

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL



LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL

~Summary~

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Comparison between European and Chinese Art

This chapter is a comparative study of European and Chinese painting. It touches upon various subtleties of reality and art. Art is one of the forms of expression like poetry, music and dance. All these forms of expression have an abstract nature as they can't be defined and have to be felt or experienced. The chapter has three important areas of discussion: anecdotes related to Chinese and European painting, Daoism and how one of the philosophical doctrines of Daoism called 'Shanshui' is reflected in Chinese paintings.

Anecdote about Chinese Painter Wu Daozi

The eighth century Chinese Emperor Xuanzong commissioned a painter named Wu Daozi to paint a landscape. When the painting was ready, the Emperor was invited to appreciate it. He enjoyed looking at the forests, high mountains, waterfalls, clouds, men on hilly paths, birds in flight etc depicted in the painting. But the painter was not satisfied and he invited the attention of the Emperor towards a cave in the painting, inside which, the painter said, resided a spirit. The painter clapped his hands, causing the entrance to the cave. Then the painter said, "The inside is splendid, beyond anything words can convey. Please let me show your Majesty the way". The painter entered the cave and disappeared. The cave door closed and the painting disappeared from the wall before the Emperor could move.

Anecdote about European Painter Quinten Metsys

A fifteenth century Belgian blacksmith named Quinten Metsys fell in love with a painter's daughter. Knowing that her father would not accept him because of his profession, he secretly entered the painter's studio and painted such a realistic fly on the artist's panel that the master tried to swat it before he realised that it was not real! Quinten was accepted by the master as an apprentice, married his beloved and soon became famous for his 'realism' in painting.

Meaning of the Tales

Such stories as that about Wu Daozi are very common in China's classical education. It was through such stories that great masters made abstract concepts concrete. Such tales reveal that art has an inner life, meaning or soul. Only when one is able to see that inner life can one

understand its true meaning. The Emperor had appreciated the painting only from what he saw. He could only see the body of the painting, whereas the painter tried to show him the soul, the inner life and meaning of the painting. Similarly, Quinten Metsys signified illusionistic likeness in European painting.

The same holds good for the story about the frightening likeness of a dragon to a real one which prevented a Chinese painter from drawing its eye, as he felt that then the dragon would see him and attack him.

Basis of Chinese Paintings

Chinese paintings are based on the philosophy of Daoism. Dao means "path or way"- the way into the mystery of the universe. The Emperor may rule over territories, but the artist alone knows the way within. Life has no meaning unless we undertake the inner, spiritual journey. When Wu Daozi said, "let me show you the way", he meant the way to the inner meaning of art or mystery of the universe. This is the spirit of Chinese paintings. They do not reproduce an actual view, but use a real landscape to say something more. A Chinese painter, therefore, wants the viewer to take plural view points to enter into his painting and travel in it. He wants our active participation, not only physical but also mental. His landscape is not a copy of a real landscape; it is a representation of an inner reality, a spiritual and conceptual space.

What Daoism Is?

According to Daoism, this universe is composed of two complementary poles, viz. Yin (feminine) and Yang (masculine). The interaction of these two energies makes the universe. Their meeting point, called the "Middle Void" also holds great significance, though it is often overlooked. This can be compared with the yogic practice of pranayama; breathe in, retain, breathe out the retain' part is the "Middle Void" where meditation occurs. This void is essential - nothing can happen without it.

In Daoism, a landscape is called "Shanshui" (Shan = mountain, Shui = water); however, it doesn't represent a real landscape; it is the Daoist view of the universe. To understand Chinese paintings, one must understand Daoism. So, the mountains and water in the Chinese paintings are representative of Shanshui and the unpainted space is representative of the Middle Void where the interaction between Yin and Yang takes place. Man is the medium of communication between the two complementary poles of the universe and you can see his presence too in the Chinese paintings.

Conclusion of Landscape to Soul

To sum up, in Landscape to Soul summary, we learn that art is an infinite form that has a rich history and it cannot fit inside any certain box or label, it has a life of its own.

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NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 38)

(Understanding The Text)

Question 1.

- i. Contrast the Chinese view of art with the European view with examples.

Answer: Chinese painting art is imaginative and spiritual in nature, whereas European paintings are based on actual views or real objects. The paintings of Wu Daozi and master painters from Europe demonstrate the disparity between the perspectives of two distinct arts.

- ii. Explain the concept of shanshui.

Answer: It literally means “mountain water,” and it refers to a type of Chinese painting that incorporates natural landscapes, spiritual spaces, and conceptual spaces. It reflects two opposing poles that represent the Daoist view of the universe.

Question 2.

1. What do you understand by the terms ‘outsider art’ and ‘art brut’ or ‘raw art’?

Answer: Outsider art is art created by an artist who has no formal training but still has talent and an artistic point of view in life. The term ‘art brut’ or ‘raw art’ refers to art in its most basic form or state.

- ii. Who was the “untutored genius who created a paradise” and what is the nature of his contribution to art?

Answer: Nek Chand was the ‘untutored genius’ who created ‘paradise.’ He was the 80-year-old designer of Chandigarh’s world-famous Rock Garden. It is an example of outsider art in which raw materials and stones are combined to create an artistic work. Anything and everything can be used to create an art will, and all that is required is a critical eye. One of his most well-known works is ‘Women by the Waterfall.’

Questions (Page No. 38)

(Thinking about language)

Question 1. Find out the correlates of Yin and Yang in other cultures.

Answer: Yang and yin are two complementary poles that can be correlated in various cultures and styles.

Nature and God are central to Indian culture. Nature is yin, and God is yang. To create the world and all of its worldly things and creatures, a combination of two is required.

Question 2. What is the language spoken in Flanders?

Answer: The French language is spoken in Flanders.

Questions (Page No. 38-39) (Working with words)

I. The following common words are used in more than one sense.

panel studio brush
essence material

Examine the following sets of sentences to find out what the words, 'panel' and 'essence' mean in different contexts.

Question 1.

- i. The masks from Bawa village in Mali look like long panels of decorated wood.
- ii. Judge H. Hobart Grooms told the jury panel he had heard the reports.
- iii. The panel is laying the groundwork for an international treaty.
- iv. The glass panels of the window were broken.
- v. Through the many round tables, workshops and panel discussions, a consensus was reached.
- vi. The sink in the hinged panel above the bunk drains into the head.

Answer:

- i. boards of decorated wood.
- ii. group of men selected to give a unanimous verdict on a legal matter.
- iii. group of experts.

- iv. window panes.
- v. group discussions.
- vi. a flat board fixed with the hinge.

Question 2.

- i. Their repetitive structure must have taught the people around the great composer the essence of music.
- ii. Part of the answer is in the proposition; but the essence is in the meaning.
- iii. The implications of these schools of thought are of practical essence for the teacher.
- iv. They had added vanilla essence to the pudding

Answer:

- i. the most important quality of something that makes it what it is.
- ii. the main part.
- iii. practical importance.
- iv. liquid taken from vanilla that contains its smell and taste in very strong form.