

Norman Turner

THE ESSAY ON CÉZANNE
Part Three

“A Man Sees Nothing in Nature but What He Knows”

1

Everything within our visual field is oriented in respect to the immediate object of our attention, a point in space, lodged on a thing, a tree, road, person or house, upon which our eyes fixate. As we shift our attention from one fixation to another, one thing to another, the entire field shifts, too, and is realigned and laid down in its myriad elements to conform to the new situation. Our visual field is elastic, every element within it is tied to and under the sway of every other element within it, and it never holds the identical network of spatial relationships any two moments in a row.¹

It cannot, for to look is not only to sift through space, fixation after fixation, but to advance in time. Our vision drives forward, from the present moment toward a future one, foreshadowed on the experiential horizon. It approaches, enters our present awareness, and resolves into the adventitious, immediate display (born of the physics of light and optics), the fixation within the display to which we temporarily cling, harvesting from it a fragment of understanding.² Directing our attention to the point we are about to see, the position in space we are about to mentally occupy, the momentary intelligence of the world around us we are about to add to our store, we arrive at that new locus, capture it as our present sight, and proceed to the next, stepping in continuous transition across the physical present, rapidly assembling a mental construct and surpassing overview. We see things entire; we encompass them; we take them in. Doing so, we transcend the unadorned physical present because we endure. In this continuity, this ongoing progress through a temporal space in which we steadily register present space, the anticipated future sight is continually consumed and altered as it becomes the undeniably present one in physical fact (born of light and optics), the present one is continually supplanted in that time goes by, the past is continually swollen with the hoarded total of all that has visually transpired, only to be altered in turn as past time recedes and its traces are overlaid by, and refracted in, the seconds, minutes, days, months and years that so rapidly supervene.

Rarely is there an obligation to think of such matters. Our eyes perform as we wish, time goes by according to circadian rhythms or the measured pace of a timepiece, and

things are simply around us, to be navigated among or used according to our need. This can be termed naïve vision, readily advancing our purposes, generally unremarked. With our subjective means, we heedlessly attend to our objective goals. Engaged in the occupations of daily life, we have little reason to notice the visual field, much less its immediate disposition, its volatility, its plasticity, its role in our integrity, our continuity, our current state of being. To verbally describe the field, however, as was just done, is to direct our attention away from our pragmatic goals to our means of reaching them, notice that of which we were oblivious, break into bits that which was undivided, arrange in a linear sequence that which radiated from its center in the self, and cast as a mental image, a representation, that which was simply lived.

So it is with a painter who depicts actual trees, roads, persons or houses, that is, works from observation, except the investigation is pictorial rather than verbal. Instead of occupying his visual field in a pragmatic, unreflecting way, as if it were a handy adjunct to his habits and desires, the painter is not only aware of it as an object of attention in its own right, apart from the things in it, he is aware of it in way that requires deliberation and choice. From the visual field he dissects, in his mind's eye, a segment that will fit the canvas he brought with him. He decides what will lie within the four edges of the canvas, what will be excluded. He judges how to manage the included items—where they will sit in relation to each other, where they will sit in relation to the edges, and what will be their comparative sizes. He studies the colors that appear in the visual field and ponders what equivalent colors he will deploy, also how light or dark on a scale of white to black. He weighs the matter of paint application with brushes or palette knives, and a procedure for building up form. His hand cooperates with his eye to ensnare those aspects of the view he would respond to, as with his selected implement he notates his conclusions.

In short, composition and performance enter the experiential train. The tenor of visual experience alters. It shifts to a mode other than naïve and distinct from the mode of routine business; it is the mode of pictorial creation. To say there was always a visual field and that it remains as before, except the painter now regards it as material for his project, will not do. It is because of his project that the visual field becomes an object of contemplation and takes on a distinctive cast, an altered character, by virtue of the idea for a painting the painter brings to bear on it. By the agency of his idea, the visual field becomes laden with resemblance, and is transformed. It is the same visual field yet not the same, for it now wears the garb of such a picture as only this painter could paint.

There are three factors: First, the painter, with his individual expectations and sensibility, his outlook as an informed member of an artistic community; second, the scene before him, selected as eligible for painting, onto which his expectations, sensibility, and informed outlook are projected; third, the picture itself, asserting its own autonomous forces and budding law of growth, its own demand for coherence according to the pictorial syntax deployed in its construction, independent of the source. As the painter commences, there are two factors, the things he is looking at and himself at his ease among them. As

the surface is covered, the third factor comes into play. A virtual space, wakened on two dimensions, now participates, in the immediate experience of the painter, with the three-dimensional, erosive space of actuality. The continual shifting of attention and realignment of myriad elements that typifies the experiential field now includes not only a methodical approach to nature but a concordant painting of nature. Nature to art, art to nature, the painter strives to reconcile them.³

Consider the tribulations of a fictional landscapist of the 1860's, a youthful acquaintance of Sisley's, let's say. With knapsack and easel he one fine day tramps the countryside near Barbizon, marching down lanes, wandering through groves of oak and birch and across rocky pastures, looking for a suitable view, a grouping of elements consistent with his idea of what a painting should be. He looks, that is, for a motif. Late in the afternoon, rounding a corner, he finds a woodpile and thatch-roofed farm buildings, a rough track going straight on, some pollarded trees standing along its verge, the whole bathed in warm autumn light. These he can see as pigmented shapes fitted together on a flat surface, within the frame of his canvas, scaled to size, and unified by a common tint; so there it is, what he was looking for, a desirable image latent in nature, pliantly waiting for him to capture it.

Even while he sets up his easel and gets out his palette, brushes and paint, considers his initial attack, the sun drops a degree, the shadows creep, his motif slightly evolves, but he is unalarmed. The concept for a painting he has stumbled across, seemingly embodied in the real world, is so immediate, so compellingly apparent, so thoroughly vouchsafed to him in his imagination, he believes he is master of what he sees. Yet everything out there, including the mild illumination provided by the lowering sun shining through haze, is present at the same time. While he can with effort envision his painting complete, with all its elements likewise present simultaneously, the task of bringing it to that happy state can hardly be accomplished in one swoop. As he touches his canvas here and there, composing his envisioned picture bit by bit, the elements of nature he first saw as contemporary aspects of a united whole are seen one after another, as are the elements of his picture, which must be built up sequentially. He focuses on the particular mark he is making, as he cannot do otherwise. Doing so, he momentarily loses his view, not only of the motif, but of his whole composition. Engrossed in a subset of the motif, the dark pollarded trees against the bright sky, he loses track of their relation to another subset, that of the grouped buildings. Moreover, the emergent painting soon exerts its own authority, its own direction, apart from the motif. It demands of him that he respond in kind, make adjustments to what he had foreseen, provide what it cries out for, look to see if those adjustments are substantiated in nature. Meantime, the shadows of the actual trees lengthen, the light becomes warmer as the sun approaches the horizon, and the far pine that at first seemed a minor ornament within the virtual ensemble, a small, dark triangle, is now intrusive, spotlighted by the sun in its new position. No longer willing to play a subsidiary role, the

pine jabs the skyline, quarrels with the effect, protests with all the vigor of rampant actuality this particular union of nature and art.

That is to say, the initial unitary concept is followed by fragmentary and fleeting ones, loses its simultaneous integrity in the step-by-step manner in which its parts are assembled, is compromised by secondary, confusing details the painter's wandering mind to his annoyance insists on noticing, is led elsewhere by the claims of a semi-coherent surface he has himself created, or is worn away by the ceaseless drama of change nature rains on his senses. Continuing to paint through the hour, returning to his spot next day at the same time for another session, he finds that what he first saw, thought he saw, faintly recalled seeing, is never again quite there. Unable to cement in his mind the initial glimpse of wholeness, the rhythmic movement and massing of lights and darks that were abstract attributes of what lay before him, and that he hoped to transfix with his colored paste, he chases the movement of the sun, notices other but contrary possibilities, proceeds in sequence from one reading of his motif and picture to others, finds himself in a labyrinth of choices, sees the edifice of his project collapse, gives up, stalks disgustedly back to the inn where he is staying, swears emphatically to give up painting forever.

Well did Pierre Bonnard understand difficulties of this sort. "I tried to paint [a bouquet of roses] exactly, precisely," he said to Angele Lamotte.

I let myself be absorbed by the details, I yielded to painting roses. I discovered that I was floundering; there was no way out; and that I could not recapture my first idea; and that I had lost sight of the vision that seduced me, my point of departure.

All around me, I often see interesting things . . . I paint, trying not to lose the immediate conception, I am weak—if I let myself go, as with the bouquet of roses, at the end of a moment I have lost my original vision and I no longer know where (or how) to proceed.

In a word, a conflict is produced between the initial conception, the good idea of a painter, and the changeable, varied world of the object, of the motif, that has caused the first inspiration. The painters who are able to approach the subject directly are very rare and those who are able to get through have a very personal argument. Cézanne in front of the subject had a firm idea of what he wanted to do—and only took from nature that which reaffirmed his concept. He was the painter most powerfully armed before nature, the purest, the most sincere.

Claude Monet painted from the subject, but only for ten minutes at a time. He didn't give things the time to take him in. He would return to work when the light approximated his first vision.

The Impressionists worked from the motif but armed by their method, their manner of painting.⁴

To fend off the muddle Bonnard refers to, painters working from observation need a will and a way. John Constable found a way in Thomas Forster's "Researches about Atmospheric Phenomena," containing the theories of one Luke Howard, who classified cloud forms as "cumulus," "cirrus" and so on during the early years of the nineteenth century.⁵ Consulting this book, Constable discovered, in the sky, the clouds systematized there, and was able to convey them, or something of them, mostly in deft oil sketches on paper. In this, he was original. Yet his practice was an extension of practices common to

his time. He divided his work into three types: the small open-air sketches, full-size "sketches" for finished works, and the more polished works meant for exhibition, which the first two types were not. Though his paint handling and color especially in his later work moderately anticipated that of Delacroix and the Impressionists, his treatment of lights and darks harkened to the seventeenth-century landscapists who were his exemplars.

In France, some thirty years later, painting pictures outdoors and calling them suitable for exhibition was a venturesome pursuit, Constable's precedent notwithstanding. To concepts and procedures already embedded in French art a self-elect few added a certain impetus. They raised issues that had been thought of and discussed before, but less ardently and pointedly, with less provisional a result. "Whatever the site, whatever the object, the artist should submit to his first impression," advised Corot. "I always try to see the effect at once. . . . In the same way I work on all the parts of my picture at once, gradually improving each one till I have got the effect complete." If at another time, he said, "I recommend to you the greatest naiveté in study. And do precisely what you see," to the younger, less seasoned Renoir, he remarked, "One can never be sure about what one has done; one must always go over it in the studio." Bolder advice was given by the painter of marine views, Eugene Boudin, who befriended the young Monet. "Everything that is painted directly on the spot," Boudin said, "has always a strength, a power, a vividness of touch that one doesn't find again in the studio." One must show "extreme stubbornness in retaining one's first impression, which is the good one." Then, adding what Corot certainly would have affirmed, Boudin said, "It is not a single part which should strike one in a picture but indeed the whole."⁶

When Monet and his circle went to Chailly in 1864 to paint in the forest, it was the example of Boudin they followed by painting everything "directly on the spot."⁷ ". . . It seems to me," Monet wrote to Bazille in July of that year,

when I see nature, that I see it ready-made, completely written, but then try to do it! All this proves that one must think of nothing but this; it is by dint of observation and reflection that one makes discoveries. So let's dig away and dig without cease.⁸

Talking as they did of summary views of nature, taken in at first glance; of a site and their view of it, the object, the first impression, the effect; then of pictures made of parts, the parts worked on all at once and improved until the effect is caught, these men talked of conceptual armaments engineered to defend them during incursions into nature's territory. That painting and reality were not easily reconciled is attested by Monet, who saw nature as if it instantly were a picture, that is, "ready-made, completely written," but then announced his disillusionment, recalling soberly that discoveries require "observation and reflection," that is, thought.

While he was painting grain stacks in 1891, Monet wrote to Gustave Geffroy (who in three years would sit for Cézanne):

I am set on a series of different effects, but at this time of year the sun goes down so quickly that I cannot follow it . . . I am working at a desperately slow pace, but the further I go, the more I see that I have to work a lot in order to manage to convey what I am seeking: 'instantaneity,' above all, the envelopment, the same light spread over everywhere; and more than ever, easy things achieved at one stroke disgust me. Finally, I am more and more maddened by the need to convey what I experience⁹

Here is documented the extent to which Monet's perceptions of nature were enhanced by words and their meanings, even as he strove through his practice to amend those words. As the century wore on the meaning of "effect" changed from a thing or group of things, attended by areas of light and shade, to a transient quality of atmosphere. "The envelope" did not refer to things at all, but was the nimbus of light itself, encasing things, coating their features in an over-all particulate content of the gaseous medium, an over-all diaphanous translucency. As the envelope was by definition occasional and fugitive, it followed that as his career advanced Monet pursued fleeting meteorological conditions. The progression of thought, of language and of what was extracted from nature for painting was away from things, toward phenomena of the air, away from the lasting, toward the ephemeral.

Supporting these discussions and conceptual refinements was an elaborate scaffold of ideas represented in French painting culture by an elaborate nomenclature, items of which have been mentioned. If terms such as "motif," "effect" and "impression" were somewhat malleable, their meaning shifting over time, certain of the tenets behind them held constant, steadily upheld by instruction received in the ateliers. Students began by drawing from engravings of famous works, next drew from plaster casts of antique sculpture, and only then were allowed to draw a live model. The play of light and shade on the cast or model constituted the effect, and a purpose of drawing was to capture the effect by rendering the lights and darks of which it was comprised, giving special attention to the range of middle-tones that lay between the extremes. One way of building a range of tones was to use hatch-work, the areas of closely parallel lines sometimes crossed with other lines, or cross-hatched, to make a dark area darker, as in an etching. One student recalled that a plaster cast looked white to him when seen in the light, dark when in shadow, adding that "the *unpracticed eye does not perceive* what we call 'modeling', that is, the transition from light to shade by means of half-tones [emphasis added]."¹⁰

So pervasive was this training that it carried over to landscape drawings. One looked for the effect and blocked in areas of hatchwork to suggest the masses, to be united by the effect. "Modeling" carried over to painting as well, systematically, in the instruction students received, for they were advised to first establish the darkest darks and lightest lights, then introduce the middle tones, carefully adjusted to be distinct yet graduated. If properly done, the relationships tellingly balanced, the effect was captured. One was also advised while sketching to leave each patch of paint unblended, as if placing tiles. Unable to match a series of notes that ran in nature from the brilliance of the sky and reflected

sunlight to the opposite in darkest shadow, one compressed within the much narrower scale pigment afforded what would have been unconvincing were it not artfully contrived. Thus even the most tightly controlled, conventional products of hallowed tradition relied on an all-encompassing, inescapable fiction.

All paintings required modeling. Beyond that, they were divided by category: the study (*étude*), a quick painting done in fifteen minutes or two hours and broadly handled; the rough sketch (*pochade*), a quick painting aimed especially at the effect; and the rough draft (*ebauche*), an underpainting to be scraped, painted over and finished after it dried. Though studies were valued for their summarizing freshness and had an accepted role in the production of the large machines that dominated the huge exhibitions frequent to the period, at mid-century a strict hierarchy, *Histoire* at the top, *Paysage* at the bottom, forbade their acceptance as complete in their own right. The position of landscape studies was ancillary. They were a preparation for complete works, or formed a collection through which the painter might sort for reference while working in his studio on proper pictures that told a story, possibly from Greco-Roman mythology, European history or the Bible, as often as not in a bland mutation of David or Claude, the surface properly “licked”.

When those who were to be derisively stamped “Impressionists” began painting, in and around Paris, during the eighteen-sixties, the works that made them notorious, their at first tentative radicalism was underwritten by a long-lived, highly developed canon. This inheritance helped them build pictures from direct observation without being overwhelmed. In the eighteen-eighties science, too, was brought to the fray, as it had previously been brought by Constable with his study of cloud types. Pissarro and others discovered Michele-Eugène Chevrueil, whose *The Law of the Simultaneous Contrast of Colors* was published in 1839; also physicist Ogden Rood, whose *Students' Text-book of Color; or Modern Chromatics* was published in 1879 and soon translated into French.¹¹ Colored and shaded pictures, exactly matching the objects from which they come, Rood stated, as if to describe Divisionist methods and paintings, are deposited on the retina, “and it is by their action on the retina that we see. These retinal pictures are, as it were, mosaics, made up from an infinite number of points of light.” To Durand-Ruel, Pissarro expressed his wish for a modern synthesis of painting methods and science, based on Chevrueil, Maxwell and Rood, that would decompose tones into their constituents, replacing uniform mixtures with optical mixtures made of discrete dots.¹² “But surely it is clear,” he wrote to his son during his Divisionist phase,

that we could not pursue our studies of light with much assurance if we did not have as a guide the discoveries of Chevrueil and other scientists. I would not have distinguished between local color and light if science had not given us the hint; the same hold true for complementary colors, contrasting colors, etc.¹³

Pissarro and his colleagues, rejecting the *Histoire* and its trappings, embraced ideas and motifs that were contemporary. Their work had, for them, a somewhat spurious tinge of experiment—a word they were disposed to use. Combining what they took from the tradition of the pochade and what they converted to their own ends from fresh tendencies in thought, they discovered for painting a new structure of color in nature, newly to be found in motifs. To the extent painting was able to treat what this infusion brought to the parlay, they found what it predicted: a play of complimentaries and the decomposition of

uniform areas into their constituent hues. Local colors, they noticed and discussed, reflected whatever was nearby, or reflected the sky. Shadows, seen this way, were not merely darkened areas of local color but were sprinkled with reflections from nearby objects or the dome above, and were quite varied. Hence the interest in scenes of winter that proposed shadows on snow to be blue, as in Pissarro's *Snow at Louveciennes* (fig. 1). "Turner and Constable," Pissarro wrote to his son, "while they taught us something, showed us in their works that they had no understanding of the *analysis of shadow*"14 A robust fruit of these ideas, richly embroidered, is Pissarro's *Park in Pontoise* of 1878, wherein the shadow of a building that stood behind him, running across the bottom four-fifths of the picture, is imbued with the colors of the sky and the warm whites and yellows of the sunlit buildings across the way (fig. 2).

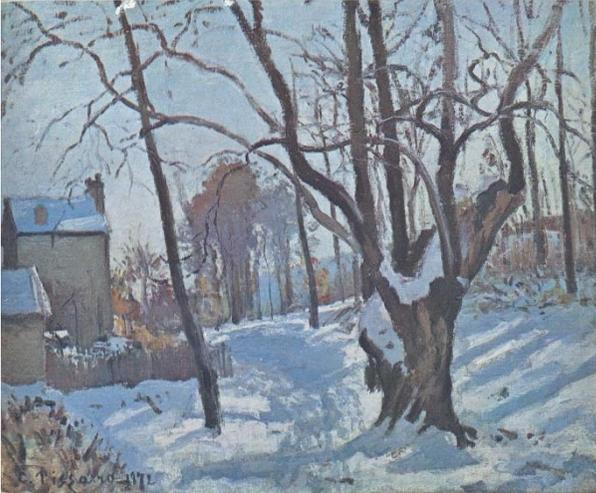


Figure 2

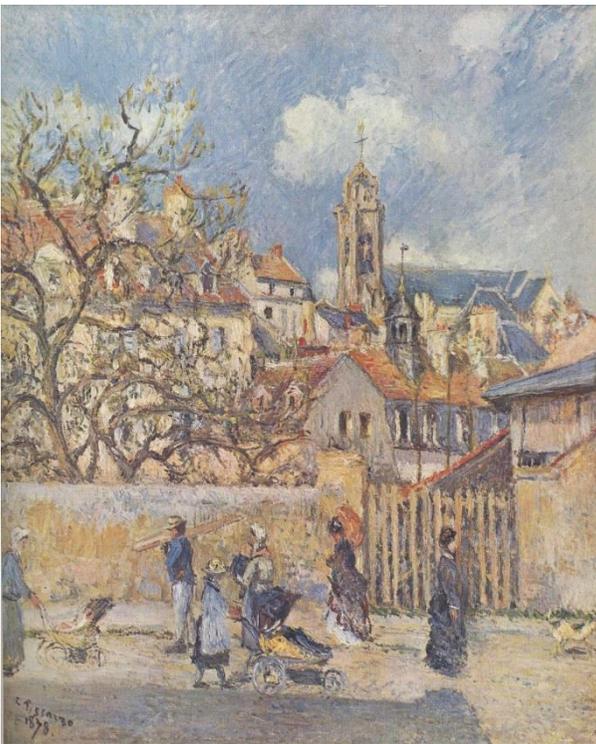


Figure 1

2

Some questions: Was it possible for Monet to circumscribe and cut away from an ever ongoing and never repeated temporal succession that which he likened to a distinct entity or quanta, as though the effect were a butterfly to be netted and pinned in a tray or an experiment to be identically repeated; or as if the same segment of time on successive days could be lived through again and again, like a length of film repeatedly run through a projector? Consequent to the invention of clocks and of time snipped into parts of equal duration, was it not so that Monet's "instant" was conceptually the same as the section of a visual

pyramid in a perspective construction, a snapshot, a halted slice of space and time that did not subsist in experience, neither on the neural cells lining Monet's retinas, nor in uninterrupted temporal extension?¹⁵ And was it not the case, as time slid by, that one minute, one hour, one day melted unstoppably and irredeemably into another, so that the effect must change, and endlessly?

Was Monet a hero of painting because he resembled Cuculain fighting the sea? Slashing away with his long-handled brushes at a furious rate, did he over and over assail the full-flooding wave, the prime moment, only to have it fall away on the ebb, the retreating time-flow? Did he first paint toward the "instant" he had envisioned, and that he glimpsed on the experiential horizon, rushing toward him from the future? Did it arrive in the present, cresting as his motif in optical fact, then slide by, so that he no sooner painted from it in the here-and-now than he painted away from it, eyeing it in retrospect as it fled into the past? Was his mental home one where the anticipated future, the concurrent moment, the remembered past, his pictorial imagination and much knowledge and experience of painting came together? Were his series of the haystack, of Rouen Cathedral, of the row of poplars, and of the Seine attained through astute looking and matching, requiring prodigies of concentration on the physical present, but also elaborate inventions, orchestrations of color that postulated reality at least as much as they recorded it?

Are the terms "effect" and "envelope" mere labels Monet applied to what was plainly there for all to see in the course of daily life, or did these terms enable him to extract from nature, for painting, what otherwise could be discerned hazily or not at all? Speaking in his letter of a "series of effects," of "seeking instantaneity," and then of "the envelopment, the same light spread everywhere," did he merely voice formal categories having no connection to his observations, or did he find that naming the categories, envisioning them as attributes of a motif, and observing them in nature coincided? And did clouds look the same to Constable after he learned their names, their characteristic shapes, the tale they told of future weather? After he grasped the phenotypes, did actual clouds take on, to his reshaped way of looking, distinctive characteristics they formerly lacked, and that passed unseen? Did Pissarro, when aided by color science, see shadows "as they really are," to recall Erle Loran's philosophically dubious phrase from part one of this essay? If he did, how could Constable before him have seen them "as they really are" when he made them a darker variant of local color? Is it not likely that Constable, equipped with Luke Howard's typology, found that clouds gained a distinctive appearance because they fit that conceptual framework, but saw shadows according to van Ruisdael and Rubens, on whom his concept of color was based; and that the Impressionists, equipped with the concept of reflections and the decomposition of light, were prepared, while looking at shadows, to see what lay dormant, potentially visible, ready to leap into view at the command of these suggestions?

Are the terms "envelope" and "effect" a mere play with words, bearing on the identical perceived phenomenon, or is the perceived phenomenon adjusted with the adjustment of language? Is it not the case that by naming a thing, whether verbally, or

through a pictorial device, or in some combination of verbal and visual construct, that an appearance is extracted from the physical present, a resemblance created? And if in the daily routines of life the color of shadows is indifferent, is it not true that the painter must decide, evoking one idea or another to pull forward into observation that which nature can verify, so that the belief in shadows as brown or speckled coincides with the perception of brown or broken color in shadows? Did not the extensive nomenclature of French painting serve to identify, and thus make visible, what otherwise languished in the netherworld of the unnamed? Did not the student speak truly when he recalled of drawing the plaster cast that “the unpracticed eye does not perceive what we call ‘modeling’,” and did not Constable have it equally right, and for the same reasons, when he said, in a letter of 1823, “A man sees nothing in nature but what he knows?”

3

If the words "motif," "effect," "envelope," "impression" and "modeling" indicate a perceived object, there is another term, one that encompasses them. It indicates the perceiving subject. It points to he who notices a motif, an effect, the envelope: he who is in receipt of impressions. Like Rood's "retinal mosaic," this term comes to painting from Empiricist philosophy and science, if through a curious shift that alters its sense.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* John Locke contended that we have no innate ideas. Our minds, blank slates at birth, are written on by the sensations falling to them from experience, and by our reflecting on these impacts. Accumulating sensations, of which it forms simple ideas, the mind builds up a stock from which it extrapolates complex ideas and ascends to higher levels of abstract reasoning.

“Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say,” Locke wrote,

white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *Experience*.

First, *Our Senses*, conversant about particular sensible Objects, do *convey into the Mind*, several distinct *Perceptions* of things, according to those various ways, wherein those Objects do affect them: And thus we come by those *Ideas*, we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet . . .* This great Source, of most of the *Ideas* we have, depending wholly upon our Senses, and derived by them to the Understanding, I call *SENSATION*.¹⁶

Locke’s descendant, Ogden Rood, professor of physics and amateur painter, departed from him mainly in having an improved understanding of the physics of light and physiology:

. . . the sensation of sight is produced by the action of very minute waves (of light) on the nervous substance of the retina; that is to say, by the aid of purely mechanical movements of a definite character. When these waves have [a certain length], they produce the sensation of red — we see red light; if they are shortened to [a certain length], they call up in us a different

sensation -- we say the light is colored orange; and as the lengths of the waves are continually shortened, the sensation passes into yellow, green, blue and violet. From this it is evident that color is something which has no existence outside and apart from ourselves; outside of ourselves there are merely mechanical movements¹⁷

If these passages suggest Impressionist theory and practice, and they do, then we might wonder how Pissarro made the leap from involuntary stimulation of the retina by light waves to pictures deliberately painted from observation. When he equated Rood's "sensations" with those of Impressionism he usefully misconstrued what Empiricist discourse on vision was about. Borrowing ideas from one sphere, he converted them to the purposes of another. The difference is illustrated in a letter he wrote to his son from Rouen, where he had gone in search of motifs. "I am letting my view of the landscape resolve itself," he wrote. "Sensations don't come all at once—I shall stroll a bit first."¹⁸ Though sensations were certainly needed for taking a stroll, these were the primary kind, reputed by Locke to be the building-blocks of knowledge, taken for granted by Rood for his "retinal mosaic," needed by Pissarro to guide himself down the streets of Rouen. To this kind Pissarro paid no attention. They were not the ones he sought. Rather than nerve cells on the retina firing in response to light, the sensations he wrote of were secondary to his primary ones. They were formal elements he read into scenes of the city, characteristics of his art that he projected on Rouen. A visual goal, a conscious aim, a contrivance pertinent to art, they had as their purpose assembly of an image. Evoked as his perceptions of the actual world, they were needed for resolving landscapes, that is, for seeing select views of Rouen as if they were signature works by Camille Pissarro.

Conceived by Pissarro as simultaneously belonging to nature, to his response to nature, and to his nascent picture of nature, these omnibus symbols reduced, condensed and summarized their ostensible object. Thus did sensations involve reification, for the limitlessly flowing and pre-pictorial world of naïve visual experience was seen abstractly, as the structural components of a motif. These abstractions were then set down as a web of marks concretely representing the motif. The motif, the impression, the effect, the envelope—all were compound of abstractions wrested from nature and designated by this term. Yet Pissarro's "sensations" stood obscurely, too, for those of the philosophers and scientists, or rather an idea of what these topics of debate and study might be like, if only he could see them. As he was unable to contemplate stimuli taking place on the posterior surfaces of his own eyes, a painter's notion of what a retinal mosaic made of "sensations" would resemble if he could examine his own somatic processes was at issue. Adapted from that technique of the schools which called for leaving each patch of relatively light or dark paint standing unblended, standing for an Empiricist idea of the initial constituents of knowledge, aimed at Rouen, threshing pictorial grain from the views he enjoyed of that city, stored as material on a surface, Pissarro's constructs represented not only discernible aspects of the untrammelled scene and certain picture-making traditions of French art but a certain scientific and philosophic outlook.

Much the same can be said of the blank slate, the *tabula rasa*, a concept inseparable from that of “sensations.” It, too, came to painting from Empiricism, and it, too, was altered for the needs of art. Writing of the mind as a white paper, devoid of characters, imprinted by “sensations,” Locke wrote of the “understanding” in terms of a primitive camera, a camera obscura,

a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without; would the Pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all Objects of sight, and the *Ideas* of them.¹⁹

A camera obscura obtains images from the laws of light and optics, much as predicted by Leonardo’s investigations of vision and linear perspective; camera images and perspective images are essentially in accord. The mind in Locke’s analogy is an unadorned wall decorated with images of this sort by means of “sensations.” As to how to prove or disprove the thesis, Locke, then Berkeley, and, before them, Descartes, conducted what would now be called a mental experiment. They discussed what would happen were a blind man given sight. The Empiricists argued, against Descartes, that without a fund of knowledge built from experience such a man would not at first be able to see as do the sighted, Locke quoting with approval a letter from his friend, Molyneux, who said a blind man familiar with a cube and sphere through touch would be unable to recognize them at first glance if he regained what he’d lost. The sensible qualities pertaining to touch are unlike those pertaining to the visual faculty, and of these he would have no experience, ran the argument. In Berkeley’s opinion, “. . . a man born blind and made to see would, at first opening of his eyes, make a very different judgment of the magnitude of objects intromitted by them from what others do. He would not consider the ideas of sight with reference to, or as having any connection with, the ideas of touch,” and so on.²⁰

“The whole technical power of painting,” wrote John Ruskin, in 1864, taking up this theme,

depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of color, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight.”²¹

But Ruskin’s thinking, compared to that of Locke and Berkeley, sailed a contrary wind on an opposite tack. His use of the word, “recovery,” bore not on somatic processes generating initial acquisitions of the mind, but on abstractions relevant to a pictorial syntax. Rather than blindness overcome, his thrust was innocence regained. Rather than automatic to a sense newly bestowed, the “childish perception” he wrote of was earned by the perfectly well-sighted artist through an effort of will, a process of phenomenological reduction, a whittling away of routine expectations, so that things could be seen entirely as stains of color, no more. A particular attitude learned on purpose by painters through long

practice was at stake, the one mentioned by Corot when he said, "I recommend to you the greatest naiveté in study," and that was adopted by Monet and Pissarro, and Cezanne, too, as will soon be shown. Just as Pissarro converted empiricist "sensations" to pictorial ends, deciding they were in his motif, in his eyes, and were substantiated both ways by flecks of paint, so did Ruskin convert from empiricism to pictorial ends the *tabula rasa* and recovery from blindness, deciding they were apposite "flat stains of color" seen "merely as such." By leaving one kind of thinking for another, Ruskin, like Pissarro, advanced, not the means and ends of understanding naïve vision, but the means and ends of image-formation.²²

4



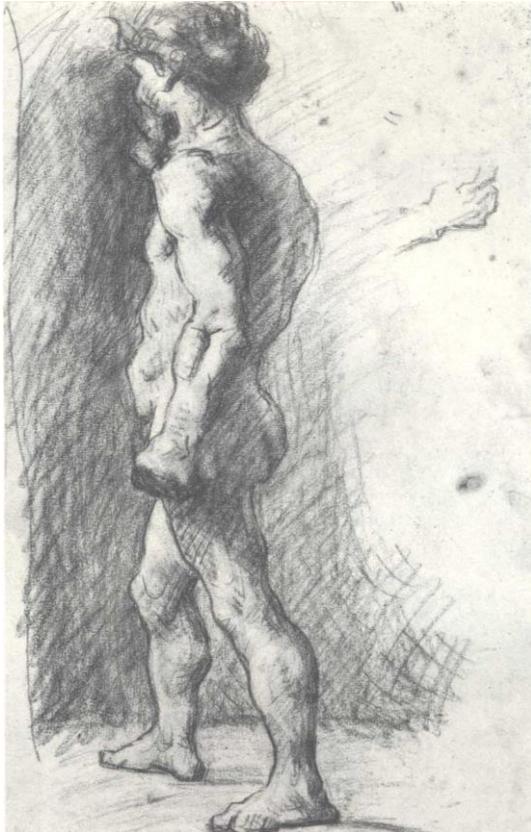
Rewald 169

Theodore Reff, providing a name in English for Cézanne's "flat stains of color," the "constructive stroke," argued that the blocky, repetitious marks first appeared in the mid-seventies, in studio paintings done from imagination, then were applied to paintings done outdoors, from observation.²³ But in *The Road* (R. 169), a somber landscape with plein air attributes, given the date c. 1871 by Rewald, the stroke appears on the rocks and clouds, and is already on the march. Adjunct to the discipline of painting was that of drawing. The centuries-old technique of hatching, taught at art schools throughout Cézanne's lifetime, was learned by one and all. Regular, parallel groups of lines appear in Cézanne's drawings from the

beginning, in perfunctory sketches, then with more nuance and care in drawings done at the *Académie Suisse* (C. 79, 80). The hatch-work describes light falling across the model more than it builds volume, but in a cautious drawing of a Roman bust, dated by Chappuis c. 1859, the technique of constructing a mass with planes hatched in pencil is presciently evident (C. 58). By the late 1860's the technique has matured to the point where it is ready for transfer to paint, as in a drawing dated by Chappuis 1867-69 (C. 205).

Though the constructive stroke probably didn't start in the imagined paintings, at least not only, it could have, for it has no counterpart in nature. It is a "sensation" assigned to a colored body, a small, sturdy shape, signifying what might be called a "virtual datum." Applied to nature, it applies also to Cézanne, who knows himself to be the seat of sensations. Its origins are likely various. It comes from the tradition of the *hacheur*, from the dabbed Impressionist mark of Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro, and from Cézanne's drive to organize himself by organizing the way he sees. It surfaces in his imagined paintings, in his copies from the paintings of other artists, or, more uncertainly at first, in his still-lives or landscapes. In the latter, it crosses some but not all sections of a picture or denotes suitable aspects of motifs, as in the rough-hewn, parallel palette-knife strokes

standing for arrays of foliage in *L'Etang des Soeurs* of 1877 (R. 307). In a painting done several years later, *Bridge at Maincy*, securely dated c. 1879-80 by Cézanne's stays at Melun (R. 436), the stroke still clings to foliage as if justified by imitating leaves, but by c. 1880, in the lushly verdant *Chateau de Médan* (R. 437), securely dated by visits Cézanne made to Zola, it is rampant. Small pats of paint, laid down bluntly with a square-cut brush,

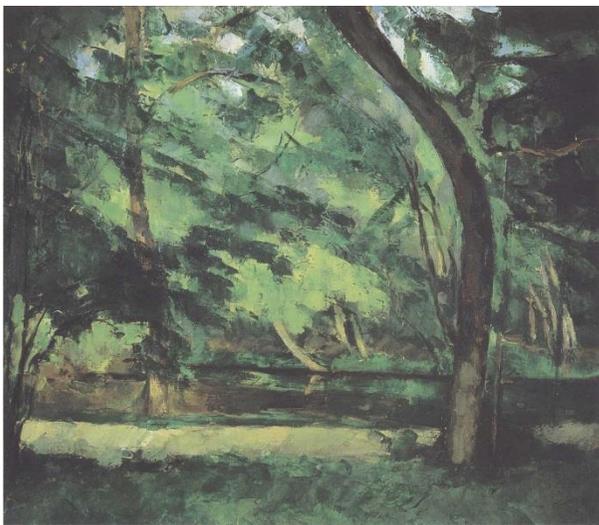


Chappuis 80

march diagonally, in parallel, across the entire picture from bottom left to top right, no longer occasioned by numerable items but pervasive, an over-all agent of the painted space and Cézanne's disposition, their steady beat all-consuming.

The act of painting from observation is propulsive. The artists' mind, geared to the abundance of nature, cranks out abundant possibilities. Cézanne's perceptions of a still life or landscape are facilitated by the generative formal act itself. Linking his pictorial imagination to a sequence of chances rising from the still life or landscape, he sees more copiously, more suggestively. His brush, setting forth on a path to completion, exposes, lays bare, the path. A way forward is opened. A structure emerges, a pictorial theme, to be pursued with cogent purpose. The theme belongs to the picture, to the apparent world from which it is gradually extracted, upon which it is gradually imposed, and to the inner life of Cézanne, whose state of awareness, of alertness to himself, is conveyed forward, stroke by stroke. If the first set of strokes, thoughtfully and deliberately distributed, predict the picture's conclusion by establishing the parameters of its beginning, bringing the entire surface into play, the first set of strokes also launch a probe.

To Monet and Pissarro a "sensation," is a unit assigned to the perceiving eye, to nature perceived, and to the picture they are working on. Convinced empiricists that they are, their logic includes the stimulating moment of nature and the stimulated lining of the retina, both of which are implied in the dab of colored substance on canvas. Each stroke fixes a momentary appearance they look for and garner from nature, catching it on the fly. Their stroke reduces this synthesis of nature and art, this created phenomenon,



Rewald 307

to a fragment of pigment, a tessera in a pavement. Each stroke participates in the emerging network of strokes that convey the motif, even as it signifies the eye receiving from the physical present a single impact.



Rewald 437

To Cézanne, the same business is more involved. His logic adds to that of Monet and Pissarro the reactive state of he who is enlightened by sensations. Just as words erupt from innermost being as a florescence of the self, giving utterance to the existence they emerge from, contributing to that existence even as they illuminate it, so it is, for Cézanne, with his "little sensation" and its material result. He is alert to the expressive power of each stroke in respect to his condition, its office as his helmsman, guiding his present affective course. Even as "sensations" voice the wincing but puissant man who studies the world and himself in it, is aimed

by him at its place in the emerging ensemble, and is set down as the permanent statement of the unity it has itself created, it is an inquiry he must respond to. Each stroke is keyed to the increasingly specific development of the picture, to the particulars of the motif, and to the current outlook of the man who wields it. Each stroke, set in place, drives the whole complex system onward. Nature, picture and man are designated in each stroke, each stroke calls for another, and as the process unfolds the destination is revealed. The solution of the problem posed by the picture slowly emerges, becomes clear, or, in some cases, not.

That Cézanne takes little account of meteorological ephemera is significant. He speaks often of motifs, rarely of effects. Saying to the dealer Ambrose Vollard, who is posing for him, "I have good news for you; if the weather is 'clear gray' tomorrow, I think the sitting will be a good one," he indicates that his response to conditions is opposite Monet's. He likes thin cloud cover more than sunshine, chooses afternoon and morning instead of the dawn and dusk that are for Monet most charged with potential, builds his studio at Les Lauves with its big window facing north, the direction that provides the least variable illumination. He wants the light to hold steady. He wants people and things he is painting to stay put. He becomes terribly upset when the maid removes a rug that's not near his sitter, but across the room from where Vollard is posing. He is tracking phenomena other than meteorological. For Monet, with his Empiricist outlook, his pursuit of "instantaneity," nature rapidly evolves as on a screen while he stands apart, a formidable machine for seeing, a retina linked to a brush. Each stroke is fired from the fixed platform of his dead-on eye to strike a passing target. For Cézanne, with his existential outlook, the light, even when the sky is overcast, varies maddeningly in that he himself is changeable. Each stroke is fired at a passing target from that moving platform, Cézanne, within his

sensate, mobile body, absorbed in its intra-organic processes, reverberating with incoming auditory, visual and tactile strikes from the surround, plowing along in duration, becoming ever more replete, in the fullness of passing hours. Vollard, as instructed, holds rigidly still, the light on him is agreeably even, especially if the weather is “clear gray,” yet even so appearances must be recalibrated as time goes by and Cézanne finds himself in a different affective situation. Vollard does not look the same as before, but looks, rather, to be a cloud drifting, sand shifting, uncertain, problematic. Not only does Cézanne happen to shift his position slightly, changing his angle of view, not only does the cursed maid remove the rug, the existential position from which he examines his sitter is steadily evolving. "You understand, Monsieur Vollard," Cezanne exclaims in perplexity and frustration, "the contour keeps slipping away from me!"²⁴

“I am, I believe, impervious.” he writes, in 1906.²⁵ Wary of instruction when younger, he remains adamantly his own man when older. His stroke, compared to that of his peers, is less conditioned by established rules of rendering, hence more sheltered from dogma, hence less fettered an agent of Ruskin’s innocent eye. It is more receptive to possibilities latent in the perceptual manifold, and more discriminating. It more clearly signifies divisions of the manifold into infinite gradations, yet it seats more firmly in the woven picture surface. It is more specific, more thoroughly a reduction of the manifold to the individual, but more bloomingly global. Containing in one, undivided impulse myriad implications, it is, to borrow words from linguistics, more "holophrastic" or "polysynthetic." Binding together virtues that in his early work had been scattered, gathering within a single decision the overabundance of thought and feeling he urgently needs to master, the stroke develops from a modest start in pencil hatchwork to become in the eighteen-eighties and nineties the engine of an ever-more-mighty ordering of motifs, seen, painted, felt. Such is the strength of this stroke when engaged with the phenomenal surround, profuse, fleeting, tri-dimensional, resolutely non-pictorial, that Cézanne is indeed, as Bonnard said, the "painter most powerfully armed before nature."

5

Nor is this all that can be said of critical differences between three painters who otherwise had much in common. "When painting," Pissarro said to Louis Le Bail,

make a choice of subject, see what is lying at the right and at the left, then work on everything simultaneously. Don't work bit by bit, but paint everything at once by placing tones everywhere, with brush strokes of the right color and value, while noticing what is alongside. Use small brush strokes and try to put down your perceptions immediately. The eye should not be fixed on one point, but should take in everything, while observing the reflections which the colors produce on their surroundings. Don't proceed according to rules and principles, but paint what you observe and feel. Paint generously and unhesitatingly, for it is best not to lose the first impression. One must have only one master—nature; she is the one always to be consulted²⁶

"When you go out to paint," Monet said to Lila Cabot Perry

try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house a field or whatever. Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact color and shape, until it gives your own naïve impression of the scene before you.

Continuing in this vein, Monet then said, as paraphrased by Cabot Perry,

he wished he had been born blind and then had suddenly gained his sight so that he could have begun to paint in this way without knowing what the objects were that he saw before him. He held that the first real look at the motif was likely to be the truest and most unprejudiced one, and said that the first painting should cover as much of the canvas as possible, no matter how roughly, so as to determine at the outset the tonality of the whole. Monet's philosophy of painting was to paint what you really see, not what you think you ought to see; not the object isolated as in a test tube, but the object enveloped in sunlight and atmosphere, with the blue dome of Heaven reflected in the shadows.

He always insisted on the great importance of a painter noticing when the effect changed, so as to get a true impression of a certain aspect of nature and not a composite picture²⁷

"I advance all of my canvas at one time," Cézanne said to Joachim Gasquet, or so the poet recalled many years after.

With the same conviction, I approach all the scattered pieces. . . Everything we look at disperses and vanishes, doesn't it? Nature is always the same, and yet its appearance is always changing. It is our business as artists to convey the thrill of nature's permanence along with the elements and the appearance of all its changes. So I join together nature's straying hands . . . From all side, here, there and everywhere, I select colors, tones and shades; I set them down, I bring them together . . . They become objects -- rocks, trees -- without my thinking about them. If, as I perceive them, these volumes and values correspond on my canvas to the planes and patches of color that lie before me, that appear to my eyes, well then, my canvas 'joins hands'. It holds firm. But if . . . I interpret too much one day, if I'm carried away today by a theory which contradicts yesterday's, if I think while I'm painting, if I meddle, then whoosh!, everything goes to pieces.

[The artist's] whole aim must be silence. He must silence all the voices of prejudice within him, he must forget, forget, be silent, become a perfect echo.²⁸

All three speak of a painting as a collection of parts to be treated from the outset as a whole, and of holding on to one's first impression or sustaining one's vision of the motif. All three equate the motif and the concrete elements of painting, Pissarro brush strokes to perceptions, Monet squares of paint to objects, Cézanne colors, tones and shades to rocks and trees. A preoccupation of all three, appropriate to treating the parts as a whole, is to subsume individual aspects of the motif to the over-all fabric. Pissarro says the eye should not be fixed on one point but take in all; Monet says to forget you have a tree, a house a field or whatever before you; and Cézanne says his colors, tones and shades become objects without his thinking about them. Speaking so, all three evoke Corot's above-

mentioned advice, with which they broadly agree, and the above-mentioned traditions of French art, toward which they sometimes express hostility and doubt, though it is a stool they stand on. Empiricist thinking on perception and their creative misunderstanding of same, specifically in regard to the constructs they call "sensations," are evoked as well; and then Corot's words on being naïve in one's studies, Ruskin's on being like a blind man recovering his sight.

By means of these precepts all three strive to clear their minds of received knowledge that yields trite results. "The further I go," Monet writes to Bazille, "the more I regret even the small amount of knowledge that I have. It is certainly that which cramps one the most. The further I go, the more I notice that one never dares to express what one experiences fully." "Ingres is a pernicious classicist," Cézanne says to Bernard, reaffirming his youthful disinclination to foray in Ingres' direction other than on a trial basis, in the cycle of the four seasons he painted for the Jas de Bouffan, "and so in general are all those who deny nature or copy it with their minds made up and look for style in the manner of the Greeks and Romans." To Gasquet, speaking of himself as a primitive of his way, who paints naively, he says, "Facility is the death of art and we must rid ourselves of it;" also, "Clichés are the leprosy of art."²⁹ The aim of all three is to go beyond what painting lore has given them, purge themselves of formulations routine and predictable, and fashion works at once more individual and more attuned to the prodigious array nature lavishes on them. They wish to shed tailored ideas as to how nature ought to look, avoid bringing to the outdoor site, as mental baggage, concepts that dictate pictorial outcomes in advance. Stylistic rigidity is to be overcome, conclusions put in abeyance, as the passing singularities of a motif are pursued. The mental framework of the painter is to be flexible, open-minded, attuned to the unexpected, the adventitious. So, in rhetorical assault on binding precedent, Pissarro says the museums ought to be burned, Monet says he wishes he had been born blind.

And, Cézanne, after saying he wants to silence prejudice, forget, become a perfect echo, next adverts to contemporary photographic techniques. Some early methods required immersing metal plates or sheets of paper in chemicals to sensitize them to light. Thus by analogy he evokes Locke's *tabula rasa*, his "white Paper, void of all characters," when he continues,

And then the entire landscape will engrave itself on the sensitive plate of his being. After that, he will have to use his craft to fix it on canvas, to externalize it; but this craft, too, is always ready to obey, to translate automatically, familiar as it is with the language, with the text to be deciphered, with the two parallel texts, nature as it is seen, nature as it is felt. . .

Gasquet, who claims to have instructed Cézanne on Kant, has the artist discuss the philosopher before returning to this trope:

I was saying to you just now that while an artist is at work, his brain should be unencumbered, like a sensitized plate, a recording machine, and no more. But after repeated dipping in experiences, this sensitized plate reaches such a level of receptivity that it becomes saturated with the exact image of things. Prolonged work, meditation, study, suffering and joy—the whole of life—have prepared it for this.³⁰

The passage seems to recall Locke but is closer to Ruskin. Cézanne's paper becomes more receptive the more it is dipped in work, meditation, study, suffering and joy, and the landscape, having engraved itself on that paper, requires craft "to fix it on canvas." The artist's membrane is well-silvered, a good deal less than blank. It isn't just flooded with stimuli as a camera obscura floods a wall in a dark chamber with an image from without, for it is overlaid with a habit of scrutiny, a strategy of looking and marking, of transmuting perceptions into pigmented sets. The "exact image of things" is geared to the means of art and all that the working life of the painter entails. Cézanne's *tabula rasa* is willed rather than innate. It pertains who he is and what he knows, and is free of "style in the manner of the Greeks and Romans." Like Monet and Pissarro he wants to forego visual habits tried and true, "make discoveries," "go further," "pursue his studies." Yet his means of doing so are exceptionally robust. His "little sensation" and its signature stroke are as wide-ranging as speculation, as certain as intuition, as rigorous as logic. With his *form of perception*, he extracts from the interchange of reality and his pictorial imagination what others seek and are less equipped to find.

Continuing to speak to Gasquet, he says, or may approximately have said, "What I'm trying to convey to you is something more mysterious, more entangled in the very roots of being, in the impalpable source of all sensations." "A minute of the world passes. To paint that minute in its precise reality! Forgetting everything else for its sake. To become that minute. To be, in other words, the sensitized plate. To convey the image of what we see, forgetting everything that appeared before." To Jules Borely, he says, "Oh, how I would like to be able to see like a newborn child!"; to Denis, he says, "I want to use color to make black and white, to re-create what is given by the confusion of the sensations;" and, when Bernard speaks to him of Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*, he stands and repeatedly strikes his chest with his forefinger, indicating, wordlessly, that he is Frenhofer, whose ultimate canvas is "nothing . . . but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines."³¹

"Time and reflection . . . modify little by little our vision," he writes to Emile Bernard in 1905, "and at last comprehension comes to us." At the end of this same letter, the verb *modifier* appears again: "Study modifies our vision to such a degree that the humble and colossal Pissarro finds himself justified in his anarchistic theories." If these remarks fall short of a developed argument, neither are they random. Cézanne has in mind something he has learned, and urgently must mention. Years spent pondering the synthesis of art and nature affects how we see, he implies. Study of the proper sort yields an eye wholly innocent, an anarchy visual rather than political. The comprehension he had gained

was yielding an "exact image of things" that was unheralded and disquieting, especially to him, it may be, for he fears something is wrong with his eyes, readily apologizing to visitors for what he laments as his picture's failings. Six years earlier, in another solitary remark, he had written to Gasquet senior, "For the time being I continue to seek the expression of the confused sensations which we bring with us when we are born."³²

Piaget speculated that infant vision is made up of mobile, highly elastic, poorly discriminated views that radiate from a being who is oblivious to his identity. External objects, the infant's own body in space, and the sequence of events in time, are not yet organized into objective groups and series, and causality is neither externalized nor rationalized. The infant is unable to tell whether things impinge on his body, or his body impinges on things, as the initial state of perception is one of "chaotic undifferentiation." Though sensate, the infant knows not his own senses. He cannot hold up his experience to scrutiny. He exists in a primal state of reflexes and powers unassimilated to a self and anterior to such expressions of the self as words or pictures.³³

Acting on a level of awareness cultivated by "long labor, meditation, study, suffering and joy," Cézanne acts on a level altogether more exigent than that of a newborn, though aimed at recovering, for painting, something of that visual plasticity, that obliviousness to causality and the importunities of language and culture. To such a level of awareness talk of the sensitive plate and newborn sensations are but allusions. Repeatedly, with profound intellect, voluptuous appetite, and iron determination, he employs his fully developed powers of interaction with the visible to sift through and arrange the myriad, the "infinite diversity" of the visual field,³⁴ uncovering that which has not yet been incorporated into art. Monet and Pissarro, object though they may to the schools, informally construe their motifs in terms of a gloried but restrictive convention. Space in their pictures is loosely consistent with that of linear perspective and its grandchild, photography. Their results, compared to Cézanne's, familiarize pre-pictorial phenomena in the very act of sequestering them. From early on, Monet's gift for scaling all things from near to far in perspective diminution is prodigious. Cézanne, noting this facility, blaming himself for lacking it, says to Jules Borely, as was quoted in Part One, "I make great efforts and have much difficulty. Monet has the ability to look at something and to draw it instantly in proportion." Yet Monet's gift is also his limitation. With the curiosity and trepidation of an explorer, Cézanne edges past Monet, forging ahead on his own. Looking at nature at least as intently as do his colleagues, following the trail of his "sensations" wherever they take him, irrespective of unusual results that trouble him, he approaches more closely than do they, with more unmitigated force than they, and with greater conviction, the primal world of the experiential frontier.

1. As the painter, Charles Cajori, puts it: "Do you remember that experiment, maybe in the sixth grade, when you put a bunch of iron filings on a sheet of paper and moved a magnet underneath it and watched the filings reassemble themselves? It's similar to the way the eyes, moving, reorder

the world." (Charles Cajori, "Interview with Charles Cajori," *Transfer*, vol. 2, no. 2, Fall/Winter, 1989-90), pp. 157-158.)

2. Rapid eye movements, called "saccadic," attain velocities of up to 900 degrees per second. This means "normal visual perception of almost any object or scene is a temporally extended event." "Saccades," Stephen E. Palmer writes, "are probably the most interesting type of eye movement because of their frequency and importance in understanding the dynamically selective nature of perceiving complex images. When you think about the limited nature of the visual information available from a single fixation, for example, it becomes obvious that perceiving realistic scenes requires a sequence of many different fixations, which must be integrated into a single unified perception." (See Stephen E. Palmer, *Vision Science: Photons to Phenomenology* (MIT Press, 1999), pp. 520-531; David Noton and Lawrence Stark, "Eye Movements and Visual Perception," *Scientific American*, June 1971, pp. 34-43.)

3. It was just such a tripartite complex that Cézanne had in mind, or was said to have in mind, when quoted by Gasquet as follows: "You were talking to me the other day about Kant. It may sound like nonsense, but I would see myself as the subjective consciousness of that landscape, and my canvas as its objective consciousness. My canvas and the landscape are both outside me, but while the one is chaotic, transient, muddled, lacking in logic or rational coherence, the other is permanent, tangible, classifiable, forming part of the world, of the theater of ideas . . . of their individuality." Joachim Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations*, trans. by Christopher Pemberton (Thames and Hudson, 1991) p. 150.

4. Angele Lamotte, "Le bouquet de roses," *Verve*, vol. V, Nos. 17 and 18, (1947), unpaginated.

5. See Basil Taylor, *Constable: Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours* (Phaidon Press, 1975), p. 203.

6. For "Whatever the site . . ." and "I always try . . .," see Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Phaidon Press, 1971, Pages 154; 155. For Corot to Renoir and others and for Boudin, see Rewald, *History of Impressionism*, pp. 101, 38.

7. Monet, especially in the later phase of his career, is known to have worked on his landscapes in the studio, away from the motif. Monet outdoors is the Monet at issue here. For a discussion of these complications, see Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge, *Monet* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989) p. 129.

8. Linda Nochlin, ed, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources and Documents* (Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 31.

9. Linda Nochlin, ed. *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism*, p. 34.

10. Boime, *The Academy and French Painting*, p 28. .

11. The French translation became the "veritable bible" of the Neo-Impressionist movement (Robert L. Herbert, *Georges Seurat* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), p. 391).

12. See Rewald, *History of Impressionism*, pp. 512-513.

-
13. Camille Pissarro, *Letters to His Son*, ed., John Rewald (Paul P. Appel, 1972), p. 99.
14. Pissarro, *Letters*, p. 356.
15. Various experiments suggest that we do not grasp the phenomenal world in the physical present only, that visual experience is not defined by optics, and that there is no retinal image as such. See note 2; also Irvin Rock, "Anorthoscopic Perception," *Scientific American*, March, 1981, p. 145; Pritchard, Heron and Hebb, "Visual Perception Approached by the Method of Stabilized Images," *Perception: Selected Readings in Science and Penomenology*, ed. Paul Tibbetts. New York: Quadrangle/ The New York Times Book Co, 1969, 191-204.
16. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press, 1975), Book II, Chapter I, section I (pp. 104-5). The French translation of 1700 was by Pierre Coste. See pp. xxxiv - xxxvi of the above-cited edition.
17. Ogden N. Rood, *Students' Text-book of Color; or Modern Chromatics* (D. Appleton and Company, 1879), pp. 10, 17.
18. Pissarro, *Letters*, p. 295.
19. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chap. XI, section 17 (p. 163).
20. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Cap. IX, section 8 (pp. 145-46); George Berkeley, *An Essay Toward a New Theory of Vision*, paragraph 79.
21. John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing; in Three Letters to Beginners*, (John Wiley, 1864), n.1, p. 22.
22. "We look up and see a colored shape in front of us, and we say, — there is a chair. But what we have seen is the mere colored shape. Perhaps an artist might not have jumped to the notion of a chair. He might have stopped at the mere contemplation of a beautiful color and a beautiful shape. But those of us who are not artists are very prone, especially if we are tired, to pass straight from the perception of the colored shape to the enjoyment of the chair, in some way of use, or of emotion, or of thought. We can easily explain this passage by reference to a train of difficult logical inference, whereby, having regard to our previous experiences of various shapes and various colors, we draw the probably conclusion that we are in the presence of a chair. I am very skeptical as to the high-grade character of the mentality required to get from the colored shape to the chair. One reason for this skepticism is that my friend the artist, who kept himself to the contemplation of color, shape and position, was a very highly trained man, and had acquired this facility of ignoring the chair at the cost of great labor. We do not require elaborate training merely in order to refrain from embarking upon intricate trains of inference." Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (Capricorn Books, 1959), pp. 2-3. See also Hilary Spurling, *Matisse the Master* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 150: "Take this chair," said Prichard. "Yes," said Matisse, "but when I paint it, I see it in relationship to the wall, to the light in the room that encloses it and to the objects that surround it. It would be different if I wanted to buy it: I might perhaps have a first impression of its beauty, but then I'd check to see if it was solidly built, etc."

23. Theodore Reff, "Cézanne's Constructive Stroke," *The Art Quarterly*, Autumn, 1962, pp. 214-226. The phrase, "constructive stroke," appears in Denis. Rewald, citing Reff, dates the first appearance of the stroke to "four copies executed roughly between 1877 and 1879" (*Studies in Impressionism*), but later pushes the date of the first of these, a picture of flowers in a Rococo vase (R. 265), back to 1875-77 (*Catalogue*). (See Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, p. 109; Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, p. 181)

24. For the full account of Vollard's sitting for Cezanne, including the details mentioned here, see Ambroise Vollard, *Cézanne*, trans., Harold L. van Doren (Dover Publications, 1984), pp.76-88.

25. Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, ed., John Rewald (Hacker Art Books, 1976), p. 336.

26. Rewald, *History of Impressionism*, p. 458.

27. Lila Cabot Perry, "Reminiscences of Claude Monet," *The American Magazine of Art*, XVII (March, 1927), pp. 120-21.

28. Gasquet committed the Socratic exchanges to paper some six years after Cézanne's death, which tardiness in itself makes them suspect; plus, he interlarded scraps from Bernard and others, mostly without attribution. The poet may partly have invented what he didn't plagiarize, but if he failed as a reporter he triumphed as a critic. Some of what he reports is so suggestive in regard to Cézanne's paintings as to compel attention. Yet there are passages that make one uneasy. The one cited here echoes, or seems to, a passage from Charles Blanc:

The spectacles of nature want the essential characteristic of art—unity. Nature not only varies every moment of the day, but in her infinite complexity, her sublime disorder, she contains and manifests to us that which corresponds to the most contradictory emotions. Capable of exciting these emotions in man, she is powerless to express them. He alone can render them clear, visible, by choosing the scattered features lost in the bosom of the real, and eliminating from them what is foreign to or contradictory of his thought.

Gasquet reports that between painting sessions Cézanne would select and leaf through one of several books lying to hand, Blanc among them, but Blanc published several and Gasquet doesn't mention which one. We know Cézanne expressed himself partly by resorting to these popular texts on painting, for his letters to Bernard are salted with comments that voice his concerns in formulations of Blanc. So we confront a problem: Did Gasquet lift from Blanc what he attributed to Cézanne, or did Cézanne himself borrow from Blanc, and end up quoted by Gasquet with at least middling accuracy? There is no way of telling, and the extent of Gasquet's reliability is a question unlikely to ever be settled. For the quoted passage and the ones that follow, see Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne*, pp. 148-152. For Blanc, see Charles Blanc, *Grammar of Painting and Engraving*, trans. Kate Newell Doggett, New York, 1874, p. 213.

29. Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge, *Monet*, p. 41; Emile Bernard, "Paul Cézanne," *L'Occident*, July, 1904, p. 23; trans. Judith Wechsler, *Cézanne in Perspective*, p. 41; Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne*, p. 155

30. Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne*, pp. 150, 152.

31. Gasquet, *Ibid*, pp. 152, 154. Jules Borely, *Conversations with Cézanne*, p. 23; Maurice Denis, *Conversations with Cézanne*, p. 93; Emile Bernard, *Conversations with Cézanne*, p. 65.

32. Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 315; 316; 271.

33. See Jean Piaget, "The Elaboration of the Universe," *Perception: Selected Readings in Science and Phenomenology*, ed., Paul Tibbets (New York Times Book Company, 1969), pp. 172-173.

34. Q. In your opinion, what is the great masterpiece of nature?

A. Its infinite diversity.

From "My Confidences," a questionnaire filled out by Cézanne. See Paul Cézanne, "My Confidences," in Michael Doran, Ed. *Conversation with Cézanne*, trans. Julie Lawrence Cochran (University of California Press, 2001), p. 102.

Notes on the Images

Figure 1. Camille Pissarro. *Snow at Louveciennes*. 1872. Paul Rosenberg & Co.

Figure 2. Camille Pissarro. *Park in Pontoise*. 1878. Private Collection, New York.

R. 169. *The Road*. C. 169. Private Collection.

C. 80. *Male Nude*. 1862-64. Present owner unknown.

C. 205. Academy Drawing: *Male Nude in the Pose of an Oarsman*. 1867-69. Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.

R 307. *L'Etang des Soeurs*. 1877. Private Collection.

R 436. *Bridge at Maincy*. 1879-80. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

R 437. *Château de Médan*. C. 1880. Glasgow Museums (Burrell Collection).