

# Chinese Calligraphy: An Art in Objectification of Intentionality - A Study of the Particularity of Calligraphy and its Relationship with Confucianism and Taoism

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SONG XIANG RUI

**Abstract:** The author of this paper deals with the influence of Confucianism and Taoism on Chinese calligraphy, and explores every possibility of the dialogue and transformation between the traditional calligraphic theory and modern aesthetics of calligraphy. The paper is framed with the latter while taking the former for the discussion content. It consists of three parts as follows. Part One: The concept of calligraphy: in a modern point of view. In this part, the three basic elements of Chinese calligraphy, that is, the ink, the character, and the brush, are analyzed with the application of comparison with Western aesthetics and arts. The concepts adopted here are modern rather than traditional for it is done in a Western academic discipline. Part Two: The concept of calligraphy: in the traditional point of view and the dialogue between it and modern point of view. Traditional theory of calligraphy in correspondence with the analyzed content in Part One is quoted and analyzed according to the main notions drawn in Part One; and comparison is done to indicate their similarity. Part Three: The influence of Confucianism-Taoism on calligraphy. The first two parts focus on the possibility of calligraphic art being influenced by Confucianism-Taoism and the inclination to Confucianism-Taoism embodied in ancient calligraphic theories as well. The last part deals with the essence of Confucianism and Taoism as well as the necessity of their relationship with calligraphic art. Each part can be an independent paper. The following is Part one.

**Key words:** Shi', calligraphy, character, Confucianism and Taoism, objectification of intentionality, objectification of objectivity (*Gegenstandlichkeit*)

## Introduction

It is rare to see paper dealing with the relationship between Confucianism-Taoism and Chinese art or calligraphy by the reflection of methodology even though it has not been a new research project and a great many research achievements have been gained since modern times in China. This paper aims at a new exploration in this field.

There are generally three methods in the study of the relationship between Confucianism-Taoism and calligraphic art or between any philosophy and any art. First, analysis of meaning formation based on materials and tools of creation of art, followed by

the study of the coupling of a certain philosophy and calligraphy. Art differs from nature. All things in nature are created without any intention and method—that is, all things are created without any external force such as the God described in the Bible. On the contrary, art is the product of mentality both with intention and method. The analysis of meaning formation based on tools and materials is to study what both intention and method function in creation of a certain art. Second, to explain or demonstrate the relationship between philosophy and art based on a certain thought system, or even based on some quotations or concepts without any consideration of the particularity from tools and materials. Alternatively, to illustrate the relationship by applying quotations from a certain thought system. Third, to substitute description of one's subjective experience for analysis of object. The second and third methods are widely applied in the study of relationship between art and philosophy in modern China. Nevertheless, these methods share a common defect that they tend to ignore the objective conditions and the history of the art, or substitute subjective value for objective state, appreciation for rules, and speculation for practice. As the result of it, study is separated from its object, and then subjectively oriented conclusion is made. The third method especially suffers from this defect in particular. It grows up in the influence of Chinese traditional literary criticism, which is full of spirit of humanity and beautiful words describing the author's aesthetic experience but lacking in the depth of concept thinking or necessary academic criterion.

The author adopts the first method in this paper. The relationship between a certain philosophy and a certain art is only considered a possibility. Demonstration of the relationship is based on the analysis of the reality of both. This method is preferred because the influence of philosophy on art is much more complicated than expected, without full consideration of which any study will suffer from emptiness. Therefore, sufficient attention should be paid to the following questions before we start researching: 1) Interactions originally exist between different schools of philosophy in the history of Chinese philosophy. For example, Lao Tsu once said, "The Tao that can be told of is not an Unvarying Tao."<sup>2</sup> Confucius's opinion was similar: "The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven says nothing!"<sup>3</sup> 2) Chinese arts, including calligraphy, enjoyed various thought sources rather than a sole one. In the long-time process of development of an art, the art and the influences came to melt into manner of the art, leaving no separation in between. 3) Specifically to say, philosophical influence on art must be embodied through individual creation of art, that is to say, an intermediary exists between philosophy and art. This intermediary is always concrete and individual. Thus, the influential relationship becomes complex. On one hand, when did the kind of the influence start? Who made first choice? What kind of calligraphic theory was brought forth? On the other hand, the choice rested on each calligrapher's understanding of a system of philosophy, which necessarily forms the limit of philosophic influence. In the light of the two respects put into one, the history of Chinese calligraphy art is actually one formed by the mixture of each 'limit' of this kind. In this sense, the study is historic exploration. 4) The influence of philosophy on art depends on subjective calligraphers such as intermediary as well as needs an objective

basis that is the necessity of calligraphy as nothing but calligraphy in writing act. This basis plays also a decisive role in the calligrapher's choice or application of a certain philosophy in his art creation. In another word, he does not choose or apply any philosophy at will though he seems to have the freedom. Hence, there are two approaches to the study of the relationship between philosophy and calligraphic art. One is to study the influence of philosophy on a certain calligrapher's creation: the other is to study the relationship between philosophical thought and calligraphy itself. The former deals with style while the latter with law. Work of art is its object if the style of calligraphy is investigated. "What is calligraphy" is asked if the law of art in calligraphy is researched. The former is historic and critical; the latter is theoretic and aesthetic. One is the study of variability and appearance; the other is of invariability and essence. Moreover, it is necessary to explore what relationship in between, for a calligrapher is confined by level of his understanding and learning of a certain philosophical thought and meanwhile, is decided by his understanding of calligraphic law. Because of this, the two fields of variable appearance-style and the invariable essence-law in practice turn out to be convertible. 5) As for the study of calligraphic art itself, it is also complex. The concept of the art has its own style classification such as Seal character, Official character, Regular script, Running character and Cursive character (*Zhuan, Li, Kai, Xing and Cao*)<sup>4</sup>. Each style bears its own features in writing, or more specifically, each style has special features of its own in writing, namely *performance of brush, application of ink, and in making shi*. When the relationship between Confucianism-Taosim and calligraphy is studied, therefore, it is inevitable for us to answer the question: Is Confucianism-Taosim related to one of them, or to several, or to all? 6) In addition to the relation above, another relation that is probably more important should also be mentioned. Is there any relationship between Confucianism-Taosim and the performance of brush, the application of ink, and in making the *shi*? In addition, if there is, how? This question seems trifling and even peculiar because people may ask how these physical techniques can be put together with metaphysical speculation. This is, however, where the key lies: for the reason that calligraphic works are created by the performance of brush, the application of ink and in making *shi*, which are something technical, material and instrumental, the calligraphy exists as calligraphy. Only calligraphic works can show the relationship, otherwise we could not speak of calligraphy or philosophy at all. Neither can we negate the close relationship between philosophical thought and calligraphic technique only because works are brought about directly from techniques. The relationship between philosophic thought and calligraphic technique cannot be direct; it has to be embodied through specific medi-activity instead. Furthermore, because of calligraphy being a general concept, its significance should also be implemented in movement of writing. Therefore, in the end, the relationship between philosophical thoughts and calligraphy art put into effect in the movement of calligraphing. So-called the movement is but the technical embodiment of the calligrapher with his tools. While a calligrapher is the intermediary between philosophical thought and calligraphic art in the field of variable style, technique is certainly the medium between philosophical thought and calligraphic art in the field of invariable nature for sure. In the case, we must admit that

the profound and subtle metaphysical thought is closely interrelated with trivial and concrete material techniques. The remaining problem is how they are interrelated.

The six questions eventually involve two relations: that of variable calligraphic style and philosophic thought, and that of invariable calligraphy itself and philosophic thought. Calligrapher plays the role of mediator in the former relation and technical rules in the latter. The former is a study of history-learning-style-appearance-criticism; the latter a study of theory-tool-material-essence-aesthetics. One is variable, meaning study of individual and particularity; the other invariable, meaning study of generality or universality. In this paper, the author carries out his study in the latter way. The author, however, stresses to announce that the two ways to a certain extent are actually interrelated instead of being separated.

When we take tool-material for research object, we take the real and independent stand of calligraphic art itself. It is these decisive reality and independence that shapes the initial points for calligraphy, from which it is possible to hold the nature of a certain art and the relationship with external things.

In the West, there are two main methodologies of aesthetics called “von oben nach unten” and “von unten nach oben.” The former means philosophical method and the latter psychological method. Besides, there are so-called philosophers’ aesthetics and artists’ aesthetics. The difference did not exist in ancient China when theories on music, calligraphy, poem, and paintings were all from the same scholar-bureaucrat. Scholar-bureaucrat at the time was an integrated or whole concept without any classification or difference. Scholar-bureaucrats at their best were successful statesmen who governed well their states and made the whole empire tranquil and happy, who also studied philosophy, ethics and aesthetics—theories between Nature and human beings, and exercised literature and art—skills to cultivate one’s moral character and to improve one’s cultural quality. So, as far as calligraphy is concerned, a scholar was both a calligrapher and a theorist in this field. There was no difference of *von oben nach unten* from *von unten nach oben* and difference of philosophers’ aesthetics from artists’ aesthetics as well (This difference is in modern China because western model has been accepted of classifying fields according to professions or subjects. So the scholars in modern China have being existed in divided professions like Western scholars). However, classical Chinese discourse system and thinking methods are not fit for nowadays-academic situation. We should apply Western manner of establishment of discipline rather than concepts of any specific discipline to calligraphy study in order to set up new academic paradigm. (The latter is to borrow Western key to unlock in China, which has become a thinking manner to deal with Chinese problems and has basically been being used in China since the beginning of modern history, while the former aims at adopting Western manner that makes key makes a Chinese key so as to unlock in China). They are different from traditional theory of calligraphy, neither from Western learning, but can bridge both. Based on this understanding, the author in Part One, using Western academic method, set about directly from tools and materials of calligraphy without any involvement of other theories. It is expected to develop some concepts, which cannot be brought about by traditional

calligraphic theory, yet which may cast some light upon them. In Part Two, the author will first introduce some ancient calligraphic theories, then interpret and comment the relationship and association between it and the modern concepts drawn in Part One, that is, comparison and contrast of ancient concepts with modern ones will be done. In the last part, the author will analyze the inner-association of calligraphy with Confucianism-Taoism. What is given in Part Two is the fact that the ancient calligraphers accepted the influence of Confucianism and Taoism, but why? The ancient people couldn't offered any principle or cause to us. Thus the author intends to interpret it. The kind of exploration of cause or principle by means of logic is just Western strong suit since ancient Greece.

## **Part One**

### **Concept of calligraphy: in a modern point of view**

As viewed from aesthetics, possibility of calligraphy in methodology consists of three entities: the ink, the character, and the writing brush. The discussion will take the order of their increasing complexity.

#### **Analysis of the ink**

Among the three elements, the ink is the weakest both in independence and in theory. To the brush, it is the material to show its power and technique of writing. Liu Xizai, a scholar in Qing dynasty, said, "The brush is substance and the ink vein in art of calligraphy, so that the veins of all things are seen outside is determined by the substance inside"<sup>5</sup>. To the character, it is one that displays traces of writing or form of character. Hence the brush is a tool, and then the ink is a tool of the tool. The property and principles of the brush also apply to the ink because it is attached to the performing of the brush. This will be discussed in the section of the brush.

#### **Analysis of the character**

The character is a tool for communication in ordinary life and is in art of calligraphy the possible material by which the brush exercises strength and shows traces. Its association of character shape in the former is the universal communicable function of its meaning and in the latter, however, is the calligrapher's drive of mental expression. They are completely two different concepts of the writing.

#### **1) The Character: the shape and the meaning**

When we enjoy a piece of calligraphic work, we first and last don't focus our major concern on meaning of characters, namely what is it written by calligrapher, but on shape or style of characters, that is, how the characters are written. Thus we want to have meaning of characters, that is, a matter of what, by applying our rational understanding, while we appreciate shape or style of characters, that's, a matter of how, by applying our aesthetical perception. In the former case, the act of writing is in accordance with the principle of

semantic recognizability, or of universal communicability of language, which regulates shape of the character. If a character is not recognizable, readers cannot acquire the meaning that the writer tends to transmit; so value of writing naturally loses. In the latter case, writing, instead of being related to the semantic recognizability, is in accordance with the principle of expressiveness of the character-shape itself, that's, the shape is associated with the writer's expressive desire, which is directly decided by his intention and temperament. If a calligrapher writes each character regular and upright just to meet the semantic recognizability without any treatment of the character-shape itself to illustrate how the calligrapher's intention and temperament are, that is, the style for taste judgment, the value of writing is lost, too. The loss, in the former case, is its semantic transmissible function, while, in the latter case, its aesthetic significance. To prevent the loss of the transmissible function in writing of character-shape, we must strictly comply with the principle of the universal communicability just like in the case of aesthetical significance; we have to abide by the principle of expressiveness of the character-shape.

The semantic communicability is an external principle for writing of character-shape and then the expressiveness of intention and temperament is an internal one. In the universal communicability, changes of the character-shape are allowed, but they must be limited to the commonly accepted degree established by usage, and each character should be rightly written. Therefore, the character-shape is tightly bound by the principle discussed above. On the contrary, the internal principle is completely open to writing. It gives free rein to the calligrapher's expression of his intention and temperament. He can bring the treatment of the shape to full play for every character-shape now is unlimitedly variable under the calligrapher's inner-expressive desire or even impulse. Disposition and temperament have nothing to do with the linguistic meaning of a character, but rather, are associated with the free-willed variability of Chinese character's stroke frame. The so-called freewill or arbitrariness means a superior man's heart that had been cultivated himself but not random that hadn't been determined. Consequently, writing for art's sake or calligraphing completely surpasses that for linguistics' sake. The character-shape is separated from its meaning and gain its independence from the communicative function; so the stroke frame of the character-shape is no longer restrained from external graphetica regulation. This is an emancipation that makes the writing of character into a kind of art. Then writing for art's sake has been sublimated to a free play without any interest. Aesthetically, the determination of the character-shape is also no longer the principle of recognition of meaning, but rather, the principle of expression of spirit or feelings——writing purely for the expressive relationship between the character-shape and the intention and disposition of calligrapher: Because of getting rid of restraining from the external regulation, writing return to itself and gains a new rule from the writer himself. But this new rule is no more than a property conforming to subjective intention or finality which, instead of being any ready-made provision or criterion, is only a kind of drive which itself, however, is merely a possibility to bring about certain rules for the writer. In other words, there is not any rule before or outside writing. Any rule, if possible, can only exist in the process of realization of subjective intention.

Thus writing of Subjective intention itself isn't a rule, which can be defined as non-regulated writing or writing without rule: Object of this non-regulated writing is of course not the character-shape that conforms to the rules for ordinary communication, instead, to the characters intentionalized by the writing state of subjective finality. It is true particularly in the calligraphic styles of running character and of cursive character. Therefore, along with substituting the writing of subjective finality for writing of objective semantic communicability, basis of stability of the character-shape in correspondence with character-meaning is lost, each character then is metamorphosed into but material or element for being intentionalized in process of writing, namely a potential relationship or construction of strokes, which is without fixed form or pattern before work of calligraphy appears. Consequently, the non-fixed form lies between existence and nihility and in a state of trance. It means that non-regulated writing negates any pre-existing form until rising of the will and the intention, when shape-styled or can be created by reining strokes in making a certain *shi*. Thereby the shape of character in calligraphy, just like music, does not have any archetype in the external world, because any character with a certain style or calligraphic work is appearance from the writer's identifying with his internal intention and feeling instead of the semantic unit subject to dictionaries, and of character created by *intuiting trace or shape of birds and beasts*, (which is a principle in creating Chinese character in remote antiquity set forth before the emergence of Chinese calligraphy. It is opposed to the principle of calligraphy, whose aim lies in portrayal of natural things). The shape appears whatever calligrapher has motives and identifies with them as well. However, the so-called shape externalized cannot be considered pre-existed originally in his mind and then simply turned out. What the calligrapher wants to externalize is only idea or mood determined by his temperament, that's, the state of subjective finality writing. The state is no form but a kind of energy that is capable of achieving a character-style. I call it *shi-vitality* or vigor of writing. Because of this, shape of the character in calligraphy has no archetype in internal world.

Non-regulated writing and non-fixed form are two characteristics of calligraphy, which are liberated from what the character-meaning regulates the character-shape. They are both the foundation of calligraphic art and the premise of its comprehension. In static state, the former characteristic eliminates the possibility that the shape is produced through sensory function since the character-shape with a certain style come into being from the *Shi-vitality* or the vigor of writing rather than from figures in the external world in correspondence to vision; in dynamic state, the other eliminates the necessity of writing or of the shape which is created according to given rules. In consequence, statically, each character in calligraphic writing becomes non-fixed form; that is, the pure relationship of strokes, or called formless image; and dynamically comes to non-regulated writing, that's, free-willed writing. These two characteristics reveal that the materials on which calligraphy depend are not the characters of actuality, but rather, the pure strokes casting off its ordinary forms (graphic sign) coming from semantics for communication. These strokes may take a certain styled-shape if only they are smelted into the writer's idea or mood, which is called

*intention prior to form*. Therefore, to the writer, it is always something possible or potential that we cannot draw out any principle from the sensation as well as from the activity in actual semantic communication for its regulation. Hence, in the view of object, non-fixed form represents probability; in the view of subject, non-fixed writing suggests variability. The characters now as materials of calligraphy have an intentionality relationship with only the calligrapher's spirit instead of an objectivity relationship with his sense. Only in the first case can calligraphy produce its unique marvelous verve. And it is just where the transcendence of Chinese art of calligraphy lies.

## 2) The Character: the signifier and the signified

As discussed in last section, the writing in calligraphy is in accordance with internal, artistic principle of expression of intention and temperament rather than external ordinary principle of semantic communication. Therefore, fundamental changes occur to the relationship of the signifier and the signified, i.e. the signifier is unified into the signified, in terms of linguistics. Let us start the discussion from present linguistic study of the character in China.

All Chinese linguists agree that the character is the recording of language or the sign used to record spoken language. It has been an everlasting conclusion drawn from imitation of Western academic concept. It widely influences almost all-relevant areas so that it has never been oppugned.

In the West, it is writing that signifies character used specially for Chinese script. In *A Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* written by R. R. K. Hartmann and F. C. Stork in Britain, the writing was defined as "the process or the result of the recording of language on the surface of material with common, perceivable signs or graphic signs."<sup>7</sup> This definition means that the writing is the language written; the language is the writing spoken. In Western linguistics, the object of both studying of language and studying of writing is one thing—combination of letters because they share the same concept i.e. sign. Thus Western scholars often define language or writing with sign (as shown in the definition above). For example, Edward Sapir, an American anthropological linguist, said "language is a kind of non-instinctive method for communication of thoughts, feelings and desires with an arbitrarily created sign system, which human being has only"<sup>7</sup>. In F. de Saussure's theory, language is often used along with sign, called *linguistic sign*. He said, "The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Sign here is a combination of the signifier with the signified, thus we can simply say that linguistic signs are arbitrary."<sup>8</sup> In *A Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, the definition of sign is more detailed: "a) Sign: Written or printed signs that can be seen and accepted through common practice. They are the basic writing units as the writing system, representing or recording thoughts, words, syllables, or sound (called sound notation or letter). B) Spoken word or written word: that the addresser or the addressee use to represent an object or a thought, a combination of the signified with the signifier."<sup>9</sup> From these examples, we can conclude that writing, language, and sign were defined each other, signification the same.



Now a question arises: is Chinese character also sign? In answer to this preliminary question I put up a hypothetic definition as the initial point for discussion that Chinese character is nothing but *symbol*. Let us first compare sign with symbol.

According to modern Western linguistic theories, there are two elements in the writing or character. One is sound and graphic sign of materiality; the other is the concept and its accompanying representation. Taking 'star' for instance, the four letters are the sound and graphic sign; 'bright, small celestial body' contained in is the indicated meaning or concept; the representative arising in the speaker's mind when spoken is the representation. The former is called the *signifier*, the latter the *signified*. According to Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, established by usage and unprovable. The point is that there is not any natural connection between them. Let us take 'sun' for example. Every nation has gained its own intuitive experience from it, that is, the *signified*, but the characters or writings expressed for the experience, namely the *signifiers*, are completely different. In Chinese, it is written as '日' and pronounced as [ri]. However, it's written as 'sun', and pronounced as [sʌn] in English. This difference is the characteristic of the signifier, the so-called arbitrariness, conventionness and unprovability of the signifier to the signified. Saussure believed that language is the sign of this kind. He also believed that symbol is just opposite to sign. It is not arbitrary, established by usage and unprovable. That is, there exists a natural relationship between symbol and the meaning. This relationship lies in the meaning originally contained in the symbol or the character-shape; it is an appearance of how the symbolized thing exists. Therefore, the first characteristic of the symbol, which is just opposite to the arbitrariness of the sign, is that the symbolized thing as a figure, as a form or as a function is the same as its meaning. For instance, a balance is seen as a symbol of fairness because its function is to make the two sides balanced. In other words, its meaning always exists in the correspondent objectified figure or form. German philosopher, H. G. Gadamer said, "a symbol is the unified state of sensory phenomenon with super-sensory meaning."<sup>10</sup> The second characteristic of symbol is also just opposite to the conventionness of the sign. It is appearance rather than established by usage. Therefore, we acquire it from intuition instead of understanding because conventionness of the sign must be embodied as a set of independent and operational signifying laws, according to which people can recognize the meaning of the sign, otherwise conventionness cannot be it. If there were not any definite laws regulating the usage of traffic lights, for instance, people could not reach any agreement, leaving them meaningless. Unlike it, the symbol of appearance is only by using intuition or perception to digest what it appears. A lion is a symbol of strength and bravery, which arises directly from common sense in intuition without employing any rational regulation.

It is obvious that there exist the differences between symbol and sign. The latter has 'traces' to follow, which are the 'laws' or the regulations, while the former has none. The symbol is beyond regulation or rule.

I have asserted that Chinese characters are symbols because they are portrayal of natural images or things before they are records of the language. The proposition of Chinese

characters being symbols instead of signs is so complex that it goes far beyond the limit of this paper. Therefore, interpretation about it is limited to the necessary part relevant to the aim of this paper.

Let's again take 'the sun' i.e. '日' in Chinese for instance. In the characters chartered on tortoiseshell-oxenbone found in China in 16<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the character '日' was written as ☉. It is written as SUN in English. The former is a depicting of the signified image denying any record of sound or voice. The latter is just the opposite. That is to say that ☉ is a symbol of the sun's image; SUN is a sounded sign signifying the object of the sun. The meaning of the former is appeared to people by the symbol itself, its signifying meaning is brought about by the signified. The meaning of the latter is based on the agreement upon the three letters S, U, and N to indicate the external image: the signified is strictly regulated within the signifier and is recognized by means of artificial laws that form writings. Now we can see that in the former case, the meaning is the appearance of the character itself without any relationship with the sound. We call it "originated from image" or "drawn out of image." In the latter case, however, the writing is the reflection of the sound. The form of writing and the sound are unified into one body with nothing to do with the signified image in natural relation. We call it "originated from sound" or "record of sound." For this reason, only in China where symbolic characters are adopted, there appears the unique language phenomenon that one kind of character diverts into great many dialects. The pronunciation gaps in between are so great that they, just like foreign languages, are not mutually understandable without special learning. Nevertheless, any of the dialects is very clear at a glance if its sound system or spoken language is transferred into characters or written language. In short, in Chinese language, the character shape and the meaning are uniformed writing-visually, but the sound and the meaning are separate pronunciation-acoustically. This feature indicates that the Chinese language is initially the portrayal of natural things, that is, the meaning comes from the image, (in ancient Chinese terms, characters are created by drawing out of natural things distantly and out of human body closely). The convention of sound is secondary. The Chinese language thus bears in it the dual nature: it is sign orally and symbol in written form. Moreover, the sound sign is based on the symbol of written form, or say, the sound brings about convention grounding on the form. The development sequence is from character shape to meaning, then from character shape-meaning to sound. In Western languages, however, pronunciation, spelling, and meaning are built into one body. They cannot be separated from one another. Its meaning is regulated rather than appearing. Due to this nature, the pronunciation decides the spelling and the spelling reflects the pronunciation. In Chinese language, the pronunciation may differ greatly, but the character is always uniformed and does not reflect pronunciation by nature. How can we say such a writing system that does not reflect the pronunciation is the record of language?

According to the above analysis, we are able to come up with a self-belonging and consequently true linguistic concept for Chinese writing system that Chinese characters are symbols of things (this meets the assumed definition I proposed earlier.) and the pronunciation is the sign of Chinese characters. The application of this linguistic concept to calligraphic

art will result in a conclusion as follows: in calligraphy, the separation of form from meaning converts Chinese characters as a signifying system from the symbol of outside things to the symbol of inside spirit, called “originated from intention”. The symbol of outside things is subject to the signified inside spirit. We master the former by means of intuition of perceptual experience and we master the latter by means of intuition of insight spirit. The meaning of the symbol of outside things is based on common sense of perceptual experience while as for the symbol of the spirit, its meaning is conceived in *the ideal of humanity self-cultivation*. Thus the signifier system (the character-style) in calligraphy, as the symbol of spirit, is no longer related to the bygone perceptual experience and to the outside world as well, and all outside things attached to it also lost their functions. What is functioning now or what makes this apperceiving intuition possible is tacit understanding of the intention conceived in the work of calligraphy as the symbol. Therefore, in calligraphy, the signified unifies the signifier which has lost its independence, and whose laws cannot be outside the process of calligraphing of the signified. Since the signified, acting as function of unification, only points at the calligrapher himself, i.e. the existing state of the calligrapher as a specific individual, each breadth of characters with a certain style that can be awarded as calligraphy comes to be the reveal of the calligrapher’s interior state that has surpassed any outside regulation. It cannot be generated by means of external laws or regulations that are commonly followed, on the contrary, it directly originated from calligrapher’s bourn of spirit and his idea of the most perfect method being without any artificial performance or regulation. Therefore, each breadth of calligraphic work is unique (including method and style) and cannot be recopied. When we face a breadth of calligraphic work, it is tacit understanding that leads us to discern the *Shi* (or the style of the character-shape) and it is along with the *Shi* that consequently leads to the taste of the verve instead of recognizing meaning of character shape according to objective rules.

### 3) Existence: spiritual world and factual world

When we define the signified as the spiritual state of existence of the individual calligrapher, the calligraphing returns from limited world of fact to unlimited world of spirit, in which it casts off any restraint of external world. And calligraphers must be silently on the listen for his own interior while ending perceiving of factual world—what the signified in the process of writing is performing is an activity of creating new signifier through unconsciously accepting drive of the his mental state. This is its unique end, and also a free end, which is just what the essence of calligraphy is.

In ordinary life, we write for communication, and the characters must be recognizable, which is a basic function of the factual world. If the characters written were not recognizable by others, we, just like going shopping with fake currency, would be rejected. Thus it is qualified for life as free as wind to write recognizable characters and use authentic currency. Suppose ordinary life is an immense arena, language and money would be tickets for admission. Without right writing habit or authentic currency, we would be ostracized from the arena and be buried in oblivion; as a result, the existence would be converted into a state

of non-existence. The reason is that language and currency is means for communication and exchange. Right making use of language and Possession of authentic currency means, on the one hand, that we can exist in them or by them without anxiety, on the other hand, that we have to thoroughly accept the laws upon which they function. We would still be frustrated if we did not thoroughly accept them. In case, however, we use them according to the laws, our existence becomes a significant existence. So, in the arena, that significant existence is established depends on man's usefulness, or provided with usefulness. This usefulness is not for myself, but rather for others as well as for the laws that constrain each who can say 'I'. It is because I am subject to it—I abide by it and communicate with others who follow it like me without any exception—that I can just gain the significance for my existence. The so-called significance no other than refers to the communicability among human beings, which governed by the same laws. Ectally viewed, others and I use the laws to communicate each other and establish a certain relationship; in fact, it is the laws that use us to realize its objectivity and universality. We *are being used*, that is the essential of why others and I are significance. In front of it, we have to constrain our own feeling and will, or say, we alienate our feeling and will into the communicability in return for the qualification of our existence. Therefore, *existence is of being used* in this sense. Every case of *existence of being used* is nothing but existence of instrumentality at any time, and is decided by the objectivity formed by the entire people who use language and currency in common. In this way, 'others' priorly determine the manner of our existence. Writing characters and using money is only a link of that objectivity, so we do these for that objectivity—to write within the recognizable range and to use within the acceptable bound. Everything here has to be demonstrated as knowable, controllable, evident, and realistic. *Nothing does not have regulations to be able to obey; no thought does not have traces to follow*. This is the limited world of fact. We can say that the factual world is an operable area. It is so because of the common laws obeyed by all, in which the objectivity of the factual world lies. All activities relying on the objectivity of the factual world are of instrumentality. They exist but as means: creation is needless, skillful application is enough. There is nothing like ideal in the factual world, or say ideal comes into being by negating reality. Accordingly, ideal is possible only when the writer breaks the bounds of the factual world and goes back to spiritual world. Calligraphic art, however, is nothing but a cause of ideal.

In conclusion, calligraphy as an art must thoroughly eliminate all poor tastes of the factual world or worldliness in order to let the signifier be formed at the disposal of the signified: writing itself is the end rather than a instrument used to transmit the linguistic meaning any longer. The foundation determining the character-shape is, instead of the objectivity of the factual world being strange to calligrapher, the calligrapher himself as fountainhead or originality of the writing, i.e., his disposition or idea and mood. Herein all outside restriction on calligrapher has been completely eliminated. The calligrapher thus returns to his true self, silently on the listen for his interior while ends perceiving of factual world and fixing his attention for calm contemplation. He takes in energy from the ego fountainhead or originality and makes every effort to objectify it and to demonstrate it as trace and shape in

intentionality. I call this non-instrumentality, non-operable, and non-medium objectification of intentionality. The result of it is the distinct style of calligraphy. This style is the symbol of the calligrapher's inbeing after he converts back to his fountainhead or originality from the factual world. It is the end of writing to demonstrate his own inbeing. The style appeared in the calligraphic work is no longer characters for objectivity of the factual world, but rather, the shape of subjective finality of the calligrapher's inbeing——what is related here is the freedom of spiritual world instead of the need of the factual world. Nevertheless, the conclusion itself is not enough as a keen insight into the calligraphic art. The analysis above actually contains another deeper meaning. Only when characters rid of the meaning, the regulations, and the experience of the factual world so as to result in nihilism or emptiness, can it be unified with the intention in the spiritual world and become the material by which the spirit fills into it to demonstrate itself. Only when the calligrapher transcends *the existing state of being used* and returns into his fountainhead or originality of soul, can his idea and mood be expressed as the symbol, that is, the *style*.

This is a very important conclusion. Anything of the factual world is of fixed meaning, regulated, and operable. Therefore it has standards. But noumenon or thing-in-itself in original spiritual world is of non-fixed meaning, non-regulated, and non-operable, and without fixed or dead standard. Its fate is *creation, ideal creation*. Among the numerous arts or even all the art forms of human beings', only Chinese calligraphic art perfectly embodies the characteristics as follows: its form is able to be intuited but not on sensory experience; its spirit or content is intellectual, but not be grasped by means of any technical regulation. The first characteristic dwarfs Chinese music and painting, and the latter leaves Chinese poetry far behind. None of the western arts, as it were, can be a counterpart of it.

### **Analysis of the brush**

The ink is that which appears the trace of calligraphic writing. The character is the non-fixed shape, or pure strokes frame. Thus, on one hand, the character comes into being through the ink applied. On the other hand, the ink can shape the character-trace only when it takes the form of strokes. Then, it is the writing brush that combines the two into calligraphic concept. The brush carries out nothing but the function of non-regulated writing. So we can say the brush represents *activity*.

The brush used to calligraphic writing can be categorized into three types according to the material. They are of soft hair, hard hair, and combined hair, which are also the three characteristics of the brush. But their common feature, compared with the pen originated and used in the West, is *soft*. This is the general feature of the writing brush. It, however, makes an interesting topic why the Chinese people finally chose animals' hair for tools of writing rather than hard pens like Westerners. About it, we can do some positive studies diachronically, and also some studies of significant formation aesthetically. The former will provide knowledge of its origination and development and the latter can provide *an interpretive theory*. It seems that the latter way will approach closer to the spiritual substance behind a kind of historical creation. Seemingly it is not the historical facts, but it can reveal

more truth than historical facts can. There are three reasons supporting this interpretive theory. First, in the history of brush writing, people have always evaluated calligraphy more aesthetically than practicably. The highly evaluation of fine and beautiful handwriting has been a long-lasting tradition because handwriting has been thought to be a symbol of moral quality and learning. Second, China's symbolic characters offer the possibility for the application of the writing brush. To try writing Western writing with the brush can easily prove this. Last, Chinese world view or their way of thinking meets the end of brush writing, or say, brush writing fully demonstrate the wisdom of the Chinese people. There have been so many historical facts to prove the first point, therefore, let's study the rest two points. The writing brush is doubtlessly a medium. It is a special medium compared with other media. Its particularity lies in the fact that its softness eliminates all externality impeding writing. It contains three meanings: that of material, that of senses, and that of techniques.

### 1. Non-material meaning

As any other tool in the process of info-transmission, a brush does not only function in info-transmission, but also is an element of information formation. Different media result in different informative effect. Let's take projection of movie for example. If a screen is very clean, the pictures will remain original appearance on it; if a stained screen, the pictures will deformed or distorted somewhat. In singing, the voice should first of all be beautiful or fair-sounding. This voice developed from appropriate training is called *Bel canto* (beautiful voice), that is, the sensory beauty that is also a material medium used to perform songs with spiritual significance. People appreciate and judge the singing according to a singer's exercise of the beautiful voice. Therefore, as far as information is concerned, media is external on one hand: it affects information, and is the way of its existence, and its result on the other hand. The writing brush, after all, rids of its externality or materiality because of its softness. The reason is that it does not erect in writing unless some mental efforts holds and supports it. Writing does not go without being erected. Hence if we let the brush be a tool for calligraphic writing, we must first of all let it erect. To erect depends to mental effort, which is just the source of performance of the brush. By the same token, that it is the source of the mental effort is the calligrapher's intention. With the result that the intention produces the mental effort that makes the brush erect; when the brush can not be performed until it erects, and when the traces doesn't appear until the brush be performed. Therefore, these traces are not those of the brush, but rather, those of the intention or of heart. Although, a medium as it is, the brush is intentionalized by the calligrapher's idea and mood as soon as it enters the state of writing. Consequently, the meaning of materiality of the brush turns into nihility. Demonstrated on the paper is purely the *Shi* of calligrapher's intentionality. This writing tool intentionalized by the idea and mood of the subject is the concept of the writing brush. In the sense, the calligraphic brush is, seen as a medium still, purely something inside the calligrapher's subjectivity. And the calligrapher does not take its natural shape for its performing law, as it is the case in writing with painting brush when the width of the brush must be considered. On the contrary, calligraphy tends to negate nothing but the natural

shape of the brush as the tool or medium in order to show the mental effort and free flow of the spirit. The calligraphic brush shows a wisdom that Chinese have: let material be void so as to the spirit functions and appears. The softness of the brush is actually like a locale where subjective spirit can fully demonstrate itself. Along with the brush being filled with the spirit or vigour, the shape and figure emerge from the boundless and immense whole spiritualized; the verve is naturally grown with the making of *Shi* and the performance of the brush. That which performs brush means human beings harness the brush and not otherwise. In the case of human beings under the control of the brush, the writing goes without spiritual essence; the brush is mixed with the ink randomly, and not assorted between them——the result is that the ink-traces in writing fall into, either because of being dull and corpulent without bone, *ink-pig*, or because of being withered and haggard without smoothness and glow, stagnancy and sluggishness. So we can say that the appreciation of calligraphy is on the performance of the brush instead of the traces of the brush. Objectively speaking, the harness of the brush in this way means that the value of the writing brush as a tool of writing lies in its self-negation, which deprives its natural effect on the writing style. The conclusion is that calligraphy is said to be an art in objectification of intentionality because of the essence that the calligraphic brush is a medium intentionalized by the subjective spiritual strength. Thus mark that can succeed in writing is that the brush is controlled by man, but not on the contrary.

## 2. Non-sensuous meaning

The second point of the so-called externality refers to that the sensuous experience of pleasure or unpleasure, which is caused by the traces of the writing brush, is natural. Both of them are direct correspondence each other. The artists, by means of the sensuous experience in introspection as a direction, choose and make use of the outside materials, such as brush in calligrapher, tones and instruments in music, line, colors, light and shadow in painting, etc., to realize the end of art. Hence the sensuous experience and the natural material share the body yet two sides. One exists outside, which is appreciable materials; the other is reserved inside, which the sensuous experience. However, they exist together and die out together. Based on the conclusion of last section that the calligraphic brush is a medium intentionalized by the subjective spiritual strength, what are correspondent to the brush are the spirit rather than the sensuous experience. Therefore, calligraphy cannot utilize any meaning produced from senses as directory for creation of art. Let's illustrate it in what follows.

It is well known that Chinese classic poems are regulated by metrical rules. Each type of poetry has its own rules and forms. They are the level and oblique tones. They as external laws exist prior to poem writing and form a relationship of harmony and disharmony with our hearing. So-called the external is that it is an objective power dominating the expression of poet's intention. This objective power must be obeyed because of its own significance; that is, the matched the level and oblique tones can cause the sense of harmony in the subject's soul. It is natural and psychological, and is called *rhyme* by poets. Poem

