

The Theory of Literati Painting: Opening Section of My Dissertation

My first two publications in book form, the small Crown Publishers book *Chinese Painting, XI-XIV Centuries* and the Skira book *Chinese Painting*, were both published in 1960. But two years before that, my doctoral dissertation, titled *Wu Chen, A Chinese Landscapist and Bamboo Painter of the Fourteenth Century*, was published in another form: the University Microfilms hard-cover copy volume that reproduced the entire dissertation. Copies of these were accessible in most large university and other research libraries, and mine was much read and discussed by scholars and students in our field after it came out. In particular, the first part, pages 1 to 84, titled “The Theory of Literati Painting in China,” was widely read and used wherever there were strong programs in Chinese art, notably Max Loehr’s at Harvard. For reasons I will suggest below, it was never published in commercial book form, and has now slipped into obscurity.

The “main part” of the dissertation, on the early Yuan artist Wu Chen (Wu Zhen), is of lesser importance. When I received my MA at the University of Michigan in 1953, I had chosen as my dissertation topic nothing less than the so-called “Four Great Masters” of Yuan Dynasty painting: Wu Zhen, Ni Zan, Huang Gongwang and Wang Meng. Post-Song painting was then a new and wide-open area, and I realized that if we were to make some sense of painting of the later centuries, which had been neglected and depreciated (the then-common view among major specialists was that painting went badly downhill after Song--Bachhofer had dismissed Ni Zan as “an execrable amateur” or something like that) we needed to understand how these four masters and others had contributed to the great change. I chose to do Wu Zhen first, not because he was the most interesting painter--he was the least interesting, in my view--but because his paintings and writings opened the way for me to take on the huge problem of the theoretical underpinnings of this new movement. I would finish Wu Zhen off quickly, I thought, and then go on to the other three.

It didn’t work out that way. After my dissertation was completed and filed, and an important spin-off article titled “Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting” had been presented at a conference and published, I was diverted by the writing of the Skira book and other projects, and never got back to revising and publishing my dissertation. But it continued to be widely read and used by those seriously engaged in Chinese painting studies, especially the first section on literati painting theory. For that, I had spent many long days and weeks poring over and scanning old Chinese writings on painting, and *suibi* or collected writings of those engaged in the new literati painting movement in the late Northern Song, looking for passages that would illuminate this new body of theory--I still recall this as an exciting time of discovery. Then I tied these together with a running text that attempted not only to sum up the main arguments of literati painting theory, but to distinguish it from earlier concepts of artistic expression--to distinguish two fundamentally distinct Chinese ways of thinking about expression in the arts, and especially in painting.

Eventually, in 1971, Susan Bush's *The Chinese Literati on Painting* was published, and became, quite properly and deservedly, the standard authority on this large subject. She used many of the same texts, but in new contexts of discussion, and she had the help of Achilles Fang, a high-powered specialist in Chinese literary theory at Harvard, to ensure the accuracy of her renderings. (In footnotes on the opening pages she corrects several of mine.) I feel nonetheless that my earlier study deserves recognition as the first attempt by a non-Chinese writer to deal with this big subject, and so I make it accessible here, as part of the history of our field, and for whatever interest and value my old discussions may still have. It is reproduced from the original typescript that was submitted as my dissertation. The translations of Chinese passages in the main essay are numbered, and the original Chinese texts, written out in my unskilled hand, are appended on separate pages at the end, using those numbers.

PART I.

THE THEORY OF LITERATI PAINTING IN CHINA

I. INTRODUCTORY

Two Concepts of Painting.

The four painters known as the Four Great Masters of the Yüan Dynasty merit our special attention for reasons which go somewhat beyond the inherent interest and value of their surviving works. They occupy, with their contemporaries, a pivotal position in the history of Chinese painting. When we think of dividing that history into two great periods, "early" and "later" painting, the epoch of the Four Masters presents itself immediately as the beginning of a new artistic era, and the point of demarcation may conveniently be placed at the outset of their activity in the early fourteenth century, or, if one chooses, a few decades before. In any case, it must be recognized that their innovations play a large part in fixing those qualities which distinguish painting after their time, especially landscape, from that which preceded them; dominant movements in the following centuries tend to proceed along the courses they lay out. Therefore, a definition of what is new in their works and in those of other Yüan artists will go far in clarifying the whole development of later Chinese painting.

I do not believe, however, that a stylistic definition alone will suffice in this case. The movement to which the Four Masters belonged—wen-jen hua, "literati painting," a term which designates painting done by scholar-amateurs—represents, rather than a school with well-marked stylistic boundaries, a new way of thought about graphic art. Having accepted a new set of values and a new conception of the very nature of painting, the Yüan artists within this movement worked with different aims in mind than had most of their predecessors, and were judged according to their success in achieving these aims. The Four Masters, in particular, are praised by Chinese critics as model literati artists; the doctrines of wen-jen hua underlie much of their writing and recorded opinions, as well as dictating, I think, some of the special tastes manifested in their painting.

Painting, they suggest, should depict instructive episodes from history, or present to the living the visages of the illustrious dead. Such a view of painting necessarily relegated it to the status of imitation; the artist, it implies, need aim at nothing beyond the faithful representation of his subject.

By the fifth century A.D., however, the period from which the earliest essays specifically devoted to painting are preserved, we may detect the beginnings of a determined opposition to the idea that painting is limited to the copying of actual appearances, whether of mundane or supernatural subjects. From this opposition, and from the feeling that an alternative view must be advanced, there arose what I have termed the primary concept. As the first coherent and clearly stated view of painting to be found in extant Chinese literature, and as a view which seems to have remained dominant for some centuries thereafter, it may justifiably be spoken of as the basic Chinese mode of thought about painting. Out of an opposition to this basic view there arose in turn, some six centuries later, the secondary concept, which is wen-jen hua theory.

Each of these concepts grew out of the thinking and discussions of a group of scholars and artists. The aim of each group was evidently to establish painting on a new footing, and, more specifically, to raise it to the level of prestige already occupied in their respective periods by the companion arts of poetry and calligraphy. The professional craftsmen of China, creators of the ceramics, sculpture, bronzes, jade carvings and other objects which in the West have been rightly admired as works of art often of superb quality, were generally not thought capable by the Chinese of attaining to the highest planes of human achievement. The emergence of each of the two concepts to be discussed was stimulated by a desire to lift painting from the category of skilled handiwork and establish it as a fitting occupation for the litterateur and scholar. In the first case, there appears to have been no corollary belief that the scholar's painting would necessarily be

presentation of these early views, with conventional citations of antique authority; but, as William Acker remarks in the introduction to his translation of part of Chang's work ([182], p. LI), Chang's own judgements of artistic quality seem to be founded on quite different criteria.

superior to that of the ordinary artist; in the second, this belief was fundamental to the whole system.

The primary concept probably had its origins in the romantic cult of nature which grew up in the south of China during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and which included the painters Tai K'uei (d. 395), Tsung Ping (375-443), and Wang Wei.³ As pointed out by Soper,⁴ the men of this group were the first in China to give expression to a love of natural beauty for its own sake, and the theory of painting they advanced reflects their new orientation. None of them is represented by extant paintings or copies of paintings, but the ideas of Tsung and Wang survive in two short essays. Analyses of these two texts have tended to place undue emphasis on mystical elements in the complex of ideas they propound, and have not taken sufficient notice of the fact that their treatment of artistic expression is (like that in the contemporaneous Chinese discussions of literature) quite sophisticated in relation to correspondingly early Western art theory, containing ideas and attitudes which anticipate much later developments in European thought about art.⁵

³The last not to be confused with the T'ang period poet-painter Wang Wei (699-759). For a short discussion of these men and of the movement to which they belonged, see Alexander Soper, "Early Chinese Landscape Painting" (216), pp. 141-164. For a fuller treatment, see Y. Murakami, "Rikuchō no shizen-kan" (The Conception of Nature in the Six Dynasties Period) (173), pp. 41-52.

⁴Soper, *op. cit.*, pp. 143, 150.

⁵Discussions of Chinese art which dwell on general concepts of cosmology, philosophy, and especially metaphysics and religion, often fail to penetrate beneath these somewhat extraneous matters to ideas more pertinent to art as a more or less independent human activity. The kernels of most meaningful statement in Chinese texts are often overlaid, I believe, with references to these "larger concepts," more with the aim of investing the discourses with classical authority and prestige than of casting any real light on the subject. S. H. Ch'en, in his article "The Beginning of Chinese Literary Criticism" (186), p. 47, speaks of "the generally homogeneous nature of most Chinese cultural expressions," and remarks: "As a result of this homogeneity, Chinese critical ideas often appear undifferentiated from the ethical, political and cosmogonic. And it behooves us in our study to extract these critical ideas out of their larger contexts, without, of course, forgetting those contexts." In the present study, while I introduce a few references to Chinese philosophy, I have tried to avoid straying too far from the discussion of questions pertaining to art and aesthetic.

The Primary Concept.

The Tsung Ping text, Hua shan-shui hsü 畫山水序, "Preface on Painting Landscape," short though it is, presents many problems in understanding and interpretation. It has been translated several times.⁶ I propose here new renderings of some key passages, a proper understanding of which, I believe, provides not only the earliest but also one of the clearest expositions of the primary concept of painting.

Tsung Ping begins by speaking of the ideal man's emotional responses to his surroundings, and of the expressive power of landscape (the actual landscape of nature, that is, not paintings of it; the word shan-shui was probably not used for the latter until some centuries after his time.⁷)

- (1) The sage, harboring the Tao, responds to [external] objects; the wise man, purifying his emotions, savors the appearances [of the things of nature]. As for landscape, its material [forms] exist, but its flavor is incorporeal [or: of the soul].

This super-material "flavor" or "mood" of landscape is felt by the sympathetic beholder, just as the wisdom of the sage is revealed to the understanding disciple, without any verbal communication taking place:

⁶ Sakanishi, The Spirit of the Brush (208), pp. 37-40. Soper, op. cit., "Excursus." Siren, The Chinese on the Art of Painting (212), pp. 14-16, and Chinese Painting (213), I, pp. 36-37. Soper's translation is generally the most accurate, although I have differed from his renderings at a number of points. Both the Tsung Ping and Wang Wei texts are included in Li-tai MHC (73), ch. 6. The former has been under suspicion since Arthur Waley (Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting [224], p. 190, note) rejected it as probably spurious on the strange grounds that it was not included in the early eighteenth century compilation P'ei-wen-chai shu-hua p'u (81). Not only is his reason shaky, but his facts as well: the work is printed in P'ei-wen-chai, exactly where one would expect to find it, in the section devoted to painting theory (XV/4a).

⁷ The hua, "paint," in the hua shan-shui of the title is thus used as the painter Ku K'ai-chih (344-406) used it in his essay Hua Yün-t'ai shan, "Painting the Cloud-terrace Mountain" (also included in ch. 6 of Li-tai MHC), not as in hua-t'u, "to paint a picture." Landscape, in Tsung Ping's treatise, is what is depicted, not the depiction; these opening sentences are thus a succinct statement of the attitude toward nature prevailing in Tsung Ping's time.

- (2) The sage, through his spirit, models himself upon the Tao, and the wise person understands him. Landscape, through its forms, captivates the Tao, and the sympathetic person enjoys it. Is this not virtually the same thing?

Tsung is old and weak, no longer able to roam about in the mountains. However, just as ideas too subtle for normal exposition, and thus apparently unrecoverable, may be grasped intuitively "between the lines" in writings, so may visual impressions from the past (and the feeling inherent in them) be reexperienced in painting:

- (3) All the more is this true of [places where] a person has lingered, [scenes] enamored by the eye: with forms one transcribes their forms, with colors depicts their appearance.

The feeling inherent in natural scenery can be lodged in paintings of that scenery, because of the affinity⁸ between the soul of the artist and that of his subject:

- (4) The [human] spirit is basically without bounds; it can dwell in forms, being moved by what is like [itself]. The organizing principle (li 理) [of these forms] enters into the traces of their appearances [i.e. into the depiction of them]; thus they can be indeed wondrously copied, and indeed exhaustively so.

That is, not only their appearance, but also their elusive "flavor", can be captured. How is the artist to accomplish this? By a twofold discipline: he must himself be responsive to impressions from the outer world, and he must develop skill of a special kind, that which enables him to communicate his responses by pictorial means, and thus to evoke them in others.

- (5) Now, if one who considers the right principle to be responding to his eyes and conforming to his heart perfects his skill in accordance with this [principle], then all eyes will respond and all hearts conform [to his paintings].

⁸ In some later texts, this is spoken of as shen-hui 神會, "spiritual affinity." See Soper, Kuo Jo-hsü's Experiences in Painting (219), n. 180, for uses of the term. It was also used for a spiritual communion between the viewer and the painting.

This definition of the kind of skill an artist requires is essential to the primary concept of art; acquisition of other kinds, not directly based upon individual response to visual stimuli, will be ineffective toward the desired end, which is the evoking of a corresponding response in the percipient. Adherence to this doctrine was to preserve Chinese painting through many centuries both from departing radically from visual reality, and from being bound too closely to it. So long as this concept of art dominated in Chinese painting, the balance implied in it remained a constant ideal; what we consider the "classic balance" between subjective and objective elements may not always have been achieved, but neither did the Chinese ever wander so far from it in either direction as have, from time to time, artists in the West.

The essay of Wang Wei presents even greater obstacles to full understanding. The text exists only in abbreviated form, according to the prefatory note by Chang Yen-yüan, who quotes it, along with the Tsung Ping work, in his ninth century history of painting. Wang Wei's aim seems to have been to set forth a view of painting as a means of revealing and interpreting the phenomena of the world, rather than of merely copying outer appearance. Behind this aim lay that of establishing painting as a suitable occupation for the scholar class, to which he belonged, and which had already incorporated the arts of calligraphy and poetry into the repertory of accomplishments proper to its members. He begins with a statement of his basic belief:

- (6) I consider that painting is not practiced and accomplished merely as a craft; it should be regarded as of the same order with the images of the Changes.

⁹ I.e. the hexagrams of the Book of Changes (I ching 易經), of which it is said in an appendix to that book, "The Sages used them in surveying all the complex phenomena under the sky." (Fung Yu-lan, A History of Chinese Philosophy [193], I, 390.) For the relationship between this concept of images and the early Chinese attitude toward painting, see Michael Sullivan, "Pictorial Art . . . in Ancient China" (221), p. 2. The movement to which Wang Wei and the others belonged had its philosophical roots in what Fung terms the school of Neo-Taoism, in which the Changes was held in great esteem.

I have omitted the puzzling opening of this passage, which might be rendered: "In a (or my?) diatribe on the calligraphy of Yen Kuang-lu [a famous calligrapher, contemporary with Wang Wei], it is said:"

Wang Wei's contemporaries were evidently disposed to belittle the achievements of painting:

- (7) Those who are skilled in the chuan and li scripts exalt their own achievements as calligraphers. Would that they might consider beautiful pictures on the same grounds, and investigate the points of similarity [between the two arts]! But those who speak of painting are limited to seeking for the appearances and aspects [of material things].

However, in Wang's as in Tsung Ping's view, copying of visible form does not exhaust reality, for natural objects have their invisible souls, which are the source of their expression.

- (8) Forms are permeated by soul; what they move and change is the mind [of one who sees them]. There is [, however,] nothing in the soul which is visible; therefore, whatever it is committed to will not move [anyone].

One cannot paint souls, but must rather depict forms in such a way as to somehow reveal these souls.¹⁰ When that is accomplished, the painting will serve as an effective substitute for natural scenery in evoking the romantic response of a true lover of the wilderness.

- (9) I spread out the picture, holding it down on a table, noting the likenesses and differences of mountains and seas, green forests, the wide-ranging wind, foaming water and gushing torrents, [to those I have seen]. Ah! How could all this be accomplished by movement of fingers and hand alone? The spirit must also be employed in bringing it forth. Such is the emotion of [i.e. evoked by] a painting.

The attitude toward painting expressed here clearly derives from the emphasis placed upon direct emotional response to nature in the thought of Tai K'uei and his school. The feeling of the scene is absorbed by the artist, who then imparts this feeling to

¹⁰ Chu Ching-hsüan, writing in the ninth century, assumes the same distinction between material objects and their non-material "souls" when he speaks of the painter's problem of "conveying the spiritual while fixing the material" 移神定質 (Preface to T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu, Soper (220) p. 8.) trans.

poem or painting. Perhaps the growth of this idea is connected also with the emergence of a new quality of emotional appeal in poetry and painting, and represents an attempt to account for that quality in theory. The earliest critic of Tai K'uei as a painter, Hsieh Ho, speaks of his works as "of uninterrupted feeling and harmony, surpassingly skilful in their air and mood."¹¹

The primary concept of painting may be stated as follows: the artist is moved by some object or scene of his physical environment, and embodies his response in a depiction of that object or scene in such a way that the one who sees his picture is similarly moved. By this means he may (as Tsung Ping and Wang Wei intend that he should) impart some intuitive understanding of natural phenomena; or he may express emotions he feels toward them. It might be a sensual pleasure in the seductive beauties of nature, a devout awe toward the weathered permanence of craggy mountains, or a Taoist sense of a vast order in perpetual change, which the artist feels and lodges in his work; but in any case, it is the response evoked in him by the object of his representation which supplies the expressive content of his picture. The components of the act of artistic creation are thus: (a) visual stimuli reaching the artist from the world around him; (b) some special quality of vision by which he perceives these; and (c) the technique through which he manages to infuse the second of these components into his portrayal of the first.¹²

¹¹ Ku hua-p'in lu (66), 3b. Ca. 500. Works of others of the school are described in similar terms.

¹² A qualification might be made which does not, however, substantially affect the argument. This is that the Chinese artist ordinarily did not work directly from nature, being rather a "studio painter"; and that the ways in which he deviated from objective realism were somewhat determined by traditional techniques inherited from his predecessors. This deviation, however, I mean to be included in what I call his special quality of vision and technique. How much a given style (e.g. the formalized blue-and-green landscape style of the T'ang Dynasty) owes to one or the other of these factors is a complex question, and perhaps one which only the artists themselves could have answered. Soper ("Early Chinese Landscape Painting" [216], p. 163) contributes an

This concept of the function and method of painting remained uncontested for six centuries. We find it still in the eleventh century, virtually unchanged, in the treatise on landscape painting by Kuo Hsi. Kuo begins by stating what he believes to be the source of value in landscape painting. He notes that the virtuous man's sense of duty toward parents and country may prevent him from retiring into the mountains and renouncing the world of human affairs. He goes on:

- (10) The memory of forests and streams, of the companionship of clouds and mists, may yet come to him in his dreams, but they are cut off from his eyes. Now, a master hand can reveal them in all their richness, and one can, without stepping out of his house, while still seated on his mat, enjoy the streams and valleys. It is this [capacity of painting] which is valued by the world, this which is the fundamental idea of landscape painting.

We may remark the similarity of this passage to the ending of the Wang Wei essay. At a later point in his treatise, Kuo Hsi describes, as suitable subjects for painting, the appearances of mountains in different seasons, and their effects on the emotions of those who see them. He continues:

- (11) Contemplation of such pictures evokes in men the corresponding ideas. It is as if one were really among the mountains. Herein lies the meaning which paintings have beyond the scenery they depict.

He goes on to develop the theme of the viewer seeming actually to be in the spot represented, and says finally:

- (12) Contemplation of such pictures arouses corresponding feelings in the heart; it is as if one really came to these places. Herein lies the marvelous quality which paintings have beyond their meaning.

How well the master's paintings achieved his stated aim is attested by lines from a poem by Huang T'ing-chien, a century later:

excellent short discussion of this problem for the early periods. Victoria Contag ("The Unique Characteristics of Chinese Landscape Pictures" [190]), contradicting a common notion, rightly doubts that the Chinese painter's use of type-forms, standardized brush-strokes, etc. ever (at least in the cases of major artists) really interfered with his expressive aims.

- (13) In the Jade Hall I lie gazing at a Kuo Hsi painting;
Exhilaration arises, and I am already in the green
forest.¹³

Hsüan-ho hua-p'u, the early twelfth century catalog of the
Emperor Hui-tsung, attributes the same power to the landscapes of
Kuan T'ung:

- (14) Look well at his picture and you will find yourself
suddenly transported to the scenes which it portrays . . .
You who but a moment ago were a common courtier or a
grubber in the dusty markets of the world are suddenly
transformed.

The foregoing should make clear the manner of thought about
painting which I call the primary concept. One or another version
of this concept of artistic expression has, until fairly recent
times, been so widely accepted in the West that some may object
to calling it "primary", preferring to see it as universal to
representational art. They would hold that the value of a
religious painting lies in the artist's ability to infuse into
his depiction of a religious subject the devout feelings proper to
that subject, that of Greek sculpture in the successful embodiment
of an idealized view of the human form, and so on. This is, however,
only one possible explanation of expressiveness in art, and not
entirely unassailable on logical grounds.¹⁴ Many of the greatest
artists of Sung and later times no longer accepted this as their

¹³ A footnote added to a similar poem by Su Tung-p'o, also on
a Kuo Hsi landscape (q. 30) identifies the Jade Hall (Yü t'ang 玉堂)
as a hall in the Han-lin Academy.

¹⁴ Various aspects of it are treated by Susanne Langer in her
book Feeling and Form (1933) and judged untenable. P. 77: "In either
case, [the artist] suppresses what is unessential and heightens what
is essential to the subject, to reveal its nature or his own feeling
toward it. But any such analysis leaves us with a fundamental confu-
sion of nature and art, and binds artistic truth, ultimately, to the
same post as propositional truth—that is, to the pictured thing."
The primary concept, as held by the Chinese, contradicts two of her
fundamental beliefs, that " . . . 'living' form is the symbolism
that conveys the idea of vital reality; and the emotive import
belongs to the form itself, not to anything it represents or suggests,"
and that the function of art is "not stimulation of feeling, but
expression of it." (pp. 28, 82.) For a discussion of the paradoxical
idea that feelings can somehow inhere in insensate objects, as Tsung
Ping and Wang Wei clearly suggest, see pp. 22 ff., 58-59.

aim; to suppose them to have done so, as many Occidental writers have done, is to miss totally the point of much of later Chinese painting (as some of these same writers seem also to have done.)

The Emergence of the Secondary Concept.

The appearance of an alternate view of painting was made possible by the gradual acceptance, among a group of writers and art theorists, of two basic notions, interrelated (each, in fact, somewhat dependent on the other) but distinguishable for the purpose of discussion:

1. The quality of expression in a picture is principally determined by the personal qualities of the man who creates it, and the circumstances under which he creates it.
2. The expressive content of a picture may be partially or wholly independent of its representational content.

Implications of the first idea may be detected throughout the Chinese literature on painting, in the often seemingly excessive interest shown by most writers in the lives, personalities and moral character of the artists they discuss. Chang Yen-yüan, in the ninth century, notes (in a context derogatory of the painters of his own time) that great painters of the past had all been noble and learned men (cf. q. 15), but fails to draw any particular conclusion from his observation. The conclusion (as stated above) was drawn, and the idea established as a basic tenet of painting theory, in the late eleventh century, when it is clearly stated by Kuo Jo-hsü and others.

The second idea seems to have gained currency around the same time, and underlies much of the writing of the wen-jen hua theorists. It is familiar enough to us, both from modern art criticism and from recent developments in painting; for of course non-representational art can have no justification without it. But with us it is (as an idea) comparatively recent, belonging chiefly to the past century. In China it is much older. By the middle of the Sung Dynasty, men of broad classical learning and deep sensitivity were turning to art in order to convey their personal qualities and

transitory feelings in paintings of bamboo branches, orchid plants and landscapes, relying only incidentally on whatever fixed symbolic connotation the subject might carry with it.

The incorporation of the two ideas stated above, with others which will be introduced and discussed in the following sections, into the foundations of what came to be known as wen-jen hua (literati painting) was the achievement of a group of amateurs of a very high order--writers, philosophers, artists-- which had for its central figure one of the giants of Sung scholarship and literature, Su Tung-p'o, and was made up chiefly of his friends and disciples. These men were the first true "literati artists." While there had been no lack in earlier times of painters who were also scholars (Tsung Ping and the others belonged to that class), it was these eleventh century men who founded the school proper, developing a special aesthetic to explain why painting by the scholar-amateur differed, and to dictate how it should differ, from that executed by the non-scholar, the professional painter. They elaborated this aesthetic in their writings and exemplified it in paintings.

The interaction between theory and practice was, in fact, essential to the development of wen-jen hua, which to a large degree represents an application of the ideas and standards of criticism to the creation of art. In critical texts which antedate the Su Tung-p'o group, there sometimes occur passages anticipating their ideas; in texts by artists, or dealing more with creation than with appreciation and evaluation, such correspondences are rarer. The criteria of excellence which the wen-jen hua theorists inherited in part from earlier writers and substantiated by their own evaluations of earlier painting gave rise to artistic styles consciously aimed at satisfying those criteria.

On the other hand, the general acceptance of painting into the group of "polite arts" proper to the ideal scholar, and the growing practice of it by versatile, cultivated amateurs, required certain innovations in both theory and style. The scholar's acute literary and aesthetic sensibilities, his wide acquaintance with poetry and prose literature, with calligraphy and paintings collected by himself and his friends, created in him an art-consciousness through

or works; too often, such condemnation has been premature. The disparagers of literati painting among Western writers on Chinese art must, to command our serious attention, demonstrate considerably greater acquaintance with the works they reject than have any thus far.

Very little survives, except in copies and imitations, of the paintings of the late Northern Sung scholar-artists; their writings, however, are still available to us, and shall be used as the chief sources for the study of wen-jen hua theory which follows. For reasons which are not entirely clear, but may be connected with the advocacy of opposing ideas and styles by the Emperor Hui-tsung and his painting academy, these men had no significant immediate following. It remained for the literati artists of the Yüan Dynasty, two centuries later, to revive and elaborate the ideals of their Sung predecessors, and to develop new styles of painting consistent with those ideals. How they did so, and what was contributed toward this end by each of several individuals, will be a dominant theme in my treatment of the Four Great Masters.

II. THE THEORY OF LITERATI PAINTING

Foreword.

The traditional Chinese scholar was not partial to the sort of treatise which expounds one aspect of a subject after another in orderly succession; most often he chose the method of rambling discourse, piecemeal revelation of his ideas in random jottings and miniature essays, often scattering these through a miscellany devoted to as many matters as had captured his interest during the period of its composition. The wen-jen hua theorists and artists of the eleventh century published no manifesto to proclaim their new beliefs. They would probably not be especially grateful to a barbarian latecomer who tries to remedy their omission, and would look with disfavor upon any attempt at systematic presentation. I offer them my apologies for making such an attempt, and also for whatever violence I may unintentionally have done their ideas, through unavoidable stress on modern preoccupations or through misunderstanding. I have organized in the interest of clarity, not meaning to imply that the Chinese writers themselves necessarily held their theories in just these relationships. Any designation of an idea as a corollary or outgrowth of another, especially if no historical precedence can be shown for that other, is likely to be limited in validity; most often, the two should properly be offered only as related tenets belonging to a single organic system of thought.

I have drawn upon literary sources of various periods: earlier writings for contrasting theories or for possible origins of the ideas; later writings (especially of the Yüan period) for illustrations of how they were developed by later men, or to fill gaps left by the Sung texts. I do not mean to suggest by this method that the doctrines of the literati school underwent no change throughout its history; but studies of the historical development

must be left for the future, the first task being to present the basic tenets of wen-jen hua as they were accepted by most of the artists belonging to that tradition. In the interest of understanding the literati painters and their works, it seems worthwhile to try to understand what were their concepts of art and aims in art; and, leaving aside (as a subject only for unprofitable speculation) any disparity between theory and practice, we may suppose these to have approximated the concepts and aims which they themselves, and their critics, express in their writings.

Since the quotations are drawn from such a wide range of writers and periods, some inconsistencies between them are inevitable. Where such inconsistencies seem important, I have tried to point them out. Also, some of the ideas incorporated into this system are not by any means peculiar to it. Nevertheless, wen-jen hua theory represents a generally consistent and distinct body of thought; there is wide agreement on fundamental issues, and some of the beliefs, at least, find no support among writers of earlier periods, or by writers outside the tradition in later periods. For certain matters on which other points of view oppose the wen-jen contention, I have included quotations to illustrate these. I have also introduced at what seemed to me suitable places selections from critical writings on poetry and calligraphy, from philosophical texts, and from the Occidental literature of aesthetics.

The Artist and His Work.

I. The personal qualities of the artist, and the circumstances of the particular moment in his life at which he creates the work of art, are not only relevant to the work itself; they are responsible for a major part of its expression and value.

A. Men of noble character and profound learning, if equipped with adequate technical ability—a factor, however, of secondary importance—will produce paintings which the discerning will recognize as superior to the productions of men lacking these attributes.

Chang Yen-yüan, mid-ninth century author of Li-tai ming-hua chi, makes the basic observation without trying to explain it:

- (15) From ancient times, those who have excelled in painting have all been members of the gentry or nobility, untrammelled scholars and eminent men, who awakened the wonder of their own time and left behind them a fragrance that shall last a thousand years. This is not a thing that humble rustics from village lanes could ever do.

Another critic, Chu Ching-hsüan, writing at about the same time the preface to his records and evaluations of T'ang Dynasty painters, found the idea sufficiently current that he felt obliged to state clearly that he had chosen not to follow it in his classification:

- (16) The others . . . have been classified directly according to their abilities as painters, without regard for official rank or mental capacity; though some facts [about their lives] have been briefly touched on during the classifying process. Those who come to look [at my work] in the future, when they critically appraise the principle I have followed, will grant that it is not a false one.

Kuo Jo-hsü, in the late eleventh century, provides the classic statement of the tenet:

- (17) I have . . . observed that the majority of the rare works of the past have been done by high officials, talented worthies, superior scholars or [recluses living in] cliffs and caves; [by persons, that is,] who have "followed the dictates of loving-kindness and have sought delight in the arts"; . . . Their elevated and refined feelings have all been lodged in their paintings. Since their personal quality was already lofty, their "spirit consonance" could not but be lofty.

To some extent, the scholar's greater aptitude for painting is attributable to his long training in the use of the brush, through practice of calligraphy. The Yüan Dynasty litterateur Yang Wei-chien writes:

- (18) Gentlemen-scholars who are good painters are always good calligraphers as well. Their manner of painting has in it elements of their calligraphic method. Since this is so, how could one expect common and specious people ever to achieve it?

But this calligraphy-painting affinity is, as we shall see,

more than a matter of manual dexterity.¹⁶ The real reasons lie deeper, in the fact that both arts reflect the personality of the artist, permitting statements of feeling through similar graphic means. Yang Wei-chen states, a bit later in the same passage:

- (19) Thus the quality of the painting, its excellence or worthlessness, is related to the personal quality, the loftiness or baseness, of the artist.

The wen-jen hua explanation of how personal qualities are reflected in painting will become apparent as we consider their concept of pictorial expression.

The danger of assuming that noble men must automatically be good painters did not go unrecognized; ch'i-yün, "spirit consonance," does not alone produce a good painting. The imperial catalog of the Emperor Hui-tsung, Hsüan-ho hua-p'u (dated 1120), says:

- (20) From the T'ang into the Sung Dynasty, those who have attained fame as landscapists have not always been painters [by profession]; many were of the gentry class, or gentlemen-scholars. But among those who captured ch'i-yün were some who were deficient in brushwork; and others who attained proper brushwork were weak in composition.

Su Tung-p'o himself recognized this important qualification to the theory, and explained it as follows:

- (21) But there is Tao¹⁷ and there is art [i.e. cultivated ability]; if one has Tao but not art, then even though things take form in his mind, they won't take form in his hand."

B. Since these personal qualities cannot be passed on from master to pupil in the ordinary way, as can technical skills and "secrets" of painting, the artistic values which derive from them must be considered untransmittable, and, to a great degree, innate in the artist.

Kuo Jo-hsü, in his chapter "On the Impossibility of Teaching 'Spirit Consonance'":

¹⁶ Kuo Hsi reduces it to that: "It is generally said that he who is good in calligraphy is mostly also good in painting, because in both arts the movement in the wrist (and the forearm) in using the brush must be unobstructed." (Sirén, Chinese Painting [213], I, 228.)

¹⁷ Here, evidently roughly equivalent to "spirit consonance" as a personal quality; cf. the following quotation.

- (22) "Spirit consonance," however, necessarily involves an innate knowledge; under no circumstances can it be secured through cleverness or close application, nor will time aid its attainment.

It is important to note that Kuo, in this and the earlier quotation (q. 17), speaks of the artist's "spirit consonance" and not that of his subject or picture. The Japanese scholars Tanaka Toyozô and Aoki Masaru¹⁸ both stress the distinction between the concept of ch'i-yün in T'ang and earlier times, when it was an attribute of the thing depicted which must somehow be caught in the picture, and in Sung and later, when it was rather a quality of the artist which was reflected in the painting.

One of Su Tung-p'o's friends, Chao Pu-chih, writes of calligraphy:

- (23) One must study calligraphy according to method; but the real wonder of it lies in the writer himself. While method can be transmitted from one person to another, this wonderful quality is attained independently, in one's own heart.

The significant point in this statement is that method or technique was not wholly disregarded, but only considered of secondary importance in determining artistic quality. This notion was not by any means new to criticism; a mid-eight century writer, Chang Huai-kuan, in his "Discourse on Calligraphy," had described his basis for judgement of individual masters as follows:

- (24) Now, although I record their order of quality, how could I praise only their talent and ability? Always I consider their innate nature foremost, and their [abilities acquired through] practice and study as secondary."

The idea of artistic ability (of unspecified nature; skill? insight?) being innate in the artist is even older. The fifth century Wang Wei wrote in a letter to a friend:

- (25) I know how to paint by instinct, as the crying cranes have the faculty for distinguishing [things] at night . . .

The wen-jen hua theorists developed this idea with their own bias. The extreme view is stated by Su Tung-p'o, in a quatrain which

¹⁸Tanaka Toyozô, Tôyô bijutsu dansô (179), p. 36 ff. Aoki Masaru, Chûka bunjinga dan (167), p. 19 ff.

seems to contradict several of his other statements (e.g. q. 21):

- (26) Why should the noble man study painting?
Use of the brush is innate in him,
Just as a man who is fond of traveling
Knows, in detail, how to handle a boat.

Han Cho, whose treatise on landscape painting (dated 1121) reflects the orthodox viewpoint of the Emperor Hui-tsung's court academy, devotes much of his last chapter to a denunciation of the idea that painting is a matter of natural ability. He distinguishes between what is innate in man, his nature, and what is acquired through study. He continues:

- (27) There has never yet been anyone in whom professional training has failed to lead to refinement of the self. Moreover, the ancients devoted themselves to study, and thereby developed their nature. People today rely on their innate nature and mock at study; this is why they become ever more remote from the ancients, while their craftsmanship becomes ever less refined . . .
Now, those who have not studied are called "without standards";¹⁹ but to be without standards is to be without the standard methods of the ancients. How could one ignore these and by himself transcend all the famous worthies of antiquity and the present? The so-called "gentlemen of little study" are mostly men of undisciplined nature who are deceiving themselves.

How far we agree with Han Cho depends on how we evaluate the achievements of the literati school. The wen-jen artists themselves felt that the formal training received by the person intending to

¹⁹ In speaking of painters "without standards" (wu-ko 無格), Han is perhaps referring to those who were classified in the i-ko 逸格, the Sung Dynasty equivalent of the i-p'in 逸品 or "untrammelled class." I might also be rendered as "unfettered [by rules]." Painters in this category were classified separately because they were not considered to be judgeable according to the standards applied to the other three classes, the "able," "excellent" and "divine." As pointed out by S. Shimada in his article "Ippin gafu ni tsuite" (Concerning the I-p'in Style of Painting) [175], the term was first used by Li Ssu-chen in the late seventh century; Chu Ching-hsüan later employed it to classify three painters, including the "ink-spatterer" Wang Mo. The substitution of ko for p'in was made by Huang Hsiu-fu in the early Sung period. Shimada establishes the importance of this early development of the anti-traditional i-p'in style to non-realistic tendencies in Sung painting, in both the Ch'an school and wen-jen hua.

make painting his profession imparted to his works an "air of habitualness" (hsi-ch'i 習氣, "mannerism" in the derogatory sense of that word), and that it made these works "merely skilful."

Some four centuries before Han Cho, Li Ssu-chen had similarly objected to the neglect of proper study in calligraphy of his time:

- (28) Those who studied it in ancient times all had teacher and method. Those who study it today give rein to their emotions. There is no spontaneous "untrammelled spirit"; theirs is only the solitary course of "following the dictates of one's own mind." Occasionally there is one who is capable, and who at times will see a little; then there are others quite unenlightened, who live out their lives as if with their eyes closed . . .

The belittling of acquired technique by the wen-jen theorists was surely a doctrine which invited abuse; but the products of such abuse are fortunately ephemeral. The no-doubt multitudinous minor dabblers who attempted to pass off their scrawls as major artistic creations are long forgotten, while those whose works have been preserved and admired cannot lightly be charged with technical incompetence. The question of the importance of technique will be considered later.

C. It is just this capacity of paintings to convey the admirable qualities of particular persons and feelings experienced by those persons, as some other arts cannot to the same degree, which establishes painting, with calligraphy and poetry, as foremost among the arts.

The Ming Dynasty painter Shen Chou, writing on a copy by Wu Chen of a Su Tung-p'o bamboo painting:

- (29) Men of today and those of the past cannot see each other; But, through surviving works [of former painters], it is as if they had never died.

The collector Chang Ch'ou (early seventeenth century) writes in the preface to his compilation for connoisseurs:

- (30) Among relics from former times, it is scrolls of calligraphy and painting which must be accorded the pre-eminent position; lutes, inkstones, jade carvings, ceramics and the like cannot be considered together with them. Why is this? Because it is in writings and paintings that famous men of the past have lodged the delineations of their minds; they are not, as are lutes, inkstones, bronzes, jades,

ceramics etc., mere products of the good craftsmanship of skilled artisans.

The process of "lodging" will be taken up in some detail in the following section. The term "delineations of the mind" is borrowed from the Han Dynasty scholar Yang Hsiung, who wrote:

- (31) Speech is the voice of the mind; writing is the delineation of the mind. When this voice and delineation take form, the princely man and the ignoble man are revealed.

Kuo Jo-hsü quotes this statement in his discussion of "heart-prints," of which he says:

- (32) These have their source in the heart (mind); one composes in his imagination the traces of forms. These traces being in accord with the heart, they are called its "prints" . . . Thus it is in calligraphy and painting; [these "prints"] arise in feeling and thought, and are transferred to silk and paper.

Only poetry and calligraphy share this capacity for revealing the mind of their maker.²⁰ Su Tung-p'o speaks of these kindred arts in the same terms in which he speaks of painting:

- (33) Reading the poem one can, in imagination, see the poet.
(34) When I look at his calligraphy, there is that in it by which I can grasp him as a man. Thus the gentleman and small man are both revealed in their writings.
(35) When the common people of our time write, even though their characters may be skilful, there is ultimately in their spirit and feeling an air of smug self-satisfaction, of meretriciousness. They don't know that a person's [real] feelings reveal themselves according to his aims.

The "common man" writes, that is, with the aim of impressing others with his skill; his writing reflects this aim, and his true nature is revealed. The importance of proper motivation in art will

²⁰ A possible exception is music. Confucius was said in an apocryphal story (to which I have lost the source reference) to have ascertained, by continued listening to a piece of music, that the composer was "dark-complexioned, tall, strong, calm, and with such a mind that he was capable of having ruled the four quarters of the earth." This, however, has in it more than a touch of the supernatural, and is a quite different matter from "seeing the man in the painting," where it is his nature and character, never his physical features, which are sensed. I am not familiar with Chinese theoretical writing on music, and so cannot say whether in later times it parallels in this respect the theory of the other arts.

be considered in section IV-B, below.

We should not bridle too quickly at such terms as "princely man" and "ignoble man"; intellectual snobbery is certainly implicit in the theory, but not so much of economic or social. The chün-tzu 君子, the "princely man" whose potential superiority as poet, calligrapher and painter is assumed in all the above, was not by necessity either wealthy, or of noble family or high rank. Wu Chen was none of these, nor was Huang Kung-wang, nor many others among the most highly-esteemed literati painters. The requirements for eligibility to the status of "gentleman" were nobility of character rather than of birth; education, profound acquaintance in the broadest way with the great stream of Chinese culture, integration of one's self into that stream and the often-resulting high level of aesthetic sensibility. In the Chinese social and political system, family wealth and influence were likely to lead to a thorough education, and this to official rank; hence the frequent references to these essentially irrelevant factors.

By drawing a false corollary to the idea that "the picture reflects the man," it was of course possible to evaluate pictures by what one knew about the painters. Such a simple way to bypass the stony road of genuine connoisseurship must have appealed to less sensitive men, particularly those who collected for reasons of prestige. A twelfth century writer, Fei Kun, seems already to have fallen into this error:

- (36) The ignorant don't ask who [painted the picture]; on seeing a painting in which the brushwork is somewhat superior, they thereupon treasure it as a prized possession. But if it is not that the man is a unique individual, if [the picture] is something of which the artisan-painter is capable, how can it be worthy of being prized? Take for example the great ministers of the Ch'ung-ning era (1102-1107), who were famous [in their time] for their calligraphy; now, people often spit on their works.²¹ On the other hand,

²¹ Fei Kun here refers to men such as Ts'ai Ching 蔡京, who was blamed by later ages for the disastrous events of the last years of the Northern Sung period. Ts'ai was really an accomplished calligrapher; a probably genuine example of his writing exists in the Osaka Municipal Museum, attached to a landscape scroll by Hu Shun-ch'en. See Sōraikan (258), II/16.

an Old Tree, Bamboo and Stone [picture] by Su Tung-p'o is fought for at a price of ten thousand gold pieces. It is according to regard for or disapproval of the man that they are valued or despised. People who buy calligraphy and painting should make their selection according to my words.

Even earlier, Chao Yüeh-chih, brother of Chao Pu-chih, had noticed in the appreciation of calligraphy the same deplorable tendency:

- (37) The ancients attained fame through their calligraphy, whereas people today bring fame to their calligraphy by being famous themselves.

The charge of judging pictures "according to the man" is often brought against the Chinese by Western writers, especially those who fail to see merit in certain artists or schools and assume that the blindness must be on the side of the Chinese. But there is no evidence that the practice was ever very prevalent among true connoisseurs; the relationship they drew between painter and painting was to account for value in art, not to determine it. The excellences of the painting should stimulate one to a consideration of the kind of man who could have created it. Such recognition of the qualities of the painter, through those of the painting, was held to be an integral factor in one's experiencing of a picture; the experience thus involved more a judgement of the artist through his work than the reverse, the judgement of the work through one's extraneous knowledge of the artist. While we in the West hold no view strictly identical to that of the wen-jen hua writers,²² we

²²The closest Occidental parallel I know is in the writing of Jonathan Richardson, quoted from his "Essay on the Theory of Painting" (1715) and discussed by F. B. Blanshard in Retreat From Likeness in the Theory of Painting (185), p. 41: "Richardson wanted to gain recognition for painting as a liberal art of equal dignity with poetry and for the painter as more than the mere craftsman he was sometimes taken to be—a gentleman of cultivated and distinguished mind . . . " Richardson himself wrote these thoroughly wen-jen lines: "Above all, [the Painter] must have in himself 'Grace' and 'Greatness' in order to put those Properties into [his] Works: For . . . Painters paint themselves." And: "The way to be an Excellent Painter is to be an Excellent Man."

The idea that the qualities of the work depend upon those of the man, however, is really inseparable from the concept of art as personal expression; and in this sense, the wen-jen hua theory is

must acknowledge that a totally independent, unconditioned response to an artistic work and appraisal of its quality is as unlikely an occurrence here as there; we must doubt the sincerity of anyone who insists that it means nothing to him whether Rubens or a studio apprentice, Vermeer or Van Meegeren, executed it, and that it is, after all, only the picture which matters.

The Expressiveness of Art.

II. The literati artist gives expression to his painting by lodging in it his feelings of the moment at which he paints. The nature of these feelings, and through them the nature of the man who experienced them, are revealed by the painting to any sensitive percipient of it.

Wu Chen:

- (38) Pictures are the overflow of writing;
Transient pleasure, lodged with brush and paper,
Is handed down through months and years, in remnants
And fragments worthy to be prized and fought for.²³

The above quatrain may be taken as the epitome of the literati painters' concept of artistic expression, and so forms an ideal introduction to this section. Especially meaningful is the second line, containing the word chi 寄, "to lodge," which belongs to the

basically in accord with modern attitudes toward art. Blanshard (op. cit., p. 72), discussing the rise of this concept in Europe in the nineteenth century, says: "Artists are beginning to recognize that their function is neither to go back to the copy theory nor to seek for Ideal Beauty, but to make their work expressive . . . The artist's own attitudes, his own personality, are all important, since it is himself primarily that he expresses." He quotes from another theorist, Bürger: "In the works that interest us, the authors substitute themselves in some way for nature."

²³ Hsü 緒 is here an abbreviation for hsü-yü 緒餘, "surplus." For the same idea of painting as "overflow," cf. q. 82, 83. For the translation of so-shih 所適 as "transient pleasure," cf. the opening lines of a poem by Wen T'ung, the bamboo painter who was Tung-p'o's close friend: "I had much leisure time, and nothing with which to entertain myself; therefore, I came to call on the recluse." 多暇無所適, 故來尋隱君 VIII/8b). (Tan-yüan chi [152]) More literally, the phrase might be rendered as "That which pleases one" or "That to which one's interests turn," especially at a given moment.

basic vocabulary of wen-jen hua theory. It occurs as the verb in a number of compound terms, the most frequent of which, in the inscriptions of Wu Chen and in wen-jen writings generally, is chi hsing 寄興. This I translate as "lodging exhilaration." The importance of the term requires us to consider the two words which compose it separately and in some detail.

A. The process of lodging: chi 寄 and related words.

The common meanings of chi are: "to lodge at"; "to send," in the sense of "to deposit something with someone for delivery to another"; "to deliver over to"; "to consign." It was probably employed most frequently in the second sense by the literati, who often preface their poems or inscribe their paintings with dedicatory notes of the pattern: "Written [or painted] to be sent (chi) to Mr. So-and-so." It was also the verb normally used in speaking of sending a letter. Its usage in art theory probably partakes somewhat of these senses.²⁴

Practically synonymous and interchangeable with chi in the texts which concern us is the verb yü 寓, likewise rendered by me as "to lodge"—a word which, since it can be used in both transitive and intransitive positions, as can the Chinese words, seems the best English equivalent. Still another verb of closely related

²⁴Victoria Contag thus translates a line from the Shih-t'ao treatise (cf. q. 51) as "Schon zu alter Zeit sandten die Menschen ihre Stimmung in Pinsel und Tusche . . ." (Die Beiden Steine [189], p. 70.) I would not carry the parallel between sending (as of letters) and conveying (of feeling) so far as this, especially in view of other uses of chi cited below, in which such an interpretation would be awkward.

For a typical use of the virtually synonymous yü 寓 in the sense of "deposit, consign," see Su Tung-p'o (TPWC [161], 59/3b): "Now, when you deposit a thing with someone, and come the next day to pick it up, sometimes you get it and sometimes you don't." The phrase yü wu yü jen 寓物於人, "deposit a thing with someone," is syntactically parallel to such a phrase as chi hsing yü pi-mo 寄興於筆墨, "lodge one's exhilaration in brush and ink" (cf. q. 39); should one understand, then, that the feeling thus lodged is to be "picked up," i.e. by the viewer? It is wisest, however, not to force too far these parallels with extra-artistic usage of the words.

meaning is t'o 托 or 託, usually translatable as "to commit" or "to consign." Each of the three is offered by Chinese dictionaries as definition of some sense of the other two.

Other compound terms in which the word chi occurs, similar in form to chi hsing, are chi ch'ing 寄情, "lodging feelings," and chi huai 寄懷, "lodging emotions or affections." Both are used in poetry, and especially as poem titles, at least as early as the T'ang Dynasty. Chou Mi, the late thirteenth century connoisseur, tells of composing poems on the subject of fishing:

- (39) I enjoy the stillness [of fishing]. Therefore I set forth some general [feelings on the subject] in order to lodge my affection in it [i.e. the poem].

Still another such compound is chi i 寄意, "lodging one's conception." It seems to be roughly equivalent in meaning to hsieh i 寫意, "drawing [literally transcribing] one's conception," a term which occurs in discussions of painting in opposition to the more realistic manner, hsieh sheng 寫生, "drawing [from] life." T'ang Hou, mid-fourteenth century critic, writes:

- (40) The excellence of painting and calligraphy is basically nothing other than [the product of] gentleman-scholars' suiting their feelings of exhilaration by lodging their conceptions [through these arts].

More in accord with the primary concept of painting is the use of chi in speaking of lodging scenes or objects in painting. The eleventh century priest Tsu-k'o writes of a landscape by Wen T'ung:

- (41) So we know that the shores of the Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers, and of Lake Tung-t'ing, Were alike swallowed into his breast, and lodged [i.e. externalized again] by the power of his brush.

Chang Chi, a T'ang poet, writes a poem on "Lodging in a Painting What I Saw upon Climbing a Tower in Hang-chou":

- (42) I capture in a painting the scenes I saw from a tower in the River City;
Thus I convey them back today to Ch'ang-an."

Also more relevant to the primary attitude is the idea of lodging the expression or mood of the scene. Su Tung-p'o writes of a Kuo Hsi landscape:

- (43) Calm and quiet, the sparse grove lodges the [mood of the] autumn evening.

And on a painting of birds and flowers:

- (44) As someone says, a single dot of red [on the tip of a twig] interprets and lodges an endless Spring.²⁵

In these passages, chi has the force of embody or eternalize. The transient moods of the autumn night and of springtime are permanently embodied, rendered transmittable, in pictures. Equally common in this usage, with the scene depicted or its mood being lodged, is the word yü 寓. Tung Yu, early twelfth century, writes the following lines in colophons to paintings:

- (45) Li Hsien-hsi [Ch'eng], in doing this picture of the landscape of Ying-ch'iu, lodging the image of it, spreading forth its scenery, has captured the complete full-bodiedness of it.
- (46) It is also said that [the Drunken Priest picture] shows what Ku Chang-k'ang [K'ai-chih] once saw in a temple and lodged in a picture in order to provoke laughter [in the viewer].

But all this pertains more to the rival school of thought; some pages later Tung says, as a loyal literatus,

- (47) To lodge objects, transcribe forms--these are not the profound attainment of the workings of Heaven!

What is to be committed to the painting is properly the feeling of the artist, particularly the feeling of an intensified moment, hsing 興.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, leading theorist in the late Ming Dynasty, makes the claim that painters belonging to what he considered the superior category (his "Southern School") often lived to advanced ages, while the others died young. He advances as explanation of this:

- (48) Although Ch'iu [Ying] was not of the same caliber as Chao [Meng-fu], both belonged to the "habitual" school, and didn't consider painting as a [means of] lodging, or as pleasure. The practice of lodging pleasure in painting begins with Huang Kung-wang; it was he who opened this gate.

The banishment of Chao Meng-fu to the enemy camp seems largely unwarranted; and the reference to Huang Kung-wang may be taken as one of Tung's offhand ponderous pronouncements. He might as well

²⁵ The reference is to a T'ang poem; see PWC (81), XV/27b.

have said (and probably did on another occasion) that the practice began with Wen T'ung, or Su Tung-p'o, or some other late Northern Sung artist. It seems to have arisen, at least as a conscious aim in painting, around that time, and was an integral part of the wen-jen hua system of thought. Kuo Jo-hsü speaks of the scholar-painters' "elevated and refined feelings" being "lodged in their paintings," (cf. Fig. 17), and Teng Ch'un, in the section of his Hua chi (1167) devoted to the painter Fan Cheng-fu, writes:

- (49) I own many of his best-realized works . . . [in which he has] lodged his exhilaration, pure and remote—true gentleman's brushwork!

Chao Meng-jung, in a colophon written in 1268 on a painting by his elder brother Chao Meng-chien:

- (50) Paintings are called "soundless poems"; they are made by sages and philosophers in order to lodge their exhilaration.

The seventeenth century painter Shih-t'ao, in his treatise on painting, Hua-yü lu:

- (51) The ancients lodged their exhilaration in brush and ink, confided their Tao to [pictures of] mountains and rivers. . .

Numerous other examples of this usage of chi are encountered in various texts on painting.

B. That which is lodged: hsing 興, exhilaration.

The character is read in two pronunciations, standing for words of different but related meaning. In the second (rising) tone, it means "to arise, begin; to prosper; to flourish." Read in the fourth (falling) tone, it denotes the same meaning applied to human feeling. Dictionary definitions include "joyful, elated," and "appetite, passion." These, however, are too limited to cover the sense the word conveys as used in the literature of art. For this usage, I prefer "exhilaration," but "ebullience" would also serve. It need not, however, be even that specific: the Tz'u yüan dictionary defines it broadly as "feeling aroused by things." Hsing is confined neither to happiness nor sadness; it is that intensification of consciousness which is evoked in one's response to certain sights, sounds, situations. If it is qualified at all (other than as to intensity), it is by its stimulus. P'ei-wen yüan-fu, the vast compilation,

of phrases from the whole of Chinese literature, offers numerous examples of different hsing, quoting uses of the phrases for the exhilarations of autumn, of spring, of drinking and tipsiness, of tea, of chrysanthemums, of the bamboo grove. The phrase tsa hsing, 雜興, "various exhilarations" or "exhilaration evoked by various things" is frequently given to poems as a title.

A Yüan poet, Fang Hui, writes these revealing lines:

- (52) In hsing, there are different kinds; but all of them are ultimate (intensified) forms of response to the world. Through them the gentleman gives profundity to his mind.

Fang then quotes verses from poems in illustration of various "intensified responses." All the above uses of hsing relate to its specific use in poetry criticism to designate one of the three "meanings," or modes of expression, in poetry. They are first set forth in the Great Preface (Ta hsü 大序) to the Book of Odes,²⁶ and are the basis of many subsequent discussions of poetry. A sixth century essay, the Shih-p'in or "Qualities of Poetry,"²⁷ defines the three "meanings"—literary devices, or creative attitudes—as follows:

- (53) Poetry has three meanings. The first is hsing, the second pi 比 (metaphor), the third fu 賦 (description). When the words have ended but some of the conception remains, it is called hsing. When things are used to illustrate one's purport, this is pi. To write the matter directly, lodging it in words, transcribing objects, is fu.

Hsing, among these, is translatable as "evocation"; it refers to the use of images, often unrelated in any direct way to the main matter of the poem, to evoke in the reader a feeling thought by the poet to be suited to that poem. But besides being a literary device, hsing is also the effect of the device: an undefined feeling lodged in the poem, considered to be somewhat independent of the sense of

²⁶ Legge, The Chinese Classics (200), IV/1, p. 34.

²⁷ Qualities, and not, in this case, grades. Cf. the eight "qualities of literature" listed in the Wen-hsin tiao-lung, same period, which are not assigned a scale of relative values, each being held suitable to a particular sort of writer. (Aoki, Shina bungaku shisô-shi [History of Chinese Literary Theory] [169], p. 79.)

the words (cf. q. 64, below). The three "meanings" are stated, in the above quotation, in the order of their directness of relationship to the literal import of the poem: fu, as description, is most closely bound to it, hsing least so. Similarly in painting, hsing was usually thought of as a quality quite independent of the representational content.

The use of hsing for the response to a work of art we have already met in the poem by Huang T'ing-chien (q. 13), in which he tells of the exhilaration which arose as he gazed at a landscape by Kuo Hsi. In this meaning, hsing can, I think, be profitably compared to the "aesthetic emotion" described by Susanne Langer:

(54) There is an actual emotion induced by . . . contemplation [of the work of art], quite different from "the feeling in it"; this actual emotion, which has been called "the aesthetic emotion", is not expressed in the work, but belongs to the percipient; it is a psychological effect of his artistic activity . . . The "aesthetic emotion" is really a pervasive feeling of exhilaration, directly inspired by the perception of good art . . . Other things than art can evoke it, if and only if they excite the same intuitive activity that art excites.

The Chinese literati artist would agree with this last statement; the same feeling of exhilaration which art evokes is also induced in the sensitive individual by a wide variety of stimuli—most significantly, must be induced in the artist, by whatever cause, before he is in the proper state of mind to paint. The literati artist would agree also with her qualification but would not trouble to state it; because of his pervasively aesthetic orientation, certain experiences in his daily life could not fail to excite in him "the same intuitive activity that art excites." It was impossible for him, that is, to respond to the sensual stimuli of nature, the company and conversation of friends, or whatever evoked in him this hsing, except in a way basically aesthetic, intimately related to his experience of literature and art.

But there is a profound divergence between Langer's view and that of the literati painter. Art, for her, does not necessarily convey or express the feelings of the artist, or transmit them to the percipient of his work; for the literati painter, it does. In her view, neither the artist nor the percipient need experience,

in any real sense, the feelings symbolized by the art work; instead, they recognize them. In the view of the wen-jen artist, feeling (usually designated as hsing, sometimes as ch'ing 情) is embodied or "lodged" in his work by the artist, and conveyed by that work to the viewer, whose direct apprehension of it is primarily responsible for the impact of the work upon him.

This difference of view bears also on the question of the relationship between artist and work. If the work of art does not convey feeling, then of course the man behind the work is really irrelevant to it, as Langer maintains.²⁸ If it does, then he is vital to it—for the expressive force of the painting is derived from the responses and modulations of his mind, and its nature from his nature. The statements of the literati painting theorists are, as we have seen, unequivocally in favor of the latter view.

Hsing designates both the feeling of the artist and the response of the viewer; it is the very source and matter of artistic expression. So real was it to artist and critic that they speak of it as of a force measurable in amount and intensity, as electricity is in amperes and volts. There can be more or less hsing, and more or less intense. Su Tung-p'o inscribes a handscroll composed of two pictures:

- (55) Originally I did only the tree; but some exhilaration remained, not yet used up, and so I did the bamboo and stone on another piece of paper.²⁹

²⁸ Langer, op. cit. (199), pp. 394-5.

²⁹ For this notion of "exhaustion of hsing," cf. the story told of Wang Hui-chih, son of the calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih, and one of the fourth century group surrounding Tai K'uei, among whom the use of the word hsing for an emotional response to nature may logically have arisen. Wang awoke one wintry, moonlit night, gazed at the moonlight on the snow, and, moved by sudden feeling, decided to visit Tai K'uei. Traveling all night by boat, he arrived at Tai's gate in the early morning; but, having come that far, immediately returned home without entering. Questioned about his odd action, he explained: "I went there, carried by exhilaration (ch'eng hsing 乘興); when this exhilaration was exhausted, I came home. I had no special reason for wanting to see Tai." (Shih-shuo hsin-yü [150], fifth century, ch. 23. Quoted by Murakami [173], p. 43.)

Lü Pen-chung, early twelfth century:

- (56) We know that the master's exhilaration, when he did this, was not shallow,
And that this picture therefore can profoundly seize our attention.

A phrase commonly used in speaking of the creation of art, as well as in many other contexts, is ch'eng hsing, "carried by exhilaration" (cf. Wang Hui-chih's reply, in n. 29). One paints, or does whatever he does, while in this state, availing himself of it as a spur to activity. The application of the phrase to painting occurs at least as early as the great T'ang poet Tu Fu (eighth century), who writes of a landscape by Liu Shao-fu:

- (57) I understand that he dashes off these pictures of our country,
Carried by exhilaration, sending forth in painting the flavor of the Ts'ang-chou [landscape].

Kuo Ssu tells how his father Kuo Hsi used to paint:

- (58) Whenever he worked carried by his exhilaration, pursuing his conception, he would forget all external matters.

Chao Hsi-ku, a thirteenth century member of the Sung imperial family, writes:

- (59) Li Ch'eng and Fan K'uan were both scholar-gentlemen, who, when they met with a sudden feeling of exhilaration, would leave behind some brushstrokes [as products of the occasion].

It is important to note that the word hsing ordinarily denotes something distinct from specific emotions—happiness or sorrow, love or anger—which may also sometimes be expressed by art. Susanne Langer writes of the ambiguity of feelings and their applicableness, as embodied in the work of art, to either joy or sorrow:

- (60) A work of art expressing such an ambiguously associated effect will be called "cheerful" by one interpreter and "wistful" or even "sad" by another. But what it conveys is really just one nameless passage of "felt life" . . .

A superb statement, and close to the literati painter's view. "A nameless passage of felt life" is precisely what he sets out to convey; not ideas, philosophical, cosmological or other; not necessarily feelings directed toward specific things (not even toward the subject of his picture) or the "souls" of those things; but simply

a moment in his existence characterized by intensity of feeling. Painting is for him the product of a particular heightened moment, as his total personality is manifested in his consciousness of that moment.

What we derive, ideally, from a painting by Wu Chen is not any notion of what Wu Chen thought on any subject or felt toward anything in particular; it is rather some inkling of what it was to be Wu Chen, seated in his Plum-Blossom Retreat, perhaps slightly tipsy, perhaps at the conclusion of an evening spent in conversation with good friends, on a spring night in 1350. We are made to sense, with the greatest immediacy, the quality of his feelings at that moment.

The terms chi ch'ing 寄情 (lodging emotions) and chi huai 寄懷 (lodging affections) are significantly seldom used in discussions of painting. These terms, and the belief in art as expression of specific emotion, are encountered more frequently in writings on literary theory and criticism. One would expect it to be so; for words can describe feeling explicitly, if the writer wishes, while visual forms can only suggest them, with less of particularization.

The concept of art as expression of personal feeling thus originates in literary theory. A Han Dynasty preface to the Shih ching, the Book of Odes, discusses the moral and pedagogic functions of poetry, but also speaks of it as "lyricizing one's nature and feeling."³⁰ S. H. Ch'en, discussing early Chinese literary criticism, points out the shift from the phrase shih yen chih 詩言志, "poetry expresses purpose," as a statement of the function of poetry (Tao chuan, third century B.C.?) to shih yüan ch'ing 詩緣情, "poetry comes from emotion" (Lu Chi, Wen fu, 302 A.D.)³¹ A fifth century writer says of literature:

- (61) It is that to which one's feelings and purposes are committed. One should consider his conception paramount, and employ literature to convey this conception.

³⁰ 吟詠性情. See Aoki, Bungaku shisô (169), p. 41.

³¹ "The Beginning of Chinese Criticism" (186). The same article contains other quotations from early Chinese literary theory which are pertinent to the present study.

The sixth century Shih-p'in (cf. q. 53) emphasizes the capacity of literature to convey emotions:

- (62) If one has a pleasant reunion with someone, he lodges this in a poem [or: sends him a poem] as [an expression of] affection; if he is separated from his companions, he commits this to a poem as [an expression of] resentment. The warrior's response to a battle-cry, the scholar's grief at being degraded in rank—if these various responses and disturbances of the mind and soul are not displayed in a poem, how is one to manifest their meaning? If not in an ode, how can he release [lit. "release"] these feelings?

By the Sung Dynasty, however, the attitude of the critics and theorists has altered. The poet is now cautioned against too direct statement of emotion; he must express it by indirect means. Wei T'ai, writing in the latter half of the eleventh century, says:

- (63) Poems set forth circumstances in order to lodge feelings (chi ch'ing). In the circumstances, it is explicitness which is valued; in the feelings, concealment. When the poet attains the point at which his emotional responses are in accord with his mind, then his feelings will be manifested in the words [of his poem]. It is for this reason that the poem has such a profound impact on the reader. If the poet should state his exuberant spirits directly, and there were no additional flavor [beyond the literal meaning], then the poem would [only] evoke a response in the reader.

The verb in the last phrase, kan 感, means "to respond emotionally," or, causatively, "to evoke a response in [a person]." Direct statement of emotion, as practiced by some poets, stirred corresponding distinct emotion in the reader; Wei T'ai does not consider this the proper purpose of poetry. His objection seems equivalent to the contemporaneous painting theorists' objection to the primary view, that contemplation of pictures in which the feelings of the artist toward the subject had been embodied "arouses corresponding feelings in the heart" of the viewer (cf. q. 12). The aim of the Sung literati was a different one: expression through the suggestive power of images in poetry, and of form itself in painting. In poetry as in painting, it was the subtler, undefined intensity of feeling, "exhilaration," which was prized. An early twelfth century writer, Yen Yü, states his reasons for preferring poetry of the "flourishing T'ang" (generally, the first

half of the eighth century, the period of Li Po and Tu Fu) to that of the middle and late T'ang:

- (64) Poetry lyricizes one's nature and feelings. [The excellence of] the poets of the "flourishing T'ang" period lies in their flavor of exhilaration . . . This leaves no trace by which it can be sought; its wonderful points are not to be gathered and fixed. It is like a sound in the void, color in one's face, the moon in the water, a reflection in a mirror. Even when the words have ended, the conception is not yet exhausted.

The practical problems of the painter differed, of course, but his essential aims and attitudes were the same. There was in the temper of the age a certain detachment and coolness, a dissatisfaction with easily-apprehended emotional content in art. Perhaps this attitude depends somewhat upon the general Neo-Confucian suspicion of emotions, which were held to "becloud the mind." One of the early figures in the Neo-Confucian development, Li Ao, writes:

- (65) That whereby a man may become a sage is his nature (hsing 性). That whereby a man may betray his nature are the emotions (ch'ing) . . . When water is muddy, its flow will not be clear . . . [but] if the sediment is not muddy, the flow will be clear . . . [Likewise,] when the emotions do not operate, the nature will gain its fulfillment.³²

Hsing, "exhilaration," seems to have been considered a function of "one's nature," hsing; and, being essentially ambiguous, it differed from the limited emotions which only obscured that nature. Specific emotions should not be allowed to sway the mind during the act of artistic creation. The wen-jen hua view is thus to be distinguished from romantic and expressionist theory and practice of art; for in the former (as in the primary concept in China) it is usually specific emotions directed toward particular objects, and in the latter, violent emotions, passions, inner tensions, which are expressed. None of these has any place

³² See David Nivison, "'Knowledge' and 'Action' in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming" (206), especially pp. 117-120, for an analysis of the concepts of "nature" and "feeling," their place in Neo-Confucian thought and in literary theory. On pp. 128-131, Nivison discusses Ch'ing literary criticism in terms very relevant to the present study, although based on writings of a later period.

in Chinese literati painting; they were condemned by the philosophers and generally eschewed by the painters.

So they were, at least, until the Yüan Dynasty, when there occur suggestions of a belief that painting is suited to the expression of more definable emotion. The early Yüan painter Cheng Ssu-hsiao claimed to be giving vent, in his paintings of orchids, to his feelings of resentment toward the new Mongol regime. Two Yüan authors quoted below (q. 73, 74) clearly hold that feelings of pleasure, sadness, anger and the like, if experienced by the artist as he paints, will be embodied in the finished work. These views are, however, decidedly untypical, and seem not to have affected the main stream of wen-jen hua thought.

C. Because this process of "lodging exhilaration" supplies the main expressive content of the painting, the expression can be largely or wholly independent of the subject-matter of the picture. Feeling is expressed in the lines and forms themselves, not through association with anything they may represent.

T'u Lung, sixteenth century, in praise of the literati painters:

- (66) By not pursuing the flavor of things, they captured the flavor of Nature.³³

Before investigating the implications of this tenet, we may consider a related tendency in philosophy. Both Buddhist and Neo-Confucian writers frequently caution against over-attachment to material forms. The Buddhists did not, however, introduce the idea to China; the Taoist Chuang-tzu states it in the fourth century B.C.:

- (67) The Perfect Man employs his mind as a mirror. It does not move with things, nor does it anticipate them. It responds to things, but does not retain them. Therefore it is able to deal successfully with things, but is not affected by them.

³³ In an earlier translation of this passage, I used "expression" to render ch'ü 趣, and was properly chided by Mr. Aschwin Lippe for doing so. He writes: "Ch'ü means 'inclination', and that quality of an object or scene which makes us incline toward it, i.e. 'charm, attraction.'" He also suggests "flavor," and I have so translated it both here and in the Tsung Ping text (q. 1). I had used "expression" because ch'ü in natural objects seems to correspond to expressive content in a work of art, serving to evoke feeling.

Fung Yu-lan, after quoting the above paragraph in his history of Chinese philosophy, distinguishes this Taoist view from that of the Neo-Confucianists, who "argue that there is nothing wrong with the emotions per se; what is important is simply that they should not be a permanent part of the person who sometimes expresses them." Similarly in the scholar's response to the objects of nature: he allows his attention to dwell on them, but does not become absorbed in them. They are for him sources of "transient pleasure," stimuli of hsing. Su Tung-p'o writes:

- (68) The princely man may lodge (yü 寓) his thoughts in objects [i.e. give them his passing attention], but may not fix (liu 留) his thoughts on objects. If he lodges his thoughts in them, then even subtle things will suffice to give him pleasure, and even extraordinary things³⁴ will not suffice to be an affliction [obsession] to him. If, however, he fixes his thoughts on them, even subtle things will be an affliction, and not even extraordinary ones a pleasure. Lao-tzu says: "The five colors confuse the eye, the five sounds dull the ear, the five tastes spoil the palate . ." ³⁵; but the sage never really renounces these [sensual objects], he merely lodges his thoughts in them.
- For example, when clouds and mists pass before my eyes, or the songs of birds strike my ears, how could I help but derive joy from my contact with these things? But then I banish them [from my mind], and think of them no more. In this way, these two things are a constant pleasure to me, but not an affliction to me.
- Now, for the enjoyable qualities of things being communicable to people, but without being able to influence [move] people, there is nothing like calligraphy and painting. But if one's thoughts become fixed inextricably in these, it leads to unspeakable disaster.

For the philosopher, the meaning of these words was unequivocal; for the painter, who must have been inclined to accept the notion less wholeheartedly, having more to do with visual impressions than to lodge them and forget them, it might have been interpreted to mean: love the material things of the world as you will;

³⁴ Yu wu 尤物; used especially of the face of a beautiful woman, from a passage in the Tso chuan (Duke Chao twenty-eighth year; Legge, The Chinese Classics [200], V/2, p. 724, trans. p. 726.)

³⁵ Translated by Waley, The Way and Its Power (225) p. 158.

but as an artist, regard them with sufficient detachment to be able to make whatever free use of them artistic needs may dictate. There is no denying Wu Chen's love for bamboo, or Mi Fu's for strange stones; but as painters, they were not emotionally bound to these, employing them only as the raw material of artistic creation, altering the natural forms as well as the usual associational aura of the objects to suit conceptions of their own.

Perhaps, to avoid misunderstanding, the proposition which heads this section should be restated as follows: The feeling evoked by the viewing of a painting need have no connection to the feeling evoked by the depicted object if it is encountered in nature. In a roundabout way, the expression is dependent on the object represented; but only in that that object provides the basic forms from which the artist evolves artistic form. It is this latter which excites feeling, carries the expression. The connection between representational content and expression is thus much more remote than in the primary view.

It is not easy to discover a consistent Chinese attitude on the function of subject-matter in paintings, once this primary view, that the subject and the artist's feelings toward it determine the expression, no longer obtains. The relationship between object and painting becomes at that point much more complex. The basic wen-jen hua concept of expression, that lines and forms embody the feelings of the artist, being the "delineations of his mind" (cf. q. 32), is clear enough; the difficulty which faced the theorists was in reconciling this belief with the fact that the picture was still ostensibly an image of landscape, bamboo or whatever it might be. The artist was thought somehow to utilize natural forms in lodging his feelings. The Hsüan-ho hua-p'u, a work which adopts varying points of view according to the artists and types of paintings it discusses, says of Wen T'ung:

(69) Wen T'ung availed himself of [natural] objects in order to lodge his exhilaration.

Such artistic use of natural materials did not leave the painter open to the stigma of "over-attachment." Han Chü (1086-1135), who studied under Su Tung-p'o's younger brother Su Che,

defends the poet T'ao Yüan-ming from the charge of being too fond of chrysanthemums:

- (70) The ancients lodged their emotions in objects; there was nothing [in these] that they loved. Only in this way could [their emotions] be manifested. It is therein, moreover, that the integrity of T'ao Yüan-ming lay; his relationship to the chrysanthemums was only that he lodged (yü 寓) his thoughts in them . . . "

Han follows this passage with a poem, beginning:

What is there to love in yellow chrysanthemums?
They only served to lodge (chi 寄) the affections of
his whole life.

This statement may strike one as unnecessarily severe; in defining properly T'ao Yüan-ming's use of chrysanthemums as an image in his poetry, Han need not have denied his doubtless genuine love for them. The notion of non-attachment to things of the visible world must often have been, among persons less fully absorbed in the realm of abstractions than the Buddhist priests and Neo-Confucian philosophers from whom they learned it, more a matter of ideal than of actuality.

A simple way to "utilize" the objects of nature was to take advantage of their conventional associations; but even when the artist did so, it was because these associations somehow suited his expressive intent.³⁶ Yüeh Cheng, a fifteenth century writer, begins his "Discourse on Painting Grape-vines" with the following observations:

(71)

³⁶ On the subject of the use of "real life" materials in art, Langer (op. cit., p. 246) has a similar opinion: "Such materials, turned to artistic purposes, need not disturb the work at all, which consequently is no less 'pure art' than it would otherwise be. The only condition is that materials from any source must be put to completely artistic use, entirely transformed, so that they do not lead away from the work, but give it, instead, the air of being 'reality'." See also Ozenfant's description of the method of Cézanne (quoted by Blanshard, op. cit., p. 93): "While the Impressionists were translating the sensations that came to them from without, Cézanne was seeking in nature's vocabulary the means of expressing his interior world; something very different therefore. Cézanne chooses from nature what best expresses Cézanne."

- (71) Painting is the overflow of calligraphy. Scholars, in the intervals of free time between "seeking delight in the arts,"³⁷ transcribe their emotions to suit their mood . . . On the whole, [their achievement] lies in the conception, not in the image . . . Nevertheless, what is painted must have the conception in it; and for this reason they make use of plants. The "virtuousness" of orchids, the "clear purity" of chrysanthemums, the "unsulliedness" of plum blossoms, the "moral principle" of bamboo and pine: in all these, the artist avails himself of the object in order to lodge his exhilaration; in order to cultivate himself, [that is,] and not without profit [to himself].³⁸

The Ming Dynasty painter Wen Cheng-ming describes another case in which the artist chooses his subject for its standard connotations, feeling that these render it adaptable to his creative purpose:

- (72) The noble scholars and recluses of old loved to play with the brush, doing landscapes to amuse themselves. Often they did snow scenes; this is because they wanted to avail themselves of this [theme] to lodge their conception of purity maintained in adversity.

The recluses referred to are those motivated by political loyalty or protest, such as the dissidents under the Yüan, who maintained their integrity under adverse conditions. The term used for "adversity," sui han 歲寒,³⁹ is literally "cold-of-the-year";—a metaphor which explains why a winter scene is suited to the expression of this idea.

More common in wen-jen hua theory, however, is the belief that paintings of a given subject may be charged with a variety of expressive qualities, according to the intent and mood of the artist

³⁷ Cf. q. 3. Quoted from Lun yü VII/6; Legge, The Chinese Classics (200), I, 196. Soper's translation. Painting was not included in the "polite arts" as Confucius understood them; even later, when its social standing is established, it is often referred to as a "small art."

³⁸ For the notion of artistic activity as self-cultivation, see Nivison, op. cit., p. 129.

³⁹ A reference to Lun yü IX/27; Legge, The Chinese Classics (200), I, 225: "The Master said, 'When the year becomes cold, then we know how the pine and the cypress are the last to lose their leaves.' This line was usually understood as a metaphor for unchanging loyalty under political and other pressure."

as he paints. This belief is, in fact, implicit in most of their writings; the most explicit statement of it I know is found in a Yüan Dynasty text on the painting of blossoming plum, the Sung chai mei-p'u:

- (73) Painting blossoming plum is the same as writing poems; the thoughts of the artist are expressed by entrusting them to the forms of the plum. As the emotions of the artist change, as he experiences pleasure, sadness, anger or any other feeling, so will the aspect of the plum branches ~~he paints~~ ~~he paints~~ ~~he paints~~ differ in displaying various qualities: a lean beauty, a seductive beauty, the beauty of chilly misery or of untrammelled excellence. This is called realizing the conception (te i 得意), but is at the same time a sort of compilation of the history of the plum blossom, a transmission of its spirit. Moreover, it can be done only by the scholar-gentleman.

The question of how lines and forms can thus embody feeling was seldom touched on by the wen-jen hua theorists; such a view as that of Langer, that the artist creates a "symbol of sentience," lay quite outside the range of concepts available to them. Nevertheless, a notion somewhat akin to symbolization, in a simple form, appears occasionally in their writings. Chüeh-yin, a monk-painter of the late Yüan period, a fellow townsman and perhaps an acquaintance of Wu Chen, chose his subjects according to his mood, and explains his choice:

- (74) I once painted orchids while in a joyful mood, and painted bamboo while in an angry mood. For, I said, the orchid, with its gracefully waving leaves, its blossoms uplifted with pistils outstretched, is able to express a spirit of joy; while the bamboo, with its branches sticking upward and outward in disorder like spears and swords, has an air of anger.

This passage, like the previous one, is unorthodox in that it speaks of the artist painting while under the sway of strong specific emotion; but this is beside the point at present. The question is whether Chüeh-yin foreshadows the modern Occidental belief in the expressiveness of abstract form (as does, I think, the wen-jen hua movement as a whole) or whether, on the contrary, he thinks of "happy" orchids and "angry" bamboo as Kuo Hsi thought of "joyful" and "sad" landscapes. The former seems to me nearer the truth; for while there is a real relation, through emotional affinity,

between the feeling of grief and the decline of living things in a bleak winter landscape, there is no such relationship between the feeling of anger and bamboo; nor has anger any part in the traditional connotations of bamboo in China. To Chüeh-yin, the orchid expressed by its form the feeling of happiness, and bamboo that of anger.

Moreover, the wide range of adjectives used by Chinese critics to describe the mood of bamboo paintings ("lonely," "untrammelled," "buoyant," "calm," etc.) show that Chüeh-yin's "anger" was no permanent attribute of the subject; that these feelings were not attributed to the bamboo at all, but to the artist who employed it. One can easily test this belief by his personal responses to Chinese literati paintings. I can think of three Wu Chen bamboo paintings which call to my mind the adjectives "lonely," "buoyant" and "calm" respectively. Someone else might discover different qualities; but I doubt that he would find in all three pictures a constant quality of expression, which he could then take for "Wu Chen's conception of the mood of bamboo," or "the soul of bamboo, as displayed by Wu Chen." The literati painters generally recognized what Langer speaks of as "the paramount importance of abstracting the form, banning all irrelevancies that might obscure its logic, and especially divesting it of all its usual meanings so that it may be open to new ones."⁴⁰

Another case of nature supplying abstract form to the needs of the artist is related by Su Tung-p'o. He tells how Wen Yü-k'o (Wen T'ung) could never master the "grass" script (ts'ao shu) as it was practiced by early calligraphers until, one day, he saw a pair of snakes fighting in the road, and from this sight came to full mastery of the script. Su comments:

(75) But as for what Yü-k'o saw, how could it have been real snakes? It was the essence of the graceful grass script.

The artist looks at material forms, but what he sees is artistic form. Wen's perception of calligraphic line in writhing serpents may have been spontaneous, but it was in full accord with

⁴⁰Langer, op. cit., p. 59.

a statement on grass writing found in an essay attributed to the supreme master of this script, the fifth century Wang Hsi-chih:

- (76) One must go slowly at first, and hurry later. The appearance and force of the characters will then approximate in form entwined dragons and snakes, with an unbroken movement.

The concept of the written character as abstraction of natural form is very old in China; calligraphy was often likened to the hexagrams of the Changes (cf. n. 9). That it could embody (symbolize?) one's personal response to the world was recognized only later, perhaps not until the T'ang Dynasty. The T'ang poet Han Yü writes:

- (77) Whatever moves the heart can surely be expressed in the grass script. One looks at things, sees mountains and rivers, cliffs and valleys, birds and animals . . . the flowering and fruition of plants and trees, the sun, moon, stars, wind and rain, water and fire, the crash of thunder, singing and dancing, warfare: all the transmutations of events and objects in the world. One can regard these with delight or with awe; [but whatever his responses,] they can all be lodged in calligraphy.

The above writers all refer specifically to the grass script among the various calligraphic manners, because that script was considered more adaptable than any other to the expression of feeling, being most supple, departing more from the standard forms of the character, allowing more of free transformation of the basic material in accordance with the character and mood of the writer. In a like way, the creation of a painting was held necessarily to involve a transformation of the "raw material," the forms seen by the artist in nature, if the resulting work was to be a personal expression. The concept of creation as transformation will be considered in the following section.

Chang Huai-kuan, in his "Discourse on Calligraphy" (cf. q. 24), writes the following:

- (78) Cliffs and valleys lean toward each other in high and dangerous [places], mountains and rivers strive respectively for height and depth. One gathers, as in a bag, these myriad phenomena, brings them into order as a single image. This he lodges [in calligraphy] in order to give rein to his varied thought, or commits [to calligraphy] to release his pent-up emotions.

In this same remarkable essay, Chang develops at length the proposition that feeling and thought (not, of course, logical and discursive thought) too subtle to be expressed in words can be manifested in the expressive forms created by the brush. Since the same belief is vital to wen-jen hua theory, it is worth while to quote some additional passages from this essay:

- (79) Discussion by words cannot [really] clarify. Since the Way (Tao)[of one's discourse] does not penetrate [the understanding of the listener], the words never end. Added to this, words are deficient in well-defined usage,⁴¹ their li (principle) is lacking in fine subtleties . . . Now, calligraphy and written documents,⁴² if they are of the highest order, all have a profound conception through which the intent of the writer is revealed. Looking at them makes one understand him fully, as if meeting him face to face . . . Thus, reading the words of the sages of the past is not the same as hearing them speak in person; whereas in appreciating the calligraphy of former masters, one can never exhaust their profound conceptions.

He writes of the great calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih:

- (80) When we look at his complete calligraphy, we know lucidly the intent and spirit of his whole life, as if we were meeting him face to face.

In another essay, the same writer reports an argument with friends over the relative merits of literature and calligraphy. He answers one of them:

⁴¹Ch'u yao 曲要 ; so used in the Appendix to the I ching (下, section 8.) See Legge, The Yi King (201), p. 399: "The strong and the weak lines change places, so that an invariable and compendious rule cannot be derived from them." Chang Huai-kuan's discussion depends somewhat on early statements of the limitation of both spoken and written language. See Nivison, op. cit., p. 115 and note 113, in which he quotes from the I ching: "Writing does not completely express language and language does not completely express thought." Su Tung-p'o (THSS [159], XI/17a) writes of human speech:

"It's not like painting, which doesn't explain and talk;
For words and talk, in our time, are dishonest to the root."

⁴²The terms han-mo 翰墨 (brush-and-ink) and wen-chang 文章 both commonly mean "literature"; but the antithesis with "discussion by words," the reference in the following sentence to "looking at them" rather than "reading them," and the general context, all make it clear that it is writing viewed for its calligraphic quality, not for its meaning, which is here under discussion.

- (81) In literature, one must use many words to bring out his idea; in calligraphy, his mind is made visible in a single character . . . [In the perception of calligraphy,] the mind is led by the eyes to the height of feeling—it is like an intimate relationship [with the writer]. This is the wonder of it. But when we investigate the source of his method and conception, that which derives from his mind is foremost, and that from his eyes secondary.

The ability of the artist to convey personal feeling through the abstract means of line and form was thus recognized by writers on calligraphy in the T'ang Dynasty, considerably before the same was acknowledged to be true of painting. This is again the historical order one would expect; for while painting may represent actual appearances and rely on them for its expression, no expressive means other than abstract are available to the calligrapher—he does not "represent" anything, and the literal meaning of the words he writes are of no importance to the work of calligraphy as such.

Chang Huai-kuan, in the above quotations, sees calligraphy as a kind of supplement to verbal expression; painting was often referred to in a similar way, as the "overflow of literature." Su Tung-p'o writes of Wen T'ung:

- (82) What could not be exhausted by his poetry overflowed and became calligraphy, or, in another form, became painting. Both were the excess from his poetry.

A postface to Wen's literary works, written in 1195, goes deeper into the matter:

- (83) Now, the rare and strange quality of his painting originates in the overflow from his literary works, and the lofty and antique quality of his literature comes from the fundamental flavor of the inner feelings of the man. How, then, could there be two separate methods [in his painting and literature]?

Such statements should serve to dispel any remaining doubt that the wen-jen hua concept of painting was one of expression of subjective experience. This, and not description, was for them the proper function both of words in poetry and of forms in painting.

D. If the painter is successful in lodging his feelings in the painting, then whoever sees it (if this percipient is himself sensitive, in the right state of mind, etc.) will derive from it, by immediate intuition, the nature of those feelings, and through them the nature of the painter.

Chao Yüeh-chih, writing of the bamboo which his friends Wen T'ung and Su Tung-p'o had painted on the walls of his studio:

- (84) It recalls wonderfully the thoughts of a former day;
Looking at it, I can perceive the feelings of that moment.

Various passages pertinent to this tenet have been quoted in section I-C; to these may be added what Fei Kun (cf. q. 36) says of the function of painting:

- (85) Thus a man, with his own particular uprightness of character and firmness of principle . . . takes his brush and writes. The person who obtains this writing will naturally respond by engendering a feeling of respect; how much less is it skill in the strokes of the characters [which produces this respect]! [As for paintings,] the overflow from scholarship and literature is transcribed in the form of "soundless poems."⁴³ One enjoys these because in their calm feeling, within the brushwork and ink, one can see in imagination the person of the painter. For this reason they are to be treasured and passed on.⁴⁴

That the question of communication deeply concerned the artists themselves is apparent in their frequent musings, expressed in notes added to their paintings, over whether or not their works will be understood, either by particular contemporaries or by unknown persons in the future. Wu Chen's remark, written on an album of bamboo pictures done in imitation of Wen T'ung, is typical:

- (86) I have done this album completely as an extension of his manner of painting. I don't know who will appreciate its [real] flavor.

The problem of the artist who fears he is not being understood arises with the wen-jen painters. Su Tung-p'o, writing on a bamboo

⁴³The notion of paintings as "soundless poems" (cf. q. 50) and poems as "paintings with sound" (as in the title of the earliest collection of poetical inscriptions for paintings, Sheng-hua chi 聲畫集), is said to have originated in Su Tung-p'o's appraisal of Wang Wei: "In his poems there are paintings, and in his paintings, poems." Cf. Leonardo da Vinci: "Painting is poetry which is seen and not heard, and poetry is a painting which is heard but not seen." (Holt, Literary Sources of Art History [197], p. 172.) See also Blanshard, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴⁴Gauguin, advising the artist not to paint directly from nature, says: "Your sensation, your intelligence and your soul will live again in the eye of one who loves your painting." (Quoted by Blanshard, op. cit., p. 98.)

painting by Wen T'ung, quotes his friend as saying:

- (87) There is no one in the world who understands me except [Su] Tzu-chan; he recognized at a glance the points in which I excel.

The practice of writing a prose record (chi 記)⁴⁵ on a painting to relate the circumstances under which it was executed is generally limited to the wen-jen painters; the artists of the court academies seldom if ever did so, nor did the Che School artists of the Ming, nor, for the most part, professional painters of any period. The literati artists felt the urgent need to communicate: their feelings of the moment in the picture itself, and, as a supplement to this, the external particulars of that moment in words.

After quoting Su Tung-p'o's account of how he came to make two pictures out of a single burst of exhilaration (q. 55), Su's young disciple Ho Yüan adds the note:

- (88) Never before has there been such a form [of painting]. The master also wanted to let people of later times know it [i.e. the circumstance of the creation of these two pictures, through his inscription].

In the inscriptions of Wu Chen, these notes are often quite intimate and personal, emphasizing the passing mood. Lines such as "Old Plum-Blossom lodges his exhilaration while sitting in his oak grove" or "It is still raining outside; my brush hand is tired, and I shall rest a bit" are not uncommon.

"Inscriptions of record" on paintings (hua-chi 畫記) correspond in function to the prose prefaces and postfaces added to Chinese poems. In these the poet sometimes (like T. S. Eliot) annotates the matter of the poem; but he may also describe how he came to compose it. The stimulus of the feeling expressed in the art work cannot, in the secondary concept of painting, be known from the work itself; and while identification of this stimulus is not strictly necessary to the appreciation of a picture, the painter assumes that it will both interest the viewer and condition somewhat his experi-

⁴⁵ For an excellent article on the various kinds of inscriptions and their development as a literary form, see Aoki Masaru, "Daiga no bungaku" (The Literature of Painting Inscriptions), in Shina bungaku geijutsu kô (168), pp. 269-294.

ence of the picture, he records it in an appendage separate from, but relevant to, the work of art proper. What the percipient knows about the work and its author, the personal qualities of this percipient himself, his mood at the moment he looks at the picture—all these affect his experience of the picture, and so were recognized as pertinent by the Chinese theorists.⁴⁶

The question of the qualities required in the viewer is one which relates to connoisseurship, and need not be considered here in detail. The main requirements were, of course, sensitivity and discernment; but, as in the case of the painter, these were thought to depend upon the total personality of the man. Chang Yen-yüan writes:

- (89) And indeed, unless one is a man of surpassing spirit,
lofty perception, transcendent emotion and gentle mind,
how can one speak of understanding painting!

⁴⁶ Various pronouncements on the proper conditions for viewing pictures, with stress on the mood of the viewer, occur in the writings of Mi Fu, T'ang Hou and others. See also Liu Tao-ch'un, quoted by Sirén in The Chinese on the Art of Painting (212), p. 74. This attitude, together with the practice of writing "records" and "prefaces," is in accord with the standpoint of the Contextualist school of present-day aesthetics, but contrary to that of Langer. She analyzes perceptively a Chinese poem by a T'ang poet (op. cit., p. 216), but then takes a stand quite in opposition to that of the Chinese on the relevance of the actual context of its composition: "That illusion [her 'virtual event'] would not be helped at all by additional knowledge—by actual familiarity with the place referred to, further information about the career or personality of Li Ts'ao, or footnotes on the authorship of the poem and on the circumstances of its composition. Such further additions would only clutter the poetic image of life with irrelevant items . . . " The Chinese believed (and on this point I decidedly believe with them) that the experiencing of a work of art involves more factors than are covered by her view of it as an immediate and unconditioned perception of symbolic import, "presented" equally to whomever encounters the work. The aesthetic experience proper is evoked by the work alone; but it occurs in a context which includes what we know of the artist and his other works, our prior acquaintance with works somehow related to this one, and other "irrelevant" elements, which, however, deeply affect that experience.

The Act of Creation.

III. The creation of a painting is accomplished by a transformation of the forms of nature into those of art. Various factors in this process of transformation contribute to or affect the expression of the finished work.

A. I 意 or Conception.

The word i is variously translated in quotations above (q. 40, 68, 71) as "conception" or "thought." In its most general usage, it is best rendered by the English idea, which denotes, as does i, both the meanings of "any object of the mind existing in thought" and "a formulated thought or opinion." It can thus exist in or out of the mind; the painter can harbor his conception while painting, and the picture can contain an idea, either specific, a meaning, or non-specific, as in pi-i 筆意, "the idea (significance) of the brushwork."

It is i as conception which interests us here. Wu Chen, in one of the many inscriptions written in an extant album of twenty bamboo paintings, tells of being shown a painting by the son of Su Tung-p'o, which moved him to recite the opening lines of a poem by the twelfth century Ch'en Chien-chai:⁴⁷

- (90) The conception suffices; don't seek for likeness in color.
In a previous existence [the painter was] the judge of
horses Chiu-fang Kao.

This Chiu-fang Kao is the hero of a Taoist anecdote which emphasizes concentration on essentials: he reported correctly to his lord the surpassing quality of a horse he had seen, while managing at the same time to describe as a dun mare what proved, when the horse was procured, to be a black stallion. Wu continues:

Having written thus far, I suddenly realize that my thoughts seem to have hit upon something. In the [proper] method of painting bamboo, one must first be guided by the conception, and later may capture this through brush technique. If one forms his conception before [using] the brush, what he does will have the excellent qualities

⁴⁷ Ch'en Chien-chai 陳簡齋 was Ch'en YU-i 與義, 1090-1138 (see Wen-hsüeh chia TTT [9], 2350.) Famous as a poet and calligrapher.

of a natural flavor and spontaneity. As for those who are bogged down in brush technique [for its own sake], and the pursuit of likeness—they are not worthy of being spoken of in the same day [with the others].

The dictum "the conception precedes the brush" occurs both in Chang Yen-yüan's history (in his discussion of Wu Tao-tzu) and in the short treatise attributed to the eighth century poet-painter Wang Wei. It is repeated by many later writers, both of the wen-jen and of the opposite persuasion. This "conception" is what Su Tung-p'o says may take form in the mind, but (if one hasn't technique) not in the hand (q. 21).

I can be (although it is not usually) used for a memory-image in the mind of the artist. The sixteenth century scholar T'u Lung writes:

- (91) One can use painting to lodge his conceptions. At a bright window, before a clean desk, he depicts scenery. Perhaps he has somewhere seen a beautiful landscape, and placed it in his heart; now he calls forth its image . . .

It can be an image formed completely by the imagination. The eleventh century landscapist Sung Ti suggests a device for facilitating this growth which is similar to what Leonardo da Vinci advised:⁴⁸ one hangs a piece of silk gauze over an old crumbling wall and gazes at this for a long time, until the fissures and depressions in the wall, seen indistinctly through the silk, seem in the imagination to form the image of a landscape. With continued gazing one begins to see grass, trees, even chickens and people moving about. Then,

- (92) when this image is complete in the eye, the brush will be guided by the conception [thus formed]. In a silent "spiritual communion" the scenery will come forth spontaneously, as if by the working of Heaven. It will not be like a work of man at all.

The conception may be a quality (loneliness, depth, coldness) rather than an image. The eleventh century scholar and statesman Ou-yang Hsiu, speaking of the proper way to judge paintings, says:

- (93) Loneliness and desolation, tranquillity and leisureliness—these are the conceptions hard to paint. Even if the

⁴⁸Holt, op. cit. (197), p. 176.

painter captures them, the person seeing his painting won't necessarily discern them. Flying and running, slow and fast—these are matters of shallow conception, easy to see; but quiet and peace, awesome stillness, feelings of a remote flavor—it is more difficult to give form to these. As for high and low, front and back, near and far, horizontal and vertical layers [i.e. planes of height and depth], these belong to the artifices of the professional painter, and are nothing which concerns connoisseurship.

So much for the problem of space representation in Chinese landscape, a subject fascinating to the Western scholar. In a statement by Huang T'ing-chien, however, in praise of landscapes by Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung, these qualities are the very matter of the conception:

- (94) Height and clarity, depth and distance—it is only afterward that one sees the mountains, sees the water.

The primary concept, by which the painter conveys the mood of the scene he paints, is not completely absent from wen-jen hua writings; but even where it occurs, the emphasis has shifted to the artist, and to his conception as induced by his subjective response. What is lodged belongs to his experience, rather than to any constant qualities of the scenery. A poem by Chao Yüeh-chih illustrates this; while elements remain of the attitude of Tsung Ping and Kuo Hsi, the artist is now a "noble man" who transmits the feeling of being in a landscape, rather than of the landscape itself:

- (95) A noble man can paint the mood of being in the mountains,
Of blowing cold air as morning light comes from the rim
of the sky.
The feeling of all this he transfers to the surface of
a fan—
Where now is the dust and dirt of the world of men?

The word i could also be used for nothing more than a clever idea. In the Emperor Hui-tsung's court academy, themes for painting were set by the emperor, and painters who found ingenious ways of treating them (e.g. portraying "A wine shop in a bamboo grove" by showing only the shop's flag protruding above the bamboo) received the emperor's praise for their excellent "conceptions."

In literati painting theory, the conception which the artist must have in his mind before he paints was usually considered to be an image, based somewhat on natural form but conditioned, already

transformed, according to his temperament. Both the formation of this image and the objectification of it with brush and paper are acts controlled by the artist's mind, and so partake of his feeling; reflect, ideally, his "exhilaration." These two operations, conceptual and physical (often termed in the texts hsin shou 心手 or "mind and hand") together accomplish the process of artistic transformation.

The conception as image is the subject of the often-quoted dicta of Su Tung-p'o and Huang T'ing-chien, that the painter must have a "ready-formed bamboo" or a "perfected bamboo" in his mind before he paints. Su's statement is found in a colophon to a bamboo painting by Wen T'ung. In another colophon Su had objected to the method of painting bamboo additively, section by section, saying "Who ever heard of bamboo growing in such a way?" Here he develops the idea on a more abstract level:

- (96) Modern paintings [of bamboo] are done joint by joint, accumulated leaf by leaf. How can there be anything of bamboo in such works? Therefore, in painting bamboo one must beforehand have the perfected bamboo in his breast. One takes up the brush with his vision matured, seeing what it is he wants to paint. Then suddenly he wields the brush, following this vision directly, pursuing what he sees—it is like the leap of a startled hare, or the swoop of a falcon. The smallest slackening of attention and you have lost it. This is how [Wen] YU-k'o taught me; and, although I can't do it so myself, I can discern in my mind why it is so. With those who can discern it but can't do it, inner and outer are not one; their minds and hands are not in mutual accord. This is due to an excess of not studying. It is generally true with those who have the vision within them but whose grasp of it is not fully mature; they can see it themselves all the time, but when it comes to the actual business [of painting], they suddenly become afraid of it.

Once again, Su probably depended on earlier theorizing about calligraphy. The short essay attributed to Wang Hsi-chih states:

- (97) One should congeal his spirit, calm his thought. He must see beforehand, in imagination, the forms of the characters [he is about to write], their proportion and bearing . . .

What is surely not meant by "the perfected bamboo" is either a memory-image of some bamboo plant once seen, or a complete and detailed image of a bamboo branch; the ordinary human mind is in any event incapable of harboring such an image. It is rather a

vision of general form, already endowed, as the painter conceives it, with whatever qualities he will invest in his painting.

Huang T'ing-chien's similar statement is also of interest:

- (98) If the painter has a pre-existent bamboo in his breast, then from first to last [the act of creation will be like] the flourishing growth of plants. If he has a perfected bamboo in his breast, then brush and ink, in dealing with objects, will completely transform them . . . Brush and ink will be identical in achievement with the Creator.

These last sentences introduce an important new idea:

B. Under ideal conditions (the proper artist working under the proper circumstances in the proper state of mind) the creative-transformative process of art takes place with the same spontaneity as do the creation-transformations of nature; and the product of it shares the "rightness" of the creations of nature.

Wu Chen, continuing the poem of which the opening quatrain was quoted above (q. 38):

- (99) At first they are produced from brush and inkstone,
But brush and ink are gradually forgotten;
The mind and hand at last forget each other—
Transform and fuse, alike to the Creator.

Before going into the matter of artistic creation, we had best consider for a bit the other element of the analogy, creation in nature. The awkward term "creation-transformation" I use (only for the moment) to convey the dual aspect of the Chinese term tsao-hua 造化. Originally a Taoist concept, tsao-hua is used not only for the process of creation, but for the (impersonal) Creator also, and is thus equivalent to T'ien, or Heaven. Similarly used is tsao-wu 造物, "creation (or Creator) of beings or things," a term found in the Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu books.

According to the concept of natural creation in the Neo-Confucian cosmology, the basic stuff of the universe is ch'i 氣, "Ether." It is this which exists before material forms evolve, and from which these forms are produced. All the objects and phenomena of the world come into being spontaneously (tzu-jan 自然), with no conscious volition motivating the process. (T'ien or Heaven is not

a conscious power, and the translation of it as "God" is misleading.⁴⁹) Since the basic matter remains constant, the evolution of material forms is thus both a creation and a transformation. The pattern by which this takes place, the guiding principle for all phenomena, is the natural order, li 理. Li, says Fung Yu-lan, "prevents the creative process from proceeding haphazardly."⁵⁰ All the above terms are used by the wen-jen hua theorists in discussing painting, and must be understood, in their writings, in the proper Neo-Confucian setting.⁵¹

Creation was not, as in Christian theology, original creation;

⁴⁹ Cf. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China (205), II, 564, note. On the same page he quotes from a commentary on Chuang-tzu: "Hence the origination of things has no lord; all things originate themselves."

⁵⁰ Fung, op. cit., p. 523. Chu Hsi's exposition of this system, based largely on the theories of Chou Tun-i and Shao Yung, presents it in fully developed form; see Fung, pp. 534-551. Needham's discussion of ch'i and li, which he renders as "Matter-energy" and "Principle of Organization," casts further light on these two concepts. (Op. cit., p. 472-485.)

⁵¹ The word ch'i, especially as used in the perplexing term ch'i-yün, "spirit resonance" (cf. q. 17, 20, 22), is perhaps an exception to this statement; by the Sung Dynasty, it had been used so frequently in discussions of painting, and so loosely, that any clear philosophical significance it may originally have carried had long been dispersed. Hence I have deliberately avoided the question of ch'i-yün in this study of wen-jen hua theory, wherein the term functions chiefly as an expression of value: a good painting has it, a bad one hasn't.

Relating Neo-Confucian philosophy to discussions of painting seems to me not only to have more historical foundation, in that this is the system accepted by the leading theorists, but also to be more illuminating than the frequent obscurantist invocations of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, especially in reference to painting other than Ch'an painting proper, i.e., that done by Ch'an monks. Ch'an, with its ineffable truths and mystical orientation, can too easily be used to camouflage woolly thinking and the essentially Western outlook of the writer. Many literati painters and theorists were deeply interested in Ch'an, but chiefly in its relations and parallels to the Confucian system, or as a supplement to it. The Neo-Confucian cosmology is not basically mystical in intent; it aims at a rational understanding of natural phenomena, and is thus proto-scientific rather than anti-scientific. Needham, in fact, considers the philosophy of Chu Hsi to foreshadow remarkably the modern organicist philosophy, and to have perhaps been the source of its germinal ideas. (Op. cit., p. 474.)

it was a continuing process, of which the evolution of every new tree, cloud or human being was a further manifestation. One of the Su Tung-p'o coterie, Ch'in Kuan, writes:

- (100) The myriad objects cannot exist forever; when [their period of] existence comes to its end, they enter [the status of] nothingness. But they cannot not exist forever either; when non-existence ends, they enter [the status of] existence.

He goes on to explain the term pien-hua 變化, "transformation," by saying that pien denotes the passing of forms into nothingness, and hua the contrary process, the creative. This is the hua of tsao-hua, the word used for artistic creation.

The notion of the painter partaking of the power of natural creation was expressed already by P'ei Hsiao-yüan in the seventh century (as quoted by Chang Yen-yüan in the ninth):

- (101) Master Ku [K'ai-chih]'s imagination is comparable to Creation itself; he achieves his marvels by spiritual insight.

Chang Yen-yüan himself speaks of the work of Wu Tao-tzu as being "in harmony with the work of Creation itself," and also writes:

- (102) If one fails to exhaust the profound and wonderful in expressing his conception, how can he bring his divine transformations into accord with [those of] the working of Heaven?

It is significant that Chu Ching-hsüan, also in the ninth century, writes in a similar way of two of the three painters whom he places in the i-p'in or "untrammelled" class. Of Wang Mo he says:

- (103) The response of hand to thought was as swift as Creation itself. He would bring out clouds and mist, and wash in wind and rain, exactly as if his cunning were a god's.

And of Li Ling-sheng:

- (104) The mode that he mastered was a singular one, matching the feats of Creation itself.

The meaning of these statements in terms of painting style is discussed by Shimada in his article on the i-p'in.⁵² It is clear (although none of their works remain) that the painters whose works

⁵² Shimada, "Ihin gafu ni tsuite" (175), pp. 266-271.

were placed in this classification worked swiftly and spontaneously, usually in a state of frenzy or intoxication, and tried, by one means or another, to introduce some element of the fortuitous (hence unwilling) into the painting process. Here was a new concept of "imitation of nature"; not imitation of its forms, through careful and faithful depiction of them, but imitation of its operations in creating those forms.⁵³ A realistic style was paradoxically considered to be in a sense "unnatural," because it was the product of human activity, motivated by human desire and guided by human intellection. These factors will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

Tung Yu, early twelfth century, writes in a colophon:

- (104) Those who discuss painting in our time say, "Excellence in originating conceptions: through this one can avoid the loss of truth. When one reaches this point, he can make exhaustive use of his ability." Someone once asked what was meant by "originating conceptions" in this regard, and was answered, "It might roughly be called spontaneity." He then asked about this spontaneity, and the answer was, "Those who are able not to alter the truth will obtain it."

Against this roundabout reasoning, Tung sets his own view:

Look at heaven and earth: all living beings are moved and transformed by a single matter-energy (ch'i). Its action is conveyed in secret; it is applied to those beings according to what is suitable, and no one knows what is really acting. Thus it is capable of perfect spontaneity. Nowadays, painters trust in their "wonderful ability"; thereupon they wash in forms, spread color, seeking for comparison with the [material] object, for likeness in imitation of it. But because the accomplishment of all this is through human power, putting last what should be first, how can it accord with true spontaneity?

The wen-jen hua standpoint was that ideal accord with the

⁵³ Here again, similar statements are to be found in discussions of poetry; e.g. Shih-lin shih-hua (148), ch. 3, speaking of a poem: "It is nothing of which human power is capable; its conception of subtle color, variegated brilliance, appears spontaneously in the marvel of Creation." (非人力所能為,而精彩華妙之意,自然見于造化之妙。)

operation of nature can be achieved, if the painter manages to avoid certain impediments to artistic transformation which are suggested in Tung's remarks: excessive intrusion of the artist's ego, excessive adherence to outward reality, excessive dependence upon technical skill. These three evils will be considered, in that order, in the following sections.

An objection similar to Tung Yu's was answered by Wen T'ung in what is the most forceful statement I know of the literati painters' concept of creation. The conversation is reported by Su Tung-p'o. It is important enough to be quoted at some length (although still greatly curtailed):

- (105) Wen Yü-k'o does bamboo [pictures] with ink; these he regards as perfectly good bamboo. A guest once saw them and exclaimed in surprise, "See here, now: the destiny [of bamboo plants] is decreed by Heaven, their forms composed on earth. They are moistened by rain and dew, shaken by the vast winds. They put forth sprouts in the spring, and change with the heat and cold . . . Although all plants are created of one matter, and all grow from the same soil, yet they differ in their nature. I believe that spontaneousness in the growth of living things is something which only [natural] creation can bring about. Now you, by grinding soot from a green pine and moving it about with hair pulled from a rabbit, shaking and sprinkling this onto a piece of silk, finish it in a moment. [You paint it] with a melancholy air, [the stalks] crooked or straight, crossing each other, thick-set or sparse, short or tall. Thus you plunder the secret thoughts of Creation . . . How can you sincerely claim to be acting in accord with the Tao?"
- Yü-k'o listened to all this, then laughed and said, "But the Tao is what I love! I am quite unattached to bamboo. When I first retired to Ch'ung-shan and built my hut in a grove of tall bamboo, I gazed at it and listened to it dispassionately; it had no effect on my mind. In the morning I strolled through it, in the evening it was my companion. I ate and drank among the bamboo, rested in the shade of the bamboo. I learned much about its transmutations—how it looks in wind and rain . . . (Wen delivers a long and rhapsodic description of the life of bamboo.) This is what makes bamboo bamboo. At the beginning I saw it and delighted in it; now I delight in it and lose consciousness of myself. Suddenly I forget that the brush is in my hand, the paper in front of me; all at once I am exhilarated, and recreate the grove of bamboo. How is this in any way different from the impersonality of creation in nature?" (The guest is convinced.)

Thus the wen-jen hua writers, depending on the Neo-Confucian ideas outlined above, developed this parallel between the transformations of the artist and those of nature: as Heaven transforms basic matter into corporeal objects, so does the artist transform his raw material, visual reality, into the work of art. This concept may have played some part, along with factors of taste and temperament, in preventing the Chinese painter from ever taking the final step into non-objective art, from which, at times, his works are separated only by the presence of the thinnest and most remote allusions to natural form. The degree and nature of his alteration of reality is perceptible only so long as such reference exists; totally deprived of any understood point of departure, the work would become all tsao and no hua, creation which is not simultaneously transformation, an action evidently out of harmony with the ways of Chinese thought.

C. There is a li (natural order) in painting as well as in nature. In the ideal act of creation, this li governs the transformations of art as it governs those of nature. Forms produced according to it will have, to the beholder, an inherent "rightness" and "naturalness."

Huang Kung-wang, fourteenth century:

- (106) In painting, it is only the one word li which is the most urgent necessity.

What Fung Yu-lan says of the cosmological li is true also of the artistic: it "prevents the creative process from proceeding haphazardly." More particularly, it prevents wilful and arbitrary distortion of form by the artist. Chang Huai, in his postface (dated 1121) to the treatise of Han Cho, writes:

- (107) Man is the most spiritual among the myriad beings; hence his affinity with painting. If he works according to li, he can paint the wonders of all things; if he is unenlightened about li he will lose the truth of things.

The most famous statement on li in painting is that of Su Tung-p'o. In it, the meaning of li (which I render, for conciseness, as "principle") approaches Needham's "Principle of Organization," that which guides the creation of form.

- (108) I once theorized about painting as follows: People and animals, buildings and interiors, implements and tools, all have constant forms; but when we come to mountains and rocks, bamboo and trees, water and waves, clouds and mist, these have no constant form, but have [only] constant principle. When the constant form is lost, anyone can see that it is; but when the constant principle is missed, even among connoisseurs there are those who won't know [the difference] . . . In painting things in which the form is not constant, one must not fail to give special heed to the principle. The [merely] skilful people of the world can exhaust all the details of the form; but when it comes to the principle, unless one is a noble man of untrammelled talents he will fail to distinguish it.

There is little mystery about this; it makes sense without reference to the philosophy which underlies it. In painting figures, buildings and the like, the painter is relatively restricted in the alterations of form he is allowed. Distort too violently the shape of a house, and the viewer (at least the eleventh century viewer) will laugh at it. But in drawing mountains, trees, clouds, objects of indeterminate shape, the painter has no guide but his own sense of rightness of form. There is not enough constancy in the shapes of these things for any given shape to be ruled out as physically impossible. It would be difficult to draw a rock which absolutely could not exist in nature. On the other hand, it appears that nature unerringly avoids ever producing a rock which looks wrong, while the ordinary painter is quite apt to do so.

Thus far it is matter-of-fact; the wen-jen hua theory of how the painter avoids composing arbitrary and unnatural form is less so. In the ideal act of creation, as specified in all the above, the artist creates as nature creates, spontaneously and without volition; thus divorced from conscious control by the intellect, he falls under the control of the natural order, li, comes to share the unerringness of natural forces, and is equally incapable of producing wrong, "unprincipled" form.

Li in connection with art has sometimes been understood as a Platonic ideal form underlying all the individual shapes of material things. This view may seem in accord with the often-stated

fact that Chinese painters did not ordinarily depict existing, individual objects. However, not only does this interpretation distort the significance of li in Chinese thought,⁵⁴ but it also attributes to Chinese painting an attitude which probably belongs only to its early phases.⁵⁵ A bamboo branch painted by one of the literati painters, while not a copy of any bamboo plant existing in nature, was no less particularized. It was itself an individual. Since, like its corporeal cousin, it had come into being under the control of li, it was no less "natural," no more dependent on the self-willed human effort which was considered to oppose the order of nature. The artist did not so much idealize the products of natural creation as supplement them. Ten thousand earthly bamboos were not abstracted into one "perfect" bamboo; rather, the ten-thousand-and-first came into being beneath his brush.

D. Excessive intrusion of the artist's ego into the act of creation will hinder these transformations. The painter's mind must be empty of conscious thought, and especially of volition. He should create as nature does, spontaneously, unconsciously.

Su Tung-p'o:

- (109) When [Wen] Yü-k'o sets out to paint bamboo,
One sees bamboo, but doesn't see the man.

⁵⁴Cf. Needham, op. cit., p. 475, where he discusses and pronounces unacceptable the equation of ch'i and li with the Matter and Form of Platonic-Aristotelian thought.

⁵⁵Michael Sullivan, in "Pictorial Art . . . in Ancient China (221), p. 2, relates this idealistic concept of art to the attempts in early China to reduce all natural phenomena to a system of abstract symbols, as in the Eight Trigrams. "This concept of hsiang (image) . . . has given rise to the idea that pictorial representation is not for the purpose of describing a particular object, for individual objects have no significance in themselves, but in order to express the ideal or norm which exists eternally beyond the limits of temporal existence and is manifest in natural forms. The more abstract and unparticularized the pictorial forms, the nearer they approach to the true form." The works of some Sung academicians may be said to approach this ideal, the "perfect" flower, rock, tree, divested of all disfiguring accidents; but I would hesitate to describe even these as "abstract and unparticularized."

Why is it that one doesn't see the man?
Because he was oblivious of himself.
His body is transformed with the bamboo,
Inexhaustibly pours forth the fresh and new.
There is no Chuang Chou in our generation—
Who comprehends this "congealing of the spirit"?

The opening lines of this poem apparently contradict the notion propounded earlier, that one "sees the man in his works." Relevant to this question is the comparison drawn by later writers between Wen T'ung and Wu Chen: in Wen's works, they say, one sees the bamboo but not the man; in Wu's, the man but not the bamboo. The comparison implies no adverse judgement of either.

Not enough of Wen T'ung's painting remains, even in reliable copies, for us to say whether or not it was somehow more impersonal than Wu Chen's. It may have been; such a difference might be said, in the most general way, to exist between Sung and Yüan painting as a whole. But as a point of theory, the distinction seems largely a free juggling of words and ideas. Su Tung-p'o suggests in other colophons that the value of Wen's bamboo pictures was that the man could be sensed in them, and had a stone engraving made from one such picture so that later connoisseurs could "remember the character of my regretted friend."⁵⁶ Wu Chen himself writes in a poem, "When Yü-k'o painted bamboo, he didn't see the bamboo." The absence of a specific subject from the Chinese sentences allows much ambiguity as to just who (painter or percipient) really saw (or didn't see) the man or bamboo, and the matter takes on a complexity quite beyond its importance.

There is, at any rate, no very profound contradiction. The qualities of the man should be apparent in the finished painting; but the artist should not aim consciously toward this end, must not deliberately intrude himself into the work.

Wu Chen writes a poem which echoes the latter part of Su's:

(110) I start to paint, becoming
Unconscious of myself,
Suddenly forgetting
The brush is in my hand.

⁵⁶Translated by Sirén, Art of Painting (212), p. 55.

The cook Pao Ting, and
The wheelwright Lun Pien—
If they returned, would they recognize
The meaning of this, or not?

The reference to Chuang-tzu (Chuang Chou) in Su Tung-p'o's poem, and to personages from two of Chuang-tzu's parables in Wu's, suggest the type of quasi-mystical absorption in the activity of the moment which the painter should cultivate. The cook and wheelwright both attained supreme mastery of their crafts through this Taoist discipline, "congealing of the spirit." Absence of deliberation and volition from the act of painting, a temporary cessation of conscious thought, allows the bamboo to grow spontaneously on paper as it does in nature when the right conditions—sun, water, soil—are present.

Chao Pu-chih describes the creative process metaphorically in another poem based on Su Tung-p'o's:

- (111) When [Wen] YÜ-k'o sets out to paint bamboo,
Bamboo is ready-formed within his breast;
Brought to maturity, as by spring rain,
Sprouting and growing, green within the ground.
Comes exhilaration, thunder bursts from earth,
A myriad shoots spring up in cliffs and vales.

When Wen T'ung and Wu Chen speak of "forgetting brush and ink" (cf. q. 99, 105), their meaning should not be equated with, for example, that of the passage in the last section of the "Ching Hao" essay⁵⁷ in which the old man ends his discourse by advising the youth, "Then you can forget brush and ink, and [still] capture the real scenery." These words, in their context, mean rather that when the artist has attained perfect skill, technical means can be neglected while he concentrates on understanding his subject, the physical phenomena of the real world. A similar statement occurs in the Kuo Hsi treatise, in which the author speaks of storing up in the mind impressions of grandiose scenery, and goes on to say: "Then, when you have these arranged in your heart, you no longer see the silk, your hand becomes unconscious of brush and ink."

⁵⁷ Pi-fa chi (82), WSHY ed. 4b. Sakanishi translation (208), p. 95. Probably late Northern Sung in date of composition.

The idea behind these passages is that sufficient garnering of visual impressions from nature, combined with perfect skill, render the actual operation of painting more or less automatic. The literati painters' notion of "forgetting brush and ink" was closer to (and probably influenced by) the practice of meditation in Ch'an Buddhism. The introduction of the idea to art theory may predate Ch'an, however; a statement of it occurs in a short essay on calligraphy which is attributed to the sixth century Wang Seng-ch'ien, but may be somewhat later in date:

- (112) You must make the mind forget itself in the brush
and the hand forget itself in writing. Mind and hand
will then manifest your feeling . . .

There was no contradiction between "being unconscious of one's self" and "manifesting one's feelings." The kind of heightened consciousness best suited to embodiment in painting was not excluded from the "unconscious" mind; it was rather ego, intellection, desire and volition, which had no place in it. Chang Yen-yüan suggests this when he writes:

- (113) Now, if one revolves his thoughts and wields the brush while consciously thinking of one's self as painting, [one's conception] will be all the more lacking from the painting. But if he revolves his thoughts and wields the brush without [consciously] applying his conception to the painting, then it will be achieved in the painting; it will neither be stopped up in the hand, nor frozen in the mind. It will be so without one's knowing it is so.

There is in this notion of non-volition something of the Taoist concept of wu-wei 無為, "non-action"—none, that is, contrary to the order of nature, or motivated by self-will.⁵⁸ The painter Shih-t'ao (cf. q. 51), speaking in praise of early painters, applies to them the phrase wu-wei erh yu-wei 無為而有為, "they accomplished [their ends] without [wilful] action."

In addition to Taoism, a major source of what mystical elements can be found in Neo-Confucian thought was the Ch'an sect of Buddhism; and, as mentioned above, the practice of meditation in this sect, with which the wen-jen hua theorists were familiar, may have influenced their notion of the "empty mind" as proper to the act

⁵⁸ Cf. Needham, op. cit., pp. 68 ff.

of painting. As in Ch'an, the end they aspired to was a mind cleared of intellection, which would then be receptive to a freer play of intuitive experience. The Ch'an monk-painter Chung-jen (Hua-kuang), who was a friend of Huang T'ing-chien and who may properly be included in the Sung literati painter group, is reported to have applied the disciplines of his sect to painting:

- (114) Whenever Hua-kuang painted, he would light incense and sit in meditation to fix his mind. Then, when his conception came to him, with one sweep of the brush the picture would be finished.

The similarity of this description of the painter at work to Su Tung-p'o's (q. 96) is notable. But, as suggested above, the idea of the "empty mind" (which is what must remain when the painter has become unconscious of himself, of the bamboo, of the brush and ink) need not be traced to Ch'an; by this period, it had been thoroughly absorbed into the Neo-Confucian system. The eleventh century philosopher Chou Tun-i, for example, writes:

- (115) The important thing is singleness. This singleness means the absence of desire (wu-yü 無欲). Such absence of desire results in vacuity (hsü 虛) when in quiescence, and straightforwardness (chih 直) when in movement.⁵⁹

The "absence of desire" means, as Fung Yu-lan says, absence of all selfish motivation. The importance of proper motivation will be considered later in its artistic application.

Aoki Masaru points out that the originally Taoist idea of "the empty mind, without thought" (虛心無思想) had appeared in theoretical writings on poetry by the T'ang Dynasty, and was fairly current by the Sung. There is an even earlier occurrence, in the Wen-fu ("Rhyme-prose on Literature") of Lu Chi, dated 302 A.D.:

- (116) [The writer] empties his mind completely, to concentrate his thoughts.

For painting, it is suggested in the writing of Chang Yen-yüan (q. 113) and developed by Sung writers. Mi Fu, in discussing calligraphy, advises the writer to

- (117) hold the brush lightly, so that mind and hand, as if empty,

⁵⁹ For other references to "vacuity" in Neo-Confucian writings, see Fung, op. cit., pp. 417, 467, 528.

move quickly, spontaneously. The reality of nature will then come forth, beyond your expectations.

Relevant to this attitude is the term hsin-shou 信手, literally "to trust to the hand," often used in connection with painting. A Sung poet⁶¹ writes on paintings of the scenery of the Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers by Sung Ti:

- (118) [Memories of] his former travels awaken spontaneously
in his mind;
He trusts to his hand, the brush totally forgotten.

Su Tung-p'o writes of a musician:

- (119) When Master Shen plucks the lute, trusting to his hand,
[the sound] harmonizes with the sound of rivulets.

A related phrase, hsin pi 信筆, "to trust to the brush," sometimes occurs in writings on painting, and is also used to describe literary productions of the "random jottings" sort. Comparable to both is hsin k'ou 信口, "to trust to the mouth," defined as "to say whatever comes uppermost." All three phrases imply an absence of intellectual control over the activity.⁶²

E. Another major impediment to artistic transformation is slavish adherence to outward appearances. Failure to transform these means failure to produce the forms of art.

Chao Pu-chih contributes the clearest statement of this tenet:

- (120) Painting depicts forms beyond the [material] object;
Whoever insists on the object will fail to alter the form.

⁶¹Attributed in SHC (30) to Chang Chi (cf. q. 42), who, however, lived several centuries before Sung Ti. Presumably a misprint.

⁶²This Chinese view is a contradiction of the common idea that "an air of unstudied spontaneous utterance is apt to be as painstakingly achieved as any other quality . . ." (Langer, op. cit., p. 245, speaking of poetry.) Again the question is one to be answered only by the artists themselves; and the Chinese painters leave us no room for doubt in their case. It is difficult to imagine at what point the taking of pains could have entered the production of one of Wu Chen's swift brush-plays—except, of course, in the years of maturing power which made possible this eventual spontaneity; but this is quite a different matter from taking pains over the individual work.

One of Su Tung-p'o's most often-quoted quatrains runs:

One who discusses paintings in terms of likeness
Must be looked upon as neighbor to a child.
Whoever makes a poem insisting on that poem
Is surely not a man who knows poetry.

Su seems here to be attacking the notion that the ideal at which the creative artist should aim is the "perfect" work of art; the painting which so completely captures the appearance of its model, the poem which, in ideal form, so perfectly embodies a given idea, scene, emotion, that any alteration would be to their detriment. No such ideal existed for the literati artist, and it is a mistake to judge his creations by their presumed proximity to it.

So, at least, I would understand Su's quatrain; how other Sung scholars understood it is a different matter. Some (along with many later men) quote it approvingly; but it provoked a thirteenth century writer, Wang Jo-hsi, to an indignant outburst:

- (122) Why, likeness is what is valued in painting! Anyone painting without likeness might as well not paint at all . . . To compose a poem, but not necessarily that poem—what is he talking about, anyway? P'o's theory is false . . . People who don't base themselves on [outer] reality aren't going to achieve it in their minds. Anyone who borrows this theory, considering it to be "lofty," and paints landscapes [according to it], won't be able to do a single proper tree or stone, but will have to rely on clouds, mist and perfumed haze, calling this "mood [-painting]."

Some artists objected to the idea of the painter creating forms instead of adopting those of nature. Of the painter Yen Su it is

- (123) The paintings of Yen Chung-mu were throughout his life confined to things he had seen; he never fabricated out of empty air, adding and diminishing according to his fancy. When asked about this, he would reply, "Anything which goes beyond human expectations [i. e. departs radically from what is seen in nature] must lose [the quality of] spontaneity."

This is, of course, in direct contradiction to the literati painters' view. A fourteenth century follower of the Southern Sung academy style in landscape, Wang Li, writing the preface to his album of paintings of Mt. Hua, grants the importance of conception in painting, but goes on to say:

- (124) But the conception lies in the forms; if you discard the forms, where can you look for the conception? Therefore, capture the forms of objects and your [or their?] conception will be fully contained in those forms. If you lose the forms, where will the conception be? In painting things, what one wants is their likeness; how, then, can the things be [rendered] unrecognizable?

The flaw in this argument, which seems on the surface so cogent, is in Wang's refusal to allow, besides his alternatives of representational form and no form at all, a third possibility: expressive form which is not primarily representational. The validity of such form in art had been clearly recognized by the literati painters, e.g. by Ni Tsan a generation before Wang Li. Ni admitted that his bamboo pictures bore little resemblance to bamboo in nature, but considered them none the less expressive of his feeling. He had thus refuted Wang Li in advance, by "discarding the forms" without "losing the conception." The basic conflict in thought between the two arises, of course, from their diverse understandings of "conception." Wang takes it to be inherent in objects of nature (so that his i would be better rendered as "idea"); Ni considers it to take form in the artist's mind.

Both Yen Su and Wang Li stress the importance of painting only what one knows from personal acquaintance. Wang, when asked who was his teacher, replied, "My teacher is my mind; its teacher is my eyes; their teacher is the Hua Mountain." Here we have another clear statement of the primary concept of painting: the expression of the work originates in the actual landscape, is filtered through the eyes and mind of the painter, and is finally embodied by him in the picture.

Most literati painters also believed firmly in the importance of intimate acquaintance with nature, although not with the aim of the direct transference to art of the impressions thus received. Some painters, such as Huang Kung-wang, are reported to have carried sketchbooks for drawing what they saw on walks in the mountains. On the other hand, Su Tung-p'o seems to belittle this aspect of the painter's preparation. He writes of his cultured and urban friend, the landscapist Wang Shen:

- (125) His elegant bearing, literary grace, cannot be rubbed away;
His painting in ink contends in beauty with his poetry.
To paint mountains, why need one be a dweller in the
mountains?
One naturally composes country songs, while knowing
nothing of the country.⁶³

The conviction that painting must not be evaluated on the basis of fidelity to nature runs through Chinese critical writing. Chang Yen-yüan, in the ninth century, speaks of the inadequacy of judgement according to "mere verisimilitude,"⁶⁴ and the Yüan Dynasty connoisseur T'ang Hou relegates "likeness" to the end of a list of qualities one should look for in a painting.⁶⁵

Such a tendency in criticism undoubtedly stimulated the painters to depart still further from fidelity to the forms of nature. Ni Tsan seems to have taken positive delight in the judgement of some people that his bamboo looked like "hemp, or rushes," and is reported to have answered someone who pointed out that one such picture (which Ni had painted the night before while drunk) didn't look like bamboo at all, by laughing and saying, "Ah, but a total lack of resemblance is hard to achieve! Not everyone can manage it!"

Conformity to natural appearance was considered to hamper both the free growth of an artistic conception in the painter's mind and his spontaneous actualization of it on paper. Tung Yu, after a standard denunciation of the pursuit of likeness in painting,⁶⁶ describes the ideal creative process:

- (126) Thus we know that those who have no real mind for painting are those who try to do it by putting primary emphasis on created things. The composition of forms and production of images originates in the birth of a

⁶³ TPHSS (159) prints a slightly different last line, reading tzu ku 自古 in place of tzu tso 自作. In this variant, the line might be rendered: [Writers of] country songs, from ancient times, weren't those who knew the country.

⁶⁴ Acker translation (182), p. 152. On the early occurrence of this idea in Chinese art criticism, see his Introduction, p. LI.

⁶⁵ Hua lun (51), MSTS ed. 4a.

⁶⁶ Translated by Sirén, Art of Painting (212), p. 65.

conception, which is achieved spontaneously. One waits until it appears in the heart, as a flower or leaf detaches itself and springs forth. Only afterwards is it exteriorized through use of the hand, and appearance lodged in it. No one who pursues likeness can ever commit his [own] conceptions [to painting].

The license allowed the artists by the critics was indeed very wide. Shen Kua, one of the late eleventh century group, writes a diatribe against those who judge paintings according to likeness, and takes to task Chang Yen-yüan, who had criticized Wang Wei for painting flowers of different seasons in a single composition. Shen proudly tells of owning a Wang Wei snow scene in which a banana-palm appears. He comments:

- (127) He had conceived the thing in his mind; his hand responded, and it was done as conceived.

F. Excessive dependence upon technical skill is a hindrance to artistic transformation. Ideally, painting should be more than skilful; the artist should transcend skill.

Su Tung-p'o, who generally accords the highest praise to the great Wu Tao-tzu, nevertheless places him one step below Wang Wei:

- (128) Wu, for all his surpassing excellence, must still be discussed in terms of painting skill; while [Wang] Mo-chieh achieved his effects beyond the [visual] image.

What, one may ask, is to replace the acquisition of technical facility through disciplined practice? Two factors: innate ability (cf. q. 22, 26) and the normal self-cultivation of the Confucian literatus. Artistic ability should flower slowly and late, by a natural, unforced process. The painter develops what technique he requires, nurtures his individual manner, by leisurely practice of painting as an avocation; he does not proceed single-mindedly toward a predetermined goal, that of "proficiency"—for he has no way of knowing what form, in his individual case, this proficiency will take, until he has attained it. It may be noted, in connection with this view, that the major works of the literati painters were normally produced in their late years; many of them (such as Wu Chen) are unknown as painters until they reach fairly advanced ages.

Technical accomplishment was not in itself condemned, providing it was achieved effortlessly, and did not lead to certain undesirable side-effects, to be discussed below. Several of the most highly-regarded among the late Northern Sung group—Li Kung-lin, Wang Shen, probably Mi Fu—were quite as proficient technically as any professional of their day, yet were not denounced by their friends as artisans.⁶⁷

One may or may not possess outstanding technical ability; one may not depend upon it, or allow the employment of it to be apparent in the finished work. A painting done by a man of brilliance and character, motivated by a proper aim—embodiment of feeling rather than production of a beautiful or admirable object—and accomplished in keeping with the concept of the creative act outlined above, will reveal a competence which is beyond the reach of technical mastery, and which no incidental skill will harm. An early Southern Sung writer, Yeh Meng-te, says of poetry:

- (129) In the language of poetry, excess of skill is to be firmly avoided; but if things are embodied by affinity with one's feelings, [the poem] has spontaneously a wondrous artfulness, and even though it be skilful, one doesn't see in it the traces of carving [i.e. laboriousness].

Skill, in the literati painter's view, was too often employed for an effect of brilliance and surface beauty; whereas the abilities and sensibilities he himself possessed could, given a modicum of technical facility, produce the qualities he valued more highly: apparent weakness concealing actual strength, complexity hidden in simplicity, a subtle richness underlying a seeming starkness. Failure to achieve these qualities through over-reliance on superficial brilliance was considered to reduce in value the works of such artists as Chao Ch'ang, characterized by Mi Fu as "beautifully glib,"⁶⁸ or Li Ssu-hsün, the T'ang landscapist whom Tung Ch'i-

⁶⁷ Wang and Li are the only two painters close to his own time whom Han Cho includes in his list of scholar-painters who had "adhered to the rules."

⁶⁸ Mi's comment, set against the praise accorded Chao by others, illustrates vividly how different concepts of the function of painting can lead to different evaluations. Hsüan-ho hua-p'u says of him:

ch'ang later named as the founder of the much-belittled "Northern School," and of whom the "Ching Hao" treatise says:

- (130) General Li's principle (li) was profound and his thought remote; his brushwork was very delicate. Nevertheless, he was skilful and florid, and badly deficient in ink-tone.

Su Tung-p'o writes of calligraphy:

- (131) Most faults in writing come from too much ornamentation. In our time, the young men embellish their characters with much coquetry. But it is like the lovely costume of a new bride—it doesn't indicate that she is necessarily a virtuous woman.

Wu K'o, an early twelfth century writer and friend of Mi Fu's son Yu-jen, writes the following of poetry, but it could be applied as well to painting:

- (132) Generally, ornamentation and detailed description [make the poem] attractive in its externals; when one first reads it, he seems to like it, but on repeated reading it loses its flavor. One must concentrate rather on the conception. But if one uses floridity and prettiness to prop this, then both internal [content] and external [form] will be cloying . . . That is why ornamentation and detailed description make the outside rich but the inside rotten. This is also spoken of as "flowering without bearing fruit." Poetry of the late T'ang period had this failing; it was too skilful, only labored, florid externally but weak in spirit . . . If, in the apposition [of words⁶⁹] in a poem one aims at skill, [the result] will inevitably be weak in spirit; on the other hand, unskilfulness in such apposition cannot make it weak in spirit. Now, literature begins by being florid and pretty, and later becomes flat and thin. It is like the succession of the seasons: spring is florid, summer brings luxurious

"Where the professional painter will primarily catch a likeness, that is not true of works like Ch'ang's, which immediately convey the soul of the flower." Li Ch'ih, in Hua-p'in: "The lotus blossom grows up out of mud and slime, to emerge above water and not be wet by it. Ch'ang, [by giving] this blossom so pure and profound a tone, has enabled us to realize this underlying idea." Both use value criteria unacceptable to the wen-jen hua group, who were not so interested in pursuing "souls" or "underlying ideas." (All the above translations from Soper, "A Northern Sung Descriptive Catalogue of Paintings" (218), p. 33 and note 70.)

⁶⁹ 對 I.e. words occupying matching positions in a couplet (tui 對) composed of parallel verses. Ch'ieh-tui 切對 is presumably a technical term in poetry; I have been unable to find a definition of it in any dictionary.

fruition. But autumn and winter are times of gathering in; they are withered on the surface but internally rich. Flowering and fruition are both contained in them.

It was in this way, and not in technical accomplishment, that the literati painters considered themselves to "transcend skill"; renouncing the stages of "flowering and fruition," they attempted a direct penetration to the consummation of these in the stage of full maturity, even at some sacrifice of visual beauty. Outer plainness and inner richness was their ideal. Terms used by critics in praising paintings of the literati school reflect this preference: tan 淡, "bland, insipid," and tan 澹, "placid"; ts'ang-lao 蒼老, "old and hoary"; jou 柔, "soft, pliant." It was this deceptive "weakness" which professional painting, "merely skilful," was held to lack.

Belittling of the factor of skill in painting was apt to lead to excesses, both in theory and in practice. The late Ming painter Ku Ning-yüan, perhaps in compensation for his own mediocre artistic talents, advocates the deliberate cultivation of clumsiness, warning that once one has lost this virtue and become skilled, it is too late—there is no returning.⁷⁰ As for the practice of deliberate awkwardness, it must be condemned or condoned according to individual cases. If such artists as Li Jih-hua and Chan Ching-feng (both noted as connoisseurs, but less so as painters) could have transcended through practice their modest abilities but chose not to, there is no excusing them. On the other hand, even if Ni Tsan's "bamboo like hemp-stalks," or Chu Ta's misshapen birds tottering on their preposterous rocks, may properly be spoken of as products of calculated clumsiness, we cannot easily bring ourselves to censure it.

The truth is, of course, that these artists had enough of technical skill, and of the precise kind they needed, to meet their expressive requirements. Both developed very personal qualities of form and line, especially in their late years, which could hardly

⁷⁰ Hua yin (58), section on sheng cho 生拙. Similar statements in reference to calligraphy and literature (e.g. "In literature, it is not skill which is hard to achieve, but clumsiness [cho"]") are made as early as the Sung Dynasty, by Su Tung-p'o and other writers. See Aoki, Bungaku shisô (169), pp. 115-6, 330.

have been improved by training in traditional techniques. I cannot believe, in fact, that many of the painters who have earned the admiration of centuries of Chinese connoisseurs were so lacking in skill that it interfered seriously with their creative aims. They recognized the need for technique adequate to their purposes, and their own deficiencies when they lacked it. Su Tung-p'o's admission that he could understand but not equal Wen T'ung as a painter, and his statement that lack of accord between mind and hand is the result of "an excess of not studying," are further indications (along with that in q. 21) that he was not unaware of the importance, although to him secondary importance, of technique. His disdainful "Why should a noble man study painting?" is thus put in its proper setting as a piece of occasional rhetoric.

Duration and Motivation of the Creative Act.

IV A. Since painting is properly the product of a "heightened moment," the physical act of painting should not extend over too long a period. In the case of large-scale works which cannot be accomplished in one such session, successive periods of exhilaration may be applied to a single work.

Su Tung-p'o:

- (133) Creation originates in nothingness;
Then, suddenly, there is no impediment—
The heart of the flower springs from a wash of ink,
The color of spring scatters from the brush-tip.

The twelfth century writer Fei Kun, in a passage on "Painting Water," treats at length the question of the proper duration of a single act of creation. He first quotes Su Tung-p'o's colophon on a Wen T'ung bamboo picture (q. 96), then relates an anecdote concerning Sun Chih-wei, an eleventh century painter famous for his depictions of water. Sun had contracted to paint compositions of waves and rocks on the walls of a temple building; but years passed without his beginning the project. One day he arrived at the temple in a great hurry, asked for brush and ink, and "in an impetuous burst of activity, his sleeves flying as if in the wind, finished it all in an instant." Fei comments:

- (134) At the moment when mind and hand are in accord, there is not a gap of a hair's breadth between them. It isn't like painting buildings and figures, which can be done with slow, devious movements of the brush, and completed over a span of days.

Finally, Fei quotes two lines from a poem by the T'ang poet Tu Fu, who says of his contemporary Wang Tsai: "In ten days he paints one stream, in five days one stone." Fei states flatly: "If it takes ten days to finish, the painting won't be worth looking at." Another twelfth century writer, Wang An-chung, in a poem written for a Li Ch'eng landscape, takes exception to these same lines by Tu Fu:

- (135) "Five days, ten days, one stream or stone"—
These words may perhaps apply to artisan work;
But see heaven and earth, the opening forth of Creation!
Does it melt and fuse a day, a month, in casting a soul?
It does its work with suddenness, as the occasion
requires . . . "

Thus, in still another parallel between natural and artistic creation, Wang establishes the ideal: spontaneity, vigor, dispatch. The expressive force of a painting depends first upon the conception of form in the mind of the artist, and secondly upon the physical movements made by him in painting, as these make their traces through his supple brush and so are sensed by the viewer in a kind of empathic kinesthesia. Both factors depend in turn upon the artist's state of mind during the physical production of the work. Painting done in a listless mood had better be left undone. When one's "exhilaration is exhausted," one had best stop. Curiously, it is nowhere suggested, although it must have been true in the experience of Chinese as well as Western artists, that the excitement of creation itself could sustain the intensity of the artist's feeling throughout the period of production.

A small painting, reflecting an ephemeral mood, was not assigned the status of relative unimportance which was formerly the fate of random sketches and occasional works in the West. If one's mind is "made visible in a single character" (q. 81), so is it manifested in a single branch of bamboo, or a landscape so simple as to be no more than a "fugitive vision." Wu Chen writes on a bamboo picture:

- (136) By "following my brush" I have done these few stalks of bamboo.⁷¹ Although they arise as overflow from the exhilaration of a single moment, yet they have a natural flavor of their own.

Of the pair of Su Tung-p'o paintings twice mentioned above (q. 55, 88), Ho Yüan writes:

- (137) Although this Old Tree and Bamboo and Stone, done by the master's playful brush, are only products of a single moment, yet [in doing them] he chose to follow his pleasure and disregard all ancient and modern standards of painting.

The admiration accorded works produced in such a way, from the Sung Dynasty onward, reveals to us the profound change which had occurred in basic notions about artistic creation since the T'ang period, when Tu Fu wrote of "five days to paint one rock," and Chang Yen-yüan stated, "A piece of writing may take some time to finish, but to complete a painting is a matter of months and years."⁷² The ideal of speed and spontaneity finds a response in our modern Occidental taste, which is likely, in many cases, to prefer the sketch to the finished work.

But the output of the literati painters was not limited to "products of the moment"; how was a large and detailed painting to be accomplished? A solution to this problem, the application of a succession of such moments to a single work, is suggested by an account of the way the Yüan landscapist Wang Meng painted a view of Mt. T'ai:

- (138) He stretched a piece of silk on the wall, and whenever he was in a state of exhilaration, applied the brush to it. After about three years, the picture was finished.

The extraordinary vitality of surface in the works of Wang Meng, the absence of any areas which betray a perfunctory and unfeeling continuation of the painting process, carried out

⁷¹"Following the brush" (sui pi 隨筆), i.e. relaxing intellectual control over it, is a phrase close in meaning to hsin pi (cf. p. 68). Again there is a parallel phrase sui k'ou 隨口, "following the mouth" or "talking at random." Sui-pi as a compound term is commonly used for informal essays and random jottings.

⁷²Acker translation (182), p. 196.

solely in order to finish the picture, attest to the efficacy of his method. Huang Kung-wang and other artists provide us, in inscriptions on their paintings, with accounts of similar programs by which large-scale works were executed.

The professional, of course, could hardly await the arrival of the pregnant moment; with mouths to feed by his art, and perhaps a commission to fulfill, he simply sat down and painted. This observation may serve to introduce the final section.

B. The creation of a work of art must be motivated by a proper purpose. If a painting is produced on commission or for sale, the mercenary motive will be reflected in it.

Chang Shun-min, early twelfth century:

- (139) When a vulgar man takes up the brush, he is sure to produce vulgar shapes with the intention of selling them; and another vulgar man will buy them.

Desire for personal gain, as a spur to any action, was expressly condemned in Neo-Confucian thought as incompatible with spontaneity. One eleventh century philosopher quotes Mencius' parable of the man who sees a child about to fall into a well: if the man acts spontaneously to save the child, he is acting in accordance with li, the principle of nature. "But when there are [secondary considerations, such as] a desire to seek the praise of neighbors and friends, or to gain the favor of the child's parents, . . . these represent human desire . . ."⁷³

The parallel between such a case and artistic creation is not perfect; the child would be saved whatever the motive, but (in the wen-jen hua view) the painting would not. Implicit in the work of art are the circumstances (reflected in the mind of the artist) which gave rise to it; any fault in these becomes a fault in the picture.

This conviction, together with the belief that reliance upon skill is detrimental to artistic quality, led to a belittling of the work of the professional. While his accomplishments could be

⁷³Hsieh Liang-tso (1050-1103). Quoted from Fung, op. cit., p. 105.

very great, they were always on a somewhat different plane from those of the scholar-artist. Su Tung-p'o writes in praise of a contemporary:

- (140) Mr. Chu Hsiang-hsien is capable in literature, but doesn't seek [official] promotion [through it]; he can paint well, but doesn't attempt to sell his works. He says, "I write to make known my mind, I paint to suit my conceptions—that's all."

The belief in painting as an intimate revelation of the nature of the artist, as this interacts with his responses to external circumstance to define a moment in his life, seemed to the scholar-painter quite incompatible with the production of paintings for sale or on demand. To sell a painting was, for him, to sell a part of one's self, "prostitute one's art" in a very real sense. A painting might be done as a present for a friend, or given to a friend when finished; but the motive of personal gain must not enter the creation of it.

It is related of many artists (among them Shih-k'o, Kuo Chung-shu, Wen T'ung, Wu Chen, Ni Tsan) that they refused to paint on commission, or sell their works. In the typical anecdote told of them, wealthy citizens bring rich presents to their homes, in the hope of being given a picture; but these hopefuls receive only insults, and are sometimes thrown out the door besides. Li Kung-lin's protest when people came to him for paintings was milder, according to what the Hsüan-ho hua-p'u tells us:

- (141) Kung-lin sighed and said, "I make paintings as a poet composes poems; I lyricize my feelings and nature [cf. q. 64] and nothing more. Alas, why can't people ever find this out? They only want me to contribute to their entertainment."

The true purpose of painting was the expression or communication of feeling. But while the artist sometimes states this as his aim (as does Li Kung-lin in the above quotation, or Ni Tsan in his famous "The only purpose of my bamboo painting is to transcribe the untrammelled feelings of my heart"), just as often he will admit to no serious aim at all, but speaks of his painting as a form of play. Mi Fu and his son Yu-jen inscribed their works with the terms hsi-tao 戲作, "playfully done," and mo-hsi 墨戲, "ink-play." Wu Chen, who designates almost all his pictures in this way, writes:

- (142) The making of ink-plays is done by gentleman-scholars as overflow from their literary activities; they are made only to agree with a momentary feeling of exhilaration.

"Play" may seem to us a shallow objective in art; but we should not accept the word at face value, and conclude that the literati artist truly took his painting lightly. On the contrary, he was likely to take it very seriously indeed; "play" is only a convenient term to describe an activity which serves no practical purpose—as painting serves none, even to the extent of necessarily producing an intrinsically valuable or beautiful object. He wanted it made very clear that he was not setting out to produce awe-inspiring masterpieces. If his works came to be prized by people of later times, well and good; but this was no immediate concern of his.

These points may be illustrated, and the entire wen-jen hua position summed up, by consideration of a specific Wu Chen "ink-play."⁷⁴ The painting is of a sprig of bamboo; it is accompanied by the illuminating poem of which two quatrains have already been quoted (q. 38, 99). In this poem, Wu Chen sets forth most clearly his belief about the fundamental character of painting, according to which even fragments, if they succeed in conveying the transient feeling of a sensitive artist, are worthy of being treasured. And it is a fragment, accordingly, which he has given us: little more than four twigs and a dozen leaves, done with no show of brilliance, a work so slight that it could hardly be of much value as a picture of bamboo. Nevertheless, in the purpose he conceives painting to serve, it functions perfectly; there is not much of bamboo in it, but all of Wu Chen.

To painting and poem he adds a note in prose:

- (143) The picture on the left, the writing on the right—
[they are actually in the reverse order; perhaps Wu Chen is suggesting their complete interchangeability?] should be looked at for their [embodiment of] a joyful mood. They are cheerful expressions of my nature and feeling. Recent collectors take such works for objects of sale in the marketplace, concerning themselves over genuineness or forgery. This is contrary and harmful to that nature and feeling. But they are blind and deaf, alas!

⁷⁴ Pl. XXVIII-A; see Catalog, A-13.

or of the "souls" of things, lagged by centuries behind recognition of the same property as a valid function of calligraphy and poetry.

As the Northern Sung period was an age of synthesis in philosophy, with the Neo-Confucian system as its product, so it was in the theory of art. It should be apparent from the critical writings cited in the foregoing that an integration of theory was taking place. A common terminology is used in discussing the various arts, and commonly-held principles underlie these discussions. Through this interaction, painting received several new attributes (the theory of painting, that is, for they had undoubtedly been present in the practice of it long before the critics were willing or able to recognize them.)

It had long been a matter of general belief that poetry can and should express the poet's personal nature and feeling, either directly or through indirect means; and that this is a function of words separate from statement of fact or opinion, description, argument—from any use of words to describe or comment upon things external to the poet.

A conviction of the expressiveness of abstract line and form had been basic to discussions of calligraphy from relatively early stages of that art. The emotive import of calligraphy was seen to arise from the symbolic power of forms created by the writer, and also from the degree and nature of their departure from the standard forms of the script he was using—that is, in the artist's free and individual transformation of his material.

In wen-jen hua theory, it was recognized that all the above is true also, mutatis mutandis, of painting; that painting, whatever else it may do at the same time—recording of visual appearance, decoration of a wall or illustration of an historical anecdote—does these incidentally, its main function being the embodiment of the personal feeling of the artist in forms.

Having thus stated what literati painting is, we may conclude by stating a few things which it is not:

Wu ends by dating his inscription, signing it and adding "Written as an ink-play."

The picture, poem and inscription, considered together, offer a complete revelation of what Wu Chen thought to be the proper function of painting. "Here," he says to the blind and deaf collector (or rather doesn't, but might have), "here is a genuine Wu Chen for you, 'an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own.' How much is it worth? If there were eight twigs and two dozen leaves, would its value be doubled? And who are you, anyway, to set a price on a moment in my life?"

At this point he would lose his temper and throw the man out the door.

Conclusion.

In the introduction to this study, it was suggested that the development of literati painting theory was a process through which the Chinese view of painting was brought into accord with views already held toward calligraphy and poetry. We may now reconsider this suggestion in the light of the parallels between the arts developed above.

Susanne Langer builds her discussion on the premise of "the relative autonomy of the several arts and their fundamental unity in 'Art' itself." A basic concept of the nature of artistic expression which holds for one should be applicable to the others.

Even before the Sung period, the Chinese spoke in general terms of the underlying unity of the arts; but they often revealed, at the same time, quite inconsistent ideas about the very nature and function of those arts. Differing technical problems evolved different approaches; what was later acknowledged to be true also of others was at first accepted only of one of them.

Langer, pointing out that "each art has its special incubus of natural misconceptions," designates as the particular affliction of painting and sculpture "the pseudo-problem of 'imitation'." In China, recognition of painting as subjective expression, delayed by a preoccupation with painting as representation either of appearances

1. It is not a revelation of Cosmic Truths, not a presentation of some mystical view of the universe, Ch'an Buddhist or other. It is not, even in any remote sense, religious painting. It is likely to be an expression of values peculiar to the individual or to a group of individuals, rather than common to the culture as a whole. It is at least as much concerned with the transitory as with the eternal. It is, in short, precisely what one school of thought about Oriental art (to which the idea of art as expression of the brilliance and nobility of the individual man is curiously abhorrent) assures us would not, or at least should not, have been allowed to exist in the Orient.

2. It is not aimed at extracting the "souls" of things, at "catching the very essence," or at revealing the ideal form beyond the accidents of time and space. Thus Sirén, in attributing to Su Tung-p'o the view that "painting should not be a representation of forms but a revelation of the inner life or soul that animates the forms,"⁷⁵ attributes to Su exactly the attitude which his new system of ideas was intended to supplant. Ch'i-yün or "spirit consonance" is no longer in objects, nor is "feeling" in them; it is in the artist, and lodged by him in freely transformed depictions of them.

3. It is not the idle pastime of the casual dilettante, treasured by posterity because of the painter's extra-artistic reputation. Many highly admired men were recognized to have been incapable as painters; Wu Chen would soon have been forgotten had he not been an extremely good painter. The system of values which guided Chinese connoisseurship differed from ours in some respects, but is not separated from ours by any such unbridgeable gulf as some Western writers have tried to establish. The only way we will ever reach the position of being able to decide what we can or cannot accept from this Chinese system of values is, first, by understanding it, and second, by approximating the familiarity with large numbers of original paintings upon which it was based. There is still some progress to be made before we can properly claim to have done either.

⁷⁵ History of Early Chinese Painting (214), II, 35.

一至於山水。實有而趣靈。

二夫聖人以神法道。而賢者通。山水以形媚道。而仁者樂。不亦幾乎。

三況乎身所盤桓。目所綢繆。以形寫形。以色貌色。四神本亡端。極形感類。理入影迹。誠能妙寫。亦誠盡矣。

五夫以應目會心為理者。類之成巧。則目亦同。應心亦俱會。

六畫非止藝。行成當與易象同體。

七工篆隸者。自以書巧為高。欲其並辭藻繪。覈其攸同。夫言繪畫者。竟求容勢而已。

八本乎形者。謂靈而動。變者心也。靈亡所見。故所託不動。

九披圖按牌。効異山海。綠林揚風。白水激澗。鳴呼。豈獨運諸指掌。亦以明神降之。此畫之情也。

十然則林泉之志煙霞之侶夢寐在焉耳目斷絕今得
妙手點染然出之不下堂筵坐窮泉壑此世之所以
貴夫畫山水之本意也

十一看此畫令人生此意如真在此山中此畫之景外意也
十二看此畫令人起此心如真即其處此畫之意外妙也
十三玉堂臥對郭熙畫發興已在青林間

十四便其見者悠然如在灞橋風雪中不復有朝市抗塵
走俗之狀

十五自古善畫者莫匪衣冠貴冑逸士高人振妙一時傳
芳千祀非閭閻鄙賤之所能為也

十六其餘直以能畫定其品格不計其冠冕賢愚然
於品格之中略序其事後之至覽者可以詆訶其理
為不謬矣

十七竊觀自古奇蹟多是軒冕才賢巖穴上士依仁游
藝高雅之情一寄於畫人品既已高矣氣韻不得不高

十八、士大夫工畫者必工書。其畫法即書法所在。然則畫豈可以庸妄人得之乎。

十九、故畫品優劣關於人品之高下。

二十、自唐至宋畫山水得名者類。非畫家者流而多出於縉紳士大夫。然得其氣韻者或乏筆法。或得筆法者多失位置。

二十一、然有道有藝。有道而不藝。則物雖形於心。不形於手。

二十二、如其氣韻必在生知。固不可以巧密得。復不可以歲月到。

二十三、學書在法。而妙在人。法可以人人而傳。而妙必其胸中之所獨得。

二十四、今雖錄其品格。豈獨稱其材能。皆先其天性。而後其習學。

二十五、吾性知書。蓋鳴鶴識夜之機。

二十六、高人豈學畫。用筆乃其天。譬如善遊人。一能操船。

二十七、未有業不精於己者也。且古人以勢學而開其性。今之人以天性取於學。此所以去古逾遠而業逾不精也。

且人之無學。者謂之無格。無格者謂之無前人之格法。

也。豈落格法而自為超越。古今名賢者歟。所謂寡學之士則多性狂而自蔽者。

二十六。古之學者皆有師法。今之學者但任胃懷。無自然之逸氣。有師心之獨往。偶有能者。時見一點。忽有不悟者。終身瞋目。

二十九。今人古人不相見。遺跡宛然人未亡。

三十。古蹟當以書畫卷軸為無上佳品。而琴硯銅玉蜜器等項不與焉。何也。蓋書畫卷軸乃名流心畫所寄。非如琴硯銅玉蜜器等項。僅為良工長技而已。

三十一。夫言心聲也。書心畫也。聲畫形則君子小人見矣。

三十二。本自心源。想成形跡。與心合是之謂印。書畫發之於情思。契之於絢繡。

三十三。讀此詩。可以想見其人。

三十四。觀其書。有以得其為人。則君子小人必見于書。

三十五。世之小人書。字雖工而其神情終有睚眦側媚之態。

不知人情隨想而見

三十六俗不問何人見用筆稍佳者則珍藏之苟非其人特
一畫工所能何足貴也如崇寧大臣以書名者後人
往往唾去而東坡所作枯木竹石萬金爭售觀非以
其人而輕重哉舊書畫者當以予言而求之

三十七(予嘗謂)古人因書而得名後人因名而名其書

三十八圖書畫之緒豪素寄所適垂垂歲月久殘斷爭寶惜

三十九畫音寂然姑述其槩以寄余懷云

四十書畫之妙本士大夫適興寄意而已

四十一乃知瀟湘洞庭岸平吞胸中寄筆力

四十二畫得江城登望處寄來今日到長安

四十三漠漠疎林寄秋晚

四十四誰言一點紅解寄無邊春

四十五李成熙作營丘山水圖富象賦景得其全

四十六又謂顧長康嘗以所見於寺而寓之圖以發喟噓

四十七、寫物寫形非天機深到。

四十八、仇與趙雖格不同，皆習者之流，非以畫為寄，以畫為

樂者也。寄樂於畫，自黃公望始開此門庭耳。

四十九、多藏其得意之作：寄興清遠，真士人筆也。

五十、畫謂之無聲詩，乃賢哲寄興。

五十一、古人寄興於筆墨，假道於山川。

五十二、興有不同，而皆極天下之感。君子以之冥心焉。

五十三、詩有三義焉：一曰興，二曰比，三曰賦。文已盡而意有

餘，興也。田物喻志，比也。直書其事，寓言寫物，賦也。

五十四、本只作墨本，餘興未已，更作竹石一紙。

五十六、知公此中興不淺，此畫故能留意深。

五十七、聞君掃却赤縣圖，乘興遣畫滄洲趣。

五十八、每乘興得意而作，則萬事俱忘。

五十九、李營丘尺牘寬，皆士夫過其適興，則留數筆。

六十二、常謂情志所託，故當以意為主，以文傳意。

六十二、喜會寄詩以親離羣託詩以怨：凡斯種種感蕩心靈非陳詩何以展其義非長歌何以騁其情。

六十三、詩者述事以寄情事貴詳情貴隱及乎感會于心則情見于詞此所以入人深也如將盛氣直述更無餘味則感人也。

六十四、詩者吟詠情性也盛唐諸人惟在興趣：無跡可求故其妙處：不可漆泊如空中之音相中之色水中之月鏡中之象言有盡而意無窮。

六十六、不求物趣而得天趣。

六十六、君子可以寓意於物而不可以留意於物。寓意於物雖微物足以為樂雖尤物不足以為病。留意於物雖微物足以為病雖尤物不足以為樂。老子曰五色令人目盲五音令人耳聾耳五味令人口爽然聖人未嘗廢此四者亦聊以寓意焉耳：譬之煙雲之過眼而鳥之感耳豈不忻然接之然去而不復念也於是乎二物者常為吾樂而不

能為吾病。凡物之可喜足以說人而不足移人者莫若書與畫。然至其留意而不釋則其禍有不可勝言。

六十九 文同託物寓意

古人寄懷於物而無所好然後為達。況淵明之真其於黃花直寓意耳。黃菊有何好且寄平生懷。

畫書之餘也。學者於游藝之暇適趣寫懷。大都在意不在象。雖然其所畫必有意焉。是故於草木也蘭之芳

蘭之秀梅之潔松竹之操皆托物寄興以自修非徒然也。

古之高士逸士往往喜弄筆作山水以自娛。然多寫雪景

蓋欲假此以寄其歲寒明潔之意耳。

梅を寫すは詩を作るのと同じで、畫家の意思が梅の形に

托して表れるものであり、喜樂憂愁憤怒など畫家の情

緒の異なるに水で畫ぶ水る梅の様態も清癯間媚寒慘

逸邁と自然に夫々違った美を發揮する。こ水ぶ意を得ると

いふことであり、また同時に清らぶは梅花のための修史であり

傳神であることにもなる。そして、これは文人士大夫だけにできること
であり……

七十四、我曾以喜氣寫蘭、以怒氣寫竹、蓋謂蘭葉勢飄、
擧花蕊舒、吐得喜之神、竹枝縱橫錯出如矛刃、飾怒耳、

七十五、與可之所見、豈真蛇耶、抑州書之精也、

七十六、須緩前急後、字體形勢狀等龍蛇鉤連不斷、

七十七、有動於心必於草書焉發之、觀於物、見山水崖谷、鳥
獸蟲魚、草木之花實、日月列星、風雨水火、雷霆霹靂、

歌舞戰鬥、天地事物之變、可喜可愕、一寓於書、

七十八、巖谷相傾於峻險、山水各務於高深、囊括萬殊、裁成
一相、或寄以騁縱橫之志、或託以散鬱結之懷、

七十九、是以言論不能詳明、夫於其道不通、出其言不斷、加之
詞寡典要、理乏研精、夫翰墨及文章、至妙者皆有
深意、以見其志、覽之即令了然、若與面會、夫誦聖
人之語、不如親聞、評先賢之書、必不能盡其深意、

八十一見全書了然知公平生志氣若與面焉

八十二文則數言乃成其意書則一字已見其心；而心追目極情猶眷眷者是為妙矣然雖考其法意所由從心者為上從眼者為下

八十三詩不能盡溢而為書變而為畫皆詩之餘

八十四且畫之奇怪本出于文章之餘而文之高古又出于其人之胸懷本趣是豈有兩法哉

八十五妙識前日意觀見此時情

八十六凡其人特身之端方：下筆為書得之者自應生敬況其字畫之工哉至於學門文章之餘寫出無聲之詩玩其蕭然筆墨間足以想見其人此乃可寶而流

八十七余為此譜番推其法不知賞趣者何人耳

八十八世無知我者惟子瞻一見識吾妙處

八十九前者未有此體也是公亦欲使後人知之耳

九十一非大神邁識高情超心惠者豈可議乎知畫

九十一意足不求顏色似。前身相馬九方臯。書至此陡覺意趣似有所得。夫畫竹之法。當先師意。然後以筆法求之可也。倘得意在筆前。則所作有天趣自然之妙。如其泥於筆法。求其形似者。豈可同日語耶。

九十二人能以畫寫意。明牕淨几。描寫景物。或觀佳山水處。胸中便生景象。

九十三象了然在目。則隨意令筆。然以神會自然。景皆天就。不類人為。

九十四蕭條澹泊。此難畫之意。畫者得之。覽者未必識也。故倦走遲速。意淺之物易見。而閑和嚴靜。趣遠之心難形。若乃高下鄉背。遠近重複。此畫工之藝耳。非精鑒者之事也。

九十五高明深遠。然後見山見水。

九十六高人能畫山中趣。涼吹曉從天際來。移盡此情紈扇上。人間何處有塵埃。

九十六、今畫者乃竹節而為之。葉葉而累之。豈復有竹乎。故畫竹必先得成竹於胸中。執筆熟視。乃見其所欲畫者。急起從之。振筆直遂。以追其所見。如兔之起。鶻之落。少縱即逝矣。與可教予如此。予不能然也。而心識其所以然也。夫既心識其所以然。而不能然者。內外不一。心手不相應。不學之過。故凡有見於中。而操之不熟者。平居自視了然。而臨事忽焉喪之。

九十七、欲書者先：凝神靜思。預想字形大小。偃仰：

九十八、有先竹於胸中。則本末暢茂。有成竹於胸中。則筆墨與物俱化。至於筆墨而與造物者同功。

九十九、始由筆硯成。漸次忘筆墨。心手兩相忘。融化同造物。

百一、顧生思得造化。得妙物於神會。

百二、若非窮玄妙於意表。安能令神變乎天機。

百三、應手隨意。倏若造化。圖出雲霞。染成風雨。宛若神巧。

得非常之體。符造化之功。

西伯世之評畫者曰：妙於生意，能不失其真如此矣。至是為能盡其技。嘗問：如何是當處生意？曰：殆謂自然。其間自然則曰：能不異真者，斯得之矣。且觀天地生物，特一氣運化爾。其功用祕移，與物有宜，莫知為之者，故能成於自然。今畫者信妙矣，方且罩形布色，求物比之，似而效之，序以成者，皆人力之後先也，豈能以合於自然者哉。

百五與可以墨為竹，視之良竹也。客見而驚焉，曰：今夫受人命於天，賦形於地，涵濡雨露，振蕩風氣，春而萌芽，寒而凋之，徂變均一，氣於草木，嗟壤同而性異，信物生之自然。雖造化其能使，今子研青松之煤，運脫兔之毫，睥睨牆堵，振洒繒綃，須臾而成，樹影手蕭騷，曲直橫斜，穠纖庠高，竊造物之潛思，子豈誠有道者耶？與可听然而笑曰：夫子之所好者道也，放乎竹矣。始予隱乎崇山之陽，廬乎脩竹之林，視聽漠然，無槩乎予心。朝與竹乎為游，莫與竹乎為朋，飲食乎竹間，偃息乎竹陰，觀竹

之變也多矣。若夫風止雨霽：此則竹之所以為竹也。始也。余見而悅之。今也。悅之而不自知也。忽乎忘筆之在手與筆之在前。勃然而興而脩竹森然。雖天造之無朕。亦何以異於茲焉。

百六 作畫祇是箇理字最緊要。

百七 人為萬物之最靈者也。故令於畫造乎理者能畫一物之妙。昧乎理則失物之真。

百八 余嘗論畫以為人禽宮室器用皆有常形。至於山石竹木水波煙雲雖無常形而有常理。常形之失人皆知之。常理之不當雖曉畫者有不知。以其形之無常。是以其理不可不謹也。世之工人或能曲盡其形而至於其理非高人逸才不能辨。

百九 興可畫竹時見竹不見人。豈獨不見人。嗒然遺其

身。其身與竹化。無窮出清新。莊周世無有。誰知此凝神。百十 初畫不自知。忽忘筆在手。庖丁及輪扁。還識此意否。

百十一、與可畫竹時，胸中有成竹，經營似春雨，滋長地中綠，興來雷出土，萬竹擢起崖谷。

百十二、必使心忘於筆，手忘於書，心手達情。

百十三、運思揮毫，自以為畫，則愈失於畫矣。運思揮毫，意不在畫，故得於畫矣。不滯於手，不凝於心，不知然而然。

百十四、華光每寫時，必焚香禪定，意適則一掃而成。

百十五、磨澄心以凝思。

百十六、把筆輕，自然手心虛振迅，天真出於意外。

百十七、蒼苔游心，自省，信手筆都忘。

百十八、沈君信手彈琴，而與泉合。

百十九、畫寫物外形，要物形不改。

百二十、論畫以形似，見於兒童鄰，賦詩必此詩，定非知詩人。

百二十一、夫所貴于畫者，為其似耳。畫而不似，則如勿畫。賦詩

不必此詩，果為何語？然則坡之論非歟？世之人不本其實，無得於心，而借此論以為高。畫山水者，未能正作。

一木一石而託雲烟杳雨謂之氣象。

百廿三燕仲穆平生畫皆因所見未嘗架空鑿空虛隨意增損或問則曰出人意者便失自然。

百廿四雖然意在形舍形何求意故得其形者意溢乎形失其形者形乎哉畫物欲似物豈可不識。

百廿五風流文彩磨不盡水墨自與詩爭妍畫山何必山中人田歌自作非知田。

百廿六則知無心於畫者求於造物之先凡賦形出象發於生意得之自然待其見於胸中者若華若葉分布而出矣然後發之於外假之手而寄色焉未嘗求其似者而託意也。

百廿七此乃得心應手意到便成。

百廿八員生雖妙絕猶以畫工論摩詰得之於象外。

百廿九詩語固忌用巧大過然緣情體物自有天然工妙雖巧而不見刻削之痕。

百三十李將軍理深思遠筆跡甚精雖巧而華大虧墨彩。

百三十九 俗人執筆必為俗狀以賣。俗人授書之。

百四十 宋象先能文而不求舉。善畫而不求售。曰。文以達吾心。畫以適吾意而已。

百四十一 公麟歎曰。吾為畫如騷人賦詩。吟咏情性而已。

奈何世人不察。徒欲供玩好耶。

百四十二 墨戲之作。蓋士大夫詞翰之餘。適一時之興趣。

百四十三 左圖右畫。取其性悅瞻視。陶寫性情。近好事

者。以為市道商賈。真贗為事。反害性情。盲目

龍耳耳。哀哉。