

The "True" in Wang Kuo-wei's Poetic Theory

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ABSTRACT

Here I interpret Wang's theory of poetry—specifically his notion of ching-chieh, "world"—as a unique blend of Chinese and Western aesthetic models which is nonetheless grounded in a coherent world-view. Wang's "world" is composed of two essential poetic elements, "scene" and "feeling": "only poems which depict true (chen) scenes/objects and true feelings possess world." The concept of "truth," which as in Schopenhauer involves inner spiritual depth, is thus crucial here. The truly depicted scene has "soul" and "vitality;" truthful description of world is "un-blocked," direct, transparent. "Truth," "no blocking" and "world" are closely inter-related concepts, suggesting a consistent, unified world-view.

KEY WORDS

world
coherence
world-view
scene
feeling

aesthetic
truth
non-blocking
soul
vitality

Numerous articles and books have been written about Wang Kuo-wei's *Jen-chien tz'u-hua* (Talks on tz'u in the Human World; hereafter, *JCTH*) since its publication, which have far outweighed the thinness of the volume. No book on Chinese poetry, to my knowledge, has drawn as much attention and acquired as much popularity. This is particularly true of the notion of "*ching-chieh*" (world) which Wang frequently alludes to in the book as the ultimate measure of poetry.

The central importance Wang attaches to *ching-chieh* has led a great many scholars to concentrate on the meaning and ramifications of this notion as a way of understanding Wang's view of poetry. It has generated quite a few studies, for example, on the etymological implications of the term as well as on the geneological relationship it shares with other similar terms in Chinese literary criticism. Wang Kuo-wei's definition of *ching-chieh* as composed of true "feeling" (*ch'ing*) and "scene" (*ching*) has also encouraged many scholars to look at it in terms of these two essential elements in Chinese poetry. Over and beyond these inquiries directly related to "*ching-chieh*", scholars have also singled out such terms as "*ku*" (blocking) and "*pu-ku*" (not blocking), "*yu-wo chih-ching*" (poetry and "I") and "*wu-wo chih-ching*" (poetry without "I") either to elucidate their meaning or to argue for their validity in poetry criticism.

Most of the critical writings on Wang Kuo-wei seem to fall into the above three categories. And I might add that most of these writings tend to treat Wang's notion of "*ching-chieh*" and poetry as *developed* from rather than *deviating* from traditional Chinese criticism.

Written in the vein of conventional "*tz'u-hua*" (*tz'u*-poetry talk) with separate entries on different aspects of poetry, and in a style that is pithy and graceful, *JCTH* has a deceptively "traditional" and "uni-cultural" look about it. This may very well account for the fact that many readers are inclined to read it as a traditional "*tz'u-hua*"—that is, treating each entry in the book as a single self-sufficient insight into poetry without too much regard to its connections with others entire in the book. Another aspect of *JCTH* which often eludes most readers because of its traditional *tz'u-hua* look is its Western dimension. It is true that during the years between 1908-1911 when he began to write *JCTH*, Wang was gradually trying to shed the influence of Western aesthetics, about which he had been deeply enthusiastic during the previous ten years or so. But traces of Western influence, as we shall see in our discussion, are still very much present. [In analyzing the Western influence, however, we have to bear in mind that it represents

Wang's interpretation of Western poetics rather than what might have been intended by the original authors, especially since he read most of these Western works in English and Japanese translations.]

Viewed in this way, *JCTH* thus represents very much the work of a genuine poetic soul who, while deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and literature, also allows western aesthetics to filter through his view of Chinese poetry and literature. Any reader who fails to recognize this rich blend in the work of Chinese poetics and Western aesthetics would, I am afraid, miss the unique insights Wang brings to bear on poetry, including, of course, his notion of "*ching-chieh*".

What I propose to do then is to see in what way his view of poetry, specifically, his notion of "*ching-chieh*," represents such a unique blend. What I also propose to do is to look at the individual entries in *JCTH* as stemming from a coherent view of poetry. For I believe that much of the strength of *JCTH* also lies in its consistency, based on a predominant notion of poetry and life rarely found in other traditional Chinese poetry talks.

What is this predominant view of poetry then? Is it "*ching-chieh*" which Wang holds to be the ultimate measure of all genres of literary writings, including poetry? Or is it some other notion that not only coheres Wang's various comments on poetry throughout *JCTH*, but also lies at the very core of his notion of "*ching-chieh*"? To answer these questions is the focus of this paper.

I will begin with Wang's definition of "*ching-chieh*" which, as mentioned earlier, is, for Wang, composed of the two most essential elements in poetry, namely, "scene" and "feeling".

"*Scene*" does not refer simply to physical scene and object. Joy, anger, sorrow and happiness are also a kind of "*world*" in one's mind. Therefore only those poems which can depict true (*chen*) scene and object, true (*chen*) feelings can be said to possess "*world*." Otherwise, they may be said to lack "*world*."

境非獨謂景物也。喜怒哀樂亦人心中之一境界。故能寫真景物真感情者，謂之有境界。

The focal point of this statement and, in fact, Wang's concept of poetry and literature generally lies in the word *chen* or "true." In the following often-quoted passage from *JCTH* Wang again talks about the expression of the

“true” as a basis and measure of great literature:

When the great masters express feelings, they penetrate into the inner core of one's being. When they describe scenery, they open up one's eyes and ears. Their words just come out naturally without any affectation or artificiality. This is because what they have perceived is *true* and what they have comprehended is profound (*shen*). This applies to both *shih* poetry and *tz'u* poetry. One will not go far wrong by measuring the works of both the present and the past by this standard. (*JCTH*, I, 56)

大家之作，其言情也必沁人心脾，其寫景也必豁人耳目。其辭脫口而出，無矯揉妝束之態。以其所見者皆然，持此以衡古今之作者，可無大誤矣。

Later on in his *The History of the Sung Yuan Drama* (*Sung Yuan hsi-ch'u shih*), he again applies the notion of the “true” as a criterion for judging the drama of the Sung and the Yuan (1260-1368) periods. He concludes that only those works which can achieve this expression of the “true” in scene, feeling and language can be said to possess “meaning and realm” (*yi-ching*), a term interchangeable with *ching-chieh* in Wang's vocabulary.

In the passage just quoted, it is obvious that for Wang, the concept of the “true” is intimately related to that of “world.” It is also clear that for him the perception of the “true” is the basis of the expression of the “true.” To understand what Wang means by “world,” one must first know more about what he means by the “true.” Among traditional Chinese critics on poetry Wang Kuo-wei seems to have been the first scholar to have thought deeply, broadly, and consistently about the notion of the “true” in literature.

There are actually three inter-related issues in Wang's discussion of the “true.” First, what does the term really *refer to* in a physical scene and a given human feeling? Secondly, how does the poet *perceive* the “true” in the “scene” and the “feeling” during the creative process? Thirdly, how does the poet *express* the “true” in literature?

Regarding the first question concerning the “true” in the physical scene or object, Wang means the “*li-nien*” (literally, idea of the reason) or “*li-hsiang*” (ideal) in it. In *JCTH*, Wang says that what the poet depicts in reality must correspond to the “ideal” state of the object. At the same time, what the poet constructs from his imagination must be taken from nature and follow the “laws of nature” (*tz'u-jan chih fa-lu*) (*JCTH*, 1, 5). What Wang

means by the "ideal" and the "laws of nature" here seems very close to the Platonic concept of an "idea" innate in physical reality. This "idea" in a given object can only be achieved, Wang says, when the poet can single out the object in nature in all its uniqueness and free it from all that either is connected with it or that confines it. (JCTH, I, 5).

Schopenhauer's concept of knowing an object "outside and independent of all relations" so as to attain its "idea" (which is "eternal" and the "true content of its phenomenon"), seems very much present in Wang's view of the "ideal." Thus, the "true," for Wang, refers to the inner essence of an object, which is unique and constant and can only be perceived by the poet when his whole being enters into the object of his contemplation, free from any interference by the world.

While Wang may have borrowed from the West to define more succinctly the concept of the "true," with its emphasis on the isolation of the object of contemplation from all irrelevancies, this idea of the "true" is not really alien to Chinese aesthetics. Ssu-k'ung T'u, for example, in his poetical treatise, *Twenty-four Types of Poetry*, identifies it repeatedly with the ultimate Tao. Similarly, Wang Fu-chih identifies it with the innate law or principle of a physical object, in the sense of *shen-li* or *wu-li*, which is to be distinguished from its mere appearance (*wu-t'ai*).

For example, in commenting on a description of lotus plants by the Southern Sung *tz'u* poet, Chou Pang-yen (1056-1121), he says that Chou has really captured their *shen-li* (literally, spirit-law), the identical term used by Wang Fu-chih, in the following lines:

The sun just now shines away yesternight's rain from the leaves,
Above the water, fresh and round are they now,
One after another, the lotus blossoms flower and sway, tall and
erect, in the gentle breeze.

(JCTH, I, 36)

葉上初陽乾宿雨，
水面清圓，
一一風荷舉。

In all his comments on the "true" or the "spirit" of the scene depicted, Wang's emphasis — as is the case with virtually all traditional Chinese critics — is always on the inner life and vitality that shine through. Take, for example,

Wang's often quoted comments on the following lines by Sung Ch'i (998-1061) and Chang Hsien (990-1078) respectively:

“On the tip of the red apricot branches, spring is noisy” – with the single word, “noisy” (*nao*), the “world” comes out completely. “As the moon breaks through the clouds, the flowers play with their shadows” – with the single word “play” (*nung*), the “world” comes out completely as well. (*JCTH*, I, 7)

「紅杏枝頭春意鬧」著一「鬧」字，而境界全出。「雲破月來花弄影」著一「弄」字，而境界全出矣。

Here, apparently, the “world” refers to the very soul and vitality depicted in the scene. I agree with the modern critic, Fu Ch'ü that for Wang Kuo-wei the Chinese notion of spirit (*shen*) and soul (*huen*) is almost identical with the Western meaning of “idea.” (183) I might add that they all refer to the “true,” and hence, to the “world,” of a given scene or object. To be sure, between the Chinese concept of “spirit” and “soul” and the Western concept of “true” and “idea” in reference to any given scene or object, there is an overlap of area. But strictly speaking, when Chinese critics talk about the “spirit” or the “soul” of a physical scene or object, they usually refer to the very *essence* and *life force*, particularly the latter, that is innate in and typical of it.

Whether such an essence exists *a priori* as a pure “idea” in the scene or object itself does not really enter into the consciousness of Chinese artists or, for that matter, Chinese critics. The identification of these terms in Wang's critical vocabulary clearly represents his synthesis of Western and traditional Chinese aesthetics. This kind of synthesis can be problematic and Wang's gradual renunciation of Western ideas around the time when *JCTH* was written might indicate that he was aware of this. Yet, more than most modern scholars, Wang's application of Western critical ideas does help clarify certain issues which have not been clearly treated in the Chinese tradition.

For instance, for Wang Kuo-wei, the “true” in human feeling refers not simply to deeply felt personal feeling but to feeling that can, at the same time, *transcend* the personal and the temporal. Thus, the most moving poetry laments *life itself* (*yu-sheng*) and laments *the world at large* (*yu-shih*) (*JCTH* I, 25). For Wang, the poet Li Yu (937-978) had really captured the “true” in human feelings. Li's poetry, says Wang, is really as Nietzsche says,

written "with his blood"; and, most importantly, the suffering in his poetry is, like that of Buddha and Jesus, for the sins of mankind. (JCTH, I, 18)

That "truth" and "sincerity" of feeling are considered most important in poetry is certainly an old idea and a matter of common knowledge among poets and critics alike from the very beginnings of the Chinese poetic tradition. Furthermore, one of the basic criteria by which poems of the past are to be considered truly great is that they must have been continuously read, appreciated, and commented upon. The very fact that they have been read over a long period of time by so many different people suggests that what is written in these poems must go beyond the personal and the topical.

In most of these traditional comments, however, the emphasis has almost invariably been on how genuinely the poet *in question* must have felt about the *particular event* in the poem; how faithfully the poet has rendered *his* feelings in the poem; and, finally, how deeply the *critic*, as a reader, has been moved by what is described in the poem. In other words, few critics have gone *beyond individual* poems to probe the *general* characteristics that are *common* to all great poetry.

In talking about "lamenting for life" and "lamenting for the world at large," or the suffering of Buddha and Jesus, Wang Kuo-wei *expands* the traditional critical vision beyond its *habitual* focus on individual poems. The following comment on the distinction between a poet and a politician is another case in point. Again, the focus is on the common and the universal:

The eyes of a politician are on the individual person, the individual event. The eyes of a poet, on the other hand, are on eternity cutting across the barrier between the past and the present. When a *tz'u* poet observes the things in the world, he should use the eyes of a poet, never the eyes of a politician (JCTH, II, 37).

政治家之眼，域於一人一事。詩人之眼則通古今而觀之。詞人觀物，須用詩人之眼，不可用政治張之眼。

Whether Wang's statement is influenced by Aristotle's well-known distinction between a historian (whose focus is on concrete events and real possibilities) and the poet (whose focus is more on imagination and the probability of things) is difficult to tell. But Wang and Aristotle are obviously similar in believing that the poet is a person who penetrates beyond the particulars of things. It is this tendency to move away from discussing what is *perceived*

in individual poems or poets towards something close to the formation of a *concept* of poetry and its distinct characteristics that distinguishes Wang from traditional critics.

The second issue concerning the notion of the "true," as I mentioned earlier, relates to the poet's perception of the "true" in feeling and scene. To reach this kind of perception, he says, the poet first has to know how to *observe* (*kuan*) the object of his contemplation. Traditional critics (Liu Hsieh, Chung Hung) talked about the poet having to "empty" (*hsu*) and "still" (*ching*) his mind as a precondition for entering into the object of contemplation without interference or blockage by his irrelevant thoughts. We also recall Wang Fu's-chih's discussion of the active participation (*ts'an*) of the mind in the physical world so as to penetrate into and commingle with the latter completely (*t'ung*).

In these traditional views, the critics seem to be rather vague about what is actually taking place in the act of "emptying" or "participation." Furthermore, how do these two different modes of relating to the object of observation result in the poetry they produce? Does the object of observation exist only in the physical world external to the poet? Traditional critics, as a rule, are not really concerned with these issues. Wang Kuo-wei, however, addresses all these questions in his discussion of "observation."

For Wang, the ability to "observe" the object of contemplation is one crucial prerequisite for making a poem possess the "world." (JCTH, III, 22) And the object of contemplation could be either something outside of the poet or the poet himself with his own various feelings. The former is a case of "observation of object" (*kuan-wu*); the latter is a case of "observation of myself" (*kuan-wuo*). In other words, the poet is essentially an observing subject capable of "observing" anything that he writes about, including his own feelings. To my knowledge, the notion that the poet's own feelings are something outside of the poet and, as such, should be "observed" in the same way that he would observe an object or scene external to him, is not a familiar one in traditional Chinese criticism.

Although from the earliest times Chinese poets have been, if only unconsciously, "observing" their own feelings as "objects" of contemplation outside themselves, critics have seldom made this notion of detachment an issue for explicit discussion. Wang Kuo-wei's idea of the poet as a pure observing consciousness seems to have been heavily influenced by Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, a book Wang had read and re-read and from which he often borrowed ideas. (Rickett, 12) In this book, Schopen-

hauer says that the artist in the moment of aesthetical contemplation is a "pure will-less subject of knowledge" whose sole aim is to acquire the "knowledge of the object, not as individual thing but as Platonic idea." (Adams, 477)

And this Platonic idea, Schopenhauer reminds us, is the "enduring form of this whole species of things." (Adams, 477) For Schopenhauer, man's subjective will, which is his desire, is the source of suffering, and the only way that he can be delivered from such suffering is to be delivered "from subjectivity, from the slavery of the will" by being raised to "the state of pure knowing." According to Schopenhauer nature and the art, because of the sheer attraction of their beauty, have precisely such power to take us out of our subjectivity to that pure will-less state of knowledge because we can be totally absorbed by them as objects of contemplation. (Adams, 478)

These ideas of Schopenhauer struck a familiar chord in Wang Kuo-wei who had thought deeply about human suffering. The power of the art is precisely because it is capable of transforming the "I as will" (*yu-chih wuo*) into the "I as knowledge" (*chih-chih wuo*) through art. (WKWSH, 196) Traces of such ideas are still visible in *JCTH* in Wang's discussion of "observation."

The act of observation involves the relationship between the observing poet and what he observes. Repeatedly, Wang says that the poet should be totally *faithful* to everything that comes within his scope of observation, including human events and every single plant or tree in nature. (*JCTH*, II, 44). This kind of faithful observation, for Wang, also involves a kind of "play," although of a serious sort, in which no practical purpose whatsoever is intended. (*JCTH*, II, 49). Schiller's notion of "art as play" and Kant's idea of art as "purposeless purposiveness" are obviously present here.

The ultimate purpose of this kind of faithfulness and play *vis a vis* the object of contemplation is, of course, to get at the "idea" of the latter through the observing poet. As such, the object thus observed is a blend of both the object and the observing consciousness. For Wang, the best poetry demonstrates a "complete synthesis of idea and object" (*yi-yu-ching huen*) (*JCTH*, III, 22). Here the word "yi" or "idea" refers to the subjective consciousness of the observing poet, and the word "*ching*" refers to the external object observed.

This kind of complete synthesis between the poet and the object of contemplation, in which one "cannot tell the demarcation between the poet and the object," is what is achieved in a type of poetry which he describes as

possessing a "world-without-I (*wu-wuo chih-ching*). This can only occur, according to Wang, when the poet observes and comprehends the "idea" of the object *in quietude* without letting his own subjective self slip into the object to block what Wang calls the "language" of the object. This is a case where the poet uses "the eyes of the object to observe the object" and speaks "the innate language of the object which cannot speak."

Since the synthesis is so perfect, the poet actually becomes the spokesman of that quiet communion between himself and the object of contemplation. According to Wang, T'ao ch'ien's lines,

Plucking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge, Leisurely, I
catch sight of the south hill,

採菊東籬下
悠然見南山

expresses precisely such an experience of communion. (JCTH, I, 3) For more than a thousand years these lines have been celebrated because T'ao had recorded a rarely encountered moment of perfect rapport between nature and man. The appearance of the south hill in his vision when the poet lifts his head from picking chrysanthemums is not only delightful and uplifting, but almost seems to be intimately communicating with the poet in a language that is beyond description. Hence, we recall that at the end of the poem, T'ao says,

There is truth in all this
I would like to tell, but forget the words.

此中有真意
欲辯已忘言

There is, for Wang, another kind of poetry in which the poet observes the object of his contemplation from his own point of view, and thus lets his own thoughts and feelings color the object. The "world" attained by this type of poetry is, according to Wang, one which includes the lyrical "I" (*yu-wo chih-ching*). To illustrate what he means by this kind of poetry, he cites such lines as

With tearful eyes, I ask the flowers but they do not speak;
 Red petals swirl past the swing and fly out of sight,

(JCTH, I, 3)

淚眼問花花不語，
 亂紅飛過秋千去。

In these lines from a *tz'u* poem, attributed to the tenth-century poet, Feng Yen-ssu (903-960), the poet's feeling apparently dominates the scene and is carried over into the latter, unlike what happens in T'ao Ch'ien's poem quoted earlier. In the "poetry-with-I" type of lyric, which accounts for a vast quantity of Chinese poems, there is also a kind of synthesis between the observing poet and the object observed. The tearful eyes, for example, reach out toward the flowers; the swirling red petals and the disappearing swing are merged into one to lament the same sad story about the disappearance of spring and the love and fun associated with it. But the synthesis is reached differently from the first kind of "poetry-without-I." According to Wang, it is achieved not in quietude as in the first kind, but after some "stirring" tension between the poet and the object of contemplation. (JCTH I, 4)

For Wang, "poetry-without-I" is "beautiful" and "poetry-with-I" is "sublime." Here again, the influence of Schopenhauer is discernible. This is especially obvious when Wang describes the "beautiful" as being without tension between the poet and what he observes and the "sublime" as the poet overcoming his own subjectivity to reach out toward the object of his observation.

One might quarrel with Wang's designation of the Western notions of the "beautiful" and the "sublime," as appropriate descriptions for these two kinds of Chinese poetry. Given the predominance of the concept of innate harmony between man and nature in traditional Chinese thinking, one might also quarrel with Wang about the appropriateness of describing the relationship between the poet and the object of his contemplation in terms of the absence or presence of *confrontation* or *tension*. Yet Wang's distinction between these two different modes in which the poet relates to the object of his contemplation is all too often blurred by the traditional critical term of fusion of "feeling" and "scene" (*ch'ing-ching chiao-jung*).

The traditional term "fusion" refers to the final effect of the relationship between "feeling" and "scene" in fine poetry, but it does not really

indicate in what manner these two elements in poetry actually come together. While Wang Fu-chih's emphasis on the interaction between "feeling" and "scene" does refer to the inner dynamics involved in general, Wang Kuo-wei's distinction regarding the modes of observation is far more specific. He pinpoints two essentially different ways in which the poet comprehends and comes to terms with the material of his poetry.

Thus from Wang Kuo-wei's perspective the relationship between "feeling" and "scene" in Chinese poetic criticism is essentially the relationship between the poet and his material, that is to say, the relationship between the "poetic I" (*wuo*) and the "poetic material" (*wu* in the sense of the traditional notion of "object"). As such, the scope of *wu* is broadened to include everything that the poet writes about, scene as well as human feelings.

Important as this ability to observe (*nung-kuan*) the "true" in the material is, it is not enough. For Wang, the poet will have to be able to finally *express* what he feels in the poetic medium (*nung-hsieh chih*). For Wang, that which can be directly felt and intuited in the object of contemplation is the primary form of the object. And this primary form will have to be delivered in what Wang calls the *secondary form*, which is the medium of the artist's choice, before it can be communicated and appreciated. (JCTHTT, 10-1)

This secondary form in poetry, referring to poetic language is the third issue with regard to the notion of the "true." Traditional critics largely agreed that the language of scene should be "near" in the sense of being vivid and easily identifiable, and the language of feeling should be "far" in the sense that it is able to evoke meaning beyond the literal level. Wang Kuo-wei, however, did not make such distinctions but, in my view, transcended them. For him, poetic language, regardless of its reference to "feeling" or "scene," should be such that it enables the reader to experience, *directly* and *without* any *obstruction*, what the poet has experienced. Wang calls such language *pu-ke* (literally, not blocking), meaning there is nothing blocking the reader from the poem. Poems that cannot be approached directly, as if there were a film of vagueness separating the reader from what is described are called *ke* (literally, blocked). In one of the many entries in *JCTH* devoted to "not blocking," Wang quotes and comments on the following two passages (among others) to illustrate what he means by this term as it applies to the depiction of "feeling" and "scene" respectively:

"The years of a one's lifespan do not reach one hundred,

But the sorrow of life one harbors is a thousand years long.
 When the days are short and nights are long,
 Why not take a lamp and sally out?"

生年不滿百，
 常懷千歲憂。
 晝短苦夜長，
 何不秉燭遊。
 寫景如此方爲不隔…

This expression of feeling [comments Wang] can be called "not blocking" (*pu-ke*).

"The sky is arched like a tent,
 Spreading over the four ends of the horizon,
 So grey is the sky,
 So vast and misty the wilderness,
 wind blows, grass bends, cows and sheep are seen."

天似穹廡，
 籠蓋四野。
 天蒼蒼，
 野茫茫。
 風吹草低見牛羊。
 寫景如此，方爲不隔。

Such a description of "scene" can be called, "not blocking" (*pu-ke*). (JCTH, I, 41)

With their vivid description enabling the reader to visualize what is happening in the poem, these two passages, for Wang, clearly exemplify the essence of "not blocking" in that "every single word appears vividly in front of one's eyes" (*yu-yu tou tsai mu-ch'ien*) (JCTH I. 40).

This simple definition of *pu-ke* certainly seems very close to such conventional terms as, "near," or Chung Hung's, "immediate to the eye," all of which refer to a sense of immediacy in poetic language. Wang's coinage of this new term, however, indicates that there was something else that he wanted to emphasize. Wang apparently attached a great deal of importance to this concept of poetic language. Not only does he make various direct and indirect comments about "not blocking" and "blocking" throughout *JCTH*,

but the concepts are used as criteria for judging individual poems and poets, as well as poetry in general. In a way, they are comparable in importance to the concept of "world" and the "true." What, then, does "not blocking" really mean? Does it simply refer to the language of poetry? And does it relate to his central notion of "world" and "true"?

In one of the passages cited earlier from *JCTH*, Wang comments on how the very "soul," "spirit," and, in a word, "truth" of the lotus plant was captured by the Sung poet Chou Pang-yen. Wang also indicates, in the same passage, that Chou's description of the lotus is "not blocking." We also recall that in both *JCTH* and *SYHCS*, Wang discusses, in almost identical words, the characteristics of the great masters in literature. In speaking of their ability to penetrate into the very core of man's being, in their expression of feeling and their ability to make the scenery they describe appear right in front of one's eyes, he is obviously referring to this quality of "not blocking," common to all great literature.

For Wang, the reason why all great writers share this quality is that, as he says in the same passage, "what they perceive is true and what they comprehend profound." Once again, as in the passage about Chou Pang-yen's description of the lotus, "not blocking" is closely associated with the "true." "Not blocking" is thus not simply a direct or vivid expression of scene as implied in the term "near" or other similar terms; it is the *direct* and *vivid* expression of the "true" and the "profound" in both "*feeling*" and "*scene*."

Thus, the importance Wang attaches to "not blocking" is directly related to the importance he attaches to the "true," which, we recall, is the very essence of the "world". Hence, "not blocking" is not really *another* concept in addition to the notion of the "world" that Wang has contributed to Chinese literary criticism; rather it is, together the concept "true," an integral part of Wang's theory of the "world". It is the very language and expression of the "world."

As is typical of the "poetry talk," in which individual entries seem very much like unstrung pearls, Wang's *JCTH* does not make an overt effort to string together these interrelated concepts of "not blocking," "true," and "world." But any reading of *JCTH* which fails to see these three concepts as interrelated can hardly do justice to Wang's theory of poetry. It is in his consistent view of poetry through these interrelated concepts, as well as in synthesis traditional Chinese and Western critical ideas, that Wang has made his unique contribution.