What is Common to Indian and Chinese Art?

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THIS theme requires a course of lectures, rather than one only. Our object is to distinguish what is essential from what is accidental in the field to be discussed, and it will appear that this can only be done by a resort to first principles, and not by discursive reasoning. We have first to demonstrate what is taken for granted in the title, that despite superficial differences and independence of development, Chinese and Indian civilizations are really commensurable (so far, equating civilization with style, art in the broadest sense); then to discuss some parallels in the aesthetic field more narrowly defined.

As to commensurability: Evidently, both Chinese and Indian civilizations are alike in that they live in and by tradition. And further, in that the tradition is metaphysical, that is, as to first principles, intellect being defined as the habit of first principles. On the other hand, Chinese and Indian civilizations are only accidentally religious, that is to say, emotional or ordered to edification, and only accidentally scientific, viz., to the degree that discursive knowledge has been necessary to the development of certain techniques.

The commensurability of Chinese and Indian culture can be demonstrated not only as immediate between themselves but also in their common incommensurability with respect to European culture. A comparison with Europe will be of use, because from what is known, there can be gained some notion of what is unknown and different. It must be emphasized, however: *first*, that a comparison with Europe means with Europe since the Renaissance—a comparison of the Orient with Europe of the thirteenth century would have had to be made in quite a different way, and would be less instructive from the present point of view; *second*, in saying "Oriental", I refer of course to the essential

Orient, not to a quite modern Orient as affected more or less by European contacts.

As to a comparison of the Orient with late classical and post-Renaissance Europe—here there is no commensurability, but only contrast. No valid comparison of Taoism or Hinduism with Grecco-Roman religion or with Protestantism could be made, nor of Taoism or the Vedanta with modern philosophy. Oriental civilizations are based on universals, and argue by induction from the infinite to the particular, while Western civilizations, at least in their classical and modern aspects, are mainly concerned with the general, which is only an extension of the particular by deduction. For example, the Greeks had no conception of the infinite, but only of the indefinite (e.g., of the everlasting as distinct from the timeless); therefore to the Greek mentality the *finite* (that which is not indefinite) and the *perfect* are necessarily synonomous; whereas in the Orient, only the infinite and indefinable can be thought of as perfect. Hence while it is easy for the Orient to understand the West, the contrary is rarely possible; or at the least demands a movement of the will and an intellectual operation additional to the work of scholarship as ordinarily conceived.

Let us now compare China and India, and both with "Europe" in certain general respects, taking into account that specific similarities are usually in the nature of accidents, to be explained historically and by derivation, while specific dissimilarities often conceal true formal resemblances which need not be accounted for by historical contacts, and are only partially to be accounted for by a community of traditional origins in a pre-historic past.

Theory, in the Orient, as the map of life, has to be contrasted with philosophy in the West, conceived as a body of consistent statements about physical and mental experience. Oriental metaphysics are not an escape, but means to the fullness of life, the total realization of all being. Metaphysical truth, for example in its doctrine as to perfectibility and as to multiple states of being, is immediate knowledge in the realm of universals; is not by way of faith or opinion (i.e., embodies no sentimental elements); is not dependent on any special mode of investigation; it is impossible that any discoveries of new and different first principles could be made, but only that particular aspects of their

consequences should be more full developed. This excludes the historical point of view, except as to its value in the field of secular accident and private interest.

The whole modern concept of absolute progress, or of evolution as anything more than a course of events, is ruled out, and we find in its place a concept of equilibrium: expressed in an ordering of life after the operation of the Universe, or if we prefer, conformably to the will of God. This is not in any sense a kind of fatalism, but a preeminent activity: it is in fact fundamental to Oriental metaphysics that knowledge, love, and art exist only in act. Where Europe is preoccupied with change, as it were of place, the Orient lives by an interior movement. Illustrating what we mean, and using the language of religion, "the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters". Now, it cannot be pretended that God, Who is without potentialities, but is all act, is not here conceived of as vitally existent, and "active"; yet the movement of the spirit is properly explained by St.Augustine as not a movement of place, that is to say not a change. In an analogous sense we speak of movement (Chinese yün, Sanskrit *dhvanana*, English "rhythm") in a work of art which in movement is not an alteration. Conservatism, then, will be the most necessary accident in a traditional culture, that is, whenever a social order has been successfully found in First Principles, or what we should now call a purely theoretical (which has nothing in common with "arbitrary") basis.

From the Oriental point of view, the ultimate object of all effort, man's true end, is the realization of that state of timeless perfection and invulnerable happiness which is always his virtually, but is obscured by his affections and mistaken ideologies. This goal, of the realization of the full potentiality of being, has very little in common with the Western conception of immortality and salvation, such ends being definitely limited and illustrating very well what we mean by the general as merely an extension of the particular. Accordingly, the Orient could not conceive of a science for science's sake or an art for art's sake, but only of science and art in so far as they can be used as means to the end of realization.

It is true that in so far as particular aspects of the truth may be explored at one time or another, a history of such developments in thought will be conceivable and may have a

certain value. But the truth as a whole is an eternal, ever accessible, infinity, incapable as such of any improvement or advancement: the wise man is therefore not interested in the history of aspects, but only in the validity of a given statement as a means conducive to the realization of invulnerable happiness. So we must not be surprised that equally in India and China it would be an insult to a thinker to praise the novelty or originality of his ideas, or his independence of authority, nor surprised at his acceptance of anonymity or pseudonymity; or to observe that good form, in any and every sense of the word, consists in adherence to custom and precedent. The energies of the scholar are not expended in higher criticism, but in ensuring the accurate preservation of traditional wisdom, either by technical means such as mnemonic systems or codes of rules, or by exegesis. "Correction" of a tradition is only possible by the rejection of any statement found to be inconsistent with First Principles and is therefore "non-tradition" even though it may have crept into a canonized text: but such interpolation is rare, and "correction" by this absolute standard (Chinese *chêng*, Sanskrit *pramana*) means in practice exclusion from the canon of what is not consistent with First Principles. As to *who* was the author of a particular text, the date of the work, or any details of his biography, this can have only a curiosity value; and it is precisely or this reason that such inquiries which bulk so largely in Western scholarship have really their proper place only there, where the tradition itself is considered as a curiosity, and not as the map of life and a means to the attainment of higher and less limited planes of consciousness.

In the modern world I can illustrate this point of view only in the isolated field of religion, where, at least in the Roman church, a tradition survives: pointing out that for the Christian priest to propound a new theology, or expect to be praised for so doing, would be inherently absurd. But Oriental civilizations are not merely traditional in their religious aspects (such aspects being indeed secondary and accidental rather than primary and essential, and certainly not more significant than the aesthetic aspects), but *throughout*; hence it would be no less an aberration and extravagance for a Chinese to abandon filial piety, or for a Hindu by way of deliberate revolt to break the taboos of caste, than for the Christian priest to institute a heresy. It is then the major strength of

Oriental cultures to have remained true to the first principles, which are those of their actual being: their major weakness, a slackening of concentration which has in modern times (under the almost irresistible pressure of barbarian contacts) conduced to a partial corruption of their purity. Even such a partial corruption can only be envisaged from the Oriental point of view as a disastrous extravagance. Nor could the idea of reform, from the Oriental point of view, have any other than its purely etymological significance: just as the soul is said to be the *form* of the body, so to re-form the state can only mean to impress again upon its substance the stamp of its own nature.

Again in their conception of nationality, or rather lack of this conception, China and India are alike. With the forced reactions of the present day, which can only be regarded as a necessary mechanism of defense against Western aggression, imperialistic and cultural, we are not now concerned. In place of patriotism we find a sense of ancestral solidarity, a conception of the past and even of the future as virtually present. Just as in Europe Christian scholasticism conceived an universal state, a City of God, so for such traditional cultures as India or China, no other conception was possible than that of a single sovereign state consisting of all those connected by pure descent, these alone being *capable* of initiation and conformity. Internationalism on the contrary is a generalization from nationalism, and means a sort of federation of incompatibles: in the Universal State all men are compatible, though not all "equal". The possible existence of such a state will depend, of course, on the traditional character of its internal order, not on ethnic or political unity. Whereas you may and perhaps must now be an American first and a Christian afterwards, the Oriental is Confucian or Hindu first, and a Chinese or Indian afterwards. For to be a Confucian or Hindu means from the Chinese or Indian point of view to be fully human, and thus represents a concept much less limited than that of national species. On the other hand, those external to the universal state can only be regarded collectively as "barbarians" or "pagans", individually to be well treated, but not as members of independent and potentially equal "nations". It is no more possible for an uncorrupted Chinese or Indian to regard an outsider as his equal than for a Jew to do so: the fact of birth beyond the pale is *prima facie* proof of spiritual and intellectual

inferiority, and the Oriental theory may be said to have been fully demonstrated in respect to their experience of Europeans, whom they can recognize as men, but not as essentially human, of course with individual exceptions.

To resume: neither in China nor in India can an insult to the country or the flag be felt as such: but an insult to the ancestors, to symbols of truth, or any forced infringement of the traditional order, may readily provoke bloodshed, precisely because such things are felt to be, what indeed they are, a denial of essential humanity. Western nations have yet to learn what poison lurks in the phrases "nationality" and "patriotism", than which religious intolerance might well be regarded as more acceptable.

What we call religious tolerance, here and now, would be expressed in Asia as a due sense of the validity of other persuasions than one's own. Here again we meet with an illustration of the incommensurability of Oriental and European cultures, and the essential unity of the Chinese and Indian points of view. For whereas in Europe tolerance was only gradually and painfully achieved with the growth of scepticism, and then only as a negative concept, religious tolerance in Asia has prevailed *ab initio*, so far as we know, and arose directly and inevitably from the positive principle that, given the greatness of the infinite, and the diversity of human endowment, it is *necessary* that God should be understood and worshipped in many different ways. Nor could the same consistency be expected in religion as in pure metaphysics, inasmuch as religion in any case represents an accommodation to human limitations, and is in this sense accidental. With some minor exceptions, particularly in the case of Buddhism, which is a heterodox development, it may be asserted that no Oriental naturally feels any urge to convert any other person to his own point of view. According to Chuang Tzu, the Perfect Man, instead of trying to lead others to adopt his own views, agrees with theirs; he who tries to share his joys with others is by no means a Perfect Man, as he is perfect whose kindness has no root in natural affection. These ideas are not less Indian than Chinese.

The different systems are not even conceived to be contradictory in that any choice between them is imposed of necessity on any individual. It is well known that a Chinese may be at one and the same a Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist, and even also a Christian,

and even practise the ritual of all these points of view, much in the same way that you might be a Republican and astronomer at the same time; while in India the so-called Six Systems, or Points of View, are no more mutually contradictory than are, let us say, chemistry and grammar. The Hindu may be at one and the same time meta-physician and worshipper, without confusion. An Oriental might even teach Christianity sincerely, without becoming a "Christian". The urge of the missionary to effect religious conversion, or of educators in general to educate the Orient in scientific, moral, or aesthetic respects, can only be conceived by a purely Oriental consciousness as the best amongst the variously deplorable impulses by which the conduct of Western barbarians is governed. That point of view which is naturally common to India and China I may illustrate as follows:. Were an Indian in discussion with a Christian, it would not be with a view to make him a Hindu by name, but to bring to the support of Christian theology the aid of Oriental metaphysics, in the sense that Aristotle proved an invaluable aid to the Schoolmen; being convinced that whereas differences of faith might exist, only identity could be demonstrated as between the metaphysical part of Christian theology, and the metaphysical tradition elsewhere. And in fact, the reluctance of Orientals to engage in propaganda without reference to the nature of the pupil would appear to be fully justified by the growth of such pseudo-religions as Theosophy and Neo-Vedantism; and equally clearly in the aesthetic field, inasmuch as one could not cite amongst numerous types of modern art under Oriental influence anything but curiosities and caricatures—merely to mention Oriental dancing as practiced in America will suffice.

As to the Chinese and Indian social systems, the differences are real, and yet more apparent than real, for both are ultimately founded in first principles. It would require a whole lecture to discuss this, but from our point of view it is only necessary to note that the art of life is in both cases ordered by a conception of *types of conduct* correct under given conditions, not on lines of individual self-assertion or competition. The individual is outwardly moulded to a pattern and thereby inwardly freed; rules, at least in their origin, being nothing more than the proper form assumed by freedom. The resulting order, as an aesthetic spectacle, is in sharp contrast with the conflict and disorder which

result from the undisciplined expression of individual imperfection in a democracy, where every opinion amounts to a distinct law. Time does not permit us to discuss the Hindu concept of *pramana*, which in its relation to art means "norm of properly conceived form", *correction du savoir-voir*, and can be thought of as a kind of aesthetic conscience: Hsüan-Tsang's rendering *is chêng*.

If, then, China and India are alike in their conservatism, in their respect for antiquity, in their neglect of science and history, in their indifference to the idea of the nation, in their lack of patriotism, and in the formality (non-individualism) of their culture: and contrasted with Europe in all these respects, which are the characteristic marks of traditional orders, we may consider it established that Chinese and Indian civilizations are really incommensurable and comparable. Let us now undertake the comparison in the aesthetic field, more strictly defined.

It will be indispensable first of all to refer to an aspect of Chinese art that *is* at once accidental in character and due to contact and influence in the accepted sense of the historians. I refer to Chinese Buddhist art in its religious aspect as iconography. The problem concerns only brief periods, relatively speaking, in the course of Chinese history, the first Wei-T'ang, when the theistic Buddhism of the Mahâyàna predominates, the second Sung-Ming when Lamaistic Buddhist art constitutes a minor style by the side of other and more significant schools. In both cases the iconography of the art was necessarily a borrowed one, of Western origin, the West in this case meaning Central Asia and India, and to a less degree a partially Hellenized Western Asia. The net result of these contacts is apparent from our point of view in the familiar general resemblance of Chinese and Indian Buddhist images; though the Chinese art is always Chinese in style. Such likeness is the result of contacts, which might have had similar effects even though the Chinese and Indian mentalities had been fundamentally incommensurable. Suppose now that we think away all specifically Buddhist religious art from China (Ch'an-Zen being only by designation and association Buddhist, but really metaphysical and not religious in its essence); there will remain an even more impressive body of purely Chinese art, continuously produced during a vastly greater period of time. It is this purely

Chinese art that we have to compare with the art of Indian, where it is equally true that Buddhism and Buddhist art represent no more than an episode, of only secondary significance when compared with the central tradition from which its aesthetic vocabulary is entirely borrowed. So then we shall exclude from our discussion of the essential correspondences of Chinese and Indian art all that we have defined as Buddhist religious art; only with this warning, that in so far as we may propose to study the history of Chinese Buddhist art, a more thorough knowledge of Indian Buddhism and Indian Buddhist art is required than is always realized by Sinalogues in this field.

Ch'an-Zen, which is not a religion, but a metaphysical tradition, and Zen art, are of another order, more directly founded in first principles: Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese *Ch'an* and Indian *dhyâna*. *Dhymza* is the Indian practise of Yoga, which is designed to accomplish the realization of more enfranchised states of being, and a consequently greater facility of conduct: the method consisting essentially in visual concentration leading to immediate knowledge by identification of subject and object, all particular distractions being eliminated. For example, in art, a mental image thus realized in identity becomes the artist's model: this model, which is "the art in the artist", being the exemplar to which the actual handiwork of the artist is ordered, to the exclusion of "direct observation of nature". It follows, of course, that the history of style in China and India cannot be discussed in terms of optical plausibility, degrees of observation, or the like, but only in terms of varying energy. From the Hindu point of view, for example, defective art is the result, not of the neglect of observation, but of slack concentration (*sithila samadhi*). I have explained this matter more fully in the "Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia": here I will only adduce by way of parallel the saying of Chuang Tsu, that "the mind of the sage being at rest, becomes the mirror of the universe".

Like Yoga, *Ch'an* or Zen is a "Way" applicable to every aspect of life. As developed in the Far East (simultaneously on Indian and Taoist premises) it may be described as the attempt to realize perfection in purity or simplicity of action; a direct relation, so to speak, being established between the pure intellect (the habit of First Principles) and the making and doing of anything. This corresponds to the Indian conception of

enfranchisement through action (*karma-yoga*), that is action without attachment (=non-action), defining Yoga as "skill in action", *karmasu kâusala* (*Bhagavad Gita*, II, *50*). Translated into religious terms, we should have to say action with surrender to the will of God, and without prudential considerations.

Probably because of the Indian origin of the name *Ch'an* or Zen, and the great fame of Bodhidharma (Daruma), the greatest Indian teacher of Yoga and Vedanta in China, it has been usual to think of Ch'an-Zen as representing the principle almost wholly of Indian origin. But this is very greatly to underestimate the importance of the Chinese sources. The Indian contribution was not in this case an influence bringing to China something in itself new (as the Buddhist *religion* had been), but served as it were to remind the Chinese consciousness of its proper *intellectual* (Taoist) inheritance, which during the theistic Buddhist period had been brought down to the level of a magical science. Even to the large extent that Ch'an-Zen has Indian roots, its manifestation in art is not of the kind commonly ascribed to "influence", Ch'an-Zen art having no obvious relation to Indian art of any kind. Styles must in fact vary like religions according to time and place, even when principles and themes are identical; after the familiar principle, that the thing known must exist in the knower according to the mode of the knower.

All that is then required for present purposes is to demonstrate from pre-Ch'an sources the essential likeness of Tao (as "Way") and as the doctrine of the First Principle of Yoga and Vedânta in the same sense. A very few examples will suffice: Chuang Tzu (Giles, p. 240) gives an excellent account of the working of Yoga (though not so called) in connection with the carpenter making a wooden stand for musical instruments, and asked "What mystery is there in your art T' He replies: "No mystery, your Highness, and yet there is something. When I am about to make such a stand... I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence... I become oblivious of any reward to be gained... of any fame to be acquired... un-conscious of my physical frame. Then, with no thought of the Court present to my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone. I enter some mountain forest. I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then

set to work".

And as to habit (habitus, *tao* as "way"): "Let me take an illustration", said the wheelwright, "from my own trade. In making a wheel, if you work too slowly, you can't make it firm; if you work too fast, the spokes won't fit in. You must go neither too slowly nor too fast. There must be co-ordination of mind and hand. Words cannot explain what it is, but there is some mysterious art herein. I cannot teach it to my son; nor can he learn it from me. Consequently, though seventy years of age, I am still making wheels in my old age". (ib., p. 271). Similarly with the sword maker: "Is it your skill, Sir, or have you a way?" "It is concentration... If a thing was not a sword, I did not notice it. I availed myself of whatever energy I did not use in other directions in order to secure greater efficiency in the direction required". (ib., p. 290). In India, similarly, we find the philosopher exclaim: "I have learnt concentration from the maker of arrows", who sees nothing but the act in which he is absorbed; the author, practising yoga vision and seeing his work complete in every detail before he' proceeds to transcription; while the image maker must be "expert in *yoga-dhyana*, for thus and in no other way, and verily not by direct observation, can the end be attained". (*Sukranitisära*, IV, 72).

To say as above "before Ch'an or Zen" is not really permissible, because a tradition cannot be thought of as having a beginning; by pre-Ch'an we mean then only "before the designation and style as we know it had been developed". In this sense, before Ch'an-Zen, Chinese like Indian art had been symbolic, presenting itself clearly as such in the ancient Chinese bronzes and jades, and old Indian art of the Water Cosmology. Theistic Buddhist art is itself symbolic in the sense that religion is always a symbolic statement of first principles, but our allusion is rather to the direct symbolic representation of these First Principles, such direct symbols, e.g., those of the *Tien* and *Ti*, being more often geometrical, vegetable, or theriomorphic than anthropomorphic. The wide-spread distribution of identical symbols at very ancient levels is itself one of the chief empirical evidences of the antiquity of metaphysical tradition, which we are thus led to push back at least to the fourth millenium B.C. Such symbols in so far as they represent principles are without sentimental or moral connotation, but with the development of

anthropomorphic religions have naturally come also to designate personal powers. Alike from the Chinese and Indian point of view, their origin is pre-historic; and although similar in source, may assume apparently very distinct forms, as in the case of the Chinese dragon and Indian *nâga* or Chinese phoenix and Indian Garuda.

There exist alike in India and China related symbols denoting the fundamental poles of being connected by opposite relation, and which by their unity and by their relation are the source of all procession, or in religious language, of creation. These fundamental poles of being are designated in China as Heaven, and Earth, Yang and Yin, in India as Purusa and Sakti, or religiously as Siva and Sakti, Laksmi-Nârâyana, etc. From these modalities of the first principle proceeds the breath of life, *ch'i*, Indian *prima*, or considered as by Mencius, as the principle of desire, the will to life, Indian *kâma*. These primary principles, and all the secondary principles proceeding from them, constitute the *types* of sentient being which are so to speak the cause of explanation of natural appearances in time and space, and so become the proper theme *of* art, which presumes to return phenomena from their sensible to their intelligible aspects. The consequences of this point of view extend even to portraiture, equally in China and India, as I have explained in the "Introduction".[1]

The development of Ch'an-Zen art presents us precisely with a transition from a formally symbolic art of this kind to an introsusceptive or imagist art in which the appearance and form of an object are so completely identified that the thing may be said to mean what it is, and to be what it means, in a simultaneous act of sense and intellect. The nature of the subject becomes here altogether indifferent; the representation of a caterpillar may be significant as that of a man or deity, and *vice-versa*, because all meaning and all being are omnipresent, though according to the *mode of* the individual reflection.

The scripture *of* Zen "is written with the characters of heaven, of man, of beasts, of demons, of hundreds of blades of grass, and of thousands of trees" (Dogen), "every

[1] *Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia,* Open Court, March, 1932

flower exhibits the image *of* Buddha" (Dugo): with the constantly emphasized view that all scripture is vain, *cf* St. Bernard's *Ligna et Lapides do cebunt te*, *quod a magistris audire non posse* and innumerable assertions of the mystics, such as Ekhart's "Any flea as it is in God is nobler than the highest of the angels as he is in himself."

In art, the symbolic and introsusceptive points of view are to be seen side by side in the following extract from a twelfth century Chinese author writing on animal painting:

The horse is used as a symbol of the sky, its even pace prefiguring the even motion of the stars; the bull mildly sustaining its heavy yoke, is fit symbol of the earth's submissive tolerance. But tigers, leopards, deer, wild swine, fawns and hares—creatures that cannot be inured to the will of man—these the painter chooses for the sake of their skittish gambols and swift, shy evasions, loves them as things that seek the desolation of great plains and wintry snows, as creatures that will not be haltered with a bridle nor tethered by the foot. He would commit to brushwork the gallant splendor of their stride; this he would do *and no more*."

It is simpler to see here a direct continuity of Taoist tradition than to seek for Indian sources; has not Chuang Tzu spoken in almost the same words (ch. IX): "Horses have hoofs to carry them over frost and snow; hair to protect them from the wind and cold. They eat grass and drink water and fling up their heels in the meadows. Such is the real nature of horses. Palatial dwellings are of no use to them... Thus far only do their natural dispositions carry them".

What now in classical Chinese aesthetic corresponds to the Ch'an-Zen concept of the identity of formal and representative elements in art, to art conceived as pure *act*? We had best undertake this enquiry by proceeding directly to a consideration of the Six Canons of Hsieh Ho, formulated in the fifth century. An attempt has been made to derive these from a list of the Six Limbs of Painting which occurs in an Indian commentary of the thirteenth century. The possibility of derivation is not excluded by the dates, because the Six Limbs are no more than a traditional summary of ideas that were already current in India in the fifth century. But the accidental correspondences are by no means so exact in detail as to

suggest derivation, and I regard the Chinese canon as quite independent. On the other hand, the essential correspondences are such as might be expected from a common foundation of aesthetic theory in metaphysical bases.

From this point of view, let us examine the Canons in due order. The first and most important demands the operation or reverberation of the spirit in life movement. The word *ch'i*, spirit, means from the Taoist point of view *life* as it proceeds from Heaven and Earth, the two modalities of the Tao, or even if taken as by Mencius to be the "passion-nature" or "fiery nature", has the same meaning of life-principle, but conceived as the will to life, or desire. It is the same as Hindu *prana*, spiration, identified either directly with Brahman, or manifested as the wind by which the waters are stirred, so that a reflection of God appears in them, which is the world picture. The word *ch'i* is also to be used with literal accuracy as the proper Chinese rendering of the third member of the Christian Trinity. *Ch'i* is accordingly "form" in the sense that "the soul is the form of the body". Those who have studied theology will readily follow these identifications, which I mention here only to demonstrate more clearly the foundation of Chinese aesthetic in traditional metaphysic, and because in a similar way it can be shown that Indian aesthetic theory is purely Vedantic; and the likeness of Vedanta and Taoism is so immediate that some scholars have supposed a derivation, which, however, does not seem to be required. As to operation or reverberation, these shades of related meaning depend on which of two characters both pronounced *yûn is* written. In any case, but preferring the sense "reverberation", the statement is comparable in form with that of the *dhvani* theory of Hindu rhetoricians, who assert that neither the literal nor the allegorical sense of the sound convey its whole import, but that is is only as it were by an echoing of the sound and sense in the heart of the hearer that the suchness (*tattva*), anagogic or transcendental content can be tasted. Just as knowledge is neither subjective nor objective, but has its being only in the *act* of knowing, so art is neither subjective nor objective, but has its being only in the *act of* aesthetic "imitation". Nor is the *work* of art to be thought of as the art; the art is an act, originally in the artist and remaining in him, but also to be reproduced by the spectator in the act *of* criticism. As Confucius says: "Are bells and

drums all that is meant by music?" In India it is constantly asserted that all art is intellectual, *citta-samjna*: the *Lankâvatara Sûtra* expresses it thus: "The real picture is not in the colour nor the surface nor the saucer". In many places it is pointed out that though the pictorial surface is flat, we speak of it as being in relief, and the subjectivity even of natural space is asserted when it is pointed out that all we see of natural forms by the eye's intrinsic faculty is a patchwork of coloured areas.

The distinction of art from the work of art is also to be found in Whitman, who says: "All music is what awakes in you when you are reminded of it by the instruments, all architecture is what you do to it when you look at it." The work of art then is simply a means of communication: its actual tangible aesthetic surfaces have no other value in themselves than as causes of sensation, pleasant or otherwise, and this is why from the Oriental point of view the modern study of aesthetics by psychological experiment has to be dismissed as altogether futile.

Now as to the nature of the aesthetic act: as we know from what was said about Yoga, it consists in the beginning of a fetch of the singly directed imagination by which the form corresponding to the required notion is drawn into intellectual mental view, and being there held, serves as the *plan* of the work to be done. But before the work can be taken in hand, the artist must have been completely identified with the form evoked in his mind, so only truly knowing it. As in the intellectual mental image thought and its manifestation are thus identified, so in the physical replica, if the artist has been effectively trained and has the habit of his craft, there will be a conformity of actual shape to intended significance. To proceed from the Christian scholastic point of view: as knowledge consists in an *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, so art is *a consonantia diversorum*, *viz*., of the intelligible idea and its sensible embodiment. Just this coincidence of formal and pictorial, intelligible and sensible elements in a work of art is precisely what is sought in Ch'an-Zen.

Now as to India: We have the terms *sadrsya* and *sahitya* denoting what is essential respectively in painting and literature. *Sâdrsya is* literally conformity, con-similarity, aesthetic "imitation" (*Arts imitatur naturam in sua operatione*) and this refers to a quality

wholly self-contained in the work itself, not to a comparison of the work with a model, but rather as we speak of *le mot juste*. I need hardly remind you that neither in Chinese nor in Indian art do we find the use of models, or of drawing from nature, except in connection with rough sketches made as an aid to the artist's own knowledge of nature. *Sâhitya* is similarly the coincidence of sound and meaning in verbal art, and this is clearly explained by the example of the two-in-oneness of Purina and Sakti as joint modalities of Brahman, which you will recognize when translated into Christian terms as the essential identity of the two Persons, Father and Son, interior and spoken word, or even better in the generation of the Son from "conjoined principles" in God (St. Thomas, *Summa Theologia, I, Q.27, A.2*).

Now what in Chinese corresponds to *consonantia*, *sâdrsya*, *sahitya*? I have not been able to find a single word used in technical aesthetics with this meaning, but I may say that Hsüan Tsang translates *sâdrsya* by *ch'ou*, where the word occurs in Vasubandhu to denote a reciprocal relation rather more abstract than is implied by *ch'ou* alone and that if a phrase were to be coined, *ying ch'ou* might be adequate. But if there is not a single term in use equivalent to *consonantia*, there are numerous dicta embodying the idea: for example, "By means of natural shape (*hsing*) depict the divine (*shên*)." "The great painters of old painted the idea (*ī*) and not merely the shape (*hsing*)", and in adverse criticism: "The appearance was like (*hsing-ssu*), but the reverberation (*yun*) was weak."

This last brings us back to Hsieh Ho. If we take the first and fourth canons together (as we are bound to do, because the canons cannot be mutually contradictory), we have (1) to express the reverberation of the spirit in the movement of life and (2) to make shape (*hsing*) according to natural species (wu). To put this in one statement amounts to saying that by means of the representative element express the spiritual conception. Which gives us our *consonantia*. As to *consonantia* in other Chinese writings on art, the fact is that they are always telling about it but do not give it a distinct name.

The second canon asserts that the vehicle of expression (as defined in the first canon) is the brush stroke or line, and it is self-evident that the brush stroke or line is in itself the most abstract and intelligible part of the work, since an outline, boundary, or limiting

plane does not correspond to anything *seen* in Nature, but represents an interpretation of what we see; in other words, line is not representative, but symbolic. The same is implied by Indian authorities when they remind us that it is the line (*rekhâ*) that interests the master, while the public cares most about colour. The third and fourth canons, taken by themselves, point out that the pictorial or representative elements in a work of art are those of shape (mass or area), and colour, and this, too, becomes self-evident if we reflect that what the eye sees in Nature is nothing but a patchwork of colours, as was recognized early in the development of Indian psychology: coloured areas being thus the primary data of sense impression become in the work of art the primary means of recognition; and because the attempt at recognition is the first animal reaction of the naive spectator, it has been observed that colour is what interests the public.

The last canon, with the ideogram *ch'uan*, says "draw according to ancient models." "What he gets by his mind (*shin*) he transmits (*ch'van*) by his hand". This is not merely a special case of the conservatism which we have already shown to be proper to traditional cultures such as the Chinese and Indian, but can be paralleled by an abundance of Indian words all used in speaking of the practice of art, for example *sastramâna*, *agamarthâvisamvâdi*, *nâyât*, *vidhivat*, *Sil-pânurûpa*, etc., all meaning "According to canonical prescription", "ascertained rules", "craft traditions", etc.

Let us now turn to the San P'ing, a well known Chinese classification of painting according to intrinsic virtue. The threefold division is as divine (*shên*), profound (*miao*), and accomplished (*nêng*), the first representing absolute perfection, the goal rather than the attainable in human art, the second is such true mastery as approaches perfection, the third is mere dexterity. A striking parallel to this occurs in the discussion of the poetic imagination by Indian rhetoricians, especially in the second chapter of Kâvya^{g}ekhara's *Kâvya-Mimâmsa*. Here the creative faculty, *kârayitri pratibhâ*, *is* considered as of three kinds: spontaneous (*sahaja*), or *sârasvata* (from Sarasvati, goddess of music); acquired (*âhârya*) or acquired by constant exercise (*abhyasika*); and the product of instruction (*âupadesikâ*). The first of these does not mean (nor does Chinese *shên*) divinely *inspired*, but rather denotes a degree of facility divine in kind, a "perfection" or "grace". Indeed,

the perfected being, for example the Buddha or Bodhisattva, is said precisely to possess a perfect virtuosity (*kusala*) in creative (*nairmànika*) and executive (*sailpasthanika*) power, and likewise to be possessed of an absolute *pramana*, of which we have seen that the aesthetic conscience is a special mode. One is reminded of the angels, who are said to have fewer ideas and to use less means than men. The Chinese also have an independent class, the Extraordinary (*ī* taken with reference to the Tao) applied to a more personal kind of philosophical or literary painting, great in achievement, though not the work of professional artists, nor governed by traditional rules, *ch'uan*. This comes nearer to the modern conception of genius than does any qualifying term already mentioned. The Indian conception of the poetic imagination as power (*Sakti*) offers a partial equivalent. But none of these latter terms can be forced to imply that there can be made any real comparison of the Oriental "perfect artist" with the occidental "genius". In the Orient, perfection *may* be obtainable from an unorthodox position, but if such a thing can happen, it is really as an abnormality and accident; in any case, perfection could never be thought of as achieved *because* of a neglect of or emancipation from rule, but only *in spite* of such a taking of liberties. It is very possible Chinese i applied to painting ought to be rendered "flair" rather than "genius". Much more work needs to be done in translating Chinese writings about art and works of art.

Chinese and Indian technique in various arts, though not in all, can be profitably compared. For example, as to painting, the essential medium in both is that of the brush outline, colour being secondary. The second canon of Hsieh Ho alludes to the rendering of structure by the brush, and Indian writers are never tired of asserting that master painters and competent critics are interested in the *purity of the line*, while what the *public* likes is richness of colour. Other parallels can be drawn between Chinese and Indian perspective, defined simply as "means of suggesting the third dimension"; some work in this field has already been done. Indian and Chinese music, and still more dramatic technique, present many remarkable parallels; here the essential and accidental have to be disentangled.

Finally, I want to call your attention to the significance of certain Chinese fairy tales,

as they would generally be called, though they are really myths. Everyone will have heard of the Taoist legends of the disappearance of a supreme artist, or of the coming to life and disappearance of his work: I allude particularly to the legends of Wu Tao Tzu, and that of the "Flight of the Dragon", first preserved to us from the Liang Dynasty; the latter has provided the title of a charming booklet written by Binyon on Far Eastern Art. The notion of the disappearance, or rather transformation, of the perfected being is in itself necessarily common to all metaphysical traditions; it occurs, for example, in Christianity as Ascension (it is interpreted by the schoolmen that the material part of the body is disintegrated in the air, only the being of the body returning to God), and in the Vedanta Transformation (*abhisambhava*), thus *Sariramakrtam akrtam krtâtmä brahma-lokam abhisambhavyämi*, "Having unmade the body, as a self made perfect, I am transformed to the unmade (uncreated) world of Brahman", *Chändogya Upanif ad*, VIII, 13. The disappearance of the poet-saint Mânikka Vâcagar in the Indian, of Moses, Enoch, and Elias in the Hebrew, and of the latter as al-khizr (who is said to have partaken of the Water of Life) in the Islamic tradition, are cases in point. Need I say that transformation has nothing in common with death or immortality, except as to the accident of disappearance?

As to the rationale of this: modes of *Being* can only be thought of, in the first place, as manifested or non-manifested. *Manifested* being, in the second place, as consciousness functioning respectively on the intelligible and sensible planes, as in Aristotle and scholastic systems in general. Now, on the sensible or material plane, here and now, we have to recognize both a mental creation (the formation of the art in the artist), and the imitation of this creation by an act of will in a material work of art. Such works of art "live" only metaphorically. But an art of this kind, with its inevitable imperfections due to what Dante calls the *sorda*, Hindu *tämasika*, qualities of the already existing materials employed in "making", is *a priori* excluded from the intelligible world, which is complete in itself, though invisible to the eye's intrinsic faculty. *There* can only be conceived the mental creation, the art in the artist, with immediate identity of cause and effect. This is *creation* in the religious sense in the language of metaphysics,

manifestation. The whole idea is very clearly expressed by Eckhart when he says: "a carpenter building a house will first erect it in his mind, and were the house enough subject to his will, then materials apart, the only difference between them would be that of begetter and suddenly begotten... as it is in God.. there being no distinction of outpouring and outpoured".

So then the perfected man, in his aspect as artist, or in any aspect, who attains partial realization (and therewith the intelligible world), or *a fortiori* who attains to complete realization (and therewith the non-manifested world, which is not merely invisible but super-rational or alogical) must be thought of as transformed and invisible from our point of view, there remaining nothing by which his existence can be sensibly registered. At the same time, his art can now only be described as a mental creation or manifestation, existing only and immediately as natural species, the phenomenal world, the unknowable as we know it. The perfected artist then shares in God's eternal and timeless creation, seeing the universe, not as we see it, but as the world picture, the totality of forms reflected in a single image, Chuang Tzu's "mirror of the Universe"—"painted by the Self on the canvas of the Self", as Sankara says. "When painting has reached divinity (*shên*) there is an end of the matter."

Now, while those ideas are expressed more or less explicitly in every tradition, or rather in *the* tradition wherever it can be recognized —even the Greek story of Pygmalion represents a distant echo—it is so far as I know peculiar to China to have invented so many specific legends of the disappearance of the perfected artist and the coming to life of his "work".

I must now conclude, and would like to repeat that my real theses have been (1) the distinction of what is essential from what is accidental in Chinese-Indian parallels, and (2) to point out that however much your mentality may be opposed to the method of induction from First Principles, there is no other method by which Oriental civilizations, which are founded in First Principles, can be made intelligible. The method of deduction from observed fact, to which no doubt you are irrevocably attached, leads only to description and classification, which may be "accurate", but need not imply any

comprehension of or assimilation to the thing described and classified. Description and classification are acts of the mind; comprehension an act of the pure intellect.

Worldly people have no stuff in them. They are like a heap of cow-dung. Flatterers come to them and say: 'You are so charitable and wise! You are so pious!' These are not mere words but pointed bamboos thrust at them... Arbitration and leadership? How trifling these are! Charity and doing good to others? You have had enough of these... If you realize God, you will get everything else. First God, then charity, doing good to others, doing good to the world, and redeeming people.

Sri Ramakrishna.