An Intercultural Perspective on Chinese Aesthetics

Karl-Heinz Pohl

The imprint of Western-style modernity on the world can be observed in the remotest corners of the globe. Whether these developments are a blessing or a curse for human enterprise on this planet will be left for later generations to decide. Whatever the ultimate judgement may be, there seems to be a globally accepted assumption among intellectuals that the theoretical approach and level of complexity in the Humanities, as they are studied in the West, are to be applied as universal norms. This would appear to be inspired by perceptions of Western superiority in many other areas, particularly in technology, natural sciences and even military capability.

In the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, this assumption has been subjected to criticism. However, the effects of this post-colonial critique have been marginal in the West in terms of questioning and challenging US- and Eurocentric views and developing a deeper consciousness of other cultures. We are still cooking in the juice of our Western style scientific theories, and take it for granted that people from other cultures will simply have to become well versed in Western modes of thought—even in the Humanities, which are designed to explore the very essentials of human existence. The so-called cross-cultural exchange in the Humanities

K.-H. Pohl (✉)
Trier University, Trier, Germany

A. K. Giri (ed.), *Social Theory and Asian Dialogues*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7095-2_16

has, then, actually been taking place on a one-way-street: Euro-American theories, categories and models have been adopted everywhere and have become the universal standard of discourse for intellectuals all over the world. Meanwhile, in the West, the preoccupation with other cultures has been limited to a kind of cultural–anthropological positivism: the peculiarities of other cultures have been researched, mapped out and filed in the edifices of Western academia.

China is no exception when it comes to this one-way-street of cross-cultural exchange. Since the early twentieth century, particularly since the so-called May Fourth Movement (*c.* 1917–1923), Western social and scientific theories have become dominant. Beginning in 1949, Marxism, as the allegedly most 'progressive' of all the Western theories, was determined to be the one and only acceptable 'order of discourse' in China. Only recently, after a de facto departure from Marxism and a merely nominal adherence to the teachings of Trier's great son, have there been certain tendencies towards a re-evaluation of China's own cultural tradition. Thus, modern Chinese intellectual history can largely be read as a history of China's struggle with Western ideas.

Modern Chinese aesthetics forms an essential part of the historical struggle with Western thought. Concerning this, however, one often hears the objection that China never had a discipline that could be compared with occidental philosophical aesthetics. Seen from a methodological point of view, such objections may carry a certain weight, but because of a similarity to art-philosophical aspects of Western aesthetics, the Chinese, in general, understood and still understand their own rich tradition of poetic rather than systematic reflections on the essence of literature and art as 'aesthetics'. The 'aesthetic fever', *meixue re*, that broke out in China during the 1980s can be understood from the pre-eminent role that aesthetics played and still plays in the history of Chinese ideas. Hence, if we want to avoid getting further tangled up in the snares of Eurocentrism, we would be well advised to accept this cross-cultural approximation in spite of its vague rather than rigorous definition of terms. Before dealing further with these intercultural aspects, let us first take a look at the basic ideas in this long and rich Chinese tradition.

* * *

Traditional Chinese poetics and art theory give weight to two seemingly contradictory notions: to naturalness (*ziran*) and regularity (*fa*). The

stunning aesthetic effect of this unity of opposites can best be observed and studied in the so-called 'regular poems' (*lüshi*) that flourished during the golden age of Chinese poetry, the Tang dynasty (sixth to tenth century AD). These poems have to follow a strict set of rules concerning length and number of lines, tone patterns, parallelism and the like. And yet, reading the works of not only the greatest poets of that time, such as Du Fu, Li Bai or Wang Wei, one gets a feeling of absolute naturalness and ease, recalling Goethe's dictum that 'true mastery only reveals itself in restriction' (*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister*). True, this preponderance of regularity also has its linguistic roots: the structure of the Chinese written language—single characters pronounced with a single syllable—lends itself supremely to neatly regular arrangements, parallelisms and such, unknown in this form in Western languages. But there are also ideological reasons for this feature, such as a Confucian predilection for regularity, or rather regular rites (*li*), in interpersonal conduct. Naturalism, on the other hand, is the domain of Daoism. And when the Chinese literary and art theorists, all through the ages, elaborated on the notion that a work of art both follows and transcends rules (*fa*), they drew their inspiration for this mostly from Daoist stories. In the Song dynasty, for example, Su Shi (1037–1101), the most influential scholar-literatus for the last 800 years of imperial China in terms of aesthetics, invoked Daoist images of natural creativity when he compared his writing to

> a thousand-gallon spring that issues forth without choosing a site … There is no knowing how it will take shape. But there is one thing I am sure of; it always goes where it should go and stops where it should stop.[1]

In later periods, after Buddhism had taken a strong hold in Chinese society, particularly for the scholar-literati class in the Daoist inspired Chan- (Zen-) Buddhist school, Buddhist concepts became major reference points in aesthetics. This also applies for the concept of *fa*. In Buddhism, *fa* is the Chinese rendering of the Sanskrit *Dharma*, which has a double connotation, both as the teaching of the Buddha or truth and as the ultimate reality. Thus it is not surprising that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the discussion on rules and methods (*fa*) in poetry and painting reached its height, we have constant reference to its Buddhist usage, requiring that 'method' or 'rules' (*fa*) be matched by 'enlightenment' (*wu*), thus leading to an 'intuitive mastery',[2] the main goal in

Chan-Buddhism. Here basic concepts of Chan-Buddhism serve in an allegorical way as explanations for the central questions of Chinese aesthetics: the unity of regularity and naturalness.

Here the question arises about the kind of rules the poets or artists were to follow. Even the most ardent followers of rules, the so-called archaists, who, flourishing in the Ming dynasty, looked up to the great masters of the past, were eager to point out that following rules or models did not mean following the models of ancient poets but following nature, because it was the rule of nature which the ancient poets followed, in the words of one of its main representatives, Li Mengyang (1475–1529):

> Words must have methods and rules before they can fit and harmonize with musical laws, just as circles and squares must fit with compasses and rulers, which were not invented by them but really created by Nature. Now, when we imitate the ancients, we are not imitating them but really imitating the natural laws of things.[3]

The concept of unity of naturalness and regularity—in terms of following the rules of nature—was further elaborated by juxtaposing the notion of 'living rules' (*huo fa*) against that of 'dead rules' (*si fa*).[4] In the Qing period, the literary critic Ye Xie (1627–1703) expressed his idea of 'living rules' in the image of the clouds on Mount Tai. They form their beautiful and natural structure because they do not follow dead rules but the unfathomable living rules of nature. An untranslatable part of this inspiring passage (in Stephen Owen's translation) is the ambiguity of the important Chinese term *wen*: meaning both beautiful/regular pattern/structure and literature:

> Within Heaven and Earth the greatest forms of *wen* [pattern/literature] are the wind and clouds, rains and the thunder. Their mutations and transformations cannot be fathomed and have neither limit nor boundary: they are the highest manifestation of spirit (*shen*) in the universe and the perfection of *wen*. But let me speak of them from one particular point of view. The clouds of Mount Tai rise from the merest wisp, but before the morning is done, they cover the world. I once lived half a year at the foot of Mount Tai and grew familiar with the shapes and attitudes of these clouds. Sometimes, as I said, they rise out of the merest wisp and stream off flooding all the ends of the earth; sometimes all the peaks of the range seem to try to rise above them, but even the very summits disappear. Sometimes several months will pass in continuous shadow, but then the clouds will scatter in the short hour

> of a meal. Sometimes they are as black as lacquer; sometimes as white as snow. They may be as huge as the wings of the Peng bird, hanging over both horizons, or as wild as tangled tresses. Sometimes they sit suspended like lumps in the sky with no others following them; sometimes they are continuous and fine, coming one after another without interruption.
>
> All at once black clouds will mount upward, and the natives of the region will read the signs by established rule: 'It will rain,' they say. And it does not rain. Then again some clouds, lit by the sun, will come out, and their established rule tells them, 'It's going to be sunny.' And it rains. The attitudes assumed by the clouds can be counted in the tens of thousands; no two are the same. Neither are any two manners of clouds the same by whose colours we might forecast their future movements. Sometimes all the clouds will come back; sometimes they will go off for good, and never come back. Sometimes all come back; sometimes half will come back—no two situations are the same. This is the natural pattern of Heaven and Earth, its perfect work.
>
> But let us suppose that the pattern of Heaven and Earth could be set according to a rule. When Mount Tai was going to dispatch its clouds, it would first gather the troops of clouds and hold a conference with them: 'I'm about to send you clouds out to make the Great Pattern of Heaven and Earth. Now you over there—I want you to go first—and you follow him. I would like you to rise up; you next to him—you sink down. You should try shining in the light, and you might try making a rippling motion. You back there!—you should turn around as you go out and come back in; and I think it would be especially nice to have you sort of roll over in the sky. This one is to begin; this one is to close; and this one here is to follow up the rear wagging its tail.
>
> If the clouds were dispatched like this and brought back home like this, there would be no vitality in any of them. And if the pattern of the universe were made in this manner, then the universe would feel burdened by having a Mount Tai, and Mount Tai would feel burdened by having clouds, and no clouds would ever be sent out.[5]

This vivid image illustrates the Chinese traditional aesthetic ideal of a great work of poetry or art better than any theory: that of a living, organic pattern, not dependent on rules derived from 'orthodox' models or periods but following the rules of nature. Such works come alive, creating their own rules, in each new period with each new poet–artist who is

stirred by the world and its affairs. In painting, it was the influential unorthodox monk–painter Shitao (1641–1717) who pinpointed this idea with his famous notion of 'no-rule' being the 'ultimate rule' (*wu fa er fa, nai wei zhi fa*).[6]

Regarding the way to achieve this ultimate state of natural creativity, it was understood from the earliest time that constant practice (*gongfu*) according to masterful models was the only means of reaching mastery and perfection. This emerges from a famous story in the *Zhuangzi* (fourth to third centuries BC) which is central to Chinese aesthetics. It pictures a cook who, transcending mere method, was able to wield his knife in an unfathomable spiritual fashion, because he had entered the *Dao*. However, as he also confesses, he had to practise cutting up oxen for a decade until he could reach this level of spirit-like mastery.[7] Hence, constant practice and copying led to an intuitive mastery over the artistic medium. Thus, the first ideal of traditional Chinese aesthetics is to achieve a degree of artistic perfection in the work of art which, when imbued with a 'vital resonance' (*qiyun*), makes it seem like a work of nature, and yet conveys a sense of spiritual mastery.

A second important notion in Chinese aesthetics is that of openness and suggestiveness. This also has a linguistic root: the syntactical indeterminacy or ambiguity of classical Chinese syntax, lending itself to openness and suggestiveness. In terms of aesthetics, the idea of suggestiveness found a lasting coinage in the dictum of the Tang poet and critic Sikong Tu (837–908), that poetry should convey 'images beyond images' and 'scenes beyond scenes' (*xiang wai zhi xiang, jing wai zhi jing*).[8] In terms of a philosophical background, we again have here Daoist roots; that is, the notion that words cannot completely transmit ideas, let alone convey the ultimate truth or *Dao*.[9] In a way, this emphasis on suggestiveness—compounded by the syntactical indeterminacy or ambiguity of classical Chinese prose—led to the predominance of poetic diction in Chinese writings of all kinds, rending even philosophical discourse poetical and suggestive rather than conceptual and rational. Furthermore, painting, which aimed at a depiction of 'inner reality' (*zhen*) beyond 'form' (*xing*), was supposed to have this suggestive, allusive and finally poetic quality (with titles of paintings often being lines of poetry),[10] leading to the well-known feature of Chinese painting that the empty space (*xu*) is more important, that is, suggestively telling, than the painted substance (*shi*).

Let us now turn to the creator of art, to the poet and artist. In Chinese thought, we have the notion of 'vital force' (*qi*) which serves as the main

category with which to discuss the creative power of a poet or artist. At first, 'vital force' was taken to be an innate quality which could not be acquired. Over the centuries, the notion of the 'vital force' of a person changed, however, ranging from an innate capacity to something which can be cultivated and acquired. Thus the rather dazzling notion of *qi* stands for both an innate talent as well as an acquired power of expression, being the first requirement of a poet–artist.

A second important requirement is the artist's imaginative capacity. This indispensable faculty of a poet, called 'spiritual thinking' (*shen si*),[11] was thought to bring about a fusion of the artist's mind with the outside world.[12] There is a well-known image used by Su Shi that describes this faculty most impressively in the capacity of his friend, the bamboo painter Wen Tong, of having the 'complete bamboo in his mind' before painting (*xiong zhong cheng zhu*), or rather of actually becoming bamboo when painting bamboo.[13]

In summary, the above-mentioned features—'living' rules, suggestiveness, creative power and imaginative capacity—have led to notions such as unity of rule and no-rule, unity of concreteness and openness, fusion of scene (*jing*) and idea/feeling (*yi/qing*), and fusion of self with world or subject with object. Two more ideas need to be mentioned, though. First is the tendency to balance out complementary or opposite elements according to the well-known and ubiquitous *yin–yang* pattern, that is uniting strong *and* weak, hard *and* soft, male *and* female elements in a duality and not in contentious dualism. This balance is at the very heart of Chinese aesthetics: the unity of naturalness and regularity. It can also be observed in Chinese landscape painting, where mountains (the *yang*-element) are united with water (the *yin*-element)—hence its Chinese name of 'mountain and water painting' (*shan-shui hua*). Second is the importance of the calligraphic brushstroke. The black–white contrast of the calligraphic line with its dynamic movement was considered to have more aesthetic appeal than colours, which were not only considered rather static but also carried a rather vulgar (*su*) connotation. These notions can be singled out as the most important ideas in Chinese aesthetical thought.

* * *

What are the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western aesthetics? In spite of the different styles of discourse we can find certain correspondences. Where the Chinese theorists emphasize adherence to

rule, that is, imitation of models, but ultimately transcending them in the concept of 'living rule' or 'enlightenment' (i.e. intuitive mastery), we have in Western thought the concept of mimesis as the imitation of nature in art. Aristotle, however, had already propounded, just like one of the Chinese authors mentioned, that mimesis, as artistic creation, is not the imitation of finished things in nature but imitation of the original creativity of nature. This thought is further elaborated by Kant as art being the product of genius through which 'nature gives rules to the work of art'. For Kant, however, there are also 'scholastic' aspects in art which require adherence to rules. It is the power of genius to transcend them, or, as it were, create works which are and at the same time are not made according to rule, thus becoming models for the inspiration of others.

Kant's 'genius' also finds its analogy in the Chinese concept of 'vital force' (*qi*) as a disposition which transmits the vital power of nature into the mental and thus artistic realm. Su Shi's description of his creative force, his 'thousand-gallon spring that issues forth without choosing a site', creating writing which is 'like drifting clouds and flowing water, things which cannot be constrained by definite patterns and which go where they ought to go and stop where they ought to stop',[14] very much fits this idea of genius through which nature gives rules to art. The work of art thus created does not show any signs of conscious artistry and cannot be taught to others, both notions that are found both in Western and Chinese aesthetic thought.[15]

So much for some of the similarities. What about the differences? Since Kant, there has been a strong emphasis on originality in Western aesthetics. This does not find much correspondence in Chinese thought.[16] For Western art, however, particularly for the period of romanticism and thereafter, in other words the modern period, this emphasis has had far-reaching consequences, becoming the dominant characteristic of a work of art. In contrast, Chinese aesthetics places more emphasis on mastery or perfection (*gong*), both through orientation on past models and through natural creativity. The two respective features of Western and Chinese aesthetics—originality and perfection—do not only mark the strong points but also stand for the weaknesses of Western and Chinese art. In the West, the emphasis on originality has led to the conceptualization of art, to the loss of its truly artistic features. In China, on the other hand, the insistence on perfection has led to too much orientation on past models and therefore stagnation.

Let us finally compare not the content, the ideas, but the form of discourse on art in the West and in China. The Western way, with Kant's or

Hegel's writing being typical for the Western approach in general, is highly analytical, and at the same time very systematic, creating a complex system of thought. This, no doubt, is its strength, but, considering its sometimes tangled and indigestible language, is also its weakness. Chinese discourse, on the contrary, is unsystematic, suggestive, indeed poetic. The description quoted above of the clouds on Mount Tai exemplifies this metaphorical rather than conceptual approach to aesthetic questions. Seen from the Western perspective with its tradition of defining its terms, the poetic ambiguity of the Chinese approach appears to be a weakness. Put in the categories used at the beginning of this chapter, we could say that the Western systematic discourse is 'with rules' (*you fa*), whereas the ambiguous, suggestive Chinese discourse is 'without rules' (*wu fa*). Considering, however, that the topic of this discourse is art—poetry, painting or calligraphy—and that it is expressed by poets and artists (not philosophers!), 'without rule' might as well be understood in Shitao's terms as the 'ultimate rule' (*zhi fa*); that is, as the adequate type of discourse for the topic of art. In comparison to this, the Western scientific and analytical approach appears detrimental to art, killing its spirit with its discursive style. Possibly also for this reason, aesthetics in the West appears to have become a subject with a purely academic interest. It does not seem to be a vital, intellectually inspiring tradition any more. Today, the general reading public does not care about aesthetics at all; an 'aesthetic fever', as occurred in China during the 1980s, would be unthinkable in the West.

* * *

Coming back to the modern period and intercultural issues, in two regards aesthetics assumes a special place in China's grappling with Western thought. First, aesthetics, particularly in its early modern phase, constituted a realm relatively free of politics. For this reason it allowed the Chinese to explore occidental thought freely and without political restraint. Second, philosophy of art as part and parcel of aesthetics offered, as already mentioned, many ways of linking up with China's own tradition. This was important because—other than the mainstream of Chinese traditional social and political thought, particularly Confucianism—this part of the Chinese tradition had not been discredited by the reception of Western ideas and the radical anti-traditionalism of the May Fourth period. Quite on the contrary: when the Chinese began to define their place in relationship to the West at the beginning of the twentieth century, they understood

their own culture as an essentially aesthetic one. In their monumental *History of Chinese Aesthetics* (*Zhongguo meixue shi*), Li Zehou and Liu Gangji marked as the last and most important characteristic of traditional Chinese aesthetics the idea that an aesthetic consciousness was regarded as the highest and noblest consciousness to be attained in life.[17]

The encounter with Western thought offered the Chinese, on the one hand, a range of fascinatingly new ideas (such as the category of the tragic or Hegel's grand system) and, on the other, a chance to look for familiar concepts which could be aligned with their own tradition. In particular, Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), the president of Peking University during the May Fourth period, felt motivated to this twofold endeavour. He was instrumental in formulating the idea of the mentioned cultural–aesthetic self-understanding of the Chinese. Through his studies in Germany he was familiar with occidental philosophy, particularly with Kant. He regarded Western man as largely shaped by religion, whereas for China he held aesthetics (a combination of ritual, art and ethics) to be the functional equivalent. For this reason he demanded for modern China 'aesthetic education in the place of religion'. As China is in the process of reinstalling aesthetic education in schools, one can see that his ideas are still reverberating there (though he failed with his attempts in his own time).

In his article 'The Spreading and Influence of German Aesthetics in China',[18] Liu Gangji showed that modern Chinese aesthetics has been largely formed by dealing with the German tradition of aesthetics. Because of the enormous problems of translation, this tradition of aesthetics—from German idealism to Marx and Heidegger—was received in China with a phase shift of about 100 to 150 years. Owing to this background, it is not surprising that the discourse of Chinese aesthetics of the twentieth century was largely shaped by the categories and questions of German philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rather rigid reception of Marxism only reinforced this tendency. This fixation also explains the Chinese translation of the Western term 'aesthetics'—'beautology', if we want to retranslate the Chinese term *meixue* back into English. This translation is for China somewhat misleading, if not unfortunate, as the category of the 'beautiful' has not played a significant role in traditional China, whether in the form of natural or as artistic beauty. In early Confucian scriptures, the character *mei* (beautiful) was used almost synonymously with 'moral goodness' (*shan*) without further differentiation or emphasis on a category of beauty. Apart from this connotation, Confucian discourse

on literature and art seems to have slighted formal beauty, deeming it, as outward ornament, to be less valuable than the substantial ethical or moral content. For Daoist writers, the recognition of beauty only led to the notion of ugliness, as *Laozi*, Chap. 3, succinctly states: 'When everyone in the world knows the beautiful as beautiful, ugliness comes into being.'[19] In Chinese literary theory and art philosophy, therefore, 'beauty' used to carry more a negative, if not a vulgar (*su*), connotation. More important in terms of aesthetic 'categories' were attributes such as 'harmonious/balanced' (*he*) or 'natural/spontaneous' (*ziran*). As already mentioned, a work of art should not imitate reality or nature, but should convey a sense of natural creativity; apart from this, it should have a poetic or self-transcending suggestive effect on the viewer or reader.

The modern Chinese aestheticians' frantic search for beauty in their own tradition thus appears in many ways like a voyage into the wrong direction which, however, as is not unusual with such voyages, has also let them discover unknown and interesting territory, such as a few parallels between Chinese and Western aesthetics, some of which having already been mentioned. Also worth noting is the creative appropriation of Marxist aesthetics in China, an accomplishment which could be stimulating in Marx's own cultural hemisphere, if anyone took notice of it. What is needed is simply to get a dialogue started on these issues.

A dialogue will not take place, however, if one side simply lectures and the other, as in a teacher–student relationship, listens attentively. Dialogue happens when both sides can express their views and are taken seriously. It is about time to begin such dialogues between the West and other cultural areas on the globe. An essential condition for a successful dialogue, however, is that each side is able to get to know the other through translations. In terms of English translations of Chinese aesthetics, we now have Li Zehou's *The Path of Beauty* (*sic*!) (in English and in German),[20] and the volume edited by Gene Blocker and Zhu Liyuan, *Contemporary Chinese Aesthetics* (New York 1995); but this is not enough when compared with the numerous translations of Western works, from Kant to Benedetto Groce. Levelling out this asymmetry will be of paramount importance for a fruitful dialogue in the future, and not only on aesthetics. In fact, the discovery of the cultural other could have a broadening and vitalizing effect on our humanities in general; for it is very likely, paraphrasing Hans-Georg Gadamer, that the other, in this case the other culture with its different answers to existential questions, has something to tell us.

Notes

1. Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, Cambridge, MA 1971, p. 35.
2. Richard John Lynn, 'Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: Wang Shih-chen's Theory of Poetry and Its Antecedents', *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), New York 1975, p. 219.
3. R.J. Lynn, 'Orthodoxy and Enlightenment', p. 232.
4. See also Richard John Lynn, 'The Sudden and the Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an-Poetry Analogy', *Sudden and Gradual*, Peter Gregory (ed.), Honolulu 1987, p. 392.
5. Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1992, p. 509. See also K.-H. Pohl, 'Ye Xie's *Yuan shi*—A Poetic of the Early Qing', *T'oung Pao*, LXXVIII (1992), pp. 1–32.
6. Lin Yutang, *The Chinese Theory of Art*, New York 1967, p. 140.
7. See Burton Watson (trans.), *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York 1968, p. 50f.
8. Owen, p. 357. Maureen A. Robertson, '"... To Convey what is Precious': Ssu-k'ung T'u's Poetics and the *Erh-shih-ssu shih-p'in*', David Buxbaum and Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *Transition and Permanence. A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Hsiao Kung-ch'üan*, Haon Kong 1972, p. 327ff. See also K.-H. Pohl, 'Bilder jenseits der Bilder—Ein Streifzug durch die chinesische Ästhetik', *China. Dimensionen der Geschichte*, Peter M. Kuhfus (ed.), Tübingen 1990, p. 232f.
9. See the beginning of the *Daodejing*: 'The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the eternal *Dao*.'
10. Lin Yutang, p. 63f.
11. See Liu Xie's *Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin diaolong*), Owen, p. 201.
12. Owen, p. 202.
13. Lin Yutang, p. 92f., Bush, p. 38f.
14. See note 1.
15. See, for example, the parable of the wheelwright in *Zhuangzi* who cannot teach the spiritual mastery of his craft to his son. Watson, p. 152.
16. With the exception, perhaps, of the writers of the so-called Gongan school, a movement towards greater self-expression in literature at the end of the Ming Dynasty, led by the writer Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610) and his two brothers; see James Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, Chicago 1975, p. 79ff.
17. Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo meixueshi* (*History of Chinese Aesthetics*), I, Beijing: Xinhua, 1984, p. 33f.

18. Liu Gangji, 'Verbreitung und Einfluss der deutschen Aesthetic in China', K.-H. Pohl (ed.), *Trierer Beitraege. Aus Forschung und Lehre an der Universitaet Trier*, July 1996 (Sonderheft 10).
19. Lao-tzu: *Te-tao Ching. A New translation Based on the recently Discovered Ma-wang-tui Texts*, transl. Robert G. Henricks, New York 1989, p. 54.
20. Li Zehou, *The Path of beauty. A Study of Chinese Aesthetics* (*Mei de licheng*), transl. by Song Lizeng, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994; *Der Weg des Schoenen. Wesen und Geschichte der chinesischen Aesthetik*, ed. by K.-H. Pohl and Gudrun Wacker, Freiburg: Herder, 1992.