

by an imperial court which Cusanus branded as treacherous, and was rabidly rejected by a band of Aristotelian monks led by Gennadios, later installed as Patriarch of Constantinople by the victorious Turks when the city fell in 1453. In the Latin West, one Johannes Wenck wrote a bitter attack on Cusanus' first scientific masterpiece, *On Learned Ignorance*, which Cusanus identified as an outburst from the dominant "Aristotelian sect" within the Church: the foes of the Renaissance, whose thinking in fixed categories reminds us of many "fundamentalists." The heirs of Cusanus'

enemies still exist vocally in every religious group today—as well as among the atheistic Enlightenment set who run the networks of Freemasonic institutions in Europe and the Americas and dominate the academic and scientific establishments. This is why the German cardinal's writings remain controversial today.

Translator Wertz calls for a return to Cusanus' Platonic ecumenism in an era when the whole world risks becoming enflamed in confessional warfare, especially between Muslims and Christians, but also, between different Christian confessions. The Orthodox-

Catholic conflict has persisted ever since the fragile unity of the Council of Florence was shattered in the 1440's and 1450's. We see the cruelty of such "religious" strife in the Balkan cockpit today. The *method* of Cusanus points to the only way to prevent this tragedy from spreading over the globe. For Cusanus's alternative lies not in maintaining a fixed and inhuman *status quo*, but in forcing a radical shift in men's thinking everywhere, to open a pathway for the *imago viva Dei* in all peoples to shine forth in a resurgence of human creativity and progress.

—Nora Hamerman

Zen Buddhism and the Decline of Chinese Painting

In China, poetry, music, and early painting all originated from one great invention: the beautifully constructed Chinese language. The sound of the tongue, with its different tones for pronouncing a syllable by the Han nation and most of the dialects, made it possible for the ancient poets to relish their strictly regulated verses. Chinese music, then, derived from singing classical poetry.

Furthermore, the pictographic form of the language made it possible to extend the art of calligraphy far beyond its counterpart in Sanskrit, for example. Chinese characters originated as pictographs cut on turtle shells, which were then imprinted as calligraphy on various available materials; thus, calligraphy matured before and independently from painting, which depended upon the much later invention of paper for ink art. Calligraphy is a form of art much appreciated by Chinese men of letters, but it is an abstract art form.

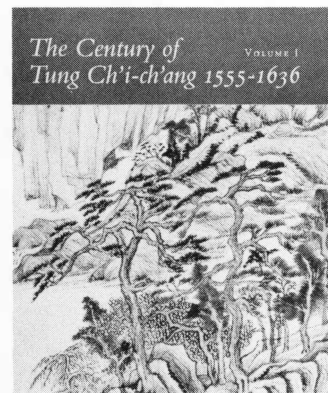
To understand the art pioneered by classical court painters, and the peculiar abstract path taken later by the "literati" school of Chinese impressionists, we have to distinguish the different concepts of nature among Chinese philosophies.

Confucians placed great emphasis on the "Way of Heaven" (*T'ian-tao*, the Maximum) and the "Way of Man"

(*Jen-tao*, the Minimum), viewing "Heaven" not only as "nature," but also as the source of all life and human values. The concept of "Heaven" encompasses the "universe," an organism brimming over with creative life force, the *logos* that gives people moral commitment to understand Heaven. The creation of life is not viewed as a mechanical physical process, but as a spiritual, purposeful procedure. In other words, "man" is the result of "Heaven's" unceasing creation of new beings with more and more wisdom. Relying on the wisdom and virtues bestowed by Heaven, man creates an increasingly sophisticated and refined culture and cultural values. Confucianism is the kind of humanism which does not deny the supreme power of Heaven, but seeks to investigate things in order to understand it.

Because of the system of universal civil service examinations based on these principles, official court painters tended to share the Confucian outlook.

On the other hand, both Taoism and Buddhism reject the idea that Heaven can be presented intelligibly to human beings. Nature to them is incomprehensible; human life has no purpose but to obey the mysterious "Great Way." While Taoism retains a passive and artistic view of nature, Buddhism leans toward an unblended religious sense of art. A faction in art



The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang
edited by Judith Smith

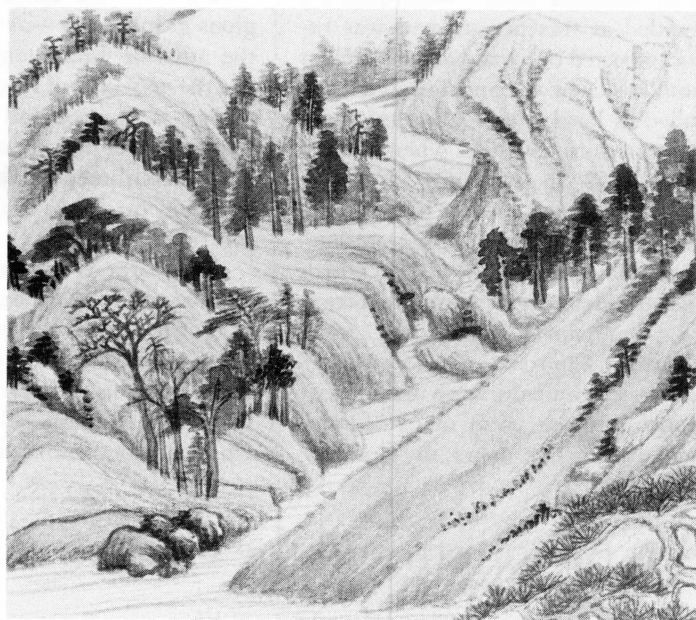
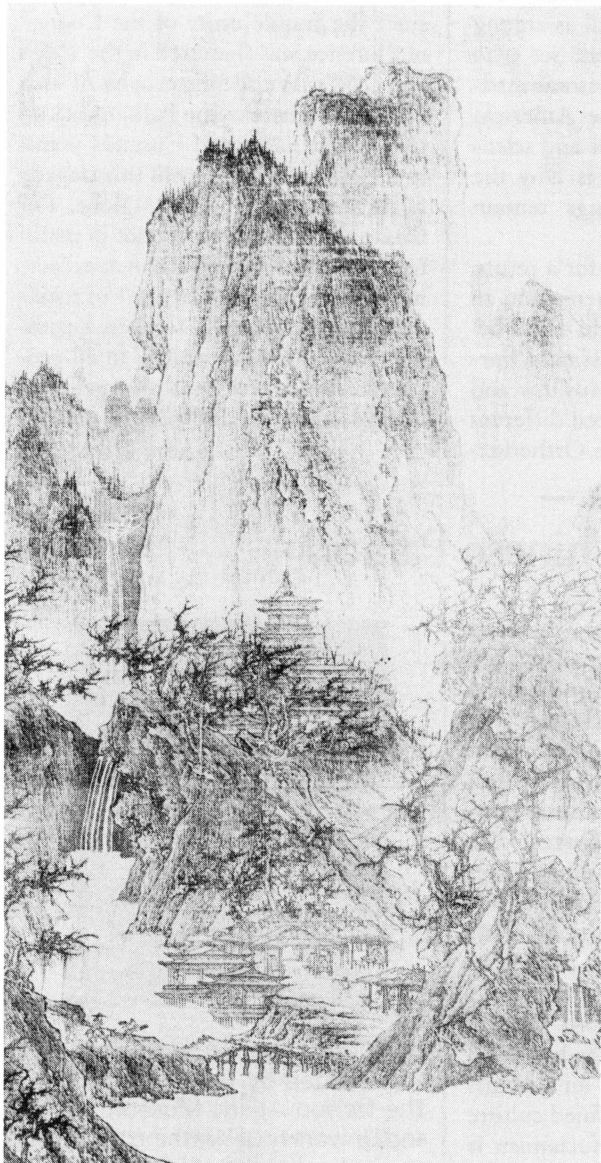
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which came to be known as the "literati" school, based on the Buddhist and Taoist worldview, typically preferred to paint according to their own fancy and without restriction, and advocated what they considered to be a free, understated, and romantic style.

Rise of 'Literati' Painting

The aristocracy of the T'ang (A.D. 618-907) and Sung (A.D. 960-1279) dynasties were major supporters of Chinese painting. The objective behind artistic



Classical school
(left): "Solitary Temple Amid Clearing Peaks," Li Ch'eng (919-967), conceived mountains through their internalized physical geometry. "Literati" school (above): Tung Ch'i-ch'ang landscapes inaugurated the impressionist style.

works produced in this period was political and educational; in style, the works tended to be elaborate and ornate. By the mid-Sung (c.1100), however, the school of "literati painting" had already emerged. With the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), there was no longer a formal painting academy within the imperial palace, and the court style of painting declined. At this point, the literati school of painting entered the mainstream, and the leadership in Chinese painting circles fell into the hands of literati painters.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636), the most important Chinese painter of the literati school and the most influential

writer on the theory of painting in the late Ming (1368-1643) period, based his aesthetics on Zen Buddhism, naming his two studios "Zen of Painting" and "Zen of Ink." Tung's painting opened up a new direction for the later Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911). He was interested in the formal structure of the picture and stressed the importance of studying ancient paintings and calligraphy. As an art theorist, he divided previous Chinese painters into Northern and Southern Schools.

Naturalism, favored by the Northern School and some of Tung's contemporaries, prized paintings that reflected and imitated natural beauty.

The painting of the Northern School is characterized by colored landscapes executed in linear contours, curves, and short strokes. Calligraphy and painting were kept separate and prevented from influencing each other.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's advocacy of the Southern School had a long-lasting influence on later aestheticians, as a result of Zen Buddhism's rising ascendancy over Confucian philosophy as the Ming dynasty collapsed into moral and economic decay. Tung established the Southern School as the orthodox lineage of painting, enhancing literati painting through its association with Zen philosophy. Later, painting and calligraphy became more and more alike, and abstract painting arose as a sort of Chinese-style impressionism. Earlier Confucian efforts to artistically capture scientific lawfulness in nature were almost completely lost.

This two-volume set is compiled with extensive plates of Chinese painting and calligraphy, and includes extensive biographical and critical material that demonstrates the past three hundred years of Chinese art along the path taken by Tung. A fair portion of the illustrations appeared in exhibitions of the painter in major U.S. cities, which were the largest display of Chinese art ever presented in the West.

—Ray Wei