture and were illustrating that which was even then coming into existence. For this reason he would probably accept rain dances and fertility rites into the realm of good art since they illustrate the religious feeling of that time from which they sprang.

"The change of spirit" says Collingwood "which divides Renaissance and
modern art from that of the Middle Ages consists in the fact that medieval art was frankly and definitely magical, while Renaissance and modern art was not." (p<sup>70</sup>)

This is probably more or less what Tolstoy meant when he said that the religious feeling fell off and that this led to a speedy decline in the standard of art. Instead of the true religious feelings, the wealthy classes were limited to "the feelings of pride, discontent with life, and above all of sexual desire", which meant that there was no river from which the artists could draw fresh material.

Tolstoy's theory, which constitutes a version of the expressionist theory, is that in artistic activity a person A has a certain feeling x and in order that person B should also have this feeling he tries to pass it on to B and this he does by art. This is similar to John Locke's theory of language whereby A has a certain thought and in order that B should have this thought he tries to pass it on to B and this he does by language. The similarity raises the question of whether art can be said to be a sort of language, but this he does not pursue. However, Tolstoy's theory does seem to spring from a misconception about how art comes into existence; it supposes that the artist first has a feeling, then decides to pass it on, then looks for a means of doing so, which often turns out to be art but is not necessarily so. It would, however, be a strange artist who felt tranquility one day, decided to make others feel tranquil, wondered how he could do this and hit on the idea of painting a picture to cause this feeling in others. To do this would not be the activity of an artist but of a propagandist. This is not to say that there is no intention in an artist's mind when he starts work, but that he is not setting out to cause a particular emotion in others; and it is surely the case that this whole notion of feeling, passing
it on and choosing art for the purpose is totally misguided. In Tolstoy it seems that it is the feeling that is the important element and that really a drug would be just as effective and worthwhile for passing that feeling on. If that were the case there would be little point in pursuing the creation or appreciation of art; our energies might just as well go into more experiments in the field of chemistry. But many people believe that even if one could pass on one's feelings to someone else with a drug, the activity of art would not become superfluous. So even if there is in art a certain degree of passing on of feelings, that is not the whole story by any means.

Thus it would appear that although Tolstoy's method of enquiry is more philosophically promising, his conclusions are unacceptable. What then is a proper definition of art? It may be unrealistic to be searching for a definition, for we saw how Collingwood was much nearer to an understanding of the nature of art although he did not attempt a definition but looked at the scope of art as it is and should be; Wollheim also, when he gives up the quest for a definition, finds that art can only be described in terms of the aesthetic experience of the percipient, or the relationship between a person and a work of art. The same sort of difficulties could arise with regard to the term 'science', for although it is possible to enumerate the sciences, difficulties might arise when one tried to give a definition of science itself. In view of this one might be tempted to adopt Wittgenstein's family resemblances and so accept anything that calls itself (or, rather, is called) art, discover its family resemblances — for there are bound to be some, which is why the theory will not limit the field in any way — and proceed to judge it as art, leaving the question not "is this art?" but "is this
good art?". This path will not, however, lead to enlightenment, for the situation where anything may be called art and we have to distinguish the good art is remarkably similar to the situation where art and non-art are substantially different and we have decide which items to include in the category of art. The problem comes full circle and one returns to the same starting point, with all the former difficulties, asking "how can we know if something is good art?" and "what are the criteria by which we may safely judge?".

I believe that a more fruitful approach to the question is to start with the category of the aesthetic and call those things art which we perceive in a certain way. This covers the range of activities, states and artefacts which we perform, experience or appreciate for their own sakes, including not only works of art but objets trouvés, that is, naturally occurring artefacts that resemble works of art, and certain natural phenomena. To dwell on the beauty of another person may constitute sexuality, but if it is disinterested it may constitute aesthetics. This aesthetic awareness is not some refined 'extra' that people acquire when they have reached a certain stage in their education; it is a basic force in their lives which may alter in direction or intensity as a result of external circumstances, but is unlikely to be eradicated. Thus, the appreciation of a beautiful face, a mountain scene, a vulgar representation of a sunset, a reproduction of Van Gogh's 'L'église d' Auvers' and the original of Raphael's 'Pope Julius II' may all come within the same category of experience, providing, to take Kant's maxim, "the satisfaction which determines the judgement of taste is disinterested". However, if the face arouses sexual desire, the mountain scene is perceived in terms of easy and difficult ascents, the sunset picture is a peg on which to
hang sentimentality, the Van Gogh is treasured as a souvenir of a happy holiday at Auvers and the Raphael admired out of loyalty to the papacy, then the aesthetic emotion or awareness is not being exercised. To say that these things are all of the same nature does not mean, however, that all are of equal worth and there is plenty of room with this understanding of the Aesthetic for notions of good and bad taste and even for education for the improvement of taste.

Taking the sub-category of the Aesthetic which we call Art, we may say that works of art are generally both created and appreciated for their own sakes. There will be marginal cases where only one criterion is satisfied; for instance the doodling executed by a self-effacing businessman may be acclaimed, to his great surprise, as art, and the esoteric unappreciated novel may also be art, but in the main body of art it will both have been created and be intended to be appreciated in response to the aesthetic emotion.

Different words are used to describe this concept, such as aesthetic awareness or attitude, the aesthetic experience or response. For consistency I shall refer to aesthetic awareness unless quoting from or specifically discussing other people's theories. One formulation of it was given by Jerome Stolnitz in 'Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism' where he pointed out that we do have different attitudes or sets depending on what we are doing and what our purposes are. This is quite clearly demonstrated by recent house-hunters who automatically notice estate agents' offices and 'for sale' boards outside houses, or the fruit farmer who remembers exactly how much blossom is on the trees in town gardens. Stolnitz asserts that in the same way as one may approach something with a 'practical attitude' so one one may also approach something with an 'aesthetic
attitude', which he defines as "disinterested and sympathetic
attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever,
for its own sake alone". By 'disinterested' he means that one has no
concern for any ulterior purpose, so excluding, for example, the
appreciation of a work of art because of its financial value;
'sympathetic' means that we accept the object on its own terms to
appreciate it; and 'contemplation' he takes to be perception directed
toward the object in its own right where the spectator is not
concerned to analyze it or ask questions about it. This is in the same
vein as Kant's assertion that "the satisfaction which determines the
judgement of taste is disinterested" and it would seem to be true
that in cases where one has definitely appreciated something
aesthetically one has observed it in its own right, unconcerned with
value, ownership, nostalgic free association or whatever else.

George Dickie, in 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude'
attacks this widespread version of the aesthetic attitude theory. He
points out that the central term in the theory, 'disinterested',
describes an ordinary kind of action (attending) done in a certain
way (disinterestedly). He then claims that it only makes sense to
speak of listening to music disinterestedly if one could also speak
of listening to music interestedly. Here the distinction would be
between on the one hand 'listening to music with no ulterior purpose'
and on the other 'listening with an ulterior purpose'. Hence the
distinction is not a perceptual one but a motivational or intentional
one. Dickie argues that there is only one way of listening to music.
There may be different things one can do instead of listening, but if
one is attending to a series of notes one is listening to the music.
The cases of listening with ulterior purposes he discounts as
distractions, where distraction is a special kind of attention, namely inattention.

The stronger version of the aesthetic attitude theory is also rejected by Dickie. This was put forward by Sheila Dawson in 'Distancing' as an Aesthetic Principle, where she used the concept of distancing to describe the aesthetic attitude. Bullough also used this concept, describing distancing as a psychological process for putting something 'out of gear'. If a jealous husband who suspects his wife of infidelity goes to see a performance of Othello he may identify so closely with the emotions of Othello that he is incapable of appreciating the play in its own right. According to Bullough he would be said to be underdistancing and therefore not approaching the play with the aesthetic attitude. On the other hand, if someone watched the play concentrating exclusively on technical details, he also would not have the aesthetic attitude, this time through overdistancing. Distancing, then, according to this theory, is an activity essential for the aesthetic attitude, has to be done in the right degree and can be done deliberately. Dickie doubts whether there is any activity undertaken in front of art which could take this name. He interprets the cases of correct distancing as cases of 'paying attention' and both overdistancing and underdistancing as ways of describing different forms of inattention.

Having abandoned pursuit of a definition of Art one may concentrate on aesthetic awareness; what Roger Fry, in 'Vision and Design', called "the disinterested intensity of contemplation". Fanchon Frohlich in describing the same experience says "This object is worthy of a detached sustained contemplation. This is beautiful—out of all context of its place and use in ordinary life — stop and
look". This particular claim introduces the notion of the beautiful which is probably best avoided at this stage and in any case it seems unnecessarily limiting to suggest that we can only have this experience before beautiful objects. The experience is one familiar to most people, so it may be possible to examine what happens when it takes place. It is a response to certain objects or events which is generally intuitive but may sometimes be evoked through learning or, rather, through repeated exposure to something, which is one reason why succeeding generations sometimes learn to appreciate styles of art which could not be responded to with aesthetic awareness when they were new. Many people in describing this mode of awareness use the word 'contemplation' which raises the question as to whether this means there is a special sort of attention which is reserved for these occasions. I think George Dickie got side-tracked by this notion, for he came to the conclusion that if the sort of attention we are describing really meant just attending it was not worth saying. But there clearly are different qualities of attention. One may well attend fully to a colourful street scene and be fully absorbed in it and yet be conscious that the quality of attention changes dramatically at the point at which one recognizes a close friend in the crowd. One may feel that sustained engrossed attention is so rare in any case that it deserves a unique, or at least more distinctive name, but it can in fact be understood in terms of there being an implicit value judgement involved in this form of attention. One says, in effect, that this particular object is worth one's whole attention and that in the presence of this object it is worth one's while rejecting normal thought processes, day dreams, analysis of the composition etc. and being entirely receptive to what is here
presented. This might be interpreted as a feeling of awe or respect plus a willingness to face the unexpected in responding to it, and generally the response will be accompanied by some positive feeling of approval of the object, which is where Stolnitz's word 'sympathetic' comes in.

To return to Stolnitz's definition, the experience we are examining is the "disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone". Here we may take 'disinterested attention' simply to mean absolute attention to the object itself and not any considerations, associations or external values associated with the object, and 'sympathetic' denotes the approval we feel that the object is as it is. Then we come to the word 'contemplation' which occurs time and time again in describing aesthetic awareness in the same way as it does in describing mystical experience. What is contemplation and how does it differ from attention? Stolnitz's definition is syntactically ambiguous as the 'disinterested and sympathetic' could qualify just 'attention' or both 'attention and contemplation'; but whereas it makes sense to speak of disinterested attention, meaning that parts of one's attention are not wandering off into areas of self-interest or concern for something else, it does not make sense to speak of disinterested contemplation, for contemplation is by its nature disinterested. Further, although attention is divisible and is frequently divided, contemplation is absolute: either one is contemplating or one is not. I will therefore assume that the adjectives 'disinterested' and 'sympathetic' qualify attention and that contemplation is a further distinct requirement in aesthetic awareness. How does contemplation differ from attention and is it
really a necessary condition for aesthetic awareness if complete attention has already been given? I will treat the subject briefly and a little superficially in this context as I shall return to the concept of contemplation in the next chapter, after which it will occupy a central position in the rest of my thesis.

The term 'contemplation' is probably used in describing religious activity more than in other areas and there it is distinguished from 'meditation'. Meditation has a cognitive aspect and is not opposed to ideas and images, whereas contemplation has an isolated object which is either perceived through the senses or in a way for which it makes sense to use metaphors of the senses, such as in 'looking at something with the mind's eye'. Another aspect of contemplation might be described by the rather woolly notion of 'fusion' which one could interpret as 'sympathy with'. It appears that so far nothing is achieved by introducing the word 'contemplation' which was not already included in 'disinterested and sympathetic attention to', for the isolation of the object could be seen as giving it one's whole attention by cutting everything else out and fusion is covered by Stolnitz's 'sympathetic'. However, I consider this to be making the concept of attention too strong and would rather suggest that in giving disinterested attention we concentrate on an object within the context of the world, without allowing our minds to wander but able at any moment to switch our attention right away from it; but in contemplation we isolate the object to such an extent that we would not find it easy to comment on that object or turn our attention elsewhere: comment and criticism imply the ability to relate the object in question to other things in the world. Similarly 'sympathetic attention' suggests that we would not wish to change the
object and that we appreciate it because it is the way it is; but the stronger notion of fusion, or identification, belongs to contemplation. So contemplation involves isolation and identification, and a further difference would appear to be in the time factor, contemplation being content to continue almost indefinitely if not artificially terminated by external forces, while attention is still attention even if it only lasts for half a minute. I shall later discuss the feeling of timelessness associated with contemplation, which may have some relevance to this time factor.

Having distinguished contemplation from disinterested and sympathetic attention it appears that, to cover everything to which we respond with aesthetic awareness, we must exclude contemplation from the requirements necessary to this state. If 'contemplation' is defined too weakly and identified with attention it is superfluous, while if it is given a stronger function then its presence in the definition would eliminate too many experiences from the aesthetic. If we abandon 'contemplation' we are left with a definition of aesthetic awareness which reads as follows: "disinterested and sympathetic attention to any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone".

With this slightly broader definition we can now look at the occasions on which aesthetic awareness is appropriate. The first thing to note is that it is not just a positive value judgement and on some occasions would be highly inappropriate. If someone with cramp is struggling in the deep end of the swimming pool it is highly inappropriate, even though possible, to watch the activity for its own sake with disinterested and sympathetic attention. However there will be many occasions on which aesthetic awareness is right and proper,
such as before a beautiful scene in nature, when faced with logical truths and mathematical proofs which are self-contained, serve no purpose at present and are responded to by virtue of their purity. Then, of course, aesthetic awareness is appropriate in many cases of what are generally called works of art. Here, though, I feel we are in a stronger position than those who try to define works of art as a class of objects, for it is apparent that we do not respond in the same way to all things that are called art. Works of art are artefacts created for the purpose of being appreciated aesthetically. They have the potential for being attended to with aesthetic awareness but in some cases this potential is not realized since the artefact is not worth a person's disinterested and sympathetic attention.

But eliminating the concept of contemplation from the definition of aesthetic awareness does not detract from its importance in the philosophy of art. Not just the modern aestheticians analyzing aesthetic awareness, but philosophers throughout history have, in discussing art and beauty, referred almost universally to the concept of contemplation. As I suggested earlier, contemplation is for most people associated with a particular form of religious activity, so it is noteworthy and a little puzzling to have such a tradition of philosophers describing our response to art and beauty in terms of contemplation and yet not defining that term but accepting it from those who have gone before. It was this anomaly which caused me to look at the way the word 'contemplation' has been used and to investigate both its meaning and its place in a theory of art.
CHAPTER 2
PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

The key to this section is the fact that if we go back to the Archaic Greeks we find the same word used for aesthetic contemplation and for scientific enquiry, namely ὑσωφοία = viewing. This word, generally rendered in English as ‘contemplation’ recurs throughout history in analysis of art and beauty, but for the early Greeks it was a wider concept, employed both for truth and for beauty; only later was it split into the epistemological contemplation of truth and the aesthetic contemplation of beauty. Diogenes Laertius reports Pythagoras's words on the subject:

"Life, he said, is like a sporting event. Some go there as competitors, some to do business, but the best come as spectators; and similarly in life people with slave mentality seek fame or profit, but those who are philosophically minded seek truth." (Laertius Diogenes, VIII 8).

I find this metaphor for contemplation unsatisfactory on two counts. First, contemplation in many traditions is not a spectator activity; it involves being engaged in a certain way rather than simply observing the engagement of others. Secondly, it suggests that those who contemplate are seeking something just as much as those who seek fame or profit, and it is only a difference in value judgement which allows truth to be sought contemplatively but not fame or profit. In other words, if contemplation describes a different activity, it must do more than describe the same activity with a different object.

1. Quotations from the pre-Socratic philosophers in this chapter are taken from ‘History of Aesthetics’ volume 1; Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz.
Because this idea of contemplation was so much wider than ours is normally understood to be, and because the generally accepted metaphor for contemplation does not describe the activity to which we give the name, I shall, for the present, revert to the Greek word ὀνειρία and when I have investigated the meaning and importance of this concept to the ancient Greeks, see what light, if any, it throws on our concept of contemplation.

There are two main strands in pre-Socratic philosophy of beauty which might be seen as stemming from the Ionian and the Dorian influences which make up the early Greek culture. So, as on the Acropolis, the Doric Parthenon stood next to the Ionic Erechtheum, so one finds the Athenian Sophists who followed the Ionian empirical style rubbing shoulders with other philosophers who maintained the tradition of Dorian rationalism, which tradition later came to its triumphant flowering in Plato. So there is the subjectivist theory of the Sophists, where beauty is said to depend on the pleasures of eye and ear and which issues in a very positive and life-enhancing hedonism. Its roots can be seen in Euripides Bacca 881, where the statement of Theognis is repeated:

"οὐκ θαλάμην τῷ λόγῳ ἀεί" - "that which is beautiful is pleasant".

Euripides was associated with the Sophists and it was he who in his 'realist' drama presented men 'as they are' rather than 'as they ought to be' as Sophocles had attempted to present them. This hedonistic element in aesthetics can be seen in St. Thomas Aquinas' definitions of beauty as that

"quae visa placent" - 'which gives pleasure on being looked at' and

"cuius ipsa apprehensio placet" - 'the very perception of which gives pleasure'.
But although it has emerged in such weakened form at various junctures of history, philosophers have in general feared the pleasure-principle and therefore eschewed hedonism. This has, I think, been a mistake, for it seems that joy is at the root of much creation and appreciation of beauty and though, obviously, there is more to the observation of beauty than just pleasure, yet one of man's most basic and immediate responses to beauty and art is pleasure. The realization in early Greek thought that our reaction to beauty is one of pleasure paves the way for the development of a theory of love which will be discussed later.

More in line with the Dorian tradition is the mathematical theory of the Pythagoreans, according to which beauty depends on measure, proportion, order and harmony. Later Socrates offered a third theory of beauty which one might call a functionalist theory, whereby things are beautiful to the extent that they are suitable for the tasks they are intended to perform. Thus for a piece of armour to be beautiful it must fit the wearer for whom it is made rather than adhering to fixed ideal measurements of an imaginary man. This theory again will recur in aesthetic history, most notably, perhaps, in Wittgenstein with his theory of the 'appropriate'.

Although I have outlined these three different theories I do not think they should be set in too much opposition to each other. All these philosophers may have emphasized different aspects of our understanding of the beautiful as seemed most important to them, but all were attempting to describe the same phenomenon and their thoughts sprang from more or less the same time and culture. So the very mathematical balance which the Pythagoreans believed to lie behind and within the universe may be what makes something pleasing to the eye or
the ear and also fits it for its proper function within the world order. This can best be illustrated by an example from Pythagorean acoustics. The Pythagoreans, possibly Pythagoras himself, observed that strings sound harmoniously or otherwise according to their lengths: in order for them to sound harmoniously the lengths must reflect direct numerical relationships. Thus the relation 1:2 produced an octave, 2:3 a fifth and by arranging the string lengths in the relation 1:2/3:1/2 one necessarily produced a harmonious chord comprising the first, third and fifth of what we would call a major scale. So the whole of music can be built upon mathematical models and principles. But the very reason why this was of interest was because the mathematical models produced pleasurable sounds, or sounds which to the hearers of that time sounded harmonious. It may therefore be observed that in large measure the things which the Sophists found beautiful because of the pleasure principle were the same things as the Pythagoreans found beautiful because of mathematical principles, and for cultured Greek man, living in the ordered environment of Hellenic Greece, pleasure was most likely to be found within ordered systems.

The Pythagoreans originated in the Dorian colonies in Italy. Their founder, Pythagoras of Samos, lived in the sixth century BC, but very little is reliably known of his life and most of the scientific achievements of the movement are due to his successors in the fifth and fourth centuries. The movement was partly religious and partly scientific and should, I think, be seen more as a cult or monastic institution than simply an academic school. Members were bound by secrecy and loyalty and as their attitude to mathematical proofs was one of religious awe, the propagating of their knowledge was strictly
taboo. On top of this, many of the discoveries of the members were ascribed to the founder or to the school as a whole, so that one has the same sort of anonymity that one finds amongst other great groups of religious artists, like the monastic illustrators of manuscripts in mediaeval England, the sculptors, architects and stonemasons who poured their creativity into French Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, the gurus who kept alive the Indian dance through the centuries.

As well as establishing a mathematical order for acoustics the Pythagoreans believed that the world itself was constructed mathematically and therefore harmoniously. They used the word 'harmony' rather than 'beauty', indeed the word 'harmony' probably originated with them; and this indicates again their belief in the essential nature of beauty, how basic it is to the way the world is and must be because of its mathematical basis. The harmony of sounds reflects a deeper harmony in the order of the world, and the world, to the Pythagoreans, was the μορφός = the order. Unlike beauty, harmony is not a property of an object but the correct arrangement of many objects, so for something to be harmonious it has to display certain mathematically satisfactory relationships between its constituent parts. The Pythagorean Philolaus wrote:

"Εστι γαρ ἀρμονία πολυμυγέων ἐνώσεως καὶ δίχα φοροέντων συμφορόντος ἐς "(Nicomachus, Arithm.II 19, p115).

'Harmony is a Unity of many mixed (elements), and an agreement between disagreeing (elements).'

This idea of harmony in the universe was not, however, pure metaphor, for it was the Pythagoreans who originated the idea of the music of the spheres, thus making what we would call the art, and they the science, of music fundamental to the whole created order. Aristotle describes the theory in De Cælo:
"Some thinkers suppose that the motion of bodies of that size must produce a noise, since on our earth the motion of bodies far inferior in size and in speed of movement has that effect. Also, when the sun and the moon, they say, and all the stars, so great in number and in size, are moving with so rapid a motion, how should they not produce a sound immensely great? Starting from this argument and from the observation that their speeds, as measured by their distances, are in the same ratios as musical concordances, they assert that the sound given forth by the circular movement of the stars is a harmony. Since, however, it appears unaccountable that we should not hear this music, they explain this by saying that the sound is in our ears from the very moment of birth and is thus indistinguishable from its contrary silence, since sound and silence are discriminated by mutual contrast. What happens to men, then, is just what happens to coppersmiths, who are so accustomed to the noise of the smithy that it makes no difference to them." (Book U 9)

In other words, assuming that the relations of the distances between planets and of the speeds at which they move to be harmonious (i.e., mathematical), and that all things that move produce sound, the planets must produce concordant sound. So the universe produces a music of the spheres, a symphony we do not hear simply because it sounds continuously.

Far-fetched as this idea of the music of the planets appears to us, it is important to remember that it was generally accepted as scientific truth for nearly two thousand years. There were sceptics, as can be seen from an earlier part of the passage from Aristotle quoted above, where he says

"From all this it is clear that the theory that the movement of the stars produces a harmony, i.e., that the sounds they make are concordant, in spite of the grace and originality with which it has been stated, is nevertheless untrue"

but the belief permeated all early theorizing about music, the Musica Mundana (planetary music) being understood as the true music to which human and instrumental music (Musica Humana and Musica Instrumentalis) only approximated weakly. In the Christian era it was theologized, so becoming the sound which links God with the world and, more romantically, indicating how the whole created order joins in singing
praise to God. I shall return to this subject when I discuss medieval aesthetics, but for the present I would stress that harmony to the ancient Greeks, through the influence of the Pythagoreans, was a mathematical and numerical disposition depending on number, measure and proportion. Through what we might like to call the false assumption of the music of the spheres the Pythagoreans arrived at what we would probably accept as the true conclusion that the world is spherical, for they inferred that the shape of the world must also be regular and harmonious and was therefore most likely to be a sphere. They also extended their ideal of harmony into the realm of men, asserting that souls should have a proper proportion of parts to be harmoniously constructed. But the soul itself could be affected, they believed, by such things as music and dance which can lead the soul into a good or bad ethos, or state of mind. This good or bad effect of music constituted for them a 'guidance of the soul' and was therefore called the psychogonic effect, and the fact that music had psychogonic and educational effects on men enhanced its importance still further. This element in their belief structure is reminiscent of the Orphic religions which saw music not only as psychogonic but as a purifying or cathartic power. Religious music and dance was participated in and souls were relieved of their fears and demons. It was only later that it was realized that some of this cathartic power was available to the spectators of these arts as well as the participants.

Perhaps these two different emphases in Pythagorean theory of music reflect the two different elements in the cult of the scientific/mathematical and the cabalistic/religious. On the one hand we have the realization that music is psychogonic, that certain constructions of sound in music or sight and movement in dance effect
man at a deep level. It may be that in a state of contemplation one is
more open and sensitive to the effects, which may, of course, work to
good or ill. Plato was much-concerned about this side of the effect of
art on man: at its crudest it views all art in terms of stimulus and
response and runs the risk of reducing music, or art, to its effects
on people and opening the way for the claim that if a drug is
discovered that has the same effects, then music, or art, will be
dispensable. The other side of the Pythagoreans' theory redressed the
balance by looking at the innate importance of music; asking why it is
essential that the world is harmonious and why, because of the
relationship between all things, there is beauty and order.

Awareness of this deep harmony in the world would be seen by many
as one of the aims and experiences of what is normally called
'contemplation'. It gave a mathematical understanding for music, so
formulating a law, or νόμος for those who created music. It also
influenced the visual arts, where the equivalent of the nomos is the
κανον with its arithmetical and geometrical foundations. All the
plastic arts of the Greeks were canonical; there was a canon for the
building of temples and one for the construction of vases; one for
painting and another for sculpting the human figure. Each one was
numerical and according to strict laws of proportion, as can be seen
in Galen's reference to Polyclitus:

"Chrysippus holds beauty to consist in the proportions not of the
elements but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger and of
all the fingers to the palm and wrist, and of these to the forearm,
and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the parts to each
other, as they are set forth in the Canon of Polyclitus. For
Polyclitus, when he had taught us all the proportions of the human
figure by means of that treatise, confirmed his theory by a practical
illustration and made a statue according to the dictates of the
theory, and called the statue, like the treatise, his Canon" (Tatarkiewicz).
The canon of, say, a man, gave the necessary proportions to be applied to represent an ideal, or perhaps one should say idealized, man. While it was not schematic and symbolic as early sculpture had been, such as that of the Egyptians who sculpted more the eternal idea of man than an image of a man, at the same time it was idealized and did not represent just any man whom one might meet in the market place. But within the basic pattern, or whilst adopting these perfect laws of proportion, there was room for infinite variation of detail, which is why Greek art appears free and varied.

In general the Greeks preferred the simplest geometrical figures such as the triangle, circle and square and this preference for basic simplicity is an earmark of much of their work in the different plastic arts. Perfect triangles were either equilateral or Pythagorean (with sides in the proportions of 3:4:5) and these recur frequently in the temples. The golden section also achieved eminence, as it has also done in our own century in the work, for example, of Le Corbusier and Seurat. The golden section occurs when a line is divided in such a way that the smaller part is to the greater as the greater is to the whole:

\[
\frac{\sqrt{5} + 1}{2} = 1 : \frac{\sqrt{5} - 1}{2}
\]

It divides the line into parts of which the approximate relation is 0.618:0.382; expressed mathematically it is of the form

\[
\frac{\sqrt{5} + 1}{2} = 1 : \frac{\sqrt{5} - 1}{2}
\]

This principle of the golden section and the so-called function of the golden section (0.528 : 0.472) determines every detail of the
In the sculpture of antiquity we may discover proportions of the human body equivalent to the golden section \((Z, z)\) approximately \(0.618:0.382\), and to the function of the golden section \((F, f)\), approximately \(0.528:0.472\). The statues here used to demonstrate these measurements are Apollo Belvedere and Venus de Milo. The calculations are by the Soviet architect Zholtovski.
construction of the Parthenon and the creation of such forms as the
Apollo Belvedere and the Venus de Milo. This tendency of the Greeks to
see the world to be based on order, balance and harmony, for man to be
most himself and therefore most perfect when his soul was organized
according to these principles, and for music, art, or whatever else,
to approach most nearly to beauty as it partook of those qualities,
all point to an interesting monism based on the harmony of the
universe, where beauty and reality and goodness are all one in this
harmony. Within such an order, presumably the place of man was a
contemplative one: when asked why he preferred to be than not to be
(ie what his essential nature was), Anaxagoras replied: "In order to
gaze at the sky and the harmony of the universe". Man, as part of this
harmonious kosmos, approached his academic seeking and his aesthetic
creation and appreciation in an attitude of ἀρετή, so achieving
intellectual and emotional balance; the order inherent in the universe
was perpetuated by the nomos in music and the kanon in the visual
arts. The kanon originally meant a builder's rule and possibly owed
its metaphorical sense to Pythagoras; it was not an unattainable ideal
but a pattern which, if followed, could give perfect results.
Polyclitus, to whom I referred earlier, flourished around 430 BC and
his statue of the Spearbearer (Doryphorus) was perceived to be so
perfect as a representation of the ideal of the human figure that the
sculpture itself became known as the Canon. Myron's Cow would be in
the same category as a representation of an animal. But art was not
representational in the sense of copying, or even fabricating objects
similar to those in the world, so much as entering into the stream of
creation, following the rules and working with what is. One might say
that the artist 'procreates' using the material and the rules of the
harmonious kosmos. All is one and art celebrates and partakes of it.

This idea of the unity inherent in all things was developed by Heraclitus of Ephesus who lived at the beginning of the fifth century BC in Ionia and who probably had contact with the philosophers of the Pythagorean school.

"οὐκ ἐμοὶ ἄλλα τοῦ λόγου ἀκόμαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφῶς ἔστιν ἐν πάντα εἶναι "(Fragment 50, Hippolytus)

'Listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that all things are one'.

This idea of the Word from which all springs and in which all exists was later taken over into Christianity through the dithyrambic prologue to St. John's gospel which shows a very clear influence of Heracliteanism:

"Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τον θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. ὁ λόγος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τον θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χῶρα αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο σῶθε ἐν ὁ γέγονεν. ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν καὶ ἦν τὸ σῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. καὶ τὸ σῶς ἐν τῇ σωτηρίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἦ σωτηρία αὐτοῦ ὁ θελέρων."

What has often been overlooked in its Christianized form is that the Logos is not just a good creating deity but the greater unity which comes from the harmony of opposites, which is achieved by strife rather than by one-sidedness:

"Heraclitus rebukes the author of the line 'Would that strife might be destroyed from among gods and men': for there would be no musical scale unless high and low existed, nor living creatures without female and male, which are opposites." (Aristotle; Eudemian Ethics.)

So not only is conflict unavoidable, but it is the very mechanism which contributes to the basic harmony of the universe;

"εἰδέσκει χρή τον πόλεμον ἔντα ξυνόν, καὶ δύνην ἔχειν, καὶ γνώμενα πάντα κατ' ἐρυύ καὶ χρέων " Fragment 80, Origen c Celsum VI, 42).

'It is necessary to know that war is common and right is strife and that all things happen by strife and necessity.'

In other words different extremes are held in balance: this is a state that can be of mind or body, and it is a feature of much dance and
contemplative activity. As we shall later observe, many of the postures adopted by those engaged in contemplation are based on a tension between relaxation and control.

"They do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself (literally, how being brought apart it is brought together with itself): there is a back-stretched connection, as in the bow and the lyre." (Fragment 51, Hippolytus).

A tension is reached whereby opposing forces are brought together under control, this creates a harmony, or achieves the point of balance because it is in accordance with the harmony of the universe which is ordered, therefore beautiful, therefore good.

"τὸ ἀντίθέτον συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστην ἀμοιβήν καὶ πάντα κατ’ έκφυν γίνεσθαι." 'That which is in opposition is in concert, and from things that differ comes the most beautiful harmony.' (Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachean 1155b 4)

One of the striking features of the mystical tradition within different religions is the acceptance of paradox and the drawing together of apparently contradictory ideas. Aristotle was inclined to pour scorn on this element as, applying his system of logic, it is nonsense to say that opposites are the same, but Heraclitus' doctrine was not describing numerical identity. I think there are two separate meanings, both of which can be attributed to him. First, the sum of opposites makes a unified whole: very hot water mixed with very cold water makes water of an acceptable temperature to man, which contains within it all temperatures; the infinitely great added to the infinitely small contains all numbers. The other meaning is less easily demonstrable and that is that different extremes are actually very similar and have such a close relationship that one can be flipped back and forth between them. Great pleasure and great pain, deep joy and sadness, fear and confidence, 'the agony and the
ecstasy', are all examples of the opposite poles of experience which at their most extreme are often found to be close. This surprising fact is something that many great artists and mystics have grappled with through the centuries and it may be, once again, that for a human being to contain these opposites and bring them into a unity is to enter into the harmony of the universe; and that this has sometimes been achieved by art and sometimes by contemplation.

"But perhaps nature actually has a liking for opposites; perhaps it is from them that she creates harmony, and not from similar things .... It seems too that art does this in imitation of nature". (Pseudo-Aristotle, De mundo, 396b 7).

If art does this, it is not by stating the obvious or copying temporal things, for basic as the unity is, it has to be sought and discovered:

"The hidden harmony is stronger (or 'better') than the visible" (Hippolytus; Tatarkiewicz).

This is fully in accord with the description of Ἐξοπλα by Pythagoras with which I started this account of the Pre-Socratics, for what is sought is truth. We have now found more information about the object of the search and the preconditions for embarking on it, but little about the method employed or clarification as to whether its object is different from that which has fame or profit as its object. It has also been suggested that intellectual balance and a control over the tension of opposites, might be features of the activity.

The kanon and the nomos retained their importance for Greek art, but 'harmonia' grew wider and came to mean orderly beauty, while the stricter Pythagorean ideal of beauty as a numerical and mathematical principle became known as 'symmetria'. The different arts that we practise were more separate for the Greeks at one level. We see painting and music as two sub-categories of the same concept of art, whereas for them they were entirely different activities, music being
free while painting was servile as it involved manual labour. In these differences lie the roots of many of our conceptions of art and artist: as Tatarkiewicz puts it in 'The History of Aesthetics' (volume 1):

"The conception of the artist as the man who expresses feelings had its origin in the theory of dance. The conception of the artist as the reproducer of reality derived from the visual arts, as a scientist — from music, as a magician — from poetry."

But at the same time, these activities, along with several others like the investigation of astronomy and manipulation of mathematics, were all part of a greater whole which was the pursuit of truth, the conforming to the same sort of laws as governed the order of the universe, thus expressing man's true nature and creating the beautiful and good. So a theory of beauty was ultimately a theory of truth, an attempt to understand the nature of what is. This conformity to reality was therefore one of the first qualities they would demand of their art.

As time went by and skills developed, art began to serve other functions. The Choreia (poetry, music and dance in combination) retained its Orphic character, expressing feelings and serving a cathartic function, music and mathematics continued in close combination, but in the visual art from the fifth century the painting became impressionistic (skiagraphia — from skia = shadow), playing with patches of light and shade to give an illusion of reality from a distance, though obviously at close quarters these paintings were often undecipherable. Similarly with theatrical design, where the artists developed techniques of perspective (skenographia), apate (illusion, deception, hallucination) was what was pursued and achieved. So this apatetic art had as its object exactly the opposite
of the truth that had earlier been sought, and this was part of the reason for Plato's deep disapproval of the artists of his time. These trends led to three different theories of the aesthetic experience: the cathartic theory of the Pythagoreans, the illusionist theory of Gorgias and later the mimetic theory of Socrates, according to which the experiences arise when similarities are discovered between the products of the artist and their models in nature.

One might well see the thought of the ancient Greek philosophers on three levels: the mathematical, the philosophical and the religious. These areas were not separate and were all part of the same discipline so we cannot really separate off parts of their writings as pertaining to one or other of these categories. But working within our own specialist framework we can identify the elements which to us represent these three intertwined levels. I have stressed the mathematical basis of their understanding of the universe and from this strand in their thought would extract the concept of order, balance, measure and good proportion. These qualities which they perceived to be the foundation of all that was, must necessarily be adhered to by artists creating beauty for the model of beauty was in the creation of the kosmos. The same features were encouraged in the lives of men and in the ordering of society. The philosophical element of their thought looked beyond the bare mathematical facts to the concepts holding them together, so that we have an emphasis on the unity of all things and of a harmony in all creation which some of them saw to be, of necessity, achieved through the tension of opposites. Concepts were formed and manipulated and philosophical discussion came about, resulting in an understanding which applied, once again, to the world at all its different levels. Religious
awareness was also growing, once again integrated with the mathematical and philosophical elements of understanding. As well as a theistic interpretation of events, I think this included, or was related to, the pleasure principle of the Sophists, for the pleasure principle is in its limited way an affirmation of what is, an acceptance of the world as basically good. This is ultimately an attitude of love, although this was not developed fully until Plato explored the Eros as the force which created the kosmos and works daily and ordinarily in human life, so connecting the world outside with the world within.
It is well-known that Plato wished to censor artists in his ideal state, that he rejected some art most of the time and most art some of the time. He has accordingly been denigrated as a reactionary and an authoritarian moralist by many who were looking for a straw man to knock down. I believe that the truth about Plato's views on art is more subtle and interesting than this judgement would allow and in seeking to draw out this truth, hope to shed light on our subject.

First I will rehearse some of the prescriptions Plato presents in the Republic, in order to clear the ground for a more global examination of his attitudes. In Books II and III of the Republic (II 376 — III 402) he discusses art, mainly in the form of literature, in connection with the primary education of the guardians. On the content of literature he says it should

1) inspire people to goodness and show them that heaven is good,
2) represent the gods as being good, brave and truthful,
3) persuade men that death is not to be feared for oneself or mourned in a friend, since heaven is good,
4) the stories told should be true ones, and
5) they must give examples of noble character.

He asserts that if these points are observed then the content of literature will be such that the young men will be inspired by it to a good life. On the question of form he says that a simple form is always to be preferred (a preference we have already observed in the Pre-Socratics), so that, for example, the dithyramb should be used as
in narrative rather than the more complex forms of tragedy and comedy. In music the Dorian and Phrygian modes are to be preferred as the first expresses courage in the face of necessity and misfortune while the second evokes peace and temperance. By way of general conclusions he suggests that the grace, rhythm and harmony which he holds to be important features of poetry are also necessary in all the other arts and crafts, for if people are surrounded by grace, rhythm and harmony in all they see or hear they will be influenced in the right way:

"rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there, bringing that grace of body and mind which is only to be found in one who is brought up in the right way" (III 401).

He recommended that one should look for inward and outward beauty in a person and learn proper non-sensual love which is love of beauty. This does not mean that he despises the senses in any way; in fact in the Timaeus (47) he says that the senses were given to us for the appreciation of true beauty. It is worth bearing in mind that in this passage from the Republic Plato is saying what sort of stories he considers could reasonably be told to children in an ideal state in order to ensure that young minds were not polluted or misled. He wanted the children to come to maturity as peaceful, truthful, honest and honourable human beings and was wondering, as many parents and educators have wondered since, how this could be achieved when children are open to bad influences rather than good.

In Book X of the Republic Plato outlines the area of disagreement between philosophy and poetry in relation to his Theory of Ideal Forms. I would prefer, in this thesis, not to digress too much into discussion of the Forms: Plato’s own understanding of them changed several times so it is not surprising that subsequent
philosophers have been in disagreement as to their exact meaning. By Book X Plato's attitude to the arts has hardened and he does make some direct criticisms which we should look at before passing to the deeper philosophy beneath his objections.

There are many beds and what they have in common is that they all embody the Ideal Bed which is unique and unchanging. Whereas one may say, according to Plato, that the author of the true nature of Bed is a god, the manufacturer of a bed in the world of physical things is a carpenter or craftsman who in effect copies the Bed. If an artist paints a bed, he is representing a manufactured bed, copying a bed, and is therefore at a third remove from the essential nature of things. In other words, he is copying a manufactured bed, which in turn is only a copy of the real Bed. Further, painting is a representation only of a semblance, for the bed in the painting can only be seen as it looks from one angle, to a certain person, in a particular light. Plato intends, by this argument, to devalue mimetic art, showing it to be unworthy of any important place in the Republic and he clinches his attack by asserting that if the artist had real understanding of the things he represented he would do the things rather than representing them. For example, he claims that the artist who paints a shoemaker, so implying that he knows something about shoemaking is false, for if he knew about shoemaking he would be making shoes rather than painting a shoemaker. In line with this charge he insists that although Homer and Hesiod appeared to represent human excellence, they never made their country better governed or helped win a battle or improved the lives of their contemporaries, therefore their poetry is nothing but the semblance of human excellence with no grasp of the reality. So he holds that
"the artist knows nothing worth mentioning about the subjects he represents, and that art is a form of play, not to be taken seriously".

In answer to the first of these charges, that relating to Forms, I would suggest that even accepting Plato's theory of Forms, this does not constitute a criticism of art, not even of mimetic art. It is not the case that art always represents a manufactured instance of a thing. Using his example, the artist may represent a particular bed, or he may represent the Ideal of Bed. In the first case the bed in question is a single recognizable piece of furniture and since it was the artist's intention to represent this particular bed it is no criticism to say that he has not represented Bed. In the second case an artist, or perhaps more particularly a poet, may produce something which is not a copy of a particular bed but is rather his interpretation of Bed, in which case he could be said to be representing the Ideal Bed. In reply to Plato's second criticism, once again keeping within his framework of ideas, great art brings men's minds back to the Idea of Beauty and so continues to inspire and improve even after the artist is dead. Also, the carpenter may tire of producing beds, mere copies of the essential Bed, and turn to art in an attempt to grapple with the essential nature of Bed.

Plato advises artists not to dwell on grief and suffering, but rather to concentrate on calm and wise characters even if these seem less interesting and are less lucrative in terms of the theatre. This advice is hard to square with his insistence on truthfulness: either he expected grief and suffering to be bred out of his ideal state by such measures as strict censorship of the arts, or else he accepted that very little art would qualify for inclusion in the ideal state. It must be admitted that at this point in the Republic (Book X)
the latter explanation appears the most likely, especially as he
claims of the poet that

"his creations are poor things by the standard of truth and reality,
and his appeal is not to the highest part of the soul, but to one
which is equally inferior" (X 604).

Though these passages in Plato should not be ignored just because they
are unsavoury, they should also not be taken out of context. It is at
least partial defence of Plato to insist that he is not here evolving
a general aesthetic but looking at the way art is (was at this point
in ancient Greece when standards were changing in ways he found
etirely unacceptable) and deciding how much it could contribute to or
undermine his Utopia.

A third criticism Plato makes of art is that in hardship we
aim to bear sorrow quietly, yet in the theatre we accept the spectacle
of men beating their breasts and crying and actually enjoy having our
emotions aroused even to the extent of shouting or weeping: Plato
recommends instead that we should feel disgust for the weakness
portrayed by the characters. Similarly in comedy we laugh at
buffooneries which in real life we would despise as vulgar. Thus, he
asserts, tragedy and comedy arouse bad emotions in us and we leave the
theatre with these newly-aroused emotions which are then bound to
influence our behaviour in the worst possible way. It was presumably
in answer to this criticism that Aristotle evolved his theory of
catharsis in which he admits that our emotions are aroused in
witnessing art, and so shares the stimulus/response view of art with
Plato, but maintains that the emotions thus aroused are discharged
within the experience of witnessing the work, so that after, for
example, a play, one leaves the theatre lightened of that load of
emotions rather then burdened by it. He thus felt that people would be
better for a good cry over a story, or for identifying with the jealous passions of a dramatic character and would, through the artistic experience, 'get them out of their system' in some way. Much twentieth century psychotherapy is based on this theory of catharsis and it is held by many that people can actually come to terms with things within themselves by having them presented to them in the safe context of a work of art, isolated from the real world and the consequences which would normally be attendant upon such strong emotions. By watching a tragedy, Aristotle would claim, one can enter into the crime without performing it, the remorse without really suffering the results and the punishment knowing it will end with the close of the play. He would probably have been heartened by the results of the study which showed that violent programmes on television do far more harm to children if they are switched off in the middle than if the child watches to the end. Plato, on the other hand, would have felt that his argument was dramatically substantiated by events occurring after the film 'The Clockwork Orange' was first released: boys being tried for a similar offence to that which takes place in the film (a mugging) claimed to have come straight from the film and to have performed the actions as a direct result of seeing the film. Dramatic though this case might appear in terms of countering Aristotle's theory of catharsis, it is only one isolated example of the bad influence a piece of mimetic art might have on the young. What Plato was concerned about was the gradual character-building effect that the art we are exposed to over the years is bound to have. Four hundred years later another thinker also saw that what we are fed on spiritually and intellectually is bound to influence what we are, and he recommended, not just theoretically for the
training of selected children in an ideal state, but urgently and practically to everyone,

"Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things" (Philippians 4 v 8).

Taking whatever consequences must follow, Plato wants to censor art pretty firmly and insists that poetry, to be admitted to the Republic, must prove that it is not "a mere source of pleasure but a benefit to society and to human life".

Plato appears to have been ambivalent about the nature of inspiration, for in the Ion, where he discusses how poetry is created and how it affects the spectator he speaks in a derogatory way of the poet being out of his mind. He further maintains that poetry feeds people's passions and thus produces bad citizens. However, in the Phaedrus he asserts that the poet who is possessed by the muses will write better poetry. The assertion, namely that the poet is 'possessed' in some way, is essentially the same in both instances, but the value judgement attached to this state of affairs is opposed in the two cases; quite clearly, in the Phaedrus, the poet who is in this state of mind is believed to write the better poetry:

"When any man without inspired madness knocks at the doors of poetry, thinking that by mere skill he is likely to become a poet, he is put to shame, together with the poetry of all such sober persons, by the poetry of those who are possessed". (245)

The ambivalence presumably arises because the passion which seems to drive poets on to write is seen to be strong and directed and to produce better poetry than that executed by detached academic versifiers, yet the very strength and directedness of this passion might make it undesirable in the Republic since the poet will write when, how and what he chooses rather than producing inspiring poetry to order for the improvement of the guardians. -- Perhaps it is not
surprising that the English institution of the Poet Laureate has a Greek flavour to its title.

Much of Plato's criticism in the Republic stems from his belief in the psychogogic effects of art and fundamentally he is not belittling art but recognizing its power over people. This belief, as we have seen in the previous chapter, stems from the Orphic religions and was developed by the Pythagoreans before being assimilated and censored by Plato. It is interesting to note in passing how easily mystical insights can slip into a moralistic insight, considering how far apart the concepts of mysticism and morality are generally considered to be. The early instinct was a recognition that being involved in music (and later, being a spectator) effected a person at a non-cognitive level which might be said to be emotional, or spiritual, or being possessed by exterior powers. This fact was, naturally, enjoyed and celebrated in religious activity and provided a statement about the nature of man and his responses, hence about reality or what 'is'. Then, because the experience effects behaviour, as mystical experience is bound to do, the promulgation of this state is seen as something to be encouraged, restricted or outlawed and it becomes a feature of morality instead of mysticism. But important as the realization of the psychogogic effects of art was to Plato, and this I shall return to later, it was only half of what he considered the nature and function of art to be. So I will now leave these superficial criticisms of art to approach his attitudes to art through his wider and more important philosophy.
BEAUTY

The first feature worthy of note that one discovers is that Plato, who has even been called a philistine by some defenders of the arts, had the most extraordinarily deep reverence for Beauty. For instance, in the Symposium he claims that "If there is anything worth living for, it is to behold Beauty". In both the Philebus and the Timaeus he speaks of beauty as a mediator between us and the Good, and this is also presented in mythical form in the Symposium and Phaedrus.

At times Plato isolates beauty and defines it in normal philosophical terms. He claims in the Philebus that whereas other fulfilments or satisfactions are preceded by a conscious feeling of lack, with our response to pure beauty the want is imperceptible and painless while the fulfilment is perceptible and pleasant. In other words, we do not realize that we are craving for beauty, so we avoid the unpleasant features of lack which we experience in the case of such needs as hunger; but when we are faced with beauty the relief and satisfaction are just as great as if we had been in agonies of longing. I do not think it is altogether true that in the case of beauty the want is imperceptible and painless, for someone starved of any beautiful sights or sounds might well have a fully conscious and painful desire for beauty, the satisfaction of which will not be qualitatively different from that experienced when a hungry man is given food. However, it would appear that what Plato is here driving at is related to what Kant meant when he spoke of 'disinterested satisfaction'. They both recognized that although man appears to have a desire for beauty so strong that it would seem reasonable to call it a need or drive, yet it is essentially different in character from
appetitive desires. It is true that we do not need beauty in the same way as we need food, for it is unlikely that a person would die if starved of beauty, though it may well be that we need it in the same way as we need intellectual stimulation or reciprocated love, where life would be very different and inferior if we were denied these things. So we can, and do, sometimes recognize our longing for beauty; it also appears that our level of acceptance of beauty is not static but will be extended as we experience more and more beauty.

But of course Plato's concept of beauty is not identical with the one we would normally employ. For him, to judge something to be beautiful is not just to endow it with a value judgement because we like the look of that thing, but it is to make a claim about the transcendent. So, to follow Plato at this point, we will need to adopt some of his assumptions about beauty. First, it is not confined to sensuous objects, so it is obviously going to be a larger concept than we might initially have expected: our normal assumption that people are using metaphors when they describe such things as manners or character as beautiful would not have been accepted by Plato. Beauty must also be seen as an objective property inherent in beautiful things rather than as man's subjective reaction to something. But the sense of whether something is beautiful comes, through anamnesis, from an inborn sense of beauty in all of us, not from any transient feeling of pleasure. Further, not everything that we like is truly beautiful. The concept of beauty which we find in the Laws is basically a Pythagorean one which Plato developed, namely that the essence of beauty lies in order (taxis), measure, proportion (symmetria), consonance and harmony. In other words, the property of beauty is
firstly dependent upon an arrangement between parts (disposition and harmony) and secondly is a numerical property expressible in numbers (measure, proportion). It is of this second basis that Plato speaks when he says that

"the qualities of measure and proportion (metriotes and symmetria) invariably constitute beauty and excellence" (Philebus 64e).

So the essence of beauty (indeed, as we shall later discover, of all good) lies in measure and proportion, and conversely

"the quality of disproportion .... is always ugly" (Sophist 228a).

Having already investigated the theories of the Pre-Socratic philosophers it is not too difficult to discover why these concepts of measure and proportion were seen by Plato to be essential features of beauty, namely that they are also fundamental to the whole kosmos and are thus basic to the way things are. In the Meno Plato commandeers the help of a young slave boy to prove to Meno that the soul is immortal. The boy acts a subject in Socrates' experiment which investigates how much geometry the boy can do when he has never, in this life, been taught such a subject. With the aid of questioning and prompting he is able to solve several questions and in so doing proves to Meno that his soul must have learned these things before birth. This is the essence of Plato's theory of anamnesis, which claims that our learning is but a remembering of things we knew before, the knowledge of which things we lost at birth or in early infancy. It is this Platonic doctrine that lies behind such lines in Wordsworth as

"The Child is father of the Man" (My heart leaps up); and

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home"  (Ode. Intimations of Immortality, V).

One of the figures that Plato and the boy explore together is the following, where there are two squares such that the side of one is equal to half the diagonal of the other:

The side AB of square ABCD = half the diagonal BC of square BEHD, and similarly with the other small squares which have C at one corner. This Plato considered to be an ideal proportion and therefore, presumably, beautiful in its own right. In the Timaeus (54) Plato holds that there are only five regular three dimensional figures which, because of their regularity, are 'perfect bodies'. In the myth accounted in the Timaeus, the world is founded on these five perfect proportions, for God must be incapable of using imperfect proportions. Plato recommends these same perfect proportions to artists and architects, especially the equilateral and Pythagorean triangles and his recommendations were followed by artists for centuries, largely determining the appearance of architecture through Greek and Roman times and into the Mediaeval period. As I suggested earlier in regard to the golden section, this could either be because artists were slavishly following his advice and producing designs in accord with his perfect proportions, or it could be that these proportions are
inherently satisfying to the eye and were arrived at by accident by anyone pursuing beauty. A third explanation would be that each generation, surrounded by the works of the preceding generation, is conditioned to see those properties as the most pleasing and so to produce art based on the same proportions which will thus condition the succeeding generations. We have only to look at some of the major breaks with tradition within our own art history to see how impossible it is initially for people to appreciate the beauty, or even to see what is presented, until they learn to accommodate the new style, proportions, perspective or whatever else. To speculate on this, however, is to take us too far from the task in hand.

Plato, like the Pre-Socratics, believes there to be an equilibrium in the kosmos, a balance and harmony, and this he speaks of in the Phaedo (109a) when Socrates describes the earth to Simmias:

"In the first place, if the earth is spherical and in the middle of the heavens, it needs neither air nor any other such force to keep it from falling; the uniformity of the heavens and the equilibrium of the earth itself are sufficient to support it. Any body in equilibrium, if it is set in the middle of a uniform medium, will have no tendency to sink or rise in any direction more than another, and having equal impulses will remain suspended".

Then, speaking of the constant movement of water and fire within the earth

"All this movement to and fro is caused by an oscillation inside the earth, and this oscillation is brought about by natural means, as follows. One of the cavities in the earth is not only larger than the rest, but pierces right through from one side to the other. It is of this that Homer speaks when he says, "Far, far way, where lies earth's deepest chasm", while elsewhere both he and many other poets refer to it as Tartarus. Into this gulf all the rivers flow together, and from it they flow forth again, and each acquires the nature of that part of the earth through which it flows".

The quotation from Homer (Iliad 8, 14) also illustrates how the poets are sometimes quoted by Plato as having perceived truth more clearly than others.
There are many other such passages in Plato's writings where through the delightful language of myth Plato presses home his underlying belief, taken over from earlier philosophers, in the inherent order and harmony of the kosmos. It is but a small step from here to the assertion made in his Laws (X) that the kosmos itself is a work of art created by the divine artist, God, the parts of which ordered kosmos are all subservient to the total design. Whilst this picture of the divine artist creating the perfect work of art was certainly treasured by Plato, I think it is by no means the only reason behind his looking for the same qualities in beauty as he did in the creation of the kosmos. The further reason lies in his equation of goodness with beauty:

"all that is good is beautiful, and what is good cannot lack proportion" (Timaeus 87c)

and this holds good for Plato whether he is speaking of the creation of the kosmos or the composing of a tune. It is measure, in fact, which determines the beauty of things, because it is measure which gives them unity and unity is that in which everything is bound together:

"Now two terms cannot be fairly wrought together without a third; there must be a bond between them to bring them together. The fairest of all bonds is that which makes itself and the terms it binds together most utterly one, and this is most perfectly effected by a proportion" (Timaeus 31c).

It also transpires that it is a characteristic of human reason to seek unity in multiplicity,

"seeing that man must needs understand the language of forms, passing from a plurality of perceptions to a unity gathered together by reasoning -- and such understanding is a recollection of those things which our souls beheld aforetime as they journeyed with their god, looking down upon things which now we suppose to be, and gazing up to that which truly is " (Phaedrus 249).

Leaving aside the doctrine of anamnesis (and so arousing
Plato's indignation), we see here exactly the same precepts as we encountered in the Pre-Socratics, where there is a unity in the cosmos as a result of the perfect proportions, the harmony and balance, and that the right reaction of man to this (in this case as the soul, in the more perfect, because more rational, state before incarnation) is contemplation, a "gazing up to that which truly is"; not searching for something outside the normal order, but entering into reality. In the Laws, which were written late in Plato's life, Plato claims that it is the sense of beauty specific to man, his sense of order, measure, proportion and harmony which is an expression of his "relationship with the gods", so it is hardly surprising that he should favour art which embodies this particular sense of beauty, and it was because of this that he favoured the art of the Egyptians, which he saw as being good art based on measure. I hope to show that this sense of the ultimate reality in the world is at the heart of the contemplative traditions in many of the world's religions and that art has at certain points in history, such as ancient Egypt and China been in harmony with these contemplative traditions.

To quote more fully the assertion in the Philebus referred to earlier: "The power of good has fled away into the nature of the beautiful; for measure and proportion are everywhere connected with beauty and virtue" (64e), we see that, since we are transported into discussion of the 'Real' and the 'Good', the concept of beauty is much more loaded in Plato than it is in current usage. It included not only things that gave joy on being seen or heard, but also everything else that caused admiration and enjoyment. Plato's Beauty, in fact, was aesthetic, moral and cognitive and was in some ways more akin to what we would call 'the Good'. This Beauty is, in fact, not just formed according to
the same laws as govern the creation of the cosmos, but is part of that creation, is the order behind the divine work of art. Small wonder that human works of art did not qualify even to be discussed in terms of this sort of beauty, although art can be created according to the same rules of harmony and proportion.

I think it will be seen from the foregoing that art for Plato had two functions. On the one hand it moulds character, for better or worse, and could therefore be instrumental in forming the ideal state. In this function it makes sense to control the material offered for consumption by the artists in the ways that Plato suggests in the Republic. The other function of art is to follow the laws governing the world, to penetrate the divine plan of the cosmos and shape things, create in accordance with it. In this function it is incumbent upon the artist to produce things which are "suitable, accurate and just, without deviations". In fact, any deviation from the laws governing the world must be a fault or a mistake. So while the first function of art is moral utility, which can be understood, acted upon, even manipulated by any artist willing to play the game, the second function is truthfulness, or rightness (orthotes), which is less likely to come from clever manipulation than from understanding. In view of this, art is unlikely even to get off the ground without the help of philosophy.
RELIGION

Whereas the first section of this chapter outlines Plato's practical and political objections to art, the section on Beauty went some way toward defining his philosophical objections. (It should be remembered that the very concept of philosophy for Plato is in fact a quasi-religious one). I wish to turn in this section to his more purely religious objections.

It will be pertinent to start this section by rehearsing the Allegory of the Cave as found in Republic Book VII, vii 514a—521b, and here I find that, foreign though illustration is to philosophy, clarity is enhanced and the allegory more easily conceptualized with the aid of a diagramatic drawing.

The picture Plato presents is of prisoners, chained together at foot and neck, sitting facing a wall all their lives. They are deep down within a cave so no sunlight penetrates to their cell. This imagery is redolent of the Greek poets' descriptions of Hades, the abode of the dead. Some way behind the prisoners, up the path to the entrance, is a
parapet with a track running behind it, both parapet and track running across the path at right angles to it. A little further up is a fire, so that when people pass back and forth across the track, although they cast no shadow on the end wall because they are lower than the parapet, the strange artificial objects and figures which they carry above their heads do cast shadows on the wall and these shadows are all that the prisoners have ever seen. Similarly, any sound that the people carrying the objects might make causes an echo to bounce, distorted, off the wall, so that it seems to the prisoners that the strange sounds they hear are the natural noises emitted by the dark figures that pass to and fro before their eyes.

The stage is thus set in such a way that the prisoners believe to be real the shadows of artificial objects to which their perception has always been limited. Plato then imagines the case of a prisoner being released from his chains and forced to walk towards the light. Painfully dazzled he would find it hard to believe that all he had 'clearly' seen before was illusion whilst the strange dark moving objects past which he is led are real. He is then dragged up the steep and rugged path to the outside world where he is practically blinded by the light and is unable for some time to see anything at all. As he slowly and painfully becomes accustomed to the light he will gradually be able to perceive shadows, then reflections in water, the moon and stars in the night sky, and eventually the full brightness of the real world in the sunlight and to understand the effect of the sun on the seasons, the growth, the warmth and the light. In this enlightened state he will realize how meagre and benighted his previous existence has been and how false and worthless was everything which he has valued and in which he has believed.
Plato continues the myth with the released prisoner glad to be in the light of day but remembering his fellow-prisoners in the Cave and feeling some responsibility for their continuing blindness. He returns to the Cave, but now, of course, cannot see in the darkness and appears to the other prisoners to have had his sight damaged by his adventure. They hold to the shadows which they believe to be real and will strongly resent any move he might make to compel them to leave their prison. They would even, suggests Plato, alluding to the death of Socrates, be prepared to kill the man. The parallel with Greek culture of the day is underlined by the suggestion that the prisoners might while away the time with contests, awarding prizes to the man who excelled in perceiving passing shadows or could memorize the order in which they passed and guess what would next appear: these prizes, Plato acidly suggests would not impress the man who has come to see clearly and who understands their worthlessness.

The meaning of the myth is fairly obvious, but its importance as an undercurrent in Plato’s thought cannot be overemphasized. We, as people, are prisoners of our image-ridden illusion, which he calls eikasia; if we never question our state it will appear to be the only reality there is and as it forms a self-consistent system all we believe, learn or aspire to will be done within the context of this prison of illusion. Our natural habitat is the real world where the sun shines, where we come to understand truth and reality, but this can only be attained through a struggle, through bafflement and pain. The ascent to enlightenment is the function of philosophy which generally starts with bafflement, as we see in the Meno, when Plato has caused the slave boy to be aware of his own ignorance and to wish to pursue the path of discovery:
"Do you suppose then that he would have attempted to look for, or learn, what he thought he knew, though he did not, before he was thrown into perplexity, became aware of his ignorance, and felt a desire to know?" (Meno 84).

The philosopher may pass through this state if he persists, though as is pointed out in the Letters (VII 341) some will not be able to complete the course and leave the Cave:

"As for those, however, who are not genuine converts to philosophy, but have only a superficial tinge of doctrine -- like the coat of tan that people get in the sun -- as soon as they see how many subjects there are to study, how much hard work they involve, and how indispensable it is for the project to adopt a well-ordered scheme of living, they decide that the plan is difficult if not impossible for them, and so they really do not prove capable of practising philosophy. Some of them too persuade themselves that they are well enough informed already on the whole subject and have no need of further application. This test then proves to be the surest and safest in dealing with those who are self-indulgent and incapable of continued hard work, since they throw the blame not on their guide but on their own inability to follow out in detail the course of training subsidiary to the project.... Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance of instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining".

But for those who persist there is clear perception, a vision of the true nature of the world:

"In the world of knowledge, the last thing to be perceived and only with great difficulty is the essential Form of Goodness. Once it is perceived, the conclusion must follow that, for all things, this is the cause of whatever is right and good; in the visible world it gives birth to light and to the lord of light, while it is itself sovereign in the intelligible world and the parent of intelligence and truth. Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom, either in his own life or in matters of state". (Republic VII 517).

Finally, those who attain this state are more than likely to be rejected and ridiculed by others who have not pursued the path towards enlightenment.

This then is one of Plato's myths. Myths are sometimes used by men to express the truths they feel most deeply and which they find to be inexpressible in normal language forms. Sometimes Plato speaks
of the whole of life as a pilgrimage from appearance to reality and sometimes it is only the very persistent philosopher who will even begin the ascent, but the contrast always stands between what we now are in our blinkered, fettered, unenlightened state and what we could be if we could just get outside the deceptions and illusions that ensnare us and come to understand the true nature of the cosmos. So our present state is bad because untruthful, in that it is a state of illusion, while the state we should be seeking is good because it is by its very nature the attainment and absorption of Truth. In the same way as we cannot come to understand and share in 'goodness' without truth, so we cannot attain to Truth without goodness. Here we come to Plato's deep objections to art in general and to mimetic art in particular. In the pilgrimage from appearance to reality which we should be undertaking, art is on the side of illusion and holds us back from the attainment of the perception of truth. For a start, art sticks to the particular and declines to question or go beyond the particular. Philosophy, as we have seen, starts from a state of bafflement and questions what it finds in the world. It believes present experience and the material offered by the senses to be illusion and presses on in the hope of discovering eternal qualities of truth and goodness. The illusionistic art which Plato abhorred, was wide open to this criticism; indeed the artists would not have considered it a criticism since this deception of the eye, to those in the flush of excitement over the development of such technical tricks as foreshortening and perspective, was the unashamed aim. Pliny the Elder, author of a Natural History, wrote of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, two rival painters in about 400 BC. In answer to a challenge by Parrhasius, Zeuxis drew aside a curtain covering his work to reveal a
painting of grapes so realistic that birds attempted to peck them. Turning triumphantly to Parrhasius' work he demanded that the curtain be drawn back from that, only to discover that the curtain itself was painted. Thus Parrhasius was considered the victor because his painting was more deceptive. Another of Pliny's stories tells how Appelles of Cos (whom Pliny considered to be an even greater artist than Zeuxis) entered into competition with other painters to see who could produce the most realistic work. He painted a group of horses so realistic that when real horses were led in they neighed with excitement, upon which Appelles was declared the winner since he could deceive the eyes not only of men but of animals as well. The acceptability of this sort of trompe l'oeil is well expressed by Euripides, an older contemporary of Plato, writing about Admetus in grief that his wife, Alcestis, is going to die, and planning to commission a work of sculpture to comfort himself when she has gone:

"And represented by the skillful hands
Of craftsmen, on the bed the body shall
Be laid; whereon I shall fall in embrace
And clasp my hands around it, call thy name,
And fancy in my arms my darling wife
To hold, holding her not; perhaps, I grant,
Illusory delight, yet my soul's burden
Thus should I lighten..."

(Alcestis, 348-54).

The capturing of an image of reality is itself achieved by means of trickery, as, for instance, we learn, again from Pliny, who reports a Hellenistic critic praising the way Parrhasius creates the illusion of roundness:

"for the outline must go round and so end, that it promises something else to lie behind and thereby shows even what it obscures" (Natural History, XXXV,67,68).

The art which Plato contrasts with this decadent illusionism was symbolic more than naturalistic and strove to represent the eternal
essence of things rather than the fleeting moment. This is an important contrast to make and one which has been made at other times and by other people than Plato, for there are pendula that swing back and forth in art history as in the history of anything else. So at times artists have concentrated on the eternal essence and at other times have tried to capture and reproduce the fleeting moment.

It is partly because of these two completely different aims in art that we have the enormous diversity in the way that 'similar' things have been represented in history, which posed for Ernst Gombrich such a problem and which he set out to investigate and explain, not altogether satisfactorily, in his book 'Art and Illusion'. The phenomenon also makes sense of the fact, puzzling to many, that the new developments in the techniques of illusionistic art, so excitedly won by the Greeks, were later lost and to some extent had to be rediscovered in the Renaissance. Byzantine art was not aiming, primarily, at the illusion that one has captured the fleeting moment, or the satisfaction of duping spectators into thinking that a man-created image is reality, but in expressing the essence of the person, event or doctrine under consideration and the portrayal, possibly in symbolic form, of its eternal values. This aim in art, which is often associated with its more religious or magical function, and to which I shall later return, came to another period of flowering in the late middle ages and was lost as the Renaissance, with its opposing aim, came into the ascendent:

"The change of spirit which divides Renaissance and modern art from that of the Middle Ages consists in the fact that mediaeval art was frankly and definitely magical, while Renaissance and modern art was not".  

So wrote R.G.Collingwood in 'The Principles of Art', recognizing one
of the symptoms of the pendulum swing, as Tolstoy had already done in more evaluative terms in 'What is Art?', where he said that the religious feeling 'fell off' and that this led to a speedy decline in the standard of art.

This, then, constitutes a major objection to art which was voiced by Plato and it is a two-fold objection. We only arrive at Truth by questioning, going through a stage of bafflement and reaching beyond the immediately obvious: philosophy does this while art sets out to capture only the present moment. This error on the part of art is further compounded by the fact that the purpose of mimetic art is to deceive people into taking an image for reality, which is a falsehood and thus contrary to truth. But there is a sense in which Plato would wish to go still further and condemn art even when it is not illusionistic. What we should be desiring in all our activities is 'perception' but many of the efforts we make towards this are in fact responsible for taking us further away from it. Thought itself, in so far as it is internal speech, is set against perception for it is a form of symbolism. Language is bad enough, being a complicated symbol system, but writing and mimetic art introduce yet further symbols and therefore draw another veil between our present state and perception of truth. At this point Plato's attack on art is similar to his attack on the Sophists who manipulated the language and thought symbols, so creating an illusion of philosophy which drew many young men to them but which, according to Plato, did not issue in perception. Plato himself was not in favour of writing generally. He felt that possessing the tool of writing led to mental laziness as people did not need to commit things to memory if they could write them down and I am sure he would have strongly disapproved of students frantically
scribbling notes in lectures rather than listening in a receptive state in order to extract from the lecture whatever is relevant, interesting, convincing and above all, true. A parallel caution to that which Plato offered in regard to writing might be suggested in regard to pocket calculators today where the possession of, and subsequent reliance upon them, could lead to a decline in the facility of mental arithmetic. But Plato's quarrel with writing went deeper than this practical educational one and was concerned with how many systems of symbol came between a person and a perception of Truth. In many of the dialogues, where he is necessarily constrained to use language (though he rarely puts long speeches in the mouth of Socrates), he is, in effect, persuading someone to go into himself in the hope of coming to a sudden non-verbal flash of insight and understanding which cannot come from instruction or reading. I would, of course, wish to challenge this latter claim and assert that reading, especially of a work of art, can lead to exactly this inner flash of the perception of truth which he is encouraging people to pursue. But this is not the place to argue this claim: the strength of this belief will be apparent later.

Art, or works of art, can be held in high esteem by people and be treated with respect as the bearers of truth. Iris Murdoch makes these high claims for art:

"Good art, thought of as symbolic force rather than statement, provides a stirring image of a pure transcendent value, a steady visible enduring higher good, and perhaps provides many people, in an unreligious age without prayer or sacraments, their clearest experience of something grasped as separate and precious and beneficial and held quietly and unpossessively in the attention. Good art which we love can seem holy and attending to it can be like praying. Our relation to such art though 'probably never' entirely pure is markedly unselfish. The calm joy in the picture gallery is quite unlike the pleasurable flutter felt in the sale room. Beauty is, as Plato says, visibly transcendent; hence indeed the metaphor of
vision so indispensable in discussions of aesthetics and morality". (The Fire and the Sun, page 76)

These sentiments, which I am sure are true, are brought in by Iris Murdoch in defence of art, but would, I suspect, have been seen by Plato to substantiate his claim that art is basically false. For it does, in this description, provide a symbol replacing religion, or philosophy, or the pursuit of Truth and is all the more dangerous in that it possesses this pseudo-spirituality. While people are pursuing the symbol system which is art, thinking that they are perceiving truth, they are still sitting in the depths of the cave applauding the beauty and reality of the shadows rather than beginning the painful ascent to the sunlight.

So art can be an obstacle by providing a substitute for philosophy, but even when it is not taking the place of this higher calling it undoes the work of philosophy by "deliberately fusing knowledge by acquaintance with knowledge by description".

"Here is a question, then, that we may fairly put to Homer or to any other poet ... we will ask them to explain, for instance, why it is that, if they have a knowledge of medicine and not merely the art of reproducing the way physicians talk, there is no record of any poet, ancient or modern, curing patients and bequeathing his knowledge to a school of medicine, as Asclepius did. But when Homer undertakes to tell us about matters of the highest importance, such as the conduct of war, statesmanship, or education, we have a right to inquire into his competence" (Republic X 599).

The artist imitates doctors' talk, so passing on a knowledge by description, the very existence of which discourages people from seeking a true knowledge by acquaintance with the subject at issue, in this case medicine. The same applies to all other subjects, as Plato illustrates in regard to shoemaking and leather-working, or anything else an artist may care to represent or write about:

"Does he know from direct experience of the subjects he portrays whether his representations are good and right or not? Has he even
gained a correct belief by being obliged to listen to someone who does know and can tell him how they ought to be represented?"

The answer Plato demands is, of course, 'No!'
CHAPTER 4

THE FIRE AND THE ROSE

In the preceding chapter I have mainly restricted myself to ideas which come out at various stages in the Republic. As noted earlier, Plato had a serious educational, possibly propagandist, aim in this work and is dealing with the realm of the possible more than what we might call, in normal non-Platonic language, the realm of the ideal. For an excursion into this latter realm we should turn to the Symposium and some of the shorter dialogues. In so doing I hope to show a further strain in Plato's thought which is every bit as important as the pursuit of philosophy which we have extracted from the strictures and recommendations of the Republic. Here the myth which embodies the essence of his thought, instead of representing the prisoner struggling painfully uphill towards the unknown blinding reality of the true world, paints a happy picture of the soul growing wings and taking flight towards the beloved:

"...as soon as he beholds the beauty of this world, is reminded of true beauty and his wings begin to grow; then is he fain to lift his wings and fly upwards" (Phaedrus 249D).

In consideration of this aspect of Plato's philosophy we find him grappling with a force stronger and stranger than the powers of reason:

"When the irrational desire that prevails over the conviction which aims at right is directed at the pleasure derived from beauty, and in the case of physical beauty powerfully reinforced by the appetites which are akin to it, so that it emerges victorious, it takes its name from the very power with which it is endowed and is called eros or passionate love" (Phaedrus 238).

(Plato here plays on the words 'rhome' which means power and 'eros' meaning love: certainly his concept of the Eros does seem to combine
the two ideas).

Iris Murdoch, again in 'The Fire and the Sun' draws out the importance of the Eros for Plato:

"Plato's Eros is a principle which connects the commonest human desire to the highest morality and to the pattern of divine creativity in the universe" (page 33).

I am sure that she is correct in her assessment of the importance of this concept in an understanding of Plato's approach to art and beauty, and the purpose of this chapter is to investigate its place in Plato's philosophy.

There are statements which, at least in translation, sound fairly mild. For instance, in the Republic (403) we find

"Then is not our account of education in poetry and music now complete? It has ended where it ought to end, in the love of beauty".

In the Greek we find that the account has ended

"εἰς τα τοῦ καλοῦ ἐρωτικά"

and that the love is not just an appreciation, or even a mild admiration, but passionate love, the Eros. Sometimes Plato uses eros as a normal noun, as in the English 'the love of wisdom', sometimes as a force and sometimes as a god: I think the three uses differ only in content and in the extent of the metaphorical use, not in meaning or strength. What then, for Plato, is this Eros?

"Well, do you not hold Love to be a god, the child of Aphrodite?" he replies in Phaedrus 242d. Here Plato is taking over the current myth of Eros and adapting it to suit his needs. Eros was unknown in Homeric times but makes his appearance in Hesiod's 'Theogony' in the eighth century BC, where he is the son of Erebus and Night. Other sources make him the son of Aphrodite, ascribing fatherhood variously to Ares, Hermes and Zeus. He was the youngest of the gods, with strong,
contradictory attributes, such as being cruel and charming, gracious and rebellious, and although on occasions Aphrodite punished his malice by confiscating his wings and quiver, in general he was her willing servant. Most relevant to the present discussion is the fact that in Hesiod Eros is the one who "brings harmony to chaos" and thus permits life to develop. In this sense he becomes a semi-abstract personification of the cosmic force and this is roughly the status he has maintained in Plato's system.

Plato's Eros is not genteel and acceptable in polite society, but is a daemon, the mixed-up child of poverty and Plenty. In the Symposium Diotima of Mantinea describes to Socrates how Eros came to be born of Poverty and Contrivance. Through trickery he was conceived on the day that Aphrodite was born when all the gods had celebrated the birth and this is why he loves beauty. But the parentage is a strange one and gives him certain characteristics:

"He is always poor, and, far from being sensitive and beautiful, as most people imagine, he is hard and weather-beaten, shoeless and homeless, always sleeping out for want of a bed, on the ground, on doorsteps, and in the street. So far he takes after his mother and lives in want. But, being also his father's son, he schemes to get for himself whatever is beautiful and good; he is bold and forward and strenuous, always devising tricks like a cunning huntsman; he yearns after knowledge, and is full of resource and is a lover of wisdom all his life, a skilful magician, an alchemist, a true sophist" (Symposium 203).

Looking at Eros in terms of a force, rather than a predictable personal deity, Plato would wish us to see it as manifest in the tyrant's lust for power and the paederast's obsession as well as in the creation of great art, the solving of a mathematical puzzle and the dedication of a Florence Nightingale. Its positive value, for Plato, is that it is the force in us and in all creation which longs for goodness and beauty, and as the lover of wisdom is what brings us
to philosophy and truth. Implicit in an understanding of Eros is this longing for the good, whatever the good is taken to be, and for the perpetual possession of the good which is immortality. What is perceived as good will be pursued relentlessly using whatever means are at his disposal, including subterfuge and trickery. But we only desire that which we lack, for if we possessed it already there would be no need to desire it. So when we say that Eros desires beauty, wisdom and the good, we are implying that he does not in himself possess these things. The desire, or to put it in stronger terms, as does Plato, the longing for these things which Eros inspires in people leads them on the quest for reality, urges them to leave their chains and climb the path out of the Cave.

Eros is meant to convey the idea of passionate love and this is emphasized by its obsessive quality, its yearning and by its procreative function:

"The function is that of procreation in what is beautiful and such procreation can be either physical or spiritual" (Symposium 205).

What is the progeny, then, that Eros longs to beget?

"The object of love..." Diotima tells Socrates, "is to procreate and bring forth in beauty" (Symposium 207) - "τόκος ἐν καλω"

and this will be manifest as sexual love, or love of fame, or love of wisdom. The imagery of childbirth is widespread in Plato and whereas on occasions he refers to the philosopher as an excellent lover, at other times he identifies the philosopher with the midwife who helps to deliver the child after someone has been in mental labour. Then in the Phaedrus Beauty itself is seen as a nursing mother of truth and goodness, being that from which they come and which nourishes them.

There are many references to the culturally acceptable love of younger men in Greek society and most of the comments about sexual
love refer to homosexual relationships, but it soon becomes clear that though such passions teach about the intensity of the concept under discussion, it is the desire for beauty which is the driving force behind Eros. So in the Symposium Diotima of Mantinea outlines the proper way to learn to love beauty. Through loving one particular person one becomes a lover of all physical beauty. Then, through better acquaintance, one comes to reckon beauty of soul more valuable than beauty of body. From thence one learns to contemplate Beauty as it exists in activities and institutions, then in morals and sciences which leads one on to the love of wisdom and so to the contemplation of absolute beauty, or the form of beauty.

"This beauty is first of all eternal; it neither waxes nor wanes; next, it is not beautiful in part and ugly in part, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, nor beautiful in this relation and ugly in that, nor beautiful here and ugly there, as varying according to its beholders; nor again will this beauty appear to him like the beauty of a face or hands or anything else corporeal, or like the beauty of a thought or a science, or like beauty which has its seat in something other than itself, be it a living thing or the earth or the sky or anything else whatever; he will see it as absolute, existing alone with itself, unique, eternal, and all other beautiful things as partaking of it, yet in such a manner that, while they come into being and pass away, it neither undergoes any increase or diminution nor suffers any change" (Symposium 211).

So through exploration of Plato's Eros we are brought back to Beauty.

Analysis of the concept of Love in English is rendered difficult by its etymological looseness, but it is so central to Plato's philosophy and has similarly played an enormous part in several other systems that it is worth trying to extract the essence of the meaning. By the time of the New Testament a new word, ἀγάπη, was being used, and some of the Christian ideas about agape would seem to be appropriate to Plato's Eros, as for example, in I Corinthians 13. But this love is self-sacrificial and also, although eternal, lacks some of the passion and fury of the Eros. But the love that the
Christian God is said to bear towards humanity, though described in paternal terms and given self-sacrificing attributes by its assimilation into Jesus Christ, is perhaps more aptly described in terms of the Eros. Saint John of the Cross amongst others, following the tradition of the Old Testament Song of Songs, describes God’s relationship to man in erotic terms and some of his imagery is very similar to Plato’s;

"For love is like to fire, which ever leaps upwards, with desire to be engulfed in the centre of its sphere" (The Dark Night of the Soul, page 239).

The poetry of St. John of the Cross is probably more blatantly erotic than anything else that western religions have produced. The human soul turns to God in darkness:

Oh noche, que guiaste,
Oh noche amable mas que el alborada:
Oh noche, que juntaste
Amada con amada,
¡Amada en el Amado transformada!

¡Oh night that was my guide!
Oh darkness dearer than the morning’s pride,
Oh night that joined the lover
To the beloved bride
Transfiguring them each into the other.

En mi pecho florido,
Que entero para el solo se guardaba,
Allí quedo dormido,
Y yo le regalaba,
Y el ventalle de cedros aire daba.

Within my flowering breast
Which only for himself entire I save
He sank into his rest
And all my gifts I gave
Lulled by the airs with which the cedars wave.

El aire de la almena,
Cuando yo sus cabellos esparcia,
Con su mano serena
En mi cuello hería,
Y todos mis sentidos suspendía.
Over the ramparts fanned
While the fresh wind was fluttering his tresses,
With his serenest hand
My neck he wounded, and
Suspended every sense with its caresses.

Quedeme, y olvideme,
El rostro recline sobre el Amado,
Ceso todo, y dejeme,
Dejando mi cuidado
Entre las azucenal olvidado.

Lost to myself I stayed
My face upon my lover having laid
From all endeavour ceasing:
And all my cares releasing
Threw them amongst the lilies there to fade."

This is not just imaginative metaphor to emphasize the importance of a relationship between God and man, but a description of the force of the contemplative experience and of the paradoxes involved in any understanding of life and death in terms which take account of powers outside man.

Oh llama de amor viva,
Que tiernamente hieres
¡De mi alma en al mas profundo centro!
Pues ya no eres esquiva,
Acaba ya si quieres,
Rome la tela deste dulce encuentro.

Oh flame of love so living,
How tenderly you force
¡To my soul's inmost core your fiery probe!
Since now you've no misgiving,
End it, pursue your course
¡And for our sweet encounter tear the robe!

¡Oh cautério suave!
¡Oh regalada llaga!
Oh mano blanda! Oh toque delicado,
Que a vida eterna sabe,
¡Y toda deuda paga!
Matando, muerte en vida la has trocado.

¡Oh cautery most tender!
¡Oh gash that is my guerdon!
¡Oh gentle hand!¡Oh touch how softly thrilling!
Eternal life you render,
Raise of all debts the burden
¡And change my death to life, even while killing!
In contrast to this imagery which St. John of the Cross is attempting to express literally, we find John Donne using erotic imagery still vividly, but more acceptably as metaphor:

"Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;

Yet dearely'I love you, and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto your enemie:
Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee" (Holy Sonnets XIV).

Once this erotic element becomes metaphorical, although it is likely to produce fine poetry it lacks the force of Plato's image. Consequently much Christian literature substitutes the word 'love' for 'God', then rather than ascribing the properties of Eros to the personality of God, ascribes culturally popular attributes of God to the concept of Love. For example in the following poem by George Herbert 'Love' is used with a meaning identical to 'God'.

"Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lacked anything.

'A guest', I answered, 'worthy to be here.'
Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee.'
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not', says Love, 'who bore the blame?'
'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down', says Love, 'and taste my meat.
So I did sit and eat'.

But it is interesting that a tradition of the celebration of Love has continued which has not been subsumed into Christianity. One of the
finest examples of this can be found in the writings of Shakespeare; for example, I am sure that Plato would have thoroughly approved of Sonnet CXVI:

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved".

It may seem strange to be quoting poetry in a philosophical treatise. I am not doing it in order to show that the sentiment of love has inspired great art, which presumably goes without questioning, but to point to a post-Platonic celebration of the importance of the Eros as a cosmic force. In the Shakespearian sonnet, although a theist may wish to substitute 'God' for 'Love' throughout and use the poem as a description of an immortal deity, this was not Shakespeare's intention, so a simple translation into Christian imagery is inappropriate. On the other hand, although there has been much speculation over the years as to for whom the sonnets were written, the 'dark lady of the sonnets', the nun, the 'young man among roses', I am convinced that the Love Shakespeare is referring to in much of his greatest poetry is not just the pairing bond celebrated in romantic literature. This other emotion has also inspired much art and from the minstrel's admiration for the lady, through the German Romantics' starry-eyed obsession with millers' maids, and on to contemporary 'blue films' we find this individualizing concept of the
erotic. Shakespeare himself also described this emotion, as well as other related ones such as Titania's obsession, but the pairing bond frequently becomes a symbol for the greater mystical love we are discussing.

"So they lov'd, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one;
Two distinct, division none:
Number there in love was slain. ....

.... That it cried, How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one!
Love hath reason, reason none,
If what parts can so remain."

(The Phoenix and the Turtle).

But Shakespeare was no idealist and would not have imagined that attraction leading to pairing of two humans was often of this immutable form, for he accepted that "every fair from fair sometime declines"; otherwise neither he, nor any other poet, would have continued to write poetry with the intensity and longing Plato ascribed to Eros after they had found satisfactory human relationships. The imagery is of pairs, as it is in Plato, because pairs exemplify the procreative aspect of Love, but Plato did not suppose that the erotic love of a man for a boy would really issue in the birth of a child, or Shakespeare believe that he would lay the Eros to rest if he persuaded a woman to vow eternal constancy to him.

In Mozart's 'Magic Flute' when all the characters join in a great hymn of love, they are not just showing delight that two people are going to live together, but celebrating the force that Plato saw as drawing people out of themselves to seek for the good and beautiful.

To recapitulate: Eros is a personification of a cosmic force which is creating and sustaining the world. It is not subservient to man's systems of morality, respectability, self-seeking or religion.
but surges forward overcoming obstacles by fair means or foul in pursuit of what is good and desired as an end in itself. For some writers it has been feasible to identify it with the Judao/Christian God and it certainly occurs within the Hindu system of divinities, but it has also been celebrated through the ages as an essential cosmic force which alters people's lives in dramatic and far-reaching ways, sending them to war, to martyrdom and to the relentless pursuit of truth. In this process the individual pairing experience may play its part:

"'Falling in love', a violent process which Plato more than once vividly describes (Love is abnegation, abjection, slavery) is for many people the most extraordinary and most revealing experience of their lives, whereby the centre of significance is suddenly ripped out of the self, and the dreamy ego is shocked into awareness of an entirely separate reality" (Iris Murdoch, page 36);

but rather than being the end of the process it is an example of the working of a greater and more universal force. The end which is sought is Beauty and we will come in the next section to our response to Beauty. So we find in the 'Symposium' the conclusion towards which all the discussion of the Eros has been leading:

"'This above all others, my dear Socrates," the woman from Mantinea continued, "is the region where a man's life should be spent, in the contemplation of absolute Beauty'."  (Symposium 212).
Having instated the Eros as a central feature of Plato's philosophy we can now turn to his views on how erotic love should be manifested in the human being. First on the practical level, whilst recommending intense love between men and particularly on the part of an older man towards a beautiful boy, he clearly considered physical chastity to be desirable. So the Eros comes across as an immensely powerful force which it is as well to both cooperate with and control.

This is clearly shown in Plato's myth describing the soul. He suggests that the human soul is of three parts: a charioteer, a good horse and a bad horse. When the soul finds another who most closely resembles his ideals, he falls in love, the followers of Hera falling for a royal nature, the followers of Zeus for one concerned with leadership and philosophy:

"And so each selects a fair one for his love after his disposition, and even as if the beloved himself were a god he fashions for himself as it were an image, and adorns it to be the object of his veneration and worship" (Phaedrus 252d).

Inspired by the Eros the bad horse then lunges forward desiring to dominate and possess the beloved and must therefore be restrained, on occasions violently and painfully, while the good horse, obedient and modest, desires only to serve and adore. It is tempting in the twentieth century to relate Plato's mythical description of the soul to Freud's analysis of the personality in terms of ego, id and super ego, and Freud certainly was impressed and influenced by Plato. But Freud's theory has been forced into a different mould and interpreted by some as a kind of 'scientific fact' and has thus, I believe, lost the force and usefulness of mythical truth which Plato's retains.

After the struggles the soul may come to the true state of
Eros which is disinterested and non-possessive and in this state can escape the dread regions of eikasia and come clearly to perceive and so to contemplate Beauty:

"when at last she has beheld being she is well content, and contemplating truth is nourished and prospers, until the heaven's revolution brings her back full circle. And while she is borne round she discerns justice, its very self, and likewise temperance, and knowledge, not the knowledge that is neighbour to becoming and varies with the various objects to which we commonly ascribe being, but the veritable knowledge of being that veritably is. And when she has contemplated likewise and feasted upon all else that has true being, she descends again within the heavens and comes back home. And having so come, her charioteer sets his steeds at their manger, and puts ambrosia before them and draught of nectar to drink withall" (Phaedrus 247).

Through the refining process through which the soul comes to partake in the Eros she flies to "that place beyond the heavens" where "true being dwells" and where she can have the ultimate form of knowledge which is contemplation. The process is a circular one and truth dawns as the revolution comes back to the starting point. All mystics have valued the image of the circle, the eternal contained within itself, and Plato's picture of the soul at this point is echoed in Sufi mysticism, for example when, at the end of Attar's 'The Conference of the Birds', that which has long been sought says:

"Come, you lost atoms, to your Centre draw,,
And be the Eternal Mirror that you saw;
Rays that have wandered into darkness wide,
Return, and back into your Sun subside". (Happold).

Henry Vaughan described the sphere of things beyond normal understanding as a great circle:

"I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright;
And round about it, Time, in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled".

But perhaps Plato's image of the soul coming full circle to truth is
best captured at the end of T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' which moves in the same direction as Plato's thought from Love to Contemplation:

"With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always —
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one".

So we have the image of the circle, time being eternal and all time being contained in the present moment rather than being a chronological progression or sequence of events. In this circle the soul, through the working of Eros, comes to the contemplation of the ultimate. What the ultimate is for Plato varies somewhat, but as he is actually presenting a monism it does not very much matter what name is applied to the first principle on which his monism is built; it is "The divine nature, which is fair, wise and good, and possessed of all other such excellences" (Phaedrus 246E).

The circle-image, for Plato, is, of course, steeped in his theory of anamnesis, for the soul recognizes beauty when she arrives back at it principally because she has perceived it before. As the slave-boy in the Meno came to understand geometry because of knowledge he acquired before his present existence, so the soul recognizes
beauty because it has, in a pure state, contemplated Beauty before:

"every human soul has, by reason of her nature, had contemplation of true being; else would she never have entered into this human creature; but to be put in mind thereof by things is not easy for every soul" (Phaedrus 250).

But as well as supporting Plato's theory of anamnesis, this image of the circle suggests the infolding of everything into a unity. The good and bad horses are held in tension, the bad horse providing much of the necessary impetus whilst being checked from excesses by the good horse, so that the soul learns love and comes to recognize reality with all things contained within the circle, and so to contemplate. Goodness, beauty, truth, all are one because they are all part of the ultimate reality,

"So now we find that the good has taken refuge in the character of the beautiful, for the qualities of measure and proportion invariably, I imagine, constitute beauty and excellence" (Philebus 64e).

Of course the ultimate reality means seeing things as they really are, both the small and insignificant and the whole cosmos. If the cosmos is the given, or the reality with which we must contend, then to understand the nature of the cosmos is to work in harmony with it and to show the same qualities that one perceives in the cosmos in one's art, private life, government and everything else. This understanding of the cosmos comes by contemplation:

"Well, said I, perhaps there is a pattern of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen" (Republic IX).

Having explored some mythical and poetic aspects of Plato's thought, let us set these aside in order to clarify what he meant by this much-used notion of contemplation and discover whether his concept of contemplation is one which is acceptable and useful to us.

First it would appear that the reason for engaging in
contemplation is that man needs and therefore loves goodness and beauty (Plato is unashamedly idealist in this area). Plato also consistently suggests that the attainment of the state of contemplation will undoubtedly involve conflict and pain, the ascent into the blinding light of Truth and reality, but that these will be part of the experience of Eros, which is powerful and good but has its negative side which must be held in tension with the positive. Part of the Truth which the man engaged in contemplation will come to is the Truth of self-knowledge, for self is part of the given reality. This pursuit of self-knowledge remained an important fruit of contemplation in the Christian tradition where the object of contemplation was God, in that it was believed that contemplation of this God brought a person to greater knowledge and understanding of his own nature.

But referring to the fruits attained through contemplation would seem to suggest that contemplation is an activity, whereas I have implied, following the Pre-Socratics and Plato, that it is a form of perception. Plato himself is not consistent in his categorization, for he also claims that it is pure knowledge unsullied by self-interest, a response to the way the world is and an activity which man ought to embark upon. This confusion is further compounded later in Christian thought where contemplation sometimes appears to be an activity which is chosen as one of the alternative methods of prayer available to the spiritual man, and sometimes as the restful attitude of the soul in loving awareness of God. Does 'contemplation' denote the same activity in these different cases, or is it in fact a family of different and rather loosely related activities?

In investigating the origins of the concept we discovered that 'theoria', the word used by the ancient Greeks, meant 'viewing',
suggesting that at its most basic it is a 'seeing'. But it was not just any form of seeing. It was exercised in academic enquiry and in response to beauty, in recognizing the order and harmony which early philosophers believed to be in the kosmos and which they also found in works of art which were created according to the kanon or nomos. It was not itself the response to the work of art or to the science, but the perception of certain features.

'Perception' and 'sensation' have sometimes been used to denote the same process, the only difference being that the vehicle of sensation is normally specified. Thus we have visual sensations, audial, haptic and olfactory sensations, all of which constitute perceptions. But following Thomas Reid in 1764 philosophers have tended to separate the two concepts by allowing perception a more cognitive interpretation, so that perception
"implies both a conception of its form and a belief of its present existence" (Inquiry into the Human Mind, VI, xx).

However, to the extent that this distinction necessitates an epistemic analysis of perception it has not received universal acceptance. It is therefore necessary to outline what one means by claiming that perception is epistemic rather than non-epistemic.

Ryle, who frequently equates 'perception' and 'observation' distinguished these from sensation in his 'Concept of Mind' by indicating the ridiculous vortex one gets into if one understands 'having a sensation' to be a species of perceiving.

'This means that having a glimpse of a horse-race is explained in terms of his having a glimpse of something else, the patchwork of colours. But if having a glimpse of a horse race entails having at least one sensation, then having a glimpse of colour patches must again involve having at least one appropriate sensation, which in its turn must be analysed into the sensing of yet an earlier sensum, and so on for ever" (page 203).
The receiving of sense-data such as patches of colours and concatenations of sounds may be one way of interpreting sensation, and was the model adopted by Berkeley, but it is not what most people mean when they speak of seeing or hearing. One can have a purely physical sensation, which is something that occurs in one's own body when certain nerve endings are activated in particular ways, but seeing or hearing the objects which caused the nerve endings to be thus activated is a different activity. But the 'seeing' sensation is not epistemic in quite the same way that perception is often claimed to be, for if someone were staring at a weird shape in the mist one evening unable to make out what it was, there is a weak sense in which one could say "He saw the tree" whereas one could not say "He perceived the tree" since he had no idea what it was. The ambiguity of our use of sensing can be seen by the fact that I could reasonably say to the person "You did see it even though you didn't know what it was" while he could reply "I did not see it because I did not realize that there was a tree there". Similarly if one passes someone without registering that one has seen them and then later realizes that one has, one could claim both that one has and that one has not seen them.

There is a sense in which distinguishing sensation from perception by claiming that the second is and the first is not epistemic will not work, for if we assert with Gombrich and others that seeing is not just being the victim of sense-data, then seeing itself requires a certain cognition. In many instances we cannot see until we know what it is we are seeing: for example the hidden figure in a picture, or the tree in the mist. When we have learnt what it is, then we can see it, though some would argue that at this point one has passed from a mere visual sensation to perception. However, if our
informant leads us astray and tells us that the shape in the mist is an elephant and in looking at it we can make sense of this interpretation, then we might wish to claim that we 'see' an elephant even though there is no elephant there. One can even see one thing as another, on purpose, knowing perfectly well that it is not that thing, hence the facility of 'seeing-as' which Gombrich and Wollheim discuss in their analysis of art. Hamlet, too, capitalizes on this facility in teasing Polonius, encouraging him to see the cloud first as a camel, then as a weasel, then as a whale. When, in the case of the object in the mist, one later learns that it was a tree, not an elephant, one might well still wish to insist that one saw an elephant: 'I'm sorry, it might well be a tree, but what I saw was an elephant'. Similarly, a non-believer in ghosts will often accept an assertion that a person definitely 'saw' the ghost without being convinced that there was a ghost (or anything else) that he saw. However, when one claims to have 'perceived' an elephant and then learns that it was a tree, one is bound to admit to a 'misperception'.

D.M. Armstrong takes the epistemic quality of perception to its extreme, claiming it to be

"the acquiring knowledge of, or inclination to believe in, particular facts about the physical world, by means of the senses, normally accompanied by knowledge of the means" (Perception and the Physical World, page 114).

This would appear to take perception too far into the epistemic realm by transferring the nub of the activity to the mind. It may be true that cognition is necessary to perception but the activity of acquiring that knowledge or belief which comes through the senses is actually the perception. If the taste of acidity brings one to knowledge of the sourness of lemons, one cannot say that the tasting
is knowledge.

It is of no great consequence to the present thesis whether perception is epistemic, for whether it is or is not does not affect the proposition that contemplation is a particular form of perception which does involve some species of cognition. But in order to avoid any confusion of terms I would offer the following distinctions in the area of perception and sensation.

1. When we speak of being dazzled or deafened or caused extreme bodily pain we use the word 'sensation' to refer not to the objects in the outside world but to events occurring in our own bodies. It is not just that observable changes take place in our bodies, such as dilation of the eye or contraction of muscles, for these are also observable to a lesser degree in other forms of sensation. We do not really mean that we saw or heard a particular X but that, whether or not there was any X in the outside world, we had a certain unpleasant experience in our bodies. This class I refer to as physical sensations and is of little interest to the present topic.

2. Next, although it is common to equate 'sensation' and 'perception' I find it more helpful to distinguish them in order to allow for our 'seeing' in the weak sense which is accepted in common parlance. This is not Berkeley's theory of receiving sense-data and then interpreting them, for it is clear that it is things we see, not patches of colour. (This does not preclude the possibility that we can on occasions choose to see things as patches of colour and so to abstract them from the world of physical and identifiable objects, as, for example, in the amusing anecdote related in Gide's Journals:

"'Yes, I am very fond of Mme E.," said Cocteau, "and I admire her. She is so sincere. Just take this for instance - she went to see Debussy's body laid out; but when, later on, she was asked:"Well, how did it
look?" "Why, I don't know," she replied; "I didn't see him at all. I see nothing but colours." And that's true. Isn't that wonderful: she sees nothing but colour!" (page 305).

All that is necessary for this sensation is that the mind can cope with what the senses receive. As Gombrich illustrates in Art and Illusion, we cannot see until we can impose a possible form on the object before us, but even if we impose the wrong form on it so that our experience does not agree with reality, we still have the sensation of seeing. It is not that all sensations and perceptions are epistemic, the first being perception and the second perception-that; but that sensation leads us to a belief or opinion about how X looks while perception leads to a belief or opinion about how X is.

Ryle's distinction of 'verbs of achievement' and 'verbs of undertaking' is of no help in this instance for it would appear that this form of seeing may or may not be registered, which is what Ryle's 'achievement' amounts to. Don Locke equates Ryle's 'achievement' with what A.R. White calls 'reception' (Attention; Blackwell 1964) and claims that what both of them have in mind is what would normally be called 'noticing'. When I pass a car in the High Street I can notice it or fail to notice it. If I fail, yet it is possible for my mind to process it and I may well realize some minutes later that I have seen it, or even days later if subjected to hypnosis. At this stage the image of how the car appeared to me will present itself to me, though I may not recall, because I did not perceive, the further information that it was my friend's car. I may then, as a further step, recognize that what I 'saw' was in fact my friend's car: I then perceive my friend's car. If on the other hand I pass a giraffe in the High Street it is unlikely that I would not notice it, so it would probably be registered by me more or less immediately ('more or less' because I
should wish to verify the unexpected information rather carefully). Because giraffes in the High Street are somewhat uncommon, my eye will probably be unable to slip lazily over that object; the surprised mind will jump to attention and I am therefore more likely to perceive the giraffe. This is similar to the formula in Communication Theory which postulates that the information content of an utterance is in inverse ratio to the probability of its occurrence.

3. Although it is not necessary to my thesis, I am taking perception to be epistemic. In the same way as we cannot see (sensation) without the operation of our minds at some minimal level, it is even more clear that we cannot 'perceive' (which in the Latin 'per-capere' implies that one has taken hold of something, or as we would say, has grasped it) without the operation of the mind.

Kant, in the Critique of Pure Reason, argues that to perceive means that we have the ability to bring the object under a certain concept, or we know what rule we can apply to it, even if we do not actively exercise that ability on the occasion in question. Kant was objecting to the model proposed by earlier philosophers such as Locke, Berkeley and Hume, which divided experience into impressions and ideas in such a way that it appeared that man first perceived and then made sense of his perception by thinking. For Kant, to perceive X was to have the ability to bring X into a concept, but this did not mean he had to 'think about' it in any way. If 'epistemic' is understood in this way, then all perception is epistemic. It is more relevant, indeed, to ask whether we can perceive without the operation of the senses.

In sensing it is possible to recognize the object as something (even if one does not know what it is, as when one says "I
saw a strange shape, I know not what it was"), the truth of one's having had a sensation being unaffected by being mistaken as to the identity of the object. In perception it is possible to form a concept of the object and to come to a belief as to what it is rather than how it looks. But the belief is not the perception; rather is perception the sensation plus the ability to bring it under a concept.

However, we also use the word 'perception' in cases where the senses as such do not have a part to play. For example, if I listen to someone's argument and come to 'perceive the truth' of what they are saying, this has nothing to do with the activity of the sense of hearing. My perception would no doubt be the same if I read the argument, or made it up myself in silent thought, or even dreamt it. It might be inappropriate for us now to speak of 'seeing the truth' in quite the literal sense which Plato gave it, but the interchangeability of verbs of seeing and knowing represents more than an idle metaphor. On the one hand, as I have already pointed out, in order to see at all we have to know to some extent what it is we are seeing for otherwise we do not know how to look or what is meant to be the object of our perception. Conversely, in order to know an object in the world we have to perceive it in some way, by sight, hearing, touch or another such sense. With non-tangible objects, however, such as God, Love or Plato's Forms, knowledge cannot come through the normal senses of the body and yet we use metaphors from the world of physical perception to imply that information is received and incorporated into a concept and understood. So although in general sensation plus concept is required for perception, perception is also accepted to have occurred in cases of the reception of information by non-sensory means plus a concept. This is important in connection with
the concept of contemplation which has often been considered when applied to the non-sensory.

4. According to the model I have proposed as being in line with Greek philosophy, contemplation is epistemic in that the contemplater recognizes or perceives, or has the propensity or ability to recognize or perceive, certain qualities in the object, though it also involves a response to this perception. These qualities are more readily seen in some objects than others, though I shall later maintain that through the operation of such filters as faith and imagination it is in theory possible to perceive anything in this way.

Plato frequently refers to the contemplation of beauty and he, like the earlier Pre-Socratics, believes beauty to be dependent on measure and order as a sine qua non. But it is in the perception of this measure and order that one comes to the contemplation of beauty. The beautiful object can be seen without this perception, but at the point where one does perceive these qualities a different form of perception has come into play. This is why contemplation is not defined as any epistemic perception, for the required cognition is of a certain specific kind. Similarly Thomas Aquinas realized that one can see an object which is commonly accepted to be beautiful, but to see the thing as beautiful oneself one has to perceive it in a certain way, in his case with an immediate response of pleasure.

But in the same way as we can perceive different things through the bodily senses and through the mind, so, to an even greater extent, are there two different classes of objects of contemplation. On the one hand there are those things which can be perceived through the physical senses: a work of art, musica humana, a cross or a flame, or the beauty of the created order. On the other hand there are the
things which cannot be perceived through the senses, which we perceive
in other ways, though we commonly use metaphors of the physical senses
to describe such perceptions: God, the Forms, Beauty, the music of the
spheres, the truth of a proposition. The Christian philosophers as
well as Plato frequently spoke of an 'unveiling' of the mind in
contemplation so that one could come to 'see' God more clearly. It is
unlikely that they expected people to 'see' with their physical eyes
the essence of a God whom they believed to be spirit.

But perception can occur randomly and accidentally, as, for
example, when one has a sudden intuition, or recognizes the person one
is sitting next to on the 'bus, whereas contemplation, for Plato as
for later Christian philosophers and mystical writers, is something
that one engages in deliberately. It is therefore a narrower concept
than 'perception' and it is because of this intentional aspect that
contemplation has often been referred to as though it were some kind
of activity rather than a form of perception. It is generally when it
has been thought of as activity that it has been seen as an end in
itself, which neither the Greek nor Christian philosophers considered
it to be. For Plato contemplation brought one to Truth, for the
Christian it was the way to relationship with God, principally through
love, and for both it was a process of 'unveiling' the mind, stripping
away all that prevented one from perceiving the Truth. This process,
though freely chosen like an activity such as reading, was believed to
occur only when a person was in a certain relationship with the
object, but rather than defining it as an activity or relationship per
se, I would contend that it is most meaningful to speak of it being
the perceiving of the object in a certain way, or the ability to form
a particular concept of it which recognizes certain specific
qualities. As this perception was considered by Plato to be the way to Truth and was advocated by Christian philosophers as one of the surer ways to God, it has been sought and appreciated. Many have therefore attempted to embark on activity which might bring it about, such as silent concentration, yoga and sensory deprivation, all of which are activities which some find conducive to contemplation but all of which can be engaged in without contemplation taking place. However, when the requisite perception has dawned, the one who is contemplating rests in that perception and could be said to be engaged in the activity of perceiving. Consequently, a reading of Greek and Christian philosophy would suggest that although there are activities which might maximize the chances of contemplation occurring and help perpetuate it when it does, these activities are not, themselves, contemplation. It may be easier to think whilst sitting in the position in which Rodin immortalized his thinker, AND it may be easier to detect that someone else is thinking when they are thus seated, but sitting in that position is not thinking. Contemplation can only loosely be called an activity if by this is understood that to contemplate is to engage in an activity which has a particular perception as its goal, and to succeed.

This has the unfortunate consequence that one cannot describe what contemplation is by pointing to certain publicly observable activities and that therefore it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to verify whether someone has been contemplating; but contemplation shares this fate with other concepts such as thinking, hating and imagining. Certainly, although we associate various actions with contemplation, Plato did not expect any observable bodily states in those who sought this high form of perception, nor, despite
extensive recommendations on the internal state to be adopted, did Richard of St. Victor. Different religions and individuals have recommended varying positions and activities as being conducive to contemplation, from the silent stillness of lying in a darkened room to the frenzied activity and sensory bombardment of certain dance forms, although ideally the same qualities that one perceives in the object of contemplation are apparent in the body and mind of the one engaged in contemplation. It is therefore more fruitful to define contemplation in terms of the type of concepts which can be formed in that perception than in asking how, or through what particular activity, the contemplation comes about. Similarly, although I have claimed that contemplation is an activity of perception, albeit a limited and rather refined mode of perception, it would also appear that many philosophers have considered it to be an attitude which one should seek to foster, particularly, in the case of Christians such as Richard of St. Victor, in one's approach to God. In this case what is fostered is a belief which leads to the required perception and issues in a specific response. Thus Plato believed the world to be a model of measure and order, therefore perceived that measure and order and responded to it.

Having discussed, in this chapter, the nature of contemplation, or what it is that a human being is doing when he contemplates, it will later be necessary to ask what are the proper objects of contemplation and how one might come to contemplate things which do not appear to sport the requisite qualities. For Plato contemplation was possible because he believed the cosmos to be based on order, harmony and love; for the Christian because he saw God as the creator and redeemer of the world, the Word from which all sprang.
For both it would be self-evident that they could perceive these basic qualities of reality mirrored in the particular as well as in the universal if they sought through faith, reasoning, prayer or philosophy for the perception. It remains to be seen whether if we define contemplation in these terms we can, given our different culture and belief structure, ever have the experience of contemplation, and to this I shall return later.

According to Plato, therefore, in contemplation we perceive the world as it really is beneath transitory appearances, that is, as a pattern of order, balance and good proportion, as a unity and as created and moved by a loving principle. Through contemplation we become aware of ourselves as part of that pattern, or become like that which is.

"What line of conduct is dear to God and a following of him? There is but one, and it is summed up in the ancient rule that 'like' - when it is a thing of due measure - 'loves its like'. For things that have no measure can be loved neither by one another nor by those that have. Now it is God who is, for you and me, of a truth the 'measure of all things', much more truly than, as they say, 'man'" (Laws 716).

So in the end Plato's philosophy is deeply and necessarily religious and the ultimate aim is to enter into some kind of communion with a transcendent God. In view of this, Iris Murdoch looks to Plato's understanding of the deity to indicate the extremely high standard Plato was setting for humans in their pursuit of the truth:

"In the mythology of the Timaeus, only passionate selfless unenvious mind can understand the world since passionate unenvious mind made it, and we see in the light of the good" (ibid page 59).

We are now in a position to extract from Plato a theory of contemplation which is, in fact, remarkably similar to that which was emerging in our investigation of the pre-Socratics. It is a response which recognizes order and proportion in the cosmos, through which we
enter the harmony and unity of that cosmos and develop an attitude of Eros. This in turn will be manifest in a reverence for the world. For instance, Plato tells us in the Republic that the stars inspire us to geometry and on to music:

"Besides the motion studied in astronomy, there is its counterpart, the harmonious movement for which our ears are framed, as our eyes are for the study of the stars ...... I would rather call it a 'useful' study; but useful only when pursued as a means to the knowledge of beauty and goodness" (Republic 530).

Our contemplation of the stars (I think it is now fair to use the word 'contemplation' to suggest our awareness of something in accordance with the three features under discussion) also leads us to philosophy:

"... had we never seen the stars and the sun and the heaven, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, and the months and the revolutions of the years have created number and have given us a conception of time, and the power of inquiring about the nature of the universe. And from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or will be given by the gods to mortal man" (Timaeus 47).

This attitude to the cosmos is the appropriate one for man because that is the nature of the universe. "Can we deny that everything is full of gods?" asks Plato, quoting Thales, for

"Of all the planets, of the moon, of years and months and all seasons, what other story shall we have to tell than just this same, that since soul, or souls, and those souls good with perfect goodness, have proved to be the causes of all, these souls we hold to be gods, whether they direct the universe by inhabiting bodies, like animated beings, or whatever the manner of their action?" (Laws 899b).

This attitude, as Plato recognized, is one of knowledge, perception and love. Plato also saw it, given his idealism, as leading necessarily to goodness and happiness:

"For the good man 'tis most glorious and good and profitable to happiness of life, and most excellently fit, to do sacrifice and be ever in communion with heaven through prayer and offerings and all manner of worship, but for the evil, entirely the contrary" (Laws 716d).

It has been suggested that both the pursuit of knowledge of
reality and also the participation in Eros involve pain and suffering
and that these are part of the unity and must on occasions be held in
tension with their opposites. But to come, through contemplation, to
reality, to what is, is necessarily to experience the greatest
pleasure that one is capable of experiencing:

"But if it were given to man to gaze on Beauty's very self --
unsullied, unalloyed and freed from the mortal taint that haunts the
frailer loveliness of flesh and blood -- if, I say, it were given to
man to see the heavenly Beauty face to face, would you call his, she
asked me, an unenviable life, whose eyes had been opened to the
vision, and who had gazed upon it in true contemplation until it had
become his own forever?" (Symposium 212)

According to this view, to perceive the world as it truly and
fundamentally is will lead to an affirmation of its goodness and
beauty and lead to the highest form of happiness or pleasure which is
the state different religions encourage their adherents to attain to,
under different names. The process is reminiscent of the way the
Jewish creation myths describe God's attitude to the cosmos:

"God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that
light was good, and God divided light from darkness ......
...... and let dry land appear. And so it was. God called the dry land
'earth' and the mass of waters 'seas', and God saw that it was good.
...... The earth produced vegetation: plants bearing seed in their
several kinds, and trees bearing fruit with their seed inside in their
several kinds. God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning
came: the third day" (Genesis 1);

and so on through all creation. Through the creative principle, or the
Eros that brings forth in beauty, something basically good comes into
being, is clearly perceived and accepted for what it is and that leads
to pleasure.

"I am assuming the existence of absolute Beauty and goodness and
magnitude and all the rest of them. If you grant my assumption and
admit that they exist, I hope with their help to explain causation to
you, and to find a proof that soul is immortal" (Phaedo 100b).

So in Plato's system of thought, because the cosmos is
beautiful and good, the good man who enters into a consciousness of
that world, who contemplates reality, will also be happy. It is partly for this reason that Plato also believes that evil-doers are in Hades in this world as well as after death (Laws 904), for the most appropriate and devastating penalty for any sin is to be the kind of person who could commit that sin:

"There are two patterns, my friend, in the unchangeable nature of things, one of divine happiness, the other of godless misery -- a truth to which their folly makes them utterly blind, unaware that in doing injustice they are growing less like one of these patterns and more like the other. The penalty they pay is the life they lead, answering to the pattern they resemble" (Theaetetus 176e).

In 'The Fire and the Sun', Iris Murdoch presents a strong case that Plato's objections to art are religious objections, accusing art of both deception in its mimetic aims and also the aping and trivializing of spirituality by pretending to be concerned with higher qualities and forgetting the rightful place of man in the cosmos:

"Our humbler task, as part of creation, is to understand the Forms through the cosmic intelligence which is akin to our own. The artist must surrender his personal will to the rhythm of divine thought, as in the oriental doctrine of the Tao. If he practises mimetic art he may be guilty of a kind of blasphemy, as has always been recognized in Islam and in Judaism. The second commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (Exodus 20:4)" (ibid page 58).

Whilst I agree with Iris Murdoch that these objections are more religious than moralistic or political, I would wish to go further and pin Plato's deepest feelings about art on the extent to which the art is or is not contemplative. Plato suggests in the Timmaeus that the only true artist is God and the only true work of art is the cosmos which God has created. On this model the creation of the cosmos is in accordance with the principles of contemplation; namely it is created to have order and proportion, to be a unified whole through the tension of opposites and to be the object and result of a force which
is passionate Eros. In order to enter into the goodness of creation, Plato felt that everything in a man's life should resound to the same principles so that, obviously, his art should. Further, art at its inception and in its earliest manifestations had sprung from the same roots as contemplation and had been man's most immediate response to the reality in which he found himself. Using a Platonic-type image, one could say that Art and Contemplation were twins born to the parents of God and Cosmos and exhibiting initially the same characteristics. What Plato was objecting to was the fact that Art was coming of age and choosing new company for herself rather than staying in the double cradle where she had been nurtured. Art, both as an expression of man's response to the reality in which he found himself and as his attempt to create beauty according to the same rules as he perceived in the cosmos, was, at its inception, a contemplative activity, so any definition or explanation of the origins of art should include reference to this. But in the Greek culture of Plato's time the nature of art was being widened to such an extent that it no longer made sense to define art in contemplative terms.

The issue is further complicated in that contemplative art remained one strong and healthy element in art and has done so to this day, so that those philosophers who have followed the tradition of making reference to contemplation in their definitions of art have in fact been able to point to examples to support their definitions and to put a question mark over the authenticity of many excellent non-contemplative works of art. For the ancients, expression through artistic activity was a mirror of man's attitude to reality, so the roots of art are in the contemplative response of man to the world around and outside him. What Plato feared and wished to censor was the
growth of a non-contemplative tradition in art which manifested itself in representational illusion, perspective trickery, portrayal of non-eternal events and values and the preoccupation with dubious character to be found in tragedy and comedy. Looking at the secularization of life and art which was leading towards the disintegration of Hellenic Greek culture he tried to stem the tide, and failed. Aristotle, coming later and being part of the new social order did not suffer from the same foreboding or need for missionary zeal. The contemplative attitude in art, which is the hallmark of much prehistoric, Egyptian, Chinese, Mycenean and early Greek art, amongst others, has continued in art since Plato, but has only been one positive strand amongst others. In contemplative art, artists have tended to concentrate on the eternal essence of things rather than reportage of the fleeting moment. This influences subject matter, making anecdotage less common, but it is also a feature of the formal properties, which can manifest the principles of contemplation. For this reason, although many Annunciation pictures fall within the sphere of contemplative art, the choice of that subject matter does not guarantee its inclusion. This was apparent, too, in the 1980 Stanley Spencer exhibition at the Royal Academy where the late paintings of shipbuilders on Clydeside answered just as well to the requirements of contemplative art as the resurrections and spiritual 'happenings' in Cookham. But it is important to remember that what is under discussion is a particular sub-category of art and that the lack of the qualities required for this sub-category in no way disqualifies works from the broader category of art or as objects of aesthetic awareness.

The art which Plato admired, expressed a contemplative response to reality, and this was what was being ignored or superceded
in the art of his own day. Given the all-important place he accorded to art, it would seem to him that the very nature of art was altering, or rather that something else, inferior because concerned with illusion rather than truth, was being set in its place, namely mimesis. But he need not have feared the demise of contemplative art, for if it is true that there is a necessary connection between contemplation and artistic activity, then that form of activity will continue unabated however many other practices take the name and so broaden the concept of art.
From a study of the Pre-Socratic philosophers we have discovered good historical reason for the association of art with contemplation, namely that both sprang from the same source which was man's response to the mystery of the world and his own place within it. We have extracted three elements of early philosophy which represent efforts to explain what essentially is in the world and have seen that these same elements are descriptive both of the experience of contemplation and of much of the early art which Plato admired and wished to be perpetuated. Through the works of Plato we have followed the refining and deepening of these concepts to a position where it is fair to suggest that the reason for Plato's censorship of the arts was that he saw the nature of art changing from its original contemplative orientation, concerned with truth, to a mimetic one whose end was deception. But I have claimed that rather than substituting one basis for another, art was expanding to accommodate different aims and that the contemplative art which was originally the basis of all art has continued in an uninterrupted tradition to the present day.

Given that western art and philosophy were dominated for over a thousand years by the Christian church we should examine what contribution the growth of this Church, with its attendant art and philosophy and its espousal of contemplation as a spiritual ideal, made to our subject. Rarely in Christian philosophy does one find the originality and insight Plato ascribes to Socrates and I would suggest that the reason for this lies in the superior freedom Socrates enjoyed. Whilst he started with open-ended questions and pursued the
truth wherever it should lead, the Christian philosopher/theologians in general started with the fact of the Christian God and tried to tailor the questions to arrive at this answer. This was a necessary discipline in terms of establishing the immense structure of Christendom and in the case of the Scholastics an exercise worthy of great respect, but it imposed on the adventure of thought limitations which, whilst they forced the greatness of Thomas Aquinas and gave a framework to his philosophy, could not in general lead to totally unexpected results. This is particularly true in the field of Aethetics which never achieved very great importance while there were other more theological and doctrinal issues to be decided.

Christian philosophy can be seen as an effort to assimilate and integrate two of the great traditions of wisdom and thought which had at this time taken root: the philosophy of the ancient Greeks and the belief system and revelation which had grown in Judaism and come to flower in the events described in the New Testament. But it was not simply a matter of taking two clearly-defined and well-understood systems and forming an equation to the effect that Greek philosophy plus Judaeo/Christian insight equals Christian thought. For a start, little of the best of Greek philosophy was known to the early Church Fathers since many of the important texts were not available during the first millennium A.D. following the split between East and West. After the Council of Ephesus in 431 Greek philosophy continued to be studied beyond the boudaries of the Roman Empire in Persia, where works were translated from Greek into Syrian, possibly into Persian, and finally into Arabic. As Arabic was the major language for all the Near East, which was Islamic, the works of Aristotle were then available throughout a vast kingdom, but were practically unknown in
the Christian west. By the seventh century virtually no Greek words were known in the West and it was not until the thirteenth century that the whole corpus of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy was translated into Latin and began to exert an influence on western thought. These translations, when they came, also brought a good deal of Eastern influence so that with the import of ancient Greek thought came contemporary Arabic thought and commentary. Next it should be noted that the limited knowledge of Plato that was available in the Patristic period was filtered through, and contaminated by, neo-Platonism. Most of the early Church Fathers, indeed, would have considered Plotinus the greatest of the Greeks and his work was the major Greek influence on early Christian philosophy. Finally, it is not true that not until the growth of Christianity did these two important systems begin to influence each other. The Old Testament Book of Wisdom, much revered by the early Christian philosophers, was written, probably around the middle of the first century B.C., by a hellenized Jew well-acquainted with Greek culture and thought. In fact, the very notion of Wisdom as that for which one should strive before all else, is reminiscent of Plato's pursuit of philosophy:

"And so I prayed, and understanding was given me;
I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.
I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones;
compared with her, I held riches as nothing.
I reckoned no priceless stone to be her peer,
for compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand,
and beside her silver ranks as mud.
I loved her more than health or beauty,
preferrred her to the light,
since her radiance never sleeps.
In her company all good things came to me,
at her hands riches not to be numbered.
All these I delighted in, since Wisdom brings them,
but as yet I did not know she was their mother"
(Wisdom 7 vv 7-12).

This pre-Christian writing already bears the imprint of Greek
philosophy and this tradition itself was one of the major influences on Christian philosophy; perhaps its most obvious manifestation came in the sixth century when Boethius wrote of the Lady Philosophy.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the work we call the Book of Wisdom and the writings of Plotinus (A.D. 205-270). Although within the Christian Bible, Wisdom has a Greek flavour and although Plotinus was a Greek non-Christian his works have a decidedly Christian ring. Wisdom pre-dates Plotinus' Enneads by about three hundred years but it may not be far-fetched to suggest that both represented the same end of the spectrum of their respective philosophies and made the integration of Judaeo/Christian thought with Greek philosophy that much easier to accomplish. But they both manifest a more mystical/practical approach to their subjects than would have been acceptable to the mainstream of the traditions from which they sprang. Plotinus' writings bear little resemblance to true Platonism and Wisdom is not typical of Jewish thought. So by responding to these two manifestations, the patristic philosophers were not assimilating and integrating the two great systems from which they had originally derived, but two late and essentially similar derivations of those systems.

For the early Christian philosophers, Augustine, Dionysius and Boethius, Plotinus was the apogee of Platonic thought and his writings had for several centuries a greater influence than pure Platonism. Whatever else he does or does not achieve, Plotinus provides a convenient bridge between Platonism and Christianity. The existence of his writings probably exaggerates the affinity between these two systems, but he contributed to Christian philosophy by making it respectable to investigate mystical concepts with the
rational mind. He produced a philosophical system more consistent than either Plato's or Aristotle's and one could, if intelligent enough to understand it and spiritually motivated enough to follow it, base a whole religion upon it, which would presumably ascribe a high value to both Art and Contemplation. In tune with Aristotle, he recognized an Absolute which was the One from which all came and to which all aspires, with the major aim or activity of the human soul being to find union of knowledge and love with the One, finally after this life, but to some extent in this life as well. So the universe is a spiritual reality, at the summit of which is the One or the Good of which nothing can be predicated, not even existence. It causes itself and loves itself but not in the sense of there being separate subject and object of love.

Mystical experience was, for Plotinus as for Plato, a journey upward towards one's source, which was attained through self-knowledge. "Our self-knowledge is our beauty; in self-ignorance we are ugly" (Enneads V).

This striving for self-knowledge in order to ascend, which we saw in the Greeks, was retained as an element of religious perception and experience in the writings of the Christian philosophers, becoming, for example, on Augustine's lips:

"Oh God, always one and the same, if I know myself, I shall know Thee" (Soliloquies II).

This is reminiscent of the ancient Delphic oracle "Know thyself", but standing within rather than before the Christian tradition there was no danger for Augustine of merging Creator with created: I may come to know God through self-knowledge, but self is I and God is other.

This emphasis on self-knowledge by Christian philosophers and later in the writings of the mystics in the thirteenth to
The sixteenth centuries raises the question of whether self-knowledge is the aim of those who engage in contemplation. Plato assumed that self-knowledge would increase as one came to perceive Truth and reality, for self is part of that Truth and reality. Indeed, given his doctrine of anamnesis he would include attainment of self-knowledge in the activity of the soul recollecting the knowledge it had before our present life. But he did not recommend contemplation in order that we might come to self-knowledge; rather he described contemplation as the appropriate response of the soul to beauty (Symposium 212). So self-knowledge would best be described as a 'fruit' of contemplation rather than its aim or object. The aim of contemplation, as was discussed in the last chapter, is a specific form of perception plus a response to that perception, but if contemplation meant the same to Plato and to the Christian philosophers it must be the case that it can have entirely different objects, for while Plato speaks of contemplating beauty the Christian is concerned with contemplating God. Further, when 'contemplation' is used by philosophers of art, it is assumed that the object of contemplation can be a picture or sculpture or other work of art and I have suggested that one need not even be limited to these objects, especially as Greek and Christian alike speak of contemplating the beauty of the physical world.

One way in which the world can be seen as a worthy object of contemplation is as the handiwork of God, so that in contemplating the world one is really contemplating God. Basil of Caesarea (329-379) justified the ancient theory of pankalia by his insistence that the world is purposefully constructed. He, like Plato, saw man's place within the ordered and beautiful creation to be a contemplative one:

"We walk the earth as though we were visiting a workshop in which the
divine sculptor exhibits his wondrous works. The Lord, the creator of these wonders and an artist, calls upon us to contemplate them" (Homilia in Hexaem, IV 33).

So although the world is beautiful, it is so in the same way as a work of art is beautiful, by virtue of having been created by an artist in order to be beautiful. This interpretation would tie all contemplation to a particular metaphysical base, whereby we could only be said to contemplate God or things in the world which we believe to have been made by God. Although it is undeniable that the concept of contemplation is found more within the different religious systems of the world than outside them, a major purpose of this thesis is to give meaning to the term when it is applied to art. Tying it to an entirely theistic approach to the world would therefore be an undesirable limitation on the term.

This objection applies to some extent to the explanation of our contemplation of physical beauty given by Hugh of St.Victor (1096-1141) in his treatise on aesthetics in which the notion of contemplation has a major part to play. He claims that visible beauty is inferior to but can sometimes lead one on to invisible beauty:

"Through the beauty of created things we seek this most beautiful of all beauty which is so wondrous and ineffable that no temporal beauty, however true, can bear comparison with it" (Didascalicon VII).

So although at first sight it appears that people contemplate physical objects, according to Hugh of St.Victor they only do so by using the physical objects as symbols of the greater beauty which lies behind them, namely God. What Hugh proposes, in fact, is an ascending scale of activity for contemplation. Whereas visible beauty is apprehended by the senses and imagination by virtue of form, invisible beauty, where form and essence coincide, is apprehended by the intuitive mind or intelligence. In extremis the normal contemplation which can be
enjoyed by all gives way to ecstasy (exultio) which is an exceptional mystical experience, and in this way Hugh suggests that there is one mode of experience which includes at the bottom end appreciation of visible beauty, moves up through intuition of invisible beauty and at its heights is mystical experience or communion with the transcendent.

Later Richard of St. Victor (died 1173) extended this idea of ecstasy in which the mind itself seems to be changed (transfiguratio) and "loses the memory of things present". This state he called 'alienation', not in the negative psychopathological Freudian or social Marxist sense, but as a description of a person freed from the normal confines of the thinking mind through contemplative ecstasy.

Different triggers cause this alienation:

"It seems to me that we are carried away into alienation of mind by three causes. For it is now according to greatness of devotion, now according to greatness of wonder, now according to greatness of exultation, that the mind is completely unable to restrain itself and, being elevated above itself, goes over into alienation" (Benjamin Major, V 5).

This would certainly answer to our earlier requirement of contemplation (chapter 1) in which time and place cease to matter, for "Behold, how he who was totally unable to discern what was going on around him had passed beyond human reason by means of alienation of mind" (V 14), but it could not thus be used in the ordinary cases where we talk of contemplating a work of art, and it was indeed seen by Richard as the heights to which one could not expect to rise very frequently.

Whereas contemplation, for Plato, was concerned with knowledge, this experience of ecstasy described by the Victorines takes a man out of the sphere where it is reasonable to speak of knowledge. Richard describes man in this state, quoting St. Paul:

"I know a man, whether in the body or outside the body God knows, who was snatched up to the third heaven" (V 19) (2 Corinthians 12).
This state is more in keeping with the negative theology of pseudo-Dionysius than the ascent to enlightenment and true knowledge of Plato, and Richard, writing at a time when the influence of the Areopagite was still astonishingly prevalent, shows his indebtedness to those writings and particularly his theory of 'divine darkness'. In the writings of pseudo-Denis the almost holy rationality of Plato is rejected and we have the beginning of the great divorce between faith and reason. Boethius, writing to Pope John I in the sixth century had exemplified the inherent aim of the Middle Ages to keep faith and reason in proper balance, both developed to the full, when he wrote "fidem, si poteris, rationemque, conjunge" (as far as you are able, join faith to reason).

But later, as the logical tools of Aristotle began to be plied with excitement, the scholastics sometimes found themselves in a struggle between their 'thinking minds' and their 'believing hearts', although there was in Thomas Aquinas at least a partial synthesis. For Plato, to contemplate was to be in full possession of one's faculties, using and rejoicing in one's rationality to the highest degree and thus practising philosophy. Following the pseudo-Denis many Christians have assumed, on the contrary, that rationality is an impediment to contemplation rather than accepting contemplation as a high form of perception which can come as a result of rational thought as well as from the perceiving of beauty.

The essential element in Dionysius' work was the negative theology and philosophy. He claimed that we cannot give God any appropriate name unless He reveals it to us; a belief which was basic to Jewish thought. But he went further in saying that even revealed names cannot express the nature of God as they are only revealed and
comprehensible to our finite minds. All the qualities we might ascribe to God are coloured by our limited understanding and experience and therefore cannot in any sense be ascribed to God. We can only say what He is not. In the 'Mystic Theology' this is taken to its extreme, where we must even negate the negation since God infinitely surpasses anything man might say of Him, affirmative or negative. Augustine had been on this path when he said

"Si comprehendis non est Deus" (Whatever you understand cannot be God) but Dionysius developed it into a whole theology which bears resemblances to some of the mystical traditions of the East which do not rely on rational thought. For example, the ancient Chinese mystic, Lao Tsu, in the sixth century B.C. expressed it thus:

"The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
The named is the mother of ten thousand things.
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery; Ever desiring, one can see the manifestation.
These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness. Darkness within darkness. The gate to all mystery".
(Tao Te Ching 1).

Hindu thought had a similar strain and in the Upanishads, written before five hundred B.C., we read:

"He is not knowable by perception, turned inward or outward, nor by both combined. He is neither that which is known nor that which is not known, nor is He the sum of all that might be known. He cannot be seen, grasped, bargained with. He is undefinable, unthinkable, indescribable" (Mandookya-Upanishad).

But it is interesting that this tradition is not anti-intellectual in the way that some later western adherents of contemplation have been:

"He who calls intellect to manage the reins of his mind reaches the end of his journey, finds there all-pervading Spirit. Above the senses are the objects of desire, above the objects of desire mind, above mind intellect, above the intellect manifest nature. Above manifest nature the unmanifest seed, above the unmanifest seed, God. God is the goal; beyond Him nothing."
God does not proclaim Himself, He is everybody’s secret, but the intellect of the sage has found Him” (Katha-Upanishad).

Later, in Zen Buddhism, we see the mind being intentionally baffled by such devices as the koan, but not left to atrophy. "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "All things return to the One; where does the One return?" are questions which require the mind to operate in a different way from the way it does in attempting to answer either "What did you have for breakfast?" or "How many eights are there in forty?", but it is through the exercise of the mind that one is here expected to enter a state of contemplation, and this should not be confused with mental indifference:

"In India, China and Japan, satori has remained thoroughly impersonal, or rather highly intellectual" (Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, p 37).

Indeed several Christian mystical philosophers of the Middle Ages as well, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, were to see the proper exercise of the mind as one of the necessary stages on the way to contemplation.

Accordingly, the negative philosophies one finds, especially in the Eastern traditions, can be seen as arising from the tension of opposites bringing about that unity which we have already noted as a feature of contemplation. There is a fundamental difference between shrugging off the discipline of rationality and passing beyond it by accepting the limitations and paradoxes; or as Lao Tsu put it:

"Knowing ignorance is strength; Ignoring knowledge is sickness" (Tao Te Ching, 71).

Dionysius realized that man could not come to contemplation without his mind having a part to play, but valuing rationality rather less than some philosophers he was concerned to lull it to sleep as far as possible; and to this extent, while his writings have historical importance in terms of their influence and spiritual
imagination, they can contribute little to philosophy.

"We pray that we may come unto this Darkness which is beyond light, and, without seeing and without knowing, to see and to know that which is above vision and knowledge through the realization that by not-seeing and by unknowing we attain to true vision and knowledge" (The Mystical Theology).

But although Richard of St.Victor learnt from the pseudo-Denis in his ideas of the 'divine darkness', he did not follow him in recommending the 'via negativa' as the way of ascent to God. Rather, he outlines, in his studies of contemplation, an affirmative apprehension of God, in which human nature and our normal powers have a vital part to play in bringing us to union with God. That final union is what he conceived of as darkness and the failing of our powers, rather than the contemplation through which that union is attained. The union is thus described in graphic terms as the 'death of Rachel', where Rachel is a symbol for reason:

"In the death of Rachel contemplation ascends above reason" (Benjamin Minor LXXXVII).

Thus although it sometimes appears that for the religious writer one of the aims of contemplation is ecstasy, this aim is actually external to the contemplation as the ecstasy itself is external to contemplation. For this reason, although some of those who write about contemplation also discuss ecstasy, it is not necessary for an analysis of the first to contain reference to the second. I may hope to arrive at ecstasy by contemplation, but when I do so arrive I have ceased to contemplate, and am instead in a state of ecstasy. Nor is it necessary to follow Hugh of St.Victor in conceiving of our contemplation of physical beauty only in terms of the invisible beauty which it mirrors or suggests. It is true that both Plato and the Christian philosophers describe contemplation in terms of our
experience of the transcendent, and indeed it is difficult to imagine how one could come to direct knowledge of Plato's Forms other than through the operation of contemplation, but we have seen that contemplation can be understood in terms of our perception of and response to certain qualities in an object, the which perception and response, incidentally, have been considered appropriate by religious writers to describe their experience of the transcendent. It makes sense, therefore, to speak both of our contemplation of transcendent beauty and of our contemplation of immanent beauty.

Richard of St. Victor himself keeps a broad canvas of objects which can be contemplated, since contemplation is a way of perceiving and so coming to know anything from an ordinary object accessible to the senses to the glory of God:

"But those who assert that one sense has a sight of higher things and another has a sight of lower things should look from whence this can be proved. I believe that it is here that they completely confuse the signification of this word "understanding". For they restrict its signification, now concerning only the superior, now only the inferior speculation, and at another time they comprehend both senses under one signification of the word. Notwithstanding, are we to call this twin sight of superior and inferior things "twin" in the sense of "from one head", or are we to call it "twofold"? Instrument of the same sense, or twin effect of the same instrument: Whichever of these we wish to choose, nothing prevents us from saying that both of these pertain to the intellectual heaven" (Benjamin Major, III 9).

Whereas the concept of 'darkness' or of 'unknowing', as derived from a negative theology, has been considered to be a feature in describing the state of ecstasy, 'knowledge' has, as we have observed, been found more appropriate in describing contemplation. Knowledge can come either by revelation or by observation and empiricism. While the essential doctrines of the Christian faith were being thrashed out there was little room for empiricism, but in the Middle Ages there is the beginning of a more empirical approach to
philosophy which was later to grow into the whole field of science. For example, Thomas Aquinas' teacher, Albertus Magnus, as well as exhibiting a breadth of learning in theology and philosophy, took an empirical delight in natural history and wrote books on biology and zoology based on his observations of plant and animal life and on the interviews he conducted with fishermen, hunters, beekeepers and birdcatchers as he travelled on Church business. In his philosophy he offered a balanced approach to the ancient Greeks:

"One can be a perfect philosopher only if one knows both Plato and Aristotle; if we consider the soul in itself, we follow Plato; if we consider it as the animating principle of the body, we agree with Aristotle" (Alberti Magni Opera, ed. Borgnet, volume XXXV).

but he also exemplified the spirit of Aristotle in his studies of nature, claiming, in effect, that all knowledge of reality starts with direct encounters with things in the world:

"Experimentum solum certificat in talibus" — 'In such matters only experience provides certainty'.

This empirical approach to knowledge became an increasing trend in the late scholastics and possibly contributed to the split between 'fides' and 'ratio' which we find at the end of this period when those who valued faith most highly were absorbed into a spiritual and mystical tradition which was non-academic, whilst those who favoured reason continued on into the great intellectual tradition of European thought which was highly esteemed in the Renaissance and has tended to be the only mode of thought considered respectable ever since. The later scholastics turned away from the specifically Eastern modes of thought which accompanied their rediscovery of Aristotle, as well as the metaphysical aspects of Plato, Augustine and the more extreme Neo-Platonic schools, to follow the empiricism and logic at which they arrived through their study of Aristotle. Because of this tendency,
although the word 'contemplation' continues to be used, particularly in aesthetics, the actual contemplative approach which we found in the early Greeks was divorced from learning and became the domain of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Mystics who are not called, nor would have considered themselves to be, philosophers. I hope to show, however, that this very empiricism has a place in our understanding of contemplation, rather than being opposed to it.

In these Christian writings it is possible to trace the same elements associated with contemplation as we observed earlier in Greek thought. Augustine, for example, follows the Greeks in seeing all good and beautiful things as arising from principles of order and measure:

"For the more measure, shape and order there is in all things, the better they are; and the less measure, form and order they possess, the less they are good" (De natura boni, 3).

Again, in 'De Ordine', he asserts

"Thence reason came into the realm of the eyes, and surveying earth and sky, perceived that it pleased only by beauty; and in beauty, by shapes; in the shapes, by proportions; and in the proportions, by numbers" (II 15 42).

So once again, these properties are believed to be basic to the way the world is (has been created by God) and will be necessary to an artist who wishes to create beauty, for what is necessary for the Creator of the world in order to create beauty must also, it is assumed, be necessary for the human artist attempting on a smaller scale the creation of beauty:

"Behold sky and earth and sea, and all in them that shines above, or creeps below, or flies, or swims; all these things have forms, because they have numerical dimensions. Remove these, and the things will be nothing. From whom do they derive but from him who created number? And number is a condition of their existence. And the human artists, who make material objects of all forms, use numbers in their works. So if you seek the strength which moves the hands of the artist, it will be number" (De libero arbitrio, II xvi 42).

Although in some ways closer to the ancient Greek
philosophers than Augustine and others in the Latin tradition, Basil of Caesarea questioned and extended some of the concepts he inherited, particularly this one of proportion and measure. He claimed that however well-proportioned the parts of a work of art may be, they must also be put together in the correct way; that is, the way which is most appropriate to what they are. Thus the idea of 'appropriateness' enters the arena of aesthetics, centuries before Wittgenstein adopted it. In 'Homilia in Hexaem' (III) we read

"that is beautiful which, in accordance with the principles of art, is completed and serves its purpose well".

Again, (IX),

"If you consider the members of animals, you will notice that the Creator has neither added anything superfluous nor omitted anything necessary".

True to form, this same principle is seen to apply both to the divine Creator in the formation of how the world is, that is, what is the nature of reality, and also to the human craftsman in his efforts to create or appreciate beautiful things:

"The hand lying separate, the eye detached from the face, some part of a statue separated from it could give no one an impression of beauty; but it suffices to return them to their proper place, and beauty lying in their proportion, a moment before barely perceptible, will strike the eyes even of the layman" (ibid, III, 10).

Whilst accepting the importance of principles of proportion, order and measure, Basil also drew attention to the limitations of these principles in regard to single, or simple, entities such as light, gold or the evening star, where there is no obvious sense in which one can talk about the relation of parts. This led him to postulate the added importance of another relationship, namely that between observer and beautiful object:

"The evening star is the most beautiful of the stars not because of the proportion of its component parts, but because it affords the eyes
a joyous and pleasant brilliance — Let us add that God's judgement of
the beauty of light was based not only on the pleasure of the eyes,
but envisaged the subsequent usefulness of light (ibid II, 7).

Here we have two interesting extensions of the ancient principle.
First there is the beginning of an appreciation of the role of the
observer of beauty, paving the way for later, more subjectivist,
theories of art which emphasized the effect beauty had on those
exposed to it rather than concentrating on such objective qualities as
proportion and measure. However, for Basil, the observer is still part
of the whole creation, so the unity and harmony are actually enhanced
by the parts of the beautiful whole responding in love and
contemplation not just to the 'creator ex machina', but also to the
other parts of the whole which includes themselves. This will be
further discussed in relation to the quality of love. The other new
feature brought in here by Basil is the importance of light, which
will be examined later in this chapter.

But discussion of the principles of art and beauty centred
around music. The Carolingian philosopher, Johannes Scotus Erigena,
for example, summed up the nature and importance of music thus:

"I am convinced that nothing pleases the soul and nothing produces
beauty but the rational intervals of different sounds, which, grouped
together, produce the sweetness of musical melody. It is not the
various sounds which produce the sweetness of the harmony, but the
relationships of the sounds and their proportions, which are perceived
and judged by the inner sense of the soul" (De divisione naturae).

This is extended to the whole of creation, here in the words of Jacob
of Liege:

"Music in the general, objective sense applies in a way to everything,
to God and His creations, spiritual and physical, heavenly and human,
and to the theoretical and practical sciences" (Speculum musicae).

These principles of order and harmony which were fundamental to their
theology were the principles upon which their music was built and to
that extent music was embraced by them as the most perfect of the arts. By extension other things were beautiful in so far as they exhibited the same qualities. The philosophy of the School of Chartres, for example, which was based on Platonic principles of proportion, harmony and contemplative response, saw beauty as firmly mathematical, an approach exemplified by Clarembaldus of Arras, in his 'Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate':

"In the other liberal arts, or even in the mechanical arts, theory is nothing but the contemplation of the principles and rules according to which one should work in the individual arts. And the practical ability to work in this way is based on knowledge of these rules and principles" (W. Jansen; Tatarkiewicz).

But although the notion of proportion retained its importance it came, over the years, to be interpreted in a qualitative rather than a strictly mathematical way. Robert Grosseteste (from 1235 bishop of Lincoln) was one of the Franciscan schoolmen who congregated in Oxford in the thirteenth century. This group was greatly interested in science as well as metaphysics and had high standards of mathematical precision, and Grosseteste returned to the original Pythagorean sense of proportion based directly on number relationships:

"The composition and harmony in all composite things derives only from the five proportions to be found between the four numbers: 1, 2, 3 and 4. Only these five proportions produce harmony in musical melodies, movements and rhythms" (De luce).

These right proportions, mathematical and, in the case of Grosseteste, geometrical, brought about the harmony of things necessary for beauty and in themselves created a unity. So to some extent our first two requirements of contemplation are even more closely related in Grosseteste than they were in ancient Greece.

In contrast to Grosseteste, Thomas Aquinas interpreted 'proportion' far more widely than in the purely quantitative
Pythagorean concept. From the assumption that good proportions involve certain relationships he extended it to refer to the relationship between a thing and a soul, between a picture and what it represents, and between a thing and our idea of it. Being so wide it contained within it the other requirement of harmony, and, one could add, almost any other requirement one might choose. But having been widened so far, it tended to lose potency.

This requirement of proportion and measure may be seen as the most clearly derived from ancient Greece by the Christian philosophers. Augustine accepted the general Greek idea that unity is essential to beauty:

"Omnis ... pulchritudinis forma unitas" — 'unity is the form of all beauty' (Epistles XVIII)

but on the whole either harmony and unity were interpreted with a theistic bias dependent on a belief in the unity of the Godhead, or were subsumed under the first requirement on the basis that good proportion must give rise to harmony. Thomas Aquinas, for example, counts the two as one single requirement:

"Beauty demands the fulfilment of three conditions: the first is integrity, or perfection, of the thing, for what is defective is, in consequence, ugly; the second is proper proportion, or harmony; and the third is clarity...". (Summa theologiae I q.39 a.8)

The third requirement, of love, to which we shall come, was necessarily transformed by the fact of the Incarnation.

It is unnecessary to extend the concept of proportion in the way that Aquinas did, although one might well adopt his definition of beauty "cuius ipsa apprehensio placet" in terms of the good proportion and the harmony in the object, since it is easier to perceive an object which has these qualities. The mind seeking to impose sense on a random series of lines and colours is not in a position to take
delight in the way that object is: that can only occur when order has been discovered and the mind can be still and accept the order, rather than searching, even if this order is not appreciated by others. Bonaventure (Giovanni di Fidanza, 1221-1274), who represents a mystical strain in mediaeval thought, illustrates both the way in which the mathematical principles of music are extended to beauty in general, and also how proportion and harmony are related to our perception and can only be manifest when the whole is perceived:

"The whole world in its perfectly ordered course may be described as proceeding from beginning to end like the most beautiful poem written in accordance with the rules, in which, depending on its temporal course, one can see the multiplicity, diversity, simplicity, order, rectitude and beauty of many divine judgements. Therefore, just as no one can see the beauty of a poem unless his gaze embraces the poem in its entirety, so too no one sees the beauty which lies in the order and rule of the universe, unless he looks at it in its entirety" (Breviloquium; Tatarkiewicz).

Translating this into Thomas Aquinas' format, one would say that beauty can only apply to those things which the senses can present directly to the mind, which will be only such things as the mind can assimilate immediately.

"Good is the object of desire ... Beauty, on the other hand, is the object of cognitive power, for we call beautiful things which give pleasure when they are seen, thus beauty rests on proper proportion, because the senses delight in things with proper proportion as being similar to themselves; for the sense and all cognitive power is a kind of reason, and because cognition takes place by means of assimilation, and assimilation pertains to form, beauty properly belongs to the concept of formal cause" (Summa Theologiae, I q 5a 4 ad 1).

The Formalists, much later, were to accentuate the role of such qualities as proportion and measure in terms of the form of a work of art. Their concern to delineate what a work of art is and how it should be viewed caused them to make assumptions about the nature of art in terms of our perception. There is a stronger case to be made for saying that there are certain things in the world, including some
of the things which people choose to call art, in which we perceive specific qualities and to which we respond in a certain way. That perception and response we will call contemplation because that appears to be close to what people have meant by the term as applied both to religious experience and to works of art.

Love as an animating principle in the world has its place in Christian philosophy both in terms of the identity of God and as the response of the Christian to God and to what God has made. For, as Augustine perceived, it is man's true nature to be one with the loving principle which created him. The words

"Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te" — 'Thou has made us for thyself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee' (Confessions I, ch 1)

are not only the epitome of Augustine's own great character, but also the heart-cry of anyone who has experienced desperate thirst for a transcendent God. Along with this restlessness, for Augustine, went great charity and it is to him that we owe the dictum 'ama et fac quod vis' — 'love and do what you will', with its deceptive simplicity and depth of truth. At various times in the history of Christianity, individuals have felt and expressed the full force of this clear insight that if the only two commandments actually given by Christ, namely "Love God" and "Love each other", were accepted and practised, there would be no necessity or place for the tomes of doctrine and ethics which the church has tended to substitute for the simplicity of this truth. Where the love that Augustine saw advocated in the gospels directs behaviour, moral strictures and admonishments are not only unnecessary, but inappropriate.

Augustine saw God as a loving Creator and the response of man to God and his creation being necessarily one of love, which leads
"But what do I love, when I love Thee?" he asked in the Confessions; "not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time, nor the brightness of the light, so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers, and ointments, and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracesments of flesh. None of these I love when I love my God; and yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement, when I love my God, the light, melody, fragrance, meat, and embracement of my inner man; where there shineth unto my soul, what space cannot contain, and there soundeth, what time beareth not away, and there smelleth, what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth, what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth, what satiety divorceth not. This is it which I love, when I love my God".

Here we have the picture of man in a world which he believes to have been created by love, responding with love towards the Creator, "before all things and in all things".

The Scholastics also tied the concept of beauty to a response of love. Bonaventure, for instance, adopting an empirical approach when looking at the effect beauty actually has on people, maintained that beauty pleases and that more beautiful things produce yet more pleasure. In delight at the greatest beauty, therefore, we come to enjoy, and so to love, God:

"Pulchritudo naturaliter animum attrahit ad amorem" --'Beauty, by its very nature, arouses the soul to love' (Sentences. Tatarkiewicz, 238).

Aquinas too sees the loving response of the perceiver to be critical in judging whether or not something is beautiful; not because our loving response makes it beautiful, but because if it is beautiful then we must love it:

"A thing is not beautiful because we love it, but is loved by us because it is beautiful and good" (Tatarkiewicz, page 259).

One may hesitate to follow these philosophers in defining beauty in terms of man's response to certain objects, on the grounds that to call something beautiful suggests that beauty is a property of that object rather than of the perceiver. But if we talk of contemplation
as something which man engages in, then as well as suggesting that there are qualities in objects which elicit this activity of perception, it is reasonable to stipulate that for contemplation to take place there must be a certain relationship between subject and object and that this is best described as a relationship of love.

Although the influence of Greek philosophy is apparent in the early Christian writings we have been examining, the Greeks were not alone in believing that the world was created perfect in accordance with principles of good proportion and harmony, or in expecting a certain response from the person who was able to perceive this inherent beauty in all that exists. The same principles associated with contemplation were also embedded within the Biblical writings with which these philosophers and theologians were familiar.

1. PROPORTION, which we have been keeping broad enough to include order and balance, is deep in the Biblical tradition. First in the understanding of creation itself in an ordered way and then in the Jewish understanding of the world. In the Book of Wisdom we find the belief that God made the world according to mathematical principles:

"You ordered all things by measure, number, weight" (chapter 11, v21) which is as mathematically-based a principle as any to be found in Greek thought. Similarly we find God speaking in the Book of Job:

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, since you are so well-informed!
Who decided the dimensions of it, do you know?
Or who stretched the measuring line across it?
What supports its pillars at their bases?
Who laid its cornerstone
When all the stars of the morning were singing with joy,
And the Sons of God in chorus were singing praises
(Job 38 vv4-7).

We have seen that this aspect was taken over by Christian philosophers who continued to see the world as an ordered and mathematical,
therefore beautiful, creation. The tradition of worship which they inherited also exemplified this order and proportion, particularly in the reciting of the psalms, with versicle and response. In fact it is highly probable that the psalms would have been found acceptable as literary art to Plato. Each statement is balanced by its response which often says the same thing in a different way, or takes the mind on to a logically connected concept.

"The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork;  
day discourses of it to day,  
night to night hands on the knowledge.

No utterance at all, no speech,  
no sound that anyone can hear;  
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their message to the ends of the world"  
(Psalms 19 vv1-4).

For Plato, to arrive at awareness of the order and proportion of the universe was to respond with contemplative appreciation. Similarly revelation brings Job to a point of stillness where further questioning ceases because he has "seen you with my own eyes". It is this final contemplative response to the order and proportion perceived that seems to have diminished during the mediaeval period. In eastern religions this stillness was attained, largely because attention was payed to the order of the body as well as mind or spirit, balance being an essential component of many prayer postures. The twin elements of control and relaxation practised by eastern mystics can well be seen as stemming from this important concept of proportion, order and balance.

2) HARMONY. In terms of the identity of Christ the New Testament writers were at pains to stress that he presented the perfect balance of God and man, which might well be seen as a tension
of opposites. Theologians later tried to upset the balance one way or the other, but the mystery which they were first offered was that he was fully God and fully man. The same sort of tension of opposites occurs in the recorded life of Christ: life and death, sin and redemption, joy and pain, humanity and divinity. Each of these pairs pulls against each other and forms the tension which we have remarked as being a feature of harmony. Then underlying the whole of the Bible is the paradox of the I AM in which, in effect, God and man become united, so that the individual 'I' is lost by entering the I AM and therefore becomes part of reality or what really is.

The nearest the early Christian thinkers got to this delight in paradox was in the thrashing out of the doctrine of the Trinity in which they tried to define the nature of God by referring to one God in three persons, father, son and holy spirit. This doctrine had potential in terms of stilling the mind by paradox: "God is one and three", "Christ is God and man", "the indivisible God was incarnate in Jesus Christ and yet was his father" would all seem to be at least as promising as the Zen koan "what is the sound of one hand clapping?". Unfortunately, however, the delight, and even humour, which characterizes the Buddhist equivalent, was often missing in Christian thought. Some adventurous thinkers were condemned as heretics, reputations built and lost, and later, books burned and divergent thinkers silenced. Such an attitude of fear and aggression was not conducive to the joys of contemplative response brought about by the tension of opposites.

The great hope of the Old Testament is of an age when harmony will be restored.

"The wolf lives with the lamb,
This hope was invested in the expectation of the advent of a messiah. But the drawing together of opposites into a harmony was not a common feature of those who claimed such a messiah had come.

3) LOVE. Obviously at the heart of the Christian gospel is the concept of Love and like Plato's Eros it is a creating force which is general rather than particular and so strong that it will inspire a man to die for others. It is also represented in the gospels as being a force that cannot die, but which actually brings about resurrection. Plato had set up an ideal of Love, not just as a cosmic force but as the mode of relationship most appropriate to human beings. But human beings, with their cavalries of bad horses, rarely attained this ideal. The incarnation of Love itself, in its life and death providing a model of what that Love really is, offered the means by which human beings could actually practise this love. The person of Jesus Christ is intended to convey the meaning and practice of love. He is represented as belonging neither to family nor to religious group, but bringing in a new order of loving in personal relationships and a harmony between God and man which symbolizes the harmony of all creation. Through him man is also seen in a new light since he

"Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is --
Christ -- for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces"

(Gerald Manley Hopkins).

The other feature of this requirement is once again the awareness of reality we have noted in the concept of the I AM. With the rise of empirical observation towards the end of the scholastic
period the chances of a contemplative approach to the world perceived through the senses increased. It may be no coincidence that contemporary with Albertus Magnus and his carefully observed studies of natural history is the figure of St. Francis of Assisi who offers a more satisfactory example of contemplation than much of the philosophy being produced in the schools at that time. In terms of his ordered and simple life, the harmonious paradox of his love for and betrothal to the Lady Poverty and the love of people and appreciation of nature, he answers extremely well to our requirements of contemplation.

But although the Christians inherited many basic assumptions from Greek philosophy and Biblical writings, they did build on these assumptions and, in terms of the present discussion, developed two important features which help to expand our understanding of the concept of contemplation: light and time. Since we have in this chapter been investigating the assimilation of and contribution to a theory of contemplation by Christian philosophers up to the end of the Middle Ages, it is apposite to finish it by outlining the way in which these two ideas were developed by Christian thinkers. In a later chapter the contribution light and time might make to a philosophical study of contemplation can then be examined in more depth.

**LIGHT**

This feature, noted in the writings of Basil, meant different things to different writers. Augustine, for instance, held beliefs about the 'divine illumination' of the intellect, which he claimed to be the method by which all men, not just men of faith, come to knowledge. His writings on this subject, however, lack clarity and consistency and should not be expected to stand as a reasoned philosophical theory, but rather as an affirmation by metaphor that we
owe the process of intellection to God.

'Light' also occurs in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, where it is introduced casually as being part of the source of all beautiful things. Combined with the older concept of harmony, which he also accepted, this gives the pair 'consonantia et claritas' or 'euharmostia kai aglaia', which came in the Middle Ages, especially in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, to be accepted as necessary requirements of all beautiful things. Richard of St. Victor, following James in the New Testament, refers to God as 'the Father of Lights', though he ties the experience of this light for the person contemplating to the blinding light which ravishes the soul in ecstasy. The anonymous fourteenth century author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing' in his 'Letter on Prayer', speaks of light as the realization of God's presence in the soul and the effect of that on the reason:

"If I can try to describe what I mean by this loving reverence I have spoken of, and how perfect and deserving it is, I would say that a soul which has been granted a feeling of God's presence as he is in himself — a perfect soul enlightened in its reason by God's clear beam of eternal light, by God himself, that is — so that it sees and feels the beauty of God as he is in himself, must, for the time this experience lasts, lose all consciousness of any favours God may ever have done to it, and know no other cause to love God than God himself" (The Cell of Self-Knowledge).

Here, once again, although the realization of God's presence is potentially available to all, the experience described is one of ecstasy rather than contemplation.

Bonaventure, on the other hand, keeps light within the sphere of physical things, where it still assumes an important position, saying"

"Lux est pulcherrimum et delectabilissimum et optimum inter corporalia" — 'Light is the most beautiful, the most pleasant and the best among physical things' (Tatarkiewicz).
So we have on the one hand a concept of light as a manifestation of God, with the reception of this light being a searing experience of ecstasy, and on the other hand an assumption that light takes its place among physical things as the highest to which such things can aspire. Neither of these two meanings is particularly relevant to the practice of contemplation.

Other philosophers, such as the Dominicans, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, conceived of something called 'claritas' being in beautiful things and our perception of this 'claritas' being part of our contemplation of beauty. They suggested, in other words, that there is something in certain objects which shines out to us and causes particular perceptions and responses in us. Thus Albert writes:

"Beauty consists in the gleaming of substantial or actual form over proportionally arranged parts of matter" (Opusculum de pulchro et bono).

Again, relating 'claritas' to colour, he states this quality as one of the pre-requisites for the perception of beauty:

"Three things are required for beauty: the first is elegant and appropriate size of body, the second, proportional arrangement of members, and the third, the diffusion of good, clear colour" ('Mariale' Q 15-16).

'Claritas' is variously translated as clarity, lustre and light, but has its root in the radiance which relates two beings in perception, is necessary for beauty to be observed in the first place and is symbolic of the pure state of perception of what truly is which Plato sought through philosophy and the early Church fathers through faith. Heidegger, in our own century, has given a new slant to this ancient image, by describing Truth as a kind of light shone on the world. In these terms one would say that we come to perception of reality, or what 'is', through this light irradiating our present
experience and earthing us to that ultimate reality which the Christian philosophers called 'God'. It is possible to subsume this requirement of 'claritas' under that of harmony, as being that which unites things into a harmony, as between perceiver and perceived. Similarly, in Thomas Aquinas' wide interpretation of proportion, light can easily be seen as a vital part of the relationship between different things, and, further, the right proportion of light to other things being necessary for beauty to be present. But 'claritas' for Aquinas probably had a more hylomorphic meaning, whereby it is necessary for the true essence of a thing to shine through its outward form. In this we should understand 'claritas' not just as physical brightness and purity of colour (though he would probably have wished to include that) but also as spiritual integrity. If this is the case, then beauty becomes part of the essence of things rather than just the outward form or allegorical significance. This interpretation is one which will become more meaningful when we come to look at later German philosophy. For the present I would simply suggest that it gives more meaning to 'claritas' to interpret it in terms of the essence of a thing shining through its outer form and further that appreciation of this might even be seen as the meeting point of man's essence with the object's essence which begins to sound more like a contemplative experience than just appreciating bright colours. In speaking of spiritual integrity I am not referring to Aquinas' 'integritas' which he introduces as a further requirement over and above proportion and clarity in the Summa Theologia (I q 39), for though he plainly presents here a three-fold requirement, there is a strong case for arguing that 'integrity' is already contained within 'proportion'. Looking again at his conditions of beauty we find:
"Beauty demands the fulfilment of three conditions: the first is integrity, or perfection, of the thing, for what is defective is, in consequence, ugly; the second is proper proportion, or harmony; and the third is clarity ..."

In order to be perfect, to be what it is meant to be, a thing, according to the theories we are here concerned with, must be in correct proportion, and vice versa, so by Occam's raser we should eliminate the extra requirement here introduced by Aquinas. He himself seems to have realized this and reverted on other occasions to the two-fold requirement.

**TIME**

The other feature of Christian philosophy which can contribute to an understanding of contemplation is the notion of time and timelessness. This was introduced by Augustine and developed a little by Boethius, who explored the nature of Time in eternity and suggested that God does not see a succession of moments in time, but that he eternally sees the timeless moment.

Augustine's belief in God as an eternal being led him to an investigation of time. He asserted that God is eternal and eternity is timeless, so those who ask (as, apparently, some did) why the Creation did not take place sooner are asking a nonsensical question since there was no 'sooner'. All time is eternally present to God. Further, there are three times, past (memory), present and future (expectation); "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future". This belief sorts out some of his difficulties over the nature of time and has been attractive to mystics ever since, though it runs the danger of merging into solipsism since even time and eternity can thus be made to revolve around the individual's perception. Questions concerning the nature of
time have continued through the ages, with occasional sparks of illumination, not always from academic philosophers and I shall discuss these issues in more detail from a modern standpoint in a later chapter. One of the loveliest expressions of this facet of Augustine's thought is to be found in the Four Quartets by T.S. Eliot, a poet educated in the philosophical discipline:

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present" (Burnt Norton).

This idea of timelessness, what Eliot called 'the intersection of the timeless moment', has been mentioned as a feature of contemplation in many writings on the subject and is also commonly described as a feature of people's response to great art or beauty, accompanying the feeling of awe before a spectacular mountain scene, the total immersion in Bach's 'St. Matthew Passion', the stillness of a Chinese vase. It was referred to in the introductory chapter as being a possible response to art, a contemplative response, but I claimed there that such a response was too strong a requirement to be made before anything can be accepted as art. But it may well be the case that when a work of art is said to be contemplative there is a sense in which whilst we look at it time ceases to be meaningful, either because it appears to stand still, or because we have the strange sensation that we have stepped right outside time and are, in this present experience, part of eternity. This commonly expressed impression will be further discussed in chapter 8.
Augustine did not pretend that time did not exist and in fact regretted the passage of time before his conversion:

"Too late loved I Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late I loved Thee ..... Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee"  (Confessions book X)

but saw time held by God in a unity or harmony. So the requirement of timelessness, like that of light, could be said to be contained within our notion of harmony which, as we saw in Greek philosophy, must often be attained by the tension of opposites,

"Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled"

(T.S.Eliot. The Dry Salvages).
CHAPTER 6

IMAGINATION

The difficulty of extracting a thesis from Greek philosophy and testing it through the writings of patristic and mediaeval philosophers comes in relating those ideas dependent upon their different belief structures to our own philosophical standards. The problem is particularly acute if early ideas about the nature of reality form part of the definition of a term which we hope to use with more precision than has hitherto been the case.

It has been noted that the word 'contemplation' has been used in defining aesthetic awareness and related experiences with surprising frequency. It has also been observed that the word has lacked the sort of precision and consistent reference that would allow it to have usefulness or meaning in such definitions. In seeking to clarify the concept we found that in the ancient world the same word was used both for the sort of observation of beauty that we refer to in discussing aesthetic awareness, and as the proper attitude to the world, to truth and to the transcendent. Certain features were regularly found to attend upon this state which can also be found in the various religious traditions which practise contemplation and in the works of art generally considered appropriate to elicit a contemplative response. The same features were considered necessary amongst the philosophers and theologians of the developing Christian church and although this is partially explained by their adherence to the elements of Greek philosophy which had filtered through to them, it also stems from the thought and writings of the Bible, thus representing the same features arising from a different culture. These features were in time refined, although no very consistent
philosophical theory of contemplation was explored. There was philosophical discussion of the tenets of the faith and the nature of the reality which was available for contemplation, and there was pastoral advice and instruction on the actual practice of contemplation, such as the works of the Victorines, particularly Richard, but no theory evolved as to what exactly a person was doing if he was said to be contemplating.

Given that the features under discussion are 1) perception of good proportion and order, 2) perception of a unity or harmony and 3) perception of and response to a loving principle, is contemplation possible to those who do not perceive the world in these terms? It has been accepted that, outside art, contemplation is more often encountered within the different religious traditions than elsewhere, so it would not be surprising if we discovered that contemplation occurred more amongst the adherents of religion than amongst others, though it would still be necessary to be able to give meaning to the word independently of the religious experience. Similarly with the word 'worship', it is far more likely to be met within a religious context, but its meaning is not entirely dependent upon that context. But worship, or the recognition of worth which we offer in 'worthship', although empty of religious connotations when applied to ordinary things or people in the world ("he worships her" or "he worships money"), obviously implies a religious mode of understanding in the case of "he worships God", simply because worship presupposes a belief in the existence of the object of that worship, which belief constitutes a religious mode of understanding. It would appear to be the same with 'contemplation'. Obviously someone who does not believe in God cannot be said to be contemplating God any more than he can be said to be contemplating the truth of a proposition which he believes
to be false. But this does not disqualify a person from contemplating an object in which he does perceive the required properties and to which he responds in delight or love, particularly if that object is a contemplative work of art which has been created in such a way as to allow such perception and response.

The person who does not share the basic beliefs of the archaic Greeks or of one of the world religions is therefore in a position to contemplate a work of art but not the transcendent being whose existence he doubts. Can he contemplate natural objects in the world without embracing some form of theism? There is no reason why such a person should not recognize the features required for contemplation without being constrained to believe that there is a God or force who created them. Certainly the first two features can be observed to apply without necessitating the belief that someone intended the good proportion and harmony and the third feature, in this case, would be a recognition that 'it is good' or 'right' that the object is as it is, along with an affirmative response of love or delight in the object's existence and nature. What does it mean, though, to perceive good proportion and harmony in something which one believes to have occurred randomly? The answer to this lies, I would suggest, in the concept of 'imagination' and this is best explored by addressing ourselves to the works of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), another philosopher who uses the word contemplation in his analysis of art and beauty.
KANT

Kant wrote extensively on questions of aesthetics, offering a more systematic approach than had hitherto been attempted. In the same way as in the 'Critique of Pure Reason' he investigated the area of knowledge and in the 'Critique of Practical Reason' desire, in his third Critique, the 'Critique of Judgement', he approached a third mode of consciousness to be found in man, namely the area of feeling.

The question to which Kant addresses himself is, basically, "What does it mean to say that something is beautiful?" He approaches this by exploring what it is that we are doing and meaning when we make such a judgement about the beauty or lack of beauty in an object. It will thus be clear that Kant's area of examination differs from mine which is not concerned to delineate what is and is not beautiful. My enquiry is "Given that there are some works of art and some natural phenomena, which may or may not be considered beautiful, to which we respond with aesthetic awareness, what do we mean when we say that our response to some of these objects is contemplative?" So whereas Kant is concerned, through examination of aesthetic awareness, with a definition of 'beauty', I am concerned, through examination of aesthetic awareness, with a definition of 'contemplation'. Having said this, there is obviously an area of overlap between the two enquiries and having extracted some of the features from Kant's writings which are most relevant to my theme it will be pertinent to ask whether what Kant considers to qualify as beautiful is related to, or even identical with, those things which possess the appropriate features to elicit what I refer to as the 'contemplative response'.

Kant differentiates between 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime'
and it is principally the first of these which I shall be examining, though I shall refer to his comments on the sublime where they contribute to, or elucidate, his theory of the beautiful. To judge something to be beautiful is to make what is called an aesthetic judgement, as opposed to a logical judgement where the predicate is objectively descriptive, such as 'This is green' or 'That is pointed'. The judgements we call aesthetic are subjective, since they refer primarily to the sensations of the perceiving (sensing) subject. 'This is pleasant' or 'That hurts' says more about the recipient and his sensations than about the object which gives rise to those sensations.

Having distinguished aesthetic from logical judgements, Kant differentiates two classes of aesthetic judgements. Whereas most aesthetic judgements simply express pleasure aroused by the object in question, a sub-category of these gives rise to a pleasure which could be said to be disinterested and universalizable. Here the perceiver's pleasure rests wholly in the object without reflecting back onto the subject in terms of desire or concern and the perceiver also assumes that anyone else would similarly take pleasure in that object. These two features indicate why we express the proposition in the objective-sounding form: "This is beautiful", rather than in such explicitly subjective terms as "I feel 'response to beauty' sensations before this object", for both requirements take the emphasis away from the subject: in the case of 'disinterested' towards the object and in the case of 'universalizable' onto other possible observers in the world.

The universality clause is expressed in terms of our assumption, when we judge something to be beautiful, that anyone who contemplates that object aesthetically must also find it beautiful. This Kant can do because he has already stipulated that the pleasure
taken in that object must be entirely disinterested. If one enquires what Kant means by 'contemplating' an object, this itself is defined in terms of disinterested delight:

".. the judgement of taste is simply contemplative, i.e. it is a judgement which is indifferent as to the existence of an object, and only decides how its character stands with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure" (Book I, 1st Moment).

As might be expected, 'disinterested' is used by Kant in a specific and somewhat unusual way which, contrary to normal usage today, does not imply an objective approach, but a particular subjective one. The reason why the perceiver is indifferent to the object is that in the judgement of taste what matters is the effect the beautiful thing has on the observer, rather than any information, description or categorization one might impose upon it qua object in the world:

"We easily see that, in saying it is beautiful and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself". (Book I, 1st Moment, 205)

This 'representation in myself' would be the same if I dreamt the object, or fantasized it or vividly remembered it and to that extent is not dependent on its existence but on the effect the object produces in the perceiver.

For Kant, therefore, a person perceives an object in which he takes a disinterested delight which constitutes a contemplative response and which he believes to be the proper response of anyone perceiving that object: the object is thus deemed to be beautiful. The disinterested nature of this response, in Kantian terminology, is such that the perceiver sees the object as if for the first time, bracketing off all knowledge and expectations of that object, or meanings it may have accrued in normal life. As Zimmerman has elucidated Kant's requirement of disinterestedness, in relation, for example, to a door, (Kant: The Aesthetic Judgement):
"We must dissociate it from its existence as a thing to open or a thing to close and experience it as a pure perceptual form of our awareness"

In distinguishing the beautiful from the sublime Kant later qualifies the term by contrasting the process of setting the mind in motion, which occurs in response to the sublime, with the restful contemplation which is the mark of the response to beauty (Book II, Analytic of the Sublime, A 258). One might thus extrapolate that what Kant meant by contemplation was a disinterested, restful pleasure. To define contemplation in these terms, however, would not make it a very useful concept outside Kantian aesthetics and my intention has been to outline a possible understanding of contemplation which would allow it to be differentiated from other modes of awareness and thereby become a useful tool in discussing aesthetic, religious or any other activity. In sharpening the definition certain stipulations have been made which would disqualify some of the ways in which contemplation has been used in normal conversation on the basis that the meaning of the term in such applications is too vague and imprecise to be useful. This is, of course, a common price to be paid when applying philosophical analysis to a word which is used both in academic discussion and in common parlance: although a pragmatic empiricism may help the enquiry, it may not always be wise to rely on it, for words can behave like the Vicar of Bray in changing their meaning to suit their present company. There is, however, a further role ascribed by Kant to contemplation, to which we shall later return.

The sub-category of aesthetic judgements which Kant defines in these terms he calls 'judgements of taste' and it is these with which he is primarily concerned in his aesthetic writings, since it is the judgement of taste which he believes to determine the beautiful. The other aesthetic judgements, which relate to the pleasant rather
than the beautiful, are called judgements of sense and both judgements of sense and judgements of taste are subjective and thus distinguished from logical judgements which are objective. Further, being subjective, these judgements do not lead to knowledge:

"But I have already stated that an aesthetic judgement is quite unique and affords no (not even a confused) knowledge of the Object. It is only through a logical judgement that we get knowledge" (Critique of Judgement, Book I, 3rd moment).

Clearly, this conclusion is opposed to that arrived at by Plato who, as we have seen in chapter 4, considers contemplation to be the only way to come to knowledge since it takes one through the appearances to the Reality beyond. So when Plato speaks of a man contemplating beauty he assumes that the man is coming to a true knowledge of that beauty, whereas when Kant uses the same term he believes that the man acquires no knowledge of the beauty but only of his own response to it:

"The aesthetic judgement refers the representation, by which an Object is given, solely to the Subject, and brings to our notice no quality of the object, but only the final form in the determination of the powers of representation engaged upon it. The judgement is called aesthetic for the very reason that its determining ground cannot be a concept, but is rather the feeling (of the internal sense) of the concert in the play of the mental powers as a thing only capable of being felt" (Book I, 3rd Moment).

This idea of 'the play of the mental powers' is important in Kant's analysis of the beautiful and the sublime and is his further feature of contemplation referred to earlier. For the contemplative response to a vase, for example, is, Kant maintains, not caused by desire but by a certain kind of mental activity, the stimulating and exhilarating play of one's mental faculties in the presence of the vase. Through this play of the mental faculties imagination is involved in the contemplative response. In observing a beautiful object we receive sense impressions of various kinds, which is why Kant maintains that the judgement based on them is empirical. But he also believes that the mind has a part to play in the process by
organizing and ordering these diverse impressions. This it does through the faculties of imagination and understanding. In the 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant had defined the imagination as "the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is not itself present" (151), so through the imagination we order the subjective impressions, thus allowing them to be perceived and appreciated in such a way that the delight in them is disinterested and universalizable and therefore not ultimately constrained by the limitations of subjectivity. Thus it is through sense that we experience the manifold of intuitions, but through imagination these are brought together into a unity to which the understanding can then be applied.

"... a given object, through the intervention of sense, sets the imagination at work in arranging the manifold, and the imagination, in turn, the understanding in giving to this arrangement the unity of concepts" (ibid, Book I, 4th moment).

The object triggers the imagination "in arranging the manifold" and the imagination triggers the understanding ("whose sole function is to bring sensuous ideas under rules" 'The Moral Law' 108), which gives unity to the arrangement. These two faculties, and the interplay between them, are found in rational beings and are both cognitive faculties. In the contemplative response to beauty these two different faculties are brought into a harmony and through this harmony the unity of the object is realized and appreciated.

Hence, although pleasure is subjective, the particular variant of pleasure which Kant postulates to be the determining ground of judgements of taste relates to a relationship between the imagination and understanding and also between these together and the object:

"the ground of this pleasure is found in .. the purposive harmony of an object (whether a product of nature or of art) with the mutual relations of the cognitive faculties (the imagination and the
understanding), a harmony which is requisite for every empirical cognition" (Introduction to the Critique of Judgement, 191).

It must also be remembered that when Kant speaks of our response being subjective this has not the private and personal meaning implied in some later aesthetic subjectivism, whereby it does not matter what response anyone else experiences before the object, for to Kant the pleasure is necessary and universalizable.

Kant also recognizes harmony in our perception of the sublime, but not in an identical way. In response to the sublime our Understanding is inadequate and we are called upon to exercise our Reason, in relation to which Understanding struggles helplessly; for the ideas of Reason go beyond the power of Understanding, bearing the mind away from the phenomenal world towards the noumenal. This very conflict though, Kant suggests, is a sort of harmony, in the sense that we have discussed the unity of opposites in regard to the Pre-Socratic philosophers, for both aspects of the conflict are necessary to the resultant judgement, each drawing the other out. So whilst in response to the beautiful there is a harmony of Imagination and Understanding, in response to the sublime there is a harmony, borne of essential and creative conflict, of Imagination and Reason:

"For just as in the estimate of the beautiful imagination and understanding by their concert generated subjective finality of the mental faculties, so imagination and reason do so here by their conflict" (Book II, 258).

In both the cases discussed by Kant, the beautiful and the sublime, there is, then, a unity, not inherent in the object but in the sensations which are the only means we have of perceiving the object, and a harmony between our own faculties working on that awareness and between those faculties and the object itself. The second feature of the contemplative response which we extracted from Greek philosophy was an awareness of the unity of the object of
contemplation and of the harmony within it and between it and the observer. If this feature is adapted to be expressed in the more empiricist terms of eighteenth century German philosophy, so that the qualities of the object are dependent upon the person perceiving it, then it could be claimed that the same feature is being required by Kant for his judgement of taste in the beautiful as was required by Plato as a mark of contemplation. The question then arises whether the other features which are found in Greek philosophy are also mirrored in Kant's theories of our judgements of beauty.

The first of these features was expressed in terms of the order, balance and good proportion in the object of contemplation. It has already been observed that Kant believed beautiful things to be ordered, that ordering being exactly the task for which the imagination is employed and that which enables the understanding to come to bear on the experience, thus distinguishing it from the sublime which is unbounded:

"But in what we are wont to call sublime in nature there is such an absence of anything leading to particular objective principles and corresponding forms of nature, that it is rather in its chaos, or in its wildest and most irregular disorder and desolation, provided it gives signs of magnitude and power, that nature chiefly excites the ideas of the sublime" (Book II, 246).

At one level the ordering relates to the formal qualities of the object in question and to the simplicity and purity of that form which constitutes its order and good proportion, in the same way as the Greeks favoured simple unified forms because of the order and good proportion readily apparent in them.

"The purity of a simple mode of sensation means that its uniformity is not disturbed or broken by any foreign sensation. It belongs merely to the form; for abstraction may there be made from the quality of the mode of such sensation (what colour or tone, if any, it represents). For this reason all simple colours are regarded as beautiful so far as pure. Composite colours have not this advantage, because not being simple, there is no standard for estimating whether they should be called pure or impure" (Book I, 3rd moment, 224).
Kant does not extend this principle to absolute regularity of form which the ancient Greeks considered to be suitable for contemplation owing to the law-governed nature of the regularity. He saw the advantages of simple forms like the circle and equilateral or equiangular quadrilateral in the ease with which the human mind can form a concept of them, as it can with more complex forms to the extent that regularity is adhered to:

"The regularity that conduces to the concept of an object is, in fact, the 'conditio sine qua non' of grasping the object as a single representation and giving to the manifold its determinate form". But the forming of a concept is not part of the judgement of the beautiful for Kant, so although the extremely regular form may be judged to be intellectually, or even morally, pleasing, it cannot be judged to be beautiful:

"This determination is an end in respect of knowledge; and in this connection it is invariably coupled with delight" (242).

With the judgement of taste the aim is not to form a concept of the object but to respond immediately with delight or aversion and thus to contemplate it as it appears to the subject, rather than trying to impose form and conceptual analysis upon it. So it is that 'the comprehension' for Kant is not concerned with knowledge but with a "single intuition holding the many in one"; in other words the unity which has already been discussed.

But there is in Kant's writings a more important sense of order which is related to what we have postulated to be a feature of those things to which it is appropriate to respond with contemplation. This is to be found in his phrase 'purposiveness without purpose' (Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck). Perhaps an analogy from the apiary will illustrate how this phrase does not necessarily constitute a contradiction. When a bee discovers a good source of nectar she
returns to the hive to communicate the information to her fellows, giving precise details of direction and distance by means of what looks very much like a dance which follows either a circular or a figure-of-eight pattern. It is quite reasonable for the beekeeper observing this performance to refer to it as a dance, even though he knows that the bee is not dancing but is, by instinct bred into her over the years, passing on a message. Similarly, the person making a judgement of taste sees the object as being purposive without concluding that it was purposed, which would involve him in forming a concept and therefore disqualify the judgement from the realm of taste. Kant's 'purposiveness' is, however, more essential and non-eliminable than in the case of the bee dance. It is not just that the object can be seen in these terms but that it must. What he implies is that we need to see the purposiveness in order to classify what we see and impose sense on the world. The object's purposiveness is what we perceive in it on the basis of its inherent law-governedness and order, but that does not lead us on to assert that there is a Will which purposed it and imposed the laws upon it.

"Purposiveness may exist apart from an end, in so far as we do not locate the causes of this form in a will, but yet are able to render the explanation of its possibility intelligible to ourselves only by deriving it from a will" (Book I, 3rd moment, 220).

In the 'Analytic of Teleological Judgement' Kant considers the hypothetical case of a man on a desert island which he believes to be uninhabited happening upon a regular figure, such as a hexagon, traced in the sand. The man will perceive that the probability of this pattern having occurred entirely by the fortuitous movement of wind and waves is so slight as to be discounted, for the formal relationships there represented adhere strictly to certain rules. Instead he recognizes them as formed according to a concept: "the
causality of a concept in respect of its object". He does not have to take the further step of asserting that it is the result of a Will, which would attribute purpose to the object as well as purposiveness and thus disqualify it from the judgement of taste. It would also require the introduction of ideas which go beyond the domain of the Understanding and Imagination, requiring instead the operation of Reason.

There are two major ways in which this theory goes beyond that of the Greeks. First, they could assert that the order perceived in the universe was the result of some power or will, a god or demiurge who created and ordered the world. This is best illustrated by Plato's myth in the Timaeus. Kant's position is more complex, for whilst certainly not denying the part played by God in the way the world is and therefore in the order we perceive in beauty, he stressed that having recourse to such belief is not a part of the aesthetic judgement of taste; that on the contrary it is necessary to respond to beauty in such a way that we are aware of its purposiveness without constructing hypotheses as to whence that purpose arose.

"Strictly speaking we do not observe the ends in nature as designed. We only read this conception into the facts as a guide to judgement in its reflection upon the products of nature. ... All that is permissible for us is the narrow formula: We cannot conceive or render intelligible to ourselves the purposiveness that must be introduced as the basis even of our knowledge of the intrinsic possibility of many natural things, except by representing it, and, in general, the world, as the product of an intelligent cause - in short, of a God" (Dialectic of Teleological Judgement 399).

But the difference is more apparent than real, for though Plato, like Kant, conceived of a Being who caused the order, the observation and appreciation of that order were not dependent on the belief in that Being.

The second difference is that the Greeks conceived of beauty as an objective quality inherent in the object to a greater or lesser
degree depending on the extent to which it approached to the Form of Beauty. Kant's more subjective theory speaks of a relationship between the object and the perceiver's response to it. In recognizing purposiveness in a beautiful object we give free rein to our imagination rather than our knowledge which would make judgements of a logical kind to do with what caused the purposiveness. Thus it is the imagination, bringing together our different sense impressions into a unity which also recognizes the order inherent in the beautiful object. This concept of the place of Imagination in our response to beauty is one which allows us to continue to make use of the Greeks' understanding of contemplation even though we operate within a different framework of ideas and beliefs. For it has been claimed that the three features of the contemplative response, to beauty, or anything else, are 1) a recognition of order, 2) a sense of harmony and 3) a response of love. If we accept the notion of 'Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck' we can appreciate the order and good proportion as much in the kosmos as in the work of art without needing to make or defend any claims as to a mind or will behind it.

By discussing Kant's theory of purposiveness in relation to Plato's requirement of order for contemplation in both of these cases I do not wish to equate the two concepts (though order may well be seen as a part of the purposiveness), but to show by analogy how the requirement of order in an analysis of contemplation is not dependent upon a theistic interpretation of the world. For in the same way as one can adopt Kant's concept of purposiveness without purpose, conceiving of a purpose but not asserting that it exists, so one can do likewise with Plato's concept of order and good proportion, conceiving them as designed without asserting the existence of their designer.
In responding to beauty we can be subject to what R.K. Elliot refers to as 'analogical imagination' or Fancy (Imagination in the Experience of Art), where by the operation of the imagination we are presented with an analogical perception such as, to take one of his examples, seeing a forest as a cathedral or a cathedral as a forest. This certainly occurs in many of our responses to the things we see and hear and is one way in which one might choose to interpret the response which perceives order in beauty or in natural occurrences. On this interpretation one might, on looking at a ring of toadstools or a triangular constellation of stars, associate them in imagination with a goldsmith’s ring or a mathematician’s diagrams in such a way that one’s consciousness of those latter things in imagination would impose itself on the former, so tying together our consciousness of both. One could then postulate that Kant’s purposiveness was a product of such analogical imagination, perceiving the same sort of purposiveness in natural beauty as in a carefully constructed sonnet, but, because it was part of an imaginative experience, not needing to be taken to its logical conclusion in terms of a purpose behind the purposiveness.

It is true that Fancy has an interesting part to play in our consciousness of some works of art and beautiful natural objects. But although I am sure these forms of attention, do, as Elliot suggests, have a place in aesthetic experience and also appear to be akin to what Kant is suggesting, this is not the sense in which I consider Imagination to have relevance to the Greeks’s concept of order or Kant’s of 'purposiveness without purpose'. When one perceives order or purposiveness in something one is not engaged in 'making present what is absent' as in analogical imagination nor in interpreting it in conceptual terms, which is the function of understanding, but in perceiving it in a particular light whereby the parts of the object or
experience itself slot into an ordered whole in one's perception of it so that one perceives it in a certain way. But, claimed Kant, the fact that we perceive something in terms of purposiveness does not imply that there is an external cause of that purposiveness. Similarly, almost anything, perceived in a certain way, has its own essential order, which is one of the things the contemplative uncovers by the sort of attention he gives to an object and of which the artist is often aware when he attempts to capture the reality of the object on canvas. A good example of this can be found in Sartre's 'Nausea', where a completely ordinary and arbitrary encounter is noted and described in such a way as to render it as ordered and purposive as a mediaeval illuminated carpet page:

"For example, on Saturday, about four in the afternoon, on the short wooden pavement of the station yard, a little woman in sky-blue was running backwards, laughing and waving a handkerchief. At the same time, a Negro in a cream-coloured raincoat, with yellow shoes and a green hat, was turning the corner of the street, whistling. Still going backwards, the woman bumped into him, underneath a lantern which hangs from the fence and which is lit at night. So there, at one and the same time, you had that fence which smells so strongly of wet wood, that lantern, and that little blonde in a Negro's arms, under a fiery-coloured sky" (page 18).

If I see a cathedral as a forest, then the image I impose on the cathedral comes from outside it and I see it as something which, essentially, it is not and cannot, whilst remaining a cathedral, be. Thus, in the same way as one cannot, in the duck/rabbit figure, see the image simultaneously as a duck and as a rabbit (the rabbit's ears being needed to form the duck's beak, for example), so one must either perceive the cathedral or the forest, if necessary switching back and forth between the two at speed. But if I perceive the cathedral as purposed then that does not in the least detract from my perception of it as a cathedral, since it can logically be both a cathedral and be purposed. This perception can be imagined rather than known, for if I
enter a building about which I know nothing I can perceive it in such a way that I imagine it to have been purposed. The same applies to some other qualities of the cathedral; for example one might imagine that it had 'arrived there by magic', or 'grown out of the hillside', or even, perhaps, been 'designed by an angel'. I am suggesting that this is also the case with the perception, in contemplating the cathedral, that it has order and good proportion. In none of these cases does the content of what is imagined change one's present perception of the nature of the building itself. But if I fancy it to be a forest, or a market square, or a lion, or a womb, then each of these images precludes my seeing it, in that instant, as the cathedral that it is. This is the first way in which I would distinguish Fancy from Imagination in the context of this discussion, namely that when order is perceived, by the operation of the Imagination, to inhere in something, we are engaged in discovering a quality within the object, rather than in making present what is absent by imposing an analogy upon it.

The second way in which the two differ is in the arbitrariness of Fancy. If one is imaginative one can choose to see the cathedral as many different things and one person perceiving it as a forest is no more right than the person seeing it as a crouching lion, nor would either impute any lack of judgement on the other. As it happens, many different people entering the cathedral may share the same analogical imagining, especially after it has been suggested to them, but there is no sense in which someone subject to this fancy would insist that the cathedral must be seen in this way. But when the Greeks found in beauty the order they expected to find there, they would also have expected that order to be perceived by anyone else who saw the object and who conceived of it as beautiful, whether or not
they believed in the same provenance of that order. Similarly, when Kant speaks of perceiving purposiveness in something, he is concerned with a perception which is universalizable. He would not accept that purposiveness in that object has sense if some perceive it whilst others find only accidental chaos. But the fact that everyone would perceive the hexagon traced in the sand as being purposive does not affect the truth or falsity of the completely separate proposition that some Will purposed it.

Fancy enlivens much of our perception of the world and of beauty and may be one of the important determinants of our creativity. But if the propensity for the perception of order which I have discussed as a feature of contemplation is a function of the imagination, it is imagination as a cognitive faculty in a stricter, more inherent and ineliminable, sense than applies to fancy:

"... but then it is only made the determining ground of this judgement by virtue of our consciousness of its resting simply upon reflection and the universal, though only subjective, conditions of the harmony of that reflection with the knowledge of objects generally, for which the form of the Object is final (purposive)" (Introduction, 191).

The purposiveness postulated by Kant was so necessary to understanding the object that discussion of that object was impossible without borrowing language from the realm of purpose and Will, in the same way as scientists have had recourse to vocabulary extraneous to their discipline in order to create the models which enabled understanding to dawn. When Bohr described the atom according to a planetary model he was saying something about what the atom is, not what it is like, even though it is not a planetary system. Only then could the appropriate questions be asked and hypotheses posited so that scientists were able to study the atom. Psychologists, too, have used various models over the last century in their efforts to present the human behaviour they wish to explain. In each case they have
erected models in pictures familiar in other contexts, for example the medical (cure), zoological (nature/nurture), mechanical (break down) or hydraulic (strain, release, tension), so that aspects of the phenomenon can be perceived which would otherwise go unnoticed and the area thus be rendered permeable to investigation. If someone states that something is a law of nature they do not mean that there is a legal system to enforce that behaviour but that to see it in terms other than those normally reserved for legal transactions is to miss the point of it. In the case of the bee dance it was only by perceiving the particular patterns of rhythm and movement made by the bees in terms of dance that the particular activity was extracted from the mass of general movement and activity so that it made sense to ask what, if anything, the activity signified. Once one has grasped, by reference to the model of dance, the nature of what occurs (our understanding 'brings sensuous ideas under rules') then one can make a separate judgement as to whether or not it is a dance. In the use of all these models Max Black suggests, in 'Models and Metaphors', that "the key to understanding the entire transaction is the identity of structure that in favourable cases permits assertions made about the secondary domain to yield insight into the original field of interest" (page 231).

Thus when the Greeks perceived order and good proportion, or Kant purposiveness, in a beautiful object, they could not conceive of it or respond to it other than in the context of its having been purposed or designed. Having thus maintained a harmony between the imagination and the understanding it was not necessary to their experience of that beauty to employ Reason to take them towards the noumenal in claims about the Will behind the purpose or order.

The third feature of contemplative awareness which we have traced through various thinkers is the response of love. Hints of this
can also be found in Kant's writings on the subject of the judgement of taste. For example Kant recognizes the importance of pleasure in the experience and indeed his whole concept of the judgement of the beautiful is a clarification of the sort of delight involved:

"Now this purely subjective (aesthetic) estimating of the object, or of the representation through which it is given, is antecedent to the pleasure in it, and is the basis of this pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties. Again, the above-described universality of the subjective conditions of estimating objects forms the sole foundation of this universal subjective validity of the delight which we connect with the representation of the object that we call beautiful" (Book I, 2nd moment, 218).

As was remarked in connection with the Pre-Socratics, pleasure and delight are closely related to the experience of love. It was also suggested that to perceive God willing the world into being by creation implied love on the part of that God. This is reflected in an observation made by Kant in his 'Analytic of the Beautiful':

"For the good is the Object of will, (ie. of a rationally determined faculty of desire). But to will something and to take delight in its existence, ie. to take an interest in it, are identical" (209)

The pleasure we feel before the beautiful perpetuates itself because of this relationship of love:

"We dwell on the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself" (222);

in other words we experience timelessness in our contemplation of that beauty to which we respond with love.

The same response is not possible before the sublime, both because of its lack of order and because although it elicits awe and respect, and awakens our moral sense, it does not inspire us to love:

"The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, apart from any interest; the sublime to esteem something highly even in opposition to our (sensible) interest" (Book II, 267).

Our response to the sublime, therefore, in which our reason is engaged, elicits moral approval rather than free conceptless contemplation:
"Hence it follows that the intellectual and intrinsically final (moral) good, estimated aesthetically, instead of being represented as beautiful, must rather be represented as sublime, with the result that it arouses more a feeling of respect than of love or of the heart being drawn towards it - for human nature does not of its own proper motion accord with the good, but only by virtue of the dominion which reason exercises over sensibility" (Book II, 271).

To regard the object simply as it appears and to take delight in it without, through the formation of concepts, forcing the experience into the realm of reason, is, I have suggested, an attitude of love and is closely related to the Judaeo/Christian concept of God as the I AM. This is beautifully and delicately illustrated by a passage in Iris Murdoch's novel, 'Nuns and Soldiers'. Two women are walking along a pebbly beach, musing, when one of them suddenly perceives the stones beneath her in this way:

"... Look at these stones. My Lord and my God. She said aloud, 'My God.' 'What?' 'Just look at these stones,' said Anne. She dropped the one she had been holding, then with a sort of animistic possessiveness turned to pick it up again, but she could not now discern which one it had been. 'Yes,' said Gertrude. 'There they are. What about them?' 'There they are'." (page 113).

It has been argued that there is a case for seeing Kant's aesthetic judgements of taste as similar to the theory of contemplation which emerged from a study of Greek philosophy in terms of its distinguishing features. As has been emphasized, Kant was not engaged in seeking to define contemplation, but beauty, which he did in terms of the perceiver's response to the object rather than, as the Greeks did, because of qualities in the object itself. So what he has described is a particular response or awareness which he believes must be present before something can correctly be judged to be beautiful and it is feasible to suggest that what he has produced is a reasoned and coherent description of the contemplative response, or contemplative awareness, differing from the Greeks' notion mainly in
the fact that they believed such contemplation to lead to knowledge whilst he believes that it cannot and should not. However, this apparent difference is caused because of the different meaning which would be ascribed to 'knowledge' in the two cases, with the Greeks's broader concept embracing more aspects of our mental experience than Kant's logical faculty, including, for instance, both Understanding and Reason.

But the major contribution which Kant makes to the subject under examination is the introduction of the concept of Imagination, through which one may perceive the purposiveness of beautiful objects without being forced to base this perception on a particular metaphysical belief; through which also the contemplative may perceive the order and good proportion, the harmony and the love in the object of contemplation to which he responds in love.
CHAPTER 7
DEVELOPING THE THEME

Having extracted my thesis from Greek philosophy and tested it through the thought and art of Christian philosophy, I now want to examine it in the light of more contemporary thought and practice. As well as referring to western philosophy, I shall find it useful to draw upon the experience and expression of various artists, the traditions of mysticism and the probings of recent physics, which can lay claim to being one of the most exciting branches of speculative philosophy now being produced. For my hesitant incursions into this latter field I am indebted to Gary Zukav's 'The Dancing Wu Li Masters -- An Overview of the New Physics' which, despite the strange placement of adverbs and other vagaries of American syntax, provides a lucid and stimulating exposition of an area otherwise daunting to the lay person.

Order and proportion of the cosmos.

Lacking as we do the unified vision of the ancient Greeks, whereby all their thinking, moral, aesthetic, scientific and metaphysical could be subsumed under their religious sense, the truth of their basic presupposition of the order inherent in the cosmos is far from self-evident. Patterns can be imposed on our experience and so the modern mind is able to demonstrate certain ordered features in cultural or economic history, in sociological phenomena and in the development of physical or mental illness, but these patterns are insignificant beside the Greek concept and are chiefly remarkable for managing to manifest some ordered pattern in an otherwise arbitrary world.
Having lost this base on which their theories of beauty were built it is interesting to note how artists have continued to hanker after a concept of order in their work. Some of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings, for example, adhere so strictly to the principle of the golden section that it is unlikely that he arrived at the configurations by accident. If it be objected that Leonardo was the product of a more religious age than our own, still secure in the belief in the ordered nature of God's world, then we can find numerous examples during the last century of this insistence on art springing from order and correct proportion.

The Cubists, early this century, were concerned with form and by rejecting the third dimension they forced people to see flat shapes on a plane surface, but as Kandinsky was quick to point out (Concerning the Spiritual in Art, chapter VI) this soon came to the limits of its own possibilities and even when the third dimension crept back in, the concentration on form for its own sake, divorced from a strong inner principle, was ultimately impoverishing. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to underestimate the importance of Cubism on the development of twentieth century art. Not only did it free artists from the shackles of several centuries of the 'Rule of Representation', but also influenced the writers on 'significant form' and the art which sprang from this theory.

In the theory of significant form, which owed some of its impetus to G.E. Moore's remarks about the aesthetic emotion in Principia Ethica (1903) we have an attempt, especially in the case of Clive Bell, to distinguish the aesthetic emotion from the rest of our experience. He felt that people's reactions to art were sullied by all sorts of extraneous factors, whereas in fact
"To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space".

(Significant Form. Hosper, page 92)

Unfortunately Bell’s aesthetic theory subsides into circularity, for whilst claiming that it is only significant form that matters to art, he defines ‘significant’ as that which is expressed by the artist. In an attempt to escape this circle he posits his Metaphysical Theory, suggesting, rather tentatively, that through significant form we experience the rhythm and reality that lie beneath everything and that although, in the Aesthetic Theory, he insists that the aesthetic emotion applies solely to works of art, he here allows that occasionally an artist may be enabled to see something natural as an end in itself. When the veil is drawn aside one may, in effect, see with the eye of God.

"But if an object considered as an end in itself moves us more profoundly (i.e. has greater significance) than the same object considered as a means to practical ends or as a thing related to human interests — and this undoubtedly is the case — we can only suppose that when we consider anything as an end in itself we become aware of that in it which is of greater moment than any qualities it may have acquired from keeping company with human beings. Instead of recognizing its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm. Call it by what name you will, the thing that I am talking about is that which lies behind the appearance of all things — that which gives to all things their individual significance" (Clive Bell: Significant Form).

Bell is here on the threshold of an area which Heidegger was later to explore in much more depth. This is as far as Bell dared to go and his remarks are too tentative and vague to qualify as a theory, but in writing the short section entitled 'The Metaphysical Hypothesis' he seems to have had at least an intuition that the formal properties of art represent an order and proportion which is part of a deeper order and proportion in the nature of Reality. Had he pursued this train of thought he might have risked seeing art as part of a wholeness rather
than as an end in itself and thereby maintained the unity of the work of art which, by attempting to separate form and content and outlawing aspects of expressionism and metaphysics, his aesthetic theory, as it stands, loses.

'Significant form' was also heralded as the key to art by Roger Fry, to whom we owe the phrase "disinterested intensity of contemplation":

"And here surely, thought Roger Fry, was the key, the talisman which explained the affinity between all great works -- French or Persian, Italian or Japanese, ancient or modern. Form in itself, pure and uncorrupted by the myriad accidents and associations of life -- 'more profound and more significant spiritually than any of the emotions which had to do with life'." (Gaunt, 1975).

Fry recognized the importance of the unity of the work of art. In 'An Essay in Aesthetics' of 1909 he wrote:

"One chief aspect of order in a work of art is unity; unity of some kind is necessary for our restful contemplation of the work of art as a whole, since if it lacks unity we cannot contemplate it in its entirety, but we shall pass outside it to other things necessary to complete its unity".

He saw 'order' as the first requirement in a work of art, combined with the second requirement of variety. He distinguished works of art with these two characteristics from natural phenomena which might well also possess them, by means of our conciousness of the purpose behind their creation, or the fact that we know that a fellow human being made the work of art and intended to imbue it with order and variety, rather than the order and variety arising through the coincidences of nature. This distinction shows the enormous difference between the theories of Fry and others who wrote in a similar vein and those of the ancient Greeks who appreciated the order in art largely because it mirrored the order of the cosmos.

Both Kandinsky and Klee approached art as a more unified
concept, recognizing that a work of art has formal and expressive qualities which cannot be neatly differentiated. As Klee put it in 'On Modern Art' (page 37):

"Certain proportions of line, the combination of certain tones from the scale of tone values, certain harmonies of colour carry with them at the time quite distinctive and outstanding modes of expression".

These two artists explored, in their art and in their thinking, the nature of both the order and proportion in art and of the harmony that derives from that order and proportion, and both envisaged the results of their investigations affecting not just the course of art history but the soul of man or the health of society.

"Painting is an art," said Kandinsky (Concerning the Spiritual in Art, page 54) "and art is not vague production, transitory and isolated, but a power which must be directed to the improvement and refinement of the human soul — to, in fact, the raising of the spiritual triangle".

This is a sentiment to which Plato would have given his whole-hearted assent, but rather than simply theorizing, Kandinsky explored in practice the realm of colour-harmony and form and so could be seen, in a strange way, as turning the tables on Plato by being the artist who actually practises his craft instead of just talking about it, and rescuing art from the vacuum into which formalism had tended to push it.

"The artist must have something to say, for mastery over form is not his goal but rather the adapting of form to its inner meaning" (ibid p 54).

Klee also takes us nearer to the essence of art when he writes:

"But our pounding heart drives us down, deep down to the source of all. What springs from this source, whatever it may be called, dream, idea or phantasy — must be taken seriously only if it unites with the proper creative means to form a work of art. Then those curiosities become realities — realities of art which help to lift life out of its mediocrity. For not only do they, to some extent, add more spirit to the seen, but they also make secret visions visible" (On Modern Art, p 51).
What is implicit in these writers, namely that the artist-creator and the aesthetically-responding spectator are part of the essential order of things, had been more explicit earlier, in the writings of Schopenhauer, in particular in 'The World as Will and Idea'. He wrote of the state where percipient and perceived seem to lose their separateness and be one in the experience of contemplation: this is the 'fusion' referred to in chapter 1, which has more relevance to the second section of this chapter where I shall be discussing 'harmony', but it also introduces an important notion here which is that in the order and proportion of the cosmos, not only is art part of it rather than standing outside it and filtering it, but the artist and spectator, who experience the work of art in their different ways, are integral to this order. But what I am referring to as the order of the cosmos does not have a place in Schopenhauer's philosophy, for the Will which he conceives of as underlying everything is irrational, so that although he would maintain that we come closest to the true nature of things through aesthetic contemplation, which is an artistic and cognitive process, and although he uses something akin to Platonic Forms to represent the hierarchy of things which represent the expressiveness of Will, yet his philosophy is not based on the same foundation as the Greek philosophy, to which the orderedness of the cosmos was essential. Nonetheless, he appealed to several artists and thinkers at the beginning of this century, partly because he acclaimed art to be the pinnacle of the human intellect and the supreme form of knowledge, but also because of his espousal of music as the highest form of art. "The other arts speak only of Shadows, it speaks of the Will itself" (The World as Will and Idea, I 336) and again
"The composer reveals the inner nature of the world, and expresses the deepest wisdom in a language which his reason does not understand; as a person under the influence of mesmerism tells of things of which he has no conception when he awakes" (ibid I 342).

Through this emulation of music as the best expression of the Will, through appreciation of its purity of expression unconstricted by the pressures and limitations of representation, and through the consequent explorations of such artists as Kandinsky and Klee (both of whom shared Schopenhauer's distrust of imitative music and its equivalents in the other arts) into the possibility of expanding this freedom and deep expressiveness in the realm of the visual arts, twentieth century art has been greatly enriched. But Schopenhauer gave a meagre place to science and the world of normal perception and observation and thus contributed also to the unfortunate alienation of art and contemplative activity from the other realms of our experience.

But if these areas we are investigating are of more than superficial importance they will set up harmonics in different disciplines. So we find Adolf Zeising basing his aesthetics in the mathematics of the golden section; and just as artists before his day used this proportion, so in more recent times there are numerous examples of art, architecture and music being built on the principle of the golden section and the Fibonacci number series: for example Le Corbusier, Mondrian, Seurat and Anthony Hill in the visual arts and Bartók in music.

Psychologists have also explored this field, one of the earliest and most famous examples being Fechner. His experiments to discover what proportions and forms are most pleasing to human beings were interesting, though not altogether conclusive. In the "inquiry
He also measured many books, cards, pictures etc. and found that the golden section occurs significantly more frequently than other proportions. As I suggested earlier when discussing the golden section, this may only mean that this proportion is the one that people have learnt is acceptable and he certainly did not manage to evolve a test which bypassed the effects of education and cultural learning. However, the attempt was made to investigate whether there is a mathematical order which applies to art and everyday experience. Fechner also evolved an aesthetic theory, the three 'supreme formal principles' of which have a familiar ring to them: a) unified connection of manifold, b) consistency, agreement or truth and c) clearness.

Perhaps the theory that relied most heavily on the assumption of order was the Gestalt theory developed in the 1930s and 1940s, which saw the artist pursuing good shape and proportion because it is natural to man to seek these attributes since he is surrounded by them in nature. Nature, in adopting the simplest and most economical path necessarily produces this sense of rhythm and correct proportion as part of her efficiency, so man, as part of nature must adopt the same principles.

But all these artists and philosophers whom I have been discussing, assume that it is necessary for art to be ordered and to
have good proportion. Some see it as the only area of experience to have this quality, whereas others suspect that it mirrors a more fundamental order and proportion in the way the world is. I have at no point claimed that art must possess this quality, but rather that this is one of the qualities we perceive when we respond to art, or anything else, in a contemplative manner. Some works of art would seem to lack anything resembling order and proportion in themselves, and yet what one becomes aware of in contemplation is the order and correct proportion of the universe, the realization that things are as they are and as they should be. Where this informs art we see what Coleridge referred to as

"living Power and prime Agent ... a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Biographia Literaria, ch XIII, vol 1 p202).

If we now turn to the works and writings of modern physicists, not to substantiate the theory but to illustrate that people working in different disciplines are sometimes feeling their way towards the same kind of truth at the same time, we find that whether they are tracing the activity of electrons in hydrogen atoms, Newton's laws of motion and gravity, or, more recently, the interaction of particles in quantum field theory, the world is seen to be built on order and proportion, even though this order and proportion is shatteringly different from that which we formerly conceived. Obviously, the same questions could be raised about this as about any other imposition of order by man's mind on the world, but the fact remains that, as far as we are able to perceive, such an order exists. Within this order, the observer is essential to what Heidegger would call the 'world's worlding'. Newton, who explored the laws which he thought were behind the world's order, saw these laws as manifestations of God's
perfection, but once physics entered the subatomic realm the laws
which purported to lead to prediction failed and a new order took
their place, based on probabilities, and basic to this new order was
the contribution of the observer.

"May the universe in some strange sense be 'brought into being' by the
participation of those who participate? ..... The vital act is the act of
participation. 'Participator' is the incontrovertible new concept
given by quantum mechanics. It strikes down the term 'observer' of
classical theory, the man who stands safely behind the thick glass
wall and watches what goes on without taking part. It can't be done,
quantum mechanics says" (J.A.Wheeler, K.S.Thorne and C.Misner,
'Gravitation', San Francisco, Freeman, p1273). (Zukav).

Because, according to the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum
mechanics, all possibilities remain open until one is actualized by
being measured, one might argue that it is we who are actualizing the
universe; and since we are part of the universe, it is, and we are,
self-actualizing.

One of the objections Einstein had to quantum mechanics was
this pure chance element. In a letter to Max Born he wrote:

"Quantum mechanics is very impressive, ... but I am convinced that God
does not play dice" (The Born-Einstein Letters', p91).

But this new understanding of the reality which literally lies beneath
the whole created order (or continually-being-created order) is not
chaos but a much denser web of interrelationships and laws than man
formerly realized. Henry Stapp in 'S-Matrix Interpretation of Quantum
Theory' (Physical Review. Zakov) claimed that

"an elementary particle is not an independently existing, unanalyzable
entity. It is, in essence, a set of relationships that reach outward
to other things"

and again (ibid) he posited the belief that the physical world,
according to this new theory, is

"not a structure built out of independently existing unanalyzable
entities, but rather a web of relationships between elements whose
meanings arise wholly from their relationships to the whole".

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Awareness and acceptance of this order and pattern, though so far more difficult to comprehend than, for example, the myth-forms with which Plato attempted to grapple with the ultimate truth of the universe, can still lead to a contemplative response.

Hegel, in attempting to analyse beauty (Philosophy of Fine Art) points to the necessity of conformity to rule, then in his ascending scale he ranks harmony considerably higher than this rule-governed order. These are not different and mutually-exclusive phenomena, but rather is the latter the culmination of the former. So in discussing philosophers, artists and physicists I have found the first concept straining to become the second. It is because there is order and good proportion in the cosmos, or in the work of art, that harmony and a sense of unity is achieved. So our first requirement leads smoothly and necessarily to our second.

Harmony and Unity.

"To this streaming or flowing belongs the beauty that all circular movement has; as the circulation of waters, the circulation of the blood, the periodical motion of planets, the annual wave of vegetation, the action and reaction of Nature" (R.W. Emerson).

Harmony consists in relationships. While music moves in a melodic line it may produce perfect intervals and formal patterns based on sound mathematical principles, but there is no harmony until other notes are introduced in relationship with those notes. A group of people with high ideals of personal behaviour is not united into a community until relationships develop. A theory of astronomical bodies or subatomic particles can be based on mathematical order and good proportion or statistical probability, but until the elements are conceived to be in some sort of relationship there is no sense of a unified whole or of the harmony of parts. So it is that Hegel spoke of
harmony in terms of the uniting of unlike series, such as colours with shapes and sounds with movements; and it is through awareness of the unity of the work, possibly arising out of the perfect order and proportion, that we proceed in our contemplative activity in relation to a work of art. As we saw earlier, Roger Fry also believed unity to be an essential feature of art and one which led to a contemplative response.

To be aware of unity and harmony in the cosmos is to have a vision of wholeness which so many mystics have written about and yet because harmony depends on relationships it often involves strife or conflict and the unity is brought about by the tension of opposites. This is not just an ancient Heraclitean formula but an essential part of our understanding of reality. At the beginning of William Blake's 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' we find the proposition

"Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (Poetical Works, vol 1 p240).

The psychomachia that we observe on the portals of Chartres Cathedral is necessary to the human soul's progression, not because it is a human soul, but because it is part of the cosmos, or the reality that the world and our experience of it is. This is the tension which is the hall-mark of so much great art, as for instance in the anger and peace one finds in Beethoven and in some of the works of Picasso. It was this feature which made music the ideal art for Schopenhauer, for in it he found the uniting of abstract freedom with a formal system of order and it is this uniting of apparently opposing qualities that visual artists have striven for in the twentieth century and which in large measure still remains unresolved. As the mind of the Zen Buddhist is brought to its own limitations by holding the koan and

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thus comes to a new awareness and the Christian grapples with the paradox of a doctrine like the Trinity in order to receive revelation of part of the nature of God, so the modern physicist, accepting a quantum (or energy packet) as both a particle and a wave, two things which are inconsistent with each other, learns to give up normal language and the channels along which the rational mind has in the past run, in order to experience the reality of which everything is a part and so, in effect, to contemplate the ineffable. Max Planck, who is considered to be the father of quantum mechanics, wrote:

"Science .... means unresting endeavour and continually progressing development toward an aim which the poetic intuition may apprehend, but which the intellect can never fully grasp" (The Philosophy of Physics, page 83).

This idea of striving and conflict is also central to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger who speaks of it both in terms of how the world is and also of the work that art is expected to do. The fundamental conflict, as he sees it, is between world and earth, world being that part of existence which is self-disclosing and is continuously attempting to come into the open and earth representing the self-secluding which shelters and conceals.

"The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up" (The Origin of the Work of Art. Poetry, Language, Thought, p47).

So the essential truth about earth is its untruth and the opening up of it reveals and sets forth its unconcealedness:

"To set forth the earth means to bring it into the Open as the self-secluding".

But world and earth are integrally connected and must forever interact with each other, thus bringing about in the core of existence, continual conflict. The conflict, however, is creative
rather than destructive and inevitable rather than unfortunate. Through the conflict, in fact, both world and earth gain their identity and maintain their relationship with each other.

"In essential striving, rather, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures" (p49).

This is where art comes in and is why it is such an important activity, for in containing world and earth, "setting up a world and setting forth the earth", the work of art maintains this essential conflict in existence and so offers itself as Truth working in the work.

"The work-being of the work consists in the fighting of the battle between world and earth. It is because the struggle arrives at its high point in the simplicity of intimacy that the work comes about in the fighting of the battle. The fighting of the battle is the continually self-overreaching gathering of the work's agitation. The repose of the work that rests in itself thus has its presencing in the intimacy of striving" (p49).

If, as Heidegger suggests, the conflict is essential to the way things are, then one of the ways in which art represents Truth is by becoming the battle:

"Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the fighting of the battle in which the unconcealedness of beings as a whole, or Truth, is won" (p55).

So the truth which art presents is nothing to do with correct representation or reportage of facts, but the revealing of what essentially is, or the world's worlding. As in the first section of this chapter we found that awareness of the order and proportion of the universe leads to an appreciation of Reality or Truth -- this is how the world is and is meant to be -- so again here we find we are concerned with that same Reality of which everything is a part. Reality must be the same at however high or low a level we choose to look at it, so Heidegger considers van Gogh's painting of the peasant
shoes as an example of this revealing of Truth, showing how van Gogh has disclosed so much more in his painting than could have been presented by the actual physical presence of the shoes. The reality disclosed by the painting includes the character of the peasant and his relationship with the earth, his patient plodding over furrowed fields, the warmth of the sun and effects of rain and wind, the rhythm of seed-time and harvest and the struggle for survival for oneself and one's dependents.

"Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being. The Greeks called the unconcealedness of beings aletheia" (p36).

In art, the truth of beings sets itself to work, not resolving the conflict of Reality, but entering its unity. It is the happening of truth and

"this happening we think of as the fighting of the conflict between world and earth. Repose occurs in the concentrated agitation of this conflict. The independence or self-composure of the work is grounded here" (p57).

In this way the artist has to recognize that he cannot get at the truth of a thing by measurement which arrests in movement through time or by taking it to bits to examine it which destroys it so that it ceases to be, but only by accepting that it is self-secluding and offering that revelation of its truth. Letting a thing rest in its thingness, which is what Heidegger thinks is demanded of the artist, is to approach it in an attitude of contemplation, but it is to approach it and enter into its conflict, not to turn one's back on it and shrug with indifference.

In 'The Question concerning Technology' Heidegger looks back to the Greek culture when, though art rose to heights seldom attained before or since, it bore the modest name of techne. The danger of
technology is that the conflict between concealing and revealing might be stopped instead of being brought forth in the sense of poiesis. But the proper task of technology and even more so of art, is to be part of poiesis and so present what is not immediately apparent to the physical eye. One of the best expressions of this is to be found in a poem by Heidegger, where he himself engages in the activity of poesis:

"When in early summer lonely narcissi bloom hidden in the meadow and the rock-rose gleams under the maple ..."

The splendour of the simple.

Only image formed keeps the vision.
Yet image formed rests in the poem.
How could cheerfulness stream through us if we wanted to shun sadness?

Pain gives of its healing power
where we least expect it."

(The Thinker as Poet. ibid).

I should like to pause at this point before moving to the next stage, to observe some of the different manifestations of this conflict we find in art. At its weakest we find a hiddenness and deliberate sacrifice of concision in order that the music of the words may reveal truth, in this case in 'Ars Poetique' by Paul Verlaine:

"De la musique avant toute chose,
Et pour cela préfère l'Impair
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

Il faut aussi que tu n'aillles point
Choisir tes mots sans quelques méprise:
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint....."

A little higher up the scale we find the tension of ambiguity, sometimes achieved in the double meaning of words or alternative interpretation of images. In the following theme from Beethoven's sonata 'Pathetique', the phrasing and notation quite
clearly indicate one understanding of the melody and yet the alternative insists on offering itself as a possibility.

As written, the melody line runs C, Bb, Eb, - Db, C, Eb, F, G, but as it is played the Bb* in the second bar always hints that it could steal from the preceding dotted crotchet Eb and form part of a melody whose nature would then be changed. It is in the tension of the two mutually exclusive possibilities that the intensity of the theme resides.

The conflict can be an emotional or spiritual one, as in the case of the chorus in Bach's 'St. Matthew Passion' who have to be able to swing back and forth between their role as rabble rousers baying for the Crucifixion, to the human heart meditating on the Passion in the Chorales, and back again to anguished fury at the sequence of events outside their control and at man's part in it. Anyone who has sung this work, passing rapidly from 'Have thunders and lightnings their furies forgotten', to 'O Lord, who dares to smite Thee' and on to 'Let him be crucified' will have experienced the conflict which is fundamental to the way the world is and to its setting-forth in a great work of art. Finally the conflict can be in the artist himself in regard to the creative process. The twentieth century artist Yaakov Agam is a Jew who has born in his life the conflict between the second
"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20 v4)

and his artistic nature driving him to create. He wrote of this conflict, both in man's approach to God and in his artistic activity, in 'Un art a quatre dimensions' (Preuves, no 7, 1971):

"En hébreu, Dieu n'a pas de nom, de même que Dieu n'a pas une existence définie. Bien qu'elle soit concrète, son existence se refuse à l'intelligence qui est limitée et qui tend à circonscrire, à matérialiser, à nommer. Il n'y a que la conscience de cette existence. Celle-ci est sans limite. Elle n'a pas d'autre nom que la réalité. C'est pourquoi nous l'appelons d'un nom commun -- exclusif mais non exhaustif: Yehova, que nous attribuons à Dieu, signifie constant devenir. Ainsi encore, il était de tradition chez nous qu'un Juif ne doit pas dessiner. C'est le deuxième commandement: ne fait pas une image gravée. Dès l'âge de treize ans, j'ai perçu qu'il y avait là une énigme. Si je ne peux pas traduire la réalité dans une image, il faudra trouver une autre voie. Pendant vingt ans, j'ai cherché, et enfin j'ai compris: l'image doit être un devenir, et non pas un état. Où est la vérité, quel est l'ordre vrai? Il n'y a que la vérité des états, le passage du temps qui se détruit lui-même".

This insight has, obviously, led Agam into entirely abstract art, but it is a contemplative art which tends to speak directly to our age, with our understanding of reality and transcendence. Probably Agam's best-known work is the Salon de l'Elysée, now in the Museum of Modern Art at the Baubourg Centre, in which he has attempted to represent the changing patterns of time reaching into infinity. The observer finds himself reflected in the globe, or eye, at the centre of the salon, thus taking his essential part within it.

So we have the tension of opposites achieving a balance and manifesting the harmony and unity of what is and this is mirrored in some great works of art, thereby increasing the chances that we will view them in a contemplative attitude. The very nature of the hiddenness of earth of which Heidegger writes is a part of this process:
"The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosed, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up.....

...The earth is essentially self-secluding. To set forth the earth means to bring it into the Open as the self-secluding" (ibid p47).

The conflict is between clearing and concealing and it is only by attempting, through art or contemplation or whatever else, to get at the Truth of a thing, to find that 'open place' within it or beyond it, where "there is a clearing, a lightning" (p53), that we come face to face with the reality which is that thing and which that thing is. What we are attempting to do is to illuminate the self-concealing and one of the functions of art, for Heidegger, is to shed light in this way.

"This shining, joined in the work, is the beautiful. Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness" (p56, emphasis original).

Heidegger therefore gives light an important place in his analysis and within the frame of reference I have outlined, it has relevance to the conflict which underlies reality and contributes to the harmony which arises through the balance attained in the tension of opposites.

It will be worthwhile now to draw together some of the strands we have discovered which concern 'light'.

**Light.**

Heidegger refers to the open space which occurs in the midst of beings and of the illumination, or lighting, which occurs in this open space being the means by which we perceive the truth of things. It can be no coincidence that our word 'contemplation' is derived from the Latin 'templum' which means an open space for observation, or a temple, together with the prefix 'con' from 'com' which denotes together with, or in union.

Another interesting etymological point concerns the word
'deity' and for this information I am indebted to Joseph Campbell in his book 'The Mythic Image':

"the Indo-European verbal root div, from which the Latin divus and deus, Greek zeús, and Old Irish dīa as well as Sanscrit deva (all meaning 'deity') derive, signifies 'to shine'; for the gods ... . shine of themselves" (p361).

In other words, buried in the meaning of many nations' verbal attempts to denote the first principle, or the transcendent Reality, or just that which is most worthy of honour and praise, is the concept of light, whose nature and function is to illuminate, by means of its shining to effect a change in man's perception. It is through this activity that those who most of the time must be 'clogged with facticity' find an open space in the centre of their being and are able to see the essence of things in the unconcealedness of their being. The process by which things emerge and rise was referred to by the Greeks as 'Φυσική' which means 'nature', or more particularly 'natural birth' or 'natural propensity'. So the object's true nature is what is to be concealed or revealed; and also the revealing of it, or bringing it forth, is part of the natural propensity of that thing, which is self-illuminating so that in its light we may see.

According to the Jewish creation myths, the first act performed by God after he had formed the heavens and the earth was the creation of light:

"God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. God saw that light was good, and God divided light from darkness. God called light 'day', and darkness he called 'night'. Evening came and morning came: the first day" (Genesis 1 vv3-5).

Light is essential to life and growth, and although it is clear from the histories of many blind people that the perception of light is not necessary to life, nevertheless it is so fundamental to the continuation of the created world and also such an important part of
the experience and perception of the vast majority of people in that world, that its absence is generally acknowledged, even by the happiest of blind people, to be a serious lack. John Milton, who himself became blind, expressed it through the character of Samson who had been blinded by his enemies, the Philistines, when they took him captive:

"........ but chief of all,
0 loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, 0 worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased ....
... 0 dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day!
0 first-created beam, and thou great Word,
'Let there be light, and light was over all',
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The Sun to me is dark
And silent as the Moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part, why was the sight
To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quenched,
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exiled from light,
As in the land of darkness, yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And buried"

(Samson Agonistes).

Not only does Milton here associate light and life, but also speaks of light as being 'in the soul', 'soul' sometimes being used, possibly figuratively, to denote that part of man which is most capable of perceiving beyond the immediately apparent, to that which truly is. In other words, just as light is necessary for us to see with our physical eyes the solid objects which are immediately apparent to
those who are sighted, so light, presumably in a slightly different and more metaphorical sense, is also necessary for our inner perception, or our understanding of the things thus seen and our grasp of those things which are of importance to us but which by their very nature cannot be seen with the physical eye. We may, with our physical eye, see the apples we want to count, but, once we get beyond quite small numbers which Wittgenstein would claim are apprehended in a direct way, it could be argued that the concept of number is something that cannot be seen but is apprehended by us by virtue of what might be called an inner perception, or what Augustine would have called 'divine illumination'. Similarly, we can see a great deal of the created world with our physical eyes (though far less than we used to suppose), but it is in the 'inner clearing' in which we contemplate that we see the order and proportion of that world, through which we begin to perceive the unity and harmony inherent in that created order, and which, in the next section we shall find perceives "The Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (Dante: Paradiso).

For the Pseudo-Dionysius, light had been the source of all beautiful things, whereas Heidegger saw its nature as a much more subtle and important concept. It is through light illuminating the real essence of something, so revealing its truth, that the concept of beauty becomes meaningful. In discussing Aquinas I suggested that although light in the right proportion is necessary in order to see, and that it forms a relationship between percipient and perceived, thus entering, itself, into the harmony of the universe, its more important meaning is to be found as that which enables the essence of a thing to shine through its form, or what is immediately apparent to the eye, so that it is by the light that is in a thing that we are
able to perceive its truth. This is much nearer to Heidegger's understanding of light than it is to that of the pseudo-Dionysius.

In St. John's gospel there is once again an emphasis on the primal nature of light:

"All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower" (John 1 vv4-5).

A natural result of this belief was that the Incarnation was held to bring an increase of light:

"I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark; he will have the light of life" (John 8v12).

But in the first case there is a grappling to describe a mystical concept, issuing in the use of the word 'light' in a literal sense, whereas the second, although probably meant to remain within the realm of mystical concepts (along with the other I AM discourses) opens the way to use of the word 'light' in a metaphorical sense. The next stage in this progression is to take the metaphor into the moral realm, equating light with good behaviour and darkness with evil and the rejection of Christ:

"On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed" (John 3 vv19-20)

This latter use has nothing to do with the contemplative experience under discussion, whereas the first one, "O first-created beam, and thou great Word" can be seen in the same way as the Hindu concept of the silence of undifferentiated Light, both as part of the reality of the cosmos and
as that opening-up which enables us, in the centre of our beings, to contemplate that Reality.

It is with this mystical and fundamental meaning that the mystics in different traditions have used the concept of light and its opposite, darkness. The darkness is not a moral darkness but, on the one hand the extinguishing of all that is not necessary to contemplation of what underlies existence, and on the other hand an experience of that ultimate Being as darkness. But, of course, in the unity of the tension of opposites it is only by encountering that darkness that Light dawns.

"Hence I observed how needful it is for me to enter into the darkness, and to admit the coincidence of opposites, beyond all the grasp of reason, and there to seek the Truth where impossibility meeteth me. And beyond that, beyond even the highest ascent of intellect, when I shall have attained unto that which is unknown to every intellect, and which every intellect judgeth to be most far removed from truth, there, my God art Thou, who art Absolute Necessity. And the more that dark impossibility is recognized as dark and impossible, the more truly doth His Necessity shine forth, and is more unveiledly present, and draweth nigh" (Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God' ch IX).

Another of the Jewish myths embedded in our culture is of Lucifer, the fallen angel who becomes the Prince of Darkness; light and dark are the opposites which have to be kept in tension in all creation for they are both part of reality, and as with other sets of opposing poles we have observed earlier, they are in some ways very close together. The literature of the mystics is steeped in such imagery of light and darkness and of their coming together, not to extinguish each other, but to intensify. So we have 'The Cloud of Unknowing' and St. John of the Cross's 'Dark Night of the Soul' in Christian literature, and references in the Upanishads to the Eternal "Shining, yet hidden" (Mundaka-Upanishad). In the Tao Te Ching there is reference to
"Darkness within darkness.
The gate to all mystery" (1).

Here the ultimate is called the Tao, but the language used to describe it is similar to the others:

"From above it is not bright;
From below it is not dark:
An unbroken thread beyond description" (14).

The poets of the Islamic mystical tradition known as Sufi use the same imagery:

"Into my heart's night
Along a narrow way
I groped; and lo! the light,
An infinite land of day" (Rumi, 13th century Sufi poet, translated by A.J. Arberry).

Then again, in the Divine Comedy, we have Dante's experience of the contemplation of Paradise in terms of light:

"And so my mind, bedazzled and amazed,
Stood fixed in wonder, motionless, intent,
And still my wonder kindled as I gazed.

That light doth so transform a man's whole bent
That never to another sight or thought
Would he surrender, with his own consent . . .

.... Eternal light, that in Thyself alone
Dwelling, alone dost know Thyself, and smile
On Thy self-love, so knowing and so known!"
(Paradiso xxxiii).

In these short extracts one is given a hint of the extremity of light which, dazzling, is somewhat akin to darkness, the sense of timelessness, to be discussed in the next chapter, and the love which is the creative force in the cosmos. On a more practical note, many adherents of different religions, in practising contemplation, either close their eyes and concentrate on the darkness in order to come to light, or conversely pin their attention on the flame of a candle till that light becomes darkness, when they experience internal
illumination.

Light is also associated with happiness; it is what Schopenhauer referred to as "light, the most joy-giving of all things". Many philosophers have eschewed references to happiness or joy in their fear of hedonism, but the pleasure principle is a factor in much of our appreciation of art. Similarly, those who spend time in contemplation generally suppose their happiness to be increased by it rather than their sense of duty or obligation. Though monastic offices, regular prayer or periods of discipline and meditation may be performed to the letter with very little joy or meaning, it would appear that if contemplation takes place then the benefits are realized -- the light shines. After an unsatisfactory period of trying to contemplate something one would say one had hoped to contemplate but failed, rather than that one had contemplated unsatisfactorily. The light which illuminates some works of art which we view in this frame of mind can similarly be seen as a mark of our joy that 'it is as it is', which in itself is an expression of Love.

Love.

In the experience of contemplation, one becomes aware of the order and proportion which is fundamental to the cosmos, or to the work of art; one sees the cosmos, or work of art, as a unity in which the tension of opposites contributes to the greater harmony. This is the truth of the being of the cosmos or work of art, which thus shines through the superficial surface and irradiates our perception; and our response in and to this experience is one of love, recognizing that basic to the order and harmony and light is a power to which it is reasonable to ascribe that name. An idealist like Schelling could see the universe as the perfect work of art, a prototype for all other
works of art, with God as supreme artist. But this romantic picture is not necessary to the contemplative experience, nor does it follow from our comparison of the order and harmony in the cosmos with that in a work of art, for the point of awareness of these qualities in the cosmos is that one begins to see them in all things, for all is part of the cosmos and it just so happens that it is sometimes easier to see them in the microcosmos that is the work of art, which is why 'contemplation' has so often been used in describing aesthetic awareness. Schelling does, however, describe appositely the awareness that comes as one contemplates and so comes to perceive Reality:

"the beholder is overtaken by the certainty that all antithesis is but apparent — that love is the bond of all being" (The Plastic Arts and Nature; page 24).

Love, in Plato's terminology, is daemonic, growing unbidden and manifesting itself in strange and diverse ways. Similarly it is described at the end of the Song of Songs in the Old Testament as

"Love no flood can quench,
no torrents drown".

But it is also the force that is continuously creating the cosmos and is aiming for goodness. In the act of creation one loves what is being created or one would not wish to bring it into being. It is difficult to discuss this in terms of art, since the mediaeval philosophers were strictly correct in asserting that the artist does not create because he does not make something out of nothing; what he does is to re-order or organize things that have already been created. It is also difficult to discuss it in terms of the cosmos without adopting the concept of an anthropomorphic deity bringing the world into existence; and even if one adopted such a concept one would be left with the problem that if he pre-existed the world then there was something
(i.e. himself) from which the world could have been created. These difficulties notwithstanding, one can say at least that in the ideal case of someone creating something, he wants what does not exist to come into existence and wants it to be what it then subsequently is. This is an attitude of love. Accepting the objections against the possibility of man creating at all, one can then say that to the extent that an artist does create, he is entering into this attitude of love, which is why it makes sense for artists to liken their works to children they have borne. One can also speak of the force of love making things be what they most essentially are. To the extent that one can speak of a force of creation, it is mirrored, not only in works of art, but in a person's life as well:

"The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
    Drives my green age" (Dylan Thomas).

Goethe spoke of the continuing nature of creation, whereby in order for things to go on existing they have to be re-created at every moment:

"the holy life-giving strength with which I create worlds around myself" (Die Lieden des jungen Werthers, page 100).

and in this scheme Love is the great artificer which eternalizes the image of the beloved by creating it afresh all the time. Again, this picture of a Creator loving himself and all he has made is one which occurs incessantly in the different mystical traditions of the world.

Love is experienced by most people at some stage in their lives and at its best is conceived of as that which has the power to change the world and which longs for goodness and beauty. Quite apart from its necessary place in the creation of the beloved, therefore, love can be seen as our natures at their best and beyond their best.

"Love is so divine and perfect a thing, that it is worthy to be the
very end and being of the Deity",

wrote Thomas Traherne in 'The Centuries of Meditations' (II:48). This may be so, but when one asserts that Love is bound up with the way the world is, one is making a more fundamental statement than that it is the best relationship and most noble feeling of which we are capable. Julian of Norwich put her finger on it more accurately in describing her revelation:

"Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was His meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. Wherefore shewed it He? For Love" (Revelations of Divine Love. LXXXVI).

In this simply expressed revelation, Dame Julian could be seen to be summing up the premises from which those within the Christian tradition approach the world, which I take to be the following:

1) The God (Being, Force) who created the world = Love.
2) Love lies behind, beneath and within the whole created order.
3) Because of love, God (= Love) became incarnate and showed the meaning of love.
4) The appropriate response for those made in God's image = love directed towards Creator and created.

But if love is fundamental to the created order this is largely because the act of creation demands the love of creator for created. In other words, there is delight in the coming to be, as they are, of all things. For this reason the theistic position is basically an optimistic one which sees Reality as tending to the good rather than escalating to the bad. This delight in a thing's true nature, or of what a person essentially is, is familiar in the context of human love:

"I've always loved you" said Dolly in Anna Karenin, "and if one loves anyone, one loves the whole person, just as they are and not as one
would like them to be".

Love is therefore concerned with reality rather than phantasy. Turning to the natural world, Henry Moore once asserted that one would need several life-times to appreciate all the different textures, from shiny beetle to rough tree bark, from soft fur to spongy toadstool. This is an attitude of love; reflected in the nature mystics' vision of all nature praising God and also in such Old Testament writings as Psalm 19:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork; day discourses of it to day, night to night hands on the knowledge".

It is an awareness of reality, in which awareness empirical observation, such as that undertaken by Albertus Magnus and many scientists since his day, plays an important part. It is the love of the artist for that which he paints, the delight he feels that it is as it is, whether it be van Gogh’s pot of chives, a Vermeer portrait or a photograph by Henri Cartier Bresson of a lonely old woman sitting on a park bench. So once again, as with awareness of the order inherent in creation and of the harmony in all things, this attitude of Love brings us back to a position of truth and reality, where we rest in an appreciation of what is: the concept, once again familiar in the major mystical traditions of the world, expressed, for example, by the Hindu as 'Tat twam asi' and by the Jew and Christian as the I AM.
CHAPTER 8
THE TIMELESS MOMENT

In the last chapter it became clear that each of the three features of the contemplative approach under investigation leads, individually and corporately, into discussion of Being or Truth, of what many people have described as an awareness of Reality, or what Meister Ekhart called 'Istigkeit' or 'isness'. In observing the order and good proportion in the whole creation one is looking at the way the world is, as well as coming to appreciate that the order and good proportion form a harmony; in appreciating the harmony one is once again appreciating how the world really is and having one's eyes opened to the meaning and end of the conflict and superficial events which lie on the surface, as well as realizing that the name for the force which brings harmony into disparate experience is love. In seeing Love as the basis for all creation and experience one is trying to express, through an inadequate word, what really is behind, before and within the created order.

I have suggested various ways in which this reality can be expressed. One is through Heidegger's concept of the 'world's worlding', where positive and negative experience are equally part of what the world is and should be:

"By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way in which world worlds" (op cit p 45).

In short 'what is, is'. This I have compared to the Judao/Christian idea of God as I AM, both in the Old Testament where, when asked for
name and identity God replies simply: "I AM that I AM"; and in the New Testament in the Johannine gospel, when Jesus Christ draws on this name of God both to assert his own identity and also to enlarge on what an understanding of God, I AM, Reality, should contain.

As in the history of the Christian faith mystics have often concentrated on this 'I AM' name or quality of God, so in Hinduism the mystical understanding of God is epitomized in the statement 'Tat twam asi' -- 'Thou art that', which is all that can be said of God. Understanding of what God is can only be arrived at negatively: once again this is an insight shared by many in the more mystical branches of both Christianity and Hinduism. The Hindu, questioning, tests out all the things that God could be, to be answered each time by 'Neti, Neti', persuading him that the answer is 'not here, not here'. The Christian awareness, similarly, has been that the Reality that is God is too great to be defined by finite minds:

"We cannot define what God is," wrote John Damascene in De Fide Orthodoxa, "but only what he is not".

In Buddhism too one is reminded that what really is cannot be put in the human pocket:

"Since everything is but an apparition
Perfect in being what it is,
Having nothing to do with good or bad,
Acceptance or rejection,
One may as well burst out in laughter"
(Longchenpa, Tibetan Buddhist. 14th century).

In all religions this has at times led to excesses in the rejection of normal experience, but in its non-extreme form has injected an awareness of the transcendent into the different cultures, or as Antoine de Saint-Exupery expressed it in 'Le Petit Prince':

"Le plus important est invisible".

But it is Being, not Imagination, that all these traditions
refer to, and the essential nature of that Being, or an awareness that it must be like that by the very fact of being. If, as the little prince discovered,

"L'essential est invisible pour les yeux" (p72) then "Il faut chercher avec le coeur" (p 81) and to this end symbols have been used where words have failed. So art is seen by many to have a dual importance, on the one hand as an image of the creative process and therefore as a 'micro-cosmos' and on the other as providing a symbol-language which can obliquely refer to those aspects of reality of which we are only a part and which we cannot therefore contain and manipulate with our minds. But one does not make a symbol, one perceives something as a symbol, so all that the artist can do is to create a work which inspires this form of perception in others. Naturally-occurring phenomena have as much chance of being seen as symbols, so the sculptor Ernst Barlach saw the whole of creation as a symbol for the Reality behind it and behind all things:

"I am like a man in love who longs to adore his creator; my sense of sight and touch, my whole capacity to feel reaches out in adoration and gratitude; so I direct this gratitude towards the creation in which as in a sacrament I am given a visible manifestation. One must not try to puzzle it out; one must just believe and in doing so one gets free from oneself .... Consciousness is let go. I am like a horse without a halter on the pastures of infinity" (The Image of Life, Lealman and Robinson, page 28)

But for many, the creation and/or appreciation of art provides images which stand in the clearest symbol-relationship with what is and become part of the whole continuing stream of creation:

"Creation has no end. Ultimately the creator and the creature are one .... This force in us is the force of God, in everything -- all our labours, our longings, our struggles, our hopes, our achievements, our joys and our angers .... Art and music sometimes give us a glimpse of undiscovered worlds" (Letter to Karl Barlach, 17 August 1931; ibid).

When a work of art does perform this function, it is a making
present, or as Heidegger would put it, a bringing forth, of Being. In fulfilling this function, art becomes part of the activity of disclosing and is therefore 'in the truth', not in terms of providing naturalistic representation, but in the presenting of what is real and true in the world: not what the peasant shoes actually looked like, but what, in essence, they were as part of the whole order of the world. There is a comment ascribed to Virginia Woolf, which I have not been able to trace, which is: "Art is not a copy of the real world. One of the damned things is enough!" This is true on several levels, one of which is that not only can art not be set in contradistinction to reality, being an essential part of that reality, but that it may also, on occasions, be the best means for understanding reality.

"It is the discernment of the reality of life, a piercing of the superficial surfaces of material existence, that gives a work of art its own life and purpose and significant power".

This assertion was made in 'Circle' (p116) by Barbara Hepworth, possibly one of the greatest contemplative artists of this century and it is the frequent belief of artists of this kind that what they are attempting to do is to get beneath the surface of appearances to express something that is eternally true. Judging by artists of the past, such as Cimabue, Fra Angelico, Vermeer and many others, it is possible to do this using representational art, but in the present century it would appear, at least up to now, that it is more often attempted and achieved through the purer means of abstract art. Naum Gabo expressed this in a letter to Herbert Read in 1942:

"I have chosen the absoluteness and exactitude of my lines, shapes and forms in the conviction that they are the most immediate medium for my communication to others of the rhythms and the state of mind I would wish the world to be in. This is not only in the material world surrounding us but also in the the mental and spiritual world we carry within us.

I think that the image they invoke is
Here, and in the other quotations I have been using from modern contemplative artists, one sees quite clearly that what makes a work of art contemplative has very little to do with what it is a picture of and a good deal to do with the criteria by which the artist is choosing the elements which go to make up the work of art. Thus, although, for instance, there are a number of pre-Renaissance Italian Annunciations which I would include in the category of contemplative art, and although I see the Annunciation itself as a contemplative event, taking place in Mary's heart rather than being a visible episode demonstrable by normal representational means, the choice of that subject in no way guarantees that the picture will be contemplative. As it happens, several pre-Renaissance Italian artists, in attempting to depict this event, were moved, perhaps by contemplating the event themselves, to produce works of art with perfect proportions, exemplifying a unity and harmony and illuminated by their love for the main character and their loving prayer-like approach to the subject.

In creating a work of art the artist enters the stream of creation, not just because he is creating a microcosm of his own, but because he is himself in loving accepting harmony with the cosmos. Nietzsche was therefore able to see art as an "affirmation, benediction, deification of existence" (Werke). The theist contemplating God is looking at what he sees as reality and affirming that it is and is good. The contemplative artist is struggling to express what he sees as reality and to offer his affirmation of it in
his art. But, as Heidegger realized, Truth, if it has any meaning, is not something transient, but "something timeless and supertemporal" (op cit p 38), for its being what it is is entirely independent of temporal factors. In terms of eternal truth, the past and the future are both contained within the present moment. So it is that in speaking of the practice of contemplation in world religions or in the normal contemplative response evoked by all manner of things including works of art, that the concept of Timelessness occurs. It would seem to be an essential and integral part of the contemplative response, but it is only at the stage we have now reached, where we see contemplation as a mode of awareness of Truth and Reality that we can give sense and meaning to the concept.

TIMELESSNESS.

"'I think you might do something better with the time,' she said, 'than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers.'

'If you knew Time as well as I do,' said the Hatter, 'you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Alice.

'Of course you don't!' the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. 'I daresay you never even spoke to Time!'

'Perhaps no,' Alice cautiously replied, 'but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.'

'Ah! That accounts for it,' said the Hatter. 'He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock....'"

(Lewis Caroll. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. ch 7).

Alice was in good company, for the nature of time has exercised many minds with problems ranging from Zeno's paradoxes, through the mediaeval concern as to whether God created the world in or out of time, to the present discussions of the possibility of different 'times' existing simultaneously, concurrently or in reverse. In the ancient world there was a virtually universal conception of time as a circle moving continually round, rather as one might conceive of eternity. Plato, in fact modelled his idea of time on that of
eternity, so that it was a "moving image of eternity" (Timaeus) and Aristotle referred to it as a circle, an image that also occurs in Maya and Hindu thought on time. It is interesting to note in this context the similarity of the Latin words annus = year and anulus (later annulus) = ring. Augustine was the first to reject this circular model of time and in his Confessions (book XI) speaks of the irreversible and unrepeatable 'rectilinear' movement of history.

Rather surprisingly, ancient philosophers did not perceive time as absolute. Plato, for example, believed that time was produced by the universe rather than being part of the pre-existing framework. Then later, Augustine speaks of it as being the measure made by human consciousness. It is not until Newton that we find an insistence on the notion of universal time, and therefore of world-wide simultaneity:

"Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external" (Mathematical Principles, page 6).

But the explorations of twentieth century physicists, shedding doubt on the efficacy of this conception and on the notion of time being made up of classes of co-existent moments, suggest that time has not yet yielded up its secrets and that there remains a rich store of undiscovered possibilities.

In the chapter on 'The forging of a Christian Philosophy' we considered the contributions made by Augustine and Boethius to the question of time and observed the way mystics have returned again and again to the strange experience of timelessness which occurs in contemplation. It was there argued that this forms part of the harmony which arises from the tension of opposites. If, as Boethius believed, God eternally sees the timeless moment, then one understanding of what
essentially is, would be in terms of timelessness. From this it could be argued that time is a human construct and that the contemplative, in trying to be aware of the reality beneath our human constructs, can have the experience of living outside time.

The most obvious point of departure in investigating this area is to observe that time moves forward in constant units, so that there is a smooth forward progression from moment to moment, but no leaps or reverses and that the units of time are the same for everyone, everywhere. Yet the experience of those who have engaged in contemplation refers, almost without exception, to the feeling of timelessness; most people, whilst acknowledging that it does not make sense to suggest it, have the experience of time passing at varying speeds, rushing by when one would like to arrest it and stretching out interminably when one would willingly skip the next few 'units of time'; everyone goes to sleep accepting that the length of time covered in the experience of dreaming need bear no relation to the length of time the body is prone in bed; and the special theory of relativity has taught us that the old distinction between space and time was an unreal one and that we will understand the world better if we conceive of things existing on one space-time continuum, in which time takes its place as the fourth dimension of matter.

"Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality"
(The Principles of Relativity, page 75).

According to B.L. Whorf, the understanding of time accessible to the Hopi Indians because of the language they use in discussing time, more naturally accommodates the concept of time which arises from modern physics. Conversely he lays the blame for our difficulties in
conceptualizing time in these terms on our language structure:

"The offhand answer, laying the blame upon intuition for our slowness in discovering mysteries of the Cosmos, such as relativity, is the wrong one. The right answer is: Newtonian space, time and matter are no intuitions. They are receipts from culture and language. That is where Newton got them" (Language, Thought & Reality, page 152).

By perceiving space and time as a static space-time continuum instead of Newton's dynamic picture of one-dimensional time moving relentlessly forward, we can begin to see the relationships between events which were denied in the old picture and to appreciate our own place, here and now, as central to our understanding of the world:

"Time is a country, the present moment
A spotlight roving round the scene;
We need not chase the spotlight,
The future is the bride of what has been"

It would thus appear that the traditional meditation techniques of the East which have been practised for several thousand years, and the analysis of time by twentieth century physicists such as Hermann Minkowski (one of Einstein's teachers, who was influenced by Einstein's work) reject the concept of time which our language most naturally expresses and present a picture in which all of time eternally meets in the present moment.

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable"

A further preliminary point about the relationship between contemplation and our concept of time is that there is a reflexive relationship between them. In the same way as the exercise of contemplation can lead one to a sense of timelessness, a consideration of time and timelessness can lead one to the exercise of...
contemplation. Most children experience the mind-opening and mind-arresting that occur when they start to delve into questions of time and the same feeling was expressed by A.N. Whitehead in 'The Concept of Nature':

"It is impossible to meditate on time and the mystery of the creative passage of nature without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence" (ch III).

One may wish to argue that it is not time that causes this awe, but infinity, and that infinity of space is as effective in causing it as infinity of time. But since we are now treating space and time as components of the same continuum, this is no objection, for one of the first and most important observations we can make about an infinity of space is that it is timeless.

I should like now to distinguish between three ways in which one might understand the concept of timelessness. The first concerns practical systems of time, like divisions of hours and minutes, while the other two are more relevant to what could be called an 'essential time', the synchronicity of moments and irreversibility of experience. Whilst the first two concepts are interesting in themselves, it is the third that I believe to have some real bearing on our topic.

First there is the common experience of being engrossed in an activity which is enjoyed, when one loses all sense of time. The activity can be anything from watching a football match to tuning a piano. In the experience time ceases to matter or even to be noticed. I am not including this sensation in my concept of timelessness, first because there is generally no awareness of timelessness involved, but only a forgetting of the chronological progression which rules other parts of the day, and secondly because when, on these occasions, time does enter consciousness it tends to be in the form of a wish that
'this moment could last for longer'. In fact, if one was at that point offered the possibility of the present experience continuing, through the normal progression of time, one would accept that (if one did not immediately retract the wish) as being the substance of what one had wanted. So the experience does not provide an awareness of timelessness, but of enjoyment which one would like to preserve.

2) The basic point of the special theory of relativity evolved by Einstein is that space–time is relative. Although the speed of light is 186000 miles per second, this velocity is not changed however fast we might be travelling towards or away from the light source. What change are the instruments we use for measurement, the length of the ruler and the speed of the clock. A moving object appears to contract in its direction of motion and become shorter as its velocity increases until, at the speed of light, it disappears altogether. Although the main relevance of this discovery is to subatomic particles travelling at unimaginably high speeds, there is an interesting parallel between it and the experience of contemplation in which ordinary objects appear to shrink not just in importance but in size as the world contracts and, in extremis, the contemplative has the sensation of rising above the natural world. This is similar also to the experience under mescaline which Aldous Huxley describes in 'The Doors of Perception' (p 20):

"And along with indifference to space there went an even completer indifference to time. 'There seems to be plenty of it,' was all I would answer when the investigator asked me to say what I felt about time. Plenty of it, but exactly how much was entirely irrelevant. I could, of course, have looked at my watch; but my watch, I knew, was in another universe. My actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse."

This variability is even more pronounced in terms of time. A
moving clock runs more slowly than a clock at rest and continues to slow its rhythm as its velocity increases until, at the speed of light, it stops running altogether. Here we have something similar to the experience of the contemplative in his sensation of timelessness. Tests have been applied in the last few years to people in contemplative states, testing their galvanic skin responses, heartbeats, breathing rhythms and 'alpha rhythms'. Although it is questionable how far one might attain a state of contemplation whilst subject to such probing, the results of the tests show a slowing down of the internal human clocks. Similarly, in 1972 four accurate atomic clocks were flown round the world after being synchronized with earth-bound clocks of the same accuracy. At the end of the flight the clocks which had been moving were slightly behind the ones which had remained stationary. The experiment was performed travelling both east and west with the same results and the conclusion drawn that time for the moving clocks passed more slowly than that for the still ones. If this is the case, it is at least worth pondering whether time for the person engaged in contemplation, with the slowing down of his system that this involves, is not also moving more slowly through time. The difficulty with this parallel hypothesis is that the clocks, on returning to earth, stay behind the home colony ones unless adjusted, whereas after contemplation people in general return to normal life with its interactions and do not expect to find themselves living in everybody else's yesterdays. But here again modern physics, in the form of quantum mechanics, offers a possible answer, for it sees the whole of life and experience as the collapsing of probabilities as each 'choice' is made, whilst retaining the possibility that all the choices which each moment are not opted for exist in another world as
the choices which were made. This gives an elaborate and complicated, because infinite, version of an 'other worlds' theory and according to this it would be feasible for a man to be living in different times. But whilst acknowledging that this is possible, it does seem too far-fetched to be relied on for normal purposes of argument. On the other hand, given the relative and subjective nature of time, one could argue that just as one adjusts to timelessness in contemplation one can also adjust back into normal time at the cessation of contemplation. This again is exactly what happens in dreaming and in waking after dreaming.

The main point which I wish to draw out of this incursion into physics is that it does at least make sense to speak of varying speeds of time and thus, by extension, to time standing still or falling away altogether. If a glass room was travelling forwards with a light bulb in the middle which flashed periodically, then a person in the moving glass room would see the light hit all walls of the room at the same time. A stationary observer outside the glass room, however, would see the light hit the rear wall before it hit the front wall, because the front wall is moving away from the point at which the light flashed while the rear wall is moving towards it. So to the room's inmate the events (hitting front and rear wall) were simultaneous, whilst to the observer they were consecutive. Our descriptions of time are local and relative rather than universal and absolute. They have meaning for us within our own frame of reference and we are not ruled by an eternal clock ticking relentlessly on.

3) The third understanding of the concept of timelessness is the strictly contemplative one. It is not so much concerned with the arresting of time as in 1) or the different speeds of time as in 2),
but with the notion of attaining a state which is outside the normal limitations of experience and where, therefore, time is not still, or variable, but non-existent and irrelevant. If all the past and all the future is present here and now, then the present moment is eternal. If one were to ask why we are not always conscious of this fact, the answer might well be that the experience of reality and truth is too large and mind-stretching to be contained within normal experience: if we held the eternal in the present moment we could certainly not catch trains or take regular meals, so we are bounded, for most of our lives, by man-made limitations like time. It is as if we protected ourselves by building walls at the edge of comfortable experience to form a box which can exist in the enormity of space and infinity, whilst we within it feel safe in our small frame of reference. One analysis of what happens in contemplation has always been in terms of unveiling reality, taking away some of the layers that protect us from seeing truth and therefore making life manageable. If this is the case, it is not surprising that our system of time should be one of the first casualties in the process of stripping away the veils.

In the light of what has been said about timelessness we can now see more clearly what is involved when a breathtaking mountain scene or a great work of art evokes the contemplative response leading to a feeling of timelessness. It is not just that one forgets time by becoming engrossed in looking, or even that one would like time to stand still so that one could enjoy the moment for longer, but that through the contemplative response one comes to a greater awareness of reality and sees, for a short period 'in time' the eternal truth that is 'outside time', the whole time span of eternity necessarily equipresent. Paul Klee, in 'On Modern Art' speaks of the artist
looking at the world in order to bring forth this truth:

"The deeper he looks, the more readily he can extend his view from the present to the past, the more deeply he is impressed by the one essential image of creation itself, as Genesis, rather than by the image of nature, the finished product.

Then he permits himself the thought that the process of creation can today hardly be complete and he sees the act of world creation stretching from the past to the future. Genesis eternal!" (P 45).

When I first started pursuing the ideas I have been examining in this thesis I thought I should be studying the concept of the Sublime. But having read what past philosophers have written on that subject, from Longinus to Kant, I was disappointed to find that rather than the concept shedding light on our understanding of our response to beauty, it was almost solely concerned with the great size or frightening nature which a thing must have in order to be considered, by these philosophers, sublime.

The problem is compounded by looking at the etymology offered by the Oxford English Dictionary. For the verb 'to sublime', which describes the process of heating a liquid to the point at which it turns into vapour, the Latin 'sublimare' is offered, meaning to lift up or elevate. But 'sublime' as an adjective is said to derive from 'sub' - under - plus 'limen' - threshold. This would appear to tie the sublime to the concept of the 'subliminal' used in psychology and to divorce it from all its normal connotations of greatness and exaltedness. However, if the sublime were to be equated with that which evokes the contemplative response, this derivation would have some meaning in the sense of taking away the veils, so that one can see under the surface. Hegel maintained that only God is sublime, but Jean Paul had a wider understanding of the sublime as that which arises when the infinite pierces the finite and overwhelms our normal
Having pursued a rather different thesis which does not depend on or need the concept of the sublime, I only introduce it here to show how the special theory of relativity could also throw some light on the choice of phenomena to which philosophers have ascribed this description 'sublime'.

There are three notable changes which occur as something approaches the speed of light. First the effective mass increases with its velocity, second a moving object contracts in the direction of motion as its velocity increases, and third, as noted earlier, a moving clock runs more slowly as its velocity increases. Most philosophers, in discussing the sublime, have used the examples of mountains and the sea, both of which, by their enormous size are reminiscent of the greater mass in the theory of relativity. Another example is lightning, normally offered as another phenomenon which inspires fear, but which could also be seen as the ultimate constriction in the direction of motion at the speed of light, being light itself. Third is the slowing of the clock already discussed, which relates to the feeling of eternity when looking at the night sky or when confronted with a Chinese vase.

If I were to attempt to give meaning to the sublime, this is an area I should wish to investigate further.
CHAPTER 9
CONTEMPLATIVE ART

In the first part of this thesis I examined the common root of art and contemplation in early Greek philosophy and extracted three features which appear to be necessary to the contemplative response. Approaching the concept from a pre-Socratic position, we found that the strict order, balance and good proportion of art was believed to be a direct reflection of the essential order, balance and good proportion of the whole cosmos. The appropriate response of man to this order, balance and good proportion was a contemplative one, which involved mirroring in oneself the order, balance and good proportion so as to enter into the stream of creation. Many people have experienced the sensation, before their most-loved works of art, of actually having been involved in their creation, so closely do the works reflect what they would like to have expressed. This experience could be seen as similar, on a lower level, to the Greek's response to the beauty of creation, where by his response he becomes a part of it.

The harmony the Greek perceived in the cosmos was indicative of the unity of all things. Life is one: our living and our loving, worshipping and creating, the movement of the stars and integrity of man are all part and parcel of the same reality. But in the same way as the tautest strings sometimes produce the sweetest notes, this unity is often achieved by the tension of opposites, which is why it is a unity and all is contained within it.

"Look, it cannot be seen -- it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard -- it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot be held -- it is intangible.
The three are indefinable;
Therefore they are joined in one .......

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...Stand before it and there is no beginning.
Follow it and there is no end.
Stay with the ancient Tao,
Move with the present"

(Tao Te Ching, 14)

The third feature of contemplation to be extracted was love and this was identified with Plato's concept of the Eros. Our attitude to life and to art, many philosophers, artists and saints have suggested, should be passionate, but also disinterested and non-possessive. In art we celebrate what is, we affirm our delight that the order and beauty are as they are. We express our love for what is.

The basic order, balance and good proportion can be observed in different religious traditions and in the art which they have inspired. So we find in Judaism and Christianity the formal properties of the psalms and offices with their regular versicles and responses, or we find in Bach music which echoes so beautifully the order, balance and proportion believed by the Greeks to be inherent in the universe, which takes the listener with him into contemplation of what is. The formal properties occur also in visual art where the order, balance and proportion of form and colour are often achieved through simplicity, as we noted in the earliest Greek art, rather than complexity and frequently accentuated by the over-all shape of the work. So, in Indian art, Shiva, the Lord of the Dance, is contained within a ring of flames, in the same way as mediaeval contemplative art is often contained within such forms as the painted cross or the regular triptych, or, more recently, some of Mondrian's abstract designs are in the shape of mandorlas.

Although the direct relationship between mathematics and music no longer holds in the same way as it did in ancient Greece and mediaeval Europe, certain mathematical sequences have continued to
exert a fascination, and therefore an influence, on artists and musicians. Examples include the Augustinian ratio, the magic square and, particularly in the visual arts but also to some extent in twentieth century music, the Fibonacci number series and corresponding golden section. The Fibonacci series, first formulated by Leonardo of Pisa ('son of Bonaccio', 1175 - 1230), can be started on any two numbers (though most commonly on 1 and 1), whereupon each new number is the sum of the last two: 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 55 etc. This sequence occurs in nature with surprising regularity, being found, for instance in the spirals on the seeds of sunflowers and daisies. There are two sets of spirals on these seeds, turning in opposite directions and it has been observed that the number of spirals in each case usually corresponds to two consecutive Fibonacci numbers, most commonly 34 and 55. The sequence was first noted in relation to the reproductive habits of rabbits and has since been observed in the mating of bees and the formation of pine cones, pineapples and certain shells. The study of the series is called 'phyllotaxis' or 'philotaxis' and one of the many interesting features of it, and less contentious than some, is that the arithmetical ratio between consecutive numbers, 5:8, 13:21 etc., approaches the golden section, namely 1.618. It is arguable that by adhering to this sequence or to the golden section, otherwise known as the 'divine proportion', artists produce an order and proportion which mirrors that of creation, since it is one which occurs consistently in nature. The same could be said of the ratios which determined the structure of much mediaeval music: the Pythagorean ratios (1:2, 2:3, 3:4, 9:8), the Pythagorean higher musical ratios (1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 1:12), the Platonic ratios (1:2 and 1:3), the Boethian ratios (3:4 and 2:3) and above all the Augustinian
ratios (1:1, 1:2, 2:3, 3:4) (T. Messenger).

As was suggested in chapter 7, it is man's mind that perceives order and it could be claimed that it is man's mind that initiates and imposes the order. Aleatory music adheres to a set pattern, even though that set pattern is chance and some may wish to claim that this pattern is as worthy of inclusion in a system of order, balance and good proportion as is the golden section or the magic square. Whereas the Jewish creation myth pictures an initial stage of chaos onto which order is imposed for the world to come into being, a Hindu myth pictures an ordered state of nothingness into which chaos has to be introduced for the process of creation to start. But even if it is true that any configuration or sequence can be seen as adhering to some pattern, the fact remains that certain sequences and proportions, which are simple enough to be embraced by the human mind without the aid of computers or recourse to notions of infinity, exist in nature, are found to be satisfying, and have frequently been reproduced in art.

Artists have sometimes been tempted to emphasize the order and good proportion of the universe by symmetry, which rarely, if ever, occurs in nature. It is not, however, the artist's task to impose order on chaos by fabricating symmetry, but to enter into the order of the cosmos, which may sometimes involve going into the darkness of chaos, a paradox familiar to the masters of contemplation: "If a man wishes to be sure of the road he travels on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark" (St. John of the Cross).

Part of the task of the contemplative artist would seem to be to enter into the stream of creation and become aware of the unity of all things, in order to create an art which will enable others to
perceive this unity. The tension of opposites manifests itself both in the person of the artist who is constrained to hold the extremes within himself, and in the form. For example, in listening to music one can be carried along in an agony of waiting for the resolution, what I have referred to in poetry as "the cadence unresolved and aching", and in visual art one finds that the ordinary materials of the physical world are constrained to become ethereal or to make a statement about the eternal. In an extreme case a sculptor like Peter Eugene Ball collects flotsam and jetsam and recreates, or resurrects them into works of art:

"Each of these pieces of driftwood has been through so many lives, first as a tree, then as part of a ship or whatever -- and now it has a new kind of life, as a work of art. It is a fascinating thing that a piece of wood designed with one function in mind should end up serving a quite different function -- a spiritual one. This is a function absolutely essential in any society. It may be dead ... but what's left of it has a new kind of life of its own: there's a sort of timelessness about it" (Peter Eugene Ball, in The Image of Life. 156)

This is the same process which can be observed in the sacraments of many religions, such as in the Christian Eucharist, where ordinary elements are taken and blessed in order to stand as symbols for truths which are invisible and intangible. Through the artist's acceptance, ordinary elements, wood, stone, word or whatever are the basic elements of his chosen medium, transcend their ordinary, elemental nature.

The requirement of love which we evolved from Plato's Eros can be seen both in the artist's attitude to his creation, often expressed in language of parental affection, and in his delight in the way the world is which causes him to celebrate it in his art. Gerard Manley Hopkins, who was particularly aware of the 'inscape' of the world, was able, in his poem 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of
the comfort of the Resurrection' to extend his awareness of all things being worthy of love to his own person:

"In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond,
Is immortal diamond".

These features recur in the art of all ages and are the qualities which distinguish contemplative art from other art which, though so feared and deprecated by Plato, is a respected part of our cultural history. They are found amongst the arts of the major religious traditions of the world, for instance, in the art of the Christian church during the years when the philosophy discussed in chapter 5 was evolving. As, for the Greeks, the highest art had been music, so in the case of the early Christians the mathematical basis of art can be most clearly illustrated through their attitude to music, which was exemplified, and to some extent formed, by Boethius' unfinished work, 'De Musica'.

Although the general approach of this work was neo-Platonist, it contains Pythagorean elements and also shows the influence of Aristotle, so achieving to some extent a marriage between these different elements. Boethius himself made some translations of Aristotle and he placed the study of music within an Aristotelian education scheme. He gave music a place within the seven liberal arts, including it in the quadrivium -- arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy -- rather than in the trivium -- grammar, dialectic, rhetoric -- thus emphasising the mathematical and theoretical aspect of music rather than its expressive qualities. Whereas ancient writers had considered poetry to be very close to music, Boethius actually subsumed it under the category of music.
"One kind of music uses instruments and another produces poetry" and music as theory "evaluates both instrumental and poetical works". Poetry at this time was still considered to be something that is recited and heard, as music is, rather than as something to be read. To Boethius' contemporaries the reading of poetry would have been equivalent to someone poring over musical notation today, namely, it is possible, given the skills, but is not actually what the art is about. As they defined music as number made audible it was obviously the formal qualities of poetry, such as the metre, that were valued, rather than any expressive qualities or inherent interest of the subject matter. So to be a musician was to have a knowledge of numbers related to sound and to pay attention to theory and criticism rather than the practical performing or even composing of music, which they considered "non ars sed natura".

Like the Greeks, Boethius conceived of three different kinds of music. First the Musica instrumentalis, which is what we would now call music, but which for him was the lowliest form of music. During the Middle Ages the one-stringed monochord came into use and on this the ratios of notes could be measured off in physical distances. Intervals of simple ratio -- the octave, fourth and fifth -- were thereby deemed to be consonances and all the others dissonances. The mathematical basis for music is illustrated by the legend of Pythagoras wandering in the forest and hearing wonderful harmonies from four hammers which were beating on anvils at a nearby forge. He followed the sound and weighed the heads of the hammers, which were 12 lb, 9 lb, 8 lb and 6 lb respectively. The octave was given by the relation of the 12 lb hammer to the 6 lb one, providing the ratio 2:1; the perfect fifth by either the 12 lb hammer to the 8 lb one, or the
91b to the 6 lb and so in the ratio of 3:2; the perfect fourth by the 8 lb to the 6 lb or 12 lb to 9 lb, giving the ratio 4:3; and the whole tone by the 9 lb to the 8 lb. Thus, according to this legend, harmony came to be explained by Pythagoras and his followers by numerical ratio, whereby the simpler the numerical ratio, the more beautiful the sound was. In this way the microcosm of music in its lowliest aspect was seen to reflect the numerical nature of beauty and God and all creation. Another writer expressed it thus:

"The same principle which regulates the concord of voices also governs the nature of mortals. The same numerical relationships which determine the concord of unequal sounds also determine the concord of life and body, the concord of adverse elements and the eternal harmony of the whole universe" (Musica Enchiriadis. Tatarkiewicz).

Next in ascending importance was the **Musica humana**, observable in the symmetry of the human body and of the internal organs, also in the relationship between the body and soul which was seen, long before twentieth century psychology investigated the scene, to result in health for the body and such attributes as intelligence and love for the soul. But most important of all was the **Musica mundana**, or as it later came to be called, the **Musica caelestis**, for which we have coined the term 'music of the spheres'. This described the harmonious movement of the seasons, months and years in their regular ordered passage; of the heavenly bodies both observed by ordinary people and calculated astronomically; and the interplay of the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. All these were seen to possess the essential qualities of music, as they had been by the ancient Greeks, and to these was now added the music of the angels continuously singing the Sanctus around the throne of God. It was generally agreed that the only reason man could not hear all this music was because of his lack of sensitivity, but some thinkers argued that sound was not
part of the nature of this music.

These beliefs form the background to all theory and practice of music in the middle ages, which is why I have outlined them in some detail, and it can clearly be seen that music was still exemplifying the qualities that Plato desired of art, and being tied to an understanding of the cosmos was directly related to the way the world is, to reality, or to the theistic understanding of that reality in terms of the I AM.

The practice of music during these centuries leading up to the Middle Ages was largely confined to the Church. The singing or chanting of parts of the service, particularly the psalms, grew directly out of the Jewish tradition of worship in the synagogue. Pope Leo I (440-461) and Pope Gregory I (590-604), both called 'the Great', achieved much in terms of the organization of liturgical music and, following Gregory, plainchant became for centuries the most appropriate musical form in which to express ideas of divinity or with which to worship that divinity. This in itself provides an exemplar for man's artistic creation. Although it follows the free rhythm of speech, it imposes order on it and raises ordinary speech into the pattern of beauty. Although arising out of the Jewish chant, it was heavily influenced by the Greek modal system and in it the modes were organized into eight: Dorian, Hypodorian, Phrygian, Hypophrygian, Lydian, Hypolydian, Mixolydian and Hypomixolydian. Although initially the music was handed down aurally, by the time of Boethius an alternative method of transmission was being sought, and from the sixth century onwards there were various attempts to notate, which led in time to the musical notation with which we are familiar today.

Such music was used at all the regular offices of the Church
and these too, by the sixth century, were standardized, and the regular rhythm of these monastic and church offices enhanced the feeling of rhythm in people's lives, with music forming an integral part of this rhythm. Lauds and Vespers had their origins in the synagogue as the morning and afternoon services and mattins began as a prayer vigil in the night before a special feast. The full set of offices which maintained the rhythm of work, rest and worship by the sixth century and which has remained virtually unchanged in monastic institutions to our own day, was as follows:

Mattins — during the night and at its waning,
Lauds — Cock crow (3 a.m.),
Prime — 6 a.m.,
Terce — 9 a.m.,
Mass — 10 a.m. (or sometimes after Sext or None),
Sext — noon,
None — 3 p.m.,
Vespers — 6 p.m.,
Compline — nightfall.

In this rhythm of both their understanding and practice of music people manifested an ordered progression in an area where music and worship met and overlapped and so provided themselves with the possibility of order and good proportion in their art and contemplation, thus mirroring the eternal reality of all that is.

The adjective 'contemplative' is used to qualify various words other than works of art and the objects of religious experience. So we speak of 'a contemplative person' who practises this form of perception, or 'a contemplative life' as being one in which can be perceived those qualities, and even 'a contemplative institution' to describe an institution which fosters contemplative life in its members. It will be remembered that in Plato's ascending scale by which one is supposed to come to contemplate Beauty, one comes to recognize the beauty as it exists in activities and institutions:
"The next stage is for him to reckon beauty of soul more valuable than beauty of body; the result will be that, when he encounters a virtuous soul in a body which has little of the bloom of beauty, he will be content to love and cherish it and to bring forth such notions as may serve to make young people better; in this way he will be compelled to contemplate beauty as it exists in activities and institutions, and to recognize that here too all beauty is akin, so that he will be led to consider physical beauty taken as a whole a poor thing in comparison". (Symposium 210).

Monasticism exemplifies the features of contemplation, thus offering an example of a contemplative institution. St. Benedict, too, the founder of the Benedictine order, exhibited these qualities and practised this form of perception and to that extent is an example of a contemplative person. In an appraisal of him in his 'Dialogues' of 547 A.D., St. Gregory commends the life of Benedict to a deacon:

"I would not have you ignorant of this, that Benedict was eminent, not only for the many miracles that made him famous, but also for his teaching. In fact, he wrote a Rule for Monks, which is of conspicuous discretion and is written in a lucid style. If anyone wishes to know Benedict's character and life more precisely, he may find a complete account of his principles and practice in the ordinances of that Rule; for the Saint cannot have taught otherwise than as he lived" (II 36).

What he taught and lived and inspired thousands after him to live was an ordered, harmonious, loving life: according to our frame of reference, therefore, a contemplative life. As with Greek tenets of beauty, simplicity was recommended, in this case in terms of the basic necessities of life like food and clothing. The day was organized according to the pattern outlined on page 204; hierarchies, duties and expectations were all mapped out so that for those who adopted monachism a harmonious and ordered life could be achieved. The feature of Benedictine monasticism which later orders tended to reject or reform was that the Abbot was seen as the representative of Christ in the community and had absolute authority over the men in his charge. This led, by the Middle Ages, to the Order being part of the respected power-structure of the Church. It also became a wealthy Order and as
such was bound to lose much of the simplicity and humility which were part of its inception and which had to be re-introduced into monasticism by the Franciscan Order in the thirteenth century.

But the golden age of English Illuminated Manuscript painting, from the eighth to the twelfth centuries was cradled and nurtured in the Benedictine Order and the work of this period manifests a contemplative tradition. After the chaos in England caused by the Saxon invasions in the fifth and early sixth century there followed several generations of stability. Augustine's mission arrived in Kent in 597, leading in the following year to the Christianization of the Isle. The Venerable Bede, the English monk, historian and theologian who wrote the earliest history of England describes the Council concerning the new religion summoned by King Edwin of Northumbria in 627, at which one of Edwin's chiefs makes this speech:

"Your majesty, when we compare the present life of man with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems like the swift flight of a lone sparrow through the banqueting hall where you sit in the winter months to dine with your thanes and counsellors. Inside, there is a comforting fire to warm the room; outside, the wintry storms of snow and rain are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort he vanishes from sight into the darkness whence he came. Similarly, man appears on the earth for a little while, but we know nothing of what went before this life, and what follows. Therefore if this new teaching can reveal any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it" (Bede. 'History of the English Church' II 13).

It is interesting, in parenthesis, to compare this striking image with a similar one in secular art, which occurs in the poem Beowulf:

"What was the life of a man? What, indeed, was the life of a king unless he worked hard for his people who had raised him to the throne? What more than the flight of a gull through the mead hall, a sudden bright sweep of white wings against the smoke-blackened rafter? Only the unselfish, only the great in heart were worthy of being sung by the bards".

Against this background, where men were very aware of the
fragility of temporal things, developed the bastions of peace, order and spiritual strength which produced the Hiberno-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon schools of manuscript painters, becoming increasingly eclectic as Saxon and Celtic forms received the imprint of European and Byzantine influences, and finally issuing forth in the full flowering of the Romanesque style in the twelfth century. Throughout this period the manuscripts were produced by, for and within monastic institutions and enormous changes took place when, a little later, this ceased to be the case. Bibles, psalters and, to a slightly less extent in this period, Books of Hours, were required for the growing communities, and for a number of monks the painstaking copying and embellishment of these given texts was a lifetime's work. The decoration of the texts included carpet pages (whole pages of richly coloured pattern-work, often with a strong Celtic taste), whole page pictures of scenes from the Bible (mainly later), historiated initials, margin decoration and miniatures. By the use of all these devices the eye of the reader was arrested and the practice of 'lectio divina' or spiritual reading, which might well be seen as a contemplative activity, was encouraged.

But the presentation of contemplative features does not ensure a peaceful passage either in art or in religion, as can be seen with an earlier art form, which gave rise to enormous controversy in Eastern Christendom for many years, during which time aesthetic questions were probably more hotly disputed than at any other time in history. For in Byzantium at least, the intensity of the argument between iconoclasts and iconophiles shows how deeply feelings can run when issues of art and worship are found to be related and are allowed to come into conflict.

In Judaism there had been a strict prohibition on the
creation of images, essentially of God, but by extension of any living thing. Man was considered to have been created in God's likeness, but the main reason for the prohibition was to keep the religion uncontaminated by idolatry. Idolatry was a feature of most of the other religions with which Judaism came into contact and for this reason the prohibition was included amongst the essential rules of their religion, the Ten Commandments:

"You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth" (Exodus 20 v4).

The extent of the risk of lapsing into similar practices as they saw amongst their neighbours can be seen in the story of the golden calf which the Israelites made and started to worship while Moses was too long on the mountain with God, and the punishment Moses meted out to them indicates the seriousness of the offence at least in his eyes (Exodus 32). This fear of worshipping what has once been made by man and admired is a common one in several of the more spiritual religions, although it is not the only reason for the exclusion of pictorial art. The Moslems, for example, saw creation as an attribute of God, not of man, and this also resulted in a religion in which images were not allowed. Some of the western mediaeval philosophers shared this view of creation as an attribute only of God, but instead of extending it to a prohibition of art, simply devalued art and permitted it to be practised as a human pastime.

The early Christian church, as an heir to Judaism, sustained a distrust of 'graven images' in the form of statues and it is unlikely that there were any church statues in the first millenium A.D. Statues would be seen as too akin to pagan idols to be permitted by a religion which was trying to wean people away from pagan
idolatry. But two-dimensional art was found acceptable and some churches were extremely richly embellished. One of the justifications for such decoration was that it served a didactic function and that since literacy was rare the pictures around the walls of a church could teach the simple faithful the stories of the Bible and lives of saints in much the same way as did the mediaeval mystery plays. Pope Gregory I held this opinion and said

"Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read."

This justification, which was most prevalent in the Latin West, continued, with interruption arising from the Eastern controversy, right through history until literacy became (in our culture) the norm. The late French mediaeval poet, Francois Villon, expressed it, through the mouth of a peasant woman:

"I am a woman, poor and old,  
Quite ignorant, I cannot read.  
They showed me by my village church  
A painted Paradise with harps  
And Hell where the damned souls are boiled,  
One gives me joy, the other frightens me ..."

Such pictures were obviously far more effective than many hours of sermonizing.

Images were also used simply for decorative purposes. The basilicas which during these years were the main places of worship became larger and it was natural that there should be a desire to adorn them. When the poor peasants entered a church they left behind the sordidity of their everyday life and turned their eyes to a vision of splendour which they hoped would one day be theirs. Even the Moslems decorated their mosques and some of the results in their buildings, where representational images of God or man were eschewed, are exquisite.
But the controversy arose over the images known as icons and it arose principally in the eastern part of Christendom where on the one hand the legacy of Greek culture and art was strongest and on the other hand, as Byzantium was adjacent to the eastern boundaries of the empire, Asian influence had a fairly great impact. So in the same way as for the Greeks the Athenian theatre had been an all-embracing spectacle, for the Byzantine Christians, church services came to have this function, and everything that contributed to that spectacle, music, smell, garments, decoration and language, was given great attention and made to conform to high standards of beauty. But from the East, I believe, came not only the form of painting which characterized the icon, namely the concentration on the 'essence' of the subject rather than the fleeting moment, but also the purist approach to God which maintained that physical representations of spiritual entities were either immoral or nonsense, which led to the outlawing of such icons. The defence of such images, too, by the iconophiles was eastern in the orientation of its philosophy.

The 'eikon', or image, of Christ or the saints, was defensible on the grounds that the Incarnation gave Christ a bodily form which it was quite reasonable to portray. But in fact, what the artist wished to portray was actually the soul, of which the physical body was but a symbol. Further, even the body was not presented in one aspect as would be the case with an entirely representational art; the eternal essence of that body was sought, or, as it came to be called, 'the prototype'. As Plato had seen physical objects as relating to an Ideal Form, the Byzantines believed that temporal forms have exemplars in an eternal world. So someone giving attention to the physical representation of the ikon could be transported, through
contemplation, to the eternal reality of its prototype. This was particularly advantageous in the case of Christ whom they were unable to see with their physical eyes. Through contemplating his prototype in an icon they could come to 'see' with eternal rather than temporal eyes the reality of Christ.

In encouraging the faithful to give this contemplative attention to icons, John Damascene said:

"In looking at His physical shape, we also penetrate, within the bounds of possibility, to the glory of His divinity. Because we have a double nature, composed of body and soul, we cannot penetrate to spiritual things without physical things. In this way, through physical contemplation, we arrive at spiritual contemplation" (De imaginibus oratio).

So there grew up in Byzantium what was probably the most contemplative form of art that Christianity, as a major world religion, has produced. But the contemplation of such images became the veneration of these images and these two activities are not the same. For as Plato might well have maintained if he had been able to enter this particular arena, contemplation leads to Truth, or the reality of what is, whereas when something is venerated it is to at least some extent seen as an end in itself and is not that which the venerater purports to be worshipping.

It may be felt that the approach to icons as items for contemplation bears within it the seeds of its own destruction, since if the item is just something to transport the viewer beyond itself to reality then simpler objects such as a lighted candle or a flower will serve as well, as in fact they do in some Hindu traditions. But on the other hand, the viewing of the images as prototypes cut out extravagant experimentation on the part of the Byzantine artists, and led to an established iconography with immutable canons, thus
providing an ordered framework for the art. Through the discipline imposed by these canons the artist sought a harmony between the physical and spiritual, seen and unseen, icon and prototype, worshipper and Christ, which was expressed in his love and the love of the viewer both for the icon and for the being portrayed. In this way it presents us with a valuable example of truly contemplative art.

The reasons for iconoclasm were also of a spiritual nature. The iconoclasts maintained that 'perigraphe' (pictorial representation) is impossible and should not even be attempted since such an attempt denies the distinction between the things of this world and the divine. The milder iconoclasts objected only to the veneration of images, but the fiercer ones, who went to great lengths in their destruction of art, were altogether opposed to any attempt to represent the deity. The persecution which this movement brought in its wake inspired the iconophiles to carve out a defensive position whereby the power of the prototype was said to transfer to the image, so that the physical representation partakes of the prototype and thus, Christ is in the picture. Each picture, in effect, provided a new Incarnation of Christ.

"It should also be said that a holy image of our Saviour partakes in its prototype" (The Patriarch Nicephorus. Antirrheticus, I,24).

One interesting result of iconoclasm was that the artistic impulse was pushed in other directions and during the times when the iconoclasts were in the ascendant Christian churches were decorated with beautiful paintings depicting all manner of animal and plant life. This in itself obviously contributed to the divorce between art and religion and encouraged the growth of art outside the traditions and strictures which fostered its contemplative aspects and thus
allowed the growth of a non-contemplative art. To this extent it would be fair to say that the very movement which sprang from the tradition of contemplative art led in fact to the increased validity of art as a non-contemplative activity.

In Western Christendom, at the same time as the mediaeval philosophers were assimilating and building on the philosophy of Aristotle, the great cathedrals were being built, enshrining the beliefs and preoccupations of the age. In many ways the Romanesque/Norman architecture of the early Middle Ages epitomises the strength, authority and protectiveness of the Church Militant. Then, in the same way as the new discipline and breadth of thought in logic resulted in more freedom in philosophy, so the new techniques of Gothic architecture led to greater freedom and exciting innovations in the cathedrals. Dizzy heights were reached and yet the walls became thinner and the windows larger, and stained glass came into its own, flooding the buildings with splendid colours and light.

A cathedral such as Lincoln can be seen, in its Gothic parts, to embody and exemplify the prevailing philosophy of the time. First, the building enshrines the theories of proportion, of geometrical and mathematical order, both in the parts and in the whole, seen in the perfect proportions of its visible structure. Secondly, we see in this great thirteenth century work the new birth of naturalism in art inspired by the same mentality as we found in Albertus Magnus. The delight in representing not just foliage and animal life, but particular flowers, leaves and creatures, makes Lincoln Cathedral a paradise of intricate and observant carvings, in wood as on the bosses of the cloisters and in limestone decorations which are more reminiscent of finely worked ivory than solid stone.
Thirdly, the light or brilliance and lustre which we find increasing in importance in Christian aesthetics here floods the cathedral. The technical innovations of the Gothic style resulted in taller buildings with thinner walls, the main strength residing in the slim pillars and flying buttresses. This meant that the walls between the pillars could be cut away to produce enormous windows. Similarly the flat East wall, which was made popular by Cistercian abbeys such as Tintern and Fountains, began to replace the apsidal East end of earlier Gothic cathedrals so that there was the opportunity to produce a glorious window on the wall which the congregation faced. These changes brought about, understandably, an explosion in the art of stained glass and as the sun moved round the cathedral each day, patterns of light, shade and exotic colour danced before men's eyes.

But of all the mediaeval cathedrals, Chartres is probably the most unified both in terms of its architecture and its iconography, the major part of it having been built within about thirty years following the great fire of 1194 which destroyed the previous Romanesque cathedral and most of the city of Chartres as well. So part of the beauty of Chartres lies in its unity of style which makes it one of the most perfect structures of the Gothic period. More important than this is the order and proportion of the whole conception, from the triumphs of Gothic technology to the marrying of the iconography of each external porch with its corresponding stained glass window within; and the whole follows an overall order, with the darker north side representing the Old Testament prophets looking forward to Christ, the light of the world, and the sunnier south side representing the apostles and martyrs who lived in that light. The earlier, exquisite Royal Portal at the west
end, whilst particularly celebrating the lives of Mary and Jesus, contains all time, a feature it has in common with other aspects of the cathedral.

Then there is the harmony of the whole, once again at least partially a result of the speedy building programme. The architecture presents a tension of opposites in the high walls supporting the roof by means of the flying buttresses contributing their counter-weight. In all the representations of man, too, we have the psychomachia of the soul, or the struggle between good and evil. This is most beautifully illustrated in the sculptures of the virtues and vices over the south door, and of the promise of heaven or threat of hell at the end of time. Time itself figures largely, so that, for instance, in the window which portrays the passage of months with the varying activities associated with them and the zodiac signs, we see, at the apex, Christ Chronocrator seated between the Greek letters Alpha and Omega to remind that he was present at the beginning of time (by being one with his father) and will be present at the end of time, when he will judge the world. Past, present and future are all contained within the figure of Christ who is seen equally as Creator, Redeemer and Judge.

Many of the scenes portrayed at Chartres are celebrations of Love; the Creator loving his creation, Christ loving in his healing ministry and even more in his sacrificial passion, death and resurrection. But the whole cathedral was also an offering of love, consecrated to the Assumption of Mary and illustrating in every detail the love the mediaeval Christian had for the mother of Christ.

The same features of contemplation as we have marked in Christian art are apparent in the Egyptian art which Plato admired.
particularly in the ordered, balanced statues of the Old Kingdom. A statue of King Chephren, dating from around 2500 B.C., for example, offers perfect proportions, a harmonious unity and an attitude of reverent love by the sculptor, thus presenting a contemplative work of art whose stillness contains the essence of all the king was rather than an anecdote from his mortal life. The same qualities were a feature of much Cycladic art and of Chinese art at some stages, such as in the T'ang tomb sculptures and in many of the vases from the T'ang dynasty right through to Ming.

But the tradition was a continuing one and the same features occur in mediaeval painted crosses and in the formal colour configurations of Mondrian or Rothco. They span the different media, so that one can be aware of the harmony in the sculptures of Moore and Hepworth, in the photography of Cartier-Bresson, who maximizes his own appreciation of the order and harmony in that which he photographs by using an unrectified lens which presents him with an inverted image, or in the music of Bach or Messiaen. The love which delights in the 'istigkeit' of things, which made Chinese and Japanese landscape painting one of the most contemplative and spiritual traditions to be produced in art, is the same as that expressed in the frescoes of Fra Angelico, the portraits of Vermeer or paintings by Chardin.

These examples of contemplative art do not all spring from recognized religious traditions and, as we have seen, the philosophical tradition, at least of the Christian religion, has had surprisingly little to offer in terms of analysis of contemplation. But the different religions have had their own traditions and practices of contemplation, which can be seen to bear the same features as have been discussed in this thesis. We have already noted
the aspects of corporate worship which exemplify order and good proportion in respect to liturgy, stillness and the postures shared by groups engaged in shared religious activity. This provides a framework within which the individual may explore further the activity of contemplation. The Eastern contemplative tradition has always taken into account the part played by the body in contemplation and a rich vocabulary of postures has been evolved, including such things as standing on one's head, moving in a meditation walk, dancing and sitting cross-legged in the Lotus position.

In the West, although less developed as a system, various postures, such as kneeling, sitting cross-legged, standing and processing (i.e. walking in procession) have been considered appropriate for activities associated either with contemplation or the preparation for it and the influence of the East has been apparent in the embracing of yogic practices by contemplatives who have not been raised in that tradition. Less traditionally, activities such as running and 'cycling, both of which combine relaxation and control and achieve balance through the tension of these opposites, are reported as being states conducive to the contemplative state.

Most perfectly, perhaps, dance, in itself one of the oldest art forms, has been intimately associated with religious expression and can exemplify the same qualities of order, harmony and love. In dance the body responds to order and balance, it holds a tension between relaxation and control, discipline and expression, and celebrates with the whole body love for what is real and true. It is the only art form in which the human body is actually used as the material in the work of art, and has at times been condemned by conventional religions for exactly the same reasons as Plato.
criticized the art of his day, namely for its psychogogic character and the danger of seeing it as an end rather than as a means to some higher end; whilst others, like Nietzsche, have enthusiastically claimed it to be one of the greatest of the arts because it exemplifies the most primitive and fundamental expression of man's true nature:

"In song and in dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is on the way toward flying into the air, dancing. His very gestures express enchantment. Just as the animals now talk, and the earth yields milk and honey, supernatural sounds emanate from him, too: he feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted, in ecstasy, like the gods he saw walking in his dreams. He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: in these paroxysms of intoxication the artistic power of all nature reveals itself to the highest gratification of the primordial unity" (The Birth of Tragedy, section 1, page 37)

But the ordered movement and rhythm of dance, the strict control of the body and the immense freedom discovered when that body becomes a 'tuneful instrument', can lead the dancer to the greater stillness which seems like the stillness of infinity, where in the movement of the cosmos one recognizes the stillness in which all is contained;

"So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing".

The Tai Chi Ch'uan, the ancient Chinese contemplative dance which evolved out of the martial arts, provides a good example of the features of contemplation occurring in dance. It is an exercise in control of the body combined with control of the mind, the two working in harmony to achieve complete balance and it uses the gestures, postures and emotional experience of the dancer to express a loving relationship with all that is. The same is true of Indian dance:

"The Hindu dance is first of all the representation of the joy of life in all of its ideal aspects. It is concerned with the visible interpretation of the common ideal experience of mankind. Subjective individual experience, coloured by personal impulses and idiosyncrasies, does not enter conspicuously into the exposition of either Hindu dancing or music" (Ragini Devi; Dances of India).
Shiva Nataraja (Lord of the Dance, from nata = dance and raja = lord), frequently represented in an arch or circle of flames representing the boundary of the cosmos and dancing on the lotus flower which symbolizes the world, is celebrated as the one who danced the world into creation, so that all that is must be part of the divine dance.

"In thy dance, Divine Dancer, freedom finds its image and dreams their forms. Its cadence weaves the threads of things and unwinds them for ages; Charms the atom's rebellion into beauty, gives rhythm to the symphony of stars; thrills life with pain, And churns up existence into surging joys and sorrows"

(Rabindranath Tagore).

As well as being a practical aid to and expression of contemplation, dance has also been used metaphorically to describe the contemplative state, as for instance in the sensation of timelessness and the paradox of stillness and movement:

"At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity, Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards, Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point, There would be no dance, and there is only the dance"


It is thus possible to see the activity of dance as a paradigm of both art and contemplation and an area in which these two fundamental human activities, which sprang from a common root in the response of man to the world in which he found himself, may still be combined in a common concept.

"Because Thou lovest the Burning-ground,
I have made a burning ground of my heart --
That Thou, Dark One, haunter of the Burning-ground
Mayest dance Thy eternal dance.
Nought else is within my heart, O Mother:
Day and night blazes the funeral pyre:
The ashes of the dead, strewn all about,
I have preserved against Thy coming,
With death-conquering Mahakala 'neath Thy feet"
Do Thou enter in, dancing Thy rhythmic dance
That I may behold Thee with closed eyes"

(Goddess Kali's Dance. Bengali hymn).
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