

WALKING IN SOMERSET. 27 June 1976.

Very hot and bright, midday. Following a river upstream, the ground hard and dry, flies under the trees, plants parched. A clump of willows ahead and to the right, bordering the river. As I approach a deer appears from bushes on the far side of the clump, runs a few paces, stops, turns, looks towards me. The deer tense, hesitant, one foot advanced. I stop. The deer, seen against rising ground, glossy brown coat, waits then runs, keeping close to the river and shading bushes, disappears from sight.

A little later, walking out from some trees and cutting across a bend in the river. Looking towards the bend, hearing a noise of tractors, voices, men haymaking in that direction. The extremity of the 'U' bend not cultivated, trees and thick undergrowth there. A tractor passes behind the trees, I see a deer standing in the undergrowth, looking away from me, towards the noises. Myself unseen, crouching, still and watching. A fawn appears and suckles the mother. Myself still unnoticed despite open position. Mother browsing, ears twitching, often lifting head and glancing towards the sounds of haymaking, fawn bumping at her. Mother moves, fawn staggers, unsteady, after her. Watch the pair until they disappear into undergrowth. Go off quietly in opposite direction.

Tutorial discussion of 'horse' - immaculate outline. Reflecting on this in relation to the above, which seemed to parallel and inform the experience that I had been attempting to describe:

- (1) **RECOGNITION.** The deer 'stood out' for me. When I talked about the horse I assigned 'standing out' as a quality to the way in which 'horse' as a concept and the horse as looked at matched up and to the contradiction between this matching and the apparent 'immaculate outline' thus created, between this and the palpable existence of the living animal. It is, however, true that, in saying this, I was not referring to a particularly habitual experience. Something about the horse and my looking at it led me to experience it in this extraordinary way (not a spectacle, but as something clearly manifest). Regarding the deer, as I was led to, in the same way, I considered the aspect of familiarity and unfamiliarity involved. I recognise both the horse and the deer, but in a particular way. Their relative rarity of occurrence in my experience makes me say "That's a DEER"- or whatever. Landscape, which for me is a source both of reflective and speculative experience, - I walk with a curiously detached gaze, instantly becomes

the ground for my perception of the horse or the deer, which are pre-eminently figure. (There is a critical closeness, beyond which recognition is conjectural rather than grasped, and an element of surprise - suddenly being within the critical distance).

- (2) **RARITY & SECRECY.** The aspect of familiarity/unfamiliarity led to my thinking about other aspects to the experience. For instance there was a similar thing involved when I once discovered a wild honeycomb on the branch of a tree. Also with some birds, particularly hawks, finches and swifts, with orchids, birds eggs, some butterflies and some fungi. I think what makes, for me, all these things engaging is a recognition of something rare or secretive which prompts attention in a precise way. The occurrence is a disclosure because what one is seeing is a part of nature, but generally hidden or secretive to which, momentarily, I have privileged access. Precise looking is seemingly in deference to this, to my unpreparedness, and to my being suddenly brought up short against the present.