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Traditional and Contemporary China in a Comparative Perspective

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Springer

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Beijing
China

Sponsored by Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences (本书由中华社会科学基金资助)

ISSN 2195-1853 ISSN 2195-1861 (electronic)
China Academic Library
ISBN 978-3-662-56699-2 ISBN 978-3-662-56701-2 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018935218

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer-Verlag GmbH, DE part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: Heidelberger Platz 3, 14197 Berlin, Germany

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Chapter 1
To Begin with a Beautiful Line

I would like to start my discussion of Chinese visual images with a simple question: What kinds of lines are beautiful? This appears to be an old fashioned inquiry and might be taken as similar to a question such as "what kinds of objects are beautiful?" We know that there is no definite answer to the latter question from Plato's *Hippias Major*, which concludes with a maxim: "What's fine is hard."[1] Modern philosophy tends to consider this as a naïve question and to cast it away once and for all. I am not so ambitious as to attempt to return to this old and formidable question in this paper, though I will be pleased if this effort can be renewed in some ways. What I try to do in this study is exclusively limited to exploring beautiful lines. I argue that this pursuit will prove fruitful for the comparative study of Chinese and Western arts, if we understand the implications of this question correctly. I do not intend to identify a beautiful line among many lines in accordance with its certain features that can be called *aesthetic quality*; nor do I arbitrarily decide that a line is beautiful on the basis of my personal taste. The key term here is *kind*. Different kinds of lines represent different tendencies in art. There may be no universally accepted beautiful lines, but an artist can prefer a particular kind of lines though he or she has to use more than one kind of lines in describing objects due to the necessity of realistic requirements. This preference is not limited to a single artist or a group of artists, and in this study I try to argue that there was a common tendency among ancient Chinese painters as a whole, and certain theoretical significances can be inferred from this.

[1] Plato, *Hippias Major*. Translated by Paul Woodruff (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) p. 31.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_1

1.1 Tradition in the West on Beautiful Lines

Before we discuss what the Chinese think about beautiful lines, let us first examine the European tradition in this regard. The first I quote is again from Plato. In *Philebus*, Socrates was said to have given the following elaboration on the beauty of form. He says:

> I do not mean by beauty of form such beauty as that of animals or pictures, which the many would suppose to be my meaning; but, says the argument, understand me to mean straight lines and circles, and the plain solid figures which are formed out of them by turning-lathes and rulers and measurers of angles; for these I affirm to be not only relatively beautiful, like other things, but they are eternally and absolutely beautiful, and they have peculiar pleasures, quite unlike the pleasures of scratching. And there are colours which are of the same character, and have similar pleasures; now do you understand my meaning?[2]

Yes, we understand his meaning, which includes two points: the first, that the beauty of form consists of straight lines and circles, and the figures formed by turning-lathes and rulers and measures of angles; and the second, that there is a distinction between the lines that are relatively beautiful and that are absolutely beautiful. We also know that the theoretical consideration that the visible world is the manifestation of the idealistic and thus realistic world shaped this idea.

It is an important distinction between the relatively and the absolutely beautiful. The relatively beautiful is the beauty of a line or a form by its relationship to the whole, to its purpose, and to the object it represents.

Still, it is Socrates, according to Xenophon's *The Memorabilia or Recollections of Socrates*, who gave the relatively beautiful a clear definition:

> For the simple reason that it is possible for a man who is a beautiful runner to be quite unlike another man who is a beautiful boxer, or for a shield, which is a beautiful weapon for the purpose of defence, to be absolutely unlike a javelin, which is a beautiful weapon of swift and sure discharge.[3]

In an early and lost book, St. Augustine made a distinction between beauty and aptness. Beauty was said to be beautiful "in itself," while aptness or fittingness was beautiful in virtue of being applied to something else or to a whole.[4] In fact, the relationships between the absolutely beautiful and relatively beautiful, between pure beauty and utilitarian beauty, and between the beautiful without and with purpose, are key concepts that have been debated throughout the history of Western aesthetics.[5] From the relative, the apt, the utilitarian, the purposive, or whatever it is, a theory of beauty, named by Tatarkiewiczas as the Great Theory, took shape. It maintained

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[2] Plato, *Philebus*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. *Wiki*, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Philebus.

[3] Xenophon, *The Memorabilia or Recollections of Socrates*. Translated by H. G. Dakyns, quoted from electronic version.

[4] St. Augustine, *On the Beautiful and the Fitting* (*De Pulchro et Apto*). Cf. Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1966) p. 92.

[5] Tatarkiewicz made a good summary of this history. Cf. Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1980) pp. 159–165.

that beauty consisted in number, proportion, measure and so on.[6] This implied that a mathematical relationship between different elements of an image is fundamental in forming a beautiful object.

To return to our topic, a line cannot, according to the theory of mimesis, have its own independent aesthetic quality, but should be judged by its resemblance to the lines of the imitated object and the appropriateness for its specific situation.

When English painter William Hogarth discussed the beauty of lines in *The Analysis of Beauty*, he first required a form fitting to the whole, and made the statement that a beautiful form could become disgusting when it was not put into an appropriate place.[7]

Is it possible that some absolutely beautiful lines exist that transcend their relative appropriateness? Yes, this is an argument put forth by many writers in the West. It is said that Leonardo da Vinci considered "a certain flexuous line" to consist of "the secret of the art of drawing."[8] The most important elaboration of this thesis can be found in the aforementioned book by Hogarth, which argued that an undulating line would always be more beautiful than an angular one. Hogarth even claimed that a wavy line was a "line of beauty," and serpentine line was a "line of grace".[9]

Plato's preference for straight lines and circles received its response more clearly in modernist art in the 20th century. In order to overcome the "superficialness" of Impressionism, Paul Cézanne was going to "treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything in proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point."[10] Of course, by this remark Cézanne merely stressed his intention to transcend the outer appearance of the nature, and his painting did not actually consist of geometrical shapes. What he wanted was only the constructiveness of image-making and, in his word, to achieve a good *Gestalt*. This love for geometrical forms, however, was greatly welcomed by the painters among the younger generation, and became the motto of the modernist art. This first appeared in Picasso and Braque and other Cubists in "their liking for straight lines and geometrical forms."[11] Piet Mondrian went to the extreme with many colorful squares to form some abstract compositions, in which only straight lines were used. According to Guillaume Appollinaire's explanation of the principle of Cubism, "geometry is to the plastic arts what grammar is to the art of writing."[12] After analyzing different lines,

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[6] Ibid., pp. 125–129.

[7] Cf. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*. Chapter One.

[8] Quoted from *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993) p. 142.

[9] See William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*. Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten.

[10] Paul Cézanne, "to Emile Bernard, Aix, 15 April 1904". Quoted from Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) p. 19.

[11] Norbert Lynton, *The Story of Modern Art* (London: Phaidon, 1989) p. 66.

[12] Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918): "The New Painting: Art Notes". Quoted from Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) p. 181.

August Endell boldly proclaimed, "The straight line is not only mathematically but also aesthetically superior to all other lines."[13]

From the above examples, we can see that the mainstream ideas of Western tradition are to look for beautiful lines from certain mathematically or geometrically describable lines, whether they are curves or straight lines. These lines can show orders and rules, and can scientifically compose various elements into a whole.

1.2 "Real" Painting and "Dead" Painting in China

It may be interesting for us to see what Chinese painters thought about the beauty of line in the pre-modern period when an exchange of views with their western counterparts on this issue was unlikely.

With regard to lines, the ancient Chinese made an interesting connection between the use of instruments and the real or dead painting. Let me begin with a story. In Zhu Jingxuan's *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty*, Wu Daozi (c. 680–760), one of the most important painters in the Tang Dynasty, was said to be painting the image of a Buddha:

> When Master Wu painted the halo on a Buddha inside the central gate of the Temple of Encouraging Virtue (Xingshansi), all the people of Chang'an, old and young, gentry and commoners, came rushing until the spectators were like a surrounding wall. For the halo, he raised his brush and swept it around with the force of a whirlwind. Everyone said that a divinity must have aided him.[14]

Painters can use various instruments for drawing lines, such as rulers for straight lines and compasses for circles and curves. For a large halo of a Buddha on the wall of temple, it is difficult to make a circle freehand without any instruments, but Wu must have been proud of himself of being able to do so.

Regarding the same story, Zhang Yangyuan (c. 815–907), one of the most important painting critics and historians in ancient China, made the following comments:

> Again I was asked: "How was it that Master Wu could curve his bows, straighten his blades, make vertical his pillars and horizontal his beams, without the use of marking line and ruler?" I answered: "He kept watch over his spirit, concentrating upon a single thing. [His work was] in harmony with the work of Creation itself, as if Creation had expressed itself by means of Master Wu's brush. Now, if one makes use of marking line and ruler, the result will be a dead painting. But if one guards the spirit and concentrates upon a single thing, the result will be a real painting. Is not even plain plaster better than a wall full of dead paintings? Yet even one stroke of real painting will show its breath of life.[15]

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[13] August Endell, "The Beauty of Form and Decorative Art". Quoted from Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900–1990*, p. 63.

[14] Zhu Jingxuan, *Famous Painters of the Tang Dyansty*, in Huang and Deng, comp., *Meishu Congshu*, (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986) p. 1002; the English translation refers to Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (eds.) *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985) p. 56. with my changes.

[15] Zhang Yanyuan, *Record of Famous Painters of All Dynasties*, Book 2; for the English translation cf. Bush and Shih (eds.) ibid. pp. 61–62, with my changes and italics.

Wu must thus have been very skillful and what he did would certainly have amazed his audience. It seems, however, that Wu's act should not be understood as merely displaying an extraordinary skill. Surely he was skillful, but he would seem to be only showing off his skill if he could make the halo exactly the same with a pair of compasses as he could by hand. According to Zhang, what Wu aimed at was a "real painting," which is aesthetically opposed to a "dead painting" made by instruments. This idea signified the appearance of an entirely new conception of painting. One cannot fail to notice that Zhang stressed the key concept of being "in harmony with the work of Creation itself," which is indeed what Zhang wishes to inspire us about. But before we get down to this more complicated idea, we have to continue and complete our discussion of the use of instruments.

In the early Song Dynasty, a famous art historian Huang Xiufu (active c. 1000) divided painters into four classes. He commented on the untrammeled class, the first and best one, by saying:

> The untrammeled class of painting is the most difficult to group. [These painters consider that] it is inept to draw the lines of squares or circles [in a painting] with L-squares or compasses and disdain minute thoroughness in coloring. Its brushwork is simple, yet its forms are complete and attain naturalness. None can take it as a model for it goes beyond expectation. Hence we designate it the "untrammeled Class."[16]

Huang lived at a time different from Zhang and had many different artistic views, but both of them shared exactly the same attitude towards the use of instruments in painting. Here I take only Zhang and Huang's words as examples simply because both of them were well-known. In fact, this view was not only held by Zhang and Huang, but was a typical view about painting in ancient China.

Of course, I do not mean that ancient Chinese painters would never make use of instruments. Shen Zongqian, a painter in the middle of the Qing Dynasty (about 1780 s), disclosed a trick for making lines, particularly in large-sized paintings. He taught that a painter could use drafting devices to make charcoal drafts, but when it is painted in ink, the painter should always work freehand. The last step of finishing a painting in ink should not be seen merely as the continuation of a procedure that had started, but as the major step of the whole procedure. He wrote:

> In painting large-sized figure, one should not use rulers, which can only make dead strokes. When one draws pictures of houses, pavilions and utensils, one should keep the pen perpendicularly against the paper, first using charcoal with rulers to make a draft, and then painting in a bold stroke and full ink with moving elbow.[17]

The traces of his moving his hand and body, the gestures and postures of his working process, and his emotional and spiritual state when he made these moves, should be demonstrated in the painting as a work of art he made.

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[16] Huang Xiufu, *Yizhou Minghualu*. *Wenyuange Sikuquanshu* (Taibei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1986) 812–480; Bush and Shih, pp. 100–101, with my changes and italics.

[17] Shen Zongqian, *Jiezhou Xuehua Bian*, in Yu Jianhua (ed.) *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian* (*Classified Compilation of Writing*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957. Reprint. Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973) p. 536.

1.3 The Position of Architectural Paintings in China

In ancient China, as in other countries, painting was divided into numerous genres or categories, such as figure painting (portraits of monarchs, their families, and high-ranking officials and officers, pictures of legendary heroes, sages, and ancestors; images of Buddha or other Buddhist and Taoist figures), landscape painting (paintings of mountains, rivers, and other natural scenes), flower and bird painting (including paintings of the so-called four gentlemen, i.e. bamboo, plum blossom, orchid, and chrysanthemum, which symbolized the virtues of intellectuals), animal painting (such as paintings of horses, oxen, tigers, dogs), and architectural painting (mainly paintings of palaces and temples). As is known, a great change in this regard took place during the Song and the Yuan dynasties. Before the Song Dynasty, painters thought that the most important of these branches was figure painting.

Gu Kaizhi (c. AD 348–409), one of the most important painters in the Jin Dynasty, wrote:

> The most difficult thing to paint is human beings, next comes landscape, and then dogs and horses. Towers or pavilions are only unchangeable objects, which are difficult to paint but easily made good.[18]

It is interesting here that he made a distinction between "difficult to paint" and "easily made good." Obviously the difficulty he meant is something to do with technology, particularly with precise calculation in making towers or pavilions look like the real ones. By being "easy to be good" he meant that people tended to play down the aesthetic requirements for this category of painting.

In the Tang Dynasty, Zhu Jingxuan arranged the painters he recorded according to the following order:

> The first are figure painters, then the painters of animals or birds, then those of landscape, and lastly those of towers, palaces, houses, and woods.[19]

This also implies a hierarchy between the different categories of painting, and that of towers, palaces and houses, is the lowest.

From the time of the Song Dynasty, critics began to consider that landscape painting should be in the first category. Guo Ruoxu (active in the 1070 s) once compared the painting of "modern times" (the Song Dynasty) with that of "ancient times." He wrote:

> It is sometimes asked how the best art of the present dynasty compares with that of the ancients. My answer is that, in relation to the past, [the art of] modern times has fallen behind in many respects but made progress in others. If one is speaking of Buddhist, Taoist, or secular figures, gentlewomen, or cattle and horses, then modern [paintings] cannot match

[18] Gu Kaizhi, *On Painting*, as quoted in Zhang Yanyuan, p. 116; author's translation. A painting (*The Admonitions of the Instructress to Court Ladies*) attributed to Gu is now stored in the British Museum. Cf. David M. Wilson, *The Collections of the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1989) pp. 152–153.

[19] Zhu Jingxuan, *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dyansty*, in Huang and Deng, p. 999; my translation.

> the ancient. If one is speaking of landscapes, woods and rocks, flowers and bamboo, or birds and fishes, then ancient [paintings] cannot match the modern.[20]

Tang Hou (active c. 1330), a writer and critic in the Yuan Dynasty, cited a popular saying during his time:

> When ordinary people discussed painting, they always said that there were thirteen categories. Landscape painting was at the top; architectural painting was at the bottom.[21]

During the Ming Dynasty, Wen Zhenheng (active c. 1630) made this even clearer in simple words:

The first is landscape [painting], then [that of] bamboos, woods, orchids, rocks. As to [that of] men and women, birds, animals, towers, palaces, and houses, the small-sized is secondary, the large-sized is even less.[22]

In the Ming and the Qing dynasties, even the painting of bamboos and orchids enjoyed a place close to the top since this category of painting attracted the interest of many intellectuals who thought it capable of symbolizing their virtues.

It is a significant development to give first place to landscape painting instead of figure painting, something that deserves an extended discussion.[23] But, in this context, I would like to focus on a simple fact: no matter how the order of the categories was changed, architectural painting invariably remained at the bottom. In the ancient Chinese language, architectural painting was called *jiehua*, which means to paint with rulers. To paint palaces, houses, temples, pagodas, or pavilions demands many straight lines, which are inevitably drawn with the aid of rulers. This kind of painting also requires careful calculation, measurement, composition, the knowledge and skill of foreshortening; it is, therefore, not an easy job. It would be wrong to think that the ancient Chinese did not know about the technical difficulties involved in making architectural pictures. What concerned Chinese painters were questions other than the technical ones such as these. Gu Kaizhi and his followers mainly aimed at conveying the souls of people or animals, and they also kept an eye on the qualities of lines. Painters and critics of later generations laid more stress on the latter, especially when landscape painting became the favorite of literati painters and the souls within the subjects were no longer the first priority.

Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), a famous painter in the Ming Dynasty, once tried to defend the position of architectural painting:

> Palaces and houses are the most difficult to paint well, because this kind of painting is heavily bound up with rules and regulations, and thus the brushwork is not easy to set free.[24]

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[20] Guo Ruoxu *Tuhua Jianwenzhi* Book 1 (ed.) Deng Bai (Chengdu: Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe, 1986) pp. 77–78; Bush and Shih, p. 94, with changes.

[21] Tang Hou, *Huajian*, in Shen Zicheng (ed.) *Lidai Lunhua Mingzhu Huibian* (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1982) p. 201; my translation.

[22] Wen Zhenheng, *Changwuzhi*, in Yu, p. 137; my translation.

[23] See Jianping Gao, "The Reclusive Spirit in Ancient Chinese Painting," *Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies*, Volume 6 (1995) pp. 102–124.

[24] Wen Zhengming, as quoted in *Qinghe Shuhuafang*, in Yu, p. 709; my translation.

Wen's defence revealed exactly the same opinion as those who argued against this kind of painting, that is, what is most difficult is not on the technical level, but in the freedom of the hand in moving the brush and thus in the quality of the lines. Among the different categories of painting, architectural painting is the most difficult to perform without rulers, compasses, or other instruments. Those who said that architectural painting was easy, assumed that in this category of painting, it was easy to draw lines with instruments, and that none of the painter's vital force, none of his individual feelings and emotions, and none of his gestures and postures were shown in the lines. Those who regarded it as difficult thought that since there were so many straight or curved lines in this genre of painting, it was not easy to show a sense of freedom in the command of the brush and in the application of ink. These different opinions are actually similar in that they either proscribe the use of drafting instruments, or seek to overcome the defects which the use of instruments causes.

1.4 Calligraphy as an Art

A study of the Chinese idea regarding calligraphy as an Art may also be illuminating. There are two artistic ways of writing Chinese characters: the first is called *shufa* (generally translated as calligraphy), and the second is called *meishuzi* (literally translated as "artistic calligraphy" or "art lettering" according to Chinese-English dictionaries[25]). It would be interesting to ask such a question: Which of them is Art with a capital "A"? Or, if this question is too grave, then which of them is more artistic?

If we put this question to an ordinary Chinese on the street, to a student in school, or even to an artist, the answer will be: calligraphy (*shufa*) is Art, or more artistic, while artistic calligraphy or art lettering (*meishuzi*) is not Art, or less artistic. This is an answer quite unusual to the ears of English-speaking people, but it is indeed a natural one to the Chinese.

The following evidences can support the statement that calligraphy is a form of Art:

1. There are a great number of exhibitions of calligraphy in every year or every month, in the different parts of China from Beijing, to provinces, in local cities and towns, in different galleries, museums, centers of artistic and cultural activities, as well as in conference halls, public squares, theatres and musical halls. Chinese calligraphy is also exhibited almost everywhere in the world. On the contrary, there are very few exhibitions of so-called artistic calligraphy.
2. There are many institutions linked to education in calligraphy from children's calligraphy classes up to graduate programs for calligraphy in China, providing different levels of education and research into calligraphy, while there are almost

[25]For instance, *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1995), p. 669.

no formal educational institutions for artistic calligraphy except some short-term training classes for amateur art designers.
3. There are many professional associations for calligraphy at different levels from national to provincial and municipal levels, and amateur associations in different trades and even some great companies. Artistic calligraphy lovers, however, have not formed any organizations, and lack self-confidence to do so.
4. If one goes to any public or university library in China, one will inevitably find many books on calligraphy, which include histories of calligraphy, theories of calligraphy, and biographies of famous calligraphers, and rubbings from stone inscriptions and so on, but one will find no books on artistic calligraphy except for certain booklets for training art designers, in which theoretical or historical discussions are not, but direct technical instructions are, included.
5. It is said that calligraphy practice can help to cultivate morality and even to prolong life, while no such function can be related to artistic calligraphy.
6. Calligraphy may have a political or social function when a politician writes a motto to stress a certain idea with beautiful handwriting, while no politically or socially important figures bother themselves to write in artistic calligraphy, which is supposed to be made by art designers.
7. To give one's own calligraphic work to someone as a gift used to be a decent means of communication, and it is now still popular among certain old-fashioned men of letters and politicians, but no one gives works of artistic calligraphy of his own to others as a gift.

List of instances as such can continue. These instances provide descriptions of a fact: art institutions in connection to calligraphy are already highly developed and thus constitute an artworld around calligraphy in China, while the institutions associated with artistic calligraphy are still underdeveloped. In fact, the institutions or artworld are always a result of the concept or theory of art in the final analysis, and there was always a tacit theory about art in China.

We may not be satisfied with the discovery of the paradox that artistic calligraphy or art lettering is not an Art, while calligraphy is an Art. This paradox comes from translation, and translation can be questionable if no further evidence is found. But we have indeed found this evidence, and this leads to the second paradox. According to general understanding, artwork is created for aesthetic purpose. Calligraphy keeps a close connection with daily writing activities. Even many famous ancient calligraphic works cannot be ascribed merely to aesthetic purpose. Mottoes written by politically important figures have a mixed effect of showing good calligraphy and stressing certain ideas. A great writer's manuscript can be exhibited both for good calligraphy and remarkable literary quality. All of these show the difficulty in making a distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities. On the other hand, artistic calligraphy is made for a simple purpose: aesthetic appreciation; otherwise people would not write in that way. This is the second paradox: the characters that are not particularly written for an aesthetic purpose become Art, while the characters that are particularly written for aesthetics are not Art; or, to be more precise, the former is more artistic than the latter.

The aforementioned distinction occurred in ancient times, too. Here is a story in this regard. It was said that Song Yi learned calligraphy from Zhong You (AD 151–230), a master calligrapher. At first, Song Yi had tidy handwriting and each of his characters formed a square. This kind of writing is good in itself, and if a book is printed in this shape, it will be easy to read and look quite nice. But in the minds of Zhong You, Wang Xizhi (AD 303–361), and all the famous calligraphers in China, this type of writing should be condemned. According to Wang Xizhi, the recorder of this story and also one of the greatest calligraphers in ancient China, Song was scolded by his master Zhong You and was so frightened that he dared not visit Zhong for three years. During this period he tried hard to change his style by drawing *shi* from the natural world:

> Whenever writing a horizontal stroke, he made it look like a battle array; whenever making a hook stroke, he made it look like a shooting crossbow; whenever making a dot, he made it look like a stone that was thrown from a great height.[26]

Wang Xizhi states that Zhong You had written a book, *On the Shi of Brushwork*, which must have focused on the *shi* of calligraphy in particular. After Zhong's death, someone broke into his grave and stole a copy of this book, which eventually reached the hands of Song Yi. He read it, practiced accordingly, and thus became famous.[27]

We have found the reason why calligraphy is Art while artistic calligraphy is not. Calligraphy can show the free movement of the hand, which is an expression of vital force, while artistic calligraphy tends to geometricize the form of the characters; the former is praised while the latter is played down.

1.5 The Saying "Painting and Writing Share the Same Origins"

In ancient China, there was a popular saying, "writing and painting share the same origins." This is presumed to be a record of historical fact, but there is actually an argument with political and aesthetic argument behind this saying.

Letter- or character-writing and picture-making may indeed have been related in the remote past. E. H. Gombrich noticed this: "If we want to understand the story of art we do well to remember, once in a while, that pictures and letters are really blood-relations."[28] By this statement he tried to stress that pictures in the remote past were to illustrate the knowledge of the objects, and this was also the function of letters or characters. Zhang Yuanyuan maintained in his *Record of Famous Painters of All Dynasties* that there was a period of time when writings and pictures were the

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[26] Wang Xizhi, Inscription after Lady Wei's "Map of Battle Array of Brushwork", in Hong Pimo, ed., *Fashu Yaolu* (*Essential Record of Calligraphy Exemplars*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Shuhua Chubanshe, 1986) p. 7; my translation.

[27] Ibid.

[28] E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1989) p. 30.

same and not yet differentiated, and both of them demonstrated the Great Meanings of Heaven, Earth, and the sages.[29] Zhang's statement appeared to be similar to that of Gombrich, i.e. writings and pictures are blood-relations, and both of them reveal meanings, though the meanings in Zhang's mind were the intentions of the Heaven, Earth and the sages as the creators, while in Gombrich's mind they were what the human beings as makers were to express with and viewers to know about the objects. The relations between writings and pictures held by Gombrich and Zhang, however, were precisely the opposite of each other.

It used to be generally acceptable that represented pictures came before abstract symbols, and thus the former was the origin of the latter. Both Gombrich and many Chinese writers were to challenge this theory, but they did it with different intentions. Gombrich repeatedly argued that the features of writing in painting were something to be overcome along with the development of picture-making, and the significant progress from Egyptian to Greek paintings demonstrates that painting no longer represents knowledge, but the appearance of the world.[30]

On the other hand, the Chinese retained the idea that abstract symbols had their independent origins. According to Xu Shen's *Shuowen jiezi* (Explanations of simple and compound characters), the origin of Chinese characters could be traced to three steps, the first was to draw "eight trigrams,"[31] the second was to make knots on rope, and the third was to make characters.[32] Xu Shen's idea came from the *Book of Changes*, and represented a typical Chinese view of the origin of the characters. In contrast to certain popular opinions, his view shows that, first, writing does not originate from painting, and second, the origin of writing is independent of the spoken language. The relationship between writing and language is that they encountered each other in the process of their separate developments. Writing is not "signifier of signifier" which attaches to spoken language as Ferdinand de Saussure insists; it is rather a signifier which refers directly to the signified or the meaning, an idea more close to Jacques Derrida's view argued in his *Writing and Difference*, and *Of Grammatology*. This is an important implication we can develop in another study, but in this context, we still concentrate on the idea of "painting and writing sharing the same origin".

In China, the saying "writing and painting share the same origin" is mainly mentioned in connection with painting rather than with the study of characters or calligraphic criticism. Very few pre-modern Chinese associated the origin of writing with picture-making in any of their countless discussions of the subject. Chinese historians of writing and calligraphy seemingly felt no need to mention painting. However, the connection with character-writing was regarded as significant in his-

[29]Zhang Yanyuan, *Record of Famous Painters of All Dynasties*, Book 1; English translation refers to Bush and Shih (eds.) *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 50, with my changes.

[30]Cf. "Reflections on the Greek Revolution," in E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon Press, 1959).

[31]The trigrams are collections of linear signs, each consisting of three lines (either the solid line for yang, or the divided line for yin).

[32]Xu Shen's *Shuowen jiezi* (Explanations of simple and compound characters), "The Preface".

torical discussions about painting, and we find the saying "writing and painting share the same origin" in most of them. Whenever someone tries to talk about the origin of painting, he almost always repeats its relationship to character-writing.

There were two intentions behind the Chinese trying to associate painting with writing. The first was to elevate the position of painting. According to Zhang Yanyuan, both characters and paintings are demonstrations of the ideas of Heaven, Earth, and the sages.[33] Thus both are fundamental to the dawn of the whole of Chinese civilization. Similar statements have been made and repeated subsequently by a great number of critics and historians of painting in China. They have many reasons to do so, two of which I will try to summarize below:

Firstly, all ancient documents were written in characters. Thus characters enjoyed a high status in the ancient world and were considered by intellectuals to be as significant as the documents recorded by them in educating common people, in preserving the ritual systems, and even in the existence and development of the whole of Chinese culture and civilization. Moreover, character-writing was at that time an activity pursued only by educated people who enjoyed high social status, and the activities of important people are usually regarded as important activities. Therefore, for a long time the positions of character-writing and picture-making were actually unequal. Although picture-making had in all probability appeared earlier than character-writing in the remote past, the latter had a higher standing than the former. In this case, whenever painters or critics tried to elevate the position of painting, it was natural for them to connect it with character-writing, just as a poor person prefers to mention his rich relatives and an unknown scholar likes to talk about his well-known classmates. Through such an association, painting, as Zhang Yanyuan said, acquired the same status as that of the *Six Classics* (the *Book of Poetry,* the *Book of* Documents, the *Book of* Rites, the *Book of Music*, the *Book of Change*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annuals*), which played as crucial a role in ancient China as that of the Bible in Europe.

Secondly, painters are supposed to learn brushwork from the calligraphers. They maintained that, "in order to learn painting, one should first learn calligraphy, and this is the way to learn brushwork." [34]They even gave a clear explanation: "The saying that painting and writing sharing the same origin merely means to be good at brushwork."[35] It is not simply to describe the intimate relationship between writing and painting, but to stress the necessity of painting to learn from writing or calligraphy.

In the minds of the Chinese, the features of writings in pictures are not something to be overcome, as Gombrich argued, but something to be achieved after this "double" effort. It is not a natural relationship but one established by painters' efforts. The saying about a "sharing origin" signifies a calling for the establishment of such an effort, and as such, painting receives a continuous drive for its improvement.

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[33]Zhang Yanyuan, *Record of Famous Painters of All Dynasties*, Book 1, Qin Zhongwen and Huang Miaozi, eds. (Beijing: People Press of the Fine Arts, 1963), pp. 1–2; English translation refers to Bush and Shih (eds.) *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 50, with my changes.

[34]Li Rihua, *Zitaoxuan Za Zhui*. Yu., p. 131.

[35]Song Nian, *Yiyuan Lunhua*. Yu., p. 326.

1.6 Another Tradition in the West and Its Significance

As already discussed, it has long been a tradition in the West for painters to tend to geometrize natural shapes and take them as a major way of beautifying the visual representation of the natural world, but this was not the case in ancient China. Geometrization was indeed an important Europe tradition, but I would like to argue that it is not the only one. After a careful study of the art as it is practiced in Europe, we can find there were other traditions in ancient times, one of which was the emphasis on the excellence of brushwork.

From Pliny's *Natural History*, we find the following story:

> [Apelles] for being very desirous to be acquainted with Protogenes, a man who he had never seen, and of his works, whereof there went so great a name, he imbarqued and sailed to Rhodes, where Protogenes dwelt: and no sooner was he landed, but he enquired where his shop was, and forthwith went directly thither. Protogenes himself was not at home, only there was an old woman in the house who had the keeping of a mighty large table set in a frame, and fitted ready for a picture: and when he enquired for Protogenes, she made answer, that he was not within; and seeing him thereupon ready to depart, demanded what his name was, and who she should tell her master asked for me. Apelles then, seeing the foresaid table standing before him, took a pencil [brush] in hand and drew in colour a passing fine and small line through the said table, saying to the woman, Tell thy master, that he who made this line enquired for him; and so he went his wayes. Now then Protogenes was returned home, the old woman made relation unto him of this that happened in his absence; and as it is reported, the artificer had no sooner seene and beheld the draught of this small line, but he knew who had been there, and said withal, Surely Apelles is come to town; for unpossible it is, that any but he should make in colour so fine workemanship.
>
> With that he takes me the pencil, and with another colour drew within the same line a smaller than it: willing the woman when he went forth of dores, that if the party came again, she should shew him what he had done, and say withal, that there was the man whom he inquired after. And so it fell out indeed, for Apelles made an errand again to the shop, and seeing the second line, was dismayed at first and blushed withal to see himself thus overcome; but taking his pencil, cut the foresaid colours throughout the length, with a third colour distinct from the rest, and left no room at all for a fourth to be drawn within it. Which when Protogenes saw, hee confessed that he had met with his match and his master both; and made all the hast he could met with his match and his master both; and made all the hast he could to the haven to seek for Apelles to bid him welcome and give him friendly entertainment.[36]

We don't know what the lines look like, but from this story, we get the message that freehand lines and the dexterity of the movements of hand, wrist, arm and body can testify to the capability of a painter.

Norbert Lynton has summarized in his *The Story of Modern Art* two different lines of European tradition during the modern era: one is to impose geometrical shapes on natural forms, the other is to encourage the free movement of the hand. According to Lynton:

> The geometrical, constructed nature of Cubism puts it into the constructive tradition represented by such deliberate picture builders as Piero della Francesca, Raphael, Poussin,

[36] Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV. Quoted from Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Faber Book Art Anecdotes* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992) p. 4.

> Vermeer, Ingres, and Seurat. "The musical in painting" points to the tradition of painterly painting which goes back via Monet, Delacroix, Velásquez, Rembrandt, and Rubens to Titian and his colleagues in the Venetian school of the sixteenth century.[37]

Lynton considered that the "picture-builders" of the constructive tradition had geometrical forms in mind when they set to work. By "the musical in painting" he meant the "music," feeling, or passion in the painter's mind that was expressed in painting, which he also thought of as "the art of improvisation." Thus, lines in this type of painting were made by a carefree brush with free movement of the painter's hand and body.

Lynton's classification is quite typical and enlightening and helps us form basic conceptions about Chinese painting. Chinese painters can be divided into three kinds: professional painters (craftsmen), court painters (those who worked in the court academy), and literati painters (persons with great knowledge of literature, history, and philosophy, and especially adept at calligraphy). The professional and the court painters more or less intended to make faithful imitations, to be vivid and free in representing the movement of humans and animals, and even to be able to convey the souls of the motifs.[38] Literati painting, on the other hand, developed in the direction of sketchiness and improvisation, whereby it could show the body's movements, that is, the gestures and postures of the painters. Therefore, literati painting are closer to the so-called musical tradition. Nevertheless, Chinese painting is quite different from that of Europe. The European "musical tradition" places great stress on color, while Chinese literati painting intentionally reduces the importance of color in painting. Moreover, there was little relation in theory between calligraphy and painting in Europe, while calligraphy played an important role in the painter's "improvisation" in China and was discussed at length. We may be able to trace this tradition further to Chinese philosophy, to a Chinese way of seeing the world, but this should be the result of much more concrete research, rather than, like many researchers did, to take it as presupposition.

1.7 Conclusion: A Freehand Line and a Theoretical Possibility

Now let us return to our topic: What kind of line is beautiful? Is it straight or curved? Zigzag or helix? The reply of a traditional Chinese painter or critic would be that neither of them is beautiful.

When talking about a line, we are immediately inclined to think of a geometric line. A line is defined as the locus of a point that moves on a plane or a space, or as

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[37] Norbert Lynton, *The Story of Modern Art*, p. 82.

[38] This is only a very rough description of professional and court painting. These painters had different art pursuits in different ages and were influenced by literati painting in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

a set of points that satisfy a certain mathematical equation in co-ordinate geometry. But such a concept must have been a later development, not the original meaning.

In dictionaries, "line" is usually defined as "a long narrow stroke or mark drawn or engraved on a surface or shown on a visual display unit,"[39] or as "a thin, continuous mark, as that made by a pen, pencil, or brush applied to a surface."[40] This understanding of a line seemingly appeared earlier than the aforementioned geometrical one. To an ancient Chinese painter, a line could be defined as a stroke made by a painter with a pen-brush on a piece of paper or silk. This seems to be only a simple statement of fact, but it is open to certain theoretical possibilities and can serve as the starting-point for our discussion.

Now, from the qualities stated above we can make the preliminary suggestions that a beautiful line must be a freehand line, and that such a line has certain connections with character-writing and calligraphy.

A further study may show, as many Chinese painting critics maintained, that a line should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It should have the strength to show the vital force of its maker. It should take into consideration the thickness of ink during the process of making a line. A new aesthetics of painting can start in this way because from a single line, a new perspective on visual arts becomes possible.

[39] *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (ed.) Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[40] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981).

Chapter 2
The Relationship Between Writing and Painting in Ancient China

As a continuation of the article entitled "To Begin with A Beautiful Line …" that discusses the quality of a line in Chinese painting and how it becomes beautiful in the eye of a Chinese painter, I would like to devote this article specifically to the Chinese view on the relationship between character-writing and painting-making. Since many aestheticians nowadays are fascinated by the topic of pictorial turn, I hope this study can throw light on this interesting discussion, and show how the connections between words and images in ancient China can provide inspirations to such a modern topic.

As we know, there is a popular saying "writing and painting share the same origin," which can be found everywhere in the texts of painting criticism in ancient China. It might be interesting to explore into the origin of this saying, the motive in the mind of Chinese painters to turn it into something like a motto, and the function of this saying in the history of Chinese painting and other visual arts.

2.1 What Does the "Writing and Painting Share the Same Origin" Mean?

The first one to give a clear description of this saying is Zhang Yanyuan (ca. 815–907?), a painting critic and historian of the Tang Dynasty, who wrote the following paragraph:

> When the sages of antiquity and the first kings accepted Heaven's mandate with the [divine] tablets, they thereby came to hold the magic power in the Tortoise Characters and the proffered treasure of the Dragon chart. … The Fuxi clan discovered them from the Ying River, and thus the sprouts of books and pictures. The Xuyuan clan [i.e. Huang Di or Yellow Emperor]

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_2

> received them from the Wen and Luo rivers, The grand historian Cang Jie imitated them …. Accordingly [Cang Jie] combined the footprints of birds and [the markings] of tortoises and at last determined the forms of written characters. Then Creation could no longer hide its secrets, therefore showers of grain fell from the sky; supernatural beings could no longer hide their shapes, therefore the demons howled at night. At that time writing and painting still shared the same form and had not yet been differentiated. Standards for their formation had just been created and were still incomplete. *There was nothing by which ideas could be transmitted, hence writing proper came into existence. There was nothing by which shapes cold be made visible, hence painting came into being. This was the intent of Heaven, Earth, and the sages*.[1]

In this paragraph, the author appeared to provide the origin of Chinese characters and painting with a historical description, and argued that, there had been an epoch when writing and painting sharing the same form in the remote past, and the distinction between them occurred afterwards.

This idea may be criticized by archeologists who can show with solid evidences that picture-making, together with other artistic activities such as the making of sculpture and personal ornament, appeared some 30,000 to 40,000 years ago in the caves of France and Spain. According to historians, "painting styles underwent a gradual evolution during Upper Paleolithic times, culminating in the beautiful realistic paintings of the Magdalenian culture at the very end of the Pleistocene."[2] These paintings were even of highly artistic value. The aforementioned book continues, "These cave paintings were long dismissed as of interest only to the archaeologist, but nowadays the Magdalenian paintings are generally recognized as being among the greatest works of art that man has produced."[3] On the other hand, it is generally believed that people began to write 5000 years ago. The writings of the Sumerians in Mesopotamia is dated from 2700 B.C.[4], while the Egyptians, the Indians, and the Chinese began their writings even later, all of them developed their writings separately towards the end of the Neolithic Era or in the Bronze Era and the invention of writings itself was usually taken as the indication of the emergence of their civilizations. For instance, Lewis H. Morgan maintains that, the status of civilization "commenced, as stated, with the use of a phonetic alphabet and the production of literary records …. As an equivalent, hieroglyphical writing upon stone may be admitted."[5] If it is so, writing and painting could not share the same origin, and there was no such a state as both sharing the same form without differentiation.

The ancient Chinese was, nevertheless, not to state a fact as it is understood by archeologists or anthropologists, but to state an idea that is much more complicated than it appears to be. E. H. Gombrich wrote, "If we want to understand the story of

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[1] Zhang Yanyuan, *Record of Famous Painters of All the Dynasties*. Chap. I. English translation referred to Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih com. & ed. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 50–51, with my revisions and italics.

[2] John A. Garraty & Peter Gay, eds., *The Columbia History of the World* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 46.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 58.

[5] Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (University of Arizona Press, 1985), p. 20.

art we do well to remember, once in a while, that pictures and letters are really blood-relations."[6] He argues that image-making in early civilizations can be seen as the first form of writing, and these images can be developed into signs for objects rather than copies of their appearances. Since the Chinese use ideographic characters that directly express meanings rather than phonetic letters that record voices of speech in European languages, this fact may seem more obvious.

From the aforementioned arguments we have two ideas of the relationship of images and writings: the first is that images appears far earlier than writings, and the second is that images and writings share the same origin. Historians and anthropologists prefer the first one, while philosophers or those who are interested in a theoretical explanation of the history of art tend to take the second one. When we talk about the images that kept "blood-relations" with writings, we do not say that they are really to express a clear-cut meaning and correspond to a certain syllable as we usually understand by writing, but the images by which people endeavor to distinguish and display something they feel, and these images can be said as writings in their broad senses.

Zhang's remark quoted above can inspire us to think of some of its theoretical implications, among which the first is: there was a dynamic process that, everything begin with an undivided state, and that it was only later, to meet the needs of a developed society, the distinction between the picture-making and character-writing appeared. This can be understood as that the creation of the one kind of symbols will provide condition for the other. This is a process of specialization, which compartmentalizes the primitive visual symbols with all functions in one into different ones.

To be more precisely, ancient Chinese consider that there were three kinds of visual symbols, all of which played significant roles for human civilizations. The three image-making activities are respectively as follows:

> The first is the representation of principles, and the forms of the Eight Trigrams are such. The second is the representation of knowledge, and the written characters are created for this purpose. The third is the representation of forms, and this is painting.[7]

The first is the Trigrams, which was thought as demonstrating the principles of the changes of the world.[8] This was at first an idea coming from divination, and was philosophized then to be a reflection of the laws of the nature and the human society. The second is writing characters, which was taken as recording and summarizing human knowledge of the world. The third is painting, which represents the images of the objects. In the mind of ancient Chinese, the birth of the three kinds of symbols marked the birth of Chinese civilization.

An ancient Chinese story says that, there was a god named Hun-dun (Chaos), who was the lord of the central heaven, and who had a bare head without the seven

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[6] E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1989), p. 30.

[7] Yan Yanzhi's remarks, as quoted in Zhang Yanyuan, *Record of Famous Painters of All the Dynasties*. See Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 51, with revisions by the author of the paper.

[8] The Trigrams are collections of linear signs, each consisting of three lines (either the solid line for *yang*, or the divided line for *yin* ☰ ☷ ☳ ☴ ☵ ☲ ☶ ☱).

apertures (eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth). He was a good-natured and hospitable god, and always treated his friends with kindness. In order to repay him, his friends decided to do him a favor by chiseling the seven apertures for him. He died from this though indeed seven holes were made on his head.[9] This story may tell us that the differentiation or compartmentation is not natural growth from the original, but *the death of the old one and the birth of the new*. In this sense, even though there were primitive pictures, they were not the same ones after the appearance of the Trigrams and characters. Three different kinds of symbols have their different functions and express different contents respectively. It is only at this time that painting acquired its own function of representing "form" as Yan Yanzhi called.

2.2 Chinese Ideas on the Origin of Characters

There has been a universally influential conception that presumes people express their meanings at first with pictures, and, it is only after a long time of evolution, a process of abstraction happened. Accordingly, it is generally accepted that pictorial representation usually appeared before symbolic indication of an object. On the other hand, the Chinese had their own conception of the origin of characters that provided us with a completely different history. According to Xu Shen (30–124), there were three steps in the formation of writings, which are as follows:

> In the days of antiquity when Fu Xi ruled as king over the subcelestial realm, gazing up he observed the phenomena of the heavens, looking down he observed the patterns on earth. He noticed how the markings of birds and beasts were appropriate to the earth [around them]. Close at hand he took them [his impressions] from his own person. Further removed he took them from other creatures. Thereupon he undertook to create the Eight Trigrams of the Changes, as a means to transmit these patterns and phenomena.
>
> Later Shen Nong knotted cords to bring about order, thus giving regularity to affairs. When the various occupations multiplied and proliferated, ornament and artifice arose and thrived.
>
> Huang Di's scribe Cang Jie saw the traces of the footprints of birds and beasts. He recognized that these partiform structures could be distinguished and differentiated one from another. Thus he first created writing. The hundred craftsmen were thereby regulated, and the myriad groups were thereby scrutinized.[10]

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[9] *Zhuangzi*, Chap. 7. English translation see *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 97: "The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's trying boring him some!" Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died."

[10] Xu Shen's *Explanations of Simple and Compound Characters*. Translation is taken with some modification from William G. Boltz, *Origins and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System* (American Oriental Society Series, no. 78. New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1994), p. 135. Romanization has been changed from the Wade-Giles to the *pinyin* system.

Xu was not the first one to hold this view, and his words almost literarily adopted from *The Book of Changes*, an authoritative classical book legendarily attributed to Confucius. These three steps correspond to three legendary eras of Fu Xi, Shen Nong, and Huang Di. According to some Chinese anthropologists, Fu Xi represents the hunting era, Shen Nong (literally divine farmer) signifies the coming of agriculture, and Huang Di (Yellow Emperor) is taken as the ancestor of the modern Chinese people proper. Cang Jie is said to be the scribe of Huang Di, and, in reference to him, it is particularly stressed that an urge of differentiation becomes the propelling forces for the creation of characters. It is by means of different symbols that different facts and knowledge were defined. This conception of the origin of the characters may be stated as that, the characters were not originated from pictures, but from certain abstract symbols such as the Trigrams and knotting cords. Since there were no pictures in their today's sense at that time, the painting that is for the sake of "representing forms" as it was defined by Yan Yanzhi became possible merely after the functions of stating facts or recording knowledge were stripped off. In this sense, wring characters originated from a kind of primitive symbols that were ancestors of both writings and paintings. This is exactly what the ancient Chinese means in their argument of "sharing the origin."

> Moreover, Xu's remarks quoted here also implied another connotation that is crucial to the theory of characters: they have an origin independent of spoken language. Chinese characters began with expressing certain meanings, rather than to record the speeches. They should not be taken as the "signifier for signifier" which attaches to spoken language as Ferdinand de Saussure insists, and as the letters for European languages; rather it is directly a signifier which refers to signified or meaning, an idea more close to Jacques Derrida's view argued in his *Writing and Difference*, and *Of Grammatology*. The relationship between the writings and language in China, at the very beginning, is the two to meet and then merge with each other, instead of one was created for the other. They were originally not the same thing, and were only brought together after a long process of development, so as to constitute certain corresponding relationships, and form a system of written language. It also took another long period to draw writings close to spoken language.

Chinese characters were traditionally considered to be formed with six methods. A discussion of the six methods will provide more information of the aforementioned arguments, and prove that the characters took shape independently first, and then absorbed in the images of the natural world as well as the pronunciation of words. Among the so-called six methods, according to Xu, the first is to show the facts, such as 上 to point to a line upwards to indicate up, or 下 to point to a line downwards to indicate down, and the second is present the forms of the objects, such as to write a character for sun by drawing a sun and for moon by drawing a moon. It is very interesting that Xu maintains the order of the first two methods that the showing facts precede presenting forms.

The above two methods are used to form simple characters, while the third and the fourth are used to refer to complex ones. The third is to put two or more characters together, so as to indicate a new meaning; while the fourth is to let one of the combined characters to show the meaning, and the other one to refer to the pronunciation. I will not discuss the fifth and sixth here, since they are actually not ways of forming characters, but using the above four methods.

Among the aforementioned four, the first and second show the meeting of symbols with forms. In accordance with Xu Shen and other writers before him, the Chinese took writing characters as symbols for distinguishing meanings, and the way of draw the images of the objects was merely one of the ways to form symbols. The third is a continuation of the first two by putting the simply characters together to become complicated characters. The fourth one is rather special that indicates the meeting of writing symbols with its pronunciations. It was not until this stage that the writing was clearly shown as a register of the human speech.

Chinese characters are often considered as more or less similar to hieroglyphs of Egyptians. It is true that Chinese characters are of holy sense at its very beginning as the "hiero-" indicates, which is clearly shown in Xu's remarks that they were created by certain holy figures. Nevertheless, Chinese characters can only be called as ideographs, rather than pictographs as they might be supposed to be. It was indeed that some characters coming from shorthand pictures of the objects, but the Chinese writings did not originate from imitating the world as a whole.

The relationship of pictographs to ideographs in China might be comparable to that of onomatopoeia. A language can never be formed by imitating the sounds of the natural world, but there are indeed some words coming from this kind of sound.

2.3 "Manifest Display" as Justification of the Importance of Painting

The saying "writing and painting sharing the same origin" may, as we explained above, reveal certain truth of the origin of these two kinds of symbols. However, though the argument was supported by some legends, it was not necessary a historical fact, nor did the ancient Chinese take the saying as a history. On the contrary, what the ancient Chinese intended to do was no more than to justify their artistic practice.

The Chinese have at least two reasons to support the idea of "sharing the same origin." The first is called *zhangshi* 彰施 or "manifest display."

Just like the hostile attitudes towards arts taken by Greek philosophers according to Bernard Bosanquet,[11] many philosophers in antique China also took a negative attitude towards arts. For instance, Laozi (Lao Tzu) argues: "The five colours make man's eyes blind;/The five notes make his ears deaf;/The five tastes injure his palate;/…/Hence the sage is/For the belly/Not for the eye."[12] The Arts was rejected owing to their excessive stimulations to life. Another important philosopher Zhuangzi (Zhuang Tzu) also maintains, "Discard and confuse the six tones, smash and unstring the pipes and lutes, stop up the ears of the blind musician K'uang, and for the first time the people of the world will be able to hold on to their hearing. Wipe out patterns and designs, scatter the five colors, glue up the eyes of Li Chu, and for the first

[11] See Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetic* (London: Swan Sonneschein & Co. 1892), pp. 10–12.

[12] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* Chap. 12 (Penguin Books, 1963), p. 16.

time the people of the world will be able to hold on to their eyesight."[13] Zhuangzi put forth a rather modern theme: too much music and painting will dement people's mind, and it is only by means of returning to primitive state that men can resume the capabilities of hearing and seeing. Other philosophers, such as Mozi and Hanfeizi, criticize art by various reasons, such as to waste too much wealth, and to encourage people to disobey laws and regulations, etc. Among the various philosophers, it is only Confucius and his followers took a tolerant attitude towards arts, and recognize the usefulness of arts to political and moral education.

There was an iconoclastic tradition in Europe own to the Christian tradition. Parallel to the tradition, some Chinese writers also blamed paintings as not to convey the truth. Wang Chong (27–97?), a scholar-official in the Han Dynasty, said, "The writings bequeathed by sages of the past shine forth as recorded on bamboo and silk. Why [seek inspiration] in vain from the paintings on walls?"[14] Wang means that the teachings of the sages can be read clearly from their writings, and it is not necessary to watch their portraits. Again, there were other traditions in Europe, such as Gregory, in the sixth century, defended pictures "as necessary for religious instruction, especially with illiterate people,"[15] and "a General Council at Nicaea in 787, under Constantine VI, … declared that 'honorable reverence' is due to religious pictures, as to the cross and the Gospels."[16] In China, the idea of "manifest display" plays the similar role. In the minds of the Chinese, paintings can "manifestly display" the ideas recorded by writings, so that paintings can have the same function as writings.

The idea of "sharing the origin" can be taken as an attempt to elevate the status of painting. The status of painting as an art in antique China, as that in the West, was very low. Unlike the predominance of images in modern times, words were prevailing in ancient society, more precisely, the classics written in characters kept a supreme position. Some classics, particularly those of Confucianism, was taken as the guidelines to rule the countries, and one of the most important tasks of the scholars was to edit and make exegeses for the texts of these classics. The position of painting, on the other hand, was much lower. Painters at that time can be divided into two kinds, the one was professional painters or painting craftsmen, and the other was painting clerks at the court. The only way the former to promote their position was to manage to become the latter.

The function of painting was taken to be "manifest display" of what the Confucian classics taught. Zhang Yanyuan elaborated this idea as follows:

> At the time when the [legendary] Emperor Shun's [ancient symbols] in the five colors were made, paintings became clearly distinguished; when there was an ornamental display [of designs], the correspondence to forms was deepened. Then ritual and music were widely

[13] Burton Watson, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 111.

[14] Wang Chong's *Lun Heng*, Book 13. English translation made with reference to Bush and Shih com. & ed. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 25.

[15] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1966), p. 91.

[16] Ibid.

> developed, and culture was thereby raised. Therefore, men were able to behave with propriety and the empire was at peace; men were brilliant and literature was full developed.[17]

Here "manifest display" or "ornamental display" was originally referred to colorful clothes, by which to distinguish different social classes of their wearers. This term comes from the *Book of Documents*, one of the most ancient books in China. In its original context, *zhangshi* or "manifest display" means to distinguish people on different social status with different colors of clothes. The ideal society, according to Confucius, was the Western Zhou Dynasty from 12th century to 8th century B.C., when China was divided into numerous vassals at different levels. The emperor or, in Chinese word, son of heaven, ruled the country by means of a special ritual system, which prescribed different levels of persons with the rights of wearing different colors of clothes, building different sizes of houses, enjoying different kinds of music and dances, and offering sacrifice to different levels of gods. This was a half religious and half political system, which Confucius devoted himself to resume as his lifetime enterprise. The way of clothing and decoration, therefore, gained a religious and political sense in accordance with Confucianism. When Zhang considered that painting is a thing which "perfects civilized teachings and helps social relationships",[18] he extended Confucian idea to painting in general. By means of "manifest display," painting enjoyed the same position as that of Confucian classics, and was considered also as crucial to the civilization, politics, and social life. For Zhang and other leading art historians, as long as they are followers of Confucian teachings, there were no rooms for any ideas with slightest sense of art for art's sake. The only reason for the existence of painting was to serve the political and social purposes, and it is exactly because of these purposes, painting became as important as writing.

2.4 Same Way of Using Brush: A New Interpretation of the Saying "Share the Same Origin"

The so-called sharing "the same origin," as stated above, show the attachment of painting to characters, and thus to the texts written by ancient sages, enabling the former shared a sense of social and political importance of the latter. By means of this "sharing" as *zhangshi*, the ancient Chinese may achieve the first "pictorial turn" with painting being promoted to the status of the classics of the sages. In addition to this turn, the "sharing" later acquired another meaning, which may be of more aesthetic significance.

When we talked about "writing" in the previous parts, we meant a translation from 书 (*shu*), and considered it as character-writing in general. In this sense, we usually refer to what are written about. The invention of the character-writing was

[17] Bush and Shih com. & ed. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 51.

[18] Ibid., p. 49.

naturally an event of fundamental importance since it marked, as we stated above, the beginning of the civilization. When modern anthropologists put forth this judgment, we may understand it as that the writings promoted the appearance of civilization by making distance communication and history record possible, but in the mind of the Confucians, the most important function of the writings is to record down the words of the sages, and make moral education possible. They also judged the value of painting in the same way, and argued that painting can assist writing in this respect. On the other hand, the word *shu* can have another meaning. i.e. calligraphy, which means not writing in general but beautiful writing as an art in particular. When the painting was said to be connected with the latter meaning, we have a fundamental different meaning: how they were written, rather than what they were written about.

Calligraphy as an art in China has a long history. It was generally considered by many Chinese that calligraphy emerged as an art by the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty (around 200 A.D.), when there was a craze for cursive writing among men of letters. Zhao Yi, a scholar-official of that time, criticized the calligraphy-lovers for spending all of their time to write as to "abrade a pen-brush in ten days, and use up numerous ink-sticks in one month, collars and sleeves become dark, and lips and teeth turn to black. When they meet in public, they have no time to talk and play, but to write with their fingers on earth, or with grass-stick on wall …,"[19] rather than to do something practically useful. Many modern calligraphy historians in China take it as the mark of the appearance of calligraphy as an art, because of their acceptance of the aesthetic view that art is disinterested. This can become a problem since there was actually a much longer history for calligraphy in ancient China, and many pre-modern Chinese calligraphy historians wrote the history in different way, and traced this history even to the very beginning of Chinese characters, for instance Cang Jie, the legendary creator of Chinese characters. Anyway, it is not my task to re-write the history of Chinese calligraphy in this context. What I try to argue here is that there was a continuous history of Chinese writing and calligraphy, though I do not deny that the Eastern Han Dynasty or latter, the Jin Dynasty and the Southern dynasties, can be seen as an important period for the development of calligraphy, when there appeared many calligraphers with fame particularly owning to writing, and independent of their official status.

The emergence of calligraphy and its prevailing among men of letters encouraged the adoption of sense of beauty cultivated in calligraphy to painting. In this case, the idea of "sharing the origin" was endowed with the connotation of "same brushes" or "same brushworks."

Again, it is Zhang Yanyuan, who gave four great painters Gu Kaizhi (Ku K'ai-chih), Lu Tanwei (Lu T'anwei), Zhang Sengyou (Chang Seng-yu), and Wu Daozi (Wu Tao-tzu) a long and special discussion in his *Record of Famous Painters of All the Dynasties*, and concentrated on calligraphy and painting using the brush in the same way.[20] For instance, when talking about Lu Tanwei, he wrote:

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[19]Zhao Yi, "Against Cursive Writings," from *Peiwenzai Shuhuapu*, Vol. 5.

[20]LTMHC, Book 2, "On the Brushwork of Ku, Lu, Chang, and Wu," in Bush and Shih com. & ed. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, pp. 60–62.

> Formerly Chang Chih [active mid-2nd century A.D.] studied the cursive script methods of Ts'ui Yüan [77–142] and Tu Tu [also of the Later Han Dynasty]. Relying on them and altering them, he formed the stylistic appearance of modern cursive script. He completed [a sequence of characters] in one stroke with a vein of nervous energy running continuously through it, and without breaks to divided columns. Only Wang Hsien-chih [344–388] understood these profound objectives, hence the character at the top of a line is occasionally connected with the preceding column, this is popularly known as "one-stroke calligraphy." Later Lu T'an-wei [5th century] also made one-stroke painting without breaks in the continuity [of its brushwork]. Thus we may know that the brush is used in the same way for both calligraphy and painting.[21]

Zhang continues his argument of "same way of using the brush" by writing:

> Chang Seng-yu [6th century] made his dots, dragged strokes, hacking strokes, and sweeping strokes in accordance with the Lady Wei's [essay on use of the brush in calligraphy] "Battle Strategy of the Brush." Each of his dots and strokes was a skill in itself. His hooked halberds and sharp swords bristle as dense as forests. From this too, one can see that the use of the brush in calligraphy and painting is the same.[22]

Again, the most famous painter Wu Daozi also learned "the way of using brush" from the most famous calligrapher Zhang Xu:

> Wu Tao-tzu [Wu Daozi, 8th century] of the present dynasty stands alone for all time. He did not look back to Ku and Lu and will have no successors. He learnt his brush methods from Chang Hsü [Zhang Xu, active first half of 8th century] which shows yet again that the use of the brush in calligraphy and painting is identical.[23]

Here Zhang took the most famous painters of his times as examples to show how they had learned from the calligraphers.

Zhang's argument was very influential in ancient China, and this can be seen as one of the most important doctrines for Chinese painting. This is a new round of finding connections between writing and painting. Like the previous one, painting was under the influence of writing, but now, the way of writing rather than what is written about, or, more precisely, the act of writing itself, was focused. In the mind of the Chinese painters, it is only the lines made by free hand and in which the gestures and postures of the painters are shown that can be beautiful. Calligraphy as an art encourages an awareness of the beautiful of lines, and then transplanted it into painting from without. Because of this, the Chinese painting went on a track that is different from that of the European painting.

This became even more evident along with the rise of literati painting. I have mentioned two kinds of painters in the previous parts of the paper, i.e. painting craftsmen and painting clerks. Now from around the 8th century on the third kind of painters was emerging, who stressed more on a good calligraphy, and to put the sense of calligraphy into painting. This tendency was highly developed in the later generations, particularly in the Song and Yuan dynasties from the 10th to 13th centuries.

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[21] Ibid., pp. 60–61, italics is mine.

[22] Ibid., p. 61, italics is mine.

[23] Ibid., p. 61, italics is mine.

There was a widespread view that literati painting stressed on three perfections, i.e. perfections in poetry, calligraphy, and painting. It is a general practice that a good traditional Chinese painting should in a corner be added by a nice poem written in good calligraphy. But three perfections should not merely be understood in this way. More importantly, there must have senses of poetry and brushwork in the painting. We read this remark: "In order to learn painting, one should first learn calligraphy, and this is the way to learn brushwork."[24] We also hear such an explanation: "The saying that painting and writing share the same origin means no more than to be good at brushwork."[25] This is a new explanation for "sharing the same origin."

2.5 Writing Activities as the Intermediate Between Painting and Audience

The connection between writing and painting was highly emphasized also because a special idea of abstraction was demonstrated and developed in calligraphy, and it became the intermediate between painting and audience.

In appreciation of painting, we have a "natural attitude" towards what a painting is represented, and how it is represented.[26] A painting can remind the audience of the living scenes in practical life, such as a war in a war painting, a facial expression and temperament in a portrait, and the landscape in a landscape painting. Aristotle put the pleasure from imitation or representation as coming from cognition, and wrote, "Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity … Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.'"[27] Aristotle's remark, together with his whole book, as Monroe Beardsley put that, "its influence and authority in succeeding centuries has been out of all proportion to its length."[28] Many modern aestheticians also tried to find ways to explain the sources of pleasure for imitation, form instance, both "empathy" by Theodore Lipps and "psychical distance" by Edward Bullough are ways to explain the reasons or pre-conditions of the aesthetic pleasure given by imitation.

In addition to the "natural attitude," there is also a "formal attitude," if we can say so. Aristotle also mentioned another cause for the origin of poetry, i.e. the nature of instinct for "harmony" and rhythm. There is a long tradition of formalism in the

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[24] Li Rihua, *Zitaoxuan Za Zhui*, in Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian* (*Classified Compilation of Writing*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957. Reprint. Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973), p. 131, translation is mine.

[25] Song Nian, *Yiyuan Lunhua*, in Yu, ed., *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian*, p. 326, translation is mine.

[26] See Norman Bryson, Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan, 1983) pp. 1–12.

[27] Aristotle, *Poetics*. 1448b. Trans. S. H. Butche. Quoted from electronic version.

[28] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present*, p. 54.

history of aesthetics in Europe, but it is not until the 20th century that artists and aestheticians began to discuss the possibilities of an abstract art and aesthetics totally independent from imitation or representation.

In his *Abstraction and Empathy*, Wilhelm Worringer compared so-called the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, and maintained that "Whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world; in a religious respect it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions."[29] More clearly, he argued that "the urge to abstraction finds its beauty in the life-denying inorganic."[30] He found the root for abstraction in a negative relation of man to the external world.

When Clive Bell talked about the relationship between the emotions and qualities of the aesthetic objects, he maintained there was a "peculiar emotion provoked by works of art." "Every work produces a different emotion. But these emotions are recognizably the same in kind."[31] Corresponding to this kind of emotion, there was a quality in the objects which, in the mind of Bell, was "lines and colours combined in a particular way." "These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'; and 'Significant Form' is the one quality common to all works of visual art."[32] Bell mentioned "Art and a quiet life are incompatible I think; some stress and turmoil there must be." "When the production of good art is at all widespread and continuous, near at hand I shall expect to find a restless generation. Also, having marked a period of spiritual stir, I shall look, not far off, for its manifestation in significant form."[33] These remarks, however, do not refer to a life-denying relation between artists and society, but how emotions are stirred in life. This argument supports the idea of the corresponding relation of the emotions of the artist to the form he produced.

Susanne K. Langer developed the idea of "Significant Form" with her symbolic theory. She began her discussion with music, rather than visual arts as Clive Bell did. She also chose to discuss the feeling, a more general word, instead of emotion, and its relationship with form. More importantly, she elaborated the connections between form and expression, and maintained that, when the form was taken as symbol of feeling, it became an expression at the same time. She maintained that music and human feeling could be corresponding to each other. She wrote: "The tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal

[29] Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), p. 15.

[30] Ibid., p. 4.

[31] Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus 1916), p. 6.

[32] Ibid., p. 8.

[33] Ibid., 104–105.

passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life."[34] Music, or art in general, is formal likeness of human feeling. We say the former can become the symbol of the latter, because the one is "easier to perceive and handle than the other."[35] Nevertheless, Langer did not provide a convincing explanation why the one can become the replacement of the other. It is not necessary for a piece of music to become an embodiment of a special feeling. The same piece of music can match to different words to become different songs with totally different feelings. It was also the same with visual arts. A line is not necessary to signify an emotion or feeling. The form of a painting cannot be taken as showing a specific feeling, too. We can say different paintings can have the similar forms, if the form here is understood as composition, scheme, or balance. These old quarrels between form and expression was actually not solved, thought symbolism enable her to bring the quarrels onto a new stage.

It seems to me that Chinese calligraphy has provided a special connection between the abstract lines and the human feelings. A calligraphic work as a form should not be considered as a symbol of feeling in its general form, but the traces of human action in a mood of feelings. When a person writes something, he is not to compose a picture, but a natural way to put his feeling into lines. Ancient Chinese tried to distinguish between a written line and a described one; this can be seen as self-awareness of line.[36]

Ancient Chinese, particularly men of letters, took calligraphy as one of the most important indications of the level of one's education and cultivation. They were requested to practice calligraphy from childhood and practice it everyday, since it meant a great deal to their future of life and career. During this long process, a sense of beauty for abstract lines is accumulated from the daily activities. When they engaged in picture-making activities, they naturally brought this sense of beauty they acquired from calligraphy into the new activities.

2.6 Conclusion: From Writing to Painting

Now let us return to the saying "writing and painting share the same origin" once again. It is not a question that can get a clear-cut answer by means of archeology or anthropology, but an implication of some complicated theoretical choices.

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[34] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in A New Key* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1959), p. 27.

[35] Ibid.

[36] This will be the theme of my another paper: "'The Distinction Between Drawing and Writing' and the Process from Drawing to Writing" The Chinese version of it has been published in *Aesthetics*, Vol. 1 (2006) (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 2006), no English version, but the basic idea of this paper was referred in Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1996), pp. 55–58.

If I have to sum up some inspirations received from the above discussions in belief words, I may say that, the saying "writing and painting share the same origin" demonstrates an idea that there had existed a kind of primitive visual symbols which was both the origin of writing and that of painting. In this sense, writing and painting are indeed "blood relations." The ancient Chinese knew the fact, and put forth their statement based on it.

What I try to argue in this study is that, this fact is actually not the major reason that the ancient Chinese paid so great attention to the connections, and repeated it again and again in their writings. We find that most of the advocators of the saying are painters and the critics and historians of painting, while few historians of characters and calligraphy would like to mention it. This implies that the saying was more in the interest of the painters than in that of the calligraphers.

In this study, we discussed the dual ways for painting to seek connections with writing: the first is to attach painting to character-writing so as to claim the authority of the classics with its importance to the whole civilization, while the second is to justify the calligraphic brushwork as necessary elements for painting in its achieving the sense of beauty for the abstract lines. In both cases, the connections between writing and painting are not naturally formed, but deliberately made in order to create a theory for painting. The attempts for the connections were actually the driving forces for the ancient Chinese to establishing their theories for painting.

With this sense, I would like to return to Gombrich's argument about the "blood relations" once more. Gombrich is correct to claim the relation, but to him, the painting's breaking away from writing is an indication of the progress in painting, as he argued in his discussions of the Greek Revolution and the Renaissance. In ancient China, however, the development of painting was precisely shown in the re-combination between writing and painting.

Chapter 3
Significance of Analogy-Drawing Between *Go* and Painting

Many Chinese painters, from ancient up to modern times, have compared painting with different kinds of human activities, such as calligraphy, dance, music, as well as *go*, a board game played by two competitors. They articulate their theories of painting through these analogies, and reciprocally, these analogies have enlightened them on many important issues in painting.

In this essay I am going to explore the aesthetic implications of analogy-drawing between *go* and painting. *Go*-playing and picture-making are two different human activities, the former being a game, whereas the latter is an artistic activity. However, in the eyes of many ancient Chinese painters, they are closely related to each other and share numerous features. This is of course not a challenge to the modern concept of the fine arts formulated by, say, Charles Batteux, because there was no corresponding concept in the mind of the Chinese in ancient times, but an analogy such as this can inspire us to make certain interesting discoveries.

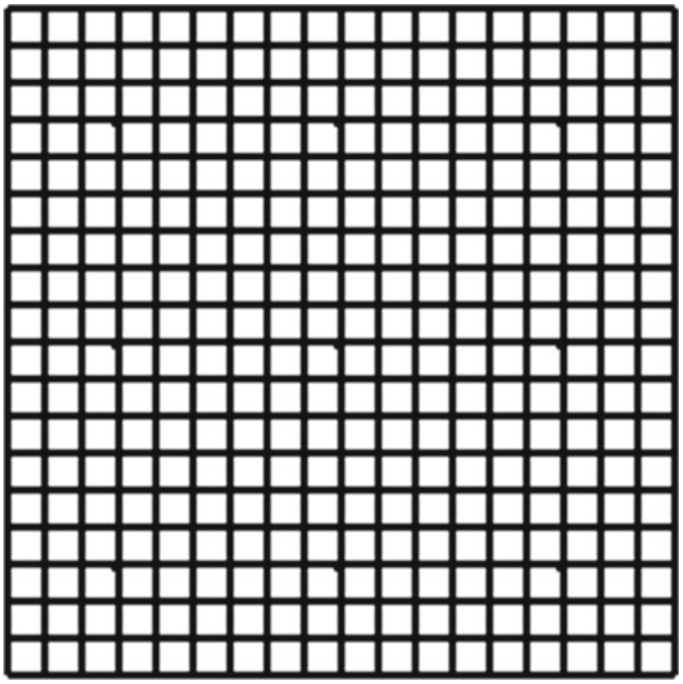
3.1 The Differences Between *Go* and Painting

Before we compare *go* with painting, I would first like to give a brief introduction of *go*.

Go was a game originally popular in China, Japan and Korea and now is gaining more acceptance in other parts of the world. As a game, it belongs in the same category as chess and is usually played by two competitors. However, unlike chess, *go* is played on a board of square grids formed by 19 horizontal and 19 vertical lines, which forms 361 intersections, or cross points (see Picture 3.1).

Unlike chess, *go* starts with an empty board without any chessmen on it. The players put small pieces of stones on the cross points. Once a stone is laid, it should remain there unless it is killed and thus removed from the board. No stone is allowed to change its position from one place to another on the board.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_3



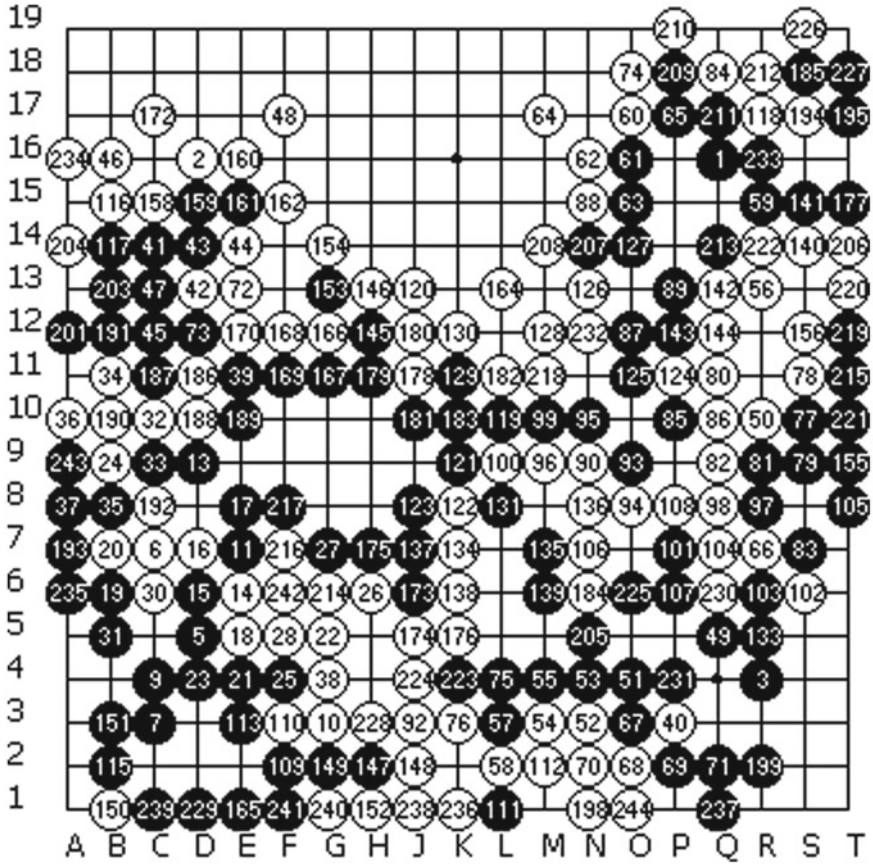
Picture 3.1

There are two colours of stones (black and white), and each of the two players takes one. The black player usually puts a stone first, which begins the game, and then the white, and then the black, and so on and so forth. Each of them puts a stone down in alternation. At the left is the record of a game. The numbers on each of the stones show the sequence of their placement on the board (see Picture 3.2).

We can also see from the picture that there are three possibilities for the cross points: black, white, and empty. The empty ones are enclosed by either black or white ones, and thus belong to them separately.

The stones are linked to be bunches or groups. In Chinese, *go* is called *weiqi*, or enclosing chess. The word *wei* bears two meanings: the first is to surround the opponent's stones. If a group of stones is being surrounded by the opponent's ones, it should try to stay alive. A surrounded group with at least two empty points (called eyes or traps) inside is called alive, otherwise it is called dead. The two players are supposed to "fight" with each other in order to "kill" the stones of the opponent, and "protect" those of his own. A group of "killed" stones have to be removed from the board, or they will be eventually removed, for example, 40, 102, 150 of white stones are dead in the picture.

The second, and more fundamental meaning of *wei* is to enclose more space, or occupy more territory on the board. Since there are only 361 points on the grid of the board, the winner of the game is supposed to take the larger share of them. This



Picture 3.2

means to use the stones effectively to enclose more empty points; for example, there are many empty points belonging to the white in the upper part of the picture because they are enclosed by white stones.

When we look at the record of a *go* game, the stones are organized into certain forms, but it would be wrong to look at them in the same way as one looks at a picture. These forms do not have meanings themselves, but are only the result of the player's intention to capture more territory and kill the stones of the opponent.

In contrast to the playing of *go*, the making of a painting is obviously a different activity. A painter is supposed to create images with his brush. Like painting in many other nations, Chinese painting originated from the impulse of keeping the forms of objects, either imaginary or real, and thus served secular or religious purposes. The styles of painting can vary in accordance with their usage and other social and historical reasons; some of them are more realistic, and others are more abstract. But, as long as it is the art of painting, it has to represent the object's form.

Ancient Chinese gave many definitions of painting. Most of them, especially those before the tenth century, stress that painting is to keep the appearance of the object. For example, Lu Ji (261–303), a poet in the third century, compared painting with literature in the following statement: "For making things widely known nothing is greater than speech, but for preserving the appearance [of those things] there is nothing better than painting."[1] To him, painting is the best means to preserve the appearances of things, and herein lies the difference between painting and literature. In this way, Lu Ji tells us what painting is, and, more importantly, this remark was quoted by Zhang Yanyuan, a ninth century painting historian, and later became one of the authoritative definitions of painting in China. Consequently, Lu Ji's originally descriptive statement was transformed into a normative requirement. Another writer Yan Yanzhi (384–456) tried to distinguish three different signs: painting, character writing and the symbolic hexagrams in the *Book of Changes*. He maintains that painting is to represent "forms", in contrast to the characters which aim to show the "knowledge," and to hexagrams whose goal is to reveal certain "reasons" behind the appearance of the nature.[2] In accordance to these definitions, the ultimate end of painting is to represent the appearance of objects and nature. Even today, the Chinese often sneer with an idiom at those who are over ambitious but end in failure: drawing a tiger like a dog (trying to draw a tiger but end up with the resemblance of a dog). To them, a good painter should be able to make lifelike pictures. If not so, he is not a qualified painter. The formal resemblance is indeed a great tradition both in the West and in China.

This may be called a perceptional attitude towards painting. A painter with a perceptional attitude paints on the basis of his visual perception. This does not mean that he always produces a lifelike painting. Art historians find that many ancient painters may consciously or unconsciously distort their images of the object. Nevertheless, all of those who produce pictures in accordance with their perception, or judge a painting in connection with what is painted, can be regarded as advocates of the perceptional attitude.

The vision of human beings is complex; it has been constantly changing with transformations of social contexts. A picture that is regarded as lifelike by one generation may not be viewed so by another generation. Ernst Gombrich explains this issue with his formula of "schema and correction" (in *Art and Illusion*) and "recall and recognition" (in *The Image and the Eye*). These two formulae contain many innovative views, but because he evaluates different styles of painting by checking if they match what was seen, and glorifies the styles based on what one *sees* while playing down those based on what one *knows* or *feels* (see also his *The Story of Art*), his theoretical horizon is limited to human beings' perception. Another important scholar Rudolf Arnheim is famous for his perceptualist approach to art. His approach

[1]This sentence is quoted from Zhang Yanyuan's *Record of Painters of All the Dynasties*, Book 2. English translation quoted from Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, eds., *Early Chinese Text on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 28.

[2]These words are quoted from Zhang Yanyuan's *Record of Painters of All the Dynasties*, Book 2. English translation can be seen from Bush and Shih, p. 22.

has been established with the help of Gestalt psychology. It stresses the importance of visual organization activities and contends that perceptual states are supported by "isomorphic" structures in the underlying brain processes (in *Art and Visual Perception*). James J. Gibson, on the other hand, holds a more directly perceptional attitude. He endeavors to establish a perspectivist theory of representation (in *The Perception of the Visual World*). After analyzing all these books and benefiting from the merits of these arguments, we still have a question in connection with visual arts, particularly painting: can studies of eyes or vision exhaust all the secrets of painting?

The eye is an important human organ, but it is by no means the only one. A more important fact is that this organ is a part of human body as a whole. What we do always exerts a strong influence on what we see. Therefore, we may ask a simple question: can painting also be studied from certain points of view other than perception? The comparison between painting and *go* may be one of the choices.

To sum up the points made in the preceding passages: It is evident that a *go* player and a painter should always keep different purposes in mind. In ancient China, there were many who were both *go* players and painters, but they were informed by a common sense that they must do different things with different attitudes and mental states. In making a painting, they know that a perceptional attitude is necessary, but a question may be raised as to whether a merely perceptional attitude towards painting is enough for them to understand painting.

3.2 Ancient Chinese Sayings About the Relationship Between *Go* and Painting

However different painting is from *go*, many Chinese, from the Ming and Qing dynasties up to the modern period, were eager to link them. Probably it is because both painting and *go* playing were parts of their daily activities, and it is easy for an educated person to draw a connection between them. Before the establishing of contact with Western countries during modern periods, there was no such term as "Art" or "the fine arts" in China. The Chinese did not think that various forms of arts, such as poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance, calligraphy, and drama, should be categorized into a special group of human activities in contrast to those done by, say, a goldsmith, a blacksmith, a printer, a ship-builder, a kite-and- umbrella- and fan-maker, etc. However, they did indeed put certain human activities into special groups. From the Zhou Dynasty (10th century B.C.) through the Confucius's period (6th–5th century B.C.) to the collapse of the Han Dynasty (3rd century A.D.), there was an idea of poetry, music and dance sharing the same origin. This way of grouping arts was for religious and political purposes, and thus poetry, music and dance can be named together as the "ritual arts". Since then Chinese social order underwent many transformations. From that time to the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) periods, a new group came to be formed which consists of *qin* (an instrument like zither in the West), *go*, calligraphy, and painting. This is a quite

different group from that in the Confucius's and Han period. No particular name or term was given to that group then, but, since all the four activities show graceful life styles of the *literati*, it may be said that they are the "arts" of the educated, or they may be designated as the "graceful arts".[3] It might be unusual to the Europeans that *go* is included into such a group of "arts", but in the minds of those "educated" people or *literati*, *go* and other arts were only parts of their daily life. To them, it was not yet necessary to form a concept of "arts" to exclude *go* while including sculpture and architecture. It seemed to them that the latter required physical labor, which should not be done by them as members of polite society.

Before I get down to detailed analysis, I would like first to give certain samples of their remarks. This is a way to show that what I am going to do is only to interpret the ideas of the ancient Chinese rather than to invent new ideas of my own.

Jieziyuan Huazhuan, a guidebook for painting learners edited around 1700, says:

> When painting flowers, whether to paint with meticulous brushwork or to draw a free sketch, one should make strokes as positioning the stones in go. In both painting and go one must first race for shi and thereby attain a vivid and dynamic atmosphere so as to avoid being rigid.[4]

Here the author states that the making of a painting is like the playing of *go*; the first and the most important is to acquire *shi* 势. *Shi* is a special Chinese word that has several meanings, such as momentum, initiative, or situation.

Zhang Shi wrote in around 1830 the following:

> To arrange the composition of a painting is similar to laying stones in go playing. One can lay stones on every cross-point of the grid, but one cannot lay them indiscriminately; a painter can put ink everywhere on the paper, but he cannot do so arbitrarily. Go playing has its own way and painting has its own principles. In go playing, even if only a single stone is laid in the wrong place, the whole situation will be destroyed. A painting contains a certain principle even though there are no definite positions marking the relationships between the upper, middle, and lower parts.[5]

Shen Zongqian completed his famous work *Jiezhou Xuehuabian* in 1781, in which he wrote:

> The principle of painting is very similar to that of go playing. Low-level players fiercely fight in a single corner over only a small area and lose the much larger areas in the overall situation. When grand masters play, they hardly fight, but they never make concessions. From beginning to end, there are no idle stones. Inspired by go playing, we may recognize the principles of painting. Although painting is done by a single person, it is similar to go playing in respect to winning and losing.[6]

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[3] I gave a detailed discussion of this two concepts in connection with the fine arts in ancient China in a paper "Elitist Tendency in Chinese Painting", which was included in my book *The Secrets of Chinese Painting*, Hong Kong: The Cosmos, 1996.

[4] Wang Gai et al., *Jieziyuan Huazhuan*, Quoted from Yu Jianhua, *Zhongguo Hua Lun Lei Bian*, Zhonghua Shuju, 1973, pp. 1104–1105; author's translation.

[5] Zhang Shi, *Huatan*, in Yu, pp. 988–989; author's translation.

[6] Shen Zongqian, *Jiezhou Xuehuabian*, in Yu, p. 867; author's translation.

The above two paragraphs demonstrated that, in addition to race for *shi* or the situation so as to create a "vivid and dynamic atmosphere," a painter should also grasp two points: first, to know the principles of painting, and second, to have an opponent in mind. These two points are actually connected with each other: the principles of painting depend on the consciousness of the opponent. A painter makes a painting alone, and he draws every stroke at will, but he should act as if an opponent were sitting in front of him. In the *go* playing, a small mistake will bring about the loss of the whole game because it is a competition with a rival, who will take advantage of this mistake. Such a sense of an opponent also means a sense of order or sequence. A correct order of laying stones will make sure of a victory, while the wrong order results in giving an opponent the opportunity to race for the strategic points. A comparison with the *go* implies that it also needs an order to make a good painting, a point that deserves a detailed discussion later in this paper.

Zhang Feng, a painter in the transitional period between the Ming and Qing dynasties, wrote in his *Tanyilu* in c. 1640:

> A good go player arranges stones naturally and gracefully, making a feint to the east but attacking in the west, and then gradually tackling the details, thus taking the initiative at every stage of the game. This shows the player's ability to stay relaxed. A good painter should also be able to stay relaxed. At first he makes a loose overall arrangement, then dots and dyes ink, layer upon layer to make it look profound and lovely, thus providing a lively feeling.[7]

Sheng Dashi, another painter and art critic in the Qing Dynasty, wrote in his *Xishan Wuyou Lu* in c. 1810:

> In painting, one must begin with a few strokes to form the general situation. This is exactly like go playing. If the player concentrates on only a single corner, he can occupy a small territory but will lose the match. Nevertheless, [the scenes] in a painting should not just be knocked together either. When designing the whole, one must first arrange the positions of mountains and the directions of the trees. A good go player can decide the situation of the whole match with only a few stones. A good painter must be able to do so, too. After that, he gradually adds shades and dye tinctures, from thin to dense and from light to dark, completing a perfect composition.[8]

Some interesting ideas are expressed in these two paragraphs, such as to "stay relaxed," not to "concentrate on a single corner," and not to "knock scenes together". All this demonstrates their ideas on art, and deserves to be carefully studied. More importantly, however, the authors express a notion of stages in painting. In playing *go*, the player should first try to occupy certain key points, and thus to form the general situation as well as his own battle arrays; then, in the next stage, he tries to break though the opponent's arrays or to protect his own ones; in the end, he comes to clear the "public points," i.e. trying to get a larger share of the left interspace between himself and the opponent. In light of this idea, a painter should not only make a painting in order, but in stages. He cannot paint by putting one part after

[7] Zhang Feng, *Tanyilu*, in Yu, p. 141; author's translation.

[8] Sheng Dashi, *Xishan Woyoulu*, in Huang and Deng, *Meishu Congshu*, p. 1337; also in Yu, p. 267, author's translation.

another; rather he has to put one layer after another, which means that he has to first arrange general positions, then provide actual forms, and eventually deal with the details.

Huang Binhong (1865–1955), a famous modern painter, writes:

> I also take painting as go playing. A go player should be good at making traps [or eyes]. With more traps, one can win. Trap is equal to void in painting. Dong Yuan and Ju Ran became masters for endless generations only because they got the secrets of balancing void and solid. The Four Masters at the end of the Yuan Dynasty (referring to Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng, Ni Zan, and Wu Zheng) transformed the solid to the void, but there was solid in the very void. Ni Zan tried to express solid with void; what an excellent painter he was![9]

Huang Binhong links the issue of solid and void in painting with eyes or traps in the *go*, so as to stress the issue of life and death. This is also a key point for the analogy.

3.3 The General Situation and the Playing Attitude

The comparison between *go* and painting may be one of the clues for us to find ways of interpreting painting in addition to those based on perceptional attitude. In fact, Chinese painting style underwent a great transformation from the tenth century onward, and the perceptional attitude is no longer enough to offer a good and comprehensive explanation of it.

In contrast to Lu Ji and Yan Yanzhi's definitions of painting outlined above, Jing Hao (ca. 870–930) tried to make a distinction between the appearance and the truth, and warned painters against taking appearance as the truth. He challenged the traditional view of the form-likeness in the following statement: "painting is to paint."[10] To him, a painting is not necessarily an imitation of appearance, but a subjective creation made by the *movements* of the mind, body, and hand of the painter, in which the action "to paint" is emphasized. Or, in his words, "to collect the wonderful [elements] and create truth."[11] Jing Hao was one of those who promoted transformational style in Chinese painting, and after him, the painter's mind and brushwork played a more significant role, in addition to perception.

This transition deserves a detailed discussion in one or more full-length books, but here, a comparison with *go* may shed some light on it.

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[9]Huang Binhong: "Letter to Wang Boming, 1948." Quoted from *Huang Binhong on Art*, Henan Arts Press, 1998, p. 130, author's translation. In this paragraph, Huang mentions a few persons, who are among the most important painters in ancient China. Here is a list of them: Dong Yuan (?–ca. 962), Ju Ran (living in the second half of the 10th century), Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), Wang Meng (1308–1385), Ni Zan (1301/06–1374), and Wu Zhen (1280–1354).

[10]In Chinese, 画者画也. See Jing Hao's *A Note on the Art of the Brush*. See Yu, p. 605, author's translation.

[11]More discussions on Jing Hao's view can be seen in Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1996), pp. 138–141.

To make a painting, indeed, to make every artwork or even every human product, one must first have a general plan in mind before starting the work. The painting theories built on the basis of perceptional attitude require that a painter have a general plan of what is going to be painted, and so do the players of *go*; but these two kinds of plans have to be realized in completely different ways. A painter arranges the elements of his painting in accordance with his own intention, so as to form a general image of what is going to be painted, but, in the final analysis, his intention is decided by his perception, and he always has to compare what he paints with what he sees. His work is also supposed to be judged in this way. On the other hand, the *go* player is supposed to compete with an opponent, and every move made by him causes a counter move. Therefore, when a *go* player talks about a plan and a general situation, he has to take the moves of the opponent into consideration. He shall race to certain strategic points, take initiatives, and control the general development of the match, but what shapes his stones will eventually form are not so important (Picture 3.3).

By comparing painting with *go*, the idea of a general plan in Chinese painting was changed. Just as the aforementioned critics wrote, in painting "one must begin with a few strokes to form the general situation," rather than "concentrating on a single corner." The general plan for painting is thus no longer the arrangement of the pictorial elements and their positions in the whole picture, but the painter's strategy and its realization during the process of making a painting. This is a new attitude towards painting, which can be designated as *playing attitude*.

A perceptional attitude towards painting may allow one to perceive the "general situation" as a "structural skeleton" (Arnheim), or "schema" (Gombrich), but in a playing attitude a painter regards the "general situation" as a preparation for further development of his painting, as in the deployment for a battle. In this sense, a painter should first try to take initiative under the guidance of a general strategy in order to form a general situation for further struggle with brushwork.

3.4 The Form and Momentum in *Go* and Painting

To continue the comparison of painting and *go*, I would like to get to detailed discussion of two terms: *xing* 形 or form, and *shi* 势 or momentum, both of which are widely used in painting criticism and *go* comments. What I intend to do is to show how the meanings of the two terms were transformed due to their being borrowed from one field to another.

Xing is now translated as "form" in English in most cases, but since the meaning of "form" is so ambiguous in western languages, particularly since it implies a Platonic derivation of the idea or essence of objects, we have to avoid this translation at the very beginning. In the history of the Chinese language, the earliest meanings of *xing* are the appearance or facial features, the figure of human body, and the shape of an

Picture 3.3 Zhu Da (Ba Da Shan Ren), Imitation of Dong Yuan's Landscape, 114.5 x 51.5 cm, Rong Bao Zhai

object.[12] All of these are convenient for pictorial representation, and thus are regarded as the painter's responsibility to represent them. As the above quoted remarks made by Lu Ji and Yan Yanzhi, Chinese painters indeed once accepted it as a simple fact that painting was an art to show the *xing* of the object, in contrast to other kinds of signs made by mankind, which were supposed to represent the knowledge and idea of an object.

When the term *xing* was brought into *go*, and applied to the discussion of the *xing* of the groups of stones and their relationship, however, it gained a new meaning. A good *xing* in a *go* game does not mean it looks nice in the ordinary sense; it refers neither to pretty human bodies nor to impressive landscapes. The *xing* of facial features, the figures of human body, the shapes of an object, and even the scenes of a landscape, all this can be seen from a static point of view; in this case *xing* keeps its meaning of appearance. On the other hand, good *xing* in *go* should be taken as a group of stones which are easy to live (to make traps), to defend themselves in an effective way, to spread themselves with plenty of potentialities, and not to make forces repeat themselves or be cumbersome, etc. It is by no means the appearance of a static mass of things.

In order to understand the *xing* in *go*, we must, first of all, know what this game is, get used to its rules, and train the sense of *xing* through frequent practice. Only when one is good at *go* playing can one understand what the *xing* means, and judge if a *xing* is good. Therefore, the *xing* is understood in a dynamic way, and judged from the internal process of game itself. In this sense, probably it is still good to translate *xing* as form, in which, nevertheless, a generative connotation was retained: to form the shapes in accordance with the rules of the game.

A good *go* player always has *xing* or form in mind, and tries to make good form in order to avoid a foolish one. There are even the so-called "*go* aestheticians" who would rather lose a match than let their stones to be in a bad form. In their minds, the records of their matches would be published for people to read and even kept for future generations as works of art; a bad form will damage their reputations because it would be regarded as "too practical" without any sense of "beauty." Because of this, people might say that *go* is an art in that it pursues "beauty." My concern in this essay is not to discuss whether *go* is a form of art, but I would like to put forward two points here: 1. We have to take into account that no matter how "beautiful" forms are, the result of a match is not decided by the forms one achieves, but by the actual "territory" one occupies; 2. The criteria for the "aesthetic" judgment of forms are totally different from that of shape or appearance in the natural world. Beautiful or not, it is a judgment made on the basis of the game's rules. If one knows nothing of the game, one will be regarded as not qualified to evaluate its forms. What the

[12] *Xing* was already widely used in the pre-Qin period (before 221 B.C.) in the sense of *what was seen in general*, but the first meaning of the word was probably the shapes of creatures on the basis that the right part of *xing* (形) refers to hairs. In the "Appended Remarks" of the *Book of Changes*, there is a well-known sentence: "In the heavens, forms (heavenly bodies) appear and on earth shapes (creatures) occur. In them change and transformation can be seen" (English translation quoted from *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Wing-tsit Chan ed. & trans. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 265). The *xing* was translated as shapes here.

"aestheticians" of *go* do is only to over-emphasize the sense of form originated from the game. They take them as independent, and temporarily forget the presumed end of the game.

The meaning of *xing* or form, together with the sense of "beauty" gained in *go*-playing, was transplanted back to painting in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Now *xing* was no longer the appearance of an objective world. Form was understood as a dynamic process, and its significance applied to all subsequent activities in making a painting. A new part of a form is often made out of the necessities of the parts already in existence, as well as out of its strategic function in the next stage of form-making or forming.

Similar things happened to another term *shi* with slight differences. On the one hand, the earliest meaning for *shi* is something to do with force or in the Chinese character 力, as the lower part of the character 势 shows. In this sense, it reminds us a Western term: sublime. It can have reference to things mathematical in terms of huge size, or to dynamic something with irresistible forces.[13] Like sublime, *shi* as a term can refer both to nature and to art. When one states that a work of art has *shi* or *qi-shi* (*qi* is another imporatnt term which I cannot discuss in this context), one means either it has colossal size or it shows a powerful force.

On the other hand, *shi* was used to refer to certain special kinds of forces from a very early time. For instance, it can be referred to as the power of a monarch or official, to military strategy of a general, and to social position or geographical situation one occupies, in short, something by means of which one can be superior to the others.

A further development of the *shi* is to let its meaning be "objectified" and thus to regard it as a social and natural tendency about which people as individuals can do nothing but follow.

In literary criticism, *shi* as a subjective connotation of strength, and the objective connotation of tendency was mixed. There is a chapter entitled "Forming *shi*" in the famous *Wenxing Diaolong* (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, a book particularly dealing with principles of the literary criticism completed in ca. 500 A.D.), which means to follow the style that a literary form required, rather than to be soft or unusal. Still, by doing so, the work can gain certain strength.

A new way of combination of the subjective and objective connotation of the *shi* can be seen in two human activities: calligraphy and *go*. The influence of calligraphy on painting is very important and should be discussed on another occasion. In this context, I can only summarize this idea by stating that the *shi* in calligraphy represents a challenge to geometrical forms through free movements of hand and body in character writing.[14]

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[13] Here I refer to the distinction made by Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Judgement*.

[14] More on this topic please see Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1996), pp. 93–103.

In *go* playing, the player should try to "attain a vivid and dynamic atmosphere" through "racing for *shi*".[15] This *shi* is not a size or a force, nor is it a natural tendency already there, but something that is produced by an individual with an effort and thereby achieves a general situation for potential development of the game. A *go* player is supposed to create a *shi* in the process of laying one stone at a time in turn; in this way he can let the game develop to his advantage. As a term for *go*, *shi* often means certain strategic points a player occupies that will influence the process of the game, in contrast to the actual territory a player already owns in corners.

By returning to the remarks made by the Chinese painting critics as quoted above, the analogy to *go* strengthens the consciousness of the process. In painting, *shi* is no longer associated with the sublime notion of a painting (as an artwork) or with what a painting depicts (in nature). Rather, it has become a concept in connection with the strategy in making the painting. This concept is now usually translated as momentum. This translation is, of course, not able to exhaust the meanings of *shi* as a term in *go* and painting. Perhaps a better way is to keep the original word *shi*, though Prof. Rudolf Arnheim criticizes me for doing that.[16]

3.5 Void, Order and Stages

As I quoted in Chap. 2, Huang Binhong, a well-known Chinese painter in first half of 20th century, linked painting with the play of *go* because both are matters of life-and-death. A group of stones with at least two eyes (like a living creature) is called alive, while less than two will be called dead. By comparing painting with *go*, Huang stresses the balance of the void and the solid in painting.

The relationship between solid and void is an ancient and traditional topic for painting criticism, and critics have offered numerous different opinions about it. Chinese painters like to leave large empty spaces in paintings so that the audience may fill them by using their own imagination. This is a challenging fact to theorists who aim to offer an explanation. In order to show why Chinese painting is different in this aspect from their Western counterparts, many scholars resort to Taoism. According to Taoism, Tao or "the Way" is void, and it logically comes ahead of everything in the world.[17] This is the cosmological way of forming a metaphysics of the world. It

[15] Wang Gai et al., *Jieziyuan Huazhuan*, Quoted from Yu Jianhua, *Zhongguo Hua Lun Lei Bian*, Zhonghua Shuju, 1973, pp. 1104–1105; author's translation. See also Note 4.

[16] See Rudolf Arnheim's review on the book *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art*, in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 38, Number 3, July 1998.

[17] Here is a paragraph from *Tao Te Ching*:

> There is a thing confusedly formed,
> Born before heaven and earth.
> Silent and void
> It stands alone and does not change,

maintains that the world originated from "the Way" or something "silent and void." If this idea was borrowed from metaphysics to the field of painting criticism, then naturally the void shall come ahead of anything solid, but this may also imply that the images in painting exist because of empty space, which would be against Huang's experience of painting. Huang repeatedly stressed that as a painter, one should be "from solid to void, first to be able to paint full paper, and then seek to reach void."[18] He did not need metaphysics to justify his view on void, but tried to find an analogy more accurately to describe his experience. By comparing painting with *go*, Huang reversed the relationship of solid and void, and put solid ahead of void. In his mind, the void or empty space is not like "the Way" in metaphysics, but like the empty points in *go*. A group of stones become alive because of empty points, but, reciprocally, it is the very solid stones that enclose these points. By bringing such an idea to painting, Huang presented a much more practical explanation of the relationship between solid and void.

In addition to life-and-death in *go*, there are many more issues which attract the attention of the players. In *go*, one of the most important techniques is the order or sequence of laying stones. To a player, the sense of order seems to be a higher knowledge than the life-and-death, which is seen as a basic one. A low-level player usually concentrates on the issue of life-or-death; he either constantly worries about his stones being killed by his opponent, or the attempts to kill those of his opponent's. Therefore, they tend to focus on a part, just as Shen Zongqian put it, "Low-level players fiercely fight in a single corner over only a small area and lose the much larger areas in the general situation."[19] A master player, though still keeping an eye on the life-and-death issue, aims at the victory of the entire game, namely, to occupy the most territory. He knows that what is more crucial is to locate and race to the commanding points, thereby taking the initiative for the whole game. If he does not find and occupy the key points in time, his opponent will probably take them before him. In *go* playing, each of the two players lays one stone at a time in turn. A player must always think about where his opponent will lay his stones in future moves and the more moves in advance he can calculate, the better a player he is. This naturally gives rise to a sense of order for laying stones. *Go*-playing manuals and records usually picture certain numbers within the small circles that indicate stones in order to show the sequence of laying stones (see again Picture 3.2). Every step is but one choice among many possibilities, and it in turn opens up new opportunities.

Goes round and does not weary.

It is capable of being the mother of the world.

I know not its name

So I style it "the way".

Tao Te Ching, Chapter 25. English translation quoted from D. C. Lau translation, Penguin Books, 1963, p. 30.

[18] Huang Binhong, "preface to the book of my own small landscape paintings, 1953." Quoted from *Huang Binhong on Art*, Henan Arts Press, 1998, p. 129, author's translation.

[19] Shen Zongqian, *Jiezhou Xuehuabian*, in Yu, p. 867; author's translation. See also Note 6.

If the player is a master, every choice must be a reasonable one, that is, the result of a particular situation. There are, therefore, causal relations between the stones on the grid and a player can only realize his strategic intention by following the correct sequence. If he neglects this sequence even for a single move, the whole game will probably develop on another track and the result will be entirely different from the one he has predicted.

By comparing painting to *go*, the ancient Chinese emphasized the importance of order or sequence in brushwork. A painter is now supposed to make every new stroke in accordance with the situation he is in. When he is painting, there is, of course, no opponent sitting on the other side of the paper or silk and working on the same picture with him. And yet a Chinese painter should always keep a sense of competition in mind. As a stone is to be laid on the grid, every stroke is to be made at the right place and time, following the inclination of the preceding strokes and preparing for the strokes to come, striving to take the initiative. To make a stroke is always a choice, which is decided or influenced by the size and shape of the paper, the motif and purpose of painting, and above all by the strokes which have already been made on the paper and thus have formed the general situation and momentum.

Stroke making is, therefore, like a stone laid in *go* playing in that it is a reaction or a counter-measure to the situation. Li Gan, a painter in the 14th century, wrote: "In making a new stroke, one must see the inclination of the previous one. If [the inclination] is continued without a break, a sense of connection will naturally arise."[20] An even better presentation of this idea was made by Shen Zongqian in the 18th century as *bi-bi-xiangsheng* (笔笔相生, strokes generate with each other).[21] Every new stroke is a creative reaction to the present situation, as well as guided by the strategy of the painter. There are "theories of game" in many different fields such as mathematics and linguistics; this may also be called a "theory of game". In this theory, a counter-measure results from aesthetic feeling, which is an outcome of experiences accumulated through longtime practice. In the light of such a parallel, we get a deeper understanding of the concept of sequence in Chinese painting. Sequence in painting is not as, for example, first planting trees in the front of a house and then in the back of it, or first ploughing the land to the west of a village and then the east. A stroke in painting is the result of the preceding strokes, but it is also a cause of the next, and thus a causal chain is formed in which every stroke is a link.

A match of *go* is usually divided into several phases in which different tactics are adopted: the beginning, when the player is to have the whole grid in mind and try to occupy key positions in order to form a general situation; the middle, when he is to fight with an opponent in order to defend his territory and break into the opponent's territory; and the end, when he is to try to get a bigger share in dividing the remaining intermediate zones. Ancient Chinese painters, as quoted above, expressed similar ideas about the procedure of painting. A painter should begin with a few strokes to form a general structure rather than concentrate on a corner. It is only after the general

[20] Li Gao, Zhupu, in Huang Binhong and Deng Shi, comp., Meishi Congshu (Naijing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986), p. 973; author's translation.

[21] Shen Zongqian, *Jiezhou Xuehuabian*, in Yu, p. 532.

structure has been formed that a painter can get down to the details. "At first he [a painter] makes a loose overall arrangement; he then dots and dyes ink layer upon layer to make it look profound and lovely, thus providing a lively feeling."[22] "A good *go* player can decide the situation of the whole match with only a few stones. A good painter must be able to do so, too. After that, he gradually adds shades and tinctures, from thin to dense and from light to dark, completing a perfect composition."[23] In their minds, a painting should not be painted one part after another, but one layer after another. In different phases, the painter does different kinds of work.

3.6 A Special Development from the Expression Theory

Some Chinese art critics prefer to differentiate traditional Chinese art from its Western counterpart by arguing that the former is expressive while the latter is imitative.[24] This is of course a too simplified distinction, since there are many expression theories in the West and many imitative ideas in ancient China. But if we summarize the main features of art in China and Europe, we may find that the subjective currents in art indeed appeared much earlier in China (in painting criticism, the tenth century, but much earlier in poetics) than in the West, where art theories and criticism were mainly under the influence of imitation theories until the appearance of the Romanism and Idealism in the 19th century. The expression theories were elaborated as independent aesthetic theories as late as the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by the works of Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood.

The imitative theories stress the relationship between artwork and the objective world while expression theories direct their focus on the relationship between artwork and the creator of the work. In this sense, many ancient Chinese ideas on art may indeed be categorized as expressive ones. However, this does not mean that the purpose of painting for them was to vent strong emotions (Romanticists), or to communicate the emotions one felt to others (Leo Tolstoy). To make an artwork, one indeed needs to be in certain special mental states, but they may not necessarily be the feelings one cannot restrain from releasing, nor is artwork meant to convey one's emotions to others.

Moreover, painting is not something designed by a painter to arouse an emotion on the part of audience while the painter himself does not necessarily feel it, either. This is an opinion held by many modern theorists (for example, Stephen Davies, Peter Kivy, etc.), but no signs of it can be found in ancient Chinese art criticism. Ancient Chinese repeatedly stressed that they made painting for self-amusement,

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[22] Zhang Feng, *Taiyilu*, in Yu, p. 141. See Note 7.

[23] Sheng Dashi, *Xishan Woyoulu*, in Huang and Deng, Meishu Congshu, p. 1337. See Note 8.

[24] Yu-kung Kao made an interesting distinction between the lyric aesthetics and narrative aesthetics, and considered that the Chinese aesthetics was mainly on the side of the former. See Yu-kung Kao, "Chinese Lyric Aesthetics", in Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong eds., *Words and Images,: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) pp. 47–90.

or we may say, art for the artist's sake. The pleasures they felt during the process of making paintings and seeing their own works afterwards were given primary importance. Naturally, many ancient Chinese painters might actually paint for the sake of audience, but a theoretical framework prevented them to claim that. It was impossible for them to presume that they could arouse emotions they had not felt themselves, because to them that would be equal to insincerity, which was against their very idea of art.

Again, the analogy with *go* throws light on this issue. During the process of making a painting, a painter enters into a mental state as playing a game. In such a state, one does not think about one's own emotion and endeavors to demonstrate it, or to think about the responses of his audience. In short, one does not play in accordance with their feelings. An athlete or a player of *go* concentrates on the competition itself rather than his or her own feeling or that of the audience, and so does a painter in making a painting. The process of making a painting is a series of free movements of a painter's mind and body. If one maintains that it is still a kind of expression theory, then what is stressed is neither the beginning (the emotion to be expressed) nor the end (the audience's emotional response), but the middle, which consists of a series of actions accomplished in a particular mental state.

The Chinese often describe the quality of art with a term: true. A good art ought to be a true one, but what is "true"? In light of an imitation theory or a perceptual attitude, it is interpreted as true to the objective world, while an expression theory demands that art be true to the "heart" or emotions of the creator. The analogy to *go* and the playing attitude enables us to understand the true as *being oneself*, and as concentrating on what one is doing. It is no longer to "press out" (as the word "express" literally means) something from inside of the creator, but to do something with a state of mind as it should be in this context.

By drawing parallel to *go*, a painter's mental state can be defined as neither an active nor a passive one. An expression theory may place stress on the active role of the artist in making an artwork, while an imitative theory tends to demand that a painter follow what he has seen. In a game like *go*, one should be active but not arbitrary. A game has its own rules; one must struggle for freedom within the rules of the game. He cannot break the rules, for that will destroy the game, but he can show his freedom within the room provided by the rules, and explore new possibilities on the premise of these rules. When Chinese painters consider "painting is to paint" (Jing Hao's words, as quoted above), they take painting as a process, in which a painter follows the tendency exhibited by the strokes previously made, makes his original creations in this particular situation, and paves the way for the following strokes. A painter might have general ideas or strategies about what he is going to make, but he does not have any ready-made schemata to be projected on to the paper. To a certain extent, a painter may let the painting form itself independently, but this does not mean to form the painting automatically. Every stroke of painting is a choice of the painter. A painter is not only to choose just once before the process of making a painting starts; he has to make a choice at every step of painting as well.

As a result, the appreciation of a painting is also somewhat like reading the record of a *go* game. Most of the audience, naturally, cannot be present when the painter is

making a painting and thus see how he is working, but when they see the painting, as when they see the record of a *go* game, they can feel the process. They can feel that the painter tries hard to fight against a non-existent opponent, makes an innovative stroke like laying a bold stone, and deals with the details like occupying the remaining intermediate points at the last stage of a *go* game. This idea may remind us of Norman Bryson's *Vision and Painting*, in which he tries to argue that there is an "invisible body" in Chinese painting, i.e., from Chinese painting, he can see the gestures of the painter's hand.[25] A comparison with *go* can show more than what he said. Bryson only brings to our attention that there are movements of body (gestures and postures) behind a static picture. This is important, but is still not enough. We have to demonstrate how the body is moving, what kind of rules the body follows, and why it is so. *Go* practice and game theory can provide us many inspirations in this respect.

The comparison between Chinese notions of painting and expression theory may serve as a conclusive remark for this paper, because it shows the theoretical significance of analogy-drawing between *go* and painting. Finally, I would like to warn against another tendency, which is to take such an analogy too literally. Every analogy has its limitations. After all, *go* is not an art or something belongs to the group of the fine arts. On the other hand, as long as we aim to receive inspirations from such an analogy instead of taking it too literally, we have indeed made many interesting discoveries and will make many more in the future if we continue our studies along this line.

[25] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (Macmillan, 1983), pp. 163–164, and many other places in the book.

Chapter 4
Theoretical Significance of Painting as Performance

In ancient China, there are some instances of painting as performance in which painters produced their works in front of a large or small audience, rather than doing it alone. The most famous among them may be Wu Daozi (685?–758)'s painting halo in public, and Zhang Zao (active around 750)'s entertaining guests with painting. These instances look like modern practices in the 20th century, and are seemingly unusual more than 1000 years ago. Many may take these as bizarre stories made up by eccentrics. It seems to me, however, that these were quite common in ancient China, and can be regarded as indicative of the unique characteristics of Chinese painting. It can inspire us to contemplate on certain fundamental issues of painting theory in general.

4.1 Forewords: From *What* to *How*

A painting can be appreciated in different ways. The first may be *what* is to be painted. We may be interested in the objects described in a picture, such as attractive people and lovely animals, or the scenes of historic events that otherwise cannot be seen. In these cases, we take painting as substitute of reality, for it serves the function in the past that photography can serve today. The way (*how*) an object is represented is, of course, still noticeable here, but it is only limited to the choice of the best viewpoint and the best composition to highlight the object that the painter intends to present.

The function of painting to keep "form" or appearance of object was very important in the past that may be difficult for us to appreciate today, since we are living in an age subsequent to the revolution of visual techniques such as photography, film and television. Our eyes have been completely transformed by these new techniques, which have drastically marginalized the representational function of painting.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_4

In the past painting was considered as a copy of something, and thus served certain purposes, such as religious, political, cultural and social. Painters performed these functions by choosing various subjects. The figures of Jesus, Buddha, or Confucius were idols of different places of the world, while the portraits of Napoleon, Washington, Lenin or Mao Zedong were endowed with political meanings. In both cases, the subjects were not chosen out of aesthetic motives, and aesthetic intentions were secondary when these paintings were viewed, though artistic techniques were necessary for the images to be created.

By comparing the styles of the different historical periods, E. H. Gombrich argues that "the Egyptians had largely drawn what they *knew* to exist, the Greeks what they *saw*; in the Middle Ages the artist also learned to express in his picture what he *felt*."[1] With succinct language, he provides three kinds of *what* that were presented in different times, and thus formed different styles.

In the minds of aestheticians, however, aesthetic judgments began with the idea of *how* the world is imitated rather than with *what* is imitated. For instance, Bosanquet quotes a passage from Homer as "one of the earliest aesthetic judgments that Western literature contains." On the shield of Achilles, made by Hephaestus, "the earth looked dark behind the plough, and like to ground that had been ploughed, *although it was made of gold; that was a marvelous piece of work*!"[2] It is *how* an image was made that stimulated Homer's exclamation. What Homer appreciated is only the admiration of representational accuracy, so his words can be regarded as appreciation of *how* to represent the *what*. Gombrich actually does the same. He indeed notices *how* pictures were made, and puts forth the formula of "making and matching",[3] but what he is concerned is still *how* to represent the *what*. His theory prevents him from imagining an independent *how* that is done without *what*.

Ancient Chinese painting and painting criticism provide us with many new theoretic possibilities. One of the noticeable facts is that during the long history of China the subjects of painting gradually evolved from the idols of gods, portraits of emperors and aristocrats, to landscape, and to flowers, birds, fish and insects. On the other hand, Chinese painting criticism paid more and more attention to the way a painting was made. This fact enables us to trace the process in which the question *how* a painting is made gradually gains its importance.[4]

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[1] E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press), p. 120.

[2] See *Iliad* XVIII, 548; Bernard Bosanquet, *History of Aesthetic*, p. 12. Here I quoted from Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greence to the Present* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1966) p. 23.

[3] See E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon Press, 1962. First edition 1960). This is one of the basic themes of the book, in which the elaboration of the formula can be seen everywhere.

[4] See "The Historic Process of Chinese Painting", in Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1996), pp. 23–36.

4.2 Painting Privately or Publicly

Painting is usually done by a painter alone away from the public, who only afterwards look at the results of his or her work. An unveiling ceremony is often held for certain important work of art. The unveiling of, say, a sculpture or a painting is different from raising the curtain for a performance of music, dance, or drama. The former signifies that the process of making the work is formally finished and from then on it can be viewed. The artist may attend the ceremony, but his attendance is of no substantial significance; the audience is still able to enjoy the work in his absence. The latter, on the other hand, indicates that the work of art is about to realize or materialize itself, which would be inconceivable in the absence of the performers. Painting is no performing art in its own right and a painter has no obligation to paint in public.

Like the painters in the West, many Chinese painters indeed preferred to paint in private. There are several practical reasons for them to do so.

The first is to concentrate their attention and so as to form favorable mood for them to create a good work of art. A good example for it is Gu Junzhi (active 457–464), who lived in a two-story house and set up his studio upstairs. Whenever he was painting in his studio, he always had the staircase taken away and other members of his family seldom saw him.[5]

The second is to keep secrets of the art from being seen. This was quite common in the workshops, since competition among artisans were usually very fierce. Zhang Yanyuan writes that Yang Qidan, an official and painter in the Sui Dynasty (581–618), always covered his painting with a bamboo curtain when he was not at work.[6] Even a typical literati painter like Wen Tong was said to have refused to let his best friend and cousin Su Shi see him while he was painting.[7]

The third is that the process of painting itself is not attractive, so the painter does not like to be seen in public. *Zhuangzi* tells a story about the court clerk of Lord Yuan of Song, who "took off his robes, stretched out his legs, and was sitting naked."[8]

The fourth is that some officials felt shameful to paint in public. The best example for this was Yan Liben (601?–673), who was summoned to paint birds in the presence of the emperor and many courtiers, and felt deeply shameful for having to do it.[9]

If these were similar to the practice in the West, there were also many cases of painting in public in China, however. I would like to quote two of them as examples here.

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[5]Xie He, *Gu Huapin Lu*, in Huang Binhong and Deng Shi, comp., *Meishu Congshu*, (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986), p. 1659.

[6]Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai Minghuaji*, Book 2, eds. Qin Zhongwen and Huang Miaozi (Beijing: Renmin Meishu Chubanshe, 1963), p. 163.

[7]See Li Gang, *Liangxi Quanji* "Ti Liu Zhonggao Tixing Suocang Wen Yuke *Mozhu*", in Chen Gaohua, ed., *Song-Liao-Jin Huajia Shiliao* (*A Source Book about the Painters of the Song, Liao and Jin Dynasties*) (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1987), p. 377.

[8]*Zhuangzi*, 21, in Guo Qingfan, comp., *Zhuangzi Jishi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1961), p. 719; Watson, p. 228, with changes.

[9]Zhang Yanyuan, Book 9, p. 167.

Gu Kaizhi, Admonitions of the Court Instructress to Palace Ladies, 24.8 x 348.2 cm, British Museum

The first is that, in order to raise money for a temple, Gu Kaizhi (346?–407?) first painted the image of Vimalakirti alone for approximately a month and then dotted its eyes in the presence of those who would contribute a good sum of money.[10] This story does not explain in detail what the audience actually saw, but we can imagine that, by dotting the eyes, the effect the painting was suddenly changed as if a vital force was poured into the painting.

The second is about Zhang Zao. Fu Zai, a poet and official in the Tang Dynasty, offered a beautiful description of this:

> The deep porch was richly decorated; the wine cups and food dishes were fine. In the courtyard there were bamboos scattered in the sunlit air – a delightful scene. The master, spoiled with the generous gifts of Heaven, suddenly appeared at the party, roughly demanding fresh silk to display his extraordinary art. The host gathered his robes about him, got to his feet and answered him with a shout. On that occasion there were twenty-four guests, seated to left and right, who heard this (encounter). They all stood up and stared at Zhang Zao. Right in the middle of the room he sat down with his legs spread out, took a deep breath, and his inspiration began to issue forth. Those present were as startled as if lightning were shooting across the heavens or a whirlwind sweeping up into the sky. Ravaging and pulling, spreading in all directions, the ink seemed to be spitting from his flying brush. He clapped his hands with a cracking sound. Dividing and drawing together, suddenly strange shapes were born. When he had finished, there stood pine trees, scaly and riven, crags steep and precipitous, clear water and turbulent clouds.[11]

In this paragraph, Zhang Zao performed a painting in front of 24 guests.

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[10] Zhang Yanyuan, Book 5, pp. 113–114.

[11] Michael Sullivan, "Some Notes on the Social History of Chinese Art," in *Guoji Hanxue Huiyi Lunwenji* (The Collected Papers of the International Conference of Sinology—The History of Art) (Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan, 1981), p. 160. See also Michael Sullivan, *Chinese Landscape Painting—The Sui and T'ang Dynasties* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 66. My italics.

Whether or not a painter painted in public, it seems, depended entirely on his personal habits. Nevertheless, the examples here were endowed with a more general significance, which was demonstrated in the focus on the act of painting itself in Chinese painting.

4.3 Performing in Two Ways

Painting may be taken as performance in two senses. The one is to show *what* is to be painted during the process of painting. The painter only exhibits what has been kept in his mind before, while the audience is only interested in what the painter will do in the next step. When we see a huge pictorial poster being painted on the street, we may be interested, on the first day, the head of a figure appeared, on the second day, the body of the figure, and the third day, the scenes around, and so on. The example of Gu Kaizhi as mentioned previously might be this case, too. A figure without eyes was transformed by Gu's magical pen-brush, and appeared to be a living person.

The other is to show the process or the *act* of making the painting itself. This act was appreciated as if it were a dance. Zhang Zao's example is the case. From this example, we can see that it was a common practice that a painter performed painting in front of guests during a banquet. Wu Daozi was another example. He painted after Pei Min danced with sword for him, together with Zhang Xu, a calligrapher who also performed for him his calligraphic art. It was said that many residents of the city came to look at them.[12]

Micheal Sullivan, a British art historian, provides a good discussion for these two cases. He points out that the audience may be attracted to watch the process of painting for two reasons. The first is said to be mainly a Western one. According to Sullivan:

> The creators of the great fresco cycles of mediaeval and Renaissance Europe, for example, must often have attracted a crowd as they worked. But they were there simply to gaze and admire. It was the painting as it revealed itself, rather than the act of painting, that attracted them.[13]

Sullivan goes on to say:

> The idea of a painter performing before an audience was virtually unknown in the West before the twentieth century. It was not uncommon in China, however.[14]

In China, the audience was not only attracted by the revelation of painting, such as in the case of Gu Kaizhi and in the others mentioned above, but by the very act of painting as well. Zhang Zao and Wu Daozi are good examples, though Sullivan has different ideas about Wu Daozi.

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[12]Zhu Jingxuan, *Tangchao Minghualu*, in Huang and Deng, p. 1001.

[13]Michael Sullivan, "Some Notes on the Social History of Chinese Art," in *Guoji Hanxue Huiyi Lunwenji*, p. 160. Sullivan's italics.

[14]Sullivan, p. 160.

4.4 The Origin of Painting Performance

Sullivan was correct in arguing that there was no painting performance in Western painting before the 20th century, while it was common in China. He did not go a step further to explain the reason why it was so, however.

There were two causes for the emergence of performing painting publicly in China, one is direct and one is fundamental.

The direct cause of performing painting might be the performance of calligraphy in public. It was a common practice for men of letters in ancient China to write to each other, many of them did it at banquets. Emperors also wrote for subordinates, usually in their presence. This custom is still prevailing even today, particularly among the older persons with classical education and among high-ranking officials. From calligraphic writings, what the audience saw was still in two categories: what is written and how to write. What is written belongs to literature, philosophy, and politics, and so on, while how to write belongs to calligraphy as an art. Since calligraphy does not require many professional tricks, and is mainly popular among the men of letters, it is easy to be accepted as a publicly performed art.

In the process of appreciating calligraphic writing, the audience is naturally expecting to know what the calligrapher is going to write, but the audience is more interested in the process itself, or the gestures and postures of the calligrapher. Owing to the close connection between Chinese painting and calligraphy, and because a painter was usually also a calligrapher, the painting performance became a common practice.

On a more fundamental level, it was Chinese philosophy that brought about such a custom. Ancient Chinese always paid a great deal of attention to the act of human being, rather than merely the outcome of the act. Herewith I give an example from *Zhuangzi*. When a cook butchers an ox for the king:

> …at every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee – zip! zoop! he slithered the knife along with a zing, and all was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Ching-shou music.[15]

[15] *Zhuangzi*, 3, in Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 50.

Fu Shan, Tree and Fruits, 189 x 48.5 cm

In this paragraph the act of butchering an ox was appreciated in its own right and was described by the author as if the cook had been dancing to an ancient piece of music. In reply to the question how he was able to do so, the cook said he owed this to Dao that was higher than skill.[16] Skill only made people know how to do something, while Dao was superior to the skill or "know-how." Dao means, according to the words of the cook in *Zhuangzi*, that "I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and the spirit moves where it wants."[17] A person with Dao could act spontaneously under the guidance of the subconsciousness as if certain divinities were helping him, could observe the rules without being aware of them, and reach his goal with no conscious goal in mind. He thus acquired a kind of freedom in his actions and it is precisely this freedom that made the actions enjoyable. Since the cook's story was known to almost every educated person in China, this description of his butchering of an ox naturally exerted a profound influence on later generations.

From butchering to painting, the Chinese displayed the same attention to the act itself. We read from *Zhuangzi* that the painting clerk "took off his robes, stretched out his legs, and was sitting there naked", and was thought as the "true painter". Wu Daozi painted after watching Pei Min's sword dance. Bao Ding "puts his hands and feet on the floor, and stalks up and down, looking around, regarding himself

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

as a true tiger."[18] Fu Shan (1602–83) "was seen dancing and jumping as if he had gone crazy."[19] All of these were not dance in itself, but they constitute a background against which the painting performance became possible.

To conclude, painting performance became possible because the unique nature of Chinese painting led itself to such a practice.

4.5 Ancient Chinese Painting and Modern Western Painting

Norman Bryson compared modern Western painting with ancient Chinese painting in his *Vision and Painting* as follows:

> Towards the end of his life, Matisse, like Picasso, consented to be filmed at work in his studio. Part of the film was shot in slow motion, distending the movement of hand and brush in time so that each stroke seemed a gesture of consummate deliberation; as though in slowing the movement down the film were able to demonstrate for the first time a dimension of intention and decision that would never otherwise become known. …Looking at the Chu Jan [Ju Ran] scroll in Cleveland, I can imagine all of these gestures; no film is necessary for me to locate these movements, for the silk is itself a film that has recorded them already; I cannot conceive of the image except as the trace of a performance.[20]

Bryson is correct in connecting ancient Chinese painting with modern Western painting, but he only sees the similarities between them without noticing the unique characteristics of Chinese painting. I have put forth some of my ideas regarding this issue in another work,[21] and argued that there was a kind "countermeasure" in Chinese painting, by which the painters made new steps in accordance with the present situations. By doing so, they need the capability of "judgment" rather than "pure reason" or "pure emotion".

The distinction between Dao and skill in *Zhuangzi* was quite influential in ancient China. After narrating the performance of Zhang Zao, Fu Zai wrote, "I see the painting of Senior Zhang is not skill, but the very Dao itself."[22] Zhang Yanyuan also praised Wu Daozi's act of painting to be comparable to that of the cook in *Zhuangzi*.[23] Chinese painting does not intend to abolish the pursuit of *what*, but to manifest the *what* by means of a particular *how*, i.e., the act of painting.

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[18] Chen Shidao (active around 1100), *Houshan Tancong*, in Yu Jianhua ed., *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973) p. 1029. Bao Ding was probably contemporary with Chen Shidao.

[19] Xu Ke, comp., *Qingbai Leicao* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), vol. 9, p. 4038.

[20] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting-The Logic of the Gaze* (London and Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1983), p. 163.

[21] See "Significance of Analogy-Drawing Between *Go* and Painting", in *Journal of the Faculty of Letters*, *The University of Tokyo*, *Aesthetics*, Vol. 25 (2000), pp. 19–34.

[22] My translation. Chinese text see Yu Jianhua, p. 20.

[23] Zhang Yanyuan, Book 1.

Su Shi, Dead Wood and Monstrous Rock

Painting has its own space; perspective is one of the means to realize this space. Painting also has its own time; a painter should indicate the time of events in his work. In addition to the space and time in this sense, however, ancient Chinese painting achieved a new space and time, which are subjective. Body movements of the painter show the space, while duration of the movements is the time. This space-time comes from outside painting, but is realized in painting as traces of painter's gestures and postures.

The objective space-time can be merged with the subjective space-time. The fusion of subjective and objective spaces constitutes the combination of *what* and *how*, while the fusion of subjective and objective times shows the subject as a present being comprehends and confronts the eternity. The Wheel of Fortune versus the Mustard Seed: A Comparative Study of European and Chinese Painting.

In his famous book *Art and Illusion*, Ernest Gombrich mentions feeling puzzled by the following aspect of Chinese painting:

> No artistic tradition insists with greater force on the need for inspired spontaneity than that of ancient China, but it is precisely there we find a complete reliance on acquired vocabularies.[24]

Gombrich notices that, on the one hand, the ancient Chinese placed great stress on the inspired spontaneity of painters, so that the traces of improvisation were deliberately kept in their works, yet, on the other hand, they relied so completely on acquired vocabularies or formulas that they could trace each of their brushstrokes back to certain famous masters in previous generations. It seems paradoxical, but in fact Chinese painters made new creations precisely on the basis of acquired vocabularies, and recognition of this fact can provide a starting point for a study of the unique characteristics of Chinese painting.

[24]E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, p. 128.

4.5.1 The Way of Understanding "Acquired Vocabularies" in European Painting

Gombrich continues with a discussion of the medieval writer and painter Villard de Honnecourt's *Construction: The Wheel of Fortune* (c. 1235), and reproduces the following two pages (Fig. 4.1):

To Gombrich, Villard's pictures provide examples of how painters are always eager to give "universals"—man, bird, lion, etc.—rather than this man, that man, this bird, that lion. From this, and also from the examples he gives from a Chinese book entitled *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (芥子园画传 to which we shall return), Gombrich concludes that painters are always taught to paint universals first, and it is only afterwards that they begin to deal with the particular. He takes the transition from the universal to the particular to signify a progress, paralleling his famous making and matching formula.

It is good that Gombrich puts European and Chinese paintings together, and attempts to look for some common theoretical explanation. These two examples are indeed similar in many points: both may be taken as books for beginners, and both provide basic formulas, or, in Gombrich's term, "basic vocabularies" for apprentice painters to acquire. They are still, however, fundamentally different.

In Villard's picture we see geometrical forms in the images of men and animals: squares, triangles, and pentagrams. Zenner in her "Villard de Honnecourt and Euclidean Geometry," in which the relationship of Villard's portfolio to geometry is discussed at length, writes, "In Antiquity, within the Mediterranean basin, and in the West during the Middle Ages, scholars considered mechanics as one of the more noble of human activities, placing it at the confluent of ideal mathematics and the three-dimensional physics of the terrestrial world."[25]

It is obvious that Villard was very interested in geometry; we can find evidence not only in the pictures he left, but also in the writings that accompany them. "On folio 18v of the portfolio", writes Zenner, "Villard (or his scribe) wrote: *Ci comence li force de trais de portraiture si con li ars de iometrie les ensaigne*…('[h]ere begins the force of lines for drafting, as the art of geometry teaches…'). Elsewhere, Magister II added a commentary (fol. 20r) on a leaf of 'technical drawings' he added to the portfolio: *Totes ces figures sont estraites de geometrie* ('[a]ll these figures are taken from geometry')."[26]

Zenner also discusses the source of Villard's knowledge of geometry. She tells us that there was a practical geometry passed between the craftsmen of the Middle Ages, and that "the builder's practical geometry was handed down by means of a strictly oral tradition, and that the oral aspect was propagated because they were all illiterate."[27] Villard de Honnecourt probably also had access to original texts on

[25] Marie-Thérèse Zenner, "Villard de Honnecourt and Euclidean Geometry," in *Nexus Network Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2002.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

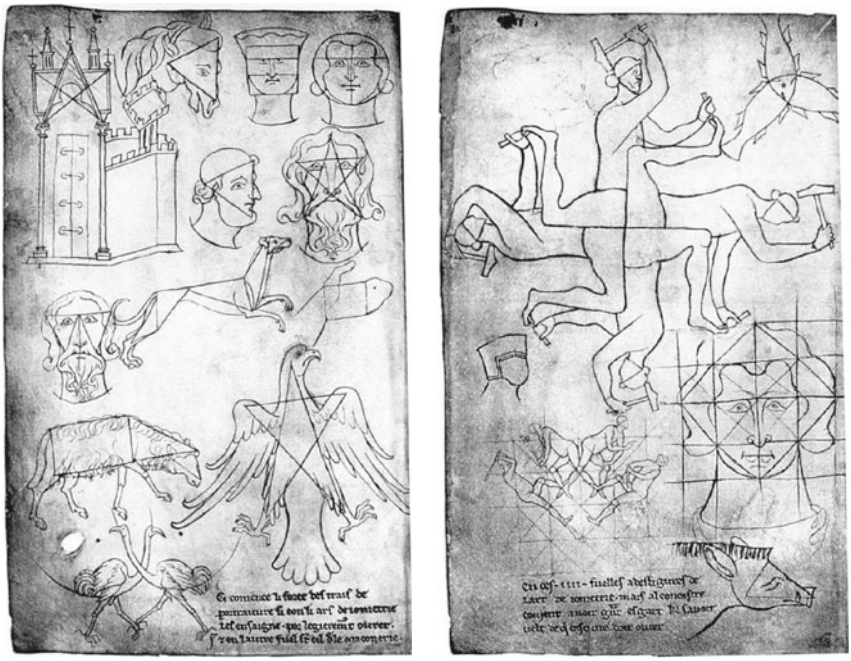

Fig. 4.1

Euclidean geometry at Corbie Abbey, where he stayed to study geometry. There are also direct traces of Euclidean geometry in the portfolio, as Zenner argues in detail.[28]

The practical methods of constructing pictures resulted from certain fundamental underlying aesthetic ideas; for example, that regular geometrical forms are beautiful. In Europe, there was a formalist tradition in aesthetics: the idea that, as Tatarkiewicz summarizes it, beauty lies in "the size, quality and number of the parts and their interrelations."[29] This is a tradition that was generally ascribed to Pythagoras, though some scholars argue that its origins are older. Pont, for example, holds that "Modern scholarship has established that most of the doctrines traditionally ascribed to Pythagoras were really the contributions of the older high civilizations, particularly of Mesopotamia and Egypt."[30] Pythagoras may not have created his theories from nothing, but rather learned a great deal from earlier civilizations, as many other Greek philosophers did. But it was in Greece that the tradition was crystallized by, among others, Pythagoras and Plato, and thus passed down as a dominant theme for later generations.

In Plato's *Philebus*, we read that "something straight, or round, and the surfaces and solids which a lathe, or a carpenter's rule and square, produces from the straight

[28] Ibid.

[29] W. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1980) p. 125.

[30] Graham Pont, "Philosophy and Science of Music in Ancient Greece: The Predecessors of Pythagoras and their Contribution," in *Nexus Network Journal*, vol. 6 no. 1 (Spring 2004).

and round" are "absolutely and eternally beautiful."[31] Similar ideas are repeated by many writers from ancient Greece and Rome, through the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, and are called "the Great Theory" by Tatarkiewicz.[32] St. Augustine first formulated beauty as measure, shape and order, and gave this idea the following well-known expression: "Only beauty pleases; and in beauty, shapes; in shapes, proportions; and in proportions, numbers."[33] In the Renaissance, Alberti defined beauty as harmony and good proportion: "the consonance and mutual integration of the parts."[34]

There are two sources for the Great Theory; one is music and the other is architecture. The Pythagoreans discovered the harmony in sound, and concluded that the "elements of the material world either are, or are imitations of, numbers."[35] But in the minds of the Greeks, architecture, which was taken as "frozen music," shared the same origin, and was also determined by number. This idea profoundly shaped the Greek view of architecture, and its influence spread from architecture to sculpture and painting.

In discussion of the geometrical forms of architecture and painting, the Italian term *disegno* frequently appeared. This concept was developed from the mathematical understanding of architecture and other arts. *Disegno* was taken as a function of the deity. "By *disegno*, which is the deity's beginning, she teaches the architect to make his edifices. She has invented the characters in which the different languages are written… given ciphers to the mathematicians… described the figures of geometry."[36] *Disegno* abbreviates *un segno di dio*, meaning a sign of God. "Art works are signs, their visible aspect indicating a metaphysical reality, an idea."[37] In this way, *disegno* is linked with theology. That God manifests himself through certain geometrical forms was a belief current among European painters in the Middle Ages, from the 3rd to 13th centuries.

A couple of years ago, as a result of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* and the film adaptation, a well-known picture became even better known: the *Vitruvian Man* (Fig. 4.2).

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[31] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 43.

[32] See W. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1980) pp. 125–129.

[33] Ibid., p. 127.

[34] Ibid., p. 128.

[35] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: From Classical Greece to the Present*, p. 27.

[36] Jean Paul Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 1 (New York: Phaidon, 1970), p. 63.

[37] See Charles Carman, "Leonardo's Vitruvian Man: Disegno Meets Theology," from http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/conferences/human/papers/Carman.pdf.

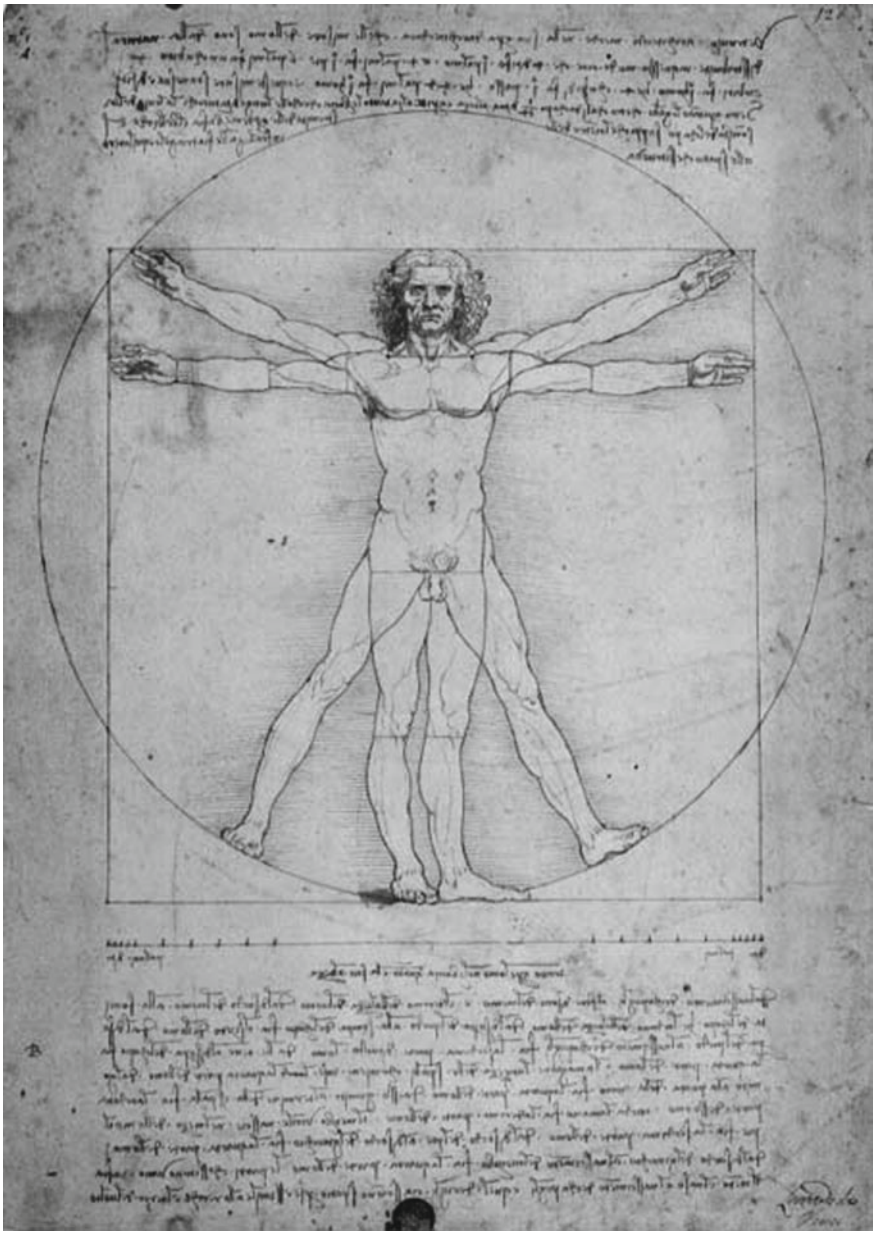

Fig. 4.2

The following text accompanies Leonardo da Vinci's drawing:

> Vitruvius, the architect, says in his work on architecture that the measurements of the human body are distributed by Nature as follows … [….] The length of a man's outspread arms is equal to his height. From the roots of the hair to the bottom of the chin is the tenth of a man's height; from the bottom of the chin to the top of his head is one eighth of his height; from the top of the breast to the top of his head will be one sixth of a man.[38]

This is exactly the code found and developed by Leonardo da Vinci, by which a mysterious connection between Nature and human beings was established. Numbers, measures, and symmetry are all codes of God, who teaches European painters the essence of painting, the root of Art.

4.5.2 The Separation of Painting and Architecture in China

Numbers and measures played important roles in other ancient civilizations, including China. In a book edited by Lü Buwei (吕布韦 293?–245 B.C.), a politician during the reign of the first Qin emperor (秦始皇帝), we find the following paragraph:

> The ultimate source of music is very far away. It was generated by measurement, while rooted in the Great First.[39]

In another chapter of the same book, Lü records how, during the legendary Yellow Emperor period (黄帝 2697?–2599? B.C.), a musician called Ling Lun (令伦) made 12 pitch-pipes to distinguish the 12 notes of an octave.[40]

These records may show that China was also among the earliest civilizations to discover the relationship between music and mathematics. These records of musical knowledge can be supported by many archeological finds, particularly the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (曾侯乙墓), uncovered in 1977, where a set of bronze bells or *bianzhong* (编钟) was found that has been dated to 433 B.C. (Fig. 4.3).

Bianzhong or chime bells are traditional Chinese musical instruments, which can be dated back to long before the creation of the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, who was only the vassal of a very small state. How large and luxurious chime bells and other musical instruments would have been for the emperor and the vassals of larger states we can only conjecture, but at least from this piece we can see that Chinese people at that time had already mastered the complex techniques necessary to make such an ingenious object possible. Pont gives the following enthusiastic description:

> The instruments included 65 bronze bells, forming a well-tuned carillon of five octaves, still in playing order. To Everybody's astonishment, the bells produced a very accurate, mostly chromatic scale … a musical Rosetta Stone, no less.[41]

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[38] *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*. Vol. 1 (of a 2 vol. set in paperback) pp. 182–183.

[39] Lü Buwei, "The Great Music," in *The Spring and Autumn Annal by Lü*. My translation.

[40] Lü Buwei, "The Ancient Music," in *The Spring and Autumn Annal by Lü*.

[41] Graham Pont, "Philosophy and Science of Music in Ancient Greece: The Predecessors of Pythagoras and their Contribution," in *Nexus Network Journal*, vol. 6 no. 1 (Spring 2004).

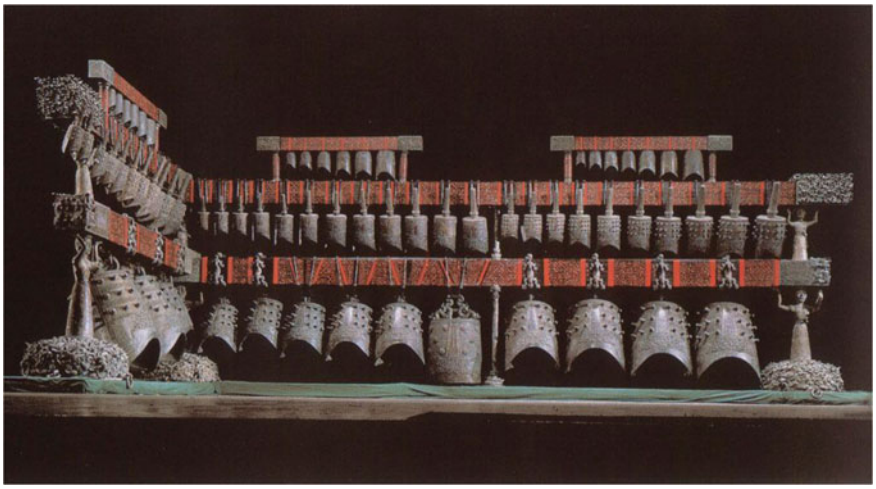


Fig. 4.3 Bianzhong of the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, Museum of Wuhan in Hubei Province

We do not know how the Chinese at that time were able to make such an excellent instrument, but we can be sure that its maker had a profound knowledge of music and its relationship with mathematics; otherwise it would have been impossible.

Very few ancient Chinese buildings have survived, since most of them were made of wood, but we can still see many pavilions, terraces, pagodas, and verandas. Euclid's work was not introduced into China until 1607, but the Chinese had developed an indigenous geometric knowledge, a mixture of practical geometry and numerology-geometry, dozens of centuries before that date.

The ancient Chinese believed that Chinese civilization began with two diagrams: *Hetu* (河图 literally, the image from the Yellow River) and *Luoshu* (洛书 literally, the writings from the Luo River) (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5).

These two diagrams revealed numeric laws, presumably invented by certain anonymous designers but attributed to rivers and thus given a natural-cryptic origin (*Hetu* was carried on the back of a dragon-horse, and *Luoshu* on the back of a turtle). However, it was believed that Fu Xi (伏羲, the legendary first tribal chief) subsequently invented *Bagua* (八卦, the Eight Diagrams) (Fig. 4.6):

Fig. 4.4

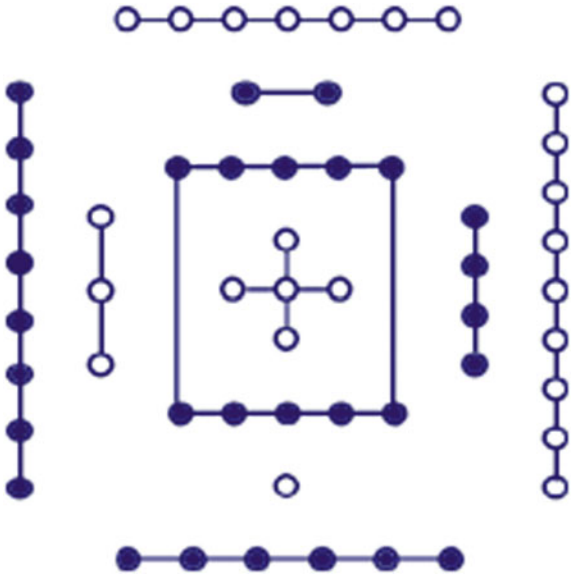
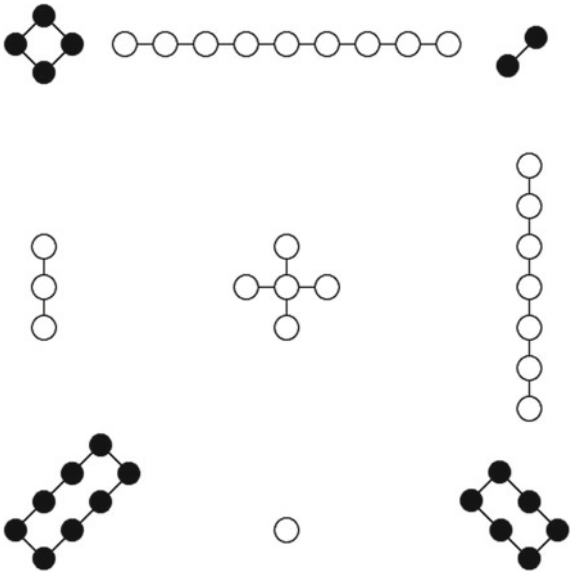


Fig. 4.5



These were later revised by King Wen of Zhou (周文王, reigning from c. 1105 B.C.–c. 1056 B.C.) as follows (Fig. 4.7):

Fig. 4.6

Fig. 4.7

All this implied a mathematical and geometrical tradition omnipresent in Chinese culture for many centuries. If we say the Pythagoreans believed that "all things are numbers" and profoundly influenced European culture, we can also say that from *Hetu* and *Luoshu* to *Bagua*, Chinese culture also demonstrates a clear line of mathematical inclination.

This line of thought was even more obvious in architecture. There are many special characteristics in Chinese architecture, such as its emphasis on bilateral symmetry, horizontal breadth, and gabled roofs. Liang Sicheng found that "The Chinese have always employed an indigenous system of construction that has retained its principal characteristics from prehistoric times to the present day."[42]

This tradition was deeply rooted in the practice of *fengshui* (风水), a system of orienting buildings according to mysterious connections between Heaven, Earth, and human beings. *Fengshui* was a recondite geomancy by means of astronomy to discover the laws of Heaven, and a geography to know the laws of Earth. In this practice, the compass and other instruments were used to decide the north-south axis, and thus other directions. By choosing a good *fengshui* for a house or tomb, people believed they would be able to achieve good fortune in their life.

Fengshui practice was also based on a *gaitian* (盖天) cosmography, dating from the Longshan culture c. 4000 B.C. (龙山文化), in which the heavens were round like a huge vault while the earth was like a square ground.[43] The *gaitian* cosmography was one of the earliest cosmographies in ancient China, and exerted a strong influence on Chinese ideas of architecture, particularly imperial buildings such as the Temple of Heaven, the Temple of Earth, and the Imperial Palace (Figs. 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10).

These pictures again remind us of the Vitruvian man, which tries to place a human figure in a circle and a square.

There was a strong possibility, then, that Chinese painting would develop in the same direction as its European counterpart, and many Chinese painters did in fact pursue geometry, but another line of thought developed in China during the European Middle Ages: literati painting.

"Literati painting" is a translation of *wenren hua* (文人画), which literally means paintings made by men of letters, scholars, or writers. However, it does not refer only to the status of the painter; more importantly, it refers to a special style demonstrating a particular aesthetic taste.

Literati painting began with a change in the status of painters. From the end of the Han Dynasty (汉朝 c. 200 A.D.) onwards, some men of letters, such as Gu Kaizhi (顾恺之 348–409), Lu Tanwei (陆探微 active 439–472) and Zhang Sengyou (张僧繇 active 500–519), started participating in picture-making activities. Although their work cannot be considered literati painting in its narrow sense, its appearance was of great importance for the eventual formation of literati painting.

Gombrich observes this fact and comments that:

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[42] Liang, Ssu-ch'eng, 1984, *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture: a study of the development of its structural system and the evolution of its types*, ed. by Wilma Fairbank, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press.

[43] See Li Liu, *The Chinese Neolithic: Trajectories to Early States* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 85–88.

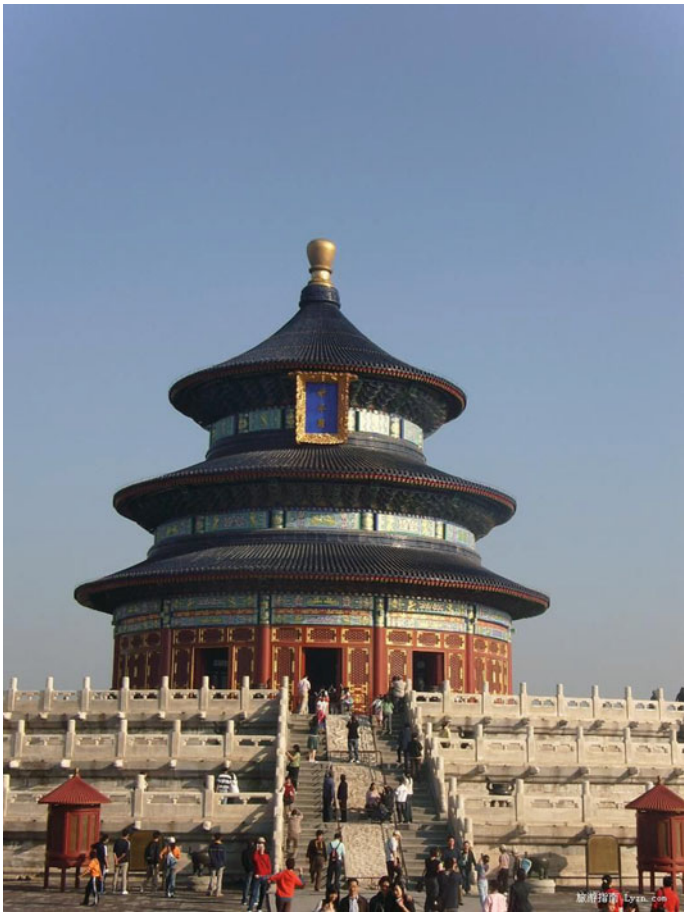

Fig. 4.8

> The Chinese were the first people who did not think of the making of pictures as a rather menial task, but who placed the painter on the same level as the inspired poet.[44]

Some small changes in this sentence would make it perfectly correct:

The Chinese were the first people among whom the inspired poets did not think of the making of pictures as a rather menial task and engaged in this form of art.

A new upper-class painting emerged at the end of the Han Dynasty. This upper-class painting was no longer made merely *for* the upper classes, but also *by* the upper classes. Gradually a distinction between so-called elegant and vulgar painting was made, which imposed certain values on picture making.

[44]E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1989), p. 105.

Fig. 4.9

Fig. 4.10

Literati painting is generally considered to have germinated during the Tang Dynasty (唐朝, 618–907), with painters such as Wang Wei (王维, 701–761) and Zhang Zao (张璪, active around 780) as its forerunners.

In the Song Dynasty (宋朝), a group of scholar-officials initiated a new kind of painting. Among them the most prominent is Su Shi (苏轼, 1037–1101), who put forth many important ideas for this new painting.

Susan Bush, a professor of Chinese art at Harvard University, describes its development thus:

> Ideally, from its inception, scholars' painting was the art of an educated minority, practiced only in a circle of intimates and appreciated by a chosen few. Yet despite its elitist origin, it gradually gained ground until, by late Ming, the styles, practices, and views of the literati were the accepted modes of art and thought.[45]

In the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644–1911), neither the orthodox painters around the court in Beijing nor the innovators in the southern commercial centers such as Yangzhou (扬州) became court or professional painters in the manner of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), when there was a threefold division of literati, court, and professional painting. Both orthodoxy and innovation should instead be regarded as continuations of literati painting. Although the relationships between the styles of each of these two kinds of painter and their social positions, as well as the different roles of painting in their lives, is highly deserving of study, the tradition of literati painting was already firmly established at that time, and any such study should first take this fact into consideration.

Literati art was created by men of letters, who were not trained in workshops and had little knowledge of the professional training of craftsmen. On the other hand, they received a humanistic education, and knew poetry and calligraphy. As is known, there are "three perfections"—poetry, calligraphy, and painting—in Chinese art, and the Chinese painter is supposed to be educated in poetry and calligraphy. It would have been impossible for them to consider mechanics as a noble activity as Europeans of that time did, and they were simply not interested in mathematics and geometry.

The rise of literati painting in China was also a process of separating painting from architecture, together with the knowledge of geometry and geomancy that architects might have. In the minds of these scholars, or men of letters, the work of painting was acceptable because it was a work of ink-play, that is, a natural extension of writing and calligraphy, but they would have nothing to do with house-building, which was only the work of menial craftsmen.

Chinese painters even considered that architectural painting was the lowest of the various genres of paintings.

Painting was divided into figure painting (such as portraits of monarchs and other royalty, as well as those of high-ranking officials and officers; pictures of legendary heroes, sages, and ancestors; images of Buddha or other Buddhist and Taoist figures), landscape painting (paintings of mountains, rivers, and other natural scenery), flower and bird painting (including paintings of the so-called "four gentlemen": bamboo, plum blossom, orchid, and chrysanthemum, which symbolized the virtues of intellectuals), animal painting (such as paintings of horses, oxen, tigers, or dogs), and architectural painting (mainly paintings of palaces and temples). A great change in the status of various kinds of painting took place during the Song and the Yuan dynasties. Before the Song Dynasty, painters thought that the most important of these branches was figure painting, but from the Song Dynasty onwards landscape

[45] Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101 to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 181.

painting was placed first. No matter how the order subsequently changed, architectural painting was always in the lowest position. For instance, Gu Kaizhi (c. A.D. 344–405) wrote: "Towers or pavilions are only unchangeable objects, which are difficult to paint but easily made good."[46] In the Tang Dynasty, Zhu Jingxuan (朱景玄) arranged the painters he recorded according to the following order: "The first are figure painters, then the painters of animals or birds, then those of landscape, and lastly those of towers, palaces, houses, and woods."[47] Tang Hou (汤垕, active c. 1330), a writer and critic in the Yuan Dynasty, cited a popular saying during his time: "When ordinary people discussed painting, they always said that there were thirteen categories. Landscape painting was at the top; architectural painting was at the bottom."[48] During the Ming Dynasty, Wen Zhenheng (文震亨 active c. 1630) made this even clearer in simple words: "The first is landscape [painting], then [that of] bamboo, woods, orchids, rocks. As to [that of] men and women, birds, animals, towers, palaces, and houses, the small-sized is secondary, the large-sized is even less."[49]

Architectural painting was called *jiehua* (界画), which means to paint with a straightedge. To paint palaces, houses, temples, pagodas, or pavilions demands many straight lines, which are inevitably drawn with the aid of instruments. This kind of painting also requires careful calculation, measurement, composition, and a knowledge of foreshortening; it is, therefore, not an easy job. It would be wrong to think that the ancient Chinese did not know about the technical difficulties involved in making architectural pictures. What they wanted to do, however, was to deliberately separate painting from architecture, with its connections to mathematics and geometry.

The separation of painting from architecture in China also gave a strong impetus to painters to break away from the ideas of linking heaven and earth, the competition of Yin versus Yang, the circle of Five Agents, and other traditional mysterious ideas.

4.5.3 *What Chinese Painters Learnt from* the Mustard Seed Garden

In his book *Art and Illusion*, Gombrich quotes a Chinese book entitled *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, which was completed in 1679 (Volume I), 1701 (Volume II–III), and 1818 (Volume IV). "The Mustard Seed Garden" was the name of a small villa in Nanjing owned by Li Yu (李渔, 1611–1680), an essayist and

[46] Gu Kaizhi, *On Painting*, as quoted in Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai Minghuaji* (*Record of famous Painters of All the Dynasties*) Qin Zhongwen and Huang Miaozi, eds. Beijing Renmin Meishu Chubanshe, 1963, p. 116; author's translation.

[47] Zhu Jingxuan, *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dyansty*, in Huang and Deng, p. 999; my translation.

[48] Tang Hou, *Huajian*, in Shen Zicheng (ed.) *Lidai Lunhua Mingzhu Huibian* (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1982) p. 201; my translation.

[49] Wen Zhenheng, *Changwuzhi*, in Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian* (*Classified Compilation of Writings on Chinese Painting*), Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1973, p. 137; my translation.

dramatist, who gave support to the compiling of the book and also wrote the preface to its first volume. The significance of the mustard seed came from a Buddhist parable—"Mount Sumeru is contained in a grain of mustard seed"—and was intended to convey the idea that a small book might contain a huge amount of meaning. In this book, the basic theories of Chinese painting were summarized and many illustrations were provided for learners to copy and practice.

Gombrich advances the book as proof of his theory that Chinese painters, like their European counterparts, began to practice painting by learning how to paint trees, rocks, mountains, water, orchid, bamboo, plum, chrysanthemum, grasses, insects, flowers, birds, and various figures, such as adults and youths, women, and children; all of them universals, designating kinds of objects rather than individual objects. He maintained that this book, like some European books, did not bring people to the level of painting particular objects, that is, not this particular tree or that particular mountain. A universal is, in his terms, a schema of the object, which is at a relatively lower level, and should be corrected in accordance with perception if the painter wants to produce a realistic painting. Gombrich writes:

> The Chinese artist appears still as a "maker" of mountains, trees, or flowers. He can conjure them up because he has learned the secret of their being, but he does so to record and evoke a mood which is deeply rooted in Chinese ideas about the nature of the universe.[50]

In his famous formula of making and matching, the maker belongs to the lower level and does not reach the level of matching. He is right to say that Chinese painters are still makers, but we will find that they were not the same makers as the Europeans, and that they have other aesthetic ideas behind their work.

Now we come back to the *Mustard Seed Garden*. The first picture in the first volume (Fig. 4.11) is accompanied by a paragraph of writing. Here is a translation of the first few sentences:

> To paint landscapes, one should first know how to draw trees. To draw a tree, one should first draw the trunk and main branches, and then do the foliage, and thus eventually it becomes a luxuriant tree. Too many twigs will make it a withered one.[51]

From this we can see that this is a book that teaches drawing. The author continues by showing how to carefully make the first few strokes to form a general composition, and stresses how important trees are in landscape painting.

What the *Mustard Seed Garden* teaches includes the following:

First, how to draw an element of a picture, such as how to draw a tree;

Second, how to put elements together: for example, drawing two trees (Fig. 4.12), three trees (Fig. 4.13), five trees (Fig. 4.14), etc.

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[50] E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, p. 129.

[51] *Jiezi Yuan Hua Zhuan*, Remin Meishu Chubanshe, 1960. Vol. 1 (《芥子园画传》, 人民美术出版社 1960 年版第一卷), p. 41. Cf. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting 1679–1701* (Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 53. My understanding of the original text seems quite different from the translator, so I have made my own translation.

Fig. 4.11

Fig. 4.12

Fig. 4.13

Fig. 4.14

Third, the ways in which elements like trees have been drawn by famous painters in the past, such as Fan Kuan's style (Fig. 4.15), Guo Xi's style (Fig. 4.16), Wang Wei's style (Fig. 4.17), Ma Yuan's style (Fig. 4.18), and many other styles. The author concludes by saying that:

> The various styles of trees have been given above as established standards. After knowing the styles, we should consider their application. Although it is impossible to divide styles from their applications, we should distinguish them for beginners. It is like five flavours, which can be blended in different ways; an expert cook uses them in different ways to make delicious food.[52]

From the *Mustard Seed Garden* and other books and ancient paintings, a student of painting only learns the ways and styles of painting; it is also very important for them to be able to make good use of these: to know how to apply them.

This is an imitation of the way calligraphy is learnt in China. Generally every Chinese student learnt calligraphy from childhood; it was an important part of education. To men of letters in ancient China, beautiful handwriting was taken as a sign of the quality of one's education and character.

Fig. 4.15

[52] *Jiezi Yuan Hua Zhuan*, Remin Meishu Chubanshe, 1960. Vol. 1, p. 73. Cf. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting 1679–1701* (Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 85.

Fig. 4.16

Fig. 4.17

Fig. 4.18

The practice of learning calligraphy begins with the line. A line should have its beginning, middle, and end. The feeling and disposition of the writer can be seen in a line. We can describe lines as being "powerful" or "soft", "rigorous" or "charming".

From a single line, a calligrapher can proceed to connect lines to create a character. A character can have eight basic strokes, as 永 has various lines in different directions. A student should begin by learning to make lines in different directions, and then the ways of turning and combining, and eventually creating characters (Fig. 4.18).

In Chinese philology, there are two kinds of characters: ones consisting of a single element (*wen*), and ones combining two or more elements (*zi*). A *wen* consists of strokes, while a *zi* consists of *wen*. In this sense, a writer will progress from strokes, through *wen*, to *zi*, and then on to sentences, ending with a whole text.

The only way for a student to make progress is to copy: firstly, by imitating copybooks, and then famous calligraphic works. In order to become a calligrapher, a student has to practice for a long time. It is not a process of learning certain secrets of writing, like tricks of the trade or the geometry of composition, but more like a process of accumulating feeling. In our everyday life, after experiencing many different things, we can become an experienced person. It is precisely the same in learning calligraphy, in which, after many years of learning and practicing by copying and writing, we become experienced calligraphers, and can write spontaneously.

A calligraphic work may have different meanings to different audiences. To those who have never practiced calligraphy or cannot even write Chinese characters, a work as such may merely be an image composed of abstract lines. They may praise the Chinese for making nice pictures when they write. In contrast, to those who can write Chinese characters or have practiced calligraphy for some time, an image as such will mean the movement of their bodies, their gestures and postures, and thus the strength in the strokes: the dynamic force in the character will be felt.

If this theory is applied to painting, we can see that we also have two different ways of seeing a picture. One way is to take it as an image, and the other is to understand it in a dynamic way, by seeing in it the traces of the gestures and postures of its maker. We cannot avoid seeing Chinese painting as an image, since it has to be of some object and have, in Chinese terms, *xingshi* (形似) or likeness in form, but calligraphic and dynamic feelings will inevitably infiltrate into our perception of painting. In this sense, we can say that the Chinese did not write characters by drawing pictures, but rather they made pictures by writing characters: a sense of the dynamic act of writing permeated their understanding of painting.

In light of this it becomes clear why the Chinese have an anti-geometric inclination in painting. As I have argued elsewhere, they retain the idea that a beautiful line in a painting is a free-hand one.[53] Jin Hao (荆浩, 923–936) once gave a simple and interesting definition of drawing or painting: "Drawing is to draw" (*Hua ze hua ye*, 画者画也). It is indeed a kind of "acquired vocabulary", but it is a dynamic one. Those who take a Chinese character as a picture cannot have a real appreciation of Chinese calligraphy, while those who see a Chinese painting as merely an image cannot fully understand the painting.

Here I do not mean to say that everyone who looks at a Chinese painting must be a painter or a student of painting. We should not say that those who have not yet learned Chinese painting cannot feel the painting by means of their own experience. The dynamic or kinesthetic sense of the act of painting for the ancient Chinese came from the calligraphic practice that was an important part of the traditional education of Chinese intellectuals. For various reasons, including the imperial examination system for scholar-officials, calligraphic ability was emphasized and became one of the signs of one's learning and cultivation. Good handwriting was important for educated people, since others would judge their quality and identify their temperaments from their handwriting. It was precisely the popularity of calligraphy that gave rise to the characteristic Chinese sense of line, which was transferred to the field of painting, and determined how painting was produced and appreciated.

This communication by means of sharing the feeling of an activity enabled the Chinese to understand paintings in a special way, which was completely different from that of Europeans. While Europeans could see in an object the geometrical forms that were taken as a more essential dimension, in China the communication between

[53] Gao Jianping, "To begin with a beautiful line…", in *Annals for Aesthetics* (Edition of the Panayotis and Effie Michelis Foundation in Collaboration with the Hellenic Society for Aesthetics), Volume 42/2003–2004, pp. 173–192.

audience and work was realized by means of the common practice of character-writing, familiar since childhood.

4.5.4 Conclusion: The Sources of Creation in China

In conclusion I would like to put forth some ideas, based on the two manuals discussed, about the difference between traditional Chinese painting and European painting.

As we have seen, Chinese painters did not try to acquire a rational comprehension of the divine world by means of mathematics and geometry, and did not present nature in this way. This is not because there was no Pythagoras or Plato in ancient China, but rather because Chinese men of letters deliberately switched Chinese painting onto another track with the rise of literati painting.

Chinese painters even deliberately avoided the help of drafting instruments and resisted the temptation to render the shapes in their painting geometrically. To them, the world was not a place of secrets that could be discovered through mathematics, but rather the place in which they lived. Painters represented the world through certain vocabularies, as people describe the world with language. As a person with a good education could employ a bigger vocabulary and so give a better description of the world, so a good painter also had a wide vocabulary with which to represent the world he saw. He developed this by means copying from manuals and from celebrated painters, and renewed the vocabulary by seeing and imitating nature. During the process of painting, he never tried to construct his painting in the manner of a builder. The process of making a painting is an experience with its own beginning, middle, and end, rather than a project of combining different objects together. During the process of picture making, Chinese painters can freely express their emotions with the help of the vocabularies they have gradually acquired since an early age, but their present experiences and kinetic feelings are always central to the process.

As we know, there were stories of "one-stroke paintings" (一笔画) in ancient China. These were taken as quite unusual instances and recorded and passed down. These stories, as some Chinese painters have argued, refer to the way strokes are connected to create a complete whole:

> Zhang Yanyuan said Wang Xianzhi could do one-stroke calligraphy and Lu Tanwei could do one-stroke painting. This does not mean that all the characters of an essay or all the lines in a picture of an object can be finished in a single stroke, but rather that, from start to end, the brushwork is consistent and linked together with an unbroken breathing thread.[54]

"One-stroke painting" might refer to a proficiency in picture making, showing a skillful application of the "acquired vocabularies," but the ancient Chinese went a step further by putting forth a rather special idea of "one-stroke" (*yi-hua*, 一画). Shi Tao wrote:

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[54]Guo Si (郭思), *Hualun* (画论, *On Painting*). Cf. Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting* (Uppsala 1996), p. 71.

> From ancient times to today, the obstacles to the law cannot be cleared away because the principles of one-stroke are not known. If one knows one-stroke, one will not be blocked by the eyes and thus the painting can follow the heart. If painting follows the heart, the obstacles are naturally removed.[55]

The single stroke is an act that becomes a bridge between the feelings inside and their traces outside. A bridge as such signifies that the relation between feelings and traces is not the heterogeneous isomorphism posited by psychologists or Neo-Kantians, but rather a causal relation between action, with its kinetic feeling, and the traces that are the results of such action. From the order of the strokes, through one-stroke painting, to a metaphysical idea of "one-stroke," this is the whole process of the ideas of Chinese painters. We may consider that "one-stroke" is not actually something that can create the world, as the author of this idea maintained, but we can at least accept that "one stroke" can be a process for cultivating painters. With this practice, the Chinese painter is convinced not that "I think, therefore I am" but rather "I act, therefore I am." The world is my trace, and I am the source of creation.

[55] Shi Tao (石涛), "Kugua Heshang Huayulu," (苦瓜和尚画语录) in Huang Binhong and Deng Shi, eds., *Meishu Congshu* (*Collected Works on Fine Arts*), (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1986) p. 13; author's translation.

Chapter 5
Difficulties in Reading Images: Diversity and Internationality in Image Reception

5.1 Ignorance in Painting

Languages are not global. We think with languages and our thinking is restricted by languages and is therefore national and regional. Languages not only determine the way we talk, but also influence what we talk about. People do not create certain ideas first and then find a certain language to express them; on the contrary, they think of the ideas with language, and the process of thinking and expressing is one and the same process. Every language has a unique situational context, a unique history of development, an intertextuality constituted by its classical texts historically and its living discourse in currently. All of this determines how people talk and influences the idiosyncratic beauty and humor a language can have. There is a sense of pleasure derived from the use of language. Chinese people, especially men of letters, like to chat in order to enjoy their use of language. This is also true with people in other countries. If you use a foreign language to chat with a native speaker, enjoy the beauty and humor of that language, speak inspiringly and tell jokes fluently, then this means you've mastered that language.

Languages tacitly and powerfully affect the way people think, constitute the political unity, national identification, religious demarcation, and the defining feature of humanistic studies. There is no universal language. Learning a foreign language is difficult, and it is even more difficult to master it. Studying foreign languages can constitute a way of life. It can often be found that those who have studied a foreign language for years act and even think like the people who natively speak that language. This is because languages are inherently part of life. People studying a foreign language naturally get involved in a foreign culture.

It is said that literature is national while paintings are universal. Paintings do not depend on languages. You may understand paintings the moment that you look at them, whereas you may not master a language even though you may have studied it for years. In fact, nobody has ever examined how much one can get from a quick glance at a painting. Some simple, widely used symbols including traffic symbols such as traffic lights, no whistling signs, drive slow signs, school signs, hospital

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_5

signs, men's restroom, and women's restroom will be grasped easily. These signs have been gradually internationalized, and you may understand them very quickly. However, they are merely guides to action. Symbols should not only guide action, but are also expected to generate meaning. Artistic appreciation should not simply be understood as a recognition of simple common symbols.

Artistic appreciation is much more complicated. First of all, what painting languages express ranges from the themes to various details. Take Chinese characters for example, every character has a meaning. But once it is written, its strokes and structures, the directions, lengths, intensities, strengths, and connections of its lines are all striving for the expression of meaning and pursuit of beauty, which goes beyond the meaning of the characters per se. It is not only about what has been painted but how it is painted.

In the past, philosophers were keen to find the innocent eye that newborns might have. Later on, psychology proved that innocent eyes do not exist. What newborns see is not an innocent world; on the contrary, they can not see. Children begin to see the world in the course of growing and learning. Alike, painting does not start from capturing the appearance of nature, but from learning its formal language and understanding the world through studying. Different art languages, and different levels of mastery of the formal language would show the world differently. It is due to this reason that people of different ages, sexes, and experiences and from different ethnic groups, nations, and cultural backgrounds see the world differently.

However, the innocent eye assumption cannot only be negated evidentially by scientific experiments; it is actually a product of a certain concept of a painting idea which advocates the pursuing of illusionary appearances. The pursuit of illusionary appearance in painting emerged in a certain historical period, with respect to certain opportunities and requirements. It is, as Ernst H. Gombrich emphazised, due to the influence of epics, tragedies and other narrative literature that made the Greek people sought for illusionary appearance in order to create a delusion of vividness. This can further be explored, though it has already been explored by many theorists. It has clearly been articulated that a natural attitude towards nature did not itself come naturally. When Gombrich used the terms "making" and "matching," he put forward an idea to approach nature by correcting schemes, thus refuting the idea of direct imitation of nature (see Gombrich 1962: 100 and others).

People who cannot read are called illiterate; those who cannot read images are likewise blind with respect to images. People have to learn to read and manage to improve their reading capabilities. There is a famous Chinese movie titled *The Life of Wu Xun*, which presents the misery of illiterate people. Those people are "blind" even though they have normal sightedness. There is an important area they cannot enter; that is, the world of written language. The illiterates have often been bullied in the life world in which written languages are deeply entrenched. Different people may find different meanings in one and the same painting. Some will look at it and skip it; others might look into it profoundly; some might be aroused in emotions and affections, in which the dramatic differences appear.

I once looked at the religious murals in a Turkish church together with a couple of European aestheticians. I could only get some sense of the antiquity and solemnity

from those paintings in this orthodox church. While my colleagues warmheartedly explained to me the details like what this sheep symbolizes, and what that tree refers to, etc. I learned a lot from these explanations. Certainly, this is not enough for a deeper understanding of those paintings, which requires profound knowledge, a well-trained interest in art, and idiosyncratic propensity of religious belief.

Images have national traits. Every nation has developed its own tradition of image making, which is collaboratively shaped by its national history, philosophical ideas, literature and arts, and the formal languages accumulated in the process of image making. It takes time to learn how to read those images just as learning a foreign language. Hence we cannot just simply take for granted what our eyes have caught. The image emerging in our eyes is the outcome of our capacity of reading image symbols. The more we want to see, the more capacity of reading image-symbols is needed.

This is the advantageous point of painting. You can get something from it without learning. I cannot read Italian, but I can have a general idea about painting during the Italian Renaissance period, and make some sense of it. It is the same for Europeans looking at Chinese paintings, even though they cannot speak and read Chinese language. This advantageous point might turn into its opposite when people conclude from this fact that there is no need to learn how to read images at all. Generally speaking, people make judgments by intuition, believing that what they see is the same for everyone. If somebody is a young student or a child, we might tell him or her that what he saw is not true and that he needs more learning. However, if somebody is a "mature scholar" or a person whose confidence has been strengthened by his position, he will believe that his or her judgment is authoritative and refuse to learn something.

If someone explains to us a manuscript of Leonardo da Vinci, we will stay modest and believe that the explanation is necessary since we cannot read Italian. However, if someone tries to explain one of Leonardo's paintings, we may think that this is unnecessary and feel impatient, though the painting includes a lot for us to learn, and we can learn it. We might feel annoyed if someone says that our intuitive feeling towards a painting is wrong and we should approach it from a different perspective. In fact, intuition is an outcome of learning and cultural influence.

We all learned a lot in the process of our upbringing, but later on the process of learning is forgotten. As researchers, we may know that our teachers have led us through the door to special academic fields. However, we often forgot what we learned from our primary and high school teachers. We also forgot a lot of what we learned before we went to school and what we learned from our surroundings and through different types of media. We forgot the bedtime stories, though we may not have really forgotten them as they may be embedded in our sub-consciousness and may have accompanied us throughout our lives. In fact, these forgotten experiences are still there, affecting our interest, shaping the ability and direction of our artistic appreciation.

Let me return to the examples of Leonardo's manuscript and painting. If we do not know the language the manuscript has been written in, we may listen to explanations of it attentively and may learn a lot. However, when we look at his painting, we

may pretend that we have understood it. But we actually do not and we may even do not know that we do not understand it. That is very sad. It is possible for people to pretend that they understand a painting which they actually do not understand or even misunderstand. This is a difference between texts and images. And the fact is that one has to learn how to read images.

5.2 Differences in Appreciating Calligraphy

It has been frequently discussed that modern Chinese ink and wash paintings are not as influential in the West as expected. This can partly be explained by the Westerner's attitude toward these paintings. Many have been stranded by this theoretical predicament. For example, some argue that this is because Chinese painting skills are required to produce these paintings. Jackson Pollock claimed that his abstract expressionism has been influenced by China. Later on, a Chinese painter Zhao Wuji (Zao Wou-ki, or Chao Wu-chi) did the same. No matter how hard Pollock tried to learn from the East, his paintings do not have the ink skills of Chinese paintings, by Chinese standards. He did very well in dripping, spilling, and sprinkling as well as in using oil paint with different colors, but in contrast to Zhao Wuji, he did not have the skills the Chinese ink-washing painting required to display people's movements, visions, and expressions in his paintings (Sullivan 1989: 194–196). And owing to his training, his most abstract paintings are not free of Chinese skills. Since Pollock was more influential in the West than Zhao, Pollock might be considered to be better than Zhao, and painting without Chinese skills higher than those with Chinese skills. This argument is very popular, but it is groundless. Whether Chinese skills are better or not is not decided by painters alone or by how good paintings are; it is closely related to how the paintings have been accepted by audience and society.

Let me give an opposite example. In Stockholm, Sweden, there is a Chinese pavilion which was built over 200 years ago. In addition to Chinese porcelain, furniture, and silk, the palace has several Chinese couplets made by Swedish writers in the way they imagined Chinese couplets to be at that time. I brought some Chinese visitors to see the couplets and they reacted to them differently. One scholar took a historical attitude and believed that they were understandable and great, given that the Swedish writers created the couplets more than 200 years ago. But other visitors, particularly artists, couldn't accept the couplets as they were not calligraphy.

What was the real problem? It was about the different ways of appreciating calligraphy. At that time the Swedish writers copied Chinese calligraphy as static images. The Swedish people, especially the royal family took great interest in these couplets and admired them in the same way as they thought Chinese people might do. They took the couplets as Chinese symbols as they imagined them to be. This is much similar, I think, to today's European and American visitors in China admiring Peking Opera or Kun Opera. They are new to them as cultural symbols. They are interested in the singing styles and enjoy the beautiful scenes, and that is it. This

is also an opportunity to show their wide range of vision and their generosity for cultural variety. However, this is still a misunderstanding, though in good will.

Let me start with calligraphy. The Swedish people at that time and the Europeans thereafter, including most contemporary westerners, usually believe that calligraphic works are static images. They may have been told this, and have subsequently realized that this is not true, but they have gotten used to it. For example, European and American students often omit strokes when writing Chinese characters. This is because they take Chinese characters as images, therefore omitting one stroke more or less does not matter. Nobody has made a rule with regard to how many strokes should be made in order to complete a painting of a face or a tree. However, this isn't true with Chinese characters. They have a fixed number of strokes so that a stroke more or less makes a great difference. It always takes a long time for foreign students to get this point.

What is more important than keeping the correct number of strokes is to follow the correct stroke order in writing. Chinese characters must be written in the correct order. Chinese teachers stress the importance of the stroke order, and correct the wrong stroke order. Chinese calligraphy stresses the importance of the stoke direction and order, the intensity of strokes, the thickness of ink, balance, symmetry and the addressing of imbalance and asymmetry. A calligraphic work is dynamic. Without these qualities, a calligraphic work can't be a good work.

This pursuit of dynamics in Chinese calligraphic works could not be understood by the Swedish people and other Europeans in the 18th century. This is not because they simply couldn't understand this kind of art, but because more learning is needed in order to achieve understanding. Thanks to the multi-century exchange between China and the West, Chinese art became more and more intelligible for Westerners. However, it is still a question as to how much of it they can understand, which is related to daily practice, but also entails further theoretical explanations.

5.3 Learning to Understand the Symbols of Images

Let's start with the need for study in order to produce paintings. It is easy to understand that study is required to produce paintings. There are different national painting traditions, different ways of study, different forms of organizing study, and different procedures, rules and teaching materials for study. I wrote an article dedicated to a comparison of *The Wheels of Chance* and *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* in order to explain that Europeans learn to produce paintings differently from Chinese people (Gao 2013). Europeans learn how to paint by proportion and size and with auxiliary lines, and bring their images in line with standard geometric figures. On the contrary, the Chinese learn how to paint by copying (*linmo*) paintings the way they follow calligraphy copybooks. In this way, they learn how to use their brushes and ink and design the layouts of their paintings. Europeans use practical geometry, explain how paintings are constituted, and teach painting skills. The Chinese stress sensory experience, and while copying, they learn the painting languages, decide

which direction lines should go and in what order and with what intensity they should be created, and ensure dynamic coordination among various painting factors. This shows the differences between European and Chinese approaches to learning painting.

Different nations have different painting traditions. We have realized that different peoples have different schemas with which they comprehend reality as E. H. Gombrich enunciated. He distinguished drawing from writing, taking drawing as a higher form than writing. He explained that writing is just making whereas painting is matching. Obviously, this point has not yet fully been developed. In discussing schemas, it is necessary to explain how they are made. Europeans believe painting is higher than writing while the Chinese take the opposite stance. While Europeans think that practical geometry is the foundation of painting, the Chinese drawing is thought to be based on calligraphy.

This also refers to the relationship between traditional and modern. We need to face the modern challenges and modernize, but we shouldn't do away with traditions utterly. The problem of Chinese modernity is twofold: how to deal with traditions and how to deal with the West. If we simply inherit traditions, we won't modernize; if we accept the West uncritically, we won't have a Chinese modernization. Chinese-type modernization is both Chinese and modern. We need to handle the modern challenges while preserving the essence of traditions simultaneously.

Study is necessary for both the producing and appreciating of paintings. I lay special emphasis on this because it is often neglected. In essence, appreciating paintings is identical with producing them. I would like to present a theory of "inner copying" (*nei mofang*) that we learn from our own imitation of actions in order to feel the dynamics of images. Inner copying does not necessarily mean to make actual imitation. People would take paintings as a course of movement, and their heart moves along the paintings when they look at them.

We may have read stories about ancient calligraphers who are said to imitate a calligraphic work with their right hands knowingly or unknowingly on their left hands, on the ground, on walls, or on their bodies when coming across with excellent calligraphic works. The reason is that they tried to grasp how calligraphy works by exercising it personally. In fact, when appreciating Chinese paintings, people may have to use their hands to some extent; some contents need to be appreciated with hands. We appreciate paintings using both eyes and hands. In a sense, the more we use our hands, the better we can appreciate.

Hands and eyes are two important dimensions for appreciating Chinese paintings, and "hands" count even higher than "eyes". Certainly, commentators' appreciation differs from the artist's. The categories of "hands" and "eyes" cannot be applied to the ranking of a painter's appreciation and a commentator's appreciation in general. To some extent painters can understand paintings better than commentators, and since commentators cannot usually paint, their comments could be irrelevant or superficial. On the other hand, however, visual symbols are different from linguistic symbols, and symbols used in theoretical discussions are different from those used in paintings. These differences entail the shift from pictorial symbols to verbal ones, which means that commentators need to express in language how they feel about the paintings.

It is not justifiable to say that the meaning of a painting is solely determined by the extent of which languages can express. The meaning of a painting lies in the meaning of images themselves. Imaginary thinking can capture the meaning of images themselves without using concepts or languages. However, commentators have to make the shift. What they do is somehow similar to translation. Translation means turning one language into another while commentators express the meaning of visual images in language. This is also a highly creative work in another sense.

In addition, commentators should also incorporate knowledge from all branches of the humanities and social sciences. Commenting doesn't merely mean to talk about what one feels; it includes analyses of the feeling and the interaction with different fields of knowledge. Of course, an ordinary audience does not have to know philosophy, psychology, sociology and history, nor aesthetics, art history or even who a painter was and when his painting was produced. It is fine for them to care about their own feelings and the meaning they interpret. However, commentators require all these types of knowledge and use it to translate visual meaning into linguistic meaning in order to augment the meaning of a painting and avoid misunderstandings.

It might be concluded here that appreciating images is an ability which should be learned in the same way as we learn a foreign language. We may realize that it is hard to learn a new language. This is especially true for adults. They may have spent many years trying to learn a new language without progress. We may think that it is much easier to learn how to appreciate paintings than to study languages. Paintings can be readily understood, and the more you look at them, the more you will know about them. In fact, it is difficult to learn how to both understand languages and appreciate paintings. It is easy to tell how good your command of a foreign language is, but it is hard to test your understanding of an artistic work and find out how well you understand it. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to appreciate paintings. To do this well you need to be exposed to the long-term artistic training and appreciation, develop artistic understanding as you grow up, and acquire an understanding of artistic practices. This is a craftsmanship, a quality, and a capacity of artistic interest leading to an accumulation of knowledge on image and symbols.

5.4 Different Meanings of Internationality

Finally, I'd like to come to the topic of internationality. Art can be regarded as international, but the internationality per se ought to be reflected. Some artistic works are admired in the national domain, and some are especially admired by peoples from other nations. Which is better? A paradox comes into play here.

People often judge artistic works and artists by the extent of their international reputation, such as where exhibitions of certain works were held, what kind of awards an artist has won, which comments were made by international experts, and what journals made comments. All these are standards of judgment. For example, the exhibitions of a local painter's works in New York and Paris are believed to be better than exhibitions of their works in Beijing, while exhibitions in Beijing are believed

to be more meaningful than those in a provincial city. This is an indisputable fact, however, theoretically speaking, this is unreasonable.

Artistic comments are not the same as sports comments. For athletes, provincial, national, international and Olympic gold medals are quite different in value. An Olympic gold medal could be as important as ten national gold medals. This sounds reasonable. There are international standards for sports events, and these standards challenge the limits of human physical strength. To ensure that athletes get higher, faster, and stronger, they are required to compete according to certain rules.

There are similar views in the world of art in which it is believed that art is recognized in different scopes and represents different levels of accomplishment. There used to be a popular saying that "what is international is worthy to be accepted to be Chinese." This statement is an adaptation of an earlier statement: "What is unique to the Chinese can be well accepted in the world." The statements are opposite in meaning. The statement "What is unique to the Chinese can be well accepted in the world" stresses the importance of Chinese national characteristics. National characteristics are a pass to the world, so it is important to develop and promote the national characteristics to be recognized by the world. This is a design for art styles and paths. However, the statement "What is international can be well accepted in China" represents a different attitude: When something that stems from China earns an international reputation and is awarded a medal some kind of distinction, it will also be naturally recognized in China. This is another design for art styles and paths. The two statements represent two different strategies and lead to two different styles.

Ethnicity doesn't come naturally. It consists of different factors based on historical reasons. Influenced by calligraphy and Chinese literati, that Chinese ink and wash painting should be ideographic, Chinese paintings are required to appear vigorous, well-structured, and dynamic. Very much infiltrated by philosophy, however, European art has been developed in a combination of two traditions, imitation and form (mainly geometrical form), and underwent an artistic transformation and development process related to formal integrity, the adaptation of the part to the whole, and light and color.

National characteristics are hereditary, but they can be learned, which means that we can learn from each other through dialogue to reach a certain level of reception. Europeans don't use unique traditional Chinese painting skills, but they work to make strokes and lines beautiful and dynamic, too. This has been found in the works of many painters from the past to present. Painters are aware of the movement of their paintbrushes. But have this feeling and awareness been recognized and conceptualized in theory? This used to be impossible in Europe in the past because there existed an artistic and philosophical tradition which suppressed the exploration of beautiful strokes in painting. Is it possible for the feelings of beauty to be recognized along with the dialogue between China and the West? It is possible, I think. And it is also the opportunity for ink and wash paintings to reach out to the world. The concept of universality can be plural. In the past, the tension only lay in the opposition between particular and universal, between global versus local. It seems that something universal was there, and all that was different from it was local. Later on, this kind of universality was just another form of locality that had spread globally. Universality

can also be plural; there are different types of universality which have become global from different regions. This can be taken as a shift from diversity to pluralism. By diversity I mean that different types of universality are found in different geographical spaces respectively, and by pluralism I mean that they are found in the same geographical space.

5.5 Conclusion

Let me return to the problem of image reception. One needs to learn how to read images. The ability to read images should be acquired in order to develop the capacity to read symbols, and thus understand the object of painting. Different cultures have quite different traditions of creating images. This leads to a considerably different understanding and evaluation of images, which is twofold. One is about understanding: foreign cultural images may not be understood at all or only to a certain extent. The other is about feeling: we may feel estranged from an image of a foreign culture.

What should be avoided is pretending to understand and commenting arbitrarily on what we do not know of a foreign culture. Chinese people shouldn't be conceited when reading foreign cultural images. In the same way Westerners shouldn't be conceited in reading Chinese paintings and calligraphic works.

The world we have is pluralistic, by which I mean that through study we can appreciate images and paintings created by different traditions. This will help us to experience and accept them, to develop our feelings and enrich our inner and outer worlds.

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Chapter 6
Who Are True Artists?—An Art Élitism in Ancient China

6.1 Élitism and Its Fate in China in This Century

Art élitism seems out of fashion and has even become taboo in contemporary China for three reasons. Firstly, since the second half of the last century, the Chinese realized that China lagged behind the European countries economically and, as some Chinese reformists insisted, socially and politically. This naturally brought about a further argument that China lagged behind the European countries in culture, including literature and the arts. This argument was based on two beliefs. The one is that literature and the arts are the products of certain economic conditions, and thus a backward economy must have produced backward literature and arts. The other is that, like the transition from agricultural to an industrial economy, literature and the arts developed along the same path all over the world. Both of these beliefs now appear to be dubious, for it is unwise to evaluate the literary and artistic production of a nation on the basis of the level of its economy, and it is generally realized that culture, literature and art do not develop along one and the same path all over the world, a univeralism severely criticized today. Although on a theoretical stratum the beliefs are not scientifically verifiable, the Chinese from the second half of the last century to the middle of the present century had a practical reason to believe in them. They needed, namely, a foreign culture to reinvigorate and safeguard the old and ancient Chinese society which they were convinced to be on the verge of extinction. During this period an overwhelming tendency in China is to learn from the West—in economy, in politics, in science, in literature and in the arts. Lu Xun, a prominent writer in modern China, said, when teaching youth how to write short stories, that he never read Chinese novels and short stories but only Western ones, though he actually had spent lengthy time in studying ancient Chinese literature. Therefore, in evaluating Chinese art many scholars inevitably have European models in mind. Traditional Chinese art consists mainly of two kinds: that of the craftsmen and that of the intellectuals. The former is comparatively close to the traditional European art in style, while the latter is not. In this century, therefore, the intellectuals' art has on

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_6

the whole been condemned, though there are still some critics and historians who go against the mainstream and try hard to defend it.

The second reason for the decline of art élitism is related to the first. In spite of the fact that the Chinese have learned various European styles in the course of modelling on the West, a naturalist or realist tendency dominated in China before the 1980s. While a history of European art is in the present century consisted mainly of a series of modernist movements which were against the naturalism, in China it is on the whole a century of learning the Western naturalist and academic art which developed in Europe in the previous centuries. Scholars during the turn of the century, such as Kang Youwei and later Chen Duxiu, admired Western painting very much and strongly criticized traditional Chinese painting. Many Chinese painters who studied art in Europe from the 1920s to 1940s brought back traditional European art at a time when modernism was flourishing there. After returning to China, they managed to establish similar colleges and taught what they had learned in Europe to the Chinese. Some of them—one of the most prominent of whom was Xu Beihong, who once received art education in Paris—tried to combine European styles with Chinese ones by using Chinese media to paint realistic paintings. Their practices were successful in their own right. But when someone tried to draw from this the conclusion that traditional European painting was better than traditional Chinese painting, it was already a proposition open to discussion. Some Chinese historians went even farther by evaluating the whole of traditional Chinese painting in accordance with the standard of European painting. To them, European painting was the best; the Chinese professionals' painting or that of the craftsmen, since it endeavored to be lifelike, was more or less acceptable; but the painting of the intellectuals (or literati painting) was the worst as it did not try to imitate reality. This judgement is obviously unfair; and even some of those art historians dared not voice such an opinion directly, though they indeed had it in mind and implied it in their writings. If professional painting was regarded as better than literati painting, art élitism would inevitably be considered to have done nothing good for Chinese art.

The third reason is perhaps puzzling to ordinary English-speaking readers but would be acceptable to a reader who knows modern Chinese history. In this century one of the most beautiful words to the Chinese is "revolution." A revolutionist is seen as one of the best persons and a counter-revolutionary a criminal. Sun Yatsen began his revolution from 1895 on and successfully overthrew the Qing Imperial Court in 1911. Two years later he led a second revolution and failed. When he died in 1925, he said in his last will and testament that "revolution has not yet succeeded, and my comrades should continue to make great efforts." In 1927 there was a civil war under the banner of revolution. In 1946–1950 there was another civil war called a revolution. In 1966–1976 there was a huge internal disorder labeled the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. I do not try to offer a historical judgement on these revolutions in this context. As a consequence of almost all revolutions, the people from the lower classes are considered better than the upper classes, since revolution always aims at dissolving the existing social order and thus changing the social positions of the various classes. From Zhang Taiyan, a revolutionist and scholar active in the beginning of this century, who put peasants into the category of the best

men in morals, to Mao Zedong who declared that a humble man is the most clever and a noble man the most stupid, intellectuals lost all their prestige and privilege in politics, economy and morality. There was no room for art élitism in such a social circumstance, and all literature and the arts were demanded to be in the service of the workers, peasants, and soldiers - a requirement demanded by Mao Zedong which dominated China until 1980s.

I do not try to argue that people from the lower classes cannot create or enjoy good art, nor do I say that the works of art by the lower classes must be bad. On the contrary, I would like to stress that the works of art by so-called craftsmen in ancient China are so excellent as to deserve a high position in the history of world art. But I am willing to say more as well about the art of intellectuals in ancient China, which has been ignored in China in this century for the above-mentioned reasons. In this paper I will focus on what ancient Chinese intellectuals thought about art, and how their ideas on art and artists exercised a strong influence on the style of their artistic creations. The art of intellectuals, especially literati painting, is so characteristic that it has particular aesthetic values, and is worthy of attention in theoretic research.

6.2 Two Kinds of Artists

In the times of the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1050–771 B.C.) and even earlier the Chinese already thought that the artists could be divided into two categories. *Kaogongji*[1] remarks:

> The wise men invented objects, which were recounted and followed by the clever men who are called *gong* [workers]. What the various *gong* are doing were invented by the sages [the wise persons].

Gong refers to those who were skilled and specialized in certain works. This was a special social class at that time and consisted of, among others, planners and builders of houses, bridges, or roads; painters; wood or stone carvers; musical instrument players, singers and dancers[2]; and the makers of copper or iron vessels. They correspond to artisans or craftsmen of ancient and medieval Europe. The ancient Chinese divided people into four categories: intellectuals (*shi*), farmers (*nong*), craftsmen (*gong*) and merchants (*shang*). In *Hanshu* (*History of the Western Han Dynasty*) the four categories are explained as follows:

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[1] *Kaogongji* (考工记 *The Inspection of Workers*) is originally an official document of the Qi State in the end of the Spring and Autumn Period. It was put into another ancient book, *Zhouli* (the *Rituals of the Zhou*), in the Western Han Dynasty when some scholars then edited the latter and found that one part of it was missing. Since then, *Kaogongji* has become one chapter of *Zhouli*.

[2] For example, *Zuozhuan* records that when Ji Zha 季札 watched music being performed, for him *gong* sang songs and danced dances from successive generations. *Zhuangzi* records that an instrument maker called himself a man of *gong* as well.

> One who has learned and is raised to a position is called a *shi* (scholar-statesman); one who plants and raises crops is a farmer; one who produces objects is a craftsman; and one who trades is a merchant.

In the hierarchical society of ancient China, the categories here actually meant social ranks. In other words, under the ruling classes (the royal family and officials of various ranks) the people were divided into four ranks in the order stated above. Craftsmen belonged to the third category and were very close to the last one, the merchants, who were considered to produce nothing except profits and thus benefited themselves rather than society. Artists, together with other craftsmen, had a very low position in the hierarchy. They are the skillful or clever men (*qiao*) in *Kaogongji*.

Apart from *gong* there is another kind of people, namely, "the wise." They are the sages who invented these professions. The following are some examples of these persons:

> Fu Xi "knotted ropes to make net, with which people went hunting and fishing."[3]
>
> Shen Nong cut or bent wood to be *si* 耜 and *lei* 耒 [two kinds of farming tools].[4]
>
> Nü Wa invented *sheng* and *huang* [two kinds of wind instruments made of reed].[5]
>
> Shi Da made five-stringed *se*.[6]
>
> The Yellow Emperor ordered Ling Lun to invent the musical temperament.[7]

There are many similar records in ancient Chinese documents. Almost every so-called sage in ancient China had his own creation. We may say that their stories are merely legends, not necessarily based on historical fact. Nevertheless, these legends reveal that the Chinese, at least those who lived in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods when these documents were written, believed that in a period much earlier than their own there was such a division between the so-called wise and the clever: the former were sages and the latter were craftsmen. Such a belief, if it had

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[3] See the *Book of Change* "The Appended Remarks." (系辞) Fu Xi 伏羲 was said to be a god or a sage who invented the Eight Diagrams (eight combinations of three whole or broken lines, formerly used in divination). Some modern Chinese scholars consider that he represented the age when people got food only by hunting and fishing.

[4] Ibid. Shen Nong 神农 was said to be a god who invented and taught people agriculture.

[5] Both Sheng 笙 and Huang 簧 are reed wind instruments. Nü Wa 女娲 was said to be the wife of Fu Xi. Her main contributions are two: firstly, she created human beings with clay, and secondly, she patched up heaven when it had been broken.

[6] *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋. This is a book written towards the end of the Warring States Period by a group of scholars under Lü Buwei 吕不韦, a merchant and later a politician, who once served as prime minister of the state of Qin, a state later defeated the other states and established the Qin Dynasty. Shi Da 士达 was said to be a musician in the age of Zhuxiangshi 朱襄氏, an age even earlier than the Yellow Emperor. *Se* 瑟 is a plucked instrument somewhat similar to the zither. The five-stringed *se* is a kind of primitive *se*. An ordinary *se* has 25 strings.

[7] The Yellow Emperor is one of the most important gods or historical figures in ancient China. Even today many Chinese respect him as the forefather of the nation. He was said to have defeated Chi You 蚩尤, a tribe or a group of tribes of barbarians, and to have civilized China. Ling Lun 令伦 must have been an official under him in charge of music.

not been not true to history in the remote past, was at least useful to justify the state affairs of the time it was recorded.[8]

From the Zhou to the Han Dynasty there existed indeed two kinds of artists. One kind belonged to *bai-gong* or "hundred-kinds of craftsmen." These craftsmen were experts in various trades and knew the skills and tricks of these trades, which were passed down in the way that sons learned from fathers or apprentices from masters. Because of their poor family background they could not afford and were not even allowed to have an education, and few of them had good knowledge of classical Chinese and knew even less of literature, history and philosophy. Nevertheless, they had great art achievements, which included the bronze castings in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the "terra-cotta army" of the emperor Qin Shi Huangdi, and the stone and brick carvings in the Han Dynasty. These are brilliant pages in the art history of China. In ancient China the word for artists (*yiren*, 艺人) referred mainly to them.

The other kind of artist is the aristocrat. In the Zhou Dynasty the youth from the noble families were educated in the Six Arts (*liu-yi*). According to *Zhouli* (*Rituals of the Zhou*),[9] there was a kind of official called Baoshi.

> Baoshi was in charge of giving advice to the monarch whenever he made wrong-doings, and cultivating the noble youths with the Dao (the Way, *i.e.* the way leading to a gentleman). The curriculum included the Six Arts, which were the Five Rituals, the Six Pieces of Music, the Five Ways of Shooting, the Five Ways of Carriage Driving, the Six Ways of Composing or Using Characters and the Nine Parts of Arithmetic.

The Baoshi was an official position instituted in accordance with the system of the Zhou Kingdom. But what these officials were supposed to do is similar to what intellectuals now intend to do, *i.e.*, on the one hand to criticize the wrong-doings of the authorities and, on the other hand, engage themselves in educational work. Among the Six Arts there are the Six Pieces of Music, which refer to six pieces of ancient music and dance. This means that the aristocrats practised at least two kinds of arts—music and dance.

Confucius was said to have started an educational program to teach pupils regardless of their social status—a momentous step which was bound to have a significant influence on the entire subsequent history of China, for it allowed even common people to feel the possibilities of joining the ruling classes. The ruling base was thus

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[8]This may indicate that in the Stone Age the "artists" had indeed enjoyed a prestigious position in society, in which they might have been the "priests" or the chiefs of a clan or tribe; but when the great kingdoms were established and urban economy was developed, "art" became the work engaged in mainly by people from lower classes or even slaves. In his *The Social History of Art*, Arnold Hauser gave a good description and analysis of how the position of the "artists" changed in the West from the Stones Age through the Egyptian period to the Greek and Roman period. His analysis will help me to continue this research, but here I want to concentrate on the facts as reflected in the minds of the people in the pre-Qin period rather than on the facts themselves in the Stone Age. See Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art—ONE: From Prehistoric Times to the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 1–21.

[9]*Zhouli* 周礼 (*The Rituals of the Zhou*) is a book which includes mostly documents written in the pre-Qin period but which was edited in the Han Dynasty.

broadened and the administration of such an enormous empire was kept working. Besides this far-reaching result, the direct effect was that education was no longer only for aristocrats but for fostering gentlemen (*junzi*, 君子); that is, a pupil could, no matter which class he came from, be cultivated to be a decent member of the ruling class and capable of political and administrative affairs.

Confucius was said to have taught pupils the Six Classics, that is, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Rituals*, the *Book of Music*, the *Book of Change* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In the *Analects*, a book of Confucius's remarks recorded by his followers, Confucius said, "Let a man be stimulated by poetry, established by the rules of property, and perfected by music."[10] And: "Set your will on the Way. Have a firm grasp on virtue. Rely on humanity. Find recreation in the arts."[11] In the mind of Confucius, a gentleman could roam about in the field of art through which to perfect his personality, but he should not limit himself in an art profession and thus become a professional. Confucius said, "The superior man is not an implement."[12] Here the superior man is another translation for *junzi* or gentleman, and implement is a translation for *qi* 器, which can also be understood as utensil. An implement or a utensil is intended only for a narrow and specific purpose, which is just like that of an artisan. A gentleman should, on the other hand, have a broad vision, wide interests, and sufficient ability to do many things, among which art was for him a manner of recreation as well as a means of self-cultivation.

The distinction between the art of educated men and that of uneducated men, which existed in all the history of China, was displayed in different manners in different times.

In the Shang and the Western Zhou Dynasty, only the noblemen had the possibility to receive education and to participate in political affairs. Since the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Period, a new class of intellectuals called *shi* 士 came into being. *Shi* was a characteristic social stratum which consisted of almost all intellectuals except the noblemen, though most of them were originally from the families of rural farmers or landlords. During the Qin and Han dynasties the aristocratic class was on the wane because of the unification of China into one great empire, and a new administrative system called the system of prefectures and counties was introduced.[13] Many a so-called *shi* was appointed as an official of local government, and some of them were promoted as officials of the central government or tutors of princes. During the Tang and Song dynasties *keju*, an imperial examination system for selecting officials, was established. The system of *keju* has been fiercely criticized in China in the present century,[14] but historically it was an advanced civil official sys-

[10] Confucius, The *Analects*. Wing-Tsit Chan tran. and comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 33. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963.

[11] Ibid., p. 31.

[12] Ibid., p. 24.

[13] A system of local administration which took shape from the Spring and Autumn Period to the Qin Dynasty, and which eventually replaced the system in which the hereditary feudal lords administered the local political affairs under an emperor.

[14] I do not fully agree with this opinion, but since to judge it is a historical issue rather than an aesthetic one, it does not matter in this case.

tem. The officials of *keju* origin were under the deep influence of Confucius's idea of being loyal and patriotic, and were appointed as officials of different levels throughout the enormous empire. These officials were diligent in civil affairs and managed to mitigate the contradictions between ordinary people and the central government, and very few tried to develop their own force against the monarch; and whenever there were confrontations between the court and the local powers, they almost always sided with the former. *Shi*, therefore, were the cornerstone of the empire, and in them might be found the reason for Chinese civilization lasting such a long time.

Shi was a group of people of high self-regard. They were thought to step into the official circle through a "right path." Noblemen inherited their titles and hence depended only on their ascendants instead of themselves. As for eunuchs and relatives of the emperor's wives and concubines, they might temporarily enjoy power and influence but were despised in the end. It is a constant theme of Chinese historical books to condemn the eunuchs and the "outer relatives" (in Chinese *waiqi*, 外戚).[15] The prestige of these intellectuals made them quite influential to the taste of art.

In the Song Dynasty a change took place in the distinction between *shi* (intellectuals) and *gong* (craftsmen). The Song Kingdom was weak in military power and lost almost all the wars with its northern neighbors, among whom were the Liao, who confronted the Song threateningly; the Jin, who occupied the northern part of the Song's territory; and finally the Mongolians, who put an end to the Song Kingdom and took over all its territory. However, this was a time when economy and culture enjoyed a high development, and it was now that a tripartition was established among painters.

The first group of the tripartition is artisans (*gong* 工, or professional painters). At that time painting became an important trade engaged in by a large number of people. In the Song Dynasty many great cities arose in China, among which the greatest is Bianjing (now Kaifeng in Henan Province), the capital of the North Song Kingdom. The flourishing civic economy brought about a great need for paintings. The residents of cities used paintings to decorate their tea-houses and wine-shops, to adorn sitting or sleeping rooms. They put paintings on walls, on screens or on paper fans. These paintings were mostly produced by the professional craftsmen.

The second group is the court painters. Most of the emperors of the Song Court were fond of painting. Some of them, such as Zhao Ji (Song Hui-zong), were talented painters themselves.[16] Under these emperors an imperial art academy was established and developed. The court painters were appointed as officials in the academy and, if appreciated by the emperor, were promoted. However, in the mind of the officials of *keju* origin they were still artisans, and the intellectuals felt it beneath their dignity to enter the academy.

The third group is the literati painters, most of whom were officials of *keju* origin. These painters never viewed painting as a profession and considered it shameful to

[15] The relatives on the emperor's side would be princes or princesses, members of the royal family. Hence here "outer" means the emperor's relatives outside of the royal family.

[16] Zhao Ji 赵佶 was not a lucky emperor and was captured by the invaders of the Jin, a nomad nation in the north. Therefore, the Chinese view him as a good painter and a bad monarch.

earn a living by it. They mainly saw painting as a way to amuse themselves and, if anything else, a way to fame. At first they did not pursue a unique style different from that of professionals. Compared to the professionals, they usually had a better sense of design and taste, but due to the lack of long practice they were awkward in skills. It was the literati such as Su Shi and Mi Fu who began to deliberately paint in a manner unlike that of professionals. Su Shi and Mi Fu signified an important transformation in art conception. Before them only the status of literati painters was higher than that of the professional painters, but now Su and Mi insisted that the painting of the former should be higher than that of the latter. They initiated a series of new notions, for example, that the idea should come ahead of the brush; that painting is similar to poetry in that it should express feelings and emotions *naturally* or spontaneously; and that painting need not imitate the appearance of the subject but capture the reasons governing it or the truth behind it.

Among the three types of painters, the first one, the professional painters, was large in number but low in social status, and their works were regarded as on a par with those of artisans to whom they actually belong. Few critics noted their works or recorded the ideas, principles or canons of their work, though in reality their ideas constituted a background against which many artistic notions were put forth. The second type, the court painters, was chosen from the professionals, and the style of these painters was actually developed from the latter, though the establishment of the court academy as a special institution to train artists inevitably transformed the style. In the academy strict rules or canons were imposed on painting in order to satisfy the taste of the ruling classes, especially that of the loyal families. During the Song Dynasty their painting enjoyed a high reputation due to the appreciation and support of the emperors. The literati painters, on the other hand, were merely dilettantes who dabbled in painting only for pleasure and took it as a sideline. They indeed put forth some interesting ideas, but the significance of these ideas was not shown until generations to come.

In the Yuan Dynasty things changed dramatically. The Yuan Kingdom was established by the Mongolians, who divided the people within the empire into four classes. The first was the Mongolians; the second was the so-called color-eyed peoples, meaning peoples living in Central Asia whose eyes were other than black; the third was the Chinese, but it meant only the Chinese then living in the north of China, which was previously ruled by the Jin nation; and the fourth was the "southern people," which meant the Chinese living in the south of China, which was previously ruled by the Southern Song Kingdom and where the economy and culture were most advanced. The Mongolians were originally nomads who lived to the north of the so-called central land of China. They conquered China, Central Asia, and even Eastern Europe by force. They damaged Chinese civilization at first. These damages, however, turned out to be an opportunity for Chinese civilization to reinvigorate and regenerate. The Mongolians put educated people of southern China into the fourth or the lowest class and cut them off from political careers, forcing them to turn their talent towards other directions and, unexpectedly, bringing about two spectacular cultural developments. The first was drama, and the second was the literati painting or the painting of men of letters. These had earlier been regarded as trivial matters or, in their words, "minor

ways," but now, since there was nothing else important for them to do, they had to take them up. Therefore, if literati painters had been weak in skills in the Song Dynasty, this was not the case in the Yuan Dynasty. At that time literati painters were no longer real dilettantes, though they still pretended to be so and they indeed followed the tradition of dilettantism of the Song Dynasty. They engaged in painting and made great efforts to learn skills. The difference between the literati and the professional painters was no longer shown in skills. Now the painting actually became an occupation for literati painters, too, and if they felt it necessary, they could surpass the artisans in skills.

The period under the rule of the Mongolians completely transformed the world of painting in China. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, although the rivalries between the literati and court painters continued, the former clearly gained superiority.[17] Literati painting—a style with abstract tendency—became the most important painting style since the 13th century, an epoch when the Renaissance occurred in Italy and an artistic orientation towards more lifelike paintings paved the way.

In the Ming Dynasty, Mo Shilong (1537–1595) and Dong Qichang (1555–1636) formulated a new interpretation of the history of landscape painting by dividing it into two schools: the Southern school and the Northern school.[18] Here "school" is a confusing word, for there was actually no school (as an institution for education) of painting at that time. Perhaps "sect" is a better word. In Chinese it is called *zong* (宗), which literally means "sect" in the sense of a religious body or group. But since "school" is already a widely accepted translation, and since I also try to emphasize the difference in meaning from that of religious body, I will keep the word "school." These two schools were said to originate in the Tang Dynasty. Li Sixun and his son Li Zhaodao were regarded as the forefathers of the Northern school, which, since they themselves were relatives of the royal family, was taken as a style closer to that of court painting. Wang Wei, a famous poet as well as a painter, was honored as the founder of the Southern school, which was followed by many literati painters in the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties. Mo and Dong's description, though it appeared in the form of a historical narrative and assumed a neutral value, was actually of a Buddhist overtone and should be understood within the context of the history of Chinese Buddhism. In the Tang Dynasty, after almost a millennium of diffusion from India, China at last developed a typical Chinese sect of Buddhism—*chan* (or *zen*, known in English-speaking countries after its Japanese name), which was later further divided into the Southern and the Northern sect. The Northern sect was in decline and eventually died out, for many *chan* followers did not like its emphasis

[17] In the paper "The Reclusive Spirit in Ancient Chinese Painting" (*The Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies*, Volume 6, 1995, pp. 102–124), I give more evidence for the argument by discussing the rival between "the Untrammeled Class" and "the Inspired Class."

[18] The same paragraph appears separately in two books, Mo Shilong's *A Talk About Painting* (*Huashuo* 画说) and Dong Qichang's *The Points of Painting* (*Huazhi* 画旨). Most Chinese researchers believe that Dong Qichang copied this paragraph from Mo Shilong, for Mo was older than Dong. But there are still some scholars, for instance Xu Fuguan, who maintain that Dong Qichang was so famous that it was impossible for him to plagiarize Mo's opinion; and since Mo's book was edited after his death, this paragraph was put in his book by mistake.

on long-time learning and practice, while the Southern sect flourished because it endorsed sudden enlightenment. When Mo and Dong argued that similar things happened in painting, they actually tried to justify the literati painting and propel it toward further development. As a result, from the second half of the Ming to the Qing Dynasty the literati painting occupied a central place. This does not mean that the professional painters no longer existed. The professionals then continued to produce a great number of paintings to meet the needs of common civic residents. But a clear-cut line had already been drawn between the literati art and that of professionals, and intellectuals no longer accepted the works of the latter. Wealthy people, because they wanted to appear elegant, followed the example of the intellectuals. Consequently, the professionals were no longer regarded as true painters. Only those who practised painting as dilettantes, though they might merely pretend to be so, were viewed as true painters. This is the first of the paradoxes I want to put forth in this paper—it was not the professional painters that were the true painters, but the dilettantes or amateur painters.

6.3 The Depreciation of Art

Let us now turn to the concept of "art." It seems that the question "Who are true artists?" is closely linked with the question "What is art?" It is a circle: artists create art, but only those who create works of art can be called artists. The concept of art is a heavily disputed topic in modern aesthetics. Here I will try to confine my discussion of the concept to the ancient history of China, that is, I will discuss only what the ancient Chinese thought about this concept.

To trace the history of a concept, we should always do two different things. The first is to study it linguistically, that is, how ancient people used the word which linguistically corresponds to a modern term for the concept. The second is to try to find out what ancient people thought about the object to which the modern term applies. Therefore, there are two things we have to do: we must understand the meaning of the word "art" (in modern Chinese: *yishu*) in ancient Chinese texts, and we must discover what the ancient Chinese thought about the arts.

The Chinese make use of a compound of two characters, *yi* 艺 and *shu* 术 to translate the word "art." Each of these two characters originally has its own meaning as follows:

Yi 艺 originally means "to plant." This character was originally written as 藝 or 埶, which looks like somebody holding a seedling and planting it in the soil. Because this might be an important and skilled activity at that time, or because this activity could be taken as a metaphor for education (as if a pupil was a seedling planted by a teacher), it later took on a new meaning—"talent" or "ability." For example, the *Book of Documents* says that Zhou Gong (Duke Zhou) was a versatile man (who was gifted and had many *yi*). The *Analects* says that because Confucius was from a poor family and had to make a living by doing various jobs when he was young, he

knew *yi*.[19] In the Zhou Dynasty the noble youth was taught with a curriculum of the Six Arts (six *yi*), which included the Five Rituals, the Six Pieces of Music, the Five Ways of Shooting, the Five Ways of Carriage Driving, the Six Ways of Composing and Using Characters, and the Nine Chapters of Arithmetic.

Shu 术 originally meant streets in a town, later it denoted way or method, and still later knowledge, talent or skill.

In the Han Dynasty or later there appeared a compound, "*yishu*", which made use of exactly the same characters we now use for "art" in the Chinese language. However, today the meaning of "*yishu*" is quite different from that of the Han Dynasty. At that time "*yishu*" meant those ancient books other than the classical books, and the philosophical schools other than the Confucian school. Or the various skills other than ruling a state by *wende* 文德 (developing an ideology in favor of the authority) or by *wugong* 武功 (serving as a military officer to establish or defend the state by force). An annotation to the *Historical Record of the Late Han Dynasty* points out that the compound "*yishu*" can be explained separately. In this context *yi* means handwriting (which might include calligraphy),[20] shooting, driving and arithmetic, and *shu* means healing skills, necromancy, and divination with the Eight Diagrams.

In the ancient Chinese language there is also a compound, "*yiren*" 艺人, which in modern Chinese refers to the artist. But its original meaning is men of talent. Ge Hong, a Taoist, said that *yiren* were those who created new technical apparatus, a work attributable to artisans.

From this we can see that the meaning of "*yi*," "*shu*," or "*yishu*" in ancient time was quite different from that of modern time. In ancient time both *yi* and *shu* belonged to so-called "minor ways" (*xiaodao*, 小道), or something not crucial to the very existence and development of society. The skills included in the "minor ways" were handicrafts, healing skills (medical care), arithmetic and divination, etc. As the modern Chinese translated "art" or "the fine arts" into *yishu*, they actually changed the original meaning of these two characters. Arithmetic, healing skills, necromancy, divination and some of the handicrafts were cut off, while literature and music were put in. But the difference between the modern concept of art and that of the ancient

[19]Confucius, *The Analects*. 9:6 Wing-Tsit Chan translates the corresponding paragraph as follows: "When I was young, I was in humble circumstances, and therefore I acquired much ability to do the simple things of humble folk. I have not been given official employment and therefore I [acquired the ability] for the simple arts" See Wing-tsit Chan trans. and Comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 35–36.

[20]The ancient Chinese used the same word shu to express both writing and calligraphy. "Today many people write that calligraphy as a form of art gained its independence during the Han Dynasty and the Six Dynasties, but this view is constructed on the basis of a modern concept of art/Art (they are written in the same form in Chinese), which has little to do with the ancients. Every book regarding the history of calligraphy in ancient China usually began with a discussion of either certain legendary figures, such as Cang Jie, or certain historical figures, such as Li Si, even though many scholars today consider that calligraphy did not exist as an independent form of art in either Cang's or Li's time.The function of writing may be to articulate meanings, but whenever a person starts to write and knows that many people will look at his writing, he naturally tries to write better."(Jianping Gao, *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art—From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1996), pp. 183–184.

lies not so much in the elements it refers to as in the concept itself; or, in logic terms, the difference lies not so much in its denotation as in its connotation. The Europeans formed their own concept of art in the eighteenth century. The Chinese, on the other hand, did not create a corresponding concept until they imported it from Europe. Nevertheless, they formed their own collections of various arts, though they were not called art and there were no particular words to name the collection. In the time corresponding to the Greco-Roman period of Europe, they had a collection of poetry, music and dance. In the time corresponding to the Middle Ages of Europe, they had a collection of poetry, calligraphy, painting and, strange as it seems, weiqi (a game usually known as "go" after its Japanese name).

The understanding of art as expressed above was accompanied by a contemptuous attitude for it was a "minor way." The ancient Chinese considered that there were three categories of immortal deeds: to establish moral models, to have political and military achievements, and to write literary texts which were so good as to be passed down to following generations.[21] Here, to write literary texts mainly referred to writing philosophical or historical books, and it is only after the second century A.D., after the collapse of the Han Kingdom, that poetry and prose began to be included.

In the time before the Qin Dynasty almost all Chinese philosophical schools rejected art, though on different grounds. Some of them insisted that art was useless to politics and human life; some thought it was costly; and some blamed it for deteriorating social customs. The Taoist school, some of whose ideas inspired many artists in forthcoming generations, gave the strongest condemnation of art. *Daodejing* says:

> The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.
> The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.[22]
>
> Great music sounds faint.
> Great form has no shape.[23]

Similar words can be found in *Zhuangzi* as well:

> Discard and confuse the six tones, smash and unstring the pipes and lutes, stop up the ears of the blind musician K'uang, and for the first time the people of the world will be albe to hold on to their hearing. Wipe out patterns and designs, scatter the five colors, glue up the eyes of Li Chu, and for the first time the people of the world will be able to hold on to their eyesight.[24]

Among the various schools of the pre-Qin Period, the Confucian school is the only one that was sympathetic to art. Philosophers of this school, from Confucius himself to Mencius and Xun Zi, have made remarks in defence of art as it was useful for political and moral edification. For this reason art should continue to exist but

[21] *Zhuozhuan* 左传。〈 |□™.

[22] *Lao Tzu* (*Daodejing*) Chap. 12. Wing-Tsit Chan, A *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 145.

[23] Ibid. Chap. 41. Wing-Tsit Chan, A *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 160.

[24] Burton Watson trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 111.

remain at the level of handicraft. Artists should continue to be artisans, one group among *bai-gong* or the "one hundred kinds of craftsmen."

This contemptuous attitude towards art remained after the pre-Qin Period. Even the authors of books on art history, who loved art and recorded the stories of artists and their works, could not completely get rid of the influence of such a tradition. The most famous book on the history of paintings in the Tang Dynasty, Zhang Yanyuan's *The History of Paintings in the Succession of Art*, still preserved a vestige of this idea.

This book mentions a story about Yan Liben, a famous painter in the Tang Dynasty. The story relates the following:

> One day the Emperor Tai Zong [Li Shimin, 李世民] and his attendant officials went sightseeing in the Spring Garden, where there were rare birds swimming in the pool. His majesty liked them very much and asked the attendants to make poems for them. He urgently summoned Yan to paint them as well. A message was passed on to ask the painting master to come. Yan was then already *zhujue langzhong* [a post in charge of the affairs of testing and judging officials with a rank as deputy minister], but he still had to hurry to the garden in a sweat. When he was painting on the poolside facing the guests of the monarch, he felt shameful. After returning home he warned his son: "I liked to read and write when I was young, but now am only known as a painter and do the work of a servant. It is terribly disgraceful. You must take a lesson from this and never learn to be a painter."

Zhang Yanyuan continued:

> When Yan Liben was promoted to the right prime minister, he took charge of state affairs together with the left prime minister Jiang Ke. Jiang had made military contributions on the frontiers, but Yan was only good at painting. Contemporaries said that the left prime minister showed the might of the emperor in the desert, and the right minister won the honor as a good painter. By this they implied that Yan was not the right man to be prime minister.

One may argue that a good painter is not necessarily a good politician, and Yan might have been a good painter but the emperor put him in the wrong political position. But this is not what Zhang meant. To him the first story was historically impossible. He argued that a good emperor such as Tai Zong would not treat an official of high position in such a way as to humiliate him by asking that he paint in front of a great audience, and would not be so impolite as to call him "painting master" instead of by his title or position. The second story was also unjust to Yan, who was a talented man and a good official. Zhang made it clear that Yan suffered from the bad custom of depreciating art. This custom implied poor logic: if one is a good artist, one will never be a good statesman.

However, even Zhang himself was under the influence of the same custom. In his book he mentioned a man named Jiang Shaoyou, who was said to be good at calligraphy, painting and sculpture. Although he was knowledgable, he engaged in the work of painting, making sculptures and designing palaces and gardens. The people with good sense felt sorry for him, but he felt at ease and persisted in doing the work tirelessly. Zhang commented that the achievement of virtue was superior to that of art. If one had art but no virtue, he was contemptible.

Here we see a self-contradiction in Zhang's idea. Why does Jiang's engaging himself enthusiastically in art mean that he lost virtue? Returning to the story of Yan,

Zhang did not mean that Yan's serving as a painter for the emperor was not shameful, but that the story itself was incredible. Zhang considered that Yan was a high ranking official, and it is simply because of this that the urgent summons was impossible. He said that it was impolite even to call an official a "painter" or "painting master." This suggests that in the Tang Dynasty the depreciation of art was still a prevalent custom, and even a great art historian like Zhang Yanyuan could not avoid it.

Du Fu once wrote two the following two poetic lines to describe the painter Xue Shaobao:

> Pitiful he did not seek political success;
>
> Now only his calligraphic and painting works remain to be seen.

Even a great poet like Du Fu believed that one should leave traces after oneself of political rather than artistic achievement.

In the Ming Dynasty Li Rihua commented on the great poet and painter Wang Wei in the Tang Dynasty, by saying that Wang's talent was as good as an engraved jade, but if he had not composed a few poems he would have been a mere player of musical instruments and a craftsman in ink-and-wash paintings. Wang Wei is regarded as the founder of the literati painting. It is obvious that no one can classify him as a craftsmen. What Li Rihua was trying to stress is this: if he had only made paintings, he would have been a mere craftsman; he was not a craftsman simply because he was simultaneously a poet.

The above-mentioned stories and quotations seem to imply that the ancient Chinese held a more contemptuous attitude towards artists than towards works of art. To them, art belonged to the "minor ways," and it was not important in life. If it had no bad effect, it could still be tolerated. But an intellectual should not demean himself by pursuing these petty things as a profession. The ideal of the ancient Chinese was to be a man of multiple abilities like Zhou Gong and Confucius.

The depreciation of art is also a consequence of the accumulation of historical ideas. Craftsmen took shape during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period when the urban economy developed and cities became the centers of political and cultural life. But China was essentially a country with an agricultural society, and almost every ruler of China was clearly aware of this fact, as seen in the four-class division of people, i.e. *shi* (intellectuals), farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. Craftsmen were ranked even lower than farmers.

In the previous section of this paper, I discussed about two kinds of artists and how, owing to the different background of these artists, different styles of painting were formed. The competition between the literati painting and the craftsman painting resulted in the victory of the former and forced the latter partly to accept the style of the former.

There seems to be a paradox in the concept of art in China: Craftsmen were *yiren*, which literally corresponds to what we call artist. However, men of letters considered their works of art superior to those of craftsmen. They even proclaimed

that the latter's works were "not paintings in fact, though they are called paintings."[25] Therefore, the true painting was not painted by craftsmen or professional painters but by literati painters.

6.4 The Virtue of a True Artist

We have seen that the social position of literati painters was higher than that of craftsmen, but it is merely in the sense of "on the whole" rather than "always." The difference in position may help to explain why literati painting got priority over professional painting, but a social criterion can never replace the artistic criterion.

Firstly, not all men who received good education could attain a high social position. Some prominent poets, such as Tao Yuanming or Li Bai, or painters, such as Gu Kaizhi and Zong Bing, were not of high social position.

Secondly, those who became officials because of their various skills rather than humanistic knowledge were scorned. These persons are exemplified by Jiang Shaoyou who, according to Zhang Yanyuan, was lacking in virtue simply because he engaged in the work of painting and garden-designing: the ancient Chinese could not help but think that if he had concentrated on reading those classical books edited by Confucius or on writing poetry or prose, he would have made better use of his talent.

Thirdly, in ancient China there were many emperors and princes who liked to paint. Some of them were fairly good painters. How to evaluate their works was also a problem for art historians of that time, since it would be offensive to place them alongside other painters. In the time before the Song Dynasty those emperors were highly praised, but critics tended to say their works were so good that they dared not evaluate them, and in this way they excused themselves from passing judgement. But after the Song Dynasty there were almost no conscientious critics who talked about the painting of emperors of their own time, and when they evaluated the artistic achievements of the emperors of the former dynasties, they were already able to hold an objective attitude.

My meaning with the three points above is this: by saying that intellectual-officials' paintings are superior to those of professionals because the social position of the former was higher than that of the latter, we only try to reveal essence in the final analysis. The social position of the intelligentsia was higher than craftsmen in ancient China in general. In the rigid hierarchy the intelligentsia belonged to a higher category, despite the actual inequality of the positions of its members. A good craftsman might be promoted to a high ranking official if his ability was appreciated by the monarch, but this made no difference in the eyes of the intellectuals.

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[25] Guo Ruoxu 郭若虚, *Tuhua Jianwen Zhi* 图画见闻志 (*An Account of My Experiences in Painting*), Vol. 1. See Deng Bai 邓白 ed, *Tuhua Jianwen Zhi* (Chengdu: Sichuan Meishu Chubanshe, 1986), p. 49.

Many Western art historians, when they write about similar phenomena in the history of the West, tend to blame the depreciation of the professional art as a result of "snobbishness". Here one might think that the exponents of the art élitism in China were "snobs" as well. The Chinese cultural élites would have infuriatingly denied it if they had been so charged. They considered that they were working precisely against a certain kind of "snobbishness." The status of *shi* or the intellectuals and the division of the four classes of people were consistently interpreted and safeguarded from an ethnical point of view, though they were actually based on a political consideration and necessity. The intellectuals were placed in a high position because they were knowledgeable and cultivated; farmers were ranked second because they fed people and made honest gains; craftsmen only made wonderful things to please people; while merchants produced nothing. Craftsmen and merchants were therefore despicable though they might be the real magnates of the time. The art of the craftsmen and court painters reflected the taste of the emperors, the princes, the noblemen and the well-to-do merchants who were patrons of this art. To the cultural élites, this very fact meant that the professional painters tended to be "snobs" who took an obsequious attitude towards the powerful and influential men. On the other hand, the elitist artists always acted like to ingratiate themselves with nobody. They argued that the difference between the literati and professional painters lay not in social but in ethical status. This moralistic explanation was embodied in a characteristic concept, *renpin* (人品, literally meaning human quality).

Renpin refers to the qualities of both morality and knowledge, and in ancient China these two qualities seemed indivisible. Man could acquire both of them through study. The intelligentsia were therefore superior to the craftsmen both in morality and knowledge. If certain intellectuals proved to be morally bad, they were considered to have read books in the *wrong* way and thus been diverted from the *right* path. They were, needless to say, only exceptions.

Yang Weizhen, a painter in the Yuan Dynasty, said that the quality of a painting was concerned with *renpin*; and Wen Zhengming, a painter in the Ming Dynasty, said that if one was not of high quality, one did not know how to make use of ink. As we know, Xie He, who was alive at the end of the fifth century, put forth the famous Six Canons for painting in his book *Gu Huapin Lu*, and first among them is *qiyun-sheng dong* (animation through vital force and rhythm). Roughly since the Song Dynasty (the tenth century), *qiyun-shengdong* was interpreted as a feature in painting that embodied a human quality. This quality was further interpreted as being inborn. Guo Ruoxu, an art historian in the Song Dynasty, wrote that among the Six Canons five were learnable, but *qiyun* (vital force and rhythm) must be innate. It could not be obtained through learning nor through long-time practice. In the Qing Dynasty, Hua Yilun put forth a more radical opinion by saying that painters were a special kind of people who were born with the ability to paint rather than learning it. Learning demands regulations, and art would die out with regulations for there would be no unique creations.

The literati art of the Chinese thus stressed innate qualities rather than learned skills. The ancient Chinese gave little explanation as to what exactly these qualities

were, so we have to guess their meaning by reading their writings. Guo Ruoxu, after writing the sentences above, continued:

> By watching the wonderful works by the ancients, I find that most of them were made by talented scholar-officials (*xuanmian-caixian*) or eminent recluses (*yanxue-shangshi*). These persons behaved according to *ren* (a universal love for mankind) and strolled in the field of art. They tried to probe into the secrets of the world, and place graceful temperaments in paintings. Since the human qualities are high, the vital force and rhythm have to be high. Since the vital force and rhythm are high, paintings have to be animated. Otherwise, despite a painter exhausting all his energies to paint skillfully, his works can only be as good as those of a craftsman, which are not paintings though they are called paintings.[26]

Talented scholar-officials (*xuanmian-caixian*) and eminent recluses (*yanxue-shangshi*) displayed two kinds of ideals of human quality. The scholar-officials represented the ideal of the Confucian school. This refers to those who established political careers through *keju*, an imperial examination. As mentioned above, they prided themselves in following the right path, and their position was acknowledged by society and by historians. Since they followed the right path in life, they were naturally considered to be of virtue. The eminent recluses, on the other hand, had every reason to believe there was another choice. The scholar-officials accepted official posts, but the eminent recluses were those who refused to accept any such posts. The quality of these people was the ideal of the Taoist school. They rejected the attraction of money and social position in the secular world and pursued a purely spiritual freedom. Which of the two values the more important was a subject of dispute in ancient China. Ancient Chinese scholars chose between the two according to which of the two philosophies they believed in. However, no matter which of the two they stressed and no matter what their individual tendencies were, they had in common the belief in a cultural élitism. They believed, namely, that it was only the highly qualified intellectuals who were the true artists, and their paintings and calligraphy the true works of art. Those made by craftsmen were, as Guo Ruoxu said, "not paintings though they are called paintings."

By attaching importance to inborn ability, literati painters held a contemptuous attitude towards the skills which professional painters learned in workshops. But this does not mean that a literati painter need learn nothing. They knew that to be a good painter one must always learn. But they did not take the masters in workshops as their teachers, but nature, the ancient paintings and the literary, historical and philosophical books. Dong Qichang and Mo Shilong mentioned such an opinion in their books: in order to be a good painter, one must travel thousands of miles and read thousands of volumes of books. This idea was put forth by people in the Tang Dynasty and originally referred to poets. That Dong and Mo applied it to painters in the Ming Dynasty, indicated that they and other literati painters at that time believed that a painter needed the cultivation of a poet rather than the training of a craftsman.

Last but not least, a concept I would like to discuss in this paper is "self-amusement" (*ziyu*, 自娱). As mentioned above, the literati painters claimed that

[26] Ibid.

it was only themselves, not craftsmen, who were the true artists. According to them, true painters do not paint for any external purposes but for self-amusement.

In ancient China, the concept of self-amusement had its own history. In his work *Xu Huapin*, Yao Zui, a critic active in the Chen Dynasty (557–589), mentioned the painter Xiao Ben by saying that he learned painting for no other purpose but self-amusement. His works, though some people like to collect them, are rarely seen now.[27]

Xiao Ben was not a famous painter. Yao only recorded a fact without particularly praising it. On the contrary, he implied that Xiao Ben's self-amusing attitude was why his works had not survived.

Zhang Yanyuan, in his book *The History of Paintings in the Succession of Art*, modestly remarked that he was not good at calligraphy and thus spoiled the reputation of his family. The brush-strokes of his paintings were not able to convey the meaning. Therefore, his paintings served only for self-amusement. "Self-amusement" is here a modest expression indicating that his paintings were not good enough to show to others.

The literati painters, on the other hand, later held a completely different attitude towards "self-amusement." For instance, Ni Zan, a painter in the Yuan Dynasty, said:

> What I call painting is only that painted in hasty brush-strokes. It was not intended for formal likeness, but for self-amusement.

Now self-amusement was, in fact, no longer a modest expression but a way to justify his artistic style. Wen Zhengming, a famous painter in the Ming Dynasty, said:

> In ancient time, great recluses liked to paint landscape painting to amuse themselves.

Bu Yantu, a painter in the Qing Dynasty, said:

> I know how to paint for myself, but I do not know how to paint for others.

To them, the best art was no longer that which served others but that which amused themselves. This is somewhat similar to the principle "art for art's sake." One question may be asked: people can amuse themselves in different ways, so why choose art? This question was, however, unthinkable in the minds of ancient Chinese intellectuals. To them *qin* (a seven-stringed, plucked instrument similar to the zither), *qi* (go), calligraphy and painting were elegant entertainments. A gentleman who chose these games or arts to amuse himself might show his elegant taste and interest. Therefore, what they asked instead was this question: "there are many ways to make living, so why choose art?" In the Qing Dynasty, Hua Yilun said:

> I often see that persons in Wu [a place in China now called Suzhou] trade paintings for money and, if more money is paid, they paint better. That is so menial that they should not paint at all. It seems to me that there are so many means in the world to make living, so why do they choose painting?

[27] Yao Zui 姚最, *Xu Huapin* 续画品.

True art should not be tainted by money, otherwise it will be vulgar, not elegant.

The ancient Chinese often gave paintings and calligraphy to each other as gifts, but this occurred in the circle of intellectuals who shared the same tastes and was a way of showing friendship. Sheng Dashi, an art critic in the Qing Dynasty, said:

> When a painter picks up his pen-brush, if he has in mind that his painting will be presented to a certain powerful official as a gift and he will be appointed to a position in return, or if presented to a certain wealthy man he will get much money, such a painter will be so menial that no one will want to view his painting and make friends with him.

This function of the art of intellectuals naturally exercises a profound impact on the features of this art.

From the narratives and analyses put forth above, we have seen a few new paradoxes. The word "art" in the Chinese language implied skills, but a true artist must have born talent. One was called a true painter not only because one made good paintings, but also because one was a poet and calligrapher at the same time. If one wanted to be a true painter, one not only had to work in the studio but to read thousands of books on literature, history and philosophy and to travel thousands of miles to "read" nature—the great book—as well. A person was called a great painter only when his paintings were appreciated by someone else (whether an art historian, a critic, a painter, a poet, an official, an emperor, a monk, or a common person); but a true painter sought only self-amusement and cared nothing about another person's judgement.

6.5 Conclusion

In this paper we have found some paradoxes in Chinese art:

1. A true painter is not a professional, but a dilettante or amateur;
2. True works of art are not made by professionals but by amateurs;
3. Painting demands skill, but a true painter is born such;
4. One is called a true painter not because one is more experienced in painting, but because one knows poetry and calligraphy, has read more books and is more experienced in society and nature.
5. A true or great painter only tries to amuse himself, though only those whose works are valued by society can be called great painters.

These self-contradictions result from both the Chinese cultural tradition and the situations of ancient Chinese society.

As stated earlier, there were three kinds of painters in ancient China, especially since the Song Dynasty. They were the professional, the court, and the literati painters. Painting played quite different roles in the lives of these different painters. Consequently, they formed different conceptions of art in their minds.

The professionals saw painting as a means of making a living. They diligently learned skills from their masters. Although they had their own artistic pursuits, and

although some created excellent works, art was to them only a commodity that was oriented by the market. Therefore, they tended to produce works with subject-matters favored by common townspeople, such as praying for fortune, longevity and more sons or grandsons. They painted these paintings in a skillful and meticulous brushwork and in bright colors, in order to cater to the taste of these townspeople.

The court painters painted for the royal families. The taste of the emperors, queens, princes and princesses oriented the styles of the painting. Since the Song Dynasty, an imperial art academy was established. Painters in the academy were well known for strictly following the regulations or canons.

These two kinds of painters are somewhat similar to those of the workshop and patronage system in Europe. The works produced by these painters were also more or less similar to traditional European paintings. If there is any difference between them, it is that the educational level of Chinese professionals and court painters was lower (especially in the education of natural science) than that of the most excellent European painters in the Renaissance period.[28] Chinese professionals knew the rules of foreshortening intuitively and tried to apply them in their paintings, but they did not have enough geometrical knowledge to formulate them in scientific terms. Therefore, they could not make use of the rules intently and exactly but only under the guidance of their feelings. I have discussed the tendency of Chinese art towards lifelikeness in paper "Imitation in a Chinese Way." If we take this tendency as a measure of value, I have to say that traditional Chinese painting was of a lower standard than that of Europe from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century.

To reiterate, traditional Chinese painting is poorer than traditional European painting for two reasons:

(1) Compared with European painters, Chinese professional and court painters received less education, and they knew even less about mathematics and natural science;
(2) Ancient Chinese education concentrated on literature, history and philosophy and was oriented by *keju*, the imperial examinations. Mathematics and natural science were not ascribed importance; and even scientists were considered craftsmen if they were not officials at the same time. Consequently, it was difficult for scientific knowledge to enter the world of art.

Nevertheless, the aesthetic standards of art are many and varied. If we forsake the value of lifelikeness, we find a brilliant aspect of Chinese art. This aspect was embodied particularly in the art of men of letters.

The art of these scholar-officials got rid of or dominated over the orientation of the market and the limitations of regulations. This art emphasized individuality and personal talent, the demonstration of the internal spirit, and self-amusement. It also emphasized the connection between painting, poetry and calligraphy. As a result, it brought about a new style which transcended lifelikeness.

[28] Some European painters took painting as a science, but it is impossible for Chinese painters to do so.

In this paper I have given a description of Chinese élitism, of its historical cause and its influence on art. I have not tried to evaluate the historical value of the élitism itself, but to describe it from a value-free point of view. What I wish to clarify is that *shi* (intellectual-official), as a kind of art practitioner, had a quite different educational background from European artists from ancient time up to the nineteenth century. These literati artists received a very high education in literature, history and philosophy. Their participation in artistic activities is one of the most important reasons why the development of traditional Chinese art was so different from that of Europe.

Chapter 7
An Introduction to the Aesthetic Ideas of Confucius

1

If it is necessary to put some titles on Confucius before we get down to discuss of him, we will perhaps choose among a political thinker, an educationist and a researcher of ancient culture, but feel somewhat of hesitation in defining him as a philosopher and aesthetician. Unlike the other of his contemporaries and later scholars, he wrote no philosophical works. The only work *Analects* (*Lun Yu*),[1] which is generally regarded as the most reliable source of Confucius's doctrines, was written by his students and recorded mainly his dialogue with students and others. Both Confucius himself and his students did not formulate his ideas systematically, even if we can discover or conjecture some systematic ideas behind the dialogues.

Confucius (551–479 B.C.) was born in the state of *Lu*, now in *Shandong* province, in the east of China. His family name was *Kong*, private name *Qiu*, another name *Zhong-ni*. He has been traditionally honored as Grand Master *Kong* (*Kong Fu-zi*), hence the Latinized form Confucius.

As a political thinker, he traveled many states in persuading kings, princes or vassals to practise his political projects or in his own words "restore *li*". *Li* was usually translated in English as "the rules of proprieties" or "rites", which is the norms of

[1] The *Analects* (*Lun Yu*) (论语) is a book which records pieces of talks and behaviors of Confucius and was written after his death. There are still some other books which are said to record down Confucius's idea: *Spring and Autumn Annuals, Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean,* and the *Book of Change*. The *Spring and Autumn Annuals* is a historic book, or a chronicle. It implies some political and ethnical judgement by the way of choosing words to record the historic events, but it rarely contains philosophic or aesthetic ideas. *Great Learning* was written by the students of *Zeng-zi*, an excellent student of Confucius, thus this is a book of Confucius's student's students. The *Doctrine of the Mean* was said to be written by *Zi-si*, Confucius's grandson and the teacher of Mencius. Both of these two books talk mainly about ethnical subject and an essay of aesthetics can pay little attention to them, though the *Doctrine of the Mean* had some connection with it. The *Book of Change* (*Yi Zhuan*) was also written by Confucius's followers, but it is better to discuss it separately, because it contain some ideas which are quite different from what was recorded the *Analects*.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_7

behavior, but is also of a religious sense. In Confucius mind, *li* is the symbol of the ideal society—Western *Zhou* Dynasty (1027–723 B.C.).[2] We can, however, hardly say Confucius is a politician, since all his life-time he served as a high rank official in the state of *Lu* for only a short period. But Confucius always thought that he himself could become a good politician. In the *Analects*, he often sighs with emotion: "No one know me". Here he mainly meant that a king or a vassal "knowing him", namely receiving his political plan and making him serve as a high rank official. This kind of life-aim make a strong impact on his philosophic and aesthetic ideas.

Confucius spent most of his life-time in teaching. According to the *Shiji* (*Records of History*),[3] he had three thousand pupils. His educational ideal is to make the pupils become *junzi*. *Junzi* literally means "son of the ruler", thus it originally signifies noble man. I find a good translation of it in English: "superior man". In English, the word "superior" has several senses and at least two of them concerned here. One is high in rank or status, another is excellence in quality. In Confucius's times, *junzi* bore precisely these two meanings. For a very long time before Confucius, these two meanings was thought as the same: a high rank aristocrat was usually regarded as a man of morality. But in the mind of Confucius, *junzi* is the result of education. No one is born to be *junzi*, no matter whose son he is. He even thinks that it is possible for everyone to receive education no matter what class he belongs to, and education is the only way for a man to become a "*junzi*". This, however, does not mean that everyone who receives education will become *junzi*. He can lead his pupils close to *junzi*, but even some of his best students do not still reach to the standard of *junzi. Junzi* is the men of ideal personality. The ideal is not reality. In order to encourage his pupils, he makes some of his best students feel themselves not far from *junzi*, but no one of them may claim to reach it. Maybe Confucius's idea about

[2]During this period, China developed a unique hierarchic social system. At that time, China was ruled by a lot of (according to legend, it amounts to as many as 800) vassals. Each vassal was, in fact, a king in his state. Their obligations to the emperor of *Zhou* was only sending gifts to him every year or every a few years and, when necessary, sending troops to defend him. These vassals were ranked below the emperor and above *dafu*, namely common nobles. All the country was then organized into a right and ritual pyramid. The emperor of *Zhou* (to be exactly, *Zhou tianzi*, literally meaning *Zhou* the son of the Heaven) sit on the top of the pyramid, vassals on second level, *dafu* third level, etc. This kind of social structure is easy for the vassals to develop the independent tendency, since they owned army and were remote from the capital of *Zhou*. In order to keep his position, the emperor of *Zhou* had to resort to not only force, but also ideology—*li*, which appeared in both religious service and daily life. For example, the emperor owned the special right to offer sacrifices to the Heaven or to some ancestors, and to offer in particular form and size, whereas vassals could only offer sacrifices to some lower rank gods or ancestors and in smaller size; what vassals should do when they meet the emperor in honor of him; etc. It is obvious that these practices of *li* served the purpose of consolidating the ideology of hierarchy. In Confucius's times, some vassals were on the way of declaring themselves as kings and the emperor of *Zhou* was, though still formally an emperor, fell actually to the rank of a small vassal. The vassals were fighting each other; some *dafu* (low rank nobles) were killing vassals; in the mind of Confucius, all the country were in chaos. It seems to Confucius, therefore, that, the only way to save the world is to "restore *li*".

[3]*Shiji* (*Records of History*), translated also as *Records of Historian,* was written by *Sima Qian* (145–86 B.C.). It covers the history from the far remote to his times. In it, there is a biography of Confucius.

junzi is of revolutionary significance. Nobility now is no longer a matter of blood, but of character. His political idea, however, is conservative. To him, the collapsing hierarchical Western *Zhou* Dynasty is the best social system. He trained his student to restore this system, to serve as an official under a good king or prince. He dare never to fancy a society in which philosophers or men of knowledge become the rulers as that suggested by Plato.

Confucius was also a researcher and compiler of ancient documents. He was said to have compiled *Six Classics*, i.e. *the Poetry, the Documents of History, Rites, Music, Changes,* and *the Spring and Autumn Annuals*. These six books are the most important written documents of the times before Confucius. Due to Confucius's work, we can now read five of them. Only *Music* was lost in *Qin* Dynasty.[4]

2

To begin with the discussion of Confucius's aesthetics, I prefer to talk about the question of "the functions of the arts", since it was heatedly disputed in *Pre-Qin* period (Before 221 B.C.) and almost all the main philosophical schools have an answer to it. All the other schools at that time condemned the arts, regard it as that of no use or of bad effect to society and politics. It is only Confucius and his followers that defend the existent right of the arts. But both of the Confucius school and non-Confucius schools considered the question from the same functional perspective. This question, therefore, is central to Confucius's aesthetics and is a good starting point for our discussion.

To Confucius, the arts (particularly poetry and music) served for two ends: education and politics.

Confucius's educational ideal, as we have said, is to train a student to be a *junzi. Junzi* has multiple abilities. He said: "Junzi is not a utensil" (2.12.) (see Appendix). A utensil serves a special usage. The man who is below *junzi* in quality is the same. *Junzi*, however, develops in an all-around way.

His education starts from poetry, but it does not include how to write poems. Whenever he talks about poetry, he always refers to the *Poetry* (or translated as *the Odes*, *the Book of Poetry or the Classics of Poetry*), which was said to be compiled by Confucius. Confucius did not write a piece of verse himself, and he did not demand his students to write poems, either. He did, however, ask them to study poetry. Here is a remark to his son *Bo-yu*:

> Do you give yourself to the *Zhou-nan* and *Zhao-nan*? The man who has not studied the *Zhou-nan* and *Zhao-nan*, is like one who stands with his face right against a wall. (17.10.)

Zhou-nan and *Zhao-nan* are the first two parts of *the Poetry*. He wanted his son to study them, perhaps implied that these two parts are most important or the best parts of *the Poetry* (I will discuss it in the fifth part of the paper). It has an educational aim,

[4] In *Qin* Dynasty (221–206 B.C.), lots of books were burnt on the bidding of *Qin the First Emperor*. Some copies of them were rediscovered after the overthrowing of *Qin* Dynasty. Among the *Six Classics*, five of them survived, but the *Music* (*Yue Jing*) disappeared.

in his words, to make a pupil no longer stands with his face "right against a wall", in other words, to obtain the ability to understand the world, or simply to open his eyes to see the world.

On another occasion, Confucius said a little more to his son *Bo-yu*:

> *Chen Kang* asked *Bo-yu*, saying, "Have you heard any lessons from your father different from what we have all heard?"
>
> *Bo-yu* replied, "No. But he was standing alone once, when I passed below the hall with hasty steps, and said to me, 'Have you learned the Poetry?' On my replying 'Not yet', he said, 'If you do not learn the *Poetry*, you will not be fit to converse with,' I retired and studied the Poetry."
>
> Another day, he was in the same way standing alone, when I passed by below the hall with hasty steps, and said to me, 'Have you learned the rules of propriety?' On my replying 'Not yet,' he said, 'if you do not learn the rules of propriety, your character cannot be established.' I then retired, and learned the rules of propriety. (16.13.)

Here, we find once again that *the Poetry* served as the basic curriculum for a pupil. It is only after a pupil have learned *the Poetry*, that he can be fit to converse with, that is, to intercommunicate ideas, to share the similar feelings, to inspire each other, to get the opportunity for further education and to talk in a graceful and elegant way.

On another occasion, he explained the functions of poetry in more details:

> The Master said, "My children, why do you not study *the Poetry*? *The Poetry* serves to inspire us. It may help us to see and understand the world. It teaches the art of sociality. It shows how to regulate feelings of resentment. From it you learn the more immediate duty of serving one's father, and the remoter one serving one's king. From it we become largely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants." (17.9.)

From this passage we can see more clearly that, to Confucius, *the Poetry* is a textbook. It can help a pupil in multiple ways. It included to improve his language ability, to increase his knowledge, to obtain the ability of making acquaintance and of developing friendship with others, to know how to express the feelings of resentment in an offenseless way to father, prince and king. In other words, to Confucius, *the Poetry*, or more generally, literature, is the textbook of life. A good student of *the Poetry* is not the one who is able to recite it, but to behave well in life. He said:

> Though a man may be able to recite as many as the all three hundred poems of the Poetry, yet if, when intrusted with a governmental charge, he does not know how to act, or if, when sent to other states (kingdoms) on a mission, he cannot give his replies appropriately, notwithstanding the extent of his learning, of what practical use is it? (13.5.)

This social functionalism sometimes developed in a more radical way. Confucius even encouraged his students to understand the verses of *the Poetry* independent of the context of the poems themselves.

Here are two examples of them:

> Zi-gong[5] said, "What do you think of a man who is poor and yet does not flatter, and the rich man who is not proud?" Confucius replied, "That will do. But they are not as good as

[5] *Zi-gong* is another name of *Chi. Zi-xia* is another name of *Shang*. Since the *Analects* was written by Confucius's students, namely, by *Zi-gong* and *Zi-xia,* and their classmates. Thus they must be

> the poor man who is happy and the rich man who loves the rules of property (*li*).” *Zi-gong* said, “The *Poetry* says:
>
> As a thing is cut and filed,
>
> As a thing is carved and polished…
>
> Does that not mean what you have said?”

Confucius said, “Ah. *Chi*. Now I can begin to talk about the Poetry with you. When I have told you what has gone before, you know what is to follow” (1.15.).

Here “cut” and “file” originally means to make handicrafts of bone, and “carve” and “polish” of jade. In the context of the poem, it means a nobleman of a good character is like a good handicraft article. *Zi-gong* here referred to moral effort and was encouraged by Confucius.

Another example is:

> *Zi-xia* asked: “What is the meaning of the passage - ‘The pretty dimples of her artful smile! The well-defined black and white of her eyes! The plain ground for the colors!’”
>
> The Master said, “The business of laying on the colors follows the preparation of the plain ground.”
>
> “Ceremonies then are a subsequent thing?”
>
> The Master said, “It is *Shang* who can bring out my meaning. Now I can begin to talk about *the Poetry* with him.” (3.8.)

Confucius explained *the Poetry* from a philosophical and ethnical point of view. What is significant to him is not what the verses signified in the context of a poem, but how they can be interpreted into a moral teaching. Only a man who understands poetry in this way, can be fit to talk about poetry.

Confucius thought that poetry was the basic course for a pupil. After it, a pupil should learn others subjects. He said:

> It is by *the Poetry* that the mind is aroused. It is by the rules of propriety that the character is established. It is by the musics that the education is accomplished. (8.8.)

We have formally read that Confucius taught his son to learn *the Poetry* and the rule of propriety. Now, we find that after the rule of propriety, a pupil must learn music. Music is the last but not least important in the course of education. It is only by music man can become a all-round man. But it is still a problem about how to interpret the meaning of that “It is by the music that the education is accomplished.”

Before learning music, Confucius asked his pupils to learn the rules of propriety, which, in the simplest interpretation, is to behave in a way suitable to the situation. It referred apparently to etiquette, but in fact, it also implied a kind of social order, namely feudal hierarchical system. It is a set of rules, everyone must subject to.

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called *Zi-gong* and *Zi-xia*, in order to show respect to them. When quoting Confucius remarks, they should be called in their original name, since Confucius is the master of them. In China, especially in ancient times, a man may have several names, the original name is usually called by parents or teachers, or, called by himself in order to show modesty. Friends and colleagues usually call the another name each other. Students or descendants can only call their teachers or ascendants the another name or even try not to call the another name, but the titles of them.

Confucius thought that, the rules of propriety must be learned and observed, but they are not enough. A well-educated *Junzi* must not only know and practise the rules of propriety, but further like them as well. He said:

> To know it [learning, the Way or the rules of propriety] is not as good as to love it, and to love it is not as good as to take delight in it. (6.18.)

How can man be cultivated "to take delight in it"? The best way is by music. In ancient Chinese, "take delight in something" is signified with the character 乐 (le) and "music" is signified with the same character "乐" but is pronounced in the sound (ye). It is possible that these two pronunciations was differentiated lately and in Confucius's times they were of little difference. In another ancient book *On Music*, there are such a sentence "乐者乐也", Which means "Music is what is to take delight of". Here the connection of these two characters is shown more clearly.

By music, the Way (*Tao*)-to Confucius, *Tao* means moral and political principles, which is quite different from the interpretation of the Taoists, who thought of *Tao* as the Law of the Nature—and the rules of propriety is no longer alien to man. It is no longer arbitrary rules which force man to observe. Man begins to love and take delight in them and therefore practise them voluntarily. In a place, Confucius asked such question:

> Ritual, ritual! Does it mean no more than presents of jade and silk?
>
> Music, music! Does it mean no more than bells and drums? (17.11.)

Music is not only a string of pleasurable sound, but it must bear moral and political implications. The social functionalism of music is more clearly seen in the dialogue below:

> The Master coming to *Wu-cheng*, heard there the sound of stringed instruments and singing. Well pleased and smiling, he said, "Why use an ox-knife to kill a fowl?"
>
> *Zi-you* replied, "Formerly, Master, I heard you say, 'when the man of high station is well instructed, he loves men; when the man of low station is well instructed, he is easily ruled.'"
>
> The master said, "My disciples, *Yan*'s words are right. What I said was only in sport." (17.4.)

Wu-cheng is a small town. Confucius made a joke to say that to rule such a town with music was like to kill a fowl with an ox-knife. He, however, emphasized in the end upon that, music can apply to everyone, no matter what social status he has, music can also apply to every state, no matter it is a big or small one.

With poetry, *li* (I have translated it to rules of properties, rituals, etiquette, ceremonies respectively according to its senses in specific contexts), music, Confucius got to establish his ideal society; but since "no one know" him, he can only construct it in his mind. From an aesthetic point of view, we may think that Confucius did not find the independent value of the arts, which always serve for political or ethnical aims. This is true, but it is a common feature shared by a lot of ancient thinkers. A more interesting fact is that Confucius see the human society from an aesthetic perspective. It seems to him that society must keep in order, which is beauty. Every one must act according to *li*. In order to understand *li*, a pupil must first study poetry.

In order to practise *li* voluntarily, a pupil must study music. *Li* is a set of rules, according to which a man acts, speaks and thinks. It mainly means the rules for political or religious meetings, though it also signifies the rules of daily life. In political and religious meetings, everyone acts according to his status, accompanied and regulated by music. This is a beautiful scene to Confucius. He imagined that, by practising *li* in this way, everyone could act voluntarily according to his status, in other words, to understand and get used to his role in the social stage, instead of transgressing rules and violating hierarchical system. We may say that, While another significant Chinese aesthetic school—Taoism—thinks that beauty consists in the Nature, Confucius and his followers consider that it consists in society. Order is beauty, but it is not a mathematical but social one.

3

Confucius talked a lot about the functions of the arts, but seldom discussed the subjects of central interest to modern aesthetics: What is beauty? What is art? Etc. His remarks, however, implied some ideas about them.

There is a correspondent word in Chinese to "beauty" in English or parallel words in other European languages, which is 美 (*mei*). But, in Confucius's times, there were no theoretical definitions of the concept. Ancient Chinese, however, have some ideas about it. At least, they use this word in their own way. Some Chinese philologists and aesthetician and Japanese sinologists have now written tens of essays to discuss it. Since Chinese have been keeping its old ideograph and we can get in touch with the characters written 3500 years ago, it is of interest to the aesthetic research. We can learn from it what kind of idea of beauty an early nation had. And if we believe, as some philosophers have said, that the origin of a thing relates its essence, we may think it is significant to aesthetic research. But to discuss this subject at length is obviously the task of another essay.[6] I cannot, however, escape from presenting Confucius's idea about it.

Confucius said nothing directly about what beauty is. We can only find in the *Analects* such a sentence as:

> The Master said of the *Shao* that it was perfectly beautiful and also perfectly good. He said of the *Wu* that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good. (3.25.)

Shao and *Wu* are two ancient pieces of music. *Shao* was said to be composed by a musician in the times of Emperor *Shun* (ca. 3rd millennium B.C.). *Wu* was said to be composed in the times of Emperor *Zhou Wu* (ca. 1st millennium B.C.). Why Confucius thought that *Shao* is better than *Wu* is a question of the evaluation criterions, I will come back to it in a moment. Now, it is important to point out that, Confucius thought that beauty and goodness were two different qualities. It seems to us that it is a simple fact but in ancient China, most of the thinkers considered that beauty is identical to goodness. Therefore, the differentiating of beauty and goodness

[6] I wrote an essay on it in Chinese, which was published in *Tianjin Normal University Journal*, No. 1, 1988.

is significant character of Confucius's aesthetic ideas. To him, beauty refers to the melody of music, but goodness refers to the implication of it. Confucius used the word "beauty" in several other cases.

> The Master said that the *Wei* grantee *Jing* knew the economy of his family. When he began to have means, he said, "it is almost suitable". When there were a little increased, he said, "it is almost complete." When he was rich, he said, "it is beautiful." (13.8.)
>
> The master said, If a man is capable and beautiful like the Duke of *Zhou*, yet is arrogant and mean, all the rest is of no account. (8.11.)

From these two evidences we can see more clearly that, to Confucius, beauty is the appearances of a man or thing, and always perceptible. Only the later was the word "beauty" used to refer to morality. And only then can people begin to say that "beauty is goodness and goodness is beauty."

"Art" is another interesting word. European aesthetic history has offered several different interpretations of the "word". In China, it has experienced a more or less similar course. The Chinese word "艺" (*yi*) has its own colorful history. Here we can only discuss what Confucius talked about. He said:

> Set your heart upon the Way, hold on the virtue, lean upon the kindness (*ren*), travel in the field of the arts. (7.6.)

To Confucius, the arts means the Six Arts, that is: etiquette, music, archery, carriage-driving, calligraphy and arithmetic. Only two of them, music and calligraphy, belong to the arts in modern sense. Painting and architecture were not included in the arts. What about poetry and dance? Dance always join together with music, thus it belonged to the arts. As to poetry, it is a little more complicated. Poetry as the words of the songs is naturally a part of music. But poetry as the textbook for teaching pupils, is not a part of music. The fundamental difference between the modern interpretation of "the arts" and Confucius's is that, modern man understands the arts as the creations of beauty, but to Confucius they are parts of the life style of a "Superior man" (*Junzi*). They are parts of his educational project as well. But no longer the ground course. A pupil must first learn and put into practice the rule of property. After that, they start such "art travels". Through art, a man accomplishes his education and develops his knowledge and ability in an all-round way. Then, he can not only obey and observe the rules of society, but love and take delight in them.

In the *Analects*, there is a sentence which originally concerned about something other than aesthetics, but it lately exerted a strong influence on it. The sentence is:

> The wise man takes delight in water; the man of kindness takes delight in mountains. The wise man is active; the man of kindness is tranquil. The wise man are joyful; the man of kindness is long-lived. (6.21.)

Confucius did not explain why a wise man likes water and the man of kindness likes mountains. It aroused subsequently countless explanations, and in the end, a theory of beauty took shape: nature becomes the symbol of the dispositions of people. The beautiful nature becomes the symbol of morality. Not only water (river, lake or sea) and mountain could correspond to dispositions, but jade, pine, ginkgo, crane,

tiger, ox, etc. became the symbol of some kind of abstract ideas as well. This tendency made a notable impact on Chinese poetry and painting.

4

Now let us come back to Confucius's comment on *Shao*. He said that *Shao* is both perfectly beautiful and perfectly good (in morality)[7]; *Wu* is perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good. Some annotations on this text explained that, *Shun*, in whose times *Shao* is composed, became the emperor by *shanrang*, namely, the old emperor found a good man, then he abdicated himself and hand over the crown to the man. But *Zhou Wu* (his name is *Fa*), in whose times the *Wu* is composed, became the emperor by overthrowing the older emperor by force. *Zhou Wu* is, therefore, not as good as *Shun*. Consequently, Wu is not as good as *Shao*.

In the Analects, there is another record about the music *Shao*:

> When he was in *Qi (8)*[8] the Master heard the *Shao* and for three months did not know the taste of meat. He said, "I did not picture to myself that any music existed which could reach such perfection as this." (7.13.)

Some leading Chinese aestheticians consider that this shows Confucius thinks music offer a kind of sentiment pleasure, which is comparable with the pleasure of tasting meat (10). But I have another idea about it.

Confucius appreciated the beauty of melody and magnificence of dance, by which he praised the *Wu*. He even gave a detailed description of melody of music:

> When instructing the Grand Music Master, the Master (Confucius) said, "how to play music may be known. It began with a strict unison. Soon the musicians were given more liberty; but the tone remained harmonious, brilliant, consistent, right on till the close." (3.23.)

Confucius, however, considered that the best music should be both beautiful and good. He believed that there is a kind of spiritual pleasure which is opposite to sensual pleasure. Confucius said:

> I have never yet seen anyone who loves virtue as he loves beautiful women. (9.17.)

It is obviously that, he tried to teach his students to become such men, even though he had never seen before. The beauty includes beautiful woman, beautiful melody, beautiful dance etc., which can produce sensual pleasure; but virtue can produce spiritual pleasure. It is easy to be sensually pleasing; but only well-educated man can take pleasure from a spiritual object. From this, we can conclude that the best work of art is what can produce both sensual and spiritual pleasure—which is perfectly beautiful and perfectly good.

Confucius had also two other concepts paralleling to beauty and goodness, which is *zhi* and *wen*. *Zhi* originally means simple and plain, then extended to be essence.

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[7] The original word in Chinese is 善 (shan), which cannot be translated as "good" in its common sense. It means "good" in morality.

[8] *Qi* is a great state in the east of China at that time, to the north of *Lu*.

Wen originally means mixture of different colors, then extended to be the system of rites and music. Confucius prefers to mean *zhi* as something like temperament or personality, and to mean *wen* as having knowledge and ability to practise the rituals and music, having a glib tongue, capable of expressing own idea perfectly and of quoting the *Poetry* freely. Confucius considered that a pupil should first learn *zhi,* then learn *wen*. He said:

> Young men should be filial when at home and respectful to their elders when away from home. They should be earnest and faithful. They should love all extensively and be intimate with men of humanity. When they have any energy to spare after the performance of moral duties, they should use it to study *wen.* (1.6.)

In another place, there is such a piece of dialogue:

> *Zi-lu* asked what was meant by "the perfect man". The Master said, "If anyone had the wisdom of *Zang Wu-zhong*, the uncovetousness of *Meng Gong-chuo*, the valor of *Bian Zhuang-zi*, and dexterity of *Ran Qiu*, and graced these virtues by the cultivation of ritual and music (*wen*), then indeed I think we might call him 'a perfect man'." (14.13.)

From these ideas, Confucius drew a famous inference:

> When *zhi* prevails over *wen*, a man gets the boorishness of the rustic. When *wen* prevails over *zhi*, he gets the pedantry of the scribe. Only when *wen* and *zhi* are duly blended does he become the *junzi* (a superior man or true gentleman). (6.16.)

To use the simplest words, *zhi* is the virtue of a man, and *wen* is his ability to express the virtue. This dichotomy of human characteristics may also apply to literature and the arts. From here, we can find the possibility of the theory of content and form. But Confucius himself did not pronounce on it and left the task to his followers.

5

Now we will go on discussing the subject put on the last passages and get to a more concrete question: The criteria for criticizing literature and art. We have known that he preferred to the unison of beauty and goodness and the unison of *wen* and *zhi*, but Confucius said much more than these.

Firstly, he judged poetry and the arts by its relation to its social and political context. He said:

> If taking one phrase to cover all the teachings of the *Poetry*, I would say "having no depraved thoughts." (2.2.)

The poetry contains 305 poems and was divided into three parts: *Feng*—folk songs; *Ya*—odes by aristocrats; *Song*—odes of the temple and altar. *Feng* was subdivided into 15 parts, and was said that they were folk songs of 15 states respectively. Though Confucius said in general that they have no "depraved thoughts", he, however, did not consider all of them to be of the highest quality. We have mentioned that he asked his son to give himself to *Zhou-nan* and *Zhao-nan*. *Zhou-nan* and *zhao-nan* are the first two parts of the 15 state's *Feng*. It is possible for someone to think the *Zhou-nan* and *Zhao-nan* served in this context only as the representatives of the whole

book of the *Poetry*. But considering that the *Poetry* was said to be was compiled by Confucius and the arrangement of the parts itself perhaps implied already the evaluating attitude, we will probably come to the conclusion that Confucius preferred these two parts.

On another occasion, he praised the first poem of *Zhou-nan*: *guanju*, which is also the first poem of the whole book of the *Poetry*:

> *Guanju* is pleasure but not carried to the point of debauch; grief but not carried to the point of self-injury. (3.20.)

This is an important critic principle which I will give a further discussion later. In the *Analects*, he condemned for several times the songs of the state of *Zheng* which are also a part of the *Poetry*. He said:

> I hate the manner in which purple takes away the luster of vermilion. I hate the way in which the songs of *Zheng* confound the music of the *Ya*. I hate those who with their sharp mouths overthrow kingdoms and families. (17.18.)

On another place, he said:

> Banish the songs of *Zheng*, and keep far from specious talkers. The songs of *Zheng* are licentious; specious talkers are dangerous. (15.10.)

Why are the songs of the *Zhou-nan* and *Zhao-nan* good and the songs of *Zheng* bad? We can reason from the text of the *Analects* that there is mainly two criteria:

One is from social and political point of view. *Zhou-nan* (which means *Zhou* and the south) and *Zhao-nan* (which means *Zhao* and the south) come from two states which have sage ancestors and these two states was deeply influenced by *Zhou* culture; but *Zheng* was a state where the custom is licentious. Because of this, their poetry and music, therefore, are different. This is perhaps the earliest expression in China that art comes from society.

On the other side, Confucius still thought that art could exert a powerful influence on society. That is why he praised poetry and music for their function in society and at the same time want to banish the songs of *Zheng*. In the times of Confucius and later in Warring States Period, almost all philosophical schools condemned the arts from respective point of view. It is only Confucius and his followers who defended the arts and made a choice among them. One or some of Confucius's followers wrote an essay *On Music* and pushed the idea of the relations of the arts to society to its culmination. Though Confucius himself only said a few sentences about this idea, it is very important to the development of Chinese aesthetics and art theory.

Confucius's second evaluating criterion for the arts come from the Doctrine of the Mean (or translated as the Constant Mean). The Doctrine of the Mean in Chinese is (*zhong yong*). A ancient philosopher explained that "*zhong*" means "being without inclination to either side", and "*yong*" means admitting of no change. A man of *zhong yong*, therefore, behaves always according to a single principle and behaves neither too much nor to little.

He commented once on his two pupils:

> *Zi-gong* asked who was better between *Shi* (*Zi-zhang*) and *Shang* (*zi-xia*). Confucius said, "*Shi* goes too far and *Shang* does not go far enough." *Zi-gong* said, "Then is *Shi* better?" Confucius said, "To go too far is the same as not to go far enough." (11.16.)

This passage shows us what the *Constant Mean* is in Confucius's mind. Confucius heavily stressed the *Mean* and once praised it in such words:

> Perfect is the virtue which is according to *the Constant Mean*! Rare for a long time has been its practice among the people. (6.27.)

This doctrine became later tremendously significant in Confucian school. One of Confucius's followers wrote a paper which particularly dealt with this subject (*Zi-si*: *The Doctrine of the Mean*) and this paper became later part of the basic textbook for pupils. Under the impact of this idea, Confucius produced a pronouncement of the literature and arts, which is typical in ancient China and can perhaps be called the doctrine of Chinese Classicism. This pronouncement I have mentioned earlier, but, I would like to quote it again before giving a comment:

> *Guanju* is pleasure but not carried to the point of debauch; grief but not carried to the point of self-injury.

Here Confucius talked about the first poem of the *Poetry.* But, as I said before, since the *Poetry* was compiled by Confucius and the arrangement of poems implied his judgements of them, we may consider that this comment betrayed his evaluating criterion of poetry and art. In Confucius times, there were no epics and dramas in China. Painting and sculpture were regarded as belonging to crafts, which was beyond Confucius visual horizon. In the *Analects*, he mainly mentioned three genres of what we call the arts: poetry, music and dance. Poetry indicates the *Poetry*, most of which are lyrics or odes. Music indicates some ancient musics (for example *Shao*, *Wu* etc.) and those corresponded to the *Poetry*. Dance would always go together with music. This situation made him to think that art is a thing of expressing emotion instead of imitating external world. What is important to him is to express what kind of emotion and how to express them. Two important Western Classic ideas—imitation and proportions—can do nothing here. Instead, Chinese have two other ideas: expressing of emotion and the moderation of it. Art is the expression of ideas and emotions: such words appeared as early as in the *Book of Documents*, which appeared much earlier than the times of Confucius. Confucius obviously prefer to this pronouncement but in the *Analects*, he said not much about it. It is only when we discuss Confucius's followers' ideas, therefore, can we give a comment on it at length. He contributes, however, a lot to the evolution of another idea: the moderation of emotion. Under the guide of the Doctrine of Mean, poetry must not be too sad, not too pleasure, either. Music must not be too strong or too week. Four concepts are significant: mean 中, just 正, mild 平, and harmonious 和. A good art work must express such emotions.

6

To give a summery of Confucius's aesthetics, we may find three ideas which are most significant to him.

Firstly, his social and political functionalism of the arts. In ancient China, especially in Confucius's times, there is no soil for such idea as art for art's sake. Just as in ancient Greece, the earliest art theories in China began with a negative attitude towards art. Most of the thinkers at that time condemned art in terms of its confusing human senses or mind, costing much money or human force, and being useless to economic life. In this ideological background, Confucius defended art by arguing that it was useful in educating pupils and keeping social order. This idea is beneficial to the development of the arts then in China. At that time, art is doomed to attach to ethics and politics. Any pronouncement of art's independence is none other than the abolishment of it. We can conclude that Confucius served at his age as a protector of art. His taste in art, however, is out of mode. He asked his pupil to study only the *Poetry* and even parts of it. He praised only ancient musics, and the older, the better. He, therefore, did not actually defend all of art, but only made a choice among the art works. The criterion of his choice did not come from art itself, but from its usage to society. In spite of this, Confucius is still the first man to say favorable words for art and his idea has been exerting influence on the countless generations of men of letters and artists in China.

Secondly, Confucius discovered the opposition between sense and intellect, between emotion and morality. Sense and emotion are in correspondence with music, which comes from human's "heart" and is an internal force thus subjective. Intellect and morality are in correspondence with the rules of propriety (or translated as "rituals"), which comes from an objective necessity of a society and is thus an external force. Confucius tried to combine these two forces together. There are two ways to reach it: one is to begin with emotion and then be restricted by rules; another is to begin with the reception of the rules and the virtue and then take delight in them. The former is important in the aesthetics of Confucian school, but was suggested by Confucius's followers. The latter plays a significant role in the aesthetics of Confucius himself. Confucius thought that, after having studied the *Poetry* and got the basic knowledge, a pupil must study the rules of appropriate. The rules now are external to him. But, after long time practice, and by the help of music, he can get used to it and in the end, take delight in it. Confucius said about himself that, after long time self-cultivation, he could, when aged, do whatever he wanted to do and not to transgress rules. Through the emotionalization of intellect and moral ideas, he find the way to educate a *junzi* (the Superior Man), and consequently to establish an ideal society. This often remind us of some German aestheticians, such as Kant, Schiller.

Thirdly, his Doctrine of Mean and its application to the evaluation of poetry and art, i.e. the moderation of emotion. Starting from this doctrine, some scholars of the Confucian school developed a characteristic interpretation of "harmony", or in Chinese "中和" (zhong he) literally meaning "mean and harmony". In ancient China, there are two interpretations of "harmony" (he). One is that harmony comes from the union of different and even opposite qualities; another is mild and appropriate. Both of them have their own origins but in the end, combine together in Confucian aesthetics. The Doctrine of Mean, however, only contributes to the latter. Still, it can also include at least two senses. The first is that the sound (of music) is not too strong to be shocking and the color (of architecture or painting) is not too rich to be dizzy. The

second is, to use Confucius words, “pleasure but not carried to the point of debauch; grief but not carried to the point of self-injury”; namely, arousing proper emotion in the appreciators. The first is suggested by the scholars before Confucius and the second is truly Confucius’s idea. This idea, as we have mentioned, the moderation of emotion, later turned into one of the central ideas in the aesthetics and art theory of the Confucian School. It is also one of the earliest ideas about the psychological effects of the work of art both in China and in the world in general.

Chapter 8
Man and His Relations with Society and Art: A Case Study of *On Music*

On Music is one of the most important, and perhaps the first, treatise on aesthetics in China. It is generally considered to be a primordial and quintessential expression of the "Chinese art spirit", and it has exerted a profound and lasting influence on the history of Chinese aesthetics and art criticism. Although the title is *On Music*, it does not discuss music from a technical point of view, but on the relationship of music to society, human mind, and politics. Thus, it touches upon some general issues of aesthetics. What it says about music is also relevant to other forms of art, such as poetry and dance.[1]

8.1 The Ideological Background of *on Music*

On Music has much to say about heaven, earth, human society, political conditions and human behaviour; it concludes with the sentence "heaven is connected with human beings".[2] This is a correlative anthropo-cosmological concept which plays a key role in ancient Chinese musicology. In order to offer a clear explanation of this

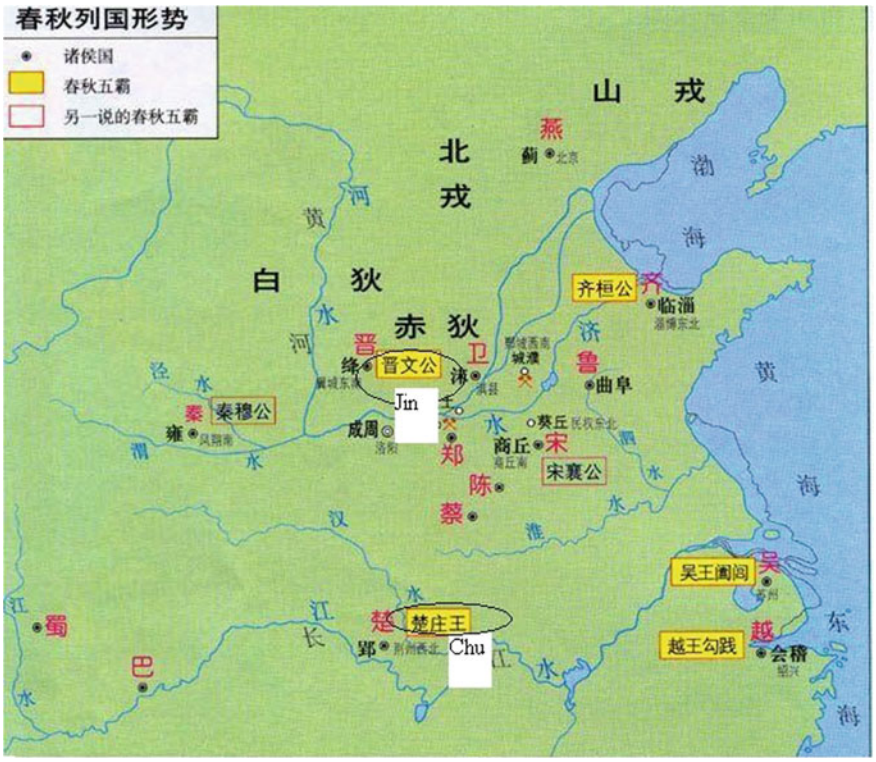
[1] *On Music* was included in the *Liji* (*Book of Rites*) by some scholars of the Han Dynasty. We cannot say exactly by whom and at what time it was written. Some scholars consider it to be a part of the *Yuejing* (*Book of Music*) which was said to be one of the Six Classics edited by Confucius (551–479 B.C.). If this is so, it is very old and was written before Confucius. Others hold that it was written by Gongsun Nizi, a student or student's student of Confucius. This would date the book to circa 450 B.C., the beginning of the Warring States period. Others again maintain that it was written by Liu De, a duke under Emperor Wu of Han (140–87 B.C.). I do not wish to discuss these opinions in this paper. However, from the point of view of the history of Chinese philosophy, I believe that it was written before the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.), but not as early as 450 B.C. In writing this paper I have consulted a modern edition translated and annotated by Professor Ji Liankang. See *Yueji*. Translated and annotated by Ji Liankang, collated by Yin Falu (Beijing: People's Press, 1980).

[2] *Tian ren xiang tong*. This was a key concept in ancient Chinese thought, meaning that human society and nature in some mysterious way are subject to the same laws.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_8

concept, we will first look at some examples from those books which are supposed to have recorded facts before *On Music* was written. The *Zuozhuan* records:

> The people of Jin learned that the Chu army would attack them. Shikuang said: "Don't be afraid of Chu. I have sung northern folk songs, and then southern folk songs. The southern folk songs are not strong, and there are many dead sounds in them. Chu will not succeed."[3]



This event took place in "Duke Xiang of Lu, the eighteenth year" (555 B.C.) in the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.). During that period, China was divided into many states, among which Jin and Chu were the two largest. Jin was in the north of China and Chu in the south. These two states were often at war with each other. Shikuang was a musician serving Jin. It seemed to him that if a state was strong the folk songs of that state were also strong, and vice versa. He compared northern folk songs with southern ones, and found that the northern songs were strong and the southern songs weak, so he concluded that Chu could not be victorious.

Another story comes from *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*:

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[3] *Zuozhuan* (Zuo's Commentary [on The Spring and Autumn Annals]), "Duke Xiang eighteenth year" (555 B.C.). The *Zuozhuan* is generally considered to be written by Zuo Qiuming, a scholar contemporary with, or a little later than, Confucius.

> When Zhuxiangshi ruled the country, it was filled with wind and *Yangqi* [the masculine force] was accumulated; thus all things were dissolved and fruits would not ripen. Therefore, Shida made a five-stringed *se* [瑟 a musical instrument, somewhat similar to the zither], with which he attracted *Yinqi* [the feminine force], thereby giving all living beings a stable life.[4]

Se

The original meaning of this legend is perhaps that in primitive times, when a man called Zhuxiangshi ruled the country, it experienced a long drought. The musician Shida prayed for rain with a five-stringed *se* and, in the end, he succeeded. During the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, two peculiar philosophical concepts, *Yin* and *Yang* developed.[5] People thought that only when *Yin* and *Yang* were in harmonious accord could living beings grow well. Therefore, this legend was transformed into attracting *Yinqi* (feminine force, moisture, rain etc.) by playing the five-stringed *se*, an old musical instrument later developed into the *se* as shown above.

Music could play other special roles in social life. When a solar eclipse occurred, people beat drums.[6] During spring ploughing, musicians predicted weather and wind for the farmers.[7] During wartime, musicians foretold the decree of the Heavenly Way.

From the above we may learn that people in antiquity held totally different notions of music, heaven, earth, and social life from what people do today. A sentence in Sima Qian's *The Records of the Grand Historian* sums up this notion:

> Voice comes from the human heart. Heaven is connected with human beings, just like shadow with object, echo with sound.[8]

It is a traditional idea that heaven (i.e. nature) is connected with human beings. Most of the ancient Chinese philosophers approved of this idea, although each of them developed it in his own way. If we trace the origin of this idea, and judge

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[4] *Lü Lüshi Chunqiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü) is a book written by adherents of Lü Buwei, a merchant and politician at the end of the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.). It records many ancient legends.

[5] *Yin* and *Yang* are a pair of complicated philosophical concepts. In simple terms, they mean that all things and events are products of two elements, forces, or principles: *Yin*, which is negative, passive, weak and feminine, and *Yang*, which is positive, active, strong and masculine.

[6] *Guliangzhuan*, (*The Guliang's Commentary* [*on The Spring and Autumn Annals*]), "Duke Zhuang twenty-fifth year."

[7] The *Guoyu* (*Records from the States*), another important historical book which records the history of each of the various states during the Spring and Autumn period.

[8] "Yueshu" ("The Book of Music"), from *The Record of the Historian*.

from the examples given above, we will perhaps come to the conclusion that it is no more than a form of superstition or primitive religion. But, as we know, philosophy originated from religion and never lost religious elements, especially in ancient times. Influenced by this idea, the author of *On Music* said:

> Music embodies the harmony between heaven and earth. Rites reflect the sequence of heaven and earth.[9]

I consider this to be the theme of *On Music*; it is the key to our understanding of this treatise.

8.2 The General Theoretical System of *on Music*

In China, most of the essays dealing with *On Music* tend to explore the identity of its author and the time of its composition.[10] I would like to avoid these questions and rather focus on its general theoretical system. The first sentence of *On Music* reads:

> All voices come from the human heart, whereas the moving of the human heart is caused by substance.[11]

A diagram can be drawn to illustrate this:

$$\text{Substance} \rightarrow \text{Heart} \rightarrow \text{Voice}$$

"Substance" (*wu*), "Heart" (*xin*), and "Voice" (*yin*) are all confusing words. Let me give some preliminary explanations here first, and offer a further analysis of these concepts later. "Substance" means what a person sees and hears. "Heart" means human feelings or emotions. "Voice" means what we now refer to as "music". However, in the context of *On Music*, the word "music" (*yue*) has a special meaning: it refers to good and moral music, therefore "voice" means ordinary music or music in general.

The diagram above is meant to illustrate the origin and nature of music. It may seem to conform with our everyday experience but, in fact, it does not. Proceeding from this notion, the author puts forward a few opinions. The first is "sound" and "voice" are connected with the political situation":

> In times of peace and prosperity, the music is mild, to express delight in the harmony of political affairs. In times of trouble and corruption the music is resentful, to show anger at the unnatural and unreasonable political circumstances. In a conquered nation the music is sorrowful and anguished, to display the people's suffering.[12]

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[9] *On Music*.

[10] Cf. *On Music*.

[11] *On Music*.

[12] *On Music*.

The point of this passage is that music originates from the human heart and is moved by substance. If substance, which mainly refers to social conditions, is different, it can produce different feelings or emotions, which in turn, find expression in different music.

Since good music comes from good social conditions, and bad music from bad social conditions, *On Music* suggests that music ought to be composed in a situation like this:

> A good king composes music after succeeding…. The greater the success, the more perfect the music.[13]

When a piece of music is composed in a peaceful and prosperous society, it can be the most perfect and beautiful of all. It is said that Confucius enjoyed the Shao music, music that is alleged to have been composed in a most peaceful and prosperous time. He enjoyed it so much that he lost his taste for meat for three months.[14] In contrast, in some corrupting states, such as Zheng and Wei, only lascivious folk songs could be produced.

Now we can see that the diagram above also works in the opposite direction:

$$\text{Substance} \leftarrow \text{Heart} \leftarrow \text{Voice}$$

Different music may evoke different responses and therefore produce different effects. This diagram is also connected with a series of artistic theories.

The first theory is "ruling people with music" as it claims in the text of *On Music*:

> Substance may arouse boundless feelings and desires in a person and since he cannot control them, he is transformed by the substance; as a result, the heavenly principle dies out and human desires spread unchecked. In this time, there are rebellions, cheatings and obscene doings. It is the way to chaos, so that grand kings made rituals and works of music, to control human desires.[15]

This is to say that music can exert influence on the human heart (feelings or emotions) and in turn control man's actions. In the end, music may promote a favourable political situation and prevent chaos.

Besides this "ruling people with music", there is another function of music which is called "music education". The meaning of this is not to train people to play or enjoy music, but to instruct them with music.

The author voices this function in the famous statement that music can "change customs". He says that the aim of music is not to meet the desires of the mouth, the stomach, the ear and the eye, but to teach people how to behave. It follows from this that the ruler of a state may "control the hearts of the people with music" so as to

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[13] *On Music*.

[14] *The Analects* 7.13: "When he was in Qi the Master heard the *Shao* and for three months could not feel the taste of meat. He said, 'I could not imagine that any music existed which could reach such perfection as this.'" According to ancient Chinese documents, *Shao* was supposed to have been composed in the times of the legendary Sage-King Shun.

[15] *On Music*.

heighten their moral level, make people believe and respect him, and show his power without losing grace.

Finally, music may have another purpose. We know that in ancient times people were stratified into various classes. The author of *On Music* thought that this social stratification was necessary, but he feared that it might cause conflicts between people of different levels. He maintained that music could counteract these conflicts and make people live harmonious lives.

Combining the two diagrams introduced above, we can now get a new diagram:

Substance ↔ Heart ↔ Voice

8.3 Analysis of the Elements of the Diagram

In the diagrams mentioned above, we have identified three elements: (1) Substance; (2) Heart; and (3) Voice.

I have offered a preliminary explanation of these three concepts with a particular reference to the general system of *On Music*. Now it is time to make a further analysis.

Firstly, I would like to say something about "substance". As we know, "substance" is a confusing concept both in modern and in ancient philosophy. Its meaning in modern philosophy is outside my concern here. Some Greek philosophers thought the world was made up of earth, water, air and fire, or one of them. But in ancient China, there were no corresponding theories of these kinds. Some critics thought that the Chinese concept of "five agents" (*wuxing*) is similar to the Greek concept of "four elements". But in fact, these concepts are quite different. "Five agents" can be better translated into "five modes of action". Although "five agents" refer to gold (metal), wood (vegetation), water, fire, earth, these are not conceived of as "elements" composing the world. Those ancient Chinese philosophers who advocated the five agents theory assumed that these five agents produced rather than composed the world in their special fashion. They considered that these "five agents" corresponded to the five planets including Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Saturn; to the five directions including east, west, south, north, and central; to the five flavours including sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and salty; to the five organs including heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys; to the five colours including blue, yellow, red, white, and black; and even gave birth to them five by five. Although *On Music* does not say much about the "five agents", it was evidently influenced by this concept.

Now let us return to "substance". In *On Music,* "substance" means something which stimulates the "heart". What may stimulate the heart are two sorts of factors: natural environment and social conditions. In *On Music*, substance mainly refers to the latter.[16] What we have said above, such as "sound is connected with the political

[16] I consider that "substance" mainly refers to social conditions. Although *On Music* mentions heaven and earth—it says, e.g., "grand music shares the same harmony with heaven and earth"—heaven and earth are actually humanized. *On Music* says, "Heaven is respected and earth is petty, thus the

situation", "composing music after succeeding", "to rule people with music", "to teach people with music", etc., are all related to human affairs, or to the social life of human beings, to put it more precisely.

On further examination, we find yet another idea. "Substance" may be divided into two aspects: good social conditions (times of peace and prosperity) and bad social conditions (times of trouble and corruption). In ancient Greece, there was a special idea: "like knows like".[17] In ancient China, people believed that "like produces like". Two different "substances" can produce two different "hearts" and, in turn, two different "voices".

Secondly, let us discuss "heart". As I have put previously, "heart" means feeling or emotion, or more exactly, feeling and emotion are the outcome of the "heart" stimulated by substance or sound. We have suggested that substance be divided into two parts: times of peace and prosperity and times of trouble and corruption. We can also classify "hearts" into two categories: "kind hearts" and "dissolute hearts". Or we may say that a "heart condition" contains two sorts of "forces" (*qi*): a "smooth force" (*shunqi*) and an "adverse force" (*niqi*). These two sorts of "hearts" or "forces" correspond to the two kinds of substance mentioned above.

Thirdly, we should discuss "voice" (*yin*). Again, we find different sorts of "voices". Some of them can be called "music" (*yue*), some cannot. In *On Music*, many sentences illuminate their differences. Here I will elaborate on two points only:

1. "Voice" is ordinary music. Only those songs composed in times of peace and prosperity and those which can teach people to improve their behaviour can be called "music" (*yue*)[18] The "voice of virtue is music". These words from *On Music* illustrate this meaning.
2. "Voice" is folk music, whereas "music" (*yue*) is composed by sages, men of virtue and grand kings.

Perhaps it is confusing to readers that "voice" (*yin*) and "music" (*yue*) can be distinguished by two criteria, and it may seem possible to classify a song as "music"

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status of the monarch and his subjects is determined". The status of the monarch and his subjects is, in fact, not determined by observing the status of heaven and earth. On the contrary, the ideas of the status of heaven and earth are only an extension or a reflection of the classification of human society.

[17]This is originally a primitive thought. Sir James George Frazier summarized one of the basic principles of magic to be "like produces like, effect resembling cause". (*The New Golden Bough*, New York, 1961). After I completed this paper, I am glad to find that Professor Kiyohiko Munakata has also been paying attention to the idea "*lei*" (category) (see the monograph "Concepts of *Lei* and *Kan-Lei* in Early Chinese Art Theory", which was included in the book *Theories of the Arts in China*, Princeton University Press, 1983). This monograph discusses the idea of "*lei*" in the *Zhouyi* (The *Book of Changes*), the *Huai Nanzi*, and some other ancient books, concentrating on the idea of "*lei*" itself, whereas I mainly deal with *On Music*, concentrating on how the idea of "*lei*" constructs a system of the relation of art to society and to the human mind.

[18]The Chinese character 乐 has two pronunciations and two corresponding meanings. One is *yue*, which means "music", and another is "*le*", which means pleasant or glad. *On Music* once employs the latter to explain the former. It says: "*Yue zhe le ye*", which means "music is pleasant". But in another passage, *On Music* says: "*Yue zhe shengren zhi suo le ye*", which means "music is the pleasure of the sages". Therefore, as I am to explain later, 乐 (*yue*) has a special meaning.

(*yue*) by means of one, but as "voice" (*yin*) by means of the other criterion. Yet, this possibility does not exist. According to the author of *On Music*, only sages and men of virtue can compose "music" (*yue*). Consequently, some pieces of folk music could be regarded as "music" (*yue)* because they were allegedly composed by sages and men of virtue, whereas other pieces of folk music could only be regarded as "voice" (*yin*) because they were not composed by sages and men of virtue.[19]

As is noted in *On Music*, the use of the word "voice" (*yin*) is confusing, too. "Voice" (*yin*) sometimes means all music and is equal to our meaning of music, but in other contexts it is the opposite of "music" (*yue*) and only means bad music or "lascivious voice". Consequently, we have two meanings for "voice": one is music (*yue*) and the other is "lascivious voice".

Thus, we may say that there are two sorts of "voice": voice of virtue and voice of lasciviousness. This leads to the two diagrams as follows:

Time of peace → Kind → Virtuous

and prosperity ← heart ← voice

Time of trouble → Dissolute → Lascivious

and corruption ← heart ← voice

8.4 Conclusions: Moving According to Categories—The Basic Principle of *On Music*

On Music says:

> The principle prevailing in the whole world is that everything moves according to its own category.[20]

Readers in China and in other countries have hardly paid enough attention to this statement. Perhaps they found it difficult to understand. After the analysis given above, I think we can assume that it is an idea which may be called "like produces like".

Heaven, earth and social circumstances can stimulate human beings and arouse their feelings or emotions, just because similar elements exist in their hearts, and their hearts may resound with these factors. Voice (music) comes from the heart from which it gets similar elements. There is also an opposite orientation. The heart

[19] The difference between *yin* and *yue* is an interesting topic which cannot be discussed at length in this paper. I add only one piece of evidence here. There are two chapters about the origin of music in the *Lü Lüshi chunqiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü): one is "Guyue" (Ancient Music), the other is "Yin chu" (The Origin of Voice). After a careful study of these two chapters, we find that *yin* mainly implies what expresses the feelings and emotions, whereas *yue* mainly implies what was employed to rule the country and keep social order.

[20] *On Music*.

can be stimulated by different voices such that it can produce different feelings and emotions, thus making men behave differently under different social and political conditions.

In *On Music* we find some ideas analogous to, and at the same time, different from the aesthetic ideas of certain ancient Greek philosophers, especially those of the Pythagorean school.

Firstly, neither the author of *On Music* nor the Pythagoreans used the term "beauty" (in Chinese *mei* 美, in Greek "χαλλοζ") to describe music, but rather employed the term "harmony" (in Chinese *he* 和, in Greek "αρμουια"). Both of them endowed the term "harmony" with the sense of attunement and unification, signifying conformity and unity of the constituents, and regarded the harmony of sounds as a manifestation of a deeper harmony, as a representation of an intrinsic order in the very structure of things. But, as we know, the Pythagoreans explained harmony in terms of mathematics. They considered that it depended on number, measure and proportion. *On Music*, on the other hand, did not employ mathematical mechanism to discuss music. In *On Music*, the harmony of music comes from the harmony of the heart, not from that of number. It has an emotive property rather than a mathematical property. In other words, the Pythagorean school studied music through the use of science and based their theory on acoustics, whereas *On Music* pays more attention to human emotion and bases its theory on a particular kind of philosophical psychology. These became the two general orientations of musicology in subsequent years.

Secondly, both of these orientations consider music to be a unique genre of art which enjoys a special mystical connection with the world. The Pythagoreans thought that the whole universe produces a "music of the spheres", a symphony which we do not hear only because it sounds continuously. *On Music* maintains that heaven and earth have their own harmony and says: "Grand music shares the same harmony with heaven and earth." The world, however, has different meanings to them. The Pythagoreans developed a sort of cosmology. They were convinced that the universe was constructed harmoniously and so gave it the name "cosmos", i.e. "order". Music and the universe are related because both of them are orderly and regular. *On Music* appeals to a kind of philosophical sociology, dividing society into various conditions, each of them corresponding to a relevant sort of music.

Thirdly, both of these orientations believed that music could affect people and change their spirit, but, as we know, they had different intellectual backgrounds. In ancient Greece there was the religious Orphic belief, which held that the soul is imprisoned in the body for its sins, and that it would be liberated when it was purified. This purification and liberation was the most important aim of man. The Pythagoreans introduced the idea that music, more than anything else, serves to purify the soul. They saw in music a "cathartic" power, which was not only ethical, but also religious. In China, as we have seen, the ancient notions of *Yin and Yang* and *Wuxing* implied that a good social and psychological state consisted in an appropriate proportion of different elements. *On Music* is influenced by this idea; it does not seek to eliminate the human desires (to liberate the soul from the body), but rather to moderate them and offer appropriate satisfaction.

Since the Pythagorean school affected the later Greek aesthetics through Plato, and *On Music* is one of the most important representations of ancient Chinese aesthetics, a comparative study of them reveals some characteristic features of classical Chinese aesthetics. Generally speaking, it does not treat art mechanically, but pays great attention to its emotive property. It lays much emphasis on the relationship between art and society, but pays little attention to its relationship to nature. Finally, it does not seek to eliminate all human desires but believes that music (and other forms of art) can channel these in such a way as to make them suitable and useful to society. In short, art is irrevocably connected with human life and society and must therefore be studied from the point of view of this interrelationship.

Chapter 9
The Original Meaning of the Chinese Character for "Beauty"

1

"Beauty" is translated into Chinese as 美 (*mei)* and "Aesthetics" as 美学 (*meixue*) (literally meaning the studies of the beauty). The compound 美学 (*meixue*) is new in Chinese and its origin is due to translation in modern time. But indigenous in China is the word *mei* (beauty), which appeared as early as more than 3000 years ago. The very first question in aesthetics was probably "what is beauty?" The concept of beauty in the mind of ancient Chinese is not necessarily identical with that in the mind of modern people, but an investigation of it may be of some interest to today's aesthetic inquiry, and, as we shall see, it already attracts attention of some scholars in the fields of both linguistics and aesthetics.

"美" (beauty) is traditionally considered to be composed of two characters: 羊 (sheep) and 大 (large). A large sheep will supply plenty of delicious meat. This explanation comes from *Shuowen Jiezi* (100 A.D.), a pioneering book on the research of Chinese characters:

> 美 (beauty) means delicious. It is composed of 羊 (sheep) and 大 (large). Among six domestic animals (cow, horse, sheep, pig, hen, and dog), sheep are the major sacrificial offerings. Beauty is identical with goodness.[1]

This opinion was accepted by almost all philologists in ancient China, such as Xu Xuan (917–992), Xu Kai (920–974), Duan Yucai (1735–1815), Wang Yun (1784–1854), and Zhu Junsheng (1788–1858), who provided authoritative interpretations of *Shuowen Jiezi* in their own generations separately. It remains to be the most influential conclusion even today. Two of the most influential dictionaries of our times, *Ciyuan* (*The Origin of Words*)[2] and *Zhongwen Da Cidian* (*A Great Dic-*

[1] *Shuowen Jiezi* (literally means "a description of simply characters and explanation of complex characters") is a dictionary-like book which was intended to explain Chinese characters on the basis of their forms. It was compiled by Xu Shen (30–124 A.D.). This paragraph is quoted from the entry of the beauty of this book.

[2] *Ci Yuan*, (literally means "The Orgin of Words", Beijing: The Comercial Press, 1988).

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_9

tionary of the Chinese Language),[3] among many other dictionaries, still put "the delicious" as the first meaning for "beauty". One of the most important Chinese aestheticians, Zhu Guangqian (1897–1986), accepted this definition and developed from it a utilitarian concept of beauty by saying that "beauty originated from the flavor of sheep soup."[4] Some scholars outside China also accepted this definition. For example, Kasahara Chuji has pointed out: "The most primitive idea of beauty of the Chinese people, generally speaking, originates directly from the experience of the sense of flavor."[5] This opinion has been widely accepted from 2000 years ago up to today, from the most prominent philologists to the most important aestheticians, and from China to Japan and perhaps to other countries. However, as we shall see, it is probably a mistake. *Shuowen Jiezi* analyses the Chinese character 美 (beauty) by means of its form in the Qin Dynasty (221–207 B.C.), i.e. small seal script. The 美 (beauty) is written thus

It is certainly composed of two characters 大 (large) and 羊 (sheep), which are written respectively as

Modern archeology, however, offers us some much older characters: i.e. shell-and-bone script (*jiaguwen*)[6] and bronze script (*jinwen*)[7]:

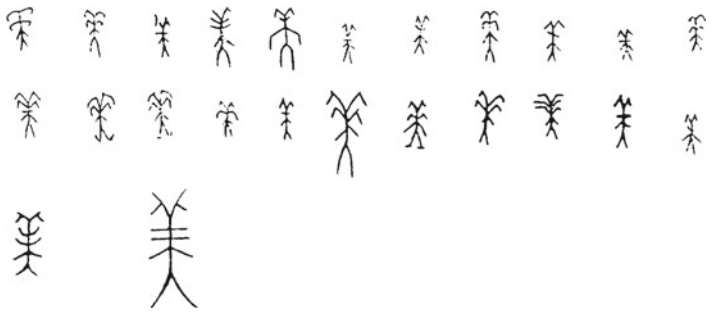
[3] *Zhongwen Da Cidian*, (literally means, "A Great Dictionary of Chinese Words", Taibei: 1967).

[4] Zhu Guangqian, *Letters on Beauty*, (Shanghai, 1980) p. 25. Zhu published voluminous books and papers on aesthetics from 1920s to 1980s, as well as translated many important books, such as Hegel's *Aesthetics* and Vico's *The New Science*, into Chinese.

[5] Cf. Kasahara Chuji, *The Aesthetic Consciousness of Ancient Chinese*. Nohon Hoyu shoten 1979.

[6] Shell-and-bone script was the charcters used in the late Shang Dynasty. The Shang Dynasty existed from ca. the 16th century to ca. the 11th century B.C. The earliest characters on bones was written in circa 1395 B.C. (See Hu Houxuan, *A Summary of the Research on the Shell-and-bone Script in Late 50 Years* (The Commerse Press, 1951) p. 66. Shell-and-bone scipt, therefore, is the writing from c. 14th century to c. the 11th century B.C.

[7] Bronze script can be divided into inscriptions on the bronze objects of the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century–c. 11th century B.C.) and those of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century–221 B.C.). But what are concerned here is mainly those of the former.



In shell-and-bone script and bronze script, sheep is written to be

It is obvious that only some of the characters for beauty looked like a sheep in the upper part. Thus, there is not much justification for the conclusion that all the characters for "beauty" have "sheep" as their upper part.

Shuowen Jiezi infers "delicious flavor" from the meaning of "large sheep", leading some aestheticians to proclaim that Chinese consciousness of beauty originated from the sense of flavor instead of the sense of sight. Now that the very first question at issue is whether the original meaning of the character for beauty came from the sense of flavor or from the sense of sight, I consider that a simple rule could be applied here: the original meaning of a word always appears before its extended meanings. There are now a large number of ancient Chinese texts available. If we examine all these texts, especially the oldest ones, we will clearly see what the original meaning of a character is. This is, however, by no means an easy job. There are two things must be done. One is to read all these texts and discern meanings of characters for beauty from the context in which the characters appear. Since there are so many ancient texts, this work is obviously dull and arduous. But, it is even more difficult to ascertain when these texts were severally written and compiled. Many Chinese philologists have been conducting research along this line from as early as the Han Dynasty up to now and tremendous knowledge was accumulated. What I have to do is to make full use of the outcomes of their research and make a choice among the conclusions whenever they do not agree one another.

Here is a sketch of my discoveries: In the *Book of Documents*,[8] the character 美 (beauty) appears twice; neither refers to the "beauty of flavor". In the *Book of Poetry*,[9] the character for beauty appears 40 times; none of these refer to the "beauty of flavor". Other ancient books, such as the *Analects*,[10] *Yili*,[11] *Zhouli*,[12] *Zhouyi* (*The Book of Chang*),[13] The *Spring and Autumn Annals*,[14] *Chunqiu Zuoshi Zhuan* (the *Zuo Qiuming's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[15] *Guo Yu* (the *Histories*

[8] *The Book of Documents* was considered to be one of the oldest books in China. Some chapters of it were proved to be written in the early years of the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century B.C.). Although the authenticity of this book was questioned by Chinese scholars from the Qing Dynasty to the early this century, it is highly probable that part of this book was edited or even re-written by people in later generations. Anyway, we still have some good evidences showing that at least part the book was indeed taking shape in the early Zhou Dynasty. Xu Xusheng managed to present a remote history of China in *The Legendary Ages in Ancient Chinese History Books* (Chinese Science Press, 1960), in which a paper by a scientist, Zhu Kezhen was included. This paper proves the written time of *The Book of Documents* by means of certain astronomical evidence, which seems more convincing than barely textual analysis.

[9] *The Book of Poetry* was allegedly compiled by Confucius (551–479 B.C.). Thus it should be a collection of poems or folk songs appeared before or contemporary to Confucius.

[10] *The Analects* was allegedly written and compiled by Confucius's students or student's students. If this was true, the book should take shape in ca. 450 B.C.

[11] *Yili* was also allegedly compiled by Confucius, thus it should be emerged before Confucius. Liang Qichao, *The Authenticity of the Ancient Books* and Their Dating "the seventeen chapters available today probably came out of Confucius's hand. The rites in Zhou Dynasty were overlaborate. Confucius sorted them out and thus made them suitable.

[12] *Zhouli* (*The Rites of the Zhou*) was written in the early years of the Warring States Period (475 B.C.–221 B.C.), and was revised in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). Zhang Xincheng, *A General Survey of Ancient Books of Dubious Authenticity*: *Zhouli* is the overall scheme for establishing the country, drafted up by the Confucians who knew the law, rituals and economy in the early Warring States Period. In the early Western Han it was stored in the loyal stacks. Liu Xin saw it during the rule of Wang Mang (9–23 A.D.), and published it with his changes.

[13] *Zhouyi* (*The Book of Change*) roughly consists of two groups of texts. One was written before Confucius and compiled by him and was called *Yijing* (*The Classic of Change*). The other was written by Confucius or the followers of him in the Warring States Period, and was called *Yizhuan* (*The Annotations to the Classic of Change*) or *Yidazhuan* (*The Great Annotations to the Classic of Change*). Liang Qicao illustrate a more detailed picture on it in his *The Authenticity of the Ancient Books and Their Dating*: "We should date the drawing of Eight Trigrams to the remote past, date the coupling of two trigrams into hexagrams, Guaci (explanation of the text of the whole hexagram) and Yaoci (the explanation of the component lines) to the early Zhou Dynasty, date Tuanci (the commentary on Guaci) and Xiangci (the explanation of the abstract meaning of Guaci and Xiangci) to Confucius, date Xici (Apprended Remarks) and Wenyan (commentary on the first two hexagrams, the qian or Heaven and the kun or Earth) to the end of the Warring States Period, date Shuogua (The Remarks on Certain Trigrams) and Zagua (The Random Remarks on the Hexagrams) to the time between the Warring States Period, and the Qin and Han dynasties. [Thus we can] observe people's mind and outlook on the world and life in different ages."

[14] *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, which was allegedly written by Confucius. Ban Gu wrote in his "A Biography of Sima Qian" in *The History of the Han Dynasty*: "Confucius wrote *The Spring and Autumn Annals* based on *The Records of the History of the Lu State*."

[15] *Chunqiu Zuoshi Zhuan* was said to have been written by Zuo Qiuming, but it is a disputing issue. It is generally considered to have been written in the early Warring State Period, and revised in the Han Dynasty.

of the States in the Spring and Autumn Period),[16] *Gongyang Zhuan* (*Gongyang Gao's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[17] *Guliang Zhuan* (*Guliang Chi's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[18] *Daodejing*,[19] *Zhuangzi*,[20] *Chuci* (The *Poetry of the Chu*),[21] *Zhanguo Ce* (The *Histories of the States in the Warring States Period*),[22] *Guanzi*,[23] etc., use the character "美" (beauty) signifying various meanings, but none of them are the beauty of flavor. The *Book of Mencius*[24] uses the word 16 times and *Xunzi*[25] more than 70 times, but both of them have only one referring to the beauty of flavor respectively.[26] *Mozi* is really an exception. The character 美 (beauty) appears in this book for 40 times, among which as many as three concerning the beauty of flavor. *Mozi* is regarded as having been written by Mo Di (478?–392? B.C.) as well as his disciples, but this book, as many Chinese scholars have pointed out, took shape as late as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.).[27] *Mozi* might be able to preserve the ideas of Mo Di and his students, but the recorders and

[16] *Guoyu* was also said to have been written by Zuo Qiuming, according to the records of some ancient books, including the *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian. Some modern Chinese scholars, however, believe that it was written by many historians from 400–300 B.C. Cf. Wei Juxian *A Study of Guoyu*.

[17] *Gongyang Zhuan* was said to have been written by Gongyang Gao in the Warring States Period.

[18] *Guliang Zhuan*, was said to have been written by Guliang Chi in the Warring States Period.

[19] *Daodejing* was allegedly written by Laozi (Lao Dan). The *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian says that Confucius once asked Laozi about the rites (see the *Records of the Historian*, "The Biographies of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Shen Buhai, and Han Fei") then Laozi should live contemporary to or even a little older than Confucius. However, it is still a disputed question about whether extant Daodejing was written by Laozi. Tang Lan, Hu Shi, among other famous scholars, believed that it was written by Laozi. Feng Youlan believed that it was written in the Warring States Period (Feng Youlan, *The History of Chinese Philosophy*). Most Chinese scholars now accepted Feng Youlan's opinion.

[20] *Zhuangzi* was allegedly written by Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369–286 B.C.) and his followers. Thus it took shape in the Warring States period.

[21] *Chuci* (*The Poetry of the Chu*) was a collection of the poems by Qu Yuan (c. 340–278 B.C.) and his followers.

[22] The author of *Zhanguoce* (*The Strategy of the Warring States*) is unknown. *Si Ku Ti Yao* (*Summaries of the Four Categories of Books*) says that it was compiled by Liu Xiang (77?–6 B.C.) from various historical records. Luo Genze guesses that it was written by Kuai Tong, a persuasive talker in the early Han Dynasty.

[23] *Guanzi*, though traditionally attributed to Guan Zhong (?–645 B.C.), was generally believed not written by him, but by certain Legalists in the late Warring States Period.

[24] *The Book of Mencius* was allegedly written by Meng Ke (ca. 372–289 B.C.?), and there is not much disputation on this conclusion.

[25] Most chapters of *Xunzi* were written by Xun Kuang (331?–238 B.C.), except for a few by his students or followers. Liang Qichao wrote: "X*unzi* is creditable on the whole. Only seven chapters such as…are probably not completely out of the hand of *Xunzi*. They were recorded either by Xun's disciples or added by people in later generations."

[26] *Mencius*: "Which among the sliced and fried meat or *yangzao* (a kind of fruit) is more beautiful?" *Xunzi*: "It is natural to human beings that their mouths like tasty food which is taken as beauty."

[27] Guo Moruo, *The Bronze Age*: "The text of Mozi existing today is edited by people of the Han Dynasty." Luo Genze, *An Investigation of the Texts by the Pre-Qin Philosphers* quoted the remarks by Ruan Diaofu: "Mozi became a book as such actually since the Han Dynasty."

compilers in the Han Dynasty presumably follow the linguistic convention of his own age whenever they revised or edited the ancient texts (if these texts did exist in the Han Dynasty). Another exception is *Liji* (*The Records of the Rituals*). The character for beauty appears in *Liji* for circa 40 times, five of which indicate the beauty of food. The account for it is similar to *Mozi*. This book was written during a long period from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty, namely, it retains some texts of the Warring States period, but was revised, replenished and compiled by the scholars of the Han period.[28] The earliest books in which the character for beauty frequently appeared are probably *Lüshi Chunqiu*[29] and *Hanfeizi*.[30] The character for beauty appeared in *Hanfeizi* around 70 times, 10 of which refer to the beauty of food. *Lüshi Chunqiu* describes the food from different parts of China and uses the character for beauty for as many as seven times in a single paragraph. Both *Lüshi Chunqiu* and *Hanfeizi* are books written at the end of the Warring States Period. I have also read books copied on silk in the Han tombs at Mawangdui[31] and found that neither of the two versions of *Daodejing* (*Laozi*) in the tombs use character for beauty referring to the beauty of food or flavor. In all of the other silk-books in the tomb, only one, *Wuxing* (*The Five Agents*, a book or a chapter from a lost ancient book), use the character for beauty twice to refer to delicious food (since this text is not mentioned by other ancient books, we have no direct evidences to decide its written time, but from the philosophical ideas appearing in it I suppose that it was written at the end of the Warring States Period or later).

That when and by whom the ancient Chinese books were written is a very complicated question. The versions of the books existing now were usually compiled, revised, replenished by many scholars in the separate period of the history. What I stated above is only a simple sketch to the whole picture and there is no room for me to describe it at length in this paper. This simple sketch, however, is sufficient for us to get a primary division as follows:

(1) In the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 11th century–771 B.C.), the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.) and even in the early Warring States Period (475 B.C.–ca. 380 B.C.), Chinese people by no means considered that delicious food can be "beautiful".
(2) In the middle Warring States Period (ca. 380–ca. 280 B.C.), they began to mention the beauty of food occasionally.
(3) In the late Warring States Period (ca. 280–221 B.C.), the beauty of delicious food began to be frequently talked.

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[28] He Yisun, *Questions and Answers about the Eleven Classics*: "Question: Who wrote *Liji*?" Answer: "Confucius made remarks. His seventy-two disciples recorded what they had heard. The Confucians in the Qin and Han period edited them into a book. Most of them are not the original remarks of Confucius. It is only someone else's remarks under Confuscius's name wherever it refers to Confucius's remarks."

[29] *Lüshi Chunqiu* is a book written by a group of scholars under Lü Buwei (?–235 B.C.), the prime minister of the Qin state.

[30] *Han Feizi* was written by Han Fei (280?–233 B.C.), an important Legalist writer. The authenticity of this book is generally creditable.

[31] Silk Books from Mawangdui Tombs of the Han Dynasty.

The details of the sketch and the division of the historical phases put forth above are still open to dispute, but it becomes evident that the fundamental fact is indisputable, i.e. the beauty of flavor is not the original meaning of the word. The argument put forward by Xu Shen and his followers is not tenable.

Besides the facts given above, I am fortunate in obtaining further evidence in two books which are comparable to today's dictionaries. One of them is *Erya*, the other is *Guangya*. *Erya* took shape from the Warring States period to the Han Dynasty.[32] It offers two groups of synonyms to "beauty",[33] but none of them is relevent to the beauty of food or flavor. *Guangya* was compiled in the Three Kingdoms Period (220–280 A.D.). It also records a group of synonyms to "beauty", which is quite different from those provided by *Erya*.[34] There are many words in the latter group referring to delicious food or flavor in *Guangya*. The differences between these two books obviously caused by the fact that they edited in different ages. *Erya* was edited earlier, hence it does not explain beauty to be "delicious". *Guangya* was edited in a later period when the "delicious" must have already become one of the major meanings of the character for beauty. *Guangya* was also edited at a time after *Shuowen Jiezi*, therefore it was possibly influenced by the latter.

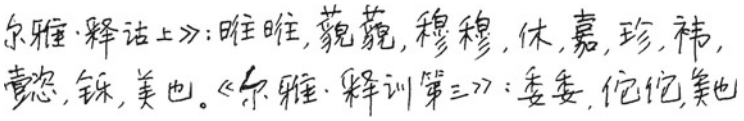
Now we reach a conclusion that the beauty of delicious food is by no means the original meaning of beauty. From this judgement we may also infer that the character is not composed of large and sheep. Any deductions from it with regard to aesthetics will, therefore, be groundless.

2

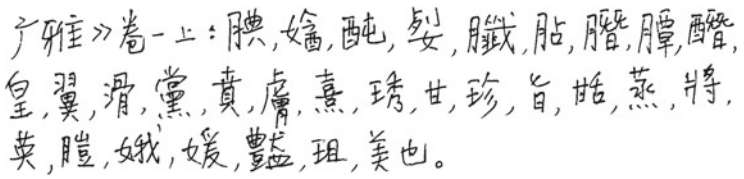
I am not the first person to challenge the opinion of "large sheep being beauty". In China, there are at least three opinions opposite to that of "large sheep". The

[32] Zhang Xincheng, *A General Survey of Ancient Books of Dubious Authenticity*: "*Erya* should be a dictionary before and in the Han Dynasty. It was gradually accumulated and added, not by a single person."

[33]



[34]



difference between mine and theirs are, first of all, not in the opinions themselves, but in the approaches. What I have done above is to try to find the characters for beauty from ancient Chinese books and study their meanings in particular contexts, hence getting sufficient evidences for my conclusion, rather than guess their meanings merely in accordance with forms of the ideographs. Now, I am going to continue my discussion by commenting these three opinions. These opinions are:

(1) One part of the character "美" refers to its meaning, and the other part of it refers to its pronunciation. Its representative is Kong Kuangju and Ma Xulun[35];

(2) Imitating a man wearing feathers on his head. It was suggested by Wang Xiantang and Kang Yin.[36]

(3) Imitating a man wearing sheep horns or a sheep on his head. It was put forth by Xiao Bing.[37]

Among these three opinions, I am first going to comment on "imitating a man wearing sheep horns", then "imitating a man wearing feathers". I will neglect the opinion of the first opinion listed above, because it has already proved to be groundless by Chinese philologists and almost no books mention their ideas thereafter and no influence it has exerted on the aesthetic society.

While we say that "large sheep" is a traditional opinion in China, and is mainly held by philologists but accepted by some aestheticians, "imitating a man wearing sheep horns or a sheep" is now a prevailing opinion in China, especially in the aesthetic society. One of the leading aesthesticians now in China, Li Zehou (1930–), approves of it, though with some hesitation.[38]

Xiao Bing put forward in his paper many arguments, two of which will be discussed in this paper:

(1) 大 (large) in inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells (shell-and-bone script) and inscriptions on bronze objects (bronze script) actually illustrates a man. Thus 美 (beauty) illustrates a man wearing horns or head of a sheep rather than being composed of two characters for "large" and "sheep".
(2) The man who was wearing horns or head of a sheep was the chief or sorcerer of a primitive tribe. He was playing a ritual dance of totemism or sorcery.

With regard to Xiao Bing's first argument, I would like to point out that, as I mentioned above, it is questionable whether the upper part of 美 (beauty) refers

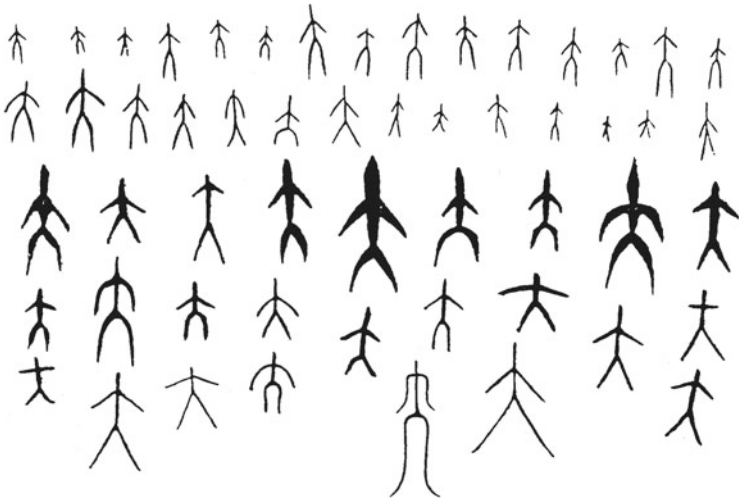
[35] Kong Kuangju, *Inquisition into Shuowen* should be explained as following (sheep) in its meaning and following (big) in its pronounciation. Ma Xulun, *Exegesis of Suowen Jiezi*: "In my mind *mei* must be following the meaning of (large), and following the pronounciation of *yu*."

[36] Wang Xiantang, *Collect Interpretations of Bronze Script*. Kang Yin, *The Souces and Development of Characters*.

[37] Xiao Bing, "From 'Beauty of Big Sheep' to 'Beauty of Sheep and Man'", *Beifang Luncong*, 1980 No. 3.

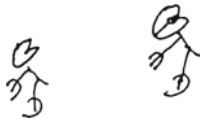
[38] Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo Meixueshi* (*A History of Chinese Aesthetics*). Vol. 1, pp. 79–82. Li Zehou, *Chinese Aesthetics*, pp. 2–10. Li Zehou, *Four Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 34–35. Li Zehou declares that he prefers the opinion and phrases it in rhetoric, but also acknowledges that further research is needed.

merely to “sheep”. The forms of the characters for beauty in shell-and-bone script and bronze script show that some look like horns in the upper part, some look like feathers, and some look like something else. We have no reason to claim that all of them are merely horns, let alone horns of sheep or head of sheep. I agree with Xiao Bing’s opinion that the lower part of 美 in shell-and-bone script and bronze script illustrates a man. This judgement was not first suggested by Xiao Bing or me, but by some Chinese philologists. The following are characters 大 (large) in shell-and-bone script and bronze script:



However, I cannot agree with Xiao Bing on that this man is the chief or sorcerer of a primitive tribe. He did not give any evidence to support his argument. The story of a man playing ritual dance of totemism will turn out to be nothing else than his personal fancy.

There are few evidences of totemism in shell-and-bone script and bronze script. One example in shell-and-bone script which may be regarded as keeping a sense of linkage with totemism is the name of a god 俊 (Jun), whose head looked like that of a bird in the writing of shell-and-bone script:



But I would like to point out here that first he was already a god rather than a totemic animal (they belong to different stages of mental development) and second, the totemic animal was a bird rather than a sheep or other horned beasts. I will develop these two arguments later, but now the totemism and its appearance in China require more discussion.

The "classical" representatives of the conception of totemism are James G. Frazer Éile and Durkheim.[39] They put forward an "evolutionary" theory on totemism which believed that human culture was essentially unitary and universal, developing everywhere through the same stages. If we could identify a people who were "frozen" into an earlier stage, we would observe modes of thought and action that were directly ancestral to our own. This "classical" conception of totemism suffered "classical" critique as early as 1910. Alexander A. Goldenweiser pointed out that totemism appeared less as an institution or religion than as an adventitious combination of simpler and more widespread usages.[40] I do not intend to become involved in the quarrels with regard to totemism itself and the "evolutionary" theory. I would like only to say that when Frazer talked about the totemism in China in his four huge volumes of book *Totemism and Exogamy*, he made use of wrong evidences. He believed that many family names of Chinese people contained traces of totemism,[41] which was a total misunderstanding. However, in order to avoid unnecessary disputation, I am ready to make concession to agree that this mistake does very little to undermine the credibility of the book as a whole, since the author mainly based his conclusion on the primitive peoples of Australia and only briefly mentioned China. I am also ready to accept the pronouncements that totemism is a kind of belief which appeared in a particular historic stage when social structures were in the form of clans and economic life was in the form of hunting and collecting. It is still very easy for us to explain why there are few evidences of totemism in the archeological discoveries in China: The cultural remains of ancient China available now were produced in a historic stage much higher than that of totemism.

Turning back to the discussion of the Chinese character for beauty, we can narrow the range of discussion on totemism to the time when the characters appeared rather than all Chinese history. As I put forth above, the earliest occurrence of *mei* 美 available are shell-and-bone script and bronze script, which have mostly been unearthed from the ruins of the Shang Dynasty. The Shang Dynasty lasted 600 years from the 16th century to the 11th century B. C., but shell-and-bone script unearthed only in Anyang, the so-called Yin Ruin. The Shang Dynasty moved its capital many times, with the last and longest capital in Anyang (Some scholars now argue that Anyang is not the capital of the Shang Kindom, but its "Archives", but this difference of opinions does not affect our reasoning). Thus shell-and-bone script available now go back to the latter half of the Shang Dynasty. According to some specialists, the earliest shell-and-bone script was written in the 14th century B.C. It is a time when agriculture already replaced collecting natural products (agriculture appeared in China as early as 8000 years ago), at least in the Shang nation[42]; animal husbandry

[39]The more recent writings on totemism, e.g. by Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss, seem of no direct relevance to our discussion.

[40]Goldenweiser, Alexander A. "Totemism: An Analytical Study", *Journal of the American Folk-Lore* 23 (1910):179–293.

[41]J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*. Vol. II, pp. 338–339.

[42]Archeological evidences show that ancient Chinese began their agricultural life as early as 8000 years ago, whereas the Shang Dynasty existed only from 3500 to 3000 years ago.

also took the place of animal hunting[43]; there existed a strong central government, with a huge administration, army and prison, etc. instead of clans and tribes in primitive society. With regard to the spiritual life of the Shang people, the shell-and-bone script tells us that there is God (帝) in the heaven, who can issue orders for wind, rain, the victory or defeat of a war, etc.[44] Such a God can never be produced in an age when totemism dominated the spiritual life of a people.[45]

Although the facts are very clear, I am still going to make another concession, i.e. to agree that after the end of the totemic life of a nation, traces of totemism would remain in the cultural life of a nation for a very long time. The outcome of the most advanced thinking could have coexisted with the oldest one in the same community. Some modern Chinese scholars proclaimed that they have discovered some vestiges of totemism in ancient China. According to them, however, the totem of the Shang people is a bird rather than a sheep. *The Book of Poetry* says,

> The Heaven decreed that the black bird,
> Flew down to generate the Shang people,
> Who would live on the vast land of the Yin.[46]

Evidence can be found in other ancient books. The *Records of the Historian* says that the mother of Qi, the earliest ancestor of the Shang people, is Jiandi. She became pregnant after swallowing eggs of the black bird and then gave birth to Qi.[47] In *Lüshi Chunqiu*, a beautiful story was developed based on this record. This record coincides with archeological discoveries. According to archeologists the tribes of eastern primitive China worshiped birds. The Shang people originated from the east. It is very probable that they once worshiped a kind of bird; sheep never enjoyed such a position in the whole history of the Shang people. It is evident that Xiao Bing's arguments are totally wrong.

The story does not end with our doing away with Xiao Bing's opinion. A new version of the totemic idea on the character of beauty emerged as if the self-contradiction of Xiao Bing's opinion had already been sensed. The new idea connected the character of beauty with another character 羌 (*qiang*). *Shuowen Jiezi* explains the character 羌 as shepherds in the west. From this, a story has been produced: sheep or goat played an important role in the economic life of the Qiang people. They worshiped sheep or goat and took it as their totemic animal. A sort of totemic dance was developed and the dancer would wear horns of sheep or sheep on their head. The Qiang people contributed dancers to the ruling family and nobles of the Shang nation. The dancing of those dancers was considered by the Shang people to be so beautiful that they created the character of beauty after these dancers. It seems to be an interesting

[43] Even sheep was a sort of domestic animal.

[44] Cf. Chen Mengjia, *A General Introduction of Bone Characters of the Yin Ruins*.

[45] Cf. L. Lévy-Bruhl: La Mentalité primitive.

[46] The *Book of Poetry*, "Black Bird".

[47] Sima Qian, *Records of the Historian*, "The History of the Yin (Shang)".

story, but it is not proper to take it as a scientific conclusion without giving any evidence.[48]

(1) Since the Qiang nation had already gone in for animal husbandry, its civilization was, though lower than that of the Shang people, much higher than that of the typical totemic peoples in Australia and North America, whose economic lives were mainly based on hunting and collecting. It is, therefore, hardly likely that the Qiang people would still take sheep or goat (even if they had done so in the remote past) as totemic animal.

(2) Suppose a dance of totemic meaning to the Qiang people still existed in the times of the Shang Dynasty (though it seemed impossible), this dance would not keep the same meaning to the Shang people. A cultural phenomenon constantly occurred in the history: a symbol that was religiously significant to a nation would lose this significance and gained simple or "pure" aesthetic meaning to another nation. The Shang people had their own beliefs and were proud of their civilization. They would never accept the cult of a people whom they regarded as barbarians. They could enjoy the dance of the Qiang people, but would never worship it. Even if all these stories are true, therefore, we still cannot say that the Shang people had totemism in mind when they were creating the character of beauty. Needless to say, almost all evidences are against this story.

3

We have discussed two opinions on the origin of the concept of beauty in ancient China, and revealed that they are obviously against the historical facts. Besides them, there are some other opinions about the character 美 (beauty) in China. However, only the two discussed above have been accepted by aestheticians and regarded by them as having certain connections with the origin of aesthetic consciousness of ancient people. It might stimulate us to consider why the farther an opinion falls short of facts, the greater the opinion exerts an impact on the aesthetic society. Thus I would like to say something here before other opinions occupy our attentions.

"The beauty being composed of large and sheep" is an opinion deeply influenced by the philosophy and aesthetics of Confucian school. It is seen clearly from the judgement "beauty is identical with goodness" by *Shuowen Jiezi*.[49] Contemporary Chinese aesthetics, especially after 1949, has been developing in the framework of Marxism rather than Confucianism. Marx and Engels, however, did not write aesthetic monographs. Although their aesthetic ideas were implied in their writing on other subjects, they did not articulate it systematically. When Chinese people constructed their Marxist system of aesthetics, therefore, they had to feed in something from other sources. What they would supply were inevitably elements of Confucianism, even though some of those Chinese Marxists proclaimed themselves against

[48]Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *A History of Chinese Aesthetics*. Vol. 1, pp. 79–81. Li Zehou, *Chinese Aesthetics*, p. 2.

[49]Goodness is the translation of Chinese character 善 (shan), which also means virtue. I am going to write another paper to discuss the relation of beauty to goodness (or virtue) in ancient China.

Confucianism. Thus a utilitarian tendency naturally appeared in their understanding of beauty. They were willing to locate the origin of "beauty" in their daily life. Thus "large sheep" perfectly meets this need. No matter how difficult it is for us to accept an opinion such as this after discussions above, it is fair to say, this opinion played an active role for a period and once served as a weapon in struggling against a more dogmatical aesthetic thought. The reason for this is that, although this opinion bears a strong shade of utilitarianism, it still stresses the relation of beauty to human beings, rather than regarding beauty as an attribute of objects without any connection with human beings.[50] However, since it does not agree with the new discovery of archeology and prevailing aesthetic ideas, this opinion has gradually been losing its strength, though it still appears in various dictionaries as an opinion of philology.[51]

Xiao Bing appeared as a challenger in the disputes on the origin of the character of beauty. He is not the first to question the conclusion of "large sheep",[52] but the first, it seems to me, to make the traditional conclusion on the origin of the beauty a matter of disputation in the aesthetic society of China.

Xiao Bing's totemistic pronouncement on the origin of aesthetic consciousness emerged in the nick of time to extricate some Chinese aestheticians from such a predicament, i.e. the need of, after repudiating the conception of "beauty of flavor" as the origin of aesthetic consciousness, finding a new utilitarian conception to take its place. Totemism is a good choice. Totemism, from our perspectives, is perhaps no more than a superstitious belief, but in the mind of the primitive peoples, it is a belief, according to Frazer and Dukheim, of tremendous consequence to their acquiring a means of livelihood, selecting sexual mates and consequently establishing social structures. This opinion, therefore, is rapidly accepted by some aestheticians with Li Zehou as their representative. Li Zehou stresses that beauty exists in human society. He also accepted the idea that a utilitarian evaluation of an object comes ahead of an aesthetic one,[53] which was suggested by, among others, Russian Marxist G. K. Plikhanov. It seems, therefore, natural to him that, in primitive society, totemism and utilitarian conception of aesthetics are combined together.

The aesthetic views of Li Zehou are important in the contemporary China. It shows that Chinese scholars have been trying to get some real discoveries in the general framework of Marxism and the coverage permitted by the authoritative ideology.

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[50] Cf. The so-called "great discussion of aesthetics" in China in 1950s and early1960s among Zhu Guangqian, Li Zehou, Cai Yi (1906–1991), and many other important Chinese scholars.

[51] Plato condemned in his dialogue *Hippias Major* the idea that delicious food could be beauty, too.

[52] That the character 美 (beauty) looks like a man wearing feathers on his head appeared earlier than that of Xiao Bing. But since it has little influence on aesthetic society, I would like to comment on it later.

[53] I merely plan to present specific discussions on some of his specific ideas in this paper. Li's idea is the most influential one in China, and, even those who are challenging his ideas agree that Li's idea is the most worthy to converse with. If this discussion has any potential theoretical meaning, that is beyond the limit of this paper. I put this issue to Prof. Li, and he considered what I was trying to do it is to add a new floor to the great mansion of human ideology. Is it possible that such a new floor provides aesthetics a new point of departure? Only a careful researching work can prove that, rather than an emotional criticism.

The endeavors they have been making should never be forgotten by history. But we cannot stop at the place where he reached.

China is a country ruled by Confucianism for more than 2000 years. Although there have occurred many anti-Confucian movements in China in this century, Confucianism would stubbornly come back in varied appearances. It could sometimes appear in the form that a thinker himself sincerely tries to break with the Confucian tradition and considers himself to be creating an entirely new idea, but his idea turns out to be one which filled with the worn-out spirit of ancient times. In this paper we cannot discuss the issue of tradition and innovation in general, but have concentrate on the origin of aesthetic consciousness. The concept of "large sheep" regards the beauty of flavor as the origin of aesthetic consciousness, in order to come to a conclusion that "beauty shares the same sense with goodness". This idea is central to the aesthetics of the Confucian school (here I refer to the ideas of the Confucian school, rather than Confucius's personal points of view with regard to aesthetics). The concept of "beauty imitating a man wearing horns of a sheep" explains the origin of aesthetic consciousness with totemism. This view has revised the disgusting aspect of the opinion "large sheep" with its directly utilitarian shade. It stressed the spiritual and cultural features of the origin of the aesthetic consciousness, while kept the essential position of Confucian aesthetics: "beauty shares the same sense with the goodness."

It is still a hard mission now in China to go beyond Li Zehou's aesthetics in an active, progressive direction (rather than somebody criticized Li Zehou in a dogmatist way by barely quoting some words or sentences from Marx or Engels, Lenin, Stalin, or Mao Zedong). The aesthetic thought of Li Zehou embodies the ideological characteristics of a transitional period. It is difficult to complete such a transition of thought and culture before the social transition is completed. His ideas will still dominate Chinese aesthetic field for some time to come. In the new century, many Chinese scholars, especially young scholars, will challenge the last representative of Chinese traditional aesthetics. However, to predict this process goes far beyond the scope of this paper. What I can do now is only to limit my discussion to the origin of aesthetic consciousness.

4

Now it is the time to present my proposition on the origin of the character *mei* 美. Before I get down to it, I have to offer a short comment on another opinion mentioned above, i.e. that the character 美 (beauty) looks like a man wearing feathers on his head.

The conception of "wearing feathers" was suggested by Wang Xiantang and Kang Yin.[54] It agrees with some characters for beauty in shell-and-bone script and bronze script, but mismatches the others. These two philologists do not give further evidences

[54]Wang Xiantang, *Collect Interpretations of Bronze Scripts*. Kang Yin, *The Sources and Development of Characters*.

for their proposal. Thus, it appears to be no more than a conjecture based merely on the form of the characters.

It seems to me that two pieces of evidence can be exploited in supporting this conjecture. One is that almost all primitive peoples prefer to adorn themselves with feathers. Another is that the Shang people may have taken the bird as their totemic token in a period long before the establishment of the Shang Dynasty. But these two evidences are far from enough to lead to a conclusion.

Before I present my pieces of evidence to support a conclusion, I would like to summarize my standpoint in commenting on the above ideas. I totally reject the opinion of "large sheep" and the idea of "the beauty of flavor". I reject the practice of attaching totemism to the opinion that the character 美 "looked like a man wearing horns of a sheep", but I do not totally reject the opinion itself. Namely, I agree that, the character 美 could be imitating "A man wearing horns of a sheep", but it would not be implying the sense of totemism. I question the opinion that the character 美 looked like a man wearing feathers because it is short of evidences, but acknowledge its right to exist as a conjecture.

After making the judgements above, I would like to put forth three groups of evidences favoring my conclusion.

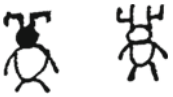
First, the original meaning of a word should appear in the context of the oldest books, whereas the extended meaning of this word should appear in later books. Among all the ancient books I studied above, three were surely written before Confucius, i.e. the *Book of Documents*, *Yijing* (the earlier parts of *the Book of Change*) and the *Book of Poetry*. In the *Book of Documents*, beauty appears twice, once in "Shuo Ming", another in "Bi Ming". The first refers to the beauty of political affairs and the second refers to the beauty of clothes. Since "Shuo Ming" turns out to be an apocrypha and was written probably as late as the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420 A.D.), we can leave it out. Another ancient book, the *Book of Change*, is constituted of many parts written at different time. Since the character 美 does not appear in those parts written before Confucius, we can leave them out, too. 美 appears in the *Book of Poetry* for 42 times, most of which refer to the beauty of man and woman. Only twice does it refer to the beauty of objects, and both references are in the "Quiet Girl". One refers to the beauty of the red stem of plant, another to the beauty of a shoot. Still, the author added such a sentence: "It is not the shoot that is beautiful, it was given me by a beautiful girl." We can, therefore, give a primary conclusion that, the earliest meaning of beauty refers to the beauty of men or women, or those in beautiful clothes.

Second, since the original meaning of beauty might be the beauty of human beings, the character "美" must look like a man or woman wearing certain ornaments. As I mentioned above, these ornaments might be horns of sheep, ox and some other animals, or feathers of certain birds. I propose, however, that the Chinese character of beauty imitates a man with some coiffure rather than some particular ornaments. Archeology tells us that as early as in the ruins of the Yangshao Culture (the Neolithic Age, about 6000–8000 years ago), many hairpins was uncovered. In Banpo near Xi'an, there are 715 pieces of hairpins unearthed, 113 of them are in the type of "T". In the ruins of the Shang Dynasty, where shell-and-bone script was unearthed, we

Picture 9.1

have much more evidence to show that the ornaments were highly developed. The Shang people had very exquisite jade hairpins and the jade men unearthed also show that they have various hair styles.

Now let us see two characters:



It is obvious that these two characters look like a man wearing neither horns of a sheep nor feathers of a bird.

Since we have found many evidences showing that the Shang people have highly-developed ornaments for the head and other parts of the body (see Picture 9.1), I propose that the character for beauty might imitate a man with some hair style or with some ornaments on his head. We have seen that all the characters for beauty are similar on the under part which refers to a person. But the upper part of each of those characters looks quite different. I acknowledge that some of them look like person wearing horns and some of them look like men wearing feathers, but there are still some of them that look like neither of those above. The point is that, if this character can be written in different ways, the Shang people might have no unanimous idea on it. They agreed on merely one thing, i.e. that the beauty is a person wearing something. No matter what the "something" is, the only requirement is that, it makes the person beautiful.

To wear some ornaments or have some hair styles is not the only way to make a man or a woman beautiful. But, since ideograph can only supply a symbol, whereas it is difficult to illustrate a person with ornaments on his or her neck, wrists, or waist, or to illustrate him in certain clothes, the easiest way is to draw some lines presenting the hair style or the ornaments on the head.

To repeat my ideas presented above: Though I have proposed that the character for beauty in ancient China might imitate a man or a woman with some ornaments on his head or of some hair style, I still do not take it as an absolute conclusion. I also agree with those who believe it might imitate a man with horns or feathers on his head. What is really significant, however, is that, since the Shang people wrote it in different way, it implies that they might diverge on which ornament were more beautiful, and each of them might write according to the way they believed to be more beautiful.

From these arguments, we can reach a conclusion, which is very simple, but is significant to aesthetics: the Shang people wrote the character *mei* 美 simply by imitating a beautiful person. They imitated such a person simply because they thought a human being was possible to be beautiful. This is the sign of the origin of their aesthetic consciousness, not for the cause of religion, nor for the cause of direct feeling of mouth or tongue.[55]

[55]This paper was written in the 1982 in Chinese and, after rejected by several journals, was published in an unimportant journal in 1988 in the end. I am delighted to know that *Hanyu Dacidian* (*The Great Dictionary of Chinese Words*, published in 1993) explains the first meaning of mei as *meiguan* "Good looking", rather than "delicious" as given by *Ciyuan* and almost all the other important dictionaries. However, such a significant change has yet to be noticed by aestheticians in China.

Chapter 10
The "Aesthetics Craze" in China—Its Cause and Significance

10.1 The "Aesthetics Craze"

In the Western world aesthetics is a rather specialized subject pursued by only a small number of scholars. In the late 1970s and early 1980s in China, however, it suddenly became very popular. At that time a scholar of aesthetics could have his books printed and sold in tens of thousands of copies, and professors could choose their students among the most excellent youth.

The following figures may give some idea of this amazing craze for aesthetics:

Li Zehou	*Meixue Lun Ji* (*Analects on Aesthetics*, a collection of twenty-five papers, most of which had already been published in various journals or newspapers from the 1950s to 1970s), 1980: 15,000 copies; 1981: 21,000 copies.
Zong Baihua	*Meixue Sanbu* (*Peripatetics in Aesthetics*, a collection of twenty-two papers written from the 1920s to 1970s) 1981: 25,000 copies; 1982: 46,000 copies.
Zhu Guangqian	*Tan Mei Shu Jian* (*Letters on Beauty,* a booklet in the form of a collection of letters in which some aesthetics ideas are explained in simple language), printed four times from 1980 to 1984, altogether 195,000 copies.
Li Zehou	*Mei de Licheng* (*The Path of Beauty,* a book summarizing the history of aesthetics ideas of ancient China) also approached 200,000 copies.

Another category of figures is the number of students intending to study aesthetics. In China only postgraduate students specialize in aesthetics. In the academic year of 1978, when Chinese universities began to enrol students at the postgraduate level for the first time since the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, three leading scholars of aesthetics—Zhu Guangqian, Li Zehou and Cai Yi—were permitted to

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_10

have students. Each planned to take five students, but to their surprise each had more than 300 applicants. Considering that the total number of postgraduate students in China at that time was only several thousand in all subjects, this figure is really amazing.

In the Western world, aestheticians are more likely to sit in a quiet corner and do rather specialized research. Why was the subject so popular in China at that time? Seeing China lacks any long aesthetics tradition, this seems all the more remarkable.

10.2 A Brief Review of Aesthetics in China

In contrast to the long history of China, aesthetics is a rather young discipline in this country. Though many thinkers and men of letters in ancient China wrote about beauty and art, on the whole writers preferred not to discuss at length the origins, natures and principles of the arts or beauty, but to define the function of art or describe their experience of art in scattered remarks.

It is only in the present century that aesthetics as a discipline started to take root in China. The most famous scholars in the early years of this century are: Liang Qichao (1873–1929), a reformist leader at the end of the Qing Dynasty, who called for a revolution of poetry and novels; Wang Guowei (1877–1927), who started to research Chinese novels, poetry and drama in terms of the German philosopher Schopenhauer's views; Cai Yuanpei (Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei, 1868–1940), President of Beijing University, who called for aesthetics to take the place of religion in Chinese life; Lu Xun (1881–1936), later an important writer in modern China, who while studying in Japan as a young student wrote papers in which he praised the European Romanticist poets and called for a similar Romantic spirit in China to break with traditional Chinese culture. All of these scholars showed the early influence of Western aesthetics on China.

In the 1920s some scholars started to write introductory essays on Western aesthetics, describing how this term was coined by Baumgarten, how aesthetics research developed into a special discipline, and the object and scope of this discipline.

In the 1930s a number of books on aesthetics appeared, among which the most prominent is Zhu Guangqian's *Wenyi Xinlixue* (*Psychology of Literature and Arts*). In this book Benedetto Croce's intuition and expression, Edward Bullough's psychical distance, Theodor Lipps' empathy (*Einfühlung*) and many other ideas of Western aestheticians are put together and described as different aspects of a body of "aesthetic experience", Western ideas being fused with traditional Chinese philosophical and literary ideas. Zhu also wrote many other books to introduce European thinkers such as Nietzsche and Freud, as well as a book in which Chinese poetry is studied in the light of Western literary theories. These books made him the first and most important scholar before 1949 to introduce Western aesthetics into China.

In the 1940s an event of great consequence for later generations was the publication of Cai Yi's *Xin Meixue* (*The New Aesthetics*). This book mainly aimed at establishing a Marxist aesthetics in China.

In the first half of this century aesthetics experienced an early development. In the second half, this was maintained even though China was now under a communist regime in which relentless class struggle had priority over beauty. In fact, the process that aesthetics developed was a painful one.

10.3 The "Great Aesthetics Discussion"

After establishing a communist government, Mao Zedong continued, in his words, "a revolution in superstructure and ideology." The early 1950s to the 1970s saw many "discussions" on literature and the arts. Almost all led eventually to "great criticism", the victims being regarded as exponents of bourgeois ideology and frequently declared "class enemies". For this reason, though almost all were in the form of academic discussions, they turned out to be political assaults. Mao Zedong was used to taking literary and artistic discussions as sparks to start political movements. This is typically exemplified by the Cultural Revolution itself, started by criticism of several dramas written by Wu Han, a playwright and historian. The "aesthetics discussion" was, however, probably the only exception in that it did not lead to "great criticism".

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, then, there was a "great aesthetics discussion" in China, initially started by the cultural authorities. According to Zhu Guangqian, several high-ranking officials in the communist party including Zhou Yang, then in charge of ideological and cultural affairs of China and the Chinese translator of Nikolai G. Chernyshevskii's *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*, had explained to him in advance that this "discussion" was intended to criticize and thus "clean up" the bourgeois ideas in the aesthetics field, rather than to attack and punish anybody. This put Zhu feel at ease, but at the same time showed that this "discussion", like all the other "discussions", was intended as part of the "revolution in the superstructure". It aimed at establishing a Marxist aesthetics by means of criticizing "bourgeois aesthetics" and its Chinese representative Zhu Guangqian. At first it looked like a continuation of the aesthetics disputation in the 1940s, when Cai Yi had criticized Zhu Guangqian while in the process of forming his "new aesthetics". Now, because Marxism became the official ideology, the situation seemed to be to Cai's advantage. Zhu's idea suffered fierce attacks from many scholars. Even Zhu himself became self-critical and tried to establish a Marxist aesthetics of his own. He studied Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' works diligently, and, since he knew German, he claimed to have a better comprehension of the text than his opponents had. However, although both Cai and Zhu had a number of followers, many other scholars tried to set up a Marxist aesthetics different from theirs. Among the most prominent was Li Zehou, who was only 26 when he published the scheme of his aesthetics system in 1956. Li's ideas rapidly became the focus of the "discussion" and were welcomed by many young scholars. More than one hundred scholars took part in the "discussion" by publishing their papers in various journals and newspapers, including the most influential, but Zhu, Cai and Li turned out to be the most impor-

tant. The "discussion" covered numerous aesthetics issues. Even a brief summary in this context is impossible, but I am still going to mention three points:

Firstly, all three scholars concentrated on the nature or essence of beauty, because they needed to prove themselves as materialists rather than idealists through the debate. Cai considered that the beauty of a thing was due to its natural or physical characteristics; Zhu emphasized its relationship with man, particularly man's appreciation of his own creative capability; Li maintained that beauty resided in the social character of a thing, rather than in its natural characteristics or in creative capability.

Secondly, while Cai declared that aesthetics belonged to epistemology, both Zhu and Li proclaimed that their idea was based on Marx's "practice". However, they understood this concept in different ways. Zhu insisted that "practice" would include both materially productive activities and spiritual activities. Li, on the other hand, emphasized that only the former was "practice". He considered that "practice" was centered on the activities of making and employing tools, and he set up his philosophy of subjectivity accordingly.

Thirdly, the three scholars' attitudes towards Western aesthetics were quite different. Cai derived very few ideas from Western aesthetics apart from the works of Marx, Engels, some Russian writers, and perhaps Hegel, whose books he thought would help people understand Marxism. Zhu and Li drew their ideas extensively from Western writers. Zhu, as a scholar educated in Britain and Germany, put the introduction of Western aesthetics into China as his top priority, and this was indeed his most important contribution to Chinese aesthetics. His aesthetics system appeared, however, to be more or less eclectic. Li, on the other hand, tried to choose and assimilate ideas from Western writers according to his aesthetics structure based on Marxism.

It is probably just because of Li's and many other young scholars' participation that the whole situation of the discussion dramatically changed. Nearly all the other "discussions" in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the involvement of the political leaders, particularly Mao Zedong himself. Mao could convince people that he knew literature because he indeed wrote political essays in good modern Chinese and his classic-style poems were nice. His involvement imposed an authoritative view on each "discussion", however. These discussions therefore ceased to be academic in nature, but were somewhat similar to the discussions of schools which aimed at comprehending the teacher's idea rather than seeking a new one. The teacher was the authority, particular Mao himself, who was later called the great teacher during the Cultural Revolution. Now, faced with so many kinds of Marxism in the aesthetics discussion, this teacher might find that he was not in a position to judge which was the "genuine" one or to interpose a remark without making silly mistakes. His absence made possible a discussion which sought rather than concurred in a conclusion.

10.4 The Cause and Significance of the "Aesthetics Craze"

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) "the great criticism" replaced all academic discussion, and China experienced over ten years without aesthetics. At the end of the 1970s when the Cultural Revolution was over, however, aesthetics returned to China with great momentum, and the real "craze" began.

The "great aesthetics discussion" of the 1950s and 1960s anticipated this "aesthetics craze" in many respects. It accumulated a large body of aesthetics knowledge, especially the study of aesthetics within the scope of Marxism. It introduced more Western aesthetics into China—more Western works on aesthetics were translated and published in Chinese. Among the most influential were Plato's dialogues, which were selected and edited as a book on aesthetics, literature and art; Aristotle's *Poetics*; Kant's *Critique of Judgement*; the first volume of Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*; Taine's *The Philosophy of Art*; Lessing's *Laokoon*; and Marx's "Paris Manuscripts". After being fiercely criticized in the 1950s, Zhu Guangqian began to write *Xifang Meixue Shi* (*The History of Western Aesthetics*) in the early 1960s, the first book of this kind in the Chinese language. Moreover, the "discussion" fostered an army of scholars who were interested in aesthetics. This army marched into the field of aesthetics in the late 1970s and contributed much to the "aesthetics craze".

The more important cause of the "craze", however, lies in its general significance for Chinese society at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. This was the great transitional period after the Cultural Revolution, which is consistently called the period of ideological liberation and regarded as the Enlightenment in China. Indeed, Enlightenment is the most prominent motif of the melody of the time. Many leading intellectuals believed that they were continuing work left by the May Fourth Movement (a cultural movement encouraged by a patriotic feeling at the end of the 1910s). Aesthetics played a vanguard role in this transition in at least three very important respects.

The first is that it provided an ideological resource for the reinterpretation of Marxism. The post-Cultural Revolution period of China is still under communist rule and Marxism is still an official ideology. Nevertheless, a new slogan arose: to comprehend Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought completely and accurately. It implied that people were no longer required to follow every single word of these teachers, but to grasp and act in accordance with their general spirit. Since it was one of the very few fields which had enjoyed serious academic discussion before the Cultural Revolution, aesthetics paved the way for this comprehension. One of the most obvious examples was "practice", which, as mentioned earlier, had been a central concept in the "aesthetics discussion". The discoursers carefully read Marx's remarks on practice and elaborated certain systematic ideas on it. During the late period of the Cultural Revolution, Li Zehou wrote a book, *Pipan Zhexue de Pipan* (*The Critique of the Philosophy of Critique*), a book introducing and commenting on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, mainly the three Critiques. At that period, this book was of great significance because it for the first time sought to approach Marxism by way of Kant rather than Hegel. The book was completed in October 1976,

coinciding with the arrest of the gang of four and the end of the Cultural Revolution. In this book he continued his discussion on "practice" at length. To the Chinese of that period, practice was destined to be a broom for sweeping away the dust of the past as well as a key for opening the door to the future. Soon after the Cultural Revolution, a precept—"practice is the sole criterion of truth"—frequently appeared in all the important newspapers and even the documents of the Communist Party of China. The only source of truth was now practice rather than somebody's remarks. Mao Zedong's words could be true only after they had been proved in practice. People could find the truth through practice rather than waiting for somebody's instructions. This precept dominated Chinese political life for several years. Everyone was required to study it, particularly officials at high levels, so as to make sure they agreed that the Cultural Revolution was wrong and Mao Zedong had made mistakes, and that the policy of reform and open-door, initiated by Deng Xiaoping, conformed to Marxism. This was naturally the work of politicians and political commentators, but aestheticians and philosophers paved the way for it and provided a theoretical basis. Eventually this formula deeply transformed the ideology of the Chinese, and made it possible for them to emerge from the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and start down the road to modernization.

The second vanguard role of aesthetics is that it has consistently been a bridgehead of Western impact on China. The dissemination of one culture to another usually starts in a few fields and then spreads to others. Aesthetics is one of the first fields where Western influence was accepted. In the first half of the 1960s many aesthetics books were translated and published. After the Cultural Revolution, some old scholars took up their work again. Still among the most prominent was Zhu Guangqian, who completed and published Hegel's voluminous *Aesthetics*, Giambattista Vico's *The New Science* and many other translations. But now translators were no longer confined to Zhu and a few other old scholars who had studied in Western countries in the 1930s. A new generation of scholars grew up. Li organized the translation of a series of Western aesthetics books which included, for instance, George Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*, Susan Langer's *Feeling and Form*, Rudolf Arnheim's *Art and Visual Perception*, R. G. Collingwood's *The Principles of Art*, and Benedetto Croce's *Aesthetics as Science of Expression and General Linguistics.* These books were quite influential in China at that time. When the publication of these books proved to be a success, more and more translated books appeared on subjects varying from aesthetics to philosophy in general, to other humanistic disciplines and to different social sciences.

If aesthetics only initiated the transformation of other academic spheres, it had a more direct influence on the Chinese outlook on art. Everyone would agree that Chinese literature and arts made great progress in the 1980s. Compared to this period, the 1950s and early 1960s left very few valuable works while during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) there was almost nothing. The success of this period (called by historians *xinshiqi* or the new historical period and defined as extending from 1978 to 1988) is ultimately due to a comparatively relaxed and tolerant social and political atmosphere, but aesthetics cleared up some of its key theoretical obstacles, and made possible a new understanding of literature and arts.

Since the 1950s the theories of art in China had been dominated by Soviet Zhdanovism mixed with Mao Zedong's literary ideas, according to which literature and the arts were regarded as the instrument of class struggle. Mao Zedong even codified it as two criteria: the first that of politics and the second that of art, the first predominant. This formula penetrated all literary and art criticism and historical writing. It encouraged politicalized writing, and the value of a modern work of art was defined by its function in political struggle. Attempts were even made to apply this formula to traditional literature and art. As a result, folk art was thought higher than literati art. Among literati art, those that reflected lower-class suffering and appealed to patriotic senses were considered higher than those that merely expressed personal feelings. The "aesthetics craze" provided new alternatives: people could now judge works of art by aesthetic standards rather than political ones. This point of view was justified by Engels' remark in a letter to Ferdinand Lassalle that the highest criteria for art are aesthetic and historic ones. With this proposition and propelled by the times, Zhdanovism soon became antiquated in China. Critics began to judge works of art in accordance with artistic value rather than political function; historians recognized the necessity of re-writing the history of literature and the arts from an aesthetic point of view rather than that of class struggle; and writers and artists felt more freedom to put their own characteristic observations and feelings into their works.

Literature and arts were long considered to visualize and pictorialize certain political or social concepts. These concepts were said to constitute the themes of works of art, which were frequently summarized in the form of political or social arguments, such as: "national capitalism in China cannot survive the economic invasion of imperialism," or "only socialism can save China". This idea had been challenged in the early 1960s by some aestheticians, among whom the most important were still Zhu Guangqian and Li Zehou. They argued that art needed *xingxiang siwei* or thinking-in-images, a term seemingly not theoretically clear and justifiable but with the good intention of breaking up the stereotyped theory of literature and arts. In 1965, with the change of political atmosphere and the approach of the Cultural Revolution, such an effort was severely criticized as idealism, a charge then seriously criminal to Chinese ears. No one mentioned *xingxiang siwei* again for thirteen years. Chinese aestheticians risked reopening the issue towards the end of the 1970s with the publication of a letter from Mao Zedong to Chen Yi, foreign minister of China, mentioning that poetry-writing should use *xingxiang siwei*. By then Mao's remarks were no longer self-evident truth, but were regarded so only after being proved by "practice". It was really an exception that Chinese intellectuals read and interpreted his remark on *xingxiang siwei* with such enthusiasm at this moment. Although this discussion had some theoretical problems, it had a positive effect: it gave a heavy blow to the formulistic theory of literature and art, stressed that artistic creation had its own law, softened up the political control over literature and arts, and deepened literary and art study by introducing some scientific terms, particularly those of psychology. Therefore, no matter what the direct theoretical result was, such a discussion played an important role in pushing the theory forward during a transitional period. Moreover, Li Zehou took the opportunity this discussion provided to put forth his

argument: artistic creation is not a question of epistemology, but of emotion. This topic may be disputable in the Western academic sphere, but in the context of Chinese discourse its message is clear: artists have a right to express their feelings and emotions spontaneously, rather than being obliged to put in their works the knowledge and judgement of society.

The ice was beginning to thaw: Chinese cultural and academic life was being reinvigorated.

The "aesthetics craze" is by no means an accidental phenomenon in China. As shown above, it represents the needs of the time. It is destined to take on the heavy responsibilities of reforming the Chinese mind. This task is perhaps not normally accomplished by aestheticians, but in China, at that historical period, it fell on them to shoulder it.

10.5 After the "Aesthetics Craze"

The "aesthetics craze" greatly stimulated the development of aesthetics itself in China. It fostered a band of aestheticians. These people have conducted different studies and are leaving traces of the "aesthetics craze" everywhere in Chinese academic life.

Since the second half of the 1980s, some aestheticians and critics have begun to raise more questions, among which "subjectivity" in artistic creation and appreciation was an influential one. This was at first raised by Li Zehou in his study of Kant, and then applied by Liu Zaifu to literary study. But the subjective tendency reflected in it can also be traced to some other aestheticians both in China and in the West. This conception was warmly welcomed by a great number of writers, and in the theoretical sphere the discussion continues.

Yet, some aestheticians are reflecting upon their own tradition, seeking the relationship of modernity to tradition. Several series of the history of Chinese aesthetics have been published since the second half of the 1980s or are still being written. Some are trying to compare the Chinese tradition with Western ones, or re-interpreting the traditional Chinese aesthetics ideas in the light of the modern aesthetics. In this very interesting work, they are looking for a form of dialogue between East and West. Some scholars are trying to study aesthetic cultural phenomena in general, to study the aesthetics questions of technology, and to study the aesthetics of the different forms of art. Of course, many scholars continue to devote themselves to introducing Western aesthetics to China. Such work has been done and has achieved a great deal, but much remains, for instance, the Chinese still know little about analytical aesthetics, and the influence of re-orientating aesthetics to linguistics has yet to be clearly felt in China. Perhaps this is a side-effect of the "aesthetics craze": one was too preoccupied with sociological and psychological aspects of aesthetics to respond to the questions raised in a period immediately after the Cultural Revolution. Today, after twenty years, the Chinese are acquired a new state of mind to think about subtler researches including analytical aesthetics, but solid achievements still take time.

More important for the Chinese is it, however, on the basis of their characteristic tradition, to make their unique contribution to the development of the aesthetics of the modern world. This is also what I am trying to do right now and in the future.

Will there be a fresh "aesthetics craze" in China sometime? I don't know. But I am sure that the recent "craze" will continue to demonstrate its significance for some time to come. An enthusiastic band of aestheticians will cultivate this field to the best of their abilities, and continue to exert influence on neighbouring fields.

Chapter 11
Chinese Aesthetics: From 1978 to the Present

During the last three decades, many events happened in Chinese society and Chinese aesthetics. It might be obvious that China underwent a great change in economic field and rapidly become a modernized country, what I try to argue in this study was that, the Chinese aesthetics also experienced some fundamental changes. In fact, the situations of Chinese aesthetics changed in every five or six years. In the Western world, aesthetics is usually a specialized research pursued by a small group of scholars. It has no direct links with the social and political development, nor does it play any important role in everyday life. It is not the case in China, however. In the last 30 years, the fate of aesthetics has been closely connected with the development of Chinese society due to such facts that China went out of the social and political ideology of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), and that the society transformed from a Soviet-style political and economical system to a market-oriented economy and a characteristic social system different from its counterpart in other countries. It seems quite unusual, but understandable if Chinese aesthetics was put into the social contexts of these periods.

11.1 The Revival of Aesthetics After the Cultural Revolution (1978–1984)

From 1978 to 1984, it was a golden period for Chinese aesthetics that witnessed a so-called "aesthetics craze". During this period, the whole society showed great enthusiasm for aesthetics. Aestheticians became quite popular in the society. Lectures

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_11

by aestheticians could attract audiences as many as thousands each time.[1] Books on aesthetics could get into the list of best sellers,[2] and a post-graduate position could appeal to more than a hundred applicants.[3] It might be a miracle, but there were certain historical reasons for it.

First, it was a historical recovery of aesthetics as a discipline. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, there was a "great debate" on aesthetics. The "debate" was originally intended to establish Marxist aesthetics in China. This is part of the effort to build up the national ideology after the Chinese Communist Party took over the power in 1949. During this period, there were many forms of "debates" in the fields of literature, art, history, and philosophy, and all of them were initiated for the same purpose. There was a common pattern among all forms of "debates", i.e. at the beginning, different opinions appeared and people were encouraged to join the discuss, and then, a conclusion from the highest authorities arrived which was immediately and universally accepted, and in the end, the exponents of the "wrong opinions" began to be criticized, which sometimes even accompanied by personal punishment. The aesthetic "debate" was probably the only exception, however, which ended in no consensus, no conclusion from the authorities, and each of the participants of the "debate" voiced their own opinions separately and independently, and, along with the continuation of the "debate", many serious academic issues were touched upon. In this "debate," everyone claimed himself as a true Marxist, and tried hard to prove that the opponents as non-Marxists on the basis of their understanding of the writings by Karl Marx and other classical Marxist writers. This "debate" educated a generation of Chinese aestheticians, and cultivated a general interest in the discipline. Although aesthetics was overwhelmed by the ideological propaganda, political crisis, and social turbulence during the subsequent Cultural Revolution, the achievement of "debate" was not disappeared, and became a precious legacy of Chinese scholarship instead.

Compared with the historical legacy, "aesthetics craze," more importantly, met the need of Chinese society immediately after the Cultural Revolution. An ideological

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[1]To take as an example, I was told by some former students of Sichuan University that, in 1980, after the first congress of the Chinese Society of Aesthetics held in Yunnan, some aestheticians went to Sichuan University and gave lectures there before they came back to Beijing. The lecturing hall was filled by the students, many of whom had to stand outside of the windows.

[2]I published a paper entitled "The 'Aesthetics Craze' in China—Its Cause and Significance" in *Dialogue and Universalism*, No. 3–4/1997. I gave statistic figures for this "craze" in that paper, here it is:

Zong Baihua: *Meixue Sanbu* (*Peripatetics in Aesthetics*, a collection of twenty-two papers written from the 1920s to 1970s) 1981: 25,000 copies; 1982: 46,000 copies.

Zhu Guangqian: *Tan Mei Shu Jian* (*Letter on Beauty*, a book in the form of a collection of letters in which some aesthetics ideas are explained in simple language), printed four times from 1980 to 1984, altogether 195,000 copies.

Li Zehou: *Meide Licheng* (*The Path of Beauty*, a book describing the development of tastes in ancient China), more than 200,000 copies.

It is difficult to know how many copies of these books to be printed eventually, since it was printed by many different publishers later. Each of them, particularly the latter three, must be sold more than a million copies.

[3]For example, there are 344 applicants taking part in the test for the post-graduate studies under Cai Yi, and only 8 were successfully admitted.

movement (which was called ideological liberation) occurred during this period, which can, in some sense, be regarded as both a renaissance and an enlightenment in China.

To take the movement as a renaissance, the Chinese scholars of humanities meant to restore, first of all, the state of cultural development existing before the Cultural Revolution, and then the earlier periods of cultural flourish in the first half of the 20th Century.

They were first attracted by the "great debate" of the 1950s. Many scholars who used to play a crucial part in the debate remained academically active. When the Cultural Revolution was defined as a great disaster, the first response among the intellectuals was a demand for returning to the time before the disaster occurred. Li Zehou (1930–) and Cai Yi (1906–1993) were leading figures in this regard. They continued their arguments that were interrupted and suspended by the Cultural Revolution. But in a new context, the arguments were endowed with different significance.[4] Li published a book on Kant, attempting to combine Kant's ideas with those of Marx's.[5] Cai published a revised version of *The New Aesthetics*, retaining his form of combination between Hegel and Marx.[6]

Under such circumstances, the Chinese scholars continue their work of reviving aesthetics by reading the books published before 1949, particularly those that came out in print in the 1930s and 1920s. The old works of two persons became influential again. They were those by Zhu Guangqian (1897–1987) and Zong Baihua (1897–1987). Both of them had been educated in Germany in the 1920s or 1930s, and their ideas were more Western than Soviet.

This is also generally referred to a period of the "New Enlightenment". At that time, the Cultural Revolution was interpreted by many people as a continuation or restoration of the feudalist and despotic system of the Middle Ages, and it was thought that China needed modernization. As we know in China, the whole 20th century was actually a period of modernizing from an imperial kingdom to a modern nation, and the communist revolution was also an effort to modernize the country. This nation had its own history for several thousand years and was forced to "modernize" itself under the foreign pressure. In the 19th century, China lost a series of humiliating wars with the Western Powers as well as Japan, a country which had been a learner of Chinese culture for more than 1000 years. The Chinese then realized that it was

[4]There were two most important journals for aesthetics during that period, the one was called *Meixue* (*Aesthetics*), which was edited by students of Li Zehou, and the other was called *Meixue Luncong* (*Aesthetics Forum*), which was edited by students of Cai Yi.

[5]It was an influential book in China entitled *The Critique of the Critical Philosophy*, in which Li Zehou tried to mend Kant's philosophical system with some ideas from Marx. Since Li stressed the concept practice, which later became a key concept in Chinese political life, this book was widely read in China. See Li Zehou, *Pipan Zhexue de Pipan* (*The Critique of the Critical philosophy*) (Beijing: People's Press, 1979, 1984).

[6]Cai Yi published his work *The New Aesthetics* in 1940s, in which he criticized Western aesthetics, particularly those introduced into China by Zhu Guangqian, on the basis of his understanding of Marxism. This is the first book on Marxist aesthetics in China, which was a mixture of ideas between Marx and Hegel. He revised this book in the 1980s, which was eventually published by the end of 1980s.

only by means of learning from the West could this nation survive. To them, there was very simple logic: learning from the West with an aim to fight against the West. This led to the dual themes of modern China: to enlighten and to save China. In order to save China, they needed an enlightenment; while the enlightenment was intended to save a nation which was considered to be endangered. The dual missions could promote each other in some situation, while could overwhelm each other in other situation. Revolution was used to save the nation, while educational and humanistic reforms were to enlighten the populace. In a famous article, Li Zehou argued that, for a long time, the mission of enlightening the nation as a whole had been overwhelmed by that of saving the nation. He maintained that it was now the time for enlightening.[7]

Aesthetics in its narrow sense also played an important role in that social context. "Aesthetics" was translated into Chinese as *meixue*, literally means the study of beauty, which was a translation made by the Japanese (pronounced as *bigaku*, but share the same way of writing in characters) in the late 19th century, and was accepted by the Chinese at the beginning of the 20th Century. This translation is not the literal one of the word in Western languages, but a coinage in accordance with the Japanese and the Chinese understanding of the content of this discipline. This understanding is, of course, under a strong influence of certain Western aestheticians of that time, particularly some German philosophers, such as Kant, Schiller, and Schopenhauer. On the other hand, a translation as such would inevitably affect people's understanding of this discipline in return. In the mind of the Chinese for a very long time, there was a triunity in aesthetics that consisted of three parts, the first was the study of beauty, the second was of the study of the sense of beauty or the aesthetic, and the third was about art.

This way of translation played a special part in the period soon after the Cultural Revolution dominated by "class struggle" that was regarded as the engine of social progress. A social revolution was usually accompanied by class struggle, and the unfair distribution of wealth may be one of the main causes of a revolution. But the Cultural Revolution was not a real revolution, and the "class struggle" was not a real one among social classes in political and economic senses, instead it is a campaign among people who were holding different political opinions and struggling against each other. When the "class" lost its original meaning as something associated with property, capital and status of social groups, the "struggle" would soon become a war of everyone against everyone. It could only lead to chaos and indeed did so. In this situation, the word beauty or harmony gained an implication of reducing political ideology, and resuming to a state of non-political life such that it was welcomed by the whole society at that time.

If one saw the topics discussed by Chinese aestheticians at that time with reference to the state of aesthetics in the West, one might be disappointed to find it too old and out of mode. They tried hard to prove an old argument that art should be autonomous and the aesthetic should be disinterested. The books by Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Benedetto Croce and Edward Bullough became influential

[7] Li Zehou, "The Double Variations of Salvage and Enlightenment". See Li Zehou, *The History and Review of Modern Chinese Thought* (Beijing: Eastern Press, 1987), pp. 7–49.

again. It was precisely these old books that paved the way for a new and modern aesthetics in China. During the Cultural Revolution, art was taken as an instrument or weapon for political struggle, and the so-called artistic quality was only determined by the effectiveness of political propaganda. Now the Chinese were eager to return to quality of art in itself. To them art for art's sake was much better than art for dirty politic tricks, and aesthetics of this form seemed to support this demand.

11.2 Expanding Outlook (1985–1989)

From 1979 to 1984, aesthetics was closely connected with social life, though in the name of art autonomy and aesthetic disinterestedness. It was no longer this case in the second half of the 1980s. The idea of art autonomy effected in two ways: It served the needs of breaking away with the ideology of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1980s, and was welcomed by the society, while it also became a specialized subject exclusively studied by a group of scholars, and so as to keep distance with the ordinary people.

1985 was an important year for literature and art in China. It was a turning point and many important events happened at the time. Generally speaking, Chinese literature and art from 1978 to 1984 kept a realistic style on the whole. During this period, some modernist works of literature and art were introduced from the west into China, and received mixed responses. It was impossible for the Chinese, particularly writers and artists of the older generation to accept avant-garde literature and art, though they adopted some of its techniques.

The year 1985 marks a new generation emerging in the field of literature and art with a challenging stance. This is a generation of the young writers and artists educated after the Cultural Revolution. Many Western works of literature and art were introduced into China, and the Chinese writers and artists started to imitate them. There were diversified motives behind the imitations. Some artists only tried to test new styles so as to make their works different, but there were also some artists who tried to break away from the old conventions of art so as to create a Chinese avant-garde art.

Chinese aesthetics of the time, nevertheless, had nothing to do with this tendency in art and literature. In the early 1980s it had a close connection with the practical producing and appreciating art and literature, but now it refused to follow the new tendency. Chinese aestheticians of this time were not prepared to accept the avant-garde conception of art. In their eyes, the avant-garde art was only the mischief of certain youngsters, which did not deserve serious theoretical studies. As a result, the avant-garde movement in China was not accompanied by any theoretical thinking at the beginning, and the artists of the time did not read Western theories concerned, partly because they could not read foreign languages and there were no translated texts available, and partly because they were not interested in theory. What they did was only to imitate foreign works in literature and art.

On the other hand, Chinese aestheticians at this stage directed their attention to two tasks: one was to study ancient Chinese aesthetics, and the other was to translate Western books of aesthetics.

There were several books on the history of Chinese aesthetics published during this period. As is noticed, it was not until then that some scholars began to think Chinese aesthetics should have a history. We know that before Baumgarten there was no such a word as aesthetics, and thus a history of aesthetics was impossible. After aesthetics as a discipline was established, people began to trace the history of this discipline back to the ideas of, say, Plato, Aristotle, or Plotinus. In China, there had been certain books on Chinese aesthetics before, such as Zhu Guangqian's *On Poetry*, Xu Fuguan's *The Spirit of Chinese Art*, etc. These books were focusing on the studies of Chinese art only such that they were not regarded as books on aesthetics. Li Zehou's *The Path of Beauty* provides a historical description of the tastes in ancient China, but it was still not the history of aesthetics in its narrow sense. Now it is time for them to write the history of Chinese aesthetics in its proper sense, and they indeed did so. As a result, a number of books in this regard were published, among which the most important might be Li Zehou and Liu Ganji's *The History of Chinese Aesthetics*, and Ye Lang's *An Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics*.

Another important event during this period was the translation of the books from Western aesthetics. The Chinese began to translate Western aesthetics very early, probably from the beginning of the 20th century. But before the 1980s, very few Western books after Marx were translated and published. Some people of that time tacitly approved that Western philosophy and aesthetics developed from the ancient Greece up to Marx and that was the end of philosophy or aesthetics. Modern Western philosophy was regarded as non-Marxism, and modern Western Marxism was not the true Marxism. Therefore, almost no Western philosophical and aesthetic works of the 20th century were translated. A great movement of translation began in the 1980s, and many important books were published around 1985, which attracted the attention of all Chinese aestheticians.

The translation was, however, still highly selective. It will be interesting to see why the Chinese choose certain aesthetic works to translate instead of others, and why certain works became influential in China rather than the others. Let me take some of them as examples: The Chinese version of Rudolf Arnheim's *Art and Visual Perception* was published in 1984, and Susan Langer's *Feeling and Form* was published in 1986. Both were warmly welcomed, becoming very influential in China. Nevertheless, no books by George Dickie and Arthur Danto were translated. There were certain papers of them be translated, but made very little response. Richard Wollheim's *Art and Its Objects* was indeed translated into Chinese, but was printed very few copies and very few persons noticed it. In fact, the Chinese aestheticians constructed their own image of Western aesthetics. This might be caused by the personal taste of certain leading aestheticians of the time. But, more importantly, it is due to the pre-established theoretical framework that was under the strong influence of the German classical philosophy and aesthetics.

During the second half of the 1980s, "aesthetics craze" was declined owing to two causes: firstly, the political implications of aesthetics disappeared, and secondly,

the aestheticians lost contacts with literature and art. Both of these causes may be relevant to the interpretation of aesthetics as the "study of beauty". It became a popular subject in the early 1980s owning to aesthetics being taken as the "study of beauty", while precisely because of the same reason, it lost popularity in the late 1980s.

11.3 New Conservatism and Its Confluence with the "Posts" (1990–1994)

The first half of the 1990s were the real silent period for aesthetics in China. The great changes in 1989 in China, Russia and the Eastern European countries brought about complex responses from the Chinese intelligentsia. It was a great transition: at first, the Chinese intellectuals were shocked, and then, owing to the economic breaking down of Russia, and the booming economy of the East Asian countries, they began to think of the new possible road to modernization. The romantic and optimistic "New Enlightenment" disappeared, and was replaced by a conservative tendency of reviving traditional Confucianism.

If we took 1985 as the year of appearing a new generation of writers and artists, 1990 marked the emergence of a new generation of scholars in the academic field of China. This was a generation of people educated after the Cultural Revolution, who no longer took the "New Enlightenment" as their responsibility, and no longer regarded themselves merely as the opponents of the ideology of the Cultural Revolution which, after all, was a story of over ten years before. They had a strong motivation of doing something new and different from that of the older generation. But such new things turned out to be more traditional. In their mind, the old formula "Western = modern" and "Chinese = ancient" was naïve. Modernization was by no means Westernization, and China should look for her own path to modernization. This tendency encouraged a new wave of rediscovering the classics of ancient China, which was called *guoxue* or national knowledge. We find an unusual and paradoxical phenomenon of the time: the younger generation of Chinese scholars was more traditional in academic tendency than the older one.

Western sinologists also played a role in this tendency. This was an age of international academic exchange. In the past, Chinese scholars came to know the West from books without personal contacts. Now they had opportunities to meet Western scholars in person by visiting western countries and receiving western visitors. They first contacted Western sinologists who live and work in the Western universities. The main task of these sinologists was to provide the Western society with relevant knowledge of China, but, at this moment, they became the main suppliers of the Western knowledge to the Chinese. These scholars lived in a different social context from that of the Chinese, and their academic outlook were confined by this context. They tended to challenge the mainstream discourse of the West, and did it by relying on two resources: one came from traditional Chinese texts and the other

from three "posts," i.e. post-modernism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism. This tendency became influential in China.

All this aforementioned elements encouraged an extremely radical line of thought in China. Some scholars took a complete negative attitude towards the reception of Western ideas in the 20th Century, as well as the establishment of Marxist aesthetics under influence of the Soviet Union after 1949. They maintained that the only way to construct a new theory of literature and art was to come back to ancient China and, from the traditional Chinese theory of literature and art, they could directly built up a new and modern theory.

In this context, aesthetics became totally out of fashion. Aesthetics or the study of beauty represented a Kantian-style modernity, or a formula "Marx + Kant", which was replaced by another formula "Chinese tradition + three 'posts'".

11.4 The Rise of Cultural Studies and Redefinition of Aesthetics in China (1995–2000)

In the second half of the 1990s, Chinese aesthetics showed certain signs of reviving, but in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, many aesthetic organizations became active; many new conferences were organized, and many new books were published; on the other hand, there were very few theoretical innovations. As an independent culture with a long history, the Chinese tends to construct its own systematic ideas in every discipline. They did it in 1950s, and developed it in the early 1980s, but were not able to create any new systematic ideas for aesthetics in the 1990s. Towards the end of the 20th Century, Chinese academic studies have been put into a fundamentally different context from that of the previous times. It was a globalized world, and, if one soliloquized without noticing the development of the world, one would never be able to make any real innovations in any sense.

During this period, the only works with any theoretical significance were still the studies of the traditional Chinese aesthetics. This sort of works, however, gained new meanings now because of the globalized sense of the aesthetics. The Chinese aestheticians during this phase tried hard to join in the international dialogues with the support of their own traditional resources. This was not to put the Chinese materials into Western theoretical frameworks, as Chinese scholars did in the early 20th century. Rather, it was intended to compare the Chinese ideas as an independent system with the systems from the West, and see if there were anything new could be added to the latter.

The Chinese aestheticians continued the project of translating, but the focus was changed. They paid more and more attention to the writers other than the above-mentioned Kantian line of thought, such as the Frankford School and the British cultural studies, and French social studies. The Chinese aestheticians had already been familiar with the works by Marx and Engels, and known very well about the

ex-Soviet way of interpreting them. Western Marxism could constitute a dialogical relationship with the knowledge they already possessed.

Their interests at this time were not necessarily aesthetic in its narrow sense. In the 1980s, Chinese aesthetics were under a strong influence of the German classical aesthetics of Kant and Hegel. Aesthetics as a discipline then aimed to transform the idea of art as a social and political instrument to its autonomy. This task was challenged in the 1990s, and the "culture craze" that occurred during the time constituted a tendency precisely opposite to the "aesthetics craze". Since aesthetics had been ignored for a long time, it was now opposed directly. The proponents of the so-called "cultural criticism" and "cultural studies" proclaimed that we no longer needed a study of beauty (literary meaning for aesthetics in China), but a study of culture.

This tendency, however, may turn out to be a momentum for aesthetics to be regenerated in China. One of the purposes of the "culture craze" was to re-unite the academic studies and the artistic practice. China experienced a great change in 1990s and the reform from the planned economy to the market economy put the production of different kinds of works of art into a new context that was completely different from the previous one. The concept of art actually underwent a fundamental change. Alongside the realist literature and art as was still advocated by the old generation of critics, avant-garde and popular arts were flourishing in many aspects. Chinese avant-garde and popular art had two different forms of fate. To the Western audience, Chinese avant-garde art in 1990s might be something important, but it was rather marginal in China, and hardly known among the intellectuals. It seems paradoxical that a Chinese art historian might have less knowledge of Chinese avant-garde art than the Westerners do. The reasons for this might be very complicated. I would like to point out here that the political reason may not be the only one or at least not the major one. In fact, popular arts during this period were much more influential in China. For example, many *wuxia* novels (*kongfu* or swordsman fictions) had not mentioned in the history books on literature in the past, nor had they noticed by critics. But now they attracted more attention from professors at leading universities in China. This gave rise to the issue of how to distinguish between the high brow and the low brow arts, and between the serious and popular arts. Traditional way of separating the high arts and popular arts was challenged, and it was therefore necessary to construct a new model in the eyes of the theorists involved.

The avant-garde and popular arts with the theoretic possibilities they provided raised questions to the established aesthetics and its conventional doctrines. Aesthetics was not necessarily a study of pure beauty, nor was it to be linked with the autonomy of art. The history of Western aesthetics witnessed a history of the idea of was formed, developed and surpassed. It was indeed for a period of time that people sought after beauty in itself and the autonomy of art, but aesthetics as a discipline could mean something more than that. The "culture craze" accelerated this process in China, and helped Chinese scholars to reach a new understanding of aesthetics. On the other hand, although the scholars of "cultural studies" in China directed their attention to social criticism in general, but they would eventually come back to literature and art, because they took literature and art as object of analysis, and the social criticism was only a way to enlarge their hermeneutic horizon or academic vision.

We should study literature and art in different ways, but, after all, it had to be a study of literature and art. This discipline is no other than aesthetics. After the "culture craze", aesthetics was not suspended but revived instead. This was an age of revival of aesthetics in China. Everything was just booming and full of promise.

11.5 Chinese Aesthetics in the New Century

It was inevitable that Chinese aesthetics established its contact with the world, and it would eventually become a part of the world aesthetics. The history of Chinese aesthetics in the 20th century could, to certain degree, be seen as a dramatic process that was characterized with three waves of foreign influence. The first was the influence of the Western aesthetics from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1930s. It spread into China partly via Japan, but the leading figures of the time, such as Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua, were educated in Europe. The second wave was from Soviet Union along with the leftist movement from the 1930s up to the 1960s. The third was a new wave of Western impact on China in the 1980s and 1990s.

Since China is a large nation with a long history, any foreign influence from outside would take a long time before taking its roots in the local soil. Moreover, a Western idea will sometimes have totally different functions in China. An outdated idea in the West may play a rather revolutionary role in China, but a trendy idea in the West may appear rather conservative in China.

In an age of globalization, what would be the possible path of the Chinese aesthetics to follow for further development? It would be still necessary to translate Western aesthetic works. The Chinese have done much in this regard in the past, but they have mainly translated the classical works written by the previous generation. What the Chinese scholars should do now is to translate the works of the present generation, and construct a dialogical relationship with the aestheticians overseas. We have to continue to study the classical Chinese aesthetics, but we should do it with high awareness of the world aesthetics. More importantly, we should develop an aesthetics that keeps a close connection with the current situation regarding Chinese literature and art.

As a non-Western nation with rich historical resources for theoretical thinking, it will go along a quite different road to develop its aesthetics from that of the Western nations and other third world nations. What we are doing now is to look for this road. We have not yet arrived at a conclusion, but remain ready to make continuous efforts to ponder and explore.

Chapter 12
The Stories of Three Words

China is now celebrating thirty years reform, and it is now interesting to recall the process of China from a society immediately after the Cultural Revolution to a much more open one.

It might be unimaginable that during the period from 1978 to 1985 in China, almost all books on aesthetics became bestsellers, with as many as tens of thousands of copies being sold in a short time, and this discipline became a highly popular one with thousands of students choosing it as their subject for master or doctoral level studies. This period is now called the "aesthetics craze," which happened during a crucial political period, and played an important political and ideological role in transforming the society from a closed one to one with an "open-door" policy.

Aesthetics, particularly its Chinese translation *meixue*, literally signifies the study of beauty, which became a replacement for Mao Zedong's "struggle philosophy" (continuously creating enemies and calling for people to fight against each other before and during the Cultural Revolution). This does not mean that aesthetics became a political philosophy at that time. This was simply an effort to develop aesthetics in China, and its importance for social transformation lay in that it balanced the all-encompassing political ideology as a legacy of the Cultural Revolution, as well as offered an entry point for Western ideas by justifying the translation and publication of Western academic works in China. Disinterestedness played a role in relaxing the tense atmosphere; it turned out to be most beneficial for a benign political climate.

In this study, I shall choose four words in Chinese aesthetics that were of central import during that period. All four words were originally translated from Russian or other European languages, and have prevailed in China since the middle of the twentieth century.

12.1 Party Literature or Party Publications

From the 1940s to the 1970s the Chinese mainly received Marxist aesthetics from Russia, and, at a time when analytic aesthetics was prevailing in West, the Chinese

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_12

persisted in utilitarian or instrumentalist ideas on literature and art by promoting art for the sake of class struggle, art in the service of workers, farmers, and soldiers, and art that would further the purposes of socialist construction and revolution. During this period, Kant's aesthetics of disinterestedness was sharply criticized, and very few books of analytic aesthetics were translated and discussed. The most important foundation for these instrumentalist ideas, in addition to many others, was a short essay by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin entitled "Party Organisation and Party Literature."

This was an essay written in 1905, when the Social Democratic Party of Russia became powerful owing to a revolution that happened that same year. In this essay, Lenin wrote,

> Down with non-partisan writers! Down with Literary supermen! Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, 'a cog and a screw' of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class.[1]

The revolution broke the restrictions formerly exerted on the Party publications. At that moment, Lenin called for a change in the strategy, for an end to the disguises of the past, and for a strengthening of control over the party's publications, demanding that they openly serve the practical struggle of the party. In Lenin's view, Russia had not yet developed a capitalist economy. The Social-Democratic Party should thus keep both the minimum program and the maximum program. The minimum program was to be "civilized" and to eliminate the remnants of the serf system, while the maximum program was to realize socialism and communism. At that time, a proletarian party was not supposed to break with the bourgeoisie and disrupt the bourgeois revolution but to join it. In other words, the proletarian party was supposed to unite with different kinds of social groups, including the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. A union such as this, however, should not be achieved at the cost of the independence of the proletarian party as concerns its ideology. In a revolutionary period many different persons with different kinds of ideas would join the party. The Party should "digest" them with its own program, rather than let them keep their own world views, which could eventually transform the Party. Owing to this reason, Lenin did not permit the Party newspapers and magazines to become contaminated and to spread ideas incompatible with the Party's program. He insisted that the purity of its publications was of crucial importance for securing the purity of the Party.

Lenin did not discuss the "principle" in an aesthetic context, and his "literature" mainly referred to publications in general, rather than to literature as an art form. But the "Party literature" later turned out to be a key concept in the Chinese version of Marxist aesthetics. The Chinese translation for the word "literature" is *wenxue*, which denotes, in the ear of the Chinese, poetry, fictional novels, and other so-called pure literature. Lenin's teaching convinced them that the pure literature was impure, fictional novels should maintain a non-fictional purpose, and all of them should serve the practical political struggle.

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature," in *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965), Vol. 10, p. 45.

In the books of literary and artistic theory in China at that time, a history was invented for the Party spirit. It begins with Engels claiming not to oppose to "partisan poetry,"[2] with his explanation of realism as "the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances," and his calling for a presentation of "the rebellious reaction of the working class against the oppressive medium which surrounds them."[3] Lenin's accentuation of the conscious service of literature to the goal of the proletarian party was regarded as a further development of Engels' idea in a new historical and social setting. The next stage was set by Mao Zedong, who maintained in his famous "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" that,

> Party work in literature and art occupies a definite and assigned position in Party revolutionary work as a whole and is subordinated to the revolutionary tasks set by the Party in a given revolutionary period.[4]

Mao Zedong's "Talks" were made in 1942 in Yenan, a base area of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the warring period, when its central tasks were to fight against the Japanese invasion, as well as to prepare for a possible break with the Kuomintang Government (KMT) during or after the Anti-Japanese War. At such a time literature had to be related to the war; if it was not actually such, at least politicians would require it to be. Mao thus followed Lenin's principle and insisted that,

> Revolutionary Literature and art are part of the whole revolutionary cause … they are indispensable cogs and screw in the whole mechanism, and an indispensable part of the entire revolutionary cause.[5]

After the CCP won the war with the KMT, this "principle" became the guideline for literature and art. What had been only a war time policy, became in the 1950s a central principle for the theory of literature and art all over China.

There was also a unique distinction in China that the Party principle was held to be a part of the theory of literature and art, rather than a part of *meixue* or aesthetics, since *meixue* literally means the study of beauty, and was thus considered mainly as a discipline devoted to harmony instead of struggle. Therefore, the fate of aesthetics depended on the political situation. There was an attempt to establish aesthetics during the 1950s and early 1960s, but when society turned to the left and the Cultural Revolution approached, literary theory based on the Party principle replaced aesthetics.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), literature became an instrument for political struggles, and Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, who was the actual leader in

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[2] "Engels to Minna Kautsky," London, November 26, 1885. See www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885/letters/85_11_26.htm.

[3] "Engels to Margaret Harkness in London," April 1888. See www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1888/letters/88_04_15.htm.

[4] Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" (May 1942), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 3. See www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm.

[5] Ibid. Translation modified.

the realm of literature and arts during that period, pushed the Party principle to an extreme and consequently eliminated most literature and arts except for several so-called "model Peking operas," i.e., Peking operas with modern and revolutionary themes in traditional forms.

How to discuss the principle of the Party spirit in the period after the Cultural Revolution? At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s this became the difficult question for Chinese aestheticians and literary theorists. They were eager to formulate a theory that would be different from the one that prevailed during the previous period of the Cultural Revolution, but that could also find confirmation among those who were regarded as classical writers of Marxism.

It was not an easy job at that time for Chinese literary theorists to challenge the long established system of literary theory within which the Party principle was considered to be one of the key concepts. They made various efforts towards the end of 1970s without any obvious effect, since most people were still used to the old theory. In the end, the reformers in literary circles, supported by certain high ranking officials in the Party, found a way to create some changes in the system while tactfully avoiding a confrontation with literary theory as a whole—by finding a new translation of the so-called Party principle. In No. 22 (1982) of the *Red Flag*, the central magazine of the CCP, a new translation of Lenin's "Party Organization and Party Literature" was published. The new title was "Party Organization and Party Publications." The translators argued that, "literature" in Russian did not indicate pure literature, or *belles-lettres*, but possessed a much broader meaning. In fact, it was the same in other European languages. In English, literature could indicate fictional or creative literature, as well as other kinds of writing. *Wenxue*, the Chinese compound for literature, came from the translation made in the modern era, and was no longer related to the original meanings of *wen* and *xue* that had existed separately in ancient Chinese; it was therefore directly understood as *belles-lettres*. On the other hand, there existed no word in ancient China which would retain meanings that would exactly correspond to "literature" in Western languages or in Russian. In this case, it could be only partly correct when it was translated as "the Party *wenxue*." Lenin indeed emphasized, "that in this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content."[6] It was thus meant to include the "pure" literature, and it could thus not be said that the old translation was totally wrong. What was at stake was actually not to make a new translation from a semantic point of view, but to create a new ideological and political one.

The new translation indeed had a strong effect, and its public appearance immediately put all authors of literary theory textbooks in an awkward situation. (There were hundreds of textbooks for different educational levels of students.) An examination of the textbooks edited during the period immediately after the new translation was published shows that many editors were panicked, for they did not know what to do. Soon afterwards, the "principle of the Party spirit" disappeared from all the literary theory textbooks in China. At the same time, the "aesthetics craze" appeared. This

[6] V. I. Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature," in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 46.

was an unusual event for aesthetics, and as Chinese aestheticians, we all benefited from it. It was this re-translation that gave Chinese aesthetics a new beginning.

12.2 Imaged Thought

From 1978 to approximately 1985, a new key term appeared in Chinese literary theory, i.e. *xingxiang siwei*, namely, "thinking in images" or "imaged thought". This was originally a term from Russian literary criticism, formulated after an expression by the famous Russian literary critic Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811–1848): "thought resides in images". What Belinsky wanted to do, was to explore the quality of art from the perspective of epistemology.

There exist three possible relations between art and knowledge: art is a kind of knowledge like scientific knowledge, which demonstrates truth; art is a special kind of knowledge, or a particular way of demonstrating truth; art is not knowledge, and thus does not demonstrate any truth. Of these three positions, Belinsky took up the second, i.e. for him, art was a special kind of knowledge and a particular way of demonstrating the truth. On the one hand, Belinsky tried hard to distinguish between science and art, and regarded them as different human activities. He insisted that their difference existed not in the contents proper, but in the means or methods that were employed in dealing with the contents. Belinsky wrote: "The philosophers speak by means of syllogism, while the poets speak by means of images and pictures, but what they say is the same."[7]

It appears that Belinsky did not distinguish between imaged thought as a means of recognizing the truth and merely as a way of demonstrating the truth. The examples of the syllogism and images he put forth, implied that this kind of "thought" only related to the latter, but what he intended to do was to prove that "imaged thought" could indeed reach the truth, or, in his words, "art is the direct perception of the truth."[8]

The "imaged thought" or "thinking in images" was popular in China in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This topic was discussed by many authors who, though different in many respects, shared the same idea that the qualities of art should be studied within the framework of epistemology. Both science and art, according to them, represented a cognition of the world, but the latter retained a special characteristic, namely to do this by means of images.

In May 1966, when Chinese society was on the path towards the Cultural Revolution, a paper entitled "Marxist Epistemology Must Be Retained in the Field of Literature and Art: A Critique of the Imaged Thought," by Zheng Jiqiao, a scholar-

[7] V. G. Belinsky, "A Glance at the Russian Literature in 1847," translated from Chinese from *Foreign Theorists and Writers on Imaged Thought*, edited by The Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS (Beijing: The Press of Chinese Social Sciences, 1979), p. 55.

[8] Ibid., p. 59.

official, appeared in the *Red Flag*, the central magazine of the CCP.[9] Zheng argued that "cognition" should be realized from the concrete to the general, and from the perceptual stage to the rational one, while the view of "thinking in images" implied a sensuous thought, and thus something impossible. Man *cannot* think in images and thought *must* be abstract. He suggested that the process of creating a work of art was to create ideas by means of abstract thinking, and then to organize images with these ideas.

This paper was, on the whole, written in the style of an academic discourse, but was published at the wrong time. Although written in 1963, its publication was long delayed and it thus appeared only as late as 1966. Its publication in the *Red Flag* also added an authoritative quality to it. The paper met with unexpected success because of the Cultural Revolution, which commenced immediately afterwards, and because of the rumors that Mao Zedong himself had praised it. Another fact that should be mentioned was that at that time no academic discussions were possible, since the whole society was preparing for a "revolution" or a political disorder.

The unnatural victory was followed by an unnatural loss. In 1965, Mao wrote a letter on poetry to Chen Yi, a former general and then the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China. The letter contained the following statement: "One should think in images when writing poems, rather than speak directly in prose."

It was a private letter that was not published until 1978.[10] In this letter Mao only discussed the ways of making poetry, criticizing Chen Yi's poems for writing down feelings or facts in a straightforward manner, rather than demonstrating them by means of vivid images. It was a letter in response to Chen's poems that were presented to him before—a rather common exchange between the two of them. Nonetheless, this letter became very influential as soon as it was made publicly known. Shortly after its publication in 1978, more than a dozen books and hundreds of papers on "imaged thought" appeared, with the most important among them being the huge volume *Foreign Theorists and Writers on Imaged Thought* (500,000 characters), produced by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with some leading scholars as its translators and editors.

"Imaged thought" refers to a rather special meaning of "the direct perception of the truth" and to "never separating from images" during the thinking process. The truth was considered to be approached by means of two pathways: the first was through logical thinking with concepts, arguments, and judgments, and the second was thinking in images. "Imaged thought" is the latter. This is a quite modern idea, but during that time the Chinese sought remarks from writers of different countries and different ages to prove it. For instance, Zhu Guangqian, a leading aesthetician in China at that time, wrote that "imagination" was just "imaged thought". Many remarks quoted in the book *Foreign Theorists and Writers on Imaged Thought* were

[9] *Red Flag*, No. 5 (1966).

[10] Mao Zedong, "A Letter to Comrade Chen Yi on Poetry," *Poetry*, No. 1 (1978). *Poetry* was an influential Chinese magazine for poetry and its criticism. It mainly focused on new poems written in modern Chinese language with fewer rules and in non-classical forms, but many of Mao Zedong's old-styled poems (written in classical Chinese language, and following old rules and forms) were also published in it in the 1950s and 1960s.

about imagination, fantasy, intuition, inspiration, etc. The "imaged thought" was taken as something discussed by people from ancient times to the present and not only in China, but also all over the world, though elsewhere purportedly different terms were used.

The reason why the concept "imaged thought" was so popular was also that it allowed a break with the corpus of literary theory of the Cultural Revolution. It was in accordance with the formula made by Zheng Jiqiao that the recognition of the truth needed abstract thought, while the task of the artists was only to demonstrate the truth and to visualize certain political ideas made by certain politicians who were considered to be the only persons able to think correctly. This formula dominated during the Cultural Revolution. Now that the Cultural Revolution was over, literary theorists needed to find a new theoretical language to justify the artistic styles they preferred. They insisted that artists were able to attain knowledge of life by themselves, instead of merely proving and presenting the "truth" discovered by politicians. Mao's letter to Chen Yi was useful to them in promoting their theoretical ambitions and their independent thought. At this time, Zheng was no longer important, though he still tried to defend himself. Almost all the important theorists and translators sided with the "imaged thought." This phrase quickly returned to the textbooks on literary theory and became an authoritative concept. It also added momentum to the development of aesthetics, particularly psychological aesthetics in China. Many of the advocates of "imaged thought" were also the leading aestheticians. In fact, if we were to say that the re-translation of the "Party principle" promoted the "aesthetics craze" from a negative aspect, we could also say that "imaged thought" did it from a positive and active aspect. It encouraged creation and appreciation, which was the focus of aesthetics in the early 1980s.

Our story about "imaged thought" cannot stop here. As we mentioned previously, there may exist three possible relationships between art and knowledge, with the idea of "imaged thought" being the second: art is a special kind of knowledge, or a particular way of demonstrating truth. This idea played a special role in literary theory during the development of Chinese society from that of the Cultural Revolution into a society more open to modern literary criticism and aesthetics. However, as early as the beginning of the 1980s, the concept of "imaged thought" was questioned by some scholars, and in the middle of the 1980s Chinese theorists gradually abandoned this concept, owing to several reasons:

(1) Art was no longer regarded as a kind of knowledge and a pathway to truth. The process that started with the interpretation of art as a kind of knowledge, continued with the interpretation of art as a special kind of knowledge, and led to art understood not as a kind of knowledge, but in fact towards the autonomy of art. The concept of "imaged thought" promoted this process. But when Kant's aesthetics made a return with the help of the works on aesthetics by Li Zehou, art was no longer taken as a way of acquiring knowledge of the world, and aesthetics was no longer a part of epistemology. This was a natural development, occurring alongside the revival of aesthetics in China.

(2) In the 1980s there was a current of scientism prevailing among Chinese aestheticians. At first, people took "imaged thought" as a scientific concept, but later realized that it was no more than a philosophic supposition, instead of a scientific conclusion. This concept was not proven by any accepted psychological studies, nor was it based on experiments on the human mind.
(3) Russian influence was gradually replaced by Western influence. Chinese scholars educated before the Cultural Revolution were strongly under the influence of the Soviet Union, while those educated after it were much more strongly influenced by theories arising from Western countries. When the new generation of scholars became the main driving force in academic studies, the whole aesthetic discourse inevitably underwent a great change. "Imaged thought" no longer had a place in it.

Today hardly anyone in China mentions "imaged thought", but I still think that once it was an important concept, which furthermore played a key role in the emergence of the "aesthetics craze" in the 1980s in China. It deserves careful study since it was a part of the history of modern Chinese aesthetics.

12.3 Subjectivity or Subjectavity?

There were two terms that attracted the attention of aestheticians in China after the Cultural Revolution: one was "subject" or *zhuti*, and another was "noumenon" or *benti*. Both terms related to a book on Kant by Li Zehou, *The Critique of the Critical Philosophy*.[11]

Li called his own philosophy both "subjective practical philosophy" and "anthropological ontology". In Chinese, the "subject" or its adjective form, the "subjective", can be translated by two terms: *zhuguan* and *zhuti*. In the semantic framework of the Chinese language *zhuguan* usually bears the sense of willful, or even arbitrary. Under the influence of the theory of reflection (a theory developed mainly on the basis of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*), people would mostly talk about *zhuguan* (subjective) and *keguan* (objective), and regarded the former as something negative and the latter as something positive. For instance, to do something subjectively (*zhuguan*), means to do it according to one's will or whim, while to do something objectively (*keguan*), means to do it according to the natural law.

In this context, the discussion of the subject, the subjective, or of subjectivity required a new translation. Chinese theorists chose *zhuti*, and thus *zhutixing*. Again, it was Zhu Guangqian who gave a new translation of Karl Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach". The first sentence of this short note reads as follows:

[11] Li Zehou, *The Critique of Critical Philosophy* (Beijing: People Press, 1979).

> The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity*, *practice*, not subjectively.[12]

It is obvious that Marx used "subjectively" in a positive sense. Here "subjectively" was translated by an authoritative institute into the Chinese language as *zhuguan*.[13] Zhu Guangqian, however, made a new translation of it as *zhuti*. Zhu gave a particular explanation for this new translation by arguing that *zhuguan* gave the reader the impression that it was conceived as a personal opinion, while *zhuti* stressed the meaning of conceiving it from the viewpoint of human practice.[14]

Li Zehou provided a clearer explanation as to what "subjectivity" and "practice" were supposed to be. He maintained that *zhutixing* was not like the subjectivity advocated by many western philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre, for example. Instead, his intent was to stress the physical activities of human beings, rather than the spiritual activities which he thought were considered by Western philosophers. Owing to this reason, he argued that his *zhutixing* could not be the translation of "subjectivity". It was actually untranslatable, and, if a translation had to be made, he suggested translating it as *subjectavity*, a new word coined for a new meaning. For the same reason, he also maintained that his *shijian* could not be translated into praxis, but only practice. He interpreted the former as including also various spiritual activities, while the latter supposedly referred merely to the physical ones.

Practice was a key notion from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s because of the great ideological campaign called "Practice is the sole criterion of truth." This was not merely an academic discussion in a narrow sense, but a political campaign let by Deng Xiaoping and his team to eliminate the ideology of the Cultural Revolution, which implied that everyone's remarks, including those made by Mao Zedong, should also be verified by practice. Although *zhutixing* as a term was discussed in a narrower philosophical circle, it echoed the broader general discussion.

Zhuti and *zhutixing* became extensively influential in aesthetics and literary theory, owing to a 1985 paper by Liu Zaifu entitled "On the Subjectivity of Literature". This paper became important due to two reasons: (1) The discussion of "imaged thought" came to an end at that time, and art was thus no longer regarded as providing knowledge of the world, thus leaving room for the subjective tendency in art. (2) Its publication coincided with a great discussion on human nature and humanism, which became the background for the idea of "subjectivity."

Every word can tell us an interesting story, if we are interested in listening. I chose these three words as examples to show how important it is for us to notice the transcultural histories of certain terms, theories, and themes. When a term or a

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[12] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucher, 2nd edition (New York and London: Norton, 1978) p. 143.

[13] *Selected Works of Marx-Engels*, trans. & ed. by the Institute for the Compilation and Translation of the Works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, CCP (Beijing: The People Press, 1972), Vol. 1, p. 16.

[14] Zhu Guangqian, *Pick up Wheat-Ears of Aesthetics* (Tianjin: Hundred Flowers Press, 1980), p. 73.

theory travels to a new culture, it necessarily gains certain meanings, and plays a new role in that society. When we attempt to understand the acquired meanings of notions and terms from philosophy and aesthetics in a culture other than our own, we should not only try to find something similar to us, but, more importantly, look for the additional meanings generated in that culture for our familiar terms.

Chapter 13
Chinese Aesthetics in the Context of Globalization

In ancient China, there was no subject such as aesthetics. As an academic discipline, aesthetics was introduced into China from the West in modern times. To the Chinese, it is even a double-importing process, i.e. in addition to bringing in the aesthetics as a discipline eventually from the West, the Chinese also learnt from the Japanese the way to translate it. It is called *bigaku* in Japanese, and thus called *meixue* in Chinese, with the same two characters but different pronunciations, and literally means the study of beauty, or a discipline of beauty. A new subject is considered to be established in China since then, which might be seen as aesthetics proper. Chinese scholars in the early 20th Century generally accepted this understanding and they frequently mentioned that aesthetics as a young subject in China.[1]

A question thus emerges when we use the expression "Chinese aesthetics": Were there anything that could be called aesthetics in China before the subject was introduced in from the West? About this, we may make such an analogy: there were no word such as "aesthetics" or its corresponding words in European languages, but a history of European aesthetics can be commenced with Plato and Aristotle, rather than with Baumgarten, no matter how the significance of Baumgarten is interpreted.[2] Accordingly, a history of Chinese aesthetics can be said to start from the works of

[1]To give an example for this understanding, I herewith quote the preface, written by Zhu Ziqing (1898–1948), to Zhu Guangqian's *Psychology of Literature and Art*: "Aesthetics can probably be taken as a *young subject* in China…. It seems to me that most of the books we now have are based on Japanese texts; and many of them are regrettably curt with a stiff style too constrained by the original language. It is like *a Westerner speaking in Chinese*, and cannot fully get into our minds." See *The Collection of Zhu Guangqian's Writings*, Vol. 1. Shanghai Literature and Art Press, 1982, p. 326. My italics.

[2]The histories of aesthetics written by Croce, Bansanquet, Beardsley, and Tatakieviki deal with aesthetics in this way. What did Baumgarten do for the history of aesthetics? Did he give an existent discipline a name, as if it is given to newly born baby, or did he establish a new discipline? We can continue our disputes in this direction, but I tend to argue that, Baumgarten's theoretical activities stimulated the process of establishing aesthetics as a modern subject for academic studies, and therefore what he did became a milestone of the development of this subject. Furthermore, we actually use the same word "aesthetics" in different senses when it is referred to the relevant studies before or after Baumgarten. When we talk about "aesthetics" before Baumgarten, what we are doing

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_13

Confucius or Laozi, rather than from those of modern specialists on this subject. Many histories of Chinese aesthetics were indeed written in this way. As a result, we are actually talking about the history of aesthetics in two different senses: the one is the process of setting up aesthetics as a discipline in China in modern times in the early 20th Century, and the other is to examine ancient texts and materials with modern concepts of aesthetics, and thus to trace an ancient history for a modern discipline.

Chinese aesthetics, nevertheless, faces a quite different situation from that of the West. Baumgarten only made a step forward from his own tradition. What he did was no more than to continue a process of differentiating the knowledge that had been started before him in the context of the philosophical rationalism and to designate this newly appeared subject a proper position. Although it still took some time for the newly established discipline to be accepted among the philosophers in Germany and in other European countries, but an acceptance as such by the Europeans is far easier than that by the Chinese, since the tradition of Chinese philosophy (if the persons such as Confucius, Laozi, and their followers can be called philosophers) and Chinese writings on literature and arts existed in a totally different state from that in the Europe. For instance, there were hardly any systematic formulations of the author's ideas on literature or art in ancient China, but were mostly short pieces of experiential reviews on works of literature and art, since there were no philosophers in its narrow sense like Aristotle, the author of *Poetics*, who preferred to present his ideas in a systematic formulation.

What kind of change did it bring about when the "aesthetics" as a term came to China, and thus a discipline was established there? Furthermore, what kind of transformation will the "aesthetics" as a concept caused when the Chinese develop their own aesthetics? All of these issues deserve a careful study. It seems to me that, a conceptual distinction between "aesthetics in China" and "Chinese aesthetics" will be rewarding to our study, and that can help us to clarify many vague ideas.

13.1 Various Manners of "Aesthetics in China"

During the 20th Century, there were many important aestheticians in China, who made great contributions to the development of aesthetics in China by doing translation or adaptation work.

The first person to introduce *meixue* as a translation for aesthetics to China was probably the famous scholar Wang Guowei (1877–1927), a scholar who was among the best at that time for the studies of ancient aesthetics in China. Wang studied in Japan from 1900 to 1901 and mentioned the word *meixue* in an essay of outlining the general components of philosophy. In his main works, such as *Talk on Ci Poetry in the Human World* and *Critical Essay on the Dream of the Red Chamber*, Wang

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is to apply the concepts formulated in modern times to ancient texts that were probably not written with any aesthetic intention in their author's minds.

applied the ideas of Kant and Schopenhauer to Chinese literature, and put forth many illuminating ideas.

Zhu Guangqian (1897–1987) studied in Hong Kong University from 1918 to 1922, and went to Europe to study from 1925 to 1933. He was a typical representative of "Western aesthetics in China". In his several decades of academic career, Zhu translated many Western classics in aesthetics into Chinese, including, for instance, a selection of Plato's dialogues on literature and art, Vico's *Scienza Nuova*, Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Art*, and Croce's *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*. In 1930s and 1940s, he published two important books, one is *The Psychology of Literature and Art* (1936), and the other is *On Poetry* (1943, 1946). The former is actually a mixture of various theories such as Croce's intuition and expression, Bullough's psychic distance, Lipps's empathy, as well as ideas from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spencer and Freud, with many instances from Chinese works of literature and art. The publication of this book can be seen as a significant stage in the forming of aesthetics in China. It was the first work in Chinese that not only absorbed various elements of Western aesthetics of that time and integrated them into a whole, but also chose a large number of examples from classical works of Chinese literature and art to prove them. In his another book, *On Poetry*, Zhu attempts to interpret Chinese poetry with Western poetics. Zhu also wrote the influential *A History of Western Aesthetics* in 1960s, which remains influential in China even today.

The third scholar is Zong Baihua (1897–1987), who was born and died in the same year as Zhu and was also a professor at the Beijing University, but he seems to show a different artistic orientation. Zong was studied in Europe in 1920s, and he was also the Chinese translator of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, but he, unlike Zhu, aimed to spell out the differences between Chinese and Western aesthetics. For instance, he maintained that Western painting originated from architecture and was therefore full of scientific implications, while Chinese painting originated from calligraphy and contains rhythms similar to that of music and dance[3]; Western painting is composed by lumpish substance, while Chinese painting is formed by lines[4]; there is a sort of "perspective spaces" that "consist of geometric and triangular forms" in Western painting, while there is a "rhythmic spaces consist of shadow and sunny, dark and light, high and low, up and down."[5] Although this pursuit after differentiae was still done within the framework of Western aesthetics for he endeavored to build up a diagram of dualistic oppositions in art between China and the West, we can recognize that a diagram as such was of positive consequence of promoting the self-consciousness of Chinese aesthetics. Precisely owing to this reason, his theory is welcomed by Chinese aestheticians in recently years. The prospect of dichotomy between the Chinese and Western aesthetics, however, remains a manifestation of

[3]Cf. Zong Baihua, *Meixue Sanbu* (*Peripatetics in Aesthetics*) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1982) pp. 114–18.

[4]Ibid., p. 41.

[5]Ibid., p. 84.

the ideological pattern that takes the West as one pole and the Rest as the other, resulting in centralizing the West while marginalizing the non-West.

The fourth scholar I would like to mention is Cai Yi (1906–93), who went to Japan and started his study there from 1929 on, and suspended his study in 1937 due to the breaking-out of Sino-Japanese War. He was influenced by leftist trend of thought current that time in Japanese academia and accepted Marxism there. After he returned to China, he published two important books, *New Reviews on Art* (1942) and *New Aesthetics* (1948), in an effort to establish a system of Marxist aesthetics in China, and thus criticized the prevailing aesthetics, particularly that by Zhu Guangqian. Two points are centralized in his books: the one is trying to apply materialist epistemology to aesthetics, and stress that beauty is objective; the other is to argue that "beauty is the typicality". According to Cai, the notion that "beauty is typicality" as a saying itself was inspired indirectly by French writer Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux and directly by a letter by Engels to M. Harkness, a women novelist, but Hegel's idea "Sensuous Semblance of the Idea" can clearly be seen from this formula.[6]

We can also find the profound influence of Western aesthetics among the scholars who were not educated in the West. Among them the most prominent is Li Zehou (born 1930). Li Zehou's aesthetics took shape in 1950s, when there is a "great discussion" on aesthetics.[7] The "discussion" occurred at that time was meaningful to the development of Chinese aesthetics, and it actually exerted widespread influence on the humanities of China in general. Many aestheticians, including Zhu and Cai, participated in the discussion, while Li's idea formulated during this period won general attention. Li maintained that beauty was of objective and social quality, and argued that a cultural-psychological structure was formed through a process of historical sedimentation. He insisted that the beautiful and the aesthetic rely on man's social practice. His ideas showed certain unique characteristics, but we can still find from it certain influence of Marxism, including that of Russian Marxist Georgy Valentinovich Plehanov. Later, Li tried to develop his own aesthetic system through a creative interpretation of Kant's philosophy, as well as adopting certain concepts from Cliff Bell, Carl Gustav Jung and Jean Piaget.[8]

Many Chinese scholars have contributed a great deal to the development of aesthetics in China, but they have never discussed such a question: do their efforts constitute an aesthetics in general, or a Chinese aesthetics in particular? In fact, they may not have realized that there were any problems here because they did not intend

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[6]"We consider that beautiful things objects are typical ones, that is, the individual objects in which the general is displayed. The essence of beauty is the typicality of objects, or the kind or species general enbodies in the individual. It is obvious, therefore, that the beauty is not, as many aestheticians conceive, a quality that is subjective, but is one that is objective. (Cai Yi, *New Aesthetics*. Quoted from *The Collection of Cai Yi's Writings*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: The Press of Chinese Literary and Artistic Union, 2002) pp. 235–236.

[7]More detailed discussion about the "Great Discussion of Aesthetics", see Jianping Gao, "The 'Aesthetics Craze' in China: Its Cause and Significance". *Dialogue and Universalism*, Vol. VII, No. 3–4/1997.

[8]Li Zehou's ideas can be found in his many books, particularly *A Collection of Papers on Aesthetics* (1980), *Four Lectures on Aesthetics* (1989), and *Critique of Critical Philosophy* (1979).

to set up a Chinese aesthetics in its narrow sense. In their minds, aesthetics in China and Chinese aesthetics are synonyms.

13.2 The Contentions Between the Universality and Particularity

The contention between the universality and national particularity in aesthetics is quite prominent in a country such as China with a long and rich non-Western tradition.

The universality of aesthetics is often supported by the following arguments: The first is the scientific quality of a theory. It is often considered that, just as that there are no Chinese mathematics, Chinese physics, Chinese chemistry, or Chinese logics, some scholars imply that, there is no such a thing as Chinese aesthetics, but a universal aesthetics that is studied by Chinese aestheticians. They argue that, aesthetics as a subject is universal in the world, which studies certain general rules for beauty, such as the rules in form including proportion, symmetry, and golden segmentation. In their mind, aesthetics is like natural sciences, which deal with natural laws in general.

Some Chinese scholars who are knowledgeable in ancient Chinese texts on literature and art endeavor to prove an idea that, all the ideas appeared in the West actually also existed in ancient China, but not were known to the modern Chinese. They exhibit excellent capabilities by digging out the materials from ancient Chinese documents, and so as to testify that, ancient Chinese had similar discoveries to those made by the West in ancient times.

This idea can also find a base on the idea of common human nature. A sentence quoted from Mencius shows this argument: "Therefore I say there is a common taste for flavor in our mouths, a common sense for sound in our ears, and a common sense for beauty in our eyes. Can it be that in our minds alone we are not alike? What is it that we have in common in our minds? It is the sense of principle and righteousness (*yili*, moral principles). The sage is the first to possess what is common in our minds. Therefore moral principles please our minds as beef and mutton and pork please our mouth."[9] This paragraph made by Mencius was influential in the 1980s in China, when the notion "common sense of beauty" developed from this paragraph, which was interpreted as that various social classes could share the same sense of beauty. Mencius took the sensuous universality as a given fact, based on which he proved a kind of universality in morality, and so as to imply a common human nature. "Common sense of beauty" as a notion gained a special meaning in China in the early 1980s, when a typical post-Cultural Revolution emotion was prevailing. From 1950s to the Cultural Revolution period (1966–1976), Chinese aestheticians under the influence of the theory of class struggle, and identified themselves with an argument that different social classes have different senses of beauty. The notion "common

[9] *Mencius*. Quoted from Wing-Tsit Chan, trans. & com. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 56.

sense of beauty," as a challenge to the aesthetics of class struggle, gained its force precisely within this context.

The universality in aesthetics was also strengthened by a strong psychological orientation. From 1930s to 1980s, psychological aesthetics occupied a key position in the mind of Chinese aestheticians. Psychology was regarded as a universal science on human minds, which was then taken as the only hope to solve the riddle of the essence of beauty. During 1980s, the ideas of Arnheim, Piaget, Freud and Jung were combined in a characteristic way, and so as to conceive a certain psychological mechanism that was taken as basis for understanding how aesthetic appreciation was possible. Scientism was therefore prevailing among the students of aesthetics in China. The reason for this was that, during the Cultural Revolution period, the humanities in China were replaced by the political ideology. As a result of the counter-action to the Cultural Revolution, Chinese scholars sought for reliability among natural sciences.

In addition to the universality in its theoretical senses, there is another sort of universality based on the historical understanding of aesthetics. In order to explain what aesthetics is, many Chinese essays frequently repeat a story how the subject was set up by German scholars such as Baumgarten and Kant, and how it was spread to China. Since it is only a subject came to China in modern times, the Chinese thus have no right to decide but only to explain what the subject actually is. There are still many who challenge the validity of the translation of aesthetics as *meixue*, or the study of beauty, and argue that the original meaning of this word was, according to Baumgarten, the "science of sensory cognition", and should translate it literally as *ganxingxue*. They even warn that the wrong translation has prevented the Chinese from a correct understanding of this subject, and so to obstruct its healthy development in China. If it is so, aesthetics as a word and a subject should have the sole correct understanding, and any misunderstanding of it in the East Asian areas are due to its particular way of translation there. The question "What is aesthetics?" can be answered at least in two different ways. The first is to keep the original meanings of the word in German, and the second is to insist that this original meaning is exclusively the sole one. The former is the historical investigation of the word, while the latter means to prevent and refute any possible changes of the content of this subject. Both of these two answers will inevitably give rise to a universal aesthetics in the sense of historical understanding.

Moreover, economical globalization brings about a far-reaching impact on aesthetics in China, although there is no clear expression in theoretical terms for it. In recent 20 years, there has been an anxious aspiration after the West in Chinese academia including the field of aesthetics. A great number of Western academic works have been translated and published. Many scholars, if they know a Western language, will inevitably become workers in this "translation factory". This is not the need of scholarship but also the demand of the market. General speaking, the translated academic works will have much more market success than those written by the Chinese. It appears positive and encouraging for the craze of translated works, which will stimulate the development of Chinese aesthetics, enabling the Chinese get more updated knowledge of Western aesthetics. Everything has its other side, however. Many Chinese scholars are getting used to a habit that they merely buy

and read translated books, while do not buy or seldom read the books written by their Chinese colleagues. Chinese aestheticians are therefore caught in a dilemma: their theoretical creations cannot be recognized by scholars outside of China, nor are they known to their Chinese colleagues. This situation damages the academic environment in China, resulting in that the production of theories is no longer the major pursuit of scholarship.

Chinese scholars are not merely to translate, of course, but they did indeed engage in theoretic writing, too. The situation of book market forces them only to find their way out in a predicament. There appear certain scholars who are always after the newest development of Western academic currents. We know that Chinese economy has been enjoying a fast growth in recent years. It is interpreted by many to be due to direct introduction of the Western technology into China, and so as to save the cost of independently cultivating new technology. In the minds of these people, Chinese academic studies can also be boosted in similar way. They can directly introduce the latest development of Western aesthetics into China, applying them to the studies of literature and arts, and thus the aesthetics is believed to be able to enjoy a fast growth. One question always occupies the central attention of these people: What is the newest school or trend in aesthetics in the West? They frequently declare that, such and such schools are out of fashion in the West, and now such and such schools are prevailing. If someone is still talking about a concept that is no longer in vogue, he will be seen as wearing a dress out of fashion. In their mind, to follow the newest schools is like to update technology in industrial production. An updated technology can elevate the rate of productivity and upgrade the quality of products, while the new concepts in the humanities are also taken as having similar functions. These people, in fact, are doing exactly the similar type of works as that done by the translators. If we have to make certain distinctions between them, I would like to argue that the latter are more active and more earnest in seeking into the universality and new trends of thoughts, and their ways of arguments are more radical.

In contrast the aforementioned several cases, there is another trend in the field of Chinese aesthetics. These people maintain that, there are characteristic traditions in Chinese literature and art, Chinese sense of beauty, and Chinese thought. We should carefully study these traditions, and so as to form a Chinese aesthetics which has particular power of explanation to Chinese culture.

The studies of Chinese aesthetics started in the early period of the 20th century. Of those who particularly deserve our attention are above mentioned Wang Guowei and Zong Baihua. Both of them endeavored to apply Western aesthetics to Chinese materials, but they also searched for the characteristics among the frameworks of the theories provided by the Western aesthetics. In his *Talk on Ci Poetry in the Human World*, Wang raised some important concepts such as *jingjie* (states of feeling), and Zong tried to find the difference between Chinese painting and the Western one. In the 1980s, there appeared several important works in the field of traditional Chinese aesthetics. The most important among them are, Li Zehou's *Chinese Aesthetics*, Ye Lang's *A Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics*. In addition to these works, there were also many researches on theories of different arts. They tried to find the counterparts of modern theories among the ancient philosophical and artistic

texts, which demonstrated an earnest effort in pursuing after the real Chineseness in aesthetics.

In the 1990s, some Chinese literary theorists began to think that the Western influence on Chinese literature and art studies during the 20th century, and subsequently the establishment of Chinese theories on literature and art, was on the whole a failure. They argued that there were particular systems and categories in Chinese literary criticism. According to them, those who tried to apply Western concepts of literary criticism to Chinese literature and arts and developed modern theories actually distorted the real Chinese ideas, and thus brought about a situation that they termed as "aphasia", a disease they thought caused by idolizing the West. The therapy they suggested was to return to ancient China, to peruse ancient Chinese writings on literature and art, and to develop a new theory directly on the basis of ancient Chinese sources. Some advocates of this opinion defended themselves with the help of the Post-colonialism of the West, while the others stick to a traditional Sino-centralism. It was a peculiar confluence of two lines of thought at the turn of the centuries in China.

In China, those who engage in the study of aesthetics are divided into different groups, with part of them specialized in Chinese aesthetics, and part of them in Western aesthetics. There are still many more scholars who contribute a great deal to the development of Chinese aesthetics being among those who are known as researchers of theories of literature and arts, as well as comparative studies of literature and arts. The idea of developing a modern Chinese theory on literature and art from the ancient Chinese ones is strongly held by these theorists. They have their own reasons for doing so. Ancient Chinese theories of literature and art, if we can say so, actually showed in a quite different state from those in Europe. In Europe, many ideas on literature and art were put forth by philosophers, who paid more attention to the systematic formulation of the ideas on the arts, and the relationship between the arts and other philosophical topics, such as epistemology, ontology, and ethics. In ancient China, it was not the case. Most of the writings by the ancient Chinese on the arts were the record of their creative and receptive experience on the works of literature and arts, and the authors of the writings were mostly men of letters or artists rather than philosophers. These writings can merely be seen as literary and artistic criticism rather than writings of philosophical aesthetics, which have been regarded as shortcomings due to lack of philosophical qualities, but now the state of affairs have been changed, and precisely the same characteristics were seen as merits. On the basis of these conceptions, a new tendency emerges, that is to draw resources from ancient China and establish new theories of literature and art compatible to modern life. What these people are doing is, in fact, to jump from the 19th century China directly to a China in the 21st Century, which is impossible.

13.3 Critique of the "General Versus Particular" Conceptions and the Tensions Between Different Aesthetics

How to build a Chinese aesthetics? What is a Chinese aesthetics? In the aforementioned arguments these have become a problem. Some concepts should therefore be clarified before we get down to further analysis. We are familiar with the assumption that there is a discipline called aesthetics, which studies the aesthetic issues in general, and the result of this study will be of a universal value. We also know that there are also aesthetics defined by the names of nations, areas and cultures, such as Indian aesthetics, Japanese aesthetics, aesthetics of Southeast Asia, Latin America, East Europe, as well as that of China. All of them are supposed to deal with the aesthetics with local characteristics. It is logically incorrect to assume a relationship as such between the general and the particular. We should not claim that aesthetics produced in certain countries are the general, while that produced in other countries are the particular. Even among those traditional superpowers of aesthetics, such as Germany, France, Britain, Italy, etc., we still find that they differ with each other, and we cannot decide which one is the general and which one is the particular.

In contrast to some subjects, say, mathematics, we will find that aesthetics keeps a different nature in its relationship with cultural and social life. A certain culture may provide a good social atmosphere for the development of a subject, say, mathematics, and thus a certain theorem may first be founded in a nation and later accepted by other nations. The cultural and social factors, however, are only the preconditions of the development of mathematics, rather than the theorems themselves. Different cultures and nations may have the same and universal theorem. We can even say that the special tradition of a nation can endow the mathematics of the nation a special characteristics. For instance, some Chinese historians of mathematics argue that ancient European mathematicians laid emphasis on testifying theorems, while ancient Chinese mathematicians paid more attention to solve practical questions by calculations. This might probably connect with the more practical attitude of the Chinese towards mathematics. In the process of developing mathematics, we can see, on one hand, different nations can learn from each other, while on the other, the same theorems discovered by different nations can be used everywhere in the world. We may write a history of mathematics in China, and explain that mathematics has experienced what kind development in China. We may also write a history of science and technology in China, as that done by Joseph Needham, and show the inventions of the ancient Chinese and their significance to the world, but we cannot set up a subject called Chinese mathematics, Chinese science or Chinese technology. There is no such thing as Chinese mathematics, but only the universal theorems discovered by the Chinese. For instance, the so-called Pythagorean theorem, i.e. the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides, was also discovered by the Chinese independently, and was named in China differently as the *gougu* theorem, but both refer to the same thing. There are no national borders for science, which is universal.

Aesthetics, on the other hand, is quite different because it has an internal link with the culture and society that it emerges from. These social and cultural conditions are not merely the preconditions of the aesthetics, but belong to, or become the product of the latter. Different aesthetics can communicate, influence, and inspire each other, but one nation's aesthetics cannot directly apply to that of another nation. The aesthetics of a nation or a culture, in this sense, is not a branch or application of a universal aesthetics. A nation develops its own cultural and artistic tradition in which the aesthetics of this nation should take root, and which the aesthetics of this nation should represent.

Furthermore, there is actually no such thing as aesthetics in general. According to logics, the general can never be an entity, but only an abstraction from particulars. There is not a general, universal, or eternal, say, table, but this or that table in particular. The word "table" cannot have a single counterpoint in real world, but only a general name for the tables as a category. White horse is a kind of horse. There are also black, red, or horse with other color. But every horse must be in a certain color. There is no horse in general that is beyond any color. Plato's theory of three beds implies a kind of general bed, or the Form of bed, but that is only an ancient theory. There is no entity as such corresponding to "bed" as a word. Aesthetics must keep a close connection with its national, social, and cultural conditions, as well as the dialogical relations with theories of other nations. It is a specific theory, rather than a universal one. The truth discovered by this theory is not universally true, but applicable only to a specific area or scope.

This does not mean that aesthetics can be developed in an isolated state. On the other hand, the aesthetics of the different nations are to impact on each other. During the 20th century, Western aesthetics, particularly the aesthetics of certain so-called aesthetic super-powers, exerted a great influence on the Chinese. We should thank for the introduction of these aesthetic ideas, rather than to hold a negative attitude towards them. It is wrong to imagine that we can trace back to traditional Chinese theories of literature and arts, and develop a modern Chinese aesthetics from them directly. We can narrate the contacts between Chinese and Western aesthetics in the 20th century as follows:

I would like to describe the development of the dialogues between Chinese aesthetics and those from without as the following three points:

Firstly, there has been a shift from the reception of Western classical aesthetics to the directly dialogues with contemporary Western aestheticians. Chinese aesthetic circle has long been familiar with such names as Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Croce, Lipps, and Bullough. During the 1980s, the Chinese acquainted themselves with the works such as Susanne Langer and Rudolf Arnheim, and became excited with these ideas. The Chinese aestheticians began their substantially academic contacts with their Western colleagues, however, began as late as 1990s, when more and more personal contacts were established.

Secondly, there has been a change from mere application of Western theories to Chinese materials to the rediscovery of the theoretical sources in classical Chinese texts. From the early 20th century on, there has a popular practice of explaining Chinese literature and art by means of Western theories. This is controversial from

a modern point of view. On the one hand, it is generally acknowledged that through these efforts modern Chinese aesthetics was established as a discipline. It was impossible to build a modern Chinese aesthetics merely on the basis of traditional Chinese theories of literature and art without any influence from outside. Chinese aesthetics has to embark on a path of modernization with the help of foreign influences. There are signs, however, that this process is reaching its mature stage. There are abundant sources in ancient Chinese theories of literature and art. Aesthetic traditions and habits have their characteristic features. We often find that it is sometimes difficult to apply Western aesthetics and art theories to Chinese art; this is simply because Chinese art has its own unique features and cannot be fully explained by the Western theories. What we did in the past was no more than juxtaposing Western concepts with Chinese ones, and hoped that they became a harmonious mixture. On our way to develop our research, what we need to do is to meet the demands of establishing a characteristic Chinese aesthetics on the basis of modern Chinese artistic practice and aesthetic experiences.

Thirdly, there will be a shift from mere reception of Western aesthetics to communication and exchange among various aesthetics, particularly those of the non-Western. The 20th century Chinese aesthetics was started from the influence of the West. At the very beginning, Japan was an important window for the Chinese to know the West, but Chinese aestheticians turned to Europe very soon, and German aesthetics attracted their attention. Since the 1920s, and particularly in the 1930s, Marxism gained more and more influence in China, and some scholars began their studies of Marxist aesthetics. In the 1980s, a great passion for translating Western books on aesthetics appeared. To Chinese aestheticians, the knowledge of other non-Western aesthetics, however, is still very limited. They know very little of the aesthetics of, say, India, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa, which will turn out to be important for them to develop an aesthetics of their own.

13.4 Some Ideas for Constructing Chinese Aesthetics

It will be perplexed issue on where to find the contemporary quality for the aesthetics in non-Western nations. For a very long time, it has been taken for granted that Chinese aesthetics merely refers to Confucian aesthetics or Taoist aesthetics both in China and in the world. This gives rise to a paradox: on the one hand, aesthetics as a discipline was established as late as the early 20th Century and there was nothing that could be called aesthetics previously; on the other hand, it is only those aesthetic materials, which were not called aesthetics in ancient China, that are "Chinese aesthetics." An equation has been prevailing in China for a long time that everything that is Chinese equals to the ancient while everything that is from the West equals to modern. This is actually to transform a spatial relationship to a temporal one. When they write a book with titles somewhat like "A History of Chinese Aesthetics", they are inevitably involving to Chinese aesthetics before the 20th Century. If they write that of the 20th Century, they have to give it a name somewhat like "modern Chinese

aesthetics." Furthermore, the international aesthetic world seems to show no interest in a modern history, and even Chinese aestheticians show no confidence on it. It is similar among other non-Western countries. When we talk about Indian aesthetics, ancient Indian aesthetic and artistic ideas will naturally appear in our mind. We also know little about Iran or Greek aesthetics in their modern forms. It is a universal issue that how a non-Western aesthetics can have its own modern form, and how to build up and deal with its own modernity.

Among the academic circle, what some Chinese aestheticians are doing now is merely to probe into certain concepts of traditional Chinese aesthetics, such as *qi* (vital force), *yun* (rhythmn), *gu* (strength), etc., and juxtapose them with Western concepts, so as to form a mixture. This juxtaposition cannot be called theoretical system, but only a textbook with consistent consideration for university students. What they are doing is not to construct theoretical system, but only to compile books by putting in knowledge they think that is essential to this subject in order to meet the needs of particular courses within limited teaching time and for specific students. These textbooks are naturally of practical values, and are produced everywhere to meet the practical needs created by the educational systems. The main body of these textbooks is still filled with Western theories from different times and from different schools, with some additional terms chosen from ancient Chinese criticism. As a matter of fact, there are no systematic lines of thinking behind these books.

Contrary to these scholars with academic orientation, another manifestation of globalization can be seen from the field of art. Chinese artists endeavor to make them known in the international art world. There are poets, musicians, movie producers among them, but more prominent are plastic artists such as painters and sculptors. They have made great success after many years efforts and become internationally influential, but are still blamed among their Chinese colleagues for writing poets with the purpose of being translated, for producing movies in order to get prices in international movies festivals, and for making works of art merely to be accepted by a Western museum or art gallery. They rely their success on the international recognition, while pay no attention to whether or not the Chinese care for their works. In this sense, they have not formed a genuine local art, but a "local" for the global. This practice may be successful itself, but contributes little to the development of Chinese aesthetics. These artists simply are interested not in theory, but in the cultural and even commercial strategies that lead them to success. We can conclude that any art practice without protection of theories will not stay for long, and those who disparage theories will eventually realize their own short-sights, but those who attach importance to theories will find difficult to release themselves from the awkward situation between the global and the local.

In the condition of globalization, is it possible for us to have a "Chinese Aesthetics" with modern sense, which is distinguished from "aesthetics in China"? This is question we have to answer.

It seems to me that in this respect, the development of Chinese aesthetics will go on a similar road like that of Chinese grammar. There was no grammar in China in ancient times until the 1898, when a Chinese named Ma Jianzhong (1845–1899) published a book called *Ma Shi Wen Tong*, or *Chinese Grammar by Ma*, in which he applied Latin

grammar to classic Chinese texts, and developed the first system of Chinese grammar. He maintained that there were invariable principles in Western languages, by which we could regulate the language of Chinese books.[10] This book was criticized by Chen Wangdao (1890–1977), a linguist, aesthetician and a leftist activist, criticized as "mechanical imitation by cutting feet to fit shoes."[11] This is inevitable during the starting period. After this book, the most influential was *New Chinese Grammar* (1924) by Li Jinxi (1890–1978), which studies the modern Chinese on the basis of English grammar. In the introduction to the book, the author writes: "the law of thinking cannot be differentiated in accordance with nations, and the 'logic analysis' of the sentences cannot be differentiated on the basis of languages." He assumed that there is a common and universal logic behind different languages, but, in fact, just as Wang Li, a Chinese linguist, pointed out, "Li's so-called 'logic analysis' is frequently based on the syntax of English language.[12] The studies of Chinese grammar has experienced a process of nationalization since then, and many scholars probed into the characteristic features of the Chinese language, and collecting Chinese language materials, in order to build up a system of Chinese grammar based on the practical studies of Chinese. For instance, Leonard Bloomfield, Noam Chomsky, and many other linguists exerted great influence on the studies of Chinese grammar. These theories should not replace the theoretic creations of Chinese linguists, however. They have to investigate Chinese language materials and carefully look for the laws of this language. Furthermore, by means of this research, their achievement will enrich the theories of modern linguistic theories. Every language in the world has its own characteristics, and the development of modern linguistic theories should base on the research of various languages.

The same applies to Chinese aesthetics. Chinese aestheticians should introduce more from outside. This is what some aestheticians did in the past, and many Chinese scholars endeavor to do it right now. They should also study Chinese tradition, particularly traditional theories of literature and art, as well as modern aesthetic tradition developed in the 20th century. However, Chinese aestheticians are on a much more important mission to study literature and art themselves and generate an aesthetics from this study. There is a strong conceptualized tendency in the field of aesthetics, which is often content with concept analysis. The students of this approach separate themselves from the concrete studies of Chinese literature and art, and because of this theirs cannot be regarded as Chinese aesthetics. A Chinese aesthetics should be developed from the practical studies of Chinese literature and art, and provide explanations and instructions for daily activities of aesthetic and artistic practices.

In this sense, we find a true foundation of Chinese aesthetics. It keeps a conversational relationship with other aesthetics. It is important to retain and develop this relationship. Chinese aestheticians should continue our efforts in this regard, and make efforts to promote the flourish and development of Chinese aesthetics. On the

[10]Quoted from Wang Li, "Postscript to *Chinese Grammar by Ma*," *Hanyu Shigao* (*A History of Chinese Language Studies*), Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980, p. 13.

[11]Chen Wangdao, "Talking about *Chinese Grammar by Ma*," *Fudan*, 1959, No. 3.

[12]Wang Li, *A History of Chinese Linguistics*. Shanxi People's Press, 1981, p. 181.

other hand, we should also try hard to direct our attention to Chinese literature and art, and bring more writers and artists to join us.

Now, in concluding my ideas, I would like to say, there is no such thing as a common aesthetics, but there indeed existed a common development of aesthetics. This is a development on the basis of dialogue between various peoples and cultures of the world.

Chapter 14
The Growth and Construction of Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace

Cyberspace was originally a term coined by Canadian writer William Gibson in his *Neuromancer*, a science fiction published in 1984.[1] Along with the development of the internet, cyberspace as literary invention has gained new connotations and powerful vigor, and thus entered academic discourse. Many discussions have been made around the term and the new perspective effected by the term.

14.1 Is Cyberspace a Space?

As the title show, this study is going to deal with the cultural diversity in cyberspace, and thus the first issue we have to tackle is the nature of cyberspace. Gibson made a prediction that "it would be something that large corporations, governments, and the military in particular would be into and on top of" in a time "very pre-Internet", but the fact turned out to be not exactly as he conceived, but developed to be "weirdly democratic and nonhierarchical."[2] As we may see, cyberspace is not a space in physical sense. Just as Steve Mizrach writes, "It is a 'no-place' because it is nowhere: a 'consensual hallucination' in which people interact with widely distributed data through textual and visual representations."[3] It is not this or that computer, nor this or that server. We can talk about the memory space of the hard-disc of a computer, but

[1] William Gibson said in an interview with the editor of the *Encarta Reference Library 2004* that "the original title of Neuromancer was *Jacked In*, and the editor didn't like it. *Neuromancer* was my second choice." He explains the origin of this word by saying, "it occurred to me that if I changed one letter in the word necromancer I would get a really mysterious word." According to the *Study Guide for William Gibson: Neuromancer*, "The name 'Neuromancer' is a variation on 'necromancer,' a magician dealing in evil spirits and death ('neuro'=nerves, artificial intelligence, 'mancer'=magician)" (see http://www.wsu.edu:8080/[Pleaseinsert\PrerenderUnicode{Ëœ}intopreamble]brians/science_fiction/neuromancer.html).

[2] See "An interview with the editor of the *Encarta Reference Library 2004*".

[3] Steve Mizrach, *Lost in Cyberspace: A Cultural Geography of Cyberspace*. See http://www.fiu.edu/[Pleaseinsert\PrerenderUnicode{Ëœ}intopreamble]mizrachs/lost-in-cyberspace.html.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_14

that is still based on its physical quality. Cyberspace means that, when one receives and reads, writes and sends emails, or navigates over internet, one is not to immerge in the world of computer, but a world generated by the inter-connected computers.

This is as if a dreamland. Many writings on cyberspace are all fictitious. We know that human beings from the remote past began to fancy paradise, holy mountains, and fairyland, and many fairy tales are enjoyed by both children and adults. Researchers on cyberspace quote not merely *Neuromance*, but also other science fictions. The adoration for myth, legend, fairytales might be caused by the innermost need of human nature. On the other hand, there is also the real side of this computer-generated hallucinatory space. We see verisimilar pictures and scenes, share these images with the author and other viewers, and even interact with others through network, such as correspondence, chats, playing games, and even affective exchanges.

Another expression is also frequently used to refer to more or less similar fact: Virtual Reality, or VR. This expression implies that, in addition to the real world we live, people are going to construct another world by means of electronic technology, and the latter is the imitation of the former.

The term VR stimulates a romantic passion, too. It seems that people create a new world and thereafter they live in it. "It will not be seen as a medium used within physical reality, but rather as an additional reality."[4] It is indeed a charming prospect, in which the age-old fancy of the other world has revived. The researchers of the internet seems all of a sudden to return to the childhood and begin to talk fairy tales.

More probably, this orientation in these researchers is not because of their child-like innocence, but economic consideration in its capability of attracting capital investment. Just as Chris Chesher wrote, "Virtual reality is an industry which exists because of its success in attracting investment."[5] Chesher also maintains that, we have over-estimated the significance of VR, and it is wrong to consider that VR is comparable in significance "with the development of print, light bulbs or flight."[6] For him, each of the technologies, such as the capacity of computer and server, the size, quality and function of display, the speed of the internet, the operation system and the ways to put in information is more important than the VR as their combinations.

The two points Chesher argues, are indeed reasonable. Firstly, the internet as a profession needs imagination, and a new concept can attract investment, so as to make this hopeful and challenging enterprise sustainable. Secondly, the development of each of these technologies that makes the VR possible is indeed indispensable itself. We should not, however, neglect the importance of a new concept that can integrate them together, and become possible to pursuit a new effect at the new level.

In comparison with "cyberspace", the VR keeps a strong sense of imitating the reality. The history of Western aesthetics provides two possibilities for imitation (or mimesis): Plato defined "mimesis" as "semblances" or "deceptive semblances",[7] i.e.

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[4]Howard Rheingold, *Virtural Reality* (London: Mandarin, 1991) p. 154.

[5]Chris Chesher, "Colonizing Virtual Reality: Construction of the Discourse of Virtual Reality, 1984–1992," in *Cultronix*, Issue One. See http://eserver.org/cultronix/.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Plato, *Timaeus* 19d, *Republic* X 597.

to represent what it looks. Aristotle tried to revise this definition by arguing that poets tell us what will probably happen, rather than what have already happened.[8] But such a revision cannot change the basic fact, i.e., imitating only the appearance of reality. In the 19th century, when the Chinese see European paintings brought into or made by Christian missionaries, they praised these paintings as "minutely working in order to be lifelike, and the colors look exactly like the natural ones," and "distinguishing brightness and shadow, and clearly showing hollow and protruding."[9] This style of painting, however, was still not the ideal painting in the mind of the Chinese, who maintained that the best landscape painting was to a place where one was "possible to travel and dwell in it."[10] This view of representation is quite different from that of Europeans, say, Plato. In the mind of the Chinese, the world created by artists is not the one opposite to the world they live in, but the one they feel friendly and yearn towards.

The researchers of cyber-culture prefer to adopt a term from art criticism and talk about the Virtual Realism. From the discussion put above, we can also have two sorts of realism: the one is to be more verisimilar, i.e. to make a picture looked more like to the appearance of the object it represent, and the other is to produce an environment we are eager to live inside. The word "object" comes from Latin word *obicere*, which constitutes of *ob-* and *jacere-* (throw). It means that something is put in front, so as to be seen, and thus this word can also mean to oppose or protest to somebody or something. On the contrary, Virtual Realists prefer to construct an "environment." VR is primarily an object, which is "opposite" to human being, and can become highly lifelike. Nevertheless, in order to produce an immerged experience, so as to become "possible to travel and dwell in it," the constructors of VR have to do much more.

Along with the development of modern information technology, this world of network will become more and more similar to the world we live in. We can have cyber-shop, cyber-bank, cyber-government, and we can play games on the web. To those who conduct academic research, cyber-library proves to be useful. There will also be virtual art gallery and museum. If video-cameras are connected with the internet, people can travel to everywhere by sitting in front of the screen of a computer. A school can become an on-line school, in which one can have on-line lessons and on-line examinations. In addition, on-line hospital will also become possible.

New issues are emerging, however, when the imitation of reality reaches a certain level. What people produce are not only the simulation of reality, but the characteristics that did not exist in real life, too. For instance, just as many researchers observe, we come to a "post-geographical" world, in which, when we surf on the internet, we can travel to various oceans and continents in just a minute and enjoy the life as

[8] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451.

[9] Song Nian, "A Comment on Painting at Yi Garden," in Yu Jianhua (ed.) *Zhongguo Hualun Leibian* (*Classified Compilation of Writing*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957. Reprint. Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973) p. 536.

[10] Guo Xi and Guo Si, "Li Quan Gao Zhi", in Yu, p. 632.

supernatural beings do in fairy stories. We may watch Parthenon of Athens and listen to Niagara by sitting in front of a screen in Beijing. An amateur chess lover used to be difficult to find a fellow player when he feel like to play, but now he can find appropriate a partner at any time and from any place in China or in the world. With the assistance of the internet, the world can become big enough for a player much more choice and find an appropriate player at a particular moment, and the world can become small enough for two players with the same interest and on the same level to play together, though thousands of miles of physical distance might separate them. As soon as two players come together on the web, they share the same world. This "post-geographical" quality encourages us to consider the features of the cyberspace. For example, it is assumed by some scholars that there are three spaces, i.e., ordinary 4 dimensions space, multiple (say, 11) dimensions space described by modern physics, and cyberspace, which is described as the third space co-existed with the previously mentioned two.[11] Someone tries to understand the nature and features of cyberspace, and maintains that Chinese idea of *fengshui*, literally "wind water", a mysterious traditional system to study people's relationship to their environment, is important by its stress on human elements and the fluid quality of space.[12] In this context, cyberspace as a term with more mythical characteristics became popular. This is a man-made new world, rather than merely the copy of the world we lived in. It seems to these people that a "new" space, which we did not know before, is generated by the computer. In this "new" space, there are new rules we did not familiar before. They feel like to enter a new world, and many rules here are different from those in physical world, and every bold imagination can be realized here.

14.2 Cyberspace: New Frontier and New Colonialism?

Cyberspace was compared to the new continent by many writers. John Barlow wrote:

> "I think this is the biggest thing since we landed on the Moon," says Jaron Lanier, the dreadlocked CEO of VPL Research. (Who was 9 years old in 1969.) I don't choke on that one. Indeed, I'd take it a bit farther, guessing that Columbus was probably the last person to behold so much useable and unclaimed real estate (or unreal estate) as these cybernauts have discovered.[13]

There is an interesting parallel between development of cyber-culture and the modern history in the past five centuries. From the word cyberspace being coined by Gibson in 1984 up to today, the modern history seems to repeat itself. In the past five centuries, we have experienced the discovery of America and Australia, colonizing overseas, developing capitalist economy, imperialism and its expansion in the world, globalization, postcolonial movement, and cultural diversity as an idea

[11] Jos de Mul, "Welcome to Cyberspace: Another Possibility of Discussing Human History."

[12] Michael Heim, "The Feng Shui of Virtual Reality," *Crossings: eJournal of Art and Technology*, Volume I, Issue I. See http://crossings.tcd.ie/issues/1.1/Heim/.

[13] John Perry Barlow, "Being in Nothingness," *Mondo 2000* (1990) p. 37.

to be brought up. This historical process appears to be repeated once more in the growth of cyberspace, but the imperialists is now not from Europe but from America.

The internet originated from the project intended to share resources among computers, which was funded by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the United States Department of Defense, and later established in some universities and research institutes.[14] A technological experiment is frequently attended by imagination that is usually unpractical. The main requirement the earliest cyber-human needs to meet is to provide a bright outlook for the cyber-technology and persuade government and universities to provide more funds. The earliest cybernauts were challengers of the mainstream culture rather than dominators. According to Cheser,

> VR emerged partly as a product of a dialectic between the growth of Silicon Valley high-tech industries and the social and political ideals of the Californian counterculture. The counterculture, established in the 1960s around Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, has continued in various forms since. Building a new reality inside a computer is a new form of technological utopianism. When changing social reality seems too hard, why not create a new reality?[15]

The cybernaut or cyber-citizen or netizen we call today are descendants of cyberpunk, a word originated from a short story by Bruce Bepkie, and represented "a merging of science fiction and bohemia."[16] These cyberpunks were a group of people who are skillful in certain profession, but not gregarious with others. To them, high-tech was alternative life style, an individual rebelling against society.

The rebellion engaged by them reminds us of the Puritan rebelling against the traditional European society several centuries ago. In fact, the exploiters of the new frontiers and the colonists of the new territory all consisted of zealous and vigorous persons who endeavored to break down the traditional life style. They were of characters of individuals challenging society, and establishing certain utopian ideals. It is, however, precisely these heroic exploiters who carve out the way for the early development of capitalism. The vigor, creativity and rebelliousness of these cyberpunks have to be temporized before cyber-cultures merge into the mainstream. The three processes, from cyberpunks to netizens, from technological utopia to hi-tech society, and from cyberpunk sub-culture to its merging into the mainstream culture, occurred almost at same time and in parallel.

The so-called pioneers of the new frontier or new colonialists developed themselves in two directions. The first is to occupy this new space. This space was initially monopolized by so-called cyberpunks. They are a group of persons who spend all their time in a room before a computer in Silicon Valley, and are thrilled by the new world they invent. As pioneers of the new frontier, they are busy to fill content in the space. It seems to them that the space is like an empty room, and their work

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[14]Cf. Bany M. Leiner, Vinton G. Cerf, David D. Clark, Robert E. Kahn, Leonard Kleinrock, Daniel C. Lynch, Jon Postel, Larry G. Roberts Stephen Wolff, "A Brief History of the Internet," in http://www.isoc.org/.

[15]Chris Chesher, "Colonizing Virtual Reality: Construction of the Discourse of Virtual Reality, 1984–1992," in *Cultronix*, Issue One. See http://eserver.org/cultronix/.

[16]Cf. Chesher, "Colonizing Virtural Reality."

is to supply content to it. They are naturally to fill in what they are familiar with. Therefore, the on-line content is naturally dominated by that which is written in English, acceptable and understandable to the people with technological orientation, and universalism in cultural perspective.

This "new frontier", however, is different from the Europeans to colonize America and the Americans to cultivate the west. Theoretically, to colonize a new continent is to occupy a place on the Earth, and take it as one's own living space. The "new frontier" in cyberspace, however, is not the case. It refers here to a "no-space," or we can say that the content itself is space; thus, no content, no space. Modern physics tell us that space is an attribute of substance, rather than the container of the object. If we have to say that there is "space" in the network, it is also in this sense. We are not to put something into an empty room, but to produce space by putting things in it. Therefore, we are to occupy a limited space, but to create an unlimited one. This is quite different from what the colonists in the old sense did. There will be no cultural collision on the web, but the growth of cultures in it.

The second direction is to take cyberspace as a base-area and to spread the culture generated here to the physical space, or we may say, the real space. Now the cyberspace becomes a metropolis, from which they go on their way to colonize the space of daily life. Michel Foucault used the term *colonization* to mean the coming to dominance of certain ways of viewing the world, and this is precisely what the advocates of cyberspace did. We witness certain technological terms of computer and the internet entering the vocabulary of daily life. For instance, we describe the connections of people and organizations as network; we talk about the hardware and software of a research institute, a university or school, a hospital, and almost everywhere, referring to the tangible and intangible components of a unity respectively. More importantly, the prevalence of computer and the internet may bring about a world view in the technological perspective.

In the TV documentary *The Thinking Machine* produced by BBC, the histories of computers and book are put together and made a comparison. Chesher points out, "Books were once the property of an elite few (manuscripts in monasteries), but with the printing press books became cheaper and universally accessible…"[17] The invention and application of letters exerted profound influence on world history, so will be the computers and the internet. The difference is only that the process from elite few to the ordinary masses took dozens of centuries from writing to printing, while it took merely a few decades in the computers and internet. Cyberspace has grown at an unbelievable speed since its establishment. Cyberpunk sub-culture is also to strip off its anti-culture clothes, and to join the mainstream culture.

Where will the electronic and information technology lead us to go? It remains a problem. This new colonialism will inevitably result in a process of mutual impacts. On the one hand, the things produced by a group of eccentrics will increasingly become parts of mainstream in a society, on the other hand, they will cease to be eccentrics. In the remote past, only those who are necromancers can read and write, while today everyone can do that. When reading and writing capabilities are popu-

[17] Ibid.

larized, those who can do these become common. Those who can use computers and get used to the on-line life are no longer elites but ordinary persons. Technological perspective can effect these ordinary people, but at the same time, ordinary people's worldview can also become a part of cyber-culture.

14.3 Exodus from Dreamland

Just as mentioned above, there is a romantic atmosphere in the research on the internet's relationship to culture, and many researchers replace rational analysis with fancy and illusion. As we know, the humanities, such as history, anthropology, literature, philosophy, concentrate themselves on the past and present. Although there are still utopian predictions in these disciplines, they cannot become dominant. The predictions for future can naturally become attractive topics, and books in this orientation may universally be interesting. Nevertheless, predictions are not reality, and guesswork should not be included in academic researches.

The studies of the internet and culture seem to be a place where one can bring his imagination into full play. This is a brand new subject, and everything changes very fast here. Something unimaginable merely a few years ago can be realized in a flash. Therefore, many studies in this respect are only prediction to the future, and this is the reason for them to rely on science fiction. Science fiction is a field where one can indulge in one's imagination. A writer of science fiction is frequently praised for the capabilities of prediction if one of his many stories turns out to be similar to the real occurrence, though most of his narratives prove to be merely stories. For instance, Jules Verne is praised for his foretelling in *From the Earth to the Moon* for Apollo spaceship, but not blamed for his *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* on his neglecting the pressure in the center of the Earth that makes the journey impossible.

Gibson originally describes cyberspace with a critical attitude on the alienation in contemporary society in his *Neuromancer*. Just as an entry of Encarta Library argues, this novel "portrays an impersonal world in which individual rights are constantly threatened by the corporate conglomerates that control society."[18] The body of Case, the name of the protagonist, "which he treats as almost an alien entity with which he is not friendly terms, is a kind of case for his mind and for the cyberspace with which it fuses, no more significant in itself than the case of a computer CPU."[19]

This critical connotation, however, is ignored by people who use this word in a positive sense. Cyberspace was taken as another space isolated and insulated from physical space. Some people even try to define the physical space in accordance with cyberspace. For instance, William J. Mitchell compares the on-line contact with the face-to-face one, and maintains, "But what is the difference anyway? Just a few more bits…. Once we have both a 'real' three-dimensional world and computer-

[18] "William Gibson" in *Encarta Reference Library 2004*.

[19] "Study Guide for William Gibson: *Neuromancer*," in http://www.wsu.edu:8080/[Pleaseinsert\PrerenderUnicode{Ëœ}intopreamble]brians/science_fiction/neuromancer.html.

constructed 'virtual' ones, the distinctions between these worlds can get fuzzed or lost."[20] He reduces the gap between real world and cyber-world merely to bandwidth, and pronounces that "with higher bandwidths, ever-greater processing power, and more sophisticated input/output devices designed to take advantage of these capabilities, the boundary that has traditionally been drawn by the edge of the computer screen will be eroded."[21] Based on this idea, even face-to-face becomes a technology called F2F, which imitates the interaction of human beings in real life.

This description implies a conviction that there will be something called post-human being. In *Neuromancer*, Case, the protagonist, takes his own body as external entity. In *Terminator II, Judgment Day*, cyborg, a new cyber-being, appears, who can be sent back in time from the future to kill someone while he is a boy and will be a resistant leader. We come to a new world, and here all the impossible can become possible.

People in the recent decades are fond of talking about different kinds of "posts", such as post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-structurism, and now electronic technology put an even more fundamental question to us: shall there be a post-anthropological age? We begin to accept such a concept that there will be a kind of beings part human and part robot. We also create a number of words prefixed with "cyber", such as cyberpunk, cybernaut, cyber-citizen, cyber-human, and cyborg. It seems to me that we can make a distinction between two kinds of beings, the one may be called cybernaut and the other cyborg. We may know cybernaut by astronaut, cosmonaut, or taikonaut, and thus imply it a person armed with new vehicle or other instruments. Cyborg means cybernetics plus organism, or certain physiological processes aided or controlled by mechanical or electronic devices. We can question if it is still a human being, and how it is possible, but more fundamental issue here is that, what kind of role the electronic devices play in this being. If it only aids physiological processes, we may say it is still a human being, but if it controls the processes, it is no longer a human being.

If cyborg is still an invention in science fiction, the activities of cybernaults already imply closeness of the cyberspace. Cybernaults at first become a special group because of economical and educational reasons that enable them to have facilities and capabilities to get access to the internet, and only later more and more people can join in. Just as we mentioned above, people who can get access to the internet are comparable to those of literacy. Just as illiterate people cannot get into a literal world, and thus become a weak group in knowledge-power, people who are not accessible to the internet cannot enter the cyberspace, and thus will belong to a weak group in an age of information-power. Consequently, cyberspace seems to be identified by some people as a unified and all-inclusive world. To a person who is used to communicate with people through the internet, those who are not on-line are not available. To a person who tends to find research data from the net, the data that are not on-line are meaningless. To a person who usually takes care of various

[20] William J. Mitchell, *City of Bits*, 2.6 in http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-books/City_of_Bits/welcome.html.

[21] Ibid.

daily affairs on-line, those that cannot deal with through internet will be troublesome affairs. The issue of cultural diversity in cyberspace is precisely in connection with this context of discourse.

Now let's return to our question: Is there a unified and closed space called cyberspace? It is a key issue for us to understand cyber-culture. Cyber-culture was originally a sub-culture for a band of cyberpunks. It then began to challenge the mainstream culture, and gained more and more influence. However, even if everyone is on-line, cyberspace is still not able to become a closed space independent of physical or real space.

Bits are made use to simulate reality, and the quality of simulation will be improved when the number and speed of the exchanged bits are increased. But if one concludes from this that the face-to-face communications between people in real life are only the exchange of greater number of bits, one is to confuse simulation and reality. The face-to-face communications in real life cannot be replaced. We still need to travel to different places and meet different people in the future when information technology is highly developed, rather than merely to meet people and see places through the internet.

This orientation is even more misleading because it believes that bits can replace bodies. Just as Howard Rheingold points out, "People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind."[22] The bodies we leave behind is not insignificant, but the home of our mind. It is always imagined that there is a spiritual garden without flesh-and-blood body, but as long as body is eliminated, the spiritual garden will also disappear. From the philosophical point of view, this error is a new version of the idealism that only concentrates on ideas and minds while ignores human existence and social practice. Under the guide of this sort of philosophy, spiritual and informational world replace the real world and flesh-and-blood man. In his criticism of idealism, Karl Marx wrote: "Social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."[23]

In fact, the internet is merely the continuation of the various means of communication. When early human beings created characters and letters to communicate each other, they completed a great transformation by leading mankind into a civilized world. The Chinese translate the word "civilization" as *wenming*, which literally means "literary enlightenment." The so-called historical and geographical consciousness of mankind developed since then. Along with the appearance of printing technique, the use of letters developed to such a level that a kind of people specialized in dealing with paperwork, and it is naturally to this kind of people that writing and printing become a special world.

Artists also construct a world of art, considering that art is not relevant to daily life, the aesthetic is disinterested, and there are permanent values of artwork. They regard artwork as a living organism, and insist on art for art's sake. What modern

[22] Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Community* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994) p. 3.

[23] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach." Quoted from Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978) pp. 143–45.

aesthetics should do is precisely to break down the illusion of this art autonomy and show the relations between art and daily life.

The internet world, or cyberspace, therefore, is only a part of people's social life. Cyber-culture may produce a kind of people living in front of computer screens, just like characters or letters will produce a kind of people inhabiting in literal world, and art will produce a group of people satisfying themselves merely with art world. Nevertheless, cyberspace cannot become a space independent of human life. On the other hand, along with the upgrowth of the internet and the increase of cyber-population, this new technique will be more and more an integrated part of daily life, rather than a world separated from the life.

Technology can create new miracles, which stimulate certain fantasies, but when we know these miracles, we will realize that, these miracles are not to negate real life, but to develop it.

14.4 On-line and Off-line

As aforementioned, there is no such thing as a unified and closed cyberspace. In clarifying the nature of cyberspace, Adrian Mihalache, a Romanian scholar has made such statement: "It is a collection of interconnected cyber-places, each of them being the outcome of a time-space synthesis."[24] This cyber-place is connected with the place in real life. We are always at a place, with a computer, to connect to a file server, by way of certain route to receive and send messages to the internet. In this sense, every user of the internet is a knot of a huge web. The internet is only a web to connect people together, rather than a world isolated from people. The true fact is only the concrete time-space relation of the person who is on-line. Just as Mihalache claims, "It is not physical geography that shows up on the Internet, but real-time history."[25] We see a world of art when we go to an art gallery, but we should not forget that what we have seen are only individual works of art, and each of them has its own real-time history, which includes its creation, distribution, reception, and response, as well as the reasons and processes of its being put to this place. The history of its being created and received constitutes its real time-space synthesis. The same fact applies to the on-line world. We appreciate the works made by net smiths, and thus generate an immersed experience. But, we can only *jack into* it, rather than plunge into it.

The experience of navigation on the internet may provide us with a transcendental feeling. When the transmitting speed was not fast enough in the past, we might still notice the places of the servers and hubs. When we are going to download a certain document with large number of bits, local hubs are always faster than those in other cities and countries. Along with the increase of the transmitting speed, everything is going to be changed. Any item of information can easily be found as long as it

[24] Adrian Mihalache, *The Delightful Diversity of Cyber-Images*, in http://www.spark-online.com.
[25] Ibid.

is in the web and there are clues for it. To those who heavily rely on the internet as resources of their information, the internet becomes a world as such that, all the data can be ours as long as they are on-line, while those that are not on-line are beyond our concern, and we can put the question of their existence into "suspence". What we can find, nevertheless, is decided by the need of real life. The internet can provide us with more extensive choice than newspapers and TV when we are interested in news, but what sorts of news can attract our attention is decided by the world outside of the web, and by our social life. We are always to search for the news according to our subjective orientation, and more choices can only give us more freedom to exercise this orientation. We often choose to focus on those sources that can provide us with quick, real and meaningful news, while the meaning here is generated in relationship to the time and place we live.

We do different things on the web. Rheingold wrote, "People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot if idle talk."[26] All of these are merely the extension of real life, which cannot become homologized because of the development of the web.

The internet starts from US, and the earliest on-line language is English. According to the statistics from ISOC, 80% of data on the internet is written in English in 1997. The Domain names are from English abbreviations, for instance ".com" refers to industrial, commercial and financial sections, ".edu" to education, ".gov" to government, and ".org" to the non-profit organizations. Every country has her own domain suffix, for instance ".cn" for China, ".br" for Britain, etc., but there are no suffix for US domains. All of these show the dominant position of the US in the internet.

Shall the Internet be like Coca Cola or Mcdonald's to replace the indigenous tradition of the various countries? Shall the Internet also become a part of the "cultural imperialism"? It seems to me that the answer is still "no". We can see that Coca Cola and McDounald's did not replace traditions of food in various countries. On the one hand, Coca Cola and McDounald's are endued with different cultural meanings in different countries; on the other hand, Coca Cola and McDounald's also encourage the production of local food in a modern style. In China, the prevalence of Coca Cola stimulates the production of indigenous beverage, while McDounald's pushes the Chinese to invent Chinese quick food. As we stated above, the predominance of US and US culture could not be regarded as that the cyberspace is Americanized. Cyberspace is merely a connection of cyber-places, while various cyber-places are rooted in various societies and cultures respectively.

The history of cyberculture in China shares the same characteristics. The internet began very late in China. Some research institutes started to test it in late 1980s, and it connected to the world in 1994. At the early stage, it was the government to promote it, particularly with the "Golden Bridge Project". In January 1996, CHINANET

[26] Rheingold, *Virtual Community*, p. 3.

backbone network completed its construction and began to provide network services through out the country. On January 1, 1997, People's Daily Online connected to the Internet. This is the first key news website of central government. In February 1997, the Info-Highway Network began its operation. It became the earliest and largest private ISP/ ICP (Internet Server Provider and Internet Content Provider).[27] During the past 7 years, the Internet in China has enjoyed a rapid expansion. The Internet users increased from 620,000 to 87,000,000, while domain names registered under ".cn" increased from 4066 to 382,216.[28] The Chinese domain names have been tested since the year 2000, and are undergoing a rapid development. The Chinese domain names are easier to remember and recognize, and more convenient for those who cannot read English to get access to the Internet.[29] More importantly, Chinese content becomes much richer in recent years. It is only a few years ago, the capabilities of a Chinese to use the internet depends on his or her English level, while today, except for the specialists in computer and the Internet, English capabilities are no longer an obstacle to the on-line life of common people in China. In accordance with a survey made by the Research Center for Social Development, CASS, among the causes of preventing people from the Internet, not enough Chinese content has already become minor one, while it was not the case only a few years ago.[30] In this sense, no matter where the Internet originated, it can rapidly becomes a part of receiver's culture. The Internet will facilitate cultural exchange, but cannot become a means of new colonialism.

14.5 Conclusion

As a conclusion, this paper tries to argue that, there is no such thing as unified and closed cyberspace. In the early stage of development, the description of the Internet was under a strong influence of science fiction. Along with its growth, there will be a demythifying process. The Internet is merely a network for communication, and it is a part of human world, rather than a world isolated from human beings. When we get access to the net, an immerged experience attracts our attention to the web, but our bodies are still left behind. Body and mind cannot be separated from one another, and mind will return to body. We still live in the real world. In the studies of the relations between the Internet and culture, there is a saying "cultural imperialism", and it seems that the unbalanced contents in the Internet will result in a new colonialism. In fact, the nature of on-line culture is only a representation of the cultural features of real life. If we keep a cultural diversity in real life, we will be able to keep similar diversity on the Internet.

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[27] See "The History of the Internet in China", in http://www.blogchina.com/.

[28] See "Statistical Reports on the Internet Development in China (1997/10)" and "Statistical Reports on the Internet Development in China (2004/7)," in http://www.cnnic.net.cn/.

[29] "The Timeline of the Development of Chinese Domains," in http://www.cnnic.net.cn/.

[30] "Surveying the Internet and Impact in 12 Chinese Cities," in http://www.wipchina.org/.

Chapter 15
Traditional Culture: Salvation or Revitalization?

China is a nation with a cultural tradition that spans several thousand years. This tradition provides a background for any new creations; it also faces difficult choices in connection with cultural legacies.

15.1 Two Voices

Two voices are frequently heard in conferences with regard to cultural affairs: one stresses the protection of cultural heritage, and the other focuses on the development of cultural industry.

According to the former, many cultural legacies are on the verge of extinction. If we do not take pains to make great efforts, they are to disappear very soon. Therefore we should come to their rescue, just as zoologists, botanists, and ecologists endeavor to salvage endangered species. By cultural legacies they mean historical relics, architecture, traditional or folk arts, etc.

With regards to historical relics, there are special lists for their protection issued by the authorities from national level to the various local levels. Those that are included in these lists are provided with certain financial means, though there are still many problems in this concern. The listed ones are, however, merely very small portions of cultural legacies of China, just like the peak of an iceberg. Along with the development of economy and mass construction of cities in today's China, those that are not listed are being exterminated at an alarming speed. To take Beijing as an instance, the city walls were destroyed, and now it is the turn of *huton*; old Wangfujing was removed, replaced by Oriental Plaza. A Ping'an Avenue passes through the city center, as if a knife stabs into the heart of Beijing. Real ancient architectures were pulled down, and faked old-looking buildings were erected. I

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_15

published a short essay in the No. 3 of *Dushu* of this year entitled "Save Stockholm". In the early 1970s, there was a fierce dispute in Stockholm about the city's choice in its path of modernization. Compared with those in Stockholm, there are much more to be saved in Beijing. Beijing is a city with a much longer history, and more characteristic cultural features. Today, Beijing is undergoing a construction on an unprecedented scale. New satellite towns are emerging as if bamboo shoots after a spring rain, with each of them having hundreds of thousands of residents. Such a great project is encroaching upon the center of the city. There will be a modern Beijing in ten or twenty years. Nevertheless, in the magnificence of a new Beijing, where can we find the old one? Perhaps we can only find it from pictures and old maps. Recently, a 1949 map of Beijing is reprinted and sold. Although it is quite expensive, many people are still willing to buy it. It reminds many old residents of the old Beijing, and they can tell the old stories to their offspring by referring to it.

There will be more difficulties in preserving traditional art genres. Fewer and fewer people go to theatres, and folk arts also have a hard time. I went to the far western parts of China last year. People in the mountains knew very little of the outside world, but today, they have television antennas on the top of their roofs. It was indeed like having many pot-like disks on the roofs of old-styled houses there. These pots can cook nothing for them to eat, but are definitely changing their life in a fundamental way. In the past, they had only folk literature and art; today, along with the appearance of the television and other modern technologies, artistic production is put into a complete different context. Everything with which they have been familiar may disappear very soon. To the young generation, computer games might be more attractive than singing and dancing together, and a live broadcast of football game on TV may be more interesting than Beijing Opera.

The latter advocates promoting cultural industry. Its representatives claim that this is a new economic form, and has tremendous potentials. They show, by cultivating this or that cultural resource, how the enterprise they are managing undergoes a great development, and how great are the economic benefits they have created.

Of these two voices, the former is indeed much louder. It calls for rescuing historic relics, and preserving traditional arts. Nevertheless, its assertion makes it sound as if it has already been marginalized, helpless, and that its only alternative is to make such noise (of what kind–this is not clear); while the latter, though seeming weak and restrained, is in fact more powerful. It is represented by those who manage the cultural industry. What they want is to say less and do more, thereby quietly changing the whole landscape of social and cultural life.

15.2 Inevitable Change of the Taste

The students of sociology tend to divide art into elite, folk and popular. Such division may originate from the division of the tastes of noblemen, peasants and burgers. In the past, the historians and critics of art concentrated on the elite art, and folk or popular arts were merely taken as the preparation or imitation of the elite ones. Along with

social development, many arts, which were taken as popular or folk ones before, are drawn into the category of elite art.

Take novel as an example: in China, novel was called *xiaoshuo*, which means "small talk"; it originated from story-telling in cities and countryside, but later became an important "grand narrative", and attracted attentions of many critics since the beginning of the 20th century. To continue this example, Jin Yong's novels, which were classified as popular literature for a long time, have entered into the view of many important critics since 1980s.

A more powerful force to promote this change is science and technology, particularly movies, TV and Internet. Folk art gradually dies away, elite art struggles for its existence, while popular art grows at a tremendous speed. In addition, the boundary between the elite and popular art is obscured. To take Hollywood as an example, it might be a controversial topic whether the movies produced in Hollywood belong to elite or popular art. A controversy as such is challenging our very concept of art.

In addition, the current of globalization also exerts a fundamental impact on the artistic production itself. China's joining the WTO may mean that the Chinese can see more movies and TV programs from abroad. But to Chinese art producers, it is an urgent task to balance the trade deficit in art field, and to enable more Chinese works of art to be known in other countries. In the face of the fierce competition, the Chinese cultural industry can only endeavor to adapt itself to the international cultural market. The managers of cultural industry have to discard the dispute with cultural specialists. To them, it is a life-and-death business. In some sense, market is a revolutionary force, which can designate the change of taste of a time.

Now the dilemma is still present here. On the one side, the tradition should be updated. At a time of global cultural industry, such a controversy seems insignificant, and even ridiculous to an entrepreneur. On the other hand, it is necessary to preserve tradition. We should not take the whole world as a huge museum, but the world still needs museums. More importantly, museums as such (or, cultural legacies to be kept in various ways) can become the sources of inspiration for new creations. Maybe the best choice is to achieve a co-existence of different styles of art.

15.3 Various Strategies for Cultural Development

At a time of international communication, the Chinese become more and more profoundly aware of the existence of the outside world. There are two arguments prevailing in Chinese art circles: 1. Only when something belongs to China, can it belong to the world; 2. Only when something belongs to the world, can it belong to China. These two arguments in fact reflect two different cultural attitudes: the former stresses pure Chinese tradition with expectations of its being discovered by other peoples; the latter addresses to the audience from other cultures, and hope its international influence can promote its acceptance back in China.

It seems to me that both arguments are valid in the sense that both can be put into practice in artistic creation in their own ways.

Indeed the desire of sticking to tradition and creating something pure Chinese is actually no more than re-discovery of tradition. Along with the disintegration of traditional society in modern times, artistic production is put in a drastically different context. In both the producers and appreciators fundamental transformations have taken place. Only through a creative effort can the tradition be preserved. When someone says, "only when something belongs to China, can it belong to the world", he only expresses a belief, which limits his artistic pursuit to a pure "Chinese" category, while waiting to be recognized by the "world". In fact, there is no fair play in artistic field as in sports. The criterion for artistic judgment is always grounded on cultural orientations.

In the minds of many Chinese people, the strategy of first seeking "international" recognition and then establishing its influence in China is quite controversial, since it appears to rely on foreign forces to shock the tastes of the Chinese. Although such a practice is criticized, it seems to me that such an artistic pursuit is still beneficial to the development of art itself. This is a dialogue between cultures by means of actual artistic production. When different cultures meet, a sense of distance is created. This can form an estrangement, but it can also produce a sense of novelty. An attempt to avoid the former while achieving the latter is itself a genuine artistic effort. We need more attempt in this respect, rather than less.

Nevertheless, the following reasoning should be rejected. In sports, a world champion is regarded as higher than a national one, while the national is higher than, say, provincial. It is not the case in art, however. A work of art that is most welcomed in an alien culture is not necessarily the best in its own culture.

In addition to the above-mentioned two arguments or pursuits, we should still have a third one, which is to face the practical life of modern Chinese people. To keep and restore artistic tradition should not become the mainstream of artistic production, though we should have a mechanism to enable the traditional legacies to be preserved, and even a group of people to preserve tradition for its own sake. Art should serve contemporary people after all. The mainstream of artistic production should face the daily life of modern Chinese people, and take a dynamic and creative attitude towards ancient tradition. We also need a dialogue with the outside world in the field of art. A dialogue as such can stimulate imagination, and thus enrich our artistic experience. Nevertheless, there can only be a limited number of artistic products that are designed to serve alien culture for the first place. The mainstream of artistic production should first serve a native culture, and then that of the outside. Such pursuit can be concluded as such: first find a foothold in China, and then strive to reach the world.

15.4 A Dynamic Attitude and Harmonious Development

There is strong tendency to reject popular art in academic field. It might be said that, such tendency is a negative way of participating in the society. By doing so, critique turns out to be a compliment.

In China, however, there is a long tradition of depreciating merchants among the knowledgeable people, which might date back to the policy of "valorizing farming and putting down business", a literati spirit cultivated by the imperial examination system. In the light of these ideas, artistic production is regarded as something totally alien to merchant class.

To balance against this tradition, it is necessary for us to adopt a dynamic attitude, which is shown in the participation of scholars in the cultural industry. Cultural products can and should become goods for the market. Along with the social and economic development, they play a more and more important role in people's daily life, and with the transformation of them from something only for holidays to the daily necessities, the cultural products will become more and more important goods. This is a tendency independent of a scholar's will. The students of cultural studies have only two alternatives: the one is to participate in, and thus manage to increase its aesthetic value; the other is to refuse to collaborate, and thus is marginalized.

A society should protect the marginalized opinions, and let those who insist on these opinions continue this kind of study. However, the mainstream of studies should follow the change of society. This does not mean to drift with the tide, but is a way of participation. By means of participation, the intellectuals can raise the taste of artistic products, and manage to adjust its orientation. The participation as such also includes a theoretical one, that is, to study the change of society and put up theoretical consideration in this respect.

Chapter 16
The Beauty of a City: Thoughts from an Ecological Perspective

'City' is now a terrain inviting hot debates. The popularity of the issue of 'city' in China today might have something to do with the popularity of it worldwide, since books written by writers like Lewis Mumford have been translated into Chinese. Yet, more importantly it is an issue of Chinese characteristics. I mean, questions about city development are real and serious for the Chinese people. These questions have stimulated experts to think hard about city design and construction, and the questions have aroused the interest of aestheticians as well. The range of the discussion about city construction is very broad, since different disciplines can scrutinize it from different perspectives and thus arrive at conclusions of different types. Diversified as the researches might be, there is a question which seems to me very fundamental, and that is: what is the beauty of a city? When this question is proposed, aesthetics makes its way into the study of city development.

16.1 One Face for a Thousand Cities: An Anxiety in City Renovation

The issue of 'city' is a conspicuous one for recent years in China, for this country is experiencing urbanization at a scale so large that it can be said unprecedented in the history of the world.

China was an agricultural country for thousands of years when rural population accounts for the absolute majority of its people. During the long history of the old and traditional society, China's rural population always accounts for more than 80% of its total population. It is only until the past twenty years that China starts to witness so rapid growth of urban population. The five decades roughly from 1980 to 2030 is a historical period for China to change her demographical structure thoroughly. It is estimated that the rural population will decrease from 80% to 20%.

J. Gao, *Aesthetics and Art*, China Academic Library,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-56701-2_16

More than the change of appearance, it also means a thorough change for the Chinese civilization. We often say that the Chinese civilization is in essence an agricultural civilization and the typical image of a Chinese used to one toiling in the field, face to the yellow earth and back to the sky. But now this type of living state is changing. Today, no matter which city we are living in, we are always impressed by the fast extension of the views of city.

I now live in Beijing. Several years ago I went to Stockholm of Sweden, a city I once had studied and lived in. I had a feeling that time was frozen there, for all the streets, stores and buildings were still so familiar to me. Time cannot change its face. If you go there at a frequency of once for several years, you will find nothing changes. Basically everything is the same as before: the same houses, the same roads, the same routes of buses and even the same bus schedules. Such a changeless stability moved me and I told my Stockholm friends that they were living in a fairy land.

Why did I call that a fairy land? Well, there is a Chinese saying for this: seven days in the immortals' hollow, a thousand years for the mundane world. Behind this saying there are Chinese stories very similar to the Rip Van Winkle type. For example, one Chinese story says that there was a peasant who went deep into a mountain to cut woods for family fuel. He lost his way and suddenly saw two persons—actually immortals—playing chess. Watching for just one round of the chess game, the peasant went back to his way home. But, when he was finally out of the mountain and back to his own home village, he found, to his ultimate amazement, that people there were no more his familiars, but people of his grand-grand-grand children generation. Stories like this tell us that in the immortals' world time flows very, very slowly, while in the mundane world time flies.

Compared with Stockholm, Beijing is both old and new. An ancient city as it is, Beijing is in fact also a completely new city. For all these years living in Beijing and witnessing the springing up of new buildings like bamboos after rain, I cannot help exclaiming that so big are her changes. Suddenly some farming lands in my memory turned into construction sites, then skyscrapers, and then new CBDs (Central Business Districts). The whole landscape transformation might be realized within just several years. In Europe, 100 years old buildings are not so old, buildings of 200 years are by no means rare, and for those more than 300 years old, plates are attached to them declaring proudly its establishing date and history. To put it briefly, the older a house is, the more aesthetic value it possesses. But in Beijing, averagely speaking, apartment building over 30 years old are outdated, occupied mainly by retired factory workers. Buildings of 20 years or so are of low taste. Houses built at the beginning of the new millennium are just passable, and buildings after the Olympic of 2008 constitute the majority of Beijing's fashionable architecture market.

Cities are growing bigger and bigger, which is a fact happening everywhere in China. For the past several decades, China's GDP is increasing at a speed of doubling itself every ten years. Considering the increase in GDP, we can make such a calculation: at the same time with the doubling of the GDP for every ten years, the urban population is doubling, and the living area per capita for city residents is also doubling. The increase of urban population and their residential space, together with the increase of land used for their shopping, education, tourism, and administration,

and together with the increase of vehicles and the consequent enlarging of land used for driving and parking, all the above-mentioned elements have worked together and caused our GDP to increase in algebraic series and our cities to extend in geometric multiplication. That's why the landscape changing is like this: low- and mid-rise buildings replacing bungalows, high-rise and super high-rise buildings replacing the low- and the mid-rise; towns turning into small cities, small cities turning into big cities, and big cities into megacities.

The speed of city construction has changed both the landscape and people's living styles. On the one hand, we are happy to see city developments; on the other hand, we are also in an anxiety facing the new phenomenon of "one face for a thousand cities"—that is countless cities are representing basically the same landscape. The undifferentiated similarity exists not only as a rough and general impression, but also goes deep into the cities details. Strolling around a city, you will see the same type of residential quarters, the same type of big or small stores, the same type of avenues and buildings along the avenues, and so on and so forth.

It is hard to tell the difference among cities. The biggest difference might be their names. Our cities are lacking uniqueness in landscape and peculiarity in culture. Except for their respective landmark architectures, we have no other clues to tell their architects out, and ironically, even the so-called landmark architectures are now imitating or copying with each other.

As to people's residential quarters, the only difference among them lies in their market values, which is determined by their density of the buildings and green areas within, the architectural forms and styles, the quality of affiliated property management, and its location, traffic, circumstances and etc. But all these differentiating elements can be calculated and reflected in the prices of the houses or apartments. It is the size of your wallet, not your personality or personal taste, that decides the architecture you live in. It is a matter of quantity, not a matter of quality, for beauty is defined by money, not by "culture". Or, we might put the logic here in this way: "culture" now equals to "classification", and "classification" equals to money.

Various elements result in the phenomenon of "one face for a thousand cities". Just think about it. How could China not fall into the trap of hasty sameness since she has realized such an unprecedented task of constructing or reconstructing her multitudinous cities in her vast land in a very short instant of history?

The sameness in city landscape is closely related to the sameness in people's imagination at a specific historical stage. For example, what a local administrative building should look like is not a design out of sheer imagination. Actually it is made within the bound of certain rules and collective mentalities. The construction of *Yamen* (government office in feudal China) has certain rules for architectural forms and styles, because there is a hierarchy in which the emperor on the top and officials of different levels under him. So the emperor's palace is the grandest, and the lower an official's rank is, the humbler his office should be. I once saw an ancient courier station in Jiangsu Province. Although such courier stations can be called the lowest government office, it is in a fairly good shape, like a *yamen* of township. From this we can see people are also inclined to uplift their state by imitating those above them within the permission of social hierarchy. I do not intend to say that once working

in the government as an official, one is certain to lose his power of imagination. I intend to emphasize that administrative positions always bring about boundaries to our imagination. Compared with officials, common people have fewer limits or constrains in their imagination. They are more localized, mainly influenced by local climates, geographical features, available building materials, folk customs, family traditions and so on. The so-called local traditions or a community's aesthetic habits are closely related to such local elements. Along the southern-east coastal areas of China, there are many old village houses of Hakka people. They are peculiar and fascinating, but their coming into being is a long story, historical deposition after hundreds of years.

On the other hand, when we are criticizing the fact of "one face for a thousand cities", we actually may think in another way and ask ourselves such a question, "Why not accept it? Why can it not be 'one face for a thousand cities?'" Take an example from the entertainment world. We often come across entertainment news like some movie stars having "clothes clashes", that is two stars wearing the same clothes on the same occasion. Especially when it is two women actresses who happen to wear the same clothes at the same time, the coincidence will be teased as an unpleasant "accident". This kind of news forces the female stars to take special measures to avoid clothes clashes. They try to avoid wearing a dress that has been worn by somebody else publicly, or has been worn by themselves on some other occasions.

We ordinary people are not afraid of "clothes clashes". Actually we like exchanging information about clothes with each other. When we see a friend or colleague is wearing an outfit to our own taste, we will naturally ask him where to get it and tend to buy the same one. It is a refrain of the salespersons in department stores, "this style is very 'in' this year." The more one style being very "in", the more it will lead to clothes clashes. But we do not mind that very much. Maybe it is because ordinary people are not so sure about their own choice that they are open to the majority's choice. The same psychological logic explains why enterprises prefer to choose hot movie stars as their public faces, and why there is a profession of fashion model. They are the means of sales promotion, taking advantage of the common people's inclination to follow fashion stars. Common people actually seek to look like popular stars, and their enthusiastic "copying" the stars in turn pushes the fashion stars to be always on the way of updating their appearance.

It is a reflection of your attitude toward life whether you are afraid of clothes clash or not. After careful selecting, choose several sets of clothes that fit you well, fitting your body shape, your profession and the possible occasion you might be in. That is the common people's usual practice. We want to dress ourselves comfortably and decently. It is generally agreed that in purchasing clothes, we do not need to buy the most expensive ones, but the most "correct" ones, for the correct ones are those that can be used as frequently as possible. So common people have common people's standard of clothes purchasing, different from that of superstars. Common people make choices out of their concern for "correctness" and "properness", while superstars' priority is "difference", something distinguishing them from others and preventing them from repeating themselves. Being different is their aim and they focus on "difference", instead of "correctness".

The same distinction exists in urban planning and construction. The fact of "one face for a thousand cities" does not bother common people that much. What they really care about is whether their living place is good enough. Are the apartments or houses of reasonable layout, efficient indoor space, pleasant natural light, nice building forms and structures, convenient facilities nearby including shopping, parking and traffic, green areas, cultural life, etc. and etc. Isn't it a wonderful place to live in, which is not far away from the downtown yet very quiet, and has a river or a lake nearby, and a park as well? As to its similarity to the other houses, or the quarter's similarity to the other quarters, it is not that important.

Sometimes, resemblance is a merit worth mentioning or bragging. "The design of this residential quarter borrows a lot from the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing." "The developer of this real estate is an addict to the Northern Europe architecture." "I hear that the designer of this company has been to California to learn from the architecture there." Such statements, if they are not spread out by the real estate company for sales promotion, are usually uttered with pride by residents or buyers of the houses. The feelings behind utterance like these are positive, expecting, self-assuring and even showing-off.

In fact, looking into the official offices, temples and even statues in temples in history, it is normal that they are alike in appearance. According to some researches about the artistic features of Buddhist statues, statues of the same historical period do have many things in common and "one face for a thousand Buddhas" is an inevitable fact. Some Buddhas are more exquisite, some are not; some has more gold coating, some doesn't. But throughout the history, the image of Buddha is always fixed for a certain period of time, with only little difference to be seen.

Nowadays we look down upon the phenomenon of resemblance, but for those involved in the making and construction work, why can't they bring out things of the same style? Resembling each other has proved an efficient way of making things. The refusal to resemblance is a demand of art. Clothes, accommodation and Buddha are not for the sake of art in essence. They are for our daily living. Resemblance happening in them is not so problematic. They are the natural inertia of life. Restriction and denial of the impulse of resemblance is, on the contrary, unnatural and has special reasons behind. It is the special reasons behind that demand our attention to point out. Therefore, the question we should ask now turns to be: what is the motive behind our aspiration to overcome resemblance in urban construction? What is the source of our pursuit for difference?

16.2 Different Modes of Development for Urban Construction

The pursuit for individuality is out of our impulse for art. Though we can define "art" in various ways, there is one defining characteristic that everyone might agree to: art should have individuality.

To demand functions from one thing is natural, while to pursue the uniqueness of it is a special demand. The former is out of the need for daily life, while the latter is perhaps closely related to the concepts of modern art. Kant said that an artist should be a "genius" who could inspire the others. Art has originality. Though it can imitate life, a piece of art cannot imitate another piece of art. Imitation is the terminator of art. According to Kant, the work of a genius does not follow rules, but create rules instead. Nor does he imitate the others, but the others imitate him.

When we are asking ourselves to overcome "one face for a thousand cities", we are actually regarding our cities as artistic things. Like clothes, houses and cities are not afraid of repetition if they are defined as daily necessity. But if defined as works of art, they cannot repeat the others.

Then, can a city be a work of art? This is a thought-provoking question.

Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, is a case in order here. In order to develop the inland areas and transform the center for Brazil's development, and at the same time also influenced by the modernism in art, two famous celebrities of Brazil—urban designer Lucio Costa and architect Oscar Niemeyer—put forwards their cooperated design. Costa was in charge of the general planning, and Niemeyer designed some representative architectures. The shape of Brasilia is like an airplane. The central body of the airplane is for various public buildings, and the cockpit of the airplane is taken by the highest administrative, legislative and judicial powers of the Brazil. The Three Power Square occupies the center of the cockpit, and the President's office, the Congress and the Highest Court are all here. The fore cabin contains big churches, embassies and office buildings for organizations like the Ministry of Culture. The rear cabin is the section for cultural and educational activities, including grand stadiums and TV Station. The tail of the airplane is where the railway station is. The wings of the airplane are to accommodate the residents of Brasilia, equipped with kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, cinemas, stores, restaurants and so on. There are no specific names for the residential quarters, but just numbers. In the connecting parts between the cabin and the wing, there are big department stores, grand hotels, banks' buildings, hospitals and the National Center for Performing Arts. On April 21st, 1960, this capital is formally put into use, and this giant eastward "airplane" sets out on its journey toward modernization. On the top of the city's TV Tower, there are some telescopes for having a bird's view of the city. Beside these telescopes, there are English words as this: *Landmark of Modernity*. This city represents the highest state of the spirit of modernity: rational, logical, comprehensive and perfect wholeness. On December 7th, 1987, Brasilia is enlisted in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites. It represents an epoch and the spirit of that epoch. This spirit is shown in making an overall and comprehensive plan first. It has also shown itself in the design of many other cities, but Brasilia is the most representative one.

To build a city as a piece of art and do it in the guidance of a comprehensive design—this is a modernist way of practice, and it is, of course, not without any faults.

First of all, treating a city as a piece of art means that this city must be finished once and for all. After it is set up, people should only do maintenance or repairing work to it, and adding new architectures to it is at the risk of destroying its coherent

artistic beauty. Once a painting is finished, more touches are not expected, for they are superfluous. Rarely have we seen that one spends his whole life writing just one novel. If there exists such a writer, he is writing in a pre-modernist way. Venus de Milo has no arms. We do not want to see new arms for her.

Secondly, this city needs to control the size of its population to fit the original design. There is no space for new comers if there are no vacant apartments or houses. The space and capacity of this city is limited and rigid. Its original urban design has decided the sizes for residents' accommodation, shopping, schooling, eating and drinking. Of course it allows certain elasticity. For example, an apartment for four persons can be shared by six persons. But very soon the upper limit will be reached, and this apartment cannot hold persons more than six. It is said that Brasilia can hold 500,000 people at most, and when the population has increased beyond its limits, some residents have to live in its satellite cities. Within a fixed and carefully designed space, people later on has no choice but accept reality and adapt themselves to the situation. They cannot actively construct their circumstances, which is the force of modernity and rationalism.

What's more, this kind of city lacks traditional neighborhood culture and street corner culture. There is an old Chinese popular song which sings so many stories a small city possesses. The stories of a small city are mainly love stories, always happening around the corners of streets. Without street corners, without traditional neighborhoods, how can we continue stories of small cities? The novel *Istanbul* by Ferit Orhan Pamuk portraits a gorgeous yet decrepit Istanbul and gives us a family saga in it. *Old Stories of the South of Beijing* brings us into the old Beijing in Lin Haiyin's memory.

So Brasilia is an exceptional city. We may build another city like it, or we may designate certain areas of a city for building functional sections like it. But, such is not the only meaning for urban planning, and we can by no means conclude that Brasilia is the only way that an urban planning might be.

Looking back into the history of "city", we may observe that in fact urban planning exists throughout history, only that ancient people hold different views about it from ours. Two ancient cities of China—Xi'an (西安) and Luoyang (洛阳), both have strict space planning during the Han Dynasty (202 B. C.–220 A. D.) and Tang Dynasty (618 A.D.–907 A.D.). The layout of the two cities is like a chess board, with lines and rows in order. Such a design emphasizes uniformity. Still, their uniformity always has to come to terms with practical situations at specific historical periods, and the development of cities is realized through the balance of different powers. Strict space design for capitals underwent great changes during the Song Dynasty (960–1279), when commercial life and culture thrived and broke the old and rigid format of city design. Time has given the city of Kaifeng (开封), the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty, more freedom and space for development, and there emerge the interplays between houses for officials' administration and houses for commercial uses. We can see the changes in cities' geographical layout then from the famous Chinese painting—*Riverside Scene at the Clear Bright Day* (《清明上河图》).

Projects of building a totally new city like Brasilia is a sole exception. It is a very special case made by a government under the guidance of certain aesthetics. Brasilia

cannot be taken as an example for the other cities to follow. Financially speaking it costs money and might be beyond the government's "purchasing power". Practically speaking, it is not a necessity. Usually the task is to construct or renovate on the basis of what the city has had, so city construction is, in most situations, to renovate rather than to construct. Realizing this is actually realizing a more fundamental aspect of the issue of "city": the temporality of a city.

Except for cities like Brasilia which is totally constructed by a modern design, cities on the average have temporality. Each has its own history. Especially in old districts of ancient cities, there are time-worn traces of history. By "temporality", I mean not only history. I also mean that in planning construction projects for a city, we can put "temporality" into our understanding about the prospects of the it. The construction of new city districts, new CBDs, new development zones for cultural and educational causes, new spots of tourist attraction… they are all adjustments of the cities' centers. They draw people to move from old city districts to new ones, which finally creates an opportunity to renovate the comparatively empty old city districts. At the same time, we all know the renovation of old districts is always accompanied by cultural root-seeking and construction, and thus stories of those cities can be dig out. Such a renovation process normally takes about one decade or several decades. It contributes to the fames of famous cities. So it is important to deliberately collect the traces of times passing by, for they are reflecting the cities' profound historical accumulations.

A comparison between taking a picture and painting a picture might be more illustrative. A photograph can tell us many things, like in which year and season, on which date, at what time it is taken, and who are the one or ones being taken and who is the one takes the photo. People in a photograph can show us the dressing styles and fashions of their time. Yet, in spite of all the messages we can get from a photograph, it is a work done in seconds. Photographers' efforts usually leave no trace in one photo alone. Painting is different. Both the western oil painting and the Chinese water painting have traces for us to see how it is made beneath the artists' hands. The final product demonstrates and records the process of its making. The making of a city is like painting which takes long time. Its shape gradually comes into being under the guidance of certain "strategies". A city has history, which is its temporality.

The development of a city demands a general strategy, and this general strategy sets special "magnetic fields" for the city. Drawn by stimulating policies and restricted by relevant regulations, the development of a city is oriented by the "magnetic field". For instance, the old railway station is always the old center of city. Now we can shift the center of a city to a new area by establishing a new railways station there. Similar to the establishment of a new railway station, the designs of the subway or light railway routes as well as the locations of the airport or seaport, can all play an orientation role in city development.

In addition to the general strategy, small clever designs, such as a street park here and a square there, are also important to a city. The Chinese people have a good habit of doing morning and evening exercises in groups out in the open air. People like to meet together to do various activities, like Taiji boxing, dancing, singing, playing

musical instruments, flying kites and swinging diabolo. They are meeting regularly not only for learning from each other and improving their skills, but also for enjoying the accompanying of the others and friendship. This kind of social gathering is rarely seen in the western countries. So our city designers should leave enough space for social activities adored by the Chinese people.

16.3 Fallacies in City Construction

The rapid urbanization naturally leads to the public's attention to urban planning and city construction. Now a great majority of the Chinese people regards city construction a cause of vital importance, and they are eager to see their cities more beautiful than ever. Yet, wishes for beauty are not equal to beauty in reality. The reality is frequently on the contrary: in numberless cases, money spent just gets worse and worse city appearance back, sometimes even destroying the cities' time-beaten beauty. There are many causes for the deterioration of the cities' appearance. One cause currently very conspicuous is the pursuit of "shining name card for our city". Here the "shining name card" refers to the "image project" a city tries to achieve in its city construction. This kind of image project is typically designed as a big city square, one or two broad avenues, some grand buildings and some counterfeit antiques. It is altogether spectacular making, that is spectacularization. By making ostensible spectaculars, the person in charge of the design want to impress the viewers instantly and dramatically. Spectacularization is out of both political and commercial motives.

Political motive refers to the political considerations of some local officials who want to create excellent administrative performance. Originally it is the combined decision of the experts and the public as to the questions of city construction. Especially the opinions of the common people who are born here and living here, and will quite probably end up their lives here, are crucial because they have the real sense of belongings to this city and the design will be most directly and closely related to them. However, they have almost no power of speech in the construction of the city. Meanwhile, the experts' views do not matter enough, either. Urban planning and its construction is a professional domain, and serious participation of professionals is a must. But in fact, it is difficult for experts to propose disputes out of their professional knowledge. Sometimes the procedure of consulting experts is just for show, since the experts invited by the government are working not as independent advisers, but as foot-note providers to the government's decisions. City construction controlled by local officials often results in appearing beauty, not real beauty. The point is what is the beauty of the city for?

The personnel management of Chinese officials features promotions following a hierarchy. A position is given to a cadre mainly through appointment from above, and after several years, based on his administrative performance, he will either be promoted to a higher position, or shift to another post of the same level, or stay where he is and have no change at all. Such adjustments happen once in several years till the time of the cadre's retirement. It causes a key to "success", that is a

cadre must get quick promotion when he is still young, otherwise he cannot arrive at a certain position at a certain age. The main problem in this system of evolution is the evaluation from above counts much more than the opinions of experts and the public. Of course in China today, opinions of the public and experts are also important, yet their importance is not so visible if their opinions and views are not strong enough to influence the leaders above their cities' mayors. Neither do I mean that local officials are necessarily in opposite to the general public and experts, but we must consider the fact that they are viewing city construction from different perspectives. Imagine a newly appointed official enters into a city, with an ambition of leaving it in several years and moving to a higher position. It is inevitable that this ambitious leader will seek for a dramatic but short-term effect. It is actually not his city, but he has the final say. To construct the beauty of a city is essentially a long-time cause, asking for one's devotion of all his life's time to doing only one thing. But now we have a leader who is willing to devote all his energy to climbing as quickly as he can on the ladder of official ranking, one who is racing with his own age. We can easily see the gap between the two kinds of mentality is too deep to be overcome.

In order not to fall into "one face for a thousand cities", designers turn to fake individuality for help. The main characteristic of fake individuality is to build landmark buildings on purpose. The changing of time leaves its traces and signs in a city's architecture. Technology and materials available define people's imagination about the beauty of city, so cities coming into being at basically the same historical phase always look very similar, (for example, Chicago of the U. S. A. and Shanghai of China are alike), while cities rising from different epoch and historical backgrounds are different, (for example, Beijing and Shanghai are so different before the 1980). Architecture of wood, earth and stone is of course different from that of steel and iron. A royal palace is of course difference from a commercial center. The existence of architectural difference is in essence a natural thing. When a giant country like China launches out its rapid urbanization in hundreds of cities simultaneously, the limit of people's imagination about architecture is helplessly visible. The individuality of a city asks for real creativity. When real creativity is in want, architects have to use fake individuality to make up this want.

The first kind of fake individuality is emphasizing its landmark architecture to an improper degree and spoiling the wholeness of the architecture with the city. Thirty years ago, I went to Xi'an and visited the famous ancient pagoda—Dayan Pagoda (大雁塔). My observation at that time is the pagoda had been long neglected and was in bad repair. It felt as if it could fall apart at any time. And around this pagoda were civil constructions at a mess. I said to myself then that this pagoda should be repaired and kept in good condition, for after all it is a memorable site where Master Monk Xuanzang (玄奘) translated Buddhist scripts into Chinese. Several years ago I went to Xi'an and Dayan Pagoda again. At this time, a big square named after the pagoda had been there. The pagoda is shining brightly, lit by colorful lights. In front of the pagoda is a grand musical fountain, water dancing high or low with music and forming into different patterns. Groups of middle-aged or senior women are also dancing there with some "square music". The whole scene makes me feel somewhat out of place. How could the Master Monk translate Buddhist classics in such a noisy

and crowded atmosphere? Like a city, a landmark architecture left to us by history has its own stories. If we highlight it so much, we are cutting it off from its proper surroundings. This kind of care and treasure is at the same time destructive, for it deprives the building of its meanings.

Now, let's turn to the second kind of fake individuality, which is reflected in arranging spectacular buildings in a blind way, following some general concepts without knowing what these concepts refer to in history and reality. In recent years, a number of disputable buildings have come up here and there around the Chinese cities, such as the CCTV headquarters building (中央电视台大楼), the National Center for Performing Arts (国家大剧院), the China Millennium Monument (中华世纪坛), the China Gate of Suzhou (苏州华门) and so on. All these buildings use novel or grotesque forms to appeal to the impulse for something new and different in Chinese architecture. However, their novelty is also controversial. The theoretical justification for such novelty is the so-called "postmodernism". "Postmodernism" in this sense is like a container for everything that challenges or confronts our aesthetic views. In fact, "postmodernism" used in this way is a misreading of it indeed. Postmodernism as a protest against modernism is in essence trying to find local discourse to fight against the grand narrative of universalism. Modernist architecture runs after universalism, not adaptive enough to the diversified world and people's conception about it. However, modernism emphasizes on "functions", and its focus on functions should not be naively forgotten. So it is not the real postmodernist spirit to pursue the grotesque alone. On the contrary, postmodernism aims at combining the functional with the local and the people. Only architecture which takes the functions, surroundings and local culture into careful consideration can be successfully accepted at last.

16.4 The Road to Beauty for a City

To realize the beauty of a city, the first thing we need to solve is "for whom is the beauty presented?" If we equal the beauty to its sceneries and spectaculars, then there would be no difference between the beauty of a city and the beauty of a museum or a gallery where people come to appreciate things. It is true in our saying that the cities are decorations on earth and the symbol of civilization. But, such qualities are not its most important aspects. Cities are for people to live in, so there should be a precondition for its beauty: it should be able to settle the problem of residence and living. Should this problem not solved satisfactorily and the cities are only objectified as a target for watching, its beauty is definitely limited.

Cities are not constructed for visitors come to watch. The target of city construction is, first of all, residents living in it, rather than temporary visitors. It is exactly like decorating and furnishing our homes. If a home is designed and decorated like a luxurious hotel room or a displaying hall, with direct intention of impressing visitors and getting praises from them, the decoration is, actually, a failure. Home is for living, while museum is for watching. Their functions are different. The same logic goes

to city construction. The first thing is being comfortable, and then is the problem of whether it looks beautiful or not.

So when constructing a city, we need to balance the two ends of tourism and daily living. Tourism belongs to the category of "looking beautiful", which is not the "real beauty". Sometimes, the "looking beautiful" is in conflicts with the "real beauty". "Looking beautiful" is a kind of objectification of the target city, treating the city as a painting hanging before its viewers' eyes. In the words of ancient Chinese people, a good painting should be able to move its viewers "to travel in and to live in". "To travel in" here is not in the sense of travelling today. It means to "enter"—to enter into the painting. The action of entering is subject-object binary overcoming. A city is not for watching, but for entering and living in.

So tourism is somewhat a kind of objectification. A city needs beauty of tourism to attract people afar. But one-dimensional focus on spectacular effect is to drain meaning out of the city and leaving the city so hollow.

To realize the beauty of a city, the second thing is to get a balance between the old time and the new days. Definitely a city needs stories. We often go to see a city because it is where some important historical event happens. I stay in a hotel on the Aristotle Street beside the Socrates Square in Athens. The moment I walk out of the hotel, I see the highly erected Parthenon Temple and I can't help emotionally thinking of the old stories I have read from books about it, even if the Parthenon Temple has almost nothing left but a mere skeleton, even if the hotels, squares and streets have only connection of names with the city's grand history. Wondering along the streets of Paris, history is everywhere: here is the Bastille Square, there is the Notre Dame; here is the butte Montmatre, there is the Lachaise Cemetery… all equipped with stories. A traveler in Rome will definitely go to see the Colosseo by his own eyes, although it is merely a broken ancient architecture. The gladiators in history bestowed meanings on the site with their death and blood. Also there is the spot where Caesar met his death by a stab. Yes, only a pile of sand and earth is there to be seen now, but anyway it is an important spot.

The beauty of a city is often associated with historical elements. Viewing their relationship against a long time span, we can see there is a two-sided interplay: renowned city attracting renowned persons, and renowned persons making the city more renowned. Maybe just pointing out their circulating interactions is not persuasive, for such circulating interactions can be used to describe many relationships. But if we put this interaction into a city's growth and illustrate it with vivid and abundant historical materials, we will have a full view of the relationship. The point of city stories is allowing history to revive in today's life. We call that kind of beauty our historical heritage, but it is more of nowadays' choice. History is the data base upon which people can position their city properly. How shall we construct the beauty of the city we are living in? It is a question and choice for people today.

Literature and arts can also give a place meaning. Li Bai (李白),a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, has two brilliant lines:

Farewell, old friend,
west of the city,

in the Tower of Yellow Crane.
(故人西辞黄鹤楼,)
Down to Yangzhou you are sailing,
city of misty flowers,
in the third month of spring.
(烟花三月下扬州。)

These two lines depict two cities—Wuhan (武汉) and (扬州), and the Yangzi River flowing through them. Today, both cities make full use of these two lines of Li Bai to arouse people's interest in them. When improvising the poem, Li Bai was in the Yellow Crane Tower of Wuhai and imagining the city of Yangzhou down the river. In his imagination, Yangzhou is a place of spring flowers and sweet dream. Employing Li Bai's lines, Yangzhou people organize an annual festival—"Yangzhou Flowery March"—every April (for "March" in the Chinese traditional lunar calendar is April), inviting people to travel and seek the poetic feelings there. Once in Beijing, I met a tourist team made up of women of retired age from Sweden. The name of their team is "Along the Road of Shen Congwen". They came to China from so far away and their destination is an old town deep in the province of Hunan (湖南)—the Phoenix Town (凤凰古城). They wanted to experience the west of Hunan, a land introduced to them by the pen of Shen Congwen (沈从文). After we read some novels of the 19th century Russian and France, the journey to St. Petersburg and Paris will be totally different. Everything will be coated with a layer of romantic and elegant light. This street is where Count Pierre lived in Tolstoy's novel. That opera house is the one Anna Karenina frequently went to. Victor Hugo often took a walk in this park. Emile Zola often had a cup of coffee in that cafeteria. All these give us special feelings. Ivan Turgenev always shuttled between St. Petersburg and Paris, and both cities have memories about him. Istanbul is a long-established famous city, still our knowledge about it limits to the Hagia Sophia Church and the Blue Mosque. Reading Pamuk will definitely deepen and broaden our understanding about this city.

Arts can teach people the eyes for a city's beauty. I do not know whether it is through the painters' eyes that people of London have learned to appreciate the fog of the city. In my case, I can appreciate the *hutongs* of Beijing (北京胡同, a typical kind of lanes or alleyways in Beijing) more and more because I gradually and really benefit a lot from photographs about it. I used to think *hutongs* are messy places, beaten by time. But photographers tell me they are actually beautiful. I heard that the old town of Lijiang in Yunnan Province (云南丽江古城) was once almost to be demolished. Fortunately it was finally reserved after some debates. Nowadays, such kind of debates has been a long past story, because artists have successfully taught people how to appreciate the beauty of old Lijiang. In Vienna, when I heard a piece of music entering into my ears, I would involuntarily try to tell on the spot whether it was Schubert or not. My head was full of Dvorak's music when I was in Prague. Paintings and music can be materialized into the sceneries of cities.

So, history, literature and arts, all contribute to the stories of a city. These stories constitute the other side of the city's meaning, the cultural side which transcends concerns for functions and pragmatism. The beauty of a city does not lie in the

ornaments for the sake of ornaments or skin-deep beautifications, although they are also "transcending" pragmatism and concerns for functions. The beauty of a city is in real city life. Yet, interpretations of history, literature and arts offer the city cultural connotations. A political center is not necessarily a cultural center, but it can melt political culture into the city. A military fortress has no culture in the normal sense, but a well-known war field is always where cultural significance lies. Similarly, a commercial center is more likely crammed with business activities, not cultural ones, but its commercial culture can be the most fascinating part of the city. Behind the beauty of a city, there are various cultural elements that play their roles in it.

If there are ready-made stories in history, literature and arts for a city, it is a bliss, for they are the most important source of interpretation in the modern world. They mean a lot if properly used. However, the balance between the historical and the current is also very important. Without this balance, the historical is no more an advantage, but turn out to be a burden. For example, Beijing is both an old city and a modern city. It is wrong to just emphasize the historical aspect of Beijing. Likewise, China is a country of long history and glorious civilization, and at the same time, she is also a hopeful and young country.

The construction of a city needs design, and generally speaking, city as a political center especially involves careful design. Look at the two representative ancient capitals of China—Xi'an of the Tang Dynasty and Beijing of the dynasties of Ming and Qing. Both have comprehensive design for the functions of every section of the city. But still, their thorough design covers mainly the royal palace section and sections for particular functions. To sections of economic activities and sections occupied by common citizens, the city design just stipulate their scopes and designate corresponding management to them. City design of this type has two characteristics.

Firstly, this kind of design must be in accordance with the models set up by political rules. Rules for constructing *Mingtang* (明堂)—temples for the emperor to practice "Heaven Worship"—have already come into being in the early ancient time before the Qin Dynasty (221B.C.–207B.C.) in China. As to the construction of palaces, temples and other sites of ritual service, there were relevant regulations to them all. What's more, design and construction following political rules were repeated throughout the ages in history, which is fundamentally different from the construction of modern cities out of people's pursuit for artistic expression.

Secondly, although there are specific designs for places of ritual and political activities, sections for such functions account for only limited part of the city. These cities, in the long run, have experienced vicissitudes and their states now are the combined outcome of natural growth and human planning. The cities' sense of history is an accumulated being, formed during their long evolution. Architectures of different times overlap, coordinate or compete with each other. The traces of history and the traces of the architectural competition, they all belong to the harmonious interactions of the city's architecture.

Cities as political centers, as I mentioned above, has strong and deliberate sense of planning. Other cities are more likely the feature natural growth. In the case of natural growth, the advantages of rivers, the design of avenues, the arrangements of transportation facilities like railway stations and wharfs, important architectures

and so on, all can play the role of "magnetic field", and they, under the influence of various elements, shape the future of the cities.

So far, we can consider city construction from this perspective. Even if we can say a city is a piece of art, it is actually very different from our common understanding of arts. In the Greek mythology, the city of Athens is compared to a piece of eternal music, but such a comparison is only people's romantic association and good intention. To build a city totally out of artistic design only applies to rare exceptional cases. The truth is it is impossible and unnecessary to almost all cities, financially impossible and even meaningless. What we should emphasize now are the concepts of "game theory" and "orientation" in the rapid process of urbanization.

The "game" of the game theory here can be for showing-off, out of the impulse to show that "my city is more prosperous than yours." This impulse leads to architectural competition and improvement. And then we need "orientation" to guide the architectural game to the rational road of functions. Improve the functional side of the cities on the basis of their current situation. Of course, the orientation is not just for 'functions' alone. It also advocates aesthetic values, values transcending the mere concerns of functions and bringing adaptations and renovations with aesthetic views to the cities. A city cannot be built within a day, nor a year, nor the time for one generation. Renovations of old city sections and constructions of new city sections is the work of people from one generation to another. They are the dynamic history of the city's objectification, and they pave the way for the city to become an art city.

16.5 Conclusion: Living Cities and the Sense of Home

What is the beauty of the city for? We need to pay consistent attention to this question.

No wonder that the architecture of a city is to display beauty. But, the pursuit of beauty might go astray, for a city is not a thing for watching but a space for living in. Making spectaculars cannot realize the beauty of a city in the true sense.

Let's think about the civil architecture in small towns. What we have interest to go for are not the fake ones built in recent years purely for tourism. Instead, we are eager to see the real ones, the real homes of the local people there. Travelling in the zones of the Chinese minorities, we find the real local buildings made from earth and bamboo, and the real ethnical villages of the Miao minority, Qiang minority and so on are far more fascinating than the artificial ones presented to us in the minorities' cultural parks of exoticism.

Aiming at attracting tourists, some scenic spots build temples in their place as a kind of decoration, but such temples are always hopelessly pretentious and insincere. Once I paid a visit to the Gao Min Temple in Yangzhou (扬州高旻寺). A master monk there in his nineties gave me a special favor and talked with me for more than one hour. He had profound knowledge about the Buddhist doctrines, yet he could combine the doctrine with the time and interpret life and society in a free and persuasive way. I was moved then and I admire him. For these years, led by him, the Gao Min Temple has rebuilt its pagoda and built a round lecture hall and a

grand Hall of Five Hundred Arhats. However, its large-scale construction does not impress its visitors as the unpleasant practice of making "a shining name card" for the city. That's because it is in essence the monks building their home of faith and the construction denotes their piety.

The conclusion I would like to draw now is that only life itself the really beautiful thing. The beauty of a city cannot come true if it cannot find a place in the city's dynamic life. The beauty of a city should be first of all accepted by the city residents, contributing to the sense of home the city can give to its people. So a city is beautiful because its people feel identified with it, possessing it and belonging to it. Only then can we say this city is a living city, and only a living city can fulfill the beauty of a city.

We all have similar experience, I suppose. You enter into a city, and you see its main buildings are so boring and listless, a sheer imitation of some other city. When you pass its alleyways and residential quarters, you see they are messy and in disorder. However, you happen to get chances to go into some ordinary persons' homes there, and you find their homes are so tasteful and clean and in order. From the professional's standards, their home decoration and ornaments might not be of high quality, but you can see their hearts there and their hearts make their homes touching and beautiful.

This observation is really thought-provoking for the hot issue of city construction. Yes, we should try to avoid the phenomenon of 'one face for a thousand cities'. But we should not avoid for the sake of avoiding, nor should we deliberately taking efforts to make architectures grotesque and novel, like fashion stars trying to avoid the "clothes clashes". The most fundamental thing for us to do now is to advocate the sense of home in city construction, asking people involved to build our cities with our hearts, like building our own homes.

Our cities are our homes, and as our homes they are for us to move into and enjoy living in. A city should make its people proud of it, and willing to build or display the beauty of the city, like a host willing to show his guests his home. A city should be a living thing, growing with time and evolving through history. That is the way to be against "one face for a thousand cities"; that is the source of the beauty of a city.