

石濤：苦瓜和尚畫語錄

## Friar Bitter-Melon on Painting

By **Shih-t'ao** (1641-before 1720)

Translated by **Lin Yutang**

1. *The One-Stroke Method.* In the primeval past there was no method. The primeval chaos was not differentiated. When the primeval chaos was differentiated, method (law) was born. How was this method born? It was born of one-stroke. This one-stroke is that out of which all phenomena are born, applied by the gods and to be applied by man. People of the word do not know this. Therefore this one-stroke (*i-hua*) method is established by me. The establishment of this one-stroke method creates a method out of no-method, and a method which covers all methods.

All painting comes from the understanding mind. If, then, the artist fails to understand the inner law and catch the outward gestures of the delicate complexities of hills and streams and human figures, or the nature of birds and animals and vegetation, or the dimensions of ponds and pavilions and towers, it is because he has not grasped the underlying principle of the one-stroke. Even as one makes a distant journey by starting with a first step, so this one-stroke contains in itself the universe and beyond; thousands and myriads of strokes and ink all begin here and end here, waiting only for one to take advantage of it. A man should be able to show the universe in one stroke, his idea clearly expressed, the execution well done. If the wrist<sup>1</sup> is not fully responsive, then the picture is not good; if the picture is not good, it is because the wrist fails to respond. Give it life and lustre by circular movement and bends, and by stopping movement give it spaciousness. It shoots out, pulls in; it can be square or round, go straight or twist along, upwards or downwards, to the right and to the left. Thus it lifts and dips in sudden turns, breaks loose or cuts across, like the gravitation of water, or the shooting up of a flame, naturally and without the least straining of effect. In this way it penetrates all inner nature of things, gives form to all expressions, never away from the method, and gives life to all. With a casual stroke, hills and streams, all life and vegetation and human habitations take their form and gesture, the scene and the feeling connected with it caught hidden or exposed. People do not see how such a painting is created, but the act of drawing never departs from the understanding mind.

For since the primeval chaos became differentiated, the one-stroke method was born. Since the one-stroke method was born, all objects of the universe appeared. Therefore I say, 'This one principle covers all.'

2. *From Method Freed.* The T-square and compasses are the perfect norms of squares and circles, and the universe is the revolving movement of squares and circles.

This article originally appeared as part of Dr. Lin's book *The Chinese Theory of Painting*. New York: Putnam, 1967. — EDITOR.

<sup>1</sup>In Chinese painting technique, the palm and fingers are held fairly rigid and all movement should start from the wrist.



SELF-PORTRAIT OF SHIH T'AO  
At the age of 33.

*(Detail from a handscroll,  
private collection, Taipei.)*

People know that there are such squares and circles, but do not know the revolving movement of heaven and earth. Thus heaven and earth bind man to a 'method', and through ignorance man becomes enslaved by it. Despite all natural and acquired intelligence, one never understands the inner law of things. Thus one is not freed by the method, but on the contrary is obstructed by it. In ancient as well as modern times, the obstructions due to method remain because the nature of one-stroke is not understood. Once it is understood, the obstacles fall away from man's vision and he can paint freely according to his will; painting according to his will automatically removes the obstacles. For painting is depicting the forms of the universe. How can it be done except by brush and ink? Ink comes by itself in heavy and light shades, in wet and dry. The brush is held by man, and from it come contours and texture lines and dry and wet inkwashes. Of course there was a method among the ancients for without the method [of squares and circles] they would be without formal limits. Thus it is seen that the one-stroke is not just to establish formal limits to the limitless, nor does it establish the limits by a 'method'. Method and obstructions do not coexist. Method is created of the painting and obstructions fall away during the creation. When method and obstructions do not interfere, the nature of the revolutions of heaven and earth is understood. Thus the principle of painting is revealed and the principle of the single-stroke is fully comprehended.

3. *Development.* The ancients furnish the means for insight, recognition. To 'develop' means to know such means and spurn them. I seldom see people who inherit the bequest of the past and can further develop it. Those who inherit but do not develop fail because of their limited insight. If the insight or recognition is limited to being like the past, then it is not a broad insight. Therefore the gentleman takes the past merely as a means of modern development.

Again it is said, 'The perfect man has no method.' It is not that he has no method, but rather the best of methods, which is the method of no-method. For there is expediency besides the principle, and flexible development besides the 'method'. One should know the principle and its flexible adaptation in expediency, as one should know the method and apply it flexibly. For what is painting but the great method of changes and developments in the universe? The spirit and essence of hills and streams, the development and growth of the creation, the action of the forces of the *yin* and the *yang*, all are revealed by the brush and ink for the depiction of this universe and for our enjoyment. People nowadays do not understand this. They always say, 'The texture strokes of such-and-such an artist can be the foundation of art. One's art will not have permanent appeal unless it is like the landscape of such-and-such an artist. The calm and detached atmosphere of such-and-such an artist can establish one's moral tone. Without such skill, art will be merely an amusement.' Thus the painter becomes a slave to a certain known artist and not his master. Even if he succeeds in imitating the model well, he is only eating the left-overs of his home. Of what value is that to the artist himself? Or some say to me, 'A certain artist broadens me. Another artist deepens me. To what school shall I belong? What class shall choose? To whom shall I want to be compared? What should be the influence? What kinds of dots and washes? What kinds of contour and texture lines? What kind of structure and disposition will enable me to come near to the ancients and the ancients to come near to me?'

People who talk like this forget they have a self ('me') too, besides the ancient models. I am as I am; I exist. I cannot stick the whiskers of the ancients on my face, nor put their entrails in my belly. I have my own entrails and chest, and I prefer to twitch my own whiskers. If sometimes by chance I happen to resemble someone, it is he who happens to come to me, and not I who try to be his death. This is the way it is. Why should I model myself upon the ancients and not develop my own forte?<sup>2</sup>

4. *Respect Your Gift.* As between natural gift and insight, the natural gift comes first. For if insight comes before the gift, it is not an [inborn] gift. The wisest of the ancients developed their inborn gifts from what they learned, and developed what they learned fully aware of what their inborn gift was. But it could concern knowledge of some special thing: this would be a minor talent, for minor ability. They were not able to recognize the power of the one-stroke and fully develop it. For the one-stroke is contained in all things. A painting receives the ink, ink receives from the brush, the brush from the artist's wrist, and the artist's wrist from its directing mind. This receiving is like the way life is created by heaven and forms are made by the earth.

<sup>2</sup>The above is a most important statement of individualism in art, like Yuan Chung-lang's statement of individualism (*hsing-ling*) in literature. The full importance of such a statement will be appreciated when one remembers: (1) the horrible, ceaseless and un-

remitting imitation of all things ancient in art and literature, and (2) the superficial grammarians, stylists and critics who tried to explain all artistic appeal by pointing out the tricks and devices of style.

The important thing is that a man should respect his natural gift and not neglect it. To know or conceive a painting and not develop it is to shackle oneself. One who receives the gift of painting must respect it and keep it, strengthen it, not dissipate it abroad, nor let it go to sleep inside. The *Yi-ching* says, 'The forces of heaven are strong. A gentleman constantly strengthens himself without cease.' This is the way to respect your gift.

5. *On brush and Ink.* Among the ancients, some have brush [-power] but no ink [-power]. Others have ink [-power] but no brush [-power]. The difference lies not in external nature but in the man's natural talent itself. The ink splashes on to the brush by soul and the brush controls the ink by spirit. Without nourishment and culture the ink lacks soul; without vitality the brush lacks spirit. Those who receive the well-nourished ink but have not the vital spirit have ink-power but no brush-power. Those who have the vital spirit but do not transform the cultured soul have brush-power, but no ink-power. Life in nature consists in the ink-wash expressing the concrete forms of hills and rivers and things, seen from the front or the back, from the side and on a slant, scattered or clustered together, distant or near, external or internal, solid or empty, continuous or broken; they have layers and sections and falling aspects; they have charm and elusive expanse. Thus all nature presents its soul to man and man has the power to control its vitality and culture. If it were not so, how could the brush and ink create the embryonic form and skeletal structure, the opening up and closing in [of spaces], the bodies and functions, the forms and gestures, and picture those that are bending in ceremony or standing erect, those that crouch and leap and hide and soar, and all those that are rugged, expansive, stiff and tall, all those that are awe-inspiring and overpowering and strange – how else could all this soul and spirit of things be captured and given their full effect on paper?

6. *Control of the Wrist.* Some may object, saying, 'There are instructions on art, in chapter and verse, and detailed instructions on the use of the brush and ink. We have never heard of one talking in vague, general terms about the life and movement of hills and streams and trying to communicate it to others. Perhaps Ta-ti-tse (Great Wash-Stick—Shih-t'ao) thinks highly of himself and wants to establish some kind of esoteric art. So he spurns the lowly details.'

It is certainly not so. What is born in us may be from unknown depths, but its expression is here and now. What can be put into the distance comes from the recognition of some object close at hand. The one-stroke is something elementary in calligraphy and painting; the modified line is a common elementary way of controlling the brush and ink. The mountains and seas are but copies of swellings and hollows of things near by. Life and movement are the elementary principles of contour and texture line. If one knows, for instance, objects confined to a particular locality, that is the original for a locality. If, then, that particular locality has a certain hill and a certain group of peaks and the artist confines himself to drawing that hill and those peaks, without change, then these become laborious restrictions on the artist's talent. Would that do?

Besides, without change in the life and movement, attention is given to the superficial contour and texture strokes. Without change in method, the life and movement become stereotyped. Without knowledge of light and shadow, one sees only a row of hills and connections of waterways. Without the provision of woods and hills, one feels the emptiness of the scene. To avoid these four errors, one must begin with wrist control. For if the wrist is infinitely flexible and responsive, then the drawing goes in

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LANDSCAPE by SHIH T'AO (*From the collection of Lin Lang-an*)

different ways. If the brush is quick and sure, then the forms take definite shape. When the wrist is firm, the drawing is sure and expressive, and when it is flexible, it darts and dances and soars. Or with a perpendicular position, the strokes strike the paper squarely without showing the tip of the brush. Or it may incline and make possible many graceful dragging lines. When it moves fast, it gathers force; when it moves slowly, there is a meaningful dip and turn. When the wrist moves, unconsciously inspired, the result is true to nature, and when it changes, the result can be weird and fantastic. When the wrist is gifted with genius, the painting is beyond the work of human minds, and when the wrist moves with the spirit, the hills and streams yield up their souls.

7. *Cloudy Forms.* Where the brush and ink blend, cloudy forms are produced. Undifferentiated, such cloudy forms represent chaos, and to bring definition out of chaos, there is inevitably the single-stroke. For with the stroke, the hills come alive, the water moves, the woods grow and prosper and the men are given that carefree atmosphere. To be able to control the mixture of brush and ink (stroke and wash), disperse the cloudy forms and create the universe and thus become a good artist on one's own and be known to posterity — this comes from intelligence. One must avoid laborious details, flatness, or falling into a set pattern, being woolly, lacking coherence or going against the inner nature of things. Stand firm in the sea of ink, seek life in the movement of the brush-tip; create a new surface and texture on the foot-long material, and give forth light from the unformed darkness. Then, even if the brush and ink and the drawings are all wrong, the 'me', the 'self', remains there. For one controls the ink and is not controlled by it, handles the brush and is not handled by it. One gives form to the embryo, the embryo does not assume its own form. From one, it divides into tens of thousands, and from the ten thousand shapes of things, one attends to the One, transforming the One into the primeval cloudy forms — this is the height of artistic ability.

8. *Hills and Streams.* The substance of hills and streams embodies the inner law of the universe. But by the method of brush and ink one catches their appearance. One cannot attend to the appearance without regard to the inner law, or attend to the substance alone without regard to the method, for thus the inner law would be violated and the method become futile. To avoid the violation of inner law and the degeneration of method, the ancients tried to reach out to the One. For if the One was not understood, all phenomena would become obstacles; on the other hand, with the understanding of the One, all things have their place. The inner law of painting and the method of the painting brush are but [to catch] the substance and appearance of the universe. The hills and streams are the life and movement of the universe. The changes of light and darkness and rain and clear days are the expression of the hills and streams; the distances and distribution, their layout; the crossing and recrossing and meeting and merging, their rhythm; the light and shade, the *yin* and *yang*, their demeanour. The gathering and distribution of water and clouds express the continuity of hills and streams; the gestures of crouching and leaping up and turning of directions express their movements. That which is high and clear constitutes the standard of heaven; that which is thick and heavy forms the norm of earth. Heaven binds the hills and streams by means of winds and clouds; the earth awakens them to movement by means of water and rocks. Without these powers of heaven and earth, there would be no natural disasters. Yet heaven cannot bind up the hills and streams to make them conform to one shape, nor can the movement of

the surf striking upon rocks serve to point out the differences in live, moving landscapes.

Besides, the mountains and waters are immense, and cloud formations spread across peaks for ten thousand miles. From a narrow point of view, even genii cannot cover the entire expanse. But with the one-stroke, man takes part in the creation of the universe. The artist surveys the layout of hills and streams, estimates the width and length of the land, examines the distribution of mountain peaks and observes the airy forlornness of clouds and mists. He looks at the earth spread out before him and takes a swift glance at the distant ranges, and knows that they are all under the overlordship of heaven and earth. Heaven has the standard to transform the spirit of hills and streams, earth has this norm to activate their pulse beat, and I have this one-stroke to penetrate into their very body and spirit.

Well, then, fifty years ago I was not yet born out of the hills and streams. Nor do I intend to neglect them and let them hide away their secrets. The hills and streams have appointed me to speak for them. They are in me and I am in them. I search out the extraordinary peaks and put them on paper. We meet and comprehend one another in spirit. Therefore all belong to Ta-ti-tse.

9. *Texture Strokes.* The texture strokes are for showing the surface texture. Since mountains have numerous forms, their surfaces are also different. People only speak of the texture strokes without reference to the real surface. Then the strokes have nothing to do with the mountains. Some are of rocks or soil, where such surfaces should be indicated, but these are not the natural textures of the mountains themselves. The different names of mountain peaks indicate their real convolutions; the different forms have different surfaces of all kinds. Therefore there are different kinds of texture strokes (*ts'un*), such as 'curling-cloud *ts'un*', 'axe-cut *ts'un*', 'split-hemp *ts'un*', 'loose-rope *ts'un*', 'ghost-face *ts'un*', 'skull-like *ts'un*', 'wood-pile *ts'un*', 'sesame seed *ts'un*', 'golden-blue *ts'un*', 'jade-powder *ts'un*', 'bullet-hole *ts'un*', 'pebbles *ts'un*', 'boneless *ts'un*'. These are different *ts'un* strokes. They must vary as the masses and surfaces of the peaks demand, and the two, the strokes and the nature of the real surfaces, have an inner relation. The peaks change their masses according as their own convolutions change. Such names of peaks indicate that they are there: The Skycore Peak, Bright Star Peak, Lotus Peak, Fairy Peak, Five Old Men Peak, Seven Wise Men Peak, Cloud Terrace Peak, Lion Peak, Crescent Peak, Lang-yeh (Fairyland) Peak, Golden Wheel Peak, Incense Pot Peak, Little Flower Peak, White Chain Peak, Returning Stork Peak. These peaks suggest such forms and the texture strokes should bring out their surfaces. However, at the time of drawing, no one has the time to think of the particular kind of stroke used. One stroke follows another, all following the natural inner law of their being. The movement of the line expresses the nature of all.

Thus the life and movement of hills and streams are caught, and the method of indicating surface texture does not vary with the schools. The life and movement of hills and streams are thus contained in the painting; the prevailing spirit of a painting lies in the ink, and the life of the ink lies in control. One who has mastery of the ink gives the impression of solid interior and spacious exterior surface. Thus through the gift of the stroke, the artist confronts all without error. There are also times when the interior is left empty while the exterior is fully indicated. Because the stroke swiftly changes and the exterior is fully indicated, further adumbration of the interior is not necessary. Therefore the ancients suited the solids and spaces to the interiors and exteriors, changed their

methods as they went along without error; in the full possession of the spirit and atmosphere, they daubed, or cut, or slanted as they pleased. As for those whose vision is completely obstructed as if by a wall, do they not invite disgust from the Creator?

10. *Dividing Sections.*<sup>3</sup> The practice of dividing a picture into 'three levels' and 'two sections' seems to ascribe a fault to nature. It is true that on some occasions the natural scene is so divided. Such dividing lines seem to exist as when the Yangtse leads into the sea, and the many mountains of Chekiang rise up on the opposite bank across a river. But often when we see landscapes with such perfunctory divisions, we feel at a glance that they are made to order. The three levels say that the first level is the ground, the second level contains the trees and the third level the mountains. How is one to distinguish the distances? Do they not look like stereotypes? The so-called two sections say that the mountains are on top and the immediate scene is below. In the centre some clusters of cloud cut the picture sharply in two. But to paint a picture one should not stick to the arbitrary three levels and two sections, but should give the whole picture a sense of cohesion. There should be unexpected break-throughs to show the strength of the artist's conception. Then wherever the brush leads it will not show the common tricks. If this sense of cohesion is established, minor faults may be forgiven.

11. *Short-cuts.* There are six short-cuts in painting: emphasis on scene, emphasis on mountains, contrast, additions, abrupt endings and suggestions of danger. Emphasis on scene means the scene is in spring, but the hills may be of archaic type as in winter. Emphasis on mountains means the trees are sparse as in winter, but the hillsides may be in spring. Straight trees contrast with leaning rocks, and straight cliffs contrast with down-bending trees: that is contrast. When the hill-lines are vague and there is no sign of life, willows and bamboos, bridges and summer houses are added: that is addition for aesthetic effect. Abrupt endings mean that the scene suddenly comes to a stop, and all the trees and rocks are left uncompleted where the lines break off. Such lines breaking off must disappear into the thinnest possible stroke. There are places suggesting danger where roads are blocked off and no access is possible. There are groups of islands in the sea, like the Gulf of Pei-chih-li and the islands of Peng-lai and Fang-hu, the lands of the fairies, inaccessible to mortals. These are natural inaccessible formations on the seas. As to dangerous places in drawings, they consist mainly of high peaks, sharp bluffs and plank roads built on hillsides; rugged and dangerous for visitors. Here great strength in brush-strokes must be shown.

12. *Woods and Vegetation.* The ancients painted trees in groups of threes or fives, or even nine or ten trees together. They were so arranged that they faced in different directions with light and shadow at different heights, giving a sense of life-likeness. When I paint old pines and cypresses, ash and locust, and there are four or five of them, I make them look like sportsmen rising to dance in different bending, crouching and stretching positions. They seem to move freely. Sometimes the lines are hard and sometimes soft, both the brush and the wrist being moved. Mostly the movement of lines is like that used for painting rock surfaces. Five, four or three fingers move back and forth with evenly distributed energy coming from the wrist and further from the elbow. When the stroke is very heavy the brush must quickly be lifted from the paper, to dissipate that force of

<sup>3</sup>The following sections, Nos. 10-18, with the exception of 15 and 16, have not been translated by Osvald Sirén in his *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*. They deal

with more specific problems of art, but are illustrative of how Shih-t'ao's principle is carried out, and are quite significant.



movement. Thus there are changes of light and heavy spots, and the result is a spaciousness fraught with life. This method may also be applied to large mountains, but not to other subjects. The goal is to create vibrant energy with haphazardness. This is so, not to be explained.

13. *Sea Waves*. There are currents in the sea, and hidden veins in mountains. The seas ebb and flow; the mountains dip and bow. The sea can raise spirits, and the mountains have pulse beats. The mountains pile up on one another, break off into ravines and deep valleys in the most unexpected zigzag manner, and the air and clouds and mist breathe through them. This is like currents and tides in the sea; the life does not come from the sea, but the mountains act like the sea. The sea can also act like the mountains. It has a vast expanse, its calm swish and its wild laughter, its mirages, its leaping whales and roaring dragons. Its surf rises like hill crests and its ebb resembles mountain ranges. This is how the sea acts like the mountains, not because the mountains give it these movements. They act like themselves, and appear so to the human spectator. Take the islands in the sea like Ying-chow, Lang-yuan, Juo-shui, Peng-lai, Yuan-p'u and P'ang-hu. Even though they are scattered around, it can be surmised that there are mountain ranges and springs under the water. One might think of the sea only as the sea and of the mountains strictly as mountains only, which would be a mistake. To me mountains are seas and seas are mountains, and the seas and mountains know that I know. This is the romance of brush and ink.

14. *The Four Seasons*. The scenes vary with the seasons, each having its own flavour, and they change with the weather. In doing a painting we must have proper regard for the changes. There are ancient sayings that describe them: '[The strokes] grow with the grass on sandy banks and their lines join with the water and clouds' (spring); 'The land lies always in the shade, and the air is coolest along the bank' (summer); 'I look after at a desolate city and the flat woodland is still dark green' (autumn); 'The brush moves ahead where the road fades away; the ink is heavy where the pond is cold' (winter). There are also days out of season, as, 'Snow is hard but the temperature is still warm; New Year's Eve is approaching and the days begin to grow long.' This indicates that one does not feel cold even in winter. There are also the lines, 'At the year's end, the dawn begins to come early; with snow still on the ground, the rainy sky has cleared.' As applied to painting these [mixed up] scenes can apply not only to winter, but also to the other three seasons. There are days that are in between clear and rainy, such as, 'A wisp of cloud shadows the moon; the slanting sun shines through a spell of rain.' There are dull days, like, 'Do not mistake it for twilight; around the horizon there is a bank of clouds.'

I have pointed out these lines as appropriate inspiring thoughts for paintings. The scene always indicates the season. All clouds and hills change. Lines sung in this spirit show that a painting often expresses the idea of a poem, and a poem is the Zen of a painting.

15. *Keep Away from the Hustle-Bustle*. A materialist attends to the affairs of the world. A man enslaved by the material world lives in a state of tension. He who is tense labours over his paintings and destroys himself. He who moves among the hustle and bustle of the world handles his brush and ink with caution and restraint. Thus the environment impinges upon a man, can only do him harm and in the end make him unhappy. I meet the world as it comes, yield superficially to the hustlers, and thus achieve peace of mind. With peace of mind comes a painting. People know about

paintings, but do not understand paintings of one-stroke. For the important thing in art work is contemplation. When one contemplates the One (unity of all things), one sees it and that makes one happy. Then one's paintings have a mysterious depth which is unfathomable. I believe nobody has said this before, and therefore touch upon it again.

16. *Nonconformism*. The intelligence of the ignorant and the conventional people is about the same. The conventional people follow the ignorant and the ignorant have a mind completely veiled. Remove the veil and the ignorant become wise; leave the conventional man uncontaminated and his mind remains pure.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the perfect man has to think his way through, has to have a perspective. With a perspective, he becomes transformed; by thinking his way through, he merges into nature. He responds to the affairs of the world without signs and deals with them without visible traces.<sup>5</sup> His ink seems to be there by itself, and his brush moves as if not doing anything.<sup>6</sup> Thus the little scroll controls all objects of creation. One who keeps his mind calm will find that ignorance is replaced by wisdom and conventionality by purity of mind.

<sup>4</sup>This is essentially Zen (*ch'an*) in a narrow sense. In a broader sense, it is Taoist and even Confucianist. The extraordinary thing about some aspects of Confucianism is that it demanded 'Keep clear the originally clear character' and 'constant renewal' (cf. 'Great Learning' chapter in *Liki*).

<sup>5</sup>This is Laotse.

<sup>6</sup>*Wuwei*, inaction. Here it means 'essentially in accordance with nature', or 'by the action of nature itself without human interference'.

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IMAGINARY PORTRAIT  
OF SHIH T'AO AT WORK  
by CHI PAI-SHIH

17. *Calligraphy Included.* Ink can build up the forms of hills and streams, and the brush can threaten and overthrow their foundations. They are not to be treated lightly. After knowing well all human history, one must have a sea of ink controlled by a mountain of brushes to have a wide range of subjects. Let go and it encompasses the eight extremities and the nine continents, the four sacred mountains and the four oceans; gather it up and they are conveniently tucked away in your breast. There is no limitation to methods or skills, and the skills can be shown in calligraphy as well as in paintings. For these are twin arts with the same function. The single-stroke is the origin of all calligraphy and painting, which are, as it were, the material application of the first principle. To know the applications and forget the first principle of the one-stroke is like children who forget their ancestry. One might forget the God-given while entangled with material objects, and so know that the universe is eternal and yet ascribe the work to man. Heaven can give man his method, but not his skill, inspire him with a painting, but the change and development are up to the man himself. When a man, however, strives after skill apart from the method, or makes changes apart from the [concept of the] painting, he is forsaken by heaven, and his work will not last. For heaven grants unto man according to his ability: to the great he grants great wisdom; to the small, petty wisdom.

Therefore all painting and calligraphy are based on heaven and perfected by man. A man acting according to his greater or lesser talent given by heaven will have the [true] method of calligraphy and painting, and develop it further. Therefore I have added this section on calligraphy.

18. *Maintaining Function*<sup>7</sup> The ancients were able to express forms through brush and ink and by means of hills and streams, the actions without action and transformations of things without [visible means of] transformation. They left a name for posterity without being well known in their lifetime, for they had gone through the awakening and growth and life, recorded in the work they left behind, and had thus incorporated into themselves the substance of hills and streams. With regard to ink, the artist has received the function of awakening and growth;<sup>8</sup> with regard to the brush, the function of life; with regard to mountains and rivers, the function of understructure; with regard to contour and surface lines, the function of spontaneity. With regard to the seas and oceans, he has received the function of the universe; with regard to the low backyards, the function of the moment; with regard to no-action, that of action; with regard to the one-stroke, that of all strokes; with regard to the responsive wrist, that of the tip of the brush.

The artist who takes these functions upon himself must maintain such functions and know what the several functions are before he commits them to paper. If not, his mind is limited and superficial and cannot carry out the functions he undertakes.

For heaven has invested the mountains with many functions. The body of the mountain comes from its location; its spirituality from its spirit; its changes of mood from growth and change; its first awakening and growth (*meng-yang*) from its clarity; its stretching across vast areas from movement; its hidden potentialities come from silence;

<sup>7</sup>This is the strangest discourse I have ever translated. In this whole section, the artist identifies himself with the universe and its various manifestations. He must justify and maintain the proper 'functions' (*jen*) of the myriad things.

<sup>8</sup>The artist's creation is compared with the creation of the

world of forms out of chaos and life out of forms. When the first vague shapes take form in ink, this is comparable to the awakening and growth of a child's consciousness (*meng-yang*), and later life is given to the picture through the brush-strokes. See above, especially section 5.

its bowing and curtsying features from courtesy; its rambling manner comes from a peaceful disposition; its grouping together from caution; its airiness from wisdom; its beauty from delicacy of spirit; its leaping and crouching from the military spirit; its awe-inspiring aspect from its dangerous shapes; its reaching out to heaven from its height; its massiveness from its generosity; and its superficialities come from what is small in it. These are the functions of the nature of the mountain itself, not what it receives from others to thrust upon Nature. Man can take these functions from Nature and maintain them and not because the mountain thrusts them upon man. Thus it is seen that the mountain takes up these functions and maintains them and they cannot be changed or substituted. Therefore the true man (*jen*) never leaves his true manhood and enjoys the mountains.

It is the same with water. Water does many things. These are things that water does. It reaches out in vast rivers and lakes to spread its benefits – such is its virtue. It seeks the lowly humble places – such is its sense of courtesy. Its tides ebb and flow ceaselessly – such is its Tao. It breaks out in crashing waves – such is its strength. It swirls about and seeks its level – such is its law. It reaches out to all places – such is its far-reaching power. Its essence is clear and pure – such is its goodness. It turns about and reaches towards the (East China Sea) – such is its goal. For water carries out these functions from the primeval damp chaos. Unless it were able to carry out these functions, it would not be able to circulate to all parts and be the arteries of the world. To know the functions of the mountain without knowing the functions of water is like a man sinking in a sea without knowledge of its shores or standing upon its shores without knowledge of the vast expanse beyond. Therefore the wise man knows the shores and watches the water passing by and his spirit is pleased.

For the immensity of the world is revealed only by the function of water, and water encircles and embraces it through the pressure of mountains. If the mountains and water do not come together and function, there will be nothing to circulate with or about, nothing to embrace. And if there is no circulation and embracing, there will be no means of life and growth. When the means of life and growth are under control, then there is the wherewithal of circulation and embracing, and with circulation and embracing open and possible, the functions of mountains and water are fulfilled.

As for the painter, the value lies not in the vastness of mountains and water, but in their controllability, not in their number and quantity, but in their flexibility in change. Only flexibility in change enables one to paint like a great master, and only control can manage their vastness. The function of the brush is not in the brush, but in something of value created – the function of ink is not in the ink but in its receptivity and response. Likewise the functions in mountains and water lie not in themselves, but in their respective silence and mobility. The proper functions of the ancients and the moderns are not in themselves but in their respective primitiveness (*huang*) and freedom. Thus each has its proper function clearly defined, and the ink and brush-work last for ever, for their functions are adequately fulfilled.

So in speaking of these functions, one sees that they are laws of growth and life. The One controls All, and All are controlled by One – not by mountains, not by waters, not by brush and ink, not by the ancients, nor by the moderns, nor by the sages. Such are the functions when they are properly maintained.

(For Chinese text see page 131)

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**PEACH-BLOSSOM FOUNT** by SHIH T'AO  
*(From the collection of Lin Lang-an)*

*"People nowadays depict the Peach-Blossom Fount in extremely fine detail. I have here done it roughly by using the 'curling-cloud' technique. I am uncertain as to whether or not I have succeeded, and must await the verdict of those more learned and perceptive."*