

Teaching the Fa at the Discussion on Creating Fine Art (Li Hongzhi, July 21, 2003, Washington D.C.)

The students here are all involved in creating fine art, and all have professional skills. I'll just talk about whatever comes to mind, and I'll only talk from the Fa-truths. Fine art is very important to mankind. Like other forms of human culture, it can play a guiding role with respect to people's concepts in human society, influencing mankind's aesthetic values. The concepts of "what is aesthetic" and "what is the appropriate sense of beauty that people should have" are closely related to mankind's moral foundation and standards. When people find unaesthetic things aesthetic, then people's moral values are gone.

Mankind's morality goes through certain changes in different time periods. Mankind's morality itself affects mankind's arts, and the arts in turn affect mankind. You've all seen that a lot of things in today's arts are concocted by the modern mentality, and today's mankind has gone well beyond the moral boundaries and standards that mankind should have. So the resulting so-called arts aren't human culture anymore, because they're not produced with rationality or a clear mind, and they're not true, beautiful things of mankind created with people's upright thoughts, good thoughts, or a correct understanding of artistic beauty. With that, the arts are degenerating. So as for today's arts, strictly speaking, they're no longer human things. I often see some so-called pieces of modern art that . in fact are all products of demon nature, even though some of them are quite famous. Not only are they of demon nature, but also many people in search of inspiration while painting are actually seeking to emulate the behavior of ghosts. When it continues like that for a long time, their state of mind is bound to become dark and bizarre. Professional artists know that when someone is doing these things his state of mind is such that he is indulging the wicked side of his human nature, and is even deliberately pursuing wicked psychological responses. So, those so-called modern art things are usually not too good, because they are not only harmful to the painters but they also bring psychological harm to those who view the work, and they seriously damage people's moral values as well.

But Dafa disciples can't break away from this social environment of ordinary people while cultivating and living their lives. You are immersed in the current of modern people's notions as well, and are also influenced by this environment. Before they learned Dafa, a lot of Dafa disciples were even studying or engaged in creating modern arts. Of course, I think that whether you are involved in modern arts or the true, traditional, and upright arts that mankind is supposed to have, the basic techniques you learned before should be the same. So, Dafa disciples must clearly understand what arts humans should have. That way, you can follow the pure and upright artistic standards of human beings, and you'll be able to create good things.

Why are we having this meeting today? Let me tell you, everything that Dafa disciples are doing during this present historic time is of utmost importance. Just yesterday I was saying that whatever Dafa disciples do, human society will emulate it in the not-too-distant future. Right now, during the Fa-rectification period, everything in the world revolves around Dafa--that's for sure--because the Three Realms were created for the Fa-rectification. Why am I discussing these things with you today? It's because Dafa disciples with artistic skills have abilities and energy. If the things you do aren't upright, or aren't upright enough, you'll reinforce the unrighteous elements, which will affect human society even more. In cultivation, you're supposed to rectify yourselves by cultivating away everything that's not good. You should be a good person wherever you are. So in the field of the arts you should be a good person as well, and in your artwork you should display what's beautiful, what's upright, what's pure, what's good, and what's bright and positive.

As the morality of human society has slid down to this point, mankind's thinking has gone through corresponding changes. And since they've changed and evolved to this point, it's impossible for people to revert on their own. No individual, no theory, and no method can enable people to return to where they were--only Dafa can. You've followed me here to save sentient beings. And the meaning of our saving sentient beings also includes how we save human morality, how the people who are saved will be in the future, how they'll live, and what kind of conditions they'll live in. In

other words, Dafa disciples are not only saving sentient beings, they're also blazing a true path for the existence of human beings. These are all things that Dafa disciples are doing in validating the Fa.

I've said that the Three Realms will exist forever. And how will it exist? That's what I'll handle during the Fa-rectification of the human world. But everything that Dafa disciples do today is of utmost importance, and it's also establishing a foundation for the future mankind and the future culture. Everything of contemporary mankind is messed up. Hardly any of the upright and traditional things that human beings should have exist anymore, and there's nothing that's pure and righteous anymore. Fortunately, there are still some cultural legacies that were left behind from people in ancient times that haven't been completely ruined--particularly in the area of fine art, where the teaching of some foundational techniques has been left behind, so that as mankind returns to the Human Realm, those who study fine art can grasp some of the most basic things. Then how should those most basic things be utilized so people can embark on a true human path? And how can [you] create good things? I think that taking those basic techniques as a foundation, and adding to them the true goodness, righteousness, and pure beauty that Dafa disciples have come to comprehend in their cultivation, [you] can display good things.

While I'm on this subject, I'd also like to talk about how mankind has evolved and the developmental process of mankind's arts as I see them.

Mankind's arts from both Eastern and Western cultures have a process of formation, stasis, and degeneration. Eastern and Western arts have taken two different paths. That's putting it in human terms, when in fact they are each concrete manifestations of the artistic aspects of the beings at the lowest level of two different, big cosmic systems, that is, human beings. In other words, they are manifestations of the things in those cosmic systems at the lowest level--this human place. Actually, there are many, many different colossal firmaments in the cosmos. There are many of them, and all of them are independent, huge cosmic bodies. Each colossal firmament has its own different style that manifests in a different way through its own, unique structure. In human words, this is to say that they have different artistic characteristics. Every gigantic cosmic body has different truths that have been enlightened to in an upright way from Zhen-Shan-Ren, the fundamental Fa-truths. As a result, the different cosmic bodies' systems all have their own systems' unique characteristics, which are concretely manifested in the structure of their heaven and earth, what their environments are like, the forms of their beings, the adornment of their beings, their architectural styles, the forms in which their animals and plants appear, etc. They all have their own, unique, upright ways of depicting beauty, friendship, grace, gratitude, etc. Among all the creations of the cosmic systems, the forms of expression of the low-level beings of basically two systems have been passed down to this human place, and they are comprised of Eastern arts and Western arts. But in the gigantic colossal body, these are not all there are. What I'm saying is that only these two types have been passed down to this human place.

As for these two artistic systems of mankind, both the East and the West have had an inheriting process in their respective ethnic cultures for several thousand years, but the styles of these two types of art are largely different. They are different in their techniques and approaches, their ways of expressing things, the feelings they project, and the visual effects they produce. From the very beginning of its inheriting process, the Chinese arts were established from a semi-divine culture. In other words, half of the emphasis was not on the human surface but on the spirit of the subject, its allure, and the inner meanings. That's why the manifestations of all aspects of the Chinese culture had that characteristic, especially in fine art, where they don't really pay attention to depicting the details on the surface, they focus on expressing the ideas, or the spirit of it, and the inner meanings. Western arts were also passed down to humans from Gods, but their emphasis is on human beings' surface culture. They stress superb, precise, and refined techniques, and realistic, superlative artistry. The emphasis is placed on demonstrating the techniques at the surface human dimension. So in their works of fine art, the surface of objects is expressed in a very refined and precise manner. So the artistic styles of the West and of China have taken two different paths. In their process of development, the arts of the West were inherited from the previous civilization. Actually, the arts of the West have preserved a format of systematic learning even through the last several civilizations. It's had schools, theories, and formal training. It has always taken such a path. In the continuation of

the arts of the East, on the other hand, it's always been circulated as part of the folk culture, among literati, artisans, and people seeking the Way. There are no systematic theories, no schools, and no formal training. How they express things in their works is based entirely on their individual experiences, especially when it comes to the sculptures. As a result of the characteristics of the Chinese people's culture, behind the expressions in the drawings, paintings, and sculptures, it's basically the Chinese people's cultural character at work, and they are unwittingly expressing the ideas and feelings. So viewed this way, the differences in the approaches they take to express things are quite significant. When you look at it from the perspective of human beings' outermost surface, the techniques of Western arts are very refined, and they demand accurate handling of light and shade, structures, and visual perspective. Especially when it comes to the structure of the human body, they express it very accurately. In ancient Chinese fine art, however, since it didn't have any systematic theories or professional studies, its expressions of the outermost surface of the structures of things lack accuracy.

The path of the arts always goes from its initial period to its peak, and then declines again. All of mankind's cultures follow this trend as well. Everything of mankind is amidst formation-stasis-degeneration-destruction, which is part of the characteristics of the past cosmos. So whenever mankind's morality is no longer good enough--when nothing is good enough anymore it has to start over--it's catastrophic for mankind, everything ends, and then everything starts over again, proceeds to the peak, and then declines again. This cycle keeps repeating.

Since ancient Chinese fine art didn't have systematic or specialized studies, they basically couldn't handle visual perspective well in terms of capturing the human body and objects. After the end of the Qing Dynasty, many who did Chinese fine art learned the basic techniques of Western fine art, and their works became accurate in depicting the external surface forms. They produced some works like that. But in recent times, especially the last twenty-some years, China has been influenced by modern thinking as well, and the works there have gotten in worse and worse shape. People's notions change along with their thinking. If a person's righteous thoughts aren't in charge and he relies entirely on the perceptions and feelings at his human surface instead of his true thoughts, and he doesn't truly think things over clearheadedly on his own, then it will be as if he doesn't have a soul anymore. Human consciousness is formed postnatally at the human surface, and it only manifests as a subconscious reaction to things. Consciousness is unstable, it can change anytime, and it changes along with the changes in external conditions and the overall situation in society. If someone completely relies on these things, he doesn't have his own thoughts. In addition, his thoughts are unsystematic, erratic, and he has no upright thoughts and no true self. The things fashioned in this state of mind are the so-called "modern arts" or "contemporary works of fine art." The beginning stage of these things' rise in popularity was the earliest appearance of those Impressionist and Abstractionist things of the West. If you calmly look at those things, you'll definitely find that they were produced when people's true thoughts were absent and people were following their human notions at the surface. They are unsystematic, unstructured, irregular, and fragmented. Who knows what they express! They don't give people an aesthetic experience, they just follow the human thoughts at the surface. The works they concocted had a crooked nose, only half a face, or had a foot growing out of the back of a body. From the very beginning, those things were the result of people abandoning their own thoughts and upright thoughts, and were the products of people's limbs and bodies being directed by their postnatal human notions. Only when a person abandons his master consciousness (*zhu yishi*) and allows his human notions at the surface to roam freely can he produce such things. The emergence of such things has destroyed the Western arts, which were nearly the entire human race's very best and most perfect arts. During recent times, that influence has reached China.

And that was only the early stage of the modern arts. When the overall morality of society becomes increasingly degenerate, human notions don't just stay the same, they slide down as well. Those Impressionist and Abstractionist things back then completely disregarded correct visual perspective, the transition from light to darkness, and the accuracy of structure. More and more, they pursued so-called "personal feelings" and mistook that kind of irrational indulgence as liberation of their individual human nature. What they were really doing was restraining their true natures, and indulging postnatal thinking that does not contain the true self. They threw on intense colors, and

were completely indulging a type of feeling from their notions that didn't contain any sober, rational thoughts. Notions, however, are formed postnatally in a person. They aren't the person's true thoughts, and they are irregular, unstructured, and unsystematic. That's why the things they concocted were like that, and looked completely disproportionate or out of balance visually. When it got to the later stage, as human moral concepts slid down more and more, their state of mind became even more base, and that kind of base consciousness didn't consist of just human notions anymore. When a person's own thoughts and true self give up control of his surface, foreign beings will seize the opportunity and get in. When it gets to that point, a foreign intelligence is already controlling the human brain. That's why artistic expressions that were even darker and more depressed--even the light was gloomy--emerged, and they entirely reflected the state of mind of dejected and decadent human nature. When it slid further down, they also became driven by the desire for fame and self-interest in society and pursued complete abandonment of themselves, and at that time even the postnatal notions were discarded. In that case, the shell in which the person's self was completely absent became one hundred percent controlled by a foreign intelligence. And in most cases the foreign intelligence was a being in the nether world, with the majority being ghosts and spirits. That was a cosmic change when mankind's morality became bad. When a painter is controlled by a yin-natured creature, what he paints will seem to portray the nether world and things of the nether world. With a lot of paintings, you can tell at a glance that they portray the worlds of ghosts, they are murky, dark, and blurry, and those so-called human figures they paint are all like ghostly spirits; the earth there is of the nether world, and the sky is of the nether world. Why do people like that feeling? Isn't it because people don't have upright thoughts anymore? Aren't they pursuing darkness? Isn't it because mankind's morality has seriously degenerated? And that's only when people go toward a dimension that's even lower than humans'. Since mankind's values are still sliding down, at present, the arts are now becoming real and concrete displays of mankind's demon nature. The arts are becoming a blasphemy of the sacred arts, they have completely become a tool for the venting of demon nature, and what they portray are demons, ghosts, and monsters. Artists themselves admit that those works are all garbage, but in the so-called artistic trend they're considered the most valuable. How could garbage be what's best? People's notions have turned upside down, so they think that garbage is the best.

That's the history of mankind's fine art--just now I talked about its general progression. Now I'll continue the discussion using Western arts as a starting point. Do you know why during World War II the French were made to surrender? Didn't the French have the ability to fight? Hadn't heroes like Napoleon and Louis XIV emerged from that nation in the old days? Didn't that nation have a glorious history? Mankind's wars are in fact controlled by Gods, and they take place for certain reasons. It's not like things will happen according to what human beings want. France didn't directly get involved in World War II because Gods' purpose was to preserve the only works of art of this human civilization, which were in France. They are also the most glorious, what mankind can be the most proud of, and truly the most upright, traditional, and perfect pieces of art of mankind in this human civilization. If battles were to break out there, the works of art kept in the Louvre and Versailles would be gone, and the art on the streets of Paris would be gone too. Gods wanted to leave those few little things behind for mankind, so that in the future human beings would still be able to use them as references and find human beings' own art again. In addition, Dafa disciples would also be able to find their way back, based on the foundational skills of those traditional, upright works of art.

In the Western arts, during the past several civilizations, people became mature through systematic learning and returned to the previous civilization's path. But after a previous civilization is destroyed, there is a period during which the basic skills are immature. You can see that from the works of Western fine art by looking at, say, the works prior to the Renaissance, the works during the Renaissance, the works after the Renaissance, and the things of modern times--that process. Before the Renaissance, generally speaking, the works' artistic skills were quite immature. Their composition, structure, proportions, colors, etc., as you can see, you'll find them quite immature. Whether it be paintings, drawings, or sculptures, they were all immature. But then people have dug up certain things of the previous civilization from the unearthed artifacts in the West. Some were sculptures of Gods, and there were also some other sculptures from the previous ancient Greek civilization. All of them were mature and perfect works. Because the foundation of these ancient

civilizations was there, the Western arts quickly matured again. Because those things from the past were there for them to learn from and compare their works to, they matured very quickly. After the Renaissance, the emergence of Leonardo da Vinci and other artists was intended by Gods to have them lead human beings to reach artistic maturity and show people how to do their artwork. That's why their works at that time had a great impact on mankind. But the modern arts of recent times were arranged by some other kinds of gods--namely, the bunch that are of the old forces and that are trying to direct the Fa-rectification today. Why did a Van Gogh come along? Why did a Picasso come along? These people, too, were arranged by them to come, but they came to play a negative role, and the purpose was to have everything in mankind's culture become degenerate at the same time that mankind's morality was sliding downward. So those two people came to disrupt mankind's art. The purpose was to corrupt mankind's art--they came entirely to ruin mankind's culture. Mankind's art has gotten to the demonic state it's in today because of the foundation they laid back then for the so-called "Modernism."

Back when traditional Western art was being attacked by so-called Impressionism, that was when photography appeared. In their debates, the most typical argument made by those so-called Impressionists was, "No matter how accurately you paint, can it be as accurate as a photograph?" So they criticized painting objects to appear how they are, painting them realistically, and painting them in a traditional, orthodox way. Actually, traditional art is for man a high-quality pursuit of perfection, and it's endless. The realm of traditional art is very broad, because a complete work of art is not only realistic, but it in fact also contains the artists' own personal life experiences and character. The things that the artist has come into contact with in life, and the knowledge and skills in various subjects that he has gained in life--all of it is reflected in his works. That's why each person will express the same thing differently in his or her artwork, whether it's in terms of the use of color, the rendering of the subject's expressions, or the degree of mastery of the techniques. Each person's life experiences are different and the artists' character traits are different, so this leads to differences in their works. In addition, what they can depict is a multifarious world, beings at even higher levels, and even wonderful displays of Gods and Gods' worlds. So it's a limitless, bright and broad road. Usually the artists who are good at painting or sculpting focus most of their thoughts on their art, so most of them are not so adept at words. Yet those who don't know how to paint or sculpt are good at talking. By aggressively promoting their agenda with twisted logic, those people indeed overturned traditional art with the photography argument. So it has gradually gotten to the point it's at today. Of course, for someone to overturn traditional art back then, that couldn't have been done by someone who didn't understand fine art at all or who was incompetent in fine art. That's why those few representatives of Modernism were arranged back then to first master the basic skills in their childhood so they could mislead the people of the world even more.

Because of the upright-versus-evil debates between the academy and the Impressionists and Abstractionists back then, because the declining morality and concepts were critical of mankind's truly sacred arts, and because the traditional artists had to eke out a little tiny bit of space for their survival, now people call traditional art "Realism." In the past there was no such name. The reason Gods passed the arts on to human beings was to enable humans to express the goodness and beauty that mankind upholds, and that has a positive effect on mankind's morality. Because of the degeneration of mankind's morality, the traditional and upright human arts were pushed out of the halls of formal academies by the trend of moving towards demon nature. So for the sake of survival, traditional art became Realism, and that's how "Realism" came about.

Right now, everything of mankind is going in the reverse direction like this--have you noticed? Those who don't know how to project a proper singing voice, who don't know music theories, and those who don't have basic dancing skills have become popular singers and dancers, yet the real artists can't make a living. Even those barbers who know what they're doing have been pushed out and do their business on the street, while those who don't know what they're doing are found in extravagant salons. Everything of mankind is sliding down in the reverse direction and is all degenerating like this. What those so-called Modernists were after were some "personal feelings." Later on they lost control of themselves, and now they're giving their bodies to be controlled by ghosts--how could they produce anything good? They hang up a so-called modernistic piece and show it to people: "Ah, look! What a good painting!" If he didn't say so, nobody would know why it

was good like he said. Yet the good things that he describes are demonic in nature, and contain such naiveté about art that it's laughable. If your thinking doesn't follow him into that kind of demon nature, you won't be able to see what the so-called good things that he talks about are. In reality those things are all garbage that's harmful to people.

Of course, there are a lot of people who are just going along with the trend and concurring. Most of the general public don't understand the Modernists' stuff. If you say that it's all garbage, then the people that do those things will say that the more it's like garbage the better. You've all heard about how a so-called artist in China ate the flesh of dead children--didn't we hear reports about that a while back? It's the pursuit of demon nature that has brought things to this point. Won't it be terrifying if all of this goes on further? If mankind's arts continue like this, then you can just imagine what they will become in the future.

Next I'll talk a bit about what mankind's arts should depict. Is the purpose of mankind's arts to depict human beings themselves, or to depict landscapes, or to depict Gods? Or ghosts? You should know that mankind's true arts first appeared in the temples of Gods. Another purpose of Gods' passing on this aspect of culture to human beings was to let humans see the magnificence of Gods, and believe in goodness and evil receiving their due--evildoers will receive retribution, good people will receive blessings, and cultivators will go up to Heaven. The appearance of Western arts all began in churches. Statues in the East in the early times were almost all of Gods, and the most ancient and the earliest paintings passed down in China were all of Gods. Is there a limit to humans painting Gods? No, there isn't. The vast cosmos, and everything that is in the immense cosmic universe... when human beings truly believe in Gods and truly go about depicting Gods, Gods will show those things to human beings. It is the most perfect, most sacred, and what mankind yearns for and their most wonderful resting place. Therefore, what the works can depict is boundless.

You know, when people paint Gods, they have to use people as models. That's not a problem, since humans were created by Gods in their own image. So it's not a problem to use human beings for practicing one's basic skills. It's not that people can't paint other people--it's fine to do so--because human beings are after all what's central to this world. It's even less of a problem to paint landscapes. But, the focus of mankind's fine art should be Gods. Why do I say that? Think about it everyone, humans have karma--you all know this as you're Dafa disciples--and everything that human beings draw or paint includes elements of the artist himself. In an artist's work, everything about that individual and about the person being portrayed is attached to that painting. When an ordinary person paints just one stroke, I know what kind of person he is, what kind of illnesses he has, how much karma he has, his state of mind, his family situation, etc. And all the thoughts the subject of the painting has and all of the factors associated with his body are fully displayed as well, including how much karma he has. Whenever someone hangs a painting of that person in his home, the karma of that person in the painting emits from the painting. So when someone hangs something like that in his home, is he benefiting or being harmed? Karma emits and spreads, it's connected with the person, and it will continuously emit in the home of the person who has hung up the painting there. People can't see the interrelationships among objects, but actually they will feel ill at ease [from something like that].

But if human beings paint Gods--think about it everyone, Gods are glorious, magnificent, and emit merciful, benevolent energy that benefits people--the people who render the paintings or create the sculptures benefit in the process of completing the artwork, and at the same time the artist develops good thoughts while he creates artwork of Gods, and therefore Gods may help him strengthen his righteous thoughts, and remove the karma on the artist's body and his thought karma. After others look at that kind of artwork they'll benefit, they'll become broad-minded, they'll have good thoughts in their minds, and it will make their character nobler. And when Gods see humans having upright thoughts, they'll remove dangers and calamities for humans. So which way is more beneficial for mankind? I like to look at those traditional and upright works, those ceiling paintings and murals of Gods, and those sculptures of Gods. After I see them, I always feel that mankind still has hope of returning, because those works are depicting the Gods' magnificence, and the Gods in the sculptures are truly doing good things for people from the other side. So based on these comparisons, don't you think that mankind's art should primarily depict Gods?

Of course, modern society's arts aren't limited to paintings, drawings, and sculptures--there are also crafts, advertisements, fashion, theatre, television and movie production, product design, etc. There are a plethora of professions related to the arts; in other words, they are all related to fine art. But no matter what profession it is, if the artist himself establishes an upright foundation, then no matter what works he creates, they'll all be infused with upright elements, and they'll all be wonderful, good, and will benefit people. That's for sure. Generally speaking, this is what I've seen with mankind's arts.

The Eastern and Western arts I just talked about include sculpture. Speaking of sculpture, I'll talk a little bit about the actual origin of the sculptures of the East and their progression through history, and I'll just talk about the situation in this civilization. Before Buddhism was spread to China, the styles of many sculptures were related to the culture of the last cycle (that is, before the Great Flood), so their artistic styles were completely different from that of the period after Buddhism was spread to China Proper. Strictly speaking, the Eastern sculptures that represent this human civilization should be represented by portrayals of Buddhism's Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Gods. That kind of sculpting method of the early period was passed along from India, and India's sculpting method was in turn left over from the period of belief in Buddhas that preceded this period of Indian Buddhism, and the Buddhas that the previous period of Indians believed in were passed to India by those ancient Greeks in Europe who believed in Buddhas. That's because in even earlier times, many Europeans believed in Buddhas; of course, not everyone believed in Buddhas, there were people who believed in other Gods. After that was passed to India, the image of Buddha and the sculpting methods were also passed to India, and that's why the Chinese method for making sculptures of Buddha in the early days basically followed that of ancient Greece. You can see that many Buddha statues of the early period had deep eye sockets, with the bones over their eyebrows and facial structure being very similar to Westerners. They had straight noses, and they had a forthright and upright appearance. The reason is that ancient Greece passed on to India the Buddhist culture of an even earlier period, which in turn was passed from India to China. But, because the works of a sculptor incorporate his elements, after it was passed into China Proper, the image of Buddha in the statues became a little bit like Chinese people. Gradually, as the time since it was passed to China grew longer, it slowly lost the elements of the early periods when the ancient Greek culture was passed to China, and gradually it evolved into having more of a local Chinese flavor. This is speaking in terms of the surface culture of humans. There are other reasons involved. After Buddhism was spread to China Proper, many people's subordinate soul (*fu yuanshen*) indeed cultivated to Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood. But because at the time there were no methodical systems of learning in China Proper, and statues were made by stonemasons and Daoists, then compared to Western sculptures they were very amateurish--for the most part they couldn't find the right proportions in the body's structure. So, when it comes to many of the statues in China, it's not that they bear the characteristics of a particular school of art, they are just the result of immature techniques.

So just now I outlined in broad and very simple terms the development and origins of mankind's art. The arts of the past usually depicted Gods, and Gods passed those things on to human beings to tell mankind: Gods are protecting mankind, and when human beings do good things, it will result in good things for them.

Usually, an artist's work will have a theme and purpose of what he wants to express or depict. That is, when you're planning a painting or formulating the layout for a painting, what you want to express or depict, or, the meaning that you want to express, is incorporated in all of that. In other words, each work has its own story. But there's another problem when today's people look at Western traditional art, especially the fine art from the Renaissance Period: they only look at the method of the painting and the approach--and even that is something that only those people who know the basic techniques understand. Very few people know what the paintings are expressing. So when I've looked at paintings or sculptures, the students with me would ask me, "What is this painting about?" and I would tell them. Of course, you're all involved with the arts and know a lot, but why don't we explore this subject together. Let's get a few paintings here and I'll talk about what's expressed in them and why they expressed it that way. (*Applause*)

Have a seat, everybody. Just now when I was talking about what these paintings were expressing, you understood what I was saying. I want to have Dafa disciples understand what to do, so why don't you also share your thoughts, OK?

Question: (Translated) We want to portray the persecution. Can we depict scenes of Dafa disciples being tortured?

Teacher: Yes, you can. You can depict scenes of Dafa disciples being persecuted, Dafa disciples studying the Fa and doing the exercises, or scenes of Gods and heavens after Dafa was widely spread--all these can be depicted.

Question: Can we create some art that shows the process of Dafa disciples clarifying the facts or spreading the Fa, or things such as marches, parades, and so on?

Teacher: Yes, you can depict all of those things. What's key is that your planning and creation of the work should be high level.

Question: Master, Chinese arts aim at conveying certain ideas or feelings. For example, most famous Chinese painters aimed at conveying their ideas or feelings, and they painted landscapes. Can we paint that way too?

Teacher: There's no problem with conveying certain ideas or feelings. Chinese-style paintings and landscape paintings are fine to do, too. Because they're the work of Dafa disciples, they can be put on display. But you're Dafa disciples, and at present everyone is validating the Fa and creating a future for sentient beings, so you should do your best to make clarifying the facts and exposing the evil the first priority, particularly during this time. That's Dafa disciples' responsibility. It's better to have more works that expose the evil, present Dafa, and present Gods, and to make these works the core. Other works of Dafa disciples can be put on display too.

Question: Isn't trying to convey feelings or ideas something deviant?

Teacher: When I talk about conveying feelings or ideas, I'm talking about expressing the inner meanings in your painting or drawing. If people can express their feelings based on a moral foundation that is orthodox and of righteous thoughts, then there's no problem. The key is whether you use righteous thoughts to create your work or pursue those so-called modern concepts, and whether you use traditional and proper methods or Modernist notions to depict things. The problem doesn't lie in the feelings or ideas themselves.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask: the pieces that you just talked about all portray images of Western Gods. So as Dafa disciples, how do we blend Chinese and Western elements together, and how do we use paintings like this one as a reference, but still preserve our own Eastern characteristics?

Teacher: It's not a problem to paint both Gods with Eastern images and Gods with Western images in the same work. During the Fa-rectification many different Gods are playing positive roles. A lot of Chinese paintings are good, and can be acknowledged as such. Improve on the approaches and skills more. These are not problems. But it seems it would be hard to include both Chinese-style painting and Western-style oil painting in the same piece. No one has set a precedent by blending Eastern and Western approaches yet. Don't turn it into something neither fish nor fowl.

Question: What I want to say is, from a higher level many Gods of the East and West are below the level of Buddha, so if we create a large piece and include all of them in it, will that be all right?

Teacher: You want to create a large work of art that will have Gods with both Eastern and Western images in it--there's no problem with that. So, say you paint some Daos, and depending on what's needed you paint some Gods with Western images, and they're all in the same painting, then that's

no problem. But if in the same piece, oil painting techniques are used on one side and Chinese painting techniques are used on another side, then I'd say that won't do.

Question: I have another question. In our artwork we should mainly depict what's bright and good. But some pieces, due to the richness of their inner meaning, have negative characters in them. With that, you can have contrast in the scene. I'd like to confirm about handling negative characters--apparently they should be put in dark corners--but can we portray them like that?

Teacher: Yes, you can. In fact, take a look at this painting. The wicked police are beating the Dafa disciple. The use of color on the evil police and the Dafa disciple is different, yet it's very harmonious and balanced overall, so there's no problem there. That's a question of your techniques, and it's about how you plan it out well.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask, is Chinese calligraphy a form of art? Also, what about the cursive styles of calligraphy, are they upright?

Teacher: Nowadays it's called calligraphy, but in the past it was just writing. As it's come down to recent times, people don't use brush pens to write anymore, so they treat it as a form of art. As a matter of fact, it does contain the inner meaning of art. Since it's now considered a form of art, in art exhibitions you can treat it as a type of fine art.

Speaking of the cursive styles of calligraphy, strictly speaking, they are a reflection of mental states in which people are indulging their negative side. When Gods helped people create Chinese characters, there were no such things as cursive styles. Actually I've never practiced calligraphy, and I'm not that good at it. But I've often been asked by people to handwrite something for them, so I use the official script style. It's not that I have a preference for the official script style; it's because when you write in the official script style you can't possibly do it cursively. If it's written in cursive, it's no longer the official script style. So it's hard for people to write in that style cursively when they are indulging their notions or thought karma. From this perspective, I like writing in the official script style.

Question: With respect to calligraphy characters, because Master writes with the official script style, I've noticed that when some Dafa disciples choose calligraphy styles, they usually go for the official script style. I'd like to ask, can we use all calligraphy styles?

Teacher: Yes, you can. You can use all kinds of calligraphy styles. But I think the cursive styles indulge humans' negative side too much, and have too many human surface elements in them. When a person truly has upright thoughts and acts in a good manner, he can't write that way. That type of writing is mainly done when people indulge their human notions. In serious cases, the person's mental state is one that's kind of crazed and his upright side is weak.

Question: I have another question, and it's about the three primary colors. Teacher talked about the three primary colors having correspondences in other dimensions. People also talk about complementary colors. So, how should we understand the three primary colors? Here among people, we say light produces colors because without light we can't see colors. But then, since other dimensions are filled with light, how is there differentiation among the colors there?

Teacher: Yes, people can blend the three primary colors from their paints to create other colors, and the three primary colors in mankind's spectrum can refract into other colors in the spectrum. But those colors are just produced by material elements of the human physical dimension, which is different from other dimensions, and the kinds of matter are different as well. Some people say that objects' appearances are the result of light, and that includes how in a painting light and shade appear and how colors emerge. That's not true. Objects maintain the same shape regardless of whether or not there's light--all light does is give people the visual impression of brightness or darkness. When affected by changes in the intensity of the light, colors might be perceived falsely, but that doesn't really change the color or shape of the object. Speaking in terms of cultivation, light can block people's eyes and create false impressions for people. In a lot of other dimensions there's

no sun, and in a lot of dimensions everything is bathed in its own soft light. Without the sun, or if there's no sun in a dimension, the appearance and state of the object are still stable. In some dimensions, all objects dimly emit light that's gentle to the eyes, and the beings at the same level can see it themselves. In that type of dimension, there's no direct source of light like the sun, but the shapes of objects you see are still what they are.

When viewed with human eyes, other dimensions glow, and the colors and shapes of the objects there remain unchanged. (Of course, Gods and everything of Gods can change. The forms in which objects exist aren't in a so-called stable state, like people think). Usually they're like colorful neon lights, and the shapes and colors of the lights aren't affected by light. If a being is a life at that level, he won't have the same feelings that humans do upon seeing that dimension. It's just as I've told you about molecules having energy as well, and the reason humans can't sense it is because everything of humans, including the eyes, is composed of molecular particles. Similarly, a being that is composed of larger particles that are lower than molecules sees that human bodies and everything in the human dimension glow and have energy. This is a different concept from the dimension I talked about earlier, where everything glows without having a sun. That's a dimension where the objects themselves emit a glow.

Because this human dimension is a place specially created for the Fa-rectification, outside the boundaries of the Three Realms everything is completely different. In the many other, broader dimensions that exist at the same level as the Three Realms, the structures of all objects have changed, and they're all different from those in the human dimension. The way objects appear and the relationship between brightness and darkness that people in this world see are all different. So the relationship between brightness and darkness that manifests here at this human place is a manifestation in the environment that's specially created for human beings. Gods in the heavens and many cosmic bodies don't have a sun that shines on them directly or emits light. But there are also many cosmic bodies where they have more than one sun that gives off light. Some places have suns and some places don't. Beings of different levels can sense different intensities of light, and they all conform to light's forms of existence at different levels. A student wrote in an article that the three primary colors are related to Zhen-Shan-Ren. That's his own feeling and view that come from his cultivation, and not the fundamental, true nature of Zhen-Shan-Ren.

When people see scenes of the heavens they're shocked and think, "What colors can I use to depict this?" Human beings can see as well as touch and use matter at the surface that is composed of molecules. But when it comes to things that are composed of particles more microscopic than molecules, ordinary people can only sense their energy. The colors of matter in dimensions composed of particles more microscopic than molecules can't be found here at this human place. Actually, molecules carry energy too. Not only do they carry energy, they can also have the impact of energy. The people in this world can't sense the energy because their bodily composition, eyes, skin, blood, flesh and everything else are all things in the layer of molecular particles. That's why humans can't sense the energy that exists at the same level as them, and the reason they can sense the energy of a more microscopic level is that particles that make up objects at this human level are larger in size than the microscopic particles. In other words, the elements that make up colors are not particles of only one level, and that's why high-level dimensions appear brighter and shinier than dimensions that are made up of particles of one level below. But that brightness is the kind that transcends realms, so in the human world you can't find those kinds of colors. Even if you used radiant colors, you still wouldn't be able to depict them. But, although you don't have the kinds of colors to depict the sacredness of those realms, you can use the pigments that humans now have to show the composition of a painting and [the subjects'] solemn appearances. Humans' pigments are capable of expressing the shapes and the structures. If you could completely display Gods in the human world using everything of Gods, that would mean Gods had arrived in the human world.

Question: Master, could you talk about the clothing that Buddhas, Daos, and Gods wear, or how they usually dress and adorn themselves?

Teacher: The Buddhas' attire that we usually see is a yellow kasaya. When you paint Bodhisattvas, just paint them in ancient Chinese women's dress. You can mimic how the women of the Song

Dynasty dressed and adorned themselves, as that's the most common way. As for Gods with a Caucasian image, no matter which world they're in, they usually wrap themselves in a large white kasaya. Buddhas wrap themselves in a large yellow kasaya, and Gods in the image of blacks wrap themselves in a large red kasaya. Of course, there are manifestations of many more varieties and at even higher levels. There are some who don't wear anything, there are others who wear all kinds of clothes and adornments that are quite primitive... there are all kinds of Gods. In your works, it's usually good enough if you just portray what people can recognize. Daos of course don't ancient Chinese dress--those are the common Daos. The clothes worn by the Great Daos at very high levels are actually also very diverse.

In the past there was this phenomenon with cultivators: No matter when, or during which dynasty you succeeded in cultivation, what you wore when you reached Consummation would become your clothes afterwards. That was usually the case. Of course, for Buddhas it was different--when someone attained Buddhahood he would definitely assume the image of a Buddha, and would wear a Buddha's clothing. As for those who cultivated into other types of Gods, normally whatever he wore when he succeeded in cultivation would be the clothes he would wear afterwards. Which of you have been to Wudang Mountain? Have you seen the portrait of Xuanwu? Why is Xuanwu's hair down in his portrait? It's because when he succeeded in cultivation his hair was down, so the image of him is such that his hair is down. He was meditating for long periods of time in the mountains and found it too troublesome to tie up his hair, so he stopped tying it up and stayed like that all the way until he succeeded in cultivation.

Question: Master, in ancient paintings and drawings, some Buddhas are wearing clothes, and some have their shoulders exposed.

Teacher: Sometimes people paint or draw Buddhas based on their own notions. For instance, it's hot in Southern Asia, so the Buddhist monks there usually leave their shoulder exposed. They expose their right shoulder so it feels cooler. In more northerly regions, the Buddhist monks cover their right shoulder with a piece of cloth so they aren't cold. There is no concept of that in Buddhas' worlds. Their way of dressing is such that they usually expose the right shoulder. When Chinese people draw or paint Buddhas, they have this notion that they should cover the shoulders entirely, but actually, Gods' way of dressing is like *this*. Gods with Western images expose a shoulder too, because this type of clothing doesn't have sleeves, and if both sides are covered up it's hard to move about.

Question: Please allow me to ask, why is it so hard to learn basic skills when we learn to draw or paint? Plus it's very hard to find [a good place to learn them]. How can those of us who study painting or drawing in China improve our skills?

Teacher: It's mainly because the education in Western countries is too influenced by the ideas of the so-called Modernist school, and they don't emphasize training the students in the fundamentals at all. In addition, a lot of teachers and professors are part of the Modernist school and they themselves don't even understand or have the most basic, common knowledge about painting and drawing. As far as mastering the fundamentals, that can only be done with diligent training. In the beginning, the person has to do still-life drawings and learn to handle structures and visual perspective. When he's able to draw still objects well, he needs to practice drawing sketches, and then he'll learn to use colors correctly. Step by step he masters the fundamentals of drawing and painting. Basic skills are what a painter or sculptor must master.

Question: Why is that in China, people have been painting landscapes for a long time? Of course, in China there are also paintings that depict images of Buddhas, but throughout China's history most paintings have been of landscapes.

Teacher: Chinese painting seeks to convey feelings or ideas, and seeks to capture a certain realm of thought and express inner meanings. That's why most of them have painted landscapes. After all, Chinese people have a semi-God-like culture. In their minds they don't want to portray people too much, and that's also because of the reason I talked about earlier. So most paintings are of

landscapes, but there are some that have portrayed people as well. But normally they don't use models, and the works spring completely from their own imagination. The good thing is, this way things are unpolluted. Of course, it's not that they don't paint real people at all. They have painted some heroic figures in history and figures that people pay tribute to. When it comes to recent times, [the subjects of paintings] have become more diversified. Actually, the earliest Chinese paintings that have been discovered are paintings of Gods, and from ancient times up to today there have always been paintings portraying Buddhas, Daos, and Gods in temples and monasteries.

Question: In Chinese paintings, the lines are dominant and the colors are soft and mild, whereas Western paintings are very particular about colors. Is it true that the colors in our Chinese paintings should be like those of Western paintings?

Teacher: No. Eastern paintings should have the characteristics of Eastern paintings. Just paint them in the way they're supposed to be. Once you change it it's no longer an Eastern painting. Eastern paintings *do* emphasize the lines. But in Western paintings they can't draw lines, and if you draw lines it won't be right, as their composition is done with light and shade.

Question: Master, [in our paintings and drawings] we convey ideas or portray something realistically. Is it true that when we paint or draw, your Law Body goes on the piece? (People laugh)

Teacher: No, my Law Body won't do that. *(People laugh)* He just needs to think and you'll know how to paint. But if you figure, "Now I see. Then I'll have Master paint it," *(people laugh)* you can't do that.

Question: At that time the painter might enter a supernatural state, and then his painting might be beyond the ordinary.

Teacher: No, it won't necessarily be beyond the ordinary. No matter what the circumstance, [the painter] should be rational and act normally. Just like with your Dafa cultivation, everything is normal. If it's something a Dafa disciple should paint, then you should just do it well. There's no such thing as getting into some state, and you shouldn't have thoughts like that.

Question: Master, I'd like to paint different human figures. You've mentioned that the Gods of blacks wrap themselves in red kasayas, but we don't know what their hair looks like.

Teacher: Usually, if you want to paint Gods with the image of Westerners, you can reference and follow the works of fine art from the Renaissance period. The images of Gods in the works of fine art from the Western Renaissance period are accurate. Generally speaking, most of the adult male Gods have mustaches or beards, but of course there are also some who don't. Buddhas usually don't have them, but a small number of them do. Gods with the image of blacks have the same hair as blacks--short, curly hair--because Gods created human beings in their own image.

Question: (Translated) I did a painting for my school, and it's basically a self-portrait. When I painted it I put a lot of care into it, and tried my best not to let any notions play a role. I've found that people's reactions have been pretty good, and its composition miraculously became better as well. So my question is, is it that as long as we put a lot of care into painting something, it will turn out well? I'd like to ask if Master can give some guidance on this.

Teacher: Strictly speaking, when you paint you have to put a lot of care into it. When you put a lot of care into it everyone will say that you painted well, but, compared to the era that emphasized the fundamentals, there is still a gap. So I think that if Dafa disciples hone and improve their basic skills, they will paint better and will leave an upright path for people in the future. Of course, it's correct to put a lot of care into painting.

Question: Can I paint a portrait of Teacher?

Teacher: Well, so many people have made sculptures and painted portraits for me, but in the end none of them look like me. It's fine for you to paint me, that's not a problem. You can just use a photograph to paint from.

Question: Master, I know that a lot of students really want to paint Master, and especially images in other dimensions. Some of the paintings do look like Master, and I feel like they truly have the power of your Law Body. But what should we do with these painted portraits, since they are after all Master's pictures, and what about those drafts?

Teacher: If those drafts need to be burned, then burn them. It's no problem. During the Fa-rectification period, Dafa disciples should make a priority of validating the Fa.

Question: Then what about the ones that are painted well? We wonder if we could offer incense before them?

Teacher: Just keep them as paintings.

Question: Master, after listening to your talk today, my mind and ideas have become a lot broader. But I was wondering if we could have these things recorded in writing, because a lot of people aren't here, and they are also quite accomplished in art.

Teacher: I'll take a look and see after the Fa-truths that I taught this time are organized.

Question: I felt that my mind was drawing a blank when it came to how to go down the path of creating [arts], but now I'm clear and I'm very happy.

Teacher: That's exactly the Fa I wanted to teach to you today.

Question: I have one more question. Take me, for example. Everything I've studied is Western painting, but I really like Chinese brush painting. When I'm painting, is it OK to focus on what's depicted, and not be limited by the traditional methodologies?

Teacher: If you're saying that you want to take the best of both worlds in terms of techniques, some people seem to have tried that before. You can give it a try, but it needs to appear harmonious, be balanced and feel natural to those who look at it. But, after trying it you might feel that you still can't find a way to really put the artistic culture from Eastern and Western paintings together.

Question: Greetings, Master. In our paintings, can we mix winged angels, for example, from East and West together?

Teacher: In the Fa-rectification, among the Gods that are playing a completely positive role, there are Gods in the image of both Eastern and Western people, as well as Gods of various images. It depends entirely on the meaning you want to express in your painting, that is, what the composition needs. For example, among Gods in the image of Westerners, some have wings and some don't. It depends on how the composition of your painting depicts things. Let me tell you, those Gods in low-level dimensions knew that I would come to disseminate the Fa, so the old forces arranged for them to influence how I would disseminate it and the conditions of society. Of course, I wouldn't do it according to what they wanted. The image I would assume to do Fa-rectification while disseminating the Fa was a major issue for all the Gods. Back then Buddhas and Daos disputed at low levels over the image I would choose, and Daoism was created as a result. The Daos wanted me to choose the image of a Dao, and to have me teach the Dao Fa with Dao [truths]. But they knew themselves that the Dao is passed down in a single-disciple approach. Then in a single-disciple approach, how could you save all beings and disseminate Dafa? That wouldn't work, so they thought of a way and started a religion on the earth, which led to the emergence of the Daoist religion. Later on in the Daoist religion, many Daos split into Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as well, and Daos' paradises really came to exist in the heavens. It's because they wanted me to choose the image of a Dao. On the Buddhas' side, they too were creating conditions for me to choose a

Buddha's image. They said that I should use the image of a Buddha, being merciful, since I wanted to save sentient beings. But I incarnated in China Proper. If I had incarnated in the West then the Gods with a Caucasian image would have created the conditions for it as well. So that's how the disputes between Daos and Buddhas came about in history. Once I finalized everything that I wanted, these disputes over images ended. I didn't follow the old forces' arrangements.

The Gods in the heavens, no matter what kind of Gods they are, whenever something happens in the heavens they discuss it together. Jesus' coming to earth to save people was also discussed and coordinated by all the Gods cooperatively, because major events that take place on the earth affect the heavens. When a Buddha wants to spread Fa, it can't be done if other Gods don't acknowledge it. Those things about the dispute between Buddhas and Daos that I just talked about are of the past, because after the matter of spreading the Fa was decided on, there was nothing to fight over anymore, so all was well.

Question: Watercolor is a little bit similar to Chinese painting, and a little bit similar to oil painting. Some works make use of watercolors as well as Chinese painting techniques...

Teacher: The fundamentals of watercolor are Western, so watercolor is a Western method of painting. As for the paint itself, it doesn't restrict you from doing a watercolor or a Chinese painting. It's not a problem if you use watercolors to paint Chinese paintings, and it's not a problem either if you take the approach of using watercolors to paint oil paintings. Watercolors themselves don't involve the issue of Eastern or Western ways of painting; in other words, what kind of paint you use or what kind of painting you do is a different matter from the way you paint. The differences between Eastern and Western paintings aren't just limited to the intensity of the colors being used, either. The inner meanings of each are complemented and supported by the two types of culture.

Many people have tried combining Eastern and Western painting styles, but they've actually all failed. Chinese painting and Western painting don't just differ in the techniques of their painting approaches and usage of paint on the surface; there are immense ethnic cultures behind the paintings. All the different skills and techniques in each culture are the culmination of that people's culture as a whole. In fact, throwing Eastern and Western art together isn't doable, unless Eastern and Western cultures are completely mixed together and become something that is rootless and warped.

Question: We want to paint about Heaven and Earth being established, in other words, the old forces in the cosmos are destroyed, and good things... that is, when the cosmic body becomes good and bad things are cast down. In that kind of scene, is it best to include images of Gods? Or should we just make some changes in color? [I think it's probably] best to include some of what Master talked about earlier.

Teacher: You can't paint abstractly. The subjects that are being depicted have to be there. In other words, you need to get back on the upright path.

Question: Regarding those supernatural animals in the heavens, like the lions that Master just mentioned, and some others like dragons and phoenixes--take dragons, for example. There are dragon deities, and the red evil dragon that Master mentioned in past scriptures, as in "the Red Dragon is slain." Are there differences in those dragons?

Teacher: The outward appearances of dragons are the same. And there are good and bad dragons. There are evil dragons, good dragons, and dragon deities. The dragons commonly seen in the heavenly paradises and Buddhas' paradises are golden dragons, which glow in golden light. There's one point I want to clarify: the dragons described in Eastern culture and the dragons in Western culture are not the same creature, not the same species. The dragons in Eastern culture have different colors, some are in colors like those of the black-and-white fish, and there are also red ones, yellow ones, white ones, and black ones. They're different, because there are distinctions in

levels among dragons as well. There are distinctions among the heavenly dragons, earthly dragons, and dragons that reside in water. As for the dragons that are referred to in Western culture, they are a type of vicious beast in hell. A lot of times, when Chinese people mention dragons, many Westerners think of dragons as being bad--that's how they feel. It's actually a difference in Eastern and Western cultures. The dragons that Westerners talk about have a head that somewhat resembles that of a dragon, and have a skinny neck, a massive body like dinosaurs, and featherless wings. That kind of creature is a low-level creature in the system of Gods with a Western image. The dragons from hell in the system of Western-looking Gods spit an infernal flame. Actually, I think people in the past mismatched things in the translation, and called that beast a dragon. It's different from the dragon of the East. (*Asking Western students*) Tell me, isn't Westerners' concept of a dragon like what I just talked about? (*Answer: "Yes."*)

Actually they are not the same creatures. In the heavenly kingdoms of the West, usually they don't have the type of dragon referred to in the East, as it's not a creature of that system. And in the system of Gods that are in the image of Caucasian people, which corresponds to the society of Caucasian people on the earth, all the way to even lower dimensions, there's no such thing as dragons in that system, nor is there any manifestation of that kind of animal. But they have many creatures that aren't in the system of Gods that have the image of Eastern people, either. For example, in the West there used to be a type of beast on the earth whose lower body was of a horse and whose upper body was human. There's no such thing in the system of the Eastern world. So it's not just a matter of differences in cultures. It's that certain things don't exist in that other world's system.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask a question. I'm an oil painter, and it's very time-consuming to complete a good painting. [I ask] because I know there are a lot of projects to do.

Teacher: Diligent Dafa disciples are all very busy. During the Fa-rectification period, they need to clarify the facts and save sentient beings. And in terms of what I've said to you today, those of us here who have these special skills also need to create works of art. Creating these works does take a lot of time, and I'm very much aware of that. But, don't worry, try your best to make good use of the time you have to paint or draw. Just don't drag it out for too long. Paint as much as you can, and we'll put together an exhibition when the works are pretty much ready.

Question: Master, what I'd like to ask about is, well, how to balance the two. We only have so much time, and when we do one thing we won't be able to do something else.

Teacher: Right, then plan things reasonably. What I'm asking you to do is not only for the sake of others and for leaving behind these things for the people of the future--it's also helpful to your own cultivation. Because you're all living in this society's environment, you all need to step out from this period of time. In other words, this is how people's notions are now, people are all in the big dye vat, and those of you who have these special skills are bound to have been influenced in this regard more than others. Then during your process of creating artworks and returning to the upright path, aren't you cleansing yourselves? And aren't you re-elevating yourselves artistically? Yes, you are fundamentally changing yourselves, and changing yourselves in terms of your concepts. Aren't you cultivating yourself?

Question: Yesterday I saw Master turning the Falun at the conference, and I was greatly moved. If I paint that scene based on my ideas, and Master was wearing a suit then, would it be too direct or too detailed?

Teacher: It's fine to paint that, and it's fine to paint me in a suit.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask two questions. One is, our Falun Dafa includes many Gods, so with that many Gods, and of course after students complete cultivation they'll become different Buddhas, Daos, and Gods, then right now we want to depict a large number of fellow practitioners who have cultivated well--some of them might have already cultivated extremely well--we can

depict them; then as for the Gods that upright religions believe in and that Master has mentioned, and in Buddhism there are a lot of upright Gods as well, can we depict them?

Teacher: In many cases, you can. Let's put it this way, the Gods mentioned in Buddhism, and all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas mentioned in Buddhism that people know about, they're fine to depict. Lao Zi, Daos, Yahweh, Jesus, Saint Mary... there's no problem with doing any of them. But it's meaningless for Dafa disciples who are in the process of validating the Fa to depict Gods that have nothing to do with Dafa. As for what you should depict and how you should depict it, there's no need for me to say too much about that.

Question: I have another question, and it's regarding some classical works that are left behind from the Renaissance Period, such as the Last Supper, etc. I think that these types of works are huge projects, and I would like us to also leave behind some really good works, but not taking the same forms as theirs, because ours will depict Falun Dafa. But the essence will be the same. First and foremost, the concept has to be good, and then the techniques need to be sound, and we need to have the time, as well as many other prerequisites. So I feel that to do that kind of project well, we need to spend a lot of effort overall.

Teacher: Your idea is grand. Don't be anxious, and take your time. You can create things based on the abilities you currently have. You're getting this started, and if you have the ability, go ahead and do it; if you can't do it, people after you will definitely do it. Mankind will definitely create something glorious for Dafa, because Dafa has brought so many blessings to mankind! *(Applause)*

Question: Master, I think the images of Buddhas in Chinese paintings are highly adorned, and they are painted so, so beautifully, but what's painted nowadays is very simple, and I don't think it looks good.

Teacher: People's perspectives are different. That's how things manifest here at this place of humans. In different time periods, Buddhas display to people the dress of the different time periods. When I first started teaching the Fa and a lot of Bodhisattvas came to see me, you would never guess what they were wearing. You know, during the Cultural Revolution Chinese girls liked wearing those grass-green military uniforms the best. *(Everyone laughs)* They came wearing grass-green military uniforms. What I mean is, Buddhas display things based on the notions of the world's people in different time periods. Actually the original image of a Buddha is one with a yellow kasaya and curly blue hair. Of course, how sculptures were created and pictures were painted in ancient times differ to a certain extent from the way they're done now. Back then, the Buddha images that were painted were dazzlingly decorated and a feast for the eyes. That, too, was displayed based on the concepts of the people at that time. Of course, when someone can see a Buddha's real image, he'll also see the Buddha's paradise and the Buddha body's splendor--it's an incredibly magnificent display. Gods intentionally vary their manifestations to people.

Question: Our paintings now are very simple.

Teacher: The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that were painted in the Tang Dynasty had a lot of adornments. When you paint, if you want to follow the portraits done in the Tang Dynasty, that's fine, too.

Question: I spent half a year at the Louvre. While the docent was introducing the painting "Mona Lisa," I heard him talking about the Gods of the past. He said that Mona Lisa represented an image of the Gods of the past, and that Gods didn't wear any adornments. But I just heard Master talk about this, and I'm confused.

Teacher: What is depicted in that painting is a human being, not a God, and it's not as great as people say. Besides, the shadows in it aren't good.

Question: The docent said that it reflected the aristocrats of the past, and that the aristocrats of the past didn't wear any adornments.

Teacher: All that was said by human beings, and the docent's words are unreliable. A lot of Gods in the heavens wear earrings. The Goddesses of the heavens wear adornments such as earrings, and those are Fa-implements, as well. As for Gods in the image of Westerners, it seems that the Goddesses wear very few adornments. Apparently the Bodhisattvas wear relatively more adornments. Usually Gods wear necklaces, and Bodhisattvas also have long strings of large rosary beads, really long ones.

Question: Master, what does it mean when heavenly maidens scatter flowers? To this day I still don't know.

Teacher: They only scatter flowers when there's someone on earth who saves people teaching the Dao or doing great and significant things. A lot of students have seen that whenever Master teaches the Fa they scatter flowers. (*Applause*) They are encouraging sentient beings, so they scatter flowers for you.

Question: (Translated) I don't often see Gods in other dimensions, and I can't see them very clearly, either. How do I know if what I'm drawing or painting is accurate? This is a big problem. What do I need to draw when I'm depicting Gods?

Teacher: Usually, if you know their approximate type of clothing and their rough image, then that's a starting point. A lot of Dafa disciples around you have seen various scenes, so you can listen to their descriptions. When you draw or paint, you'll naturally know the composition of your drawing and what it portrays.

Question: I'd like to ask a question regarding children's paintings. Kids are pure and innocent, yet they don't know any techniques. When they paint, is that method of expression very different from what we want, which is superb in terms of technique?

Teacher: Yes, a painter is a painter, a child is a child, and a child doesn't equal a painter. When a child likes to paint, it's the beginning of progressing toward becoming a painter, but it doesn't mean that he is a painter. If someone can't paint well he'll never be considered someone who can paint. There's always going to be a difference between being able to paint and not being able to paint. So kids need to study and do well in what they study. Even the kinds of pictures that adults paint for children these days only appeared after the Modernists came along. Picture books were drawn for kids in the past, too, and those picture books in the past were done with traditional techniques.

Question: Then if young children want to depict things of Dafa, if they depict them directly, would that be a problem? Or is it that only people with institutional training and adequate techniques can depict these things?

Teacher: Children can practice drawing, and practice drawings can't be considered successful works, but what they do as homework in art class at school can be shown and judged at school. Students at the Minghui Schools should of course study the Fa, and art classes should definitely involve drawing things about Dafa and practitioners, but that's just studying and doing homework. But I hope that all of the schools' art classes foster the students' basic skills in a formal and standard manner. In fact, isn't drawing Gods without skill smearing the image of Gods? Even though the intention is good, from another perspective, Gods can't be just drawn or painted any which way, right? If you don't know how to draw or paint, how can you depict Gods' solemn, wonderful, and righteous qualities? Of course drawing or painting practitioners is an exception.

At Minghui Schools, if students want to practice drawing, that's no problem, and the schools can display, compare and critique for themselves the ones that are done well. But I think that works at a truly high level require being skillful, and especially for exhibitions we need to demonstrate an upright, traditional, and professional standard.

Question: When painting scenes that show Dafa disciples and Master doing Fa-rectification, Buddhas, Daos, and Gods in other dimensions are painted. Since none of the Gods of the old

cosmos participate in the Fa-rectification, can it be understood that this is a manifestation of Dafa disciples' bodies in different dimensions participating in Fa-rectification in different dimensions?

Teacher: It's not that none of the Gods participate. Most of the Gods in the cosmos don't participate, but besides the old forces, there is a portion that can completely follow Master's requirements and play a positive role, and there are celestial soldiers and celestial generals who are also safeguarding the Fa. It's not that no Gods are participating--some righteous Gods are participating. You can go ahead and paint them. Dafa disciples can call upon divine power and *gong* when they have righteous thoughts, but it's hard for them to call upon their divine side that has completed cultivation.

Question: When Dafa disciples participate in the Fa-rectification in other dimensions, are they also in the images of Buddhas, Daos, or Gods? Are they in the same images as other Buddhas, Daos, and Gods?

Teacher: Yes, their images are like that. Dafa disciples only validate the Fa among everyday people. On the other side they basically don't move. But when they send forth righteous thoughts they can call upon their abilities on that other side. Validating the Fa is for the most part being done by their main body here, and when their righteous thoughts are strong they can call upon their energy, Fa implements, and divine power--that's usually how it is.

Question: Then can they only sit there?

Teacher: It's because they are not allowed to move on their own when the main body is not present. And that's because when their main body has completed cultivation they move along with it. If they move without the main body, isn't that equivalent to that part being independent? And wouldn't that become another being, then? And it might take your place or turn around and control you. Could that be allowed? Then everything that was cultivated would no longer be you, and that can't be allowed. So it's required that after the main body completes everything they are combined into one. Let me put it this way, if your arm starts moving by itself and can't be controlled, then is it still yours? *(Everyone laughs)*

Question: If they don't move on that other side, how do they do things?

Teacher: The ones who are truly doing things are you, who are validating the Fa in the human world. You are the ones sending righteous thoughts here, and you are clarifying the facts and saving the world's people. When your righteous thoughts are strong, you can call upon your energy. At different levels there are energy, Fa-implements, and *gong* of different levels, and the stronger your righteous thoughts, the stronger your ability to call upon them. Some students' primordial spirit can depart the shell, leave the body, and they are also playing a role in the Fa-rectification. Those whose primordial spirit can leave the shell are the ones who are able to control the divine part of their body that has completed cultivation.

Question: There are many Buddhas, Daos, and Gods in Buddhist paintings. Can we use them as a reference?

Teacher: Yes, you can.

Question: Since cursive-style calligraphy is warped, does it mean that we have to use the regular style or the official script style when we put words, poems, or inscriptions in our paintings?

Teacher: Cursive-style calligraphy is written in a state in which a person is indulging his negative side and his notions are dominating. I think it's good to write neatly and clearly. Since characters are passed down to humans from Gods, doing that is being respectful to Gods. I can only tell you the Fa-truths. You might say, "I just like the cursive style, and what I've practiced is the cursive style." At present, I'm not concerned with what ordinary people are doing, but Dafa disciples must be upright.

Question: Master, could you please talk about what you think of the Dunhuang murals?

Teacher: There used to be a large monastery there in ancient times, but the building was ruined by war and years of neglect. The Dunhuang murals were done over a period of time around the Tang Dynasty. Some of them depict scenes in the heavens. Since they were painted when Buddhism was flourishing, and a lot of people believed in Buddhas and believed in religions, a lot of people would see scenes of Buddhas or of Gods and people would depict them. But, being affected by the immature painting skills of the East, their works weren't as mature or accurate as Western art in terms of visual perspective and bodily structures. Nevertheless, the fact that those people had such skills one to two thousand years ago allowed Buddhism and the arts in China to display the brilliance of that ancient culture.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask you about the other ancient civilizations, for instance, Egypt and the Mayan culture in South America. [The Gods they believed in] seem to be very different from the Buddhas, Daos, and Gods that we know. Did they really exist before?

Teacher: Those civilizations did exist. Those people believed in different Gods, and many of them were upright Gods.

Question: Master, regarding the supernatural animals of the East and the Gods of the East, what Fa-implements do they generally have?

Teacher: Wow, it's like you're asking how many particles there are in the cosmos. There are so, so many of them. Every God has Fa-implements, and more than just one. The Fa-implements of those who ascend through cultivation are formed during the person's cultivation process. For example, the bowls, rosaries, and wooden bells that Buddhist monks often use, the horsetail whisks and swords of the Daoists, etc.--all these things can become Fa-implements as the person cultivates. When a monk moves through his rosary beads one-by-one while he chants Buddha's name every day, the energy in his hands increases as his level rises, and as he continues to move through them, the energy in them becomes quite full and even the nature of the beads changes. When he succeeds in cultivation later on, each bead becomes a Fa-implement, and the whole strand of beads together forms another Fa-implement. With those who reach a high level, each bead is like a world and it has everything in it. All kinds of things can become Fa-implements. While Dafa disciples validate the Fa, if you write articles to validate Dafa, then even that pen you use every day has earned merit and virtue, and perhaps even your pen will become a Fa-implement in the future. Once something used by a cultivator has earned merit and virtue, it can become a Fa-implement, and that includes the brushes, pens, and pencils you use to paint or draw when you validate the Fa.

Question: Master, I have a question on sculptures. The Greek and Roman sculptures appear to be very precise. But when I look back at the Buddha statues from the Tang Dynasty in China, I find that [although they aren't as precise] they are very moving. So I don't think proportions affect people's admiration of Gods.

Teacher: That's true. The statues of Buddhas and Gods have Law Bodies of the Buddhas and Gods in them, so of course they're different from ordinary statues, and that's why they can move people. That's exactly what I was talking about just now. The Chinese people pay particular attention to conveying feelings and ideas, whereas Westerners focus on accurately expressing what's on the surface. These are two different approaches, and both can excite people. Those Eastern paintings and drawings can move people because they are depicting Gods--they wouldn't if they were of everyday people. The Gods in Western paintings can arouse a sense of admiration as well. But if the Western paintings portray ordinary people, then people won't be excited. If the skills and techniques of Chinese paintings, drawings, and sculptures were as mature and accurate as those of the West, wouldn't they be more moving and more vivid? You can't consider an immature and imperfect work of art all right because of the effect a God is having. A perfect work of art with the presence of a God is what's most sacred.

Question: So we should learn from their techniques?

Teacher: What I'm talking about isn't just about technique. What I'm saying is that you should paint or draw in the traditional and upright way, and try your best to perfect your artistry. In this way, you're improving yourself and also being respectful to Gods.

Question: (Translated) What I'd like to ask is, I use computers to do design, and often take close-up shots. For instance, I might take close-up shots of Dafa disciples or everyday people. I was wondering if I could use close-up shots of a person's face, etc., in my design. I'm not sure if that's appropriate, or what the standard is.

Teacher: Yes, you can. And in addition to close-up shots, you can use the whole person as a model. But you must have a correct aesthetic standard, instead of going with what you like based on human notions.

Question: Teacher, the skills of the students in China are better than ours in this regard. In other words, they have been better trained. Can they contribute some things? What I mean is, our students in China should have a great number of paintings that are superior to ours.

Teacher: At present, let's not count on the students in Mainland China. Right now we're only having Dafa disciples in the countries outside of Mainland China who are professionals in this arena work on this. Of course, it wouldn't be a problem to find even a thousand Dafa disciples in Mainland China who are excellent painters. But a vicious persecution is taking place there right now.

Question: What I'd like to ask is, how are movies, television programs, and drawings and paintings related to the traditional drawings and paintings?

Teacher: Nothing is free from the impact of the trend of its time--that's why the characters' appearances in many cartoons are actually quite ugly, in my view. Some that are meant to express goodness are not good, and their images are actually quite wicked. What I'm telling you today is to return to the path of human beings through righteous thoughts, Goodness, and the traditional and upright approaches. While blazing the path for the world's people of the future, Dafa disciples need to first find their upright thoughts with respect to the arts again.

Question: Master, I'd like to ask you how painting is related to music composition.

Teacher: In both cases, you need to create the work with upright thoughts. Earlier, I talked to those who are involved in composing music. I just finished talking with them, so I won't talk about it here. I talked to them for several hours as well.

Question: Teacher, you talked about compassion, but I don't want to depict a very large scene.

Teacher: Then depicting a small topic is also good. Both are fine. If you want to depict a very small matter, and you don't want to portray a large scene, and you want a small-sized picture, that'll work, too.

Question: Master, what do the Eight Groups of Heavenly Law-Guardians look like?

Teacher: The Eight Groups of Heavenly Law-Guardians were mentioned by Shakyamuni. He was actually referring to eight types of sentient beings--eight groups of beings, lives. What I've arranged is for celestial soldiers and celestial generals to be your law guardians, and there are also dragons--these two groups. Of course, a very small number of Dafa disciples also have exceptional situations with their law guardians. The law guardians of those other groups can't be described accurately, because the sentient beings in those several other groups are all going through the Fa-rectification. Whether they will be kept and whether they can come through remain to be seen after the Fa-rectification.

Teacher: You've raised your hand quite a few times already.

Question: I just want to say, I feel that Dafa provides a lot of themes for our works. After these several years, Dafa has shaken heaven and earth.

Teacher: Yes, that's true.

Question: So I've been very excited, and feel that there are so many themes in Dafa that are really moving and worth exalting. As Dafa disciples and artists, we have this responsibility, and we need to fulfill what we should do. But of course, when we actually paint or draw, we face quite a few challenges. Today, after Master explained things in person, we feel that we now have direction for a lot of things. I'd like to raise a specific point, which is, I hope that the organizers of our fine art exhibition will do some overall coordination in terms of the major themes. This is because in our minds there are a lot of themes we need to paint or draw on, and they're quite important.

Teacher: The coordination you mentioned is important. When some of you have opened up your thinking, go ahead and sketch out the ideas, then those of you who have the ability to paint or draw can just go ahead and work on them instead of having to conceive your own work. Doing it that way would also be good.

Question: Some Dafa disciples have very good designs and really good ideas, but don't have good skills. So just like how we do things at the radio stations and television stations that have been set up by Dafa disciples, we can share our information, materials, designs, and techniques. We especially need to ensure the quality of our major themes, because at the very first exhibition by Dafa disciples, we should demonstrate a level that truly represents us Dafa disciples. So I think that large and small works are both good. But it's a bit hard to exhibit something that's too large. For instance, say I have great ideas and I think that my techniques can achieve a certain level, but I feel that I can't see a lot of things or don't know how to draw or paint them, then we can complement each other.

Teacher: Yes, that's how you should do it. You can have two people be responsible for coming up with the concepts and designs, and then whoever is able to paint or draw them can go ahead and work on them. That way, you'll reduce the time it takes to conceive your artwork. You just need to have a basic, rough and general outline, and because all of you have the skills and ability, you'll be able to go ahead with it. I think that idea is very constructive.

I think this is all I'll say. What's left are more specific things, and you can handle those things well and figure out how to create a Dafa disciples' path, because everything you do today is of utmost importance. If you do well, mankind will emulate it; if you don't do well, mankind will emulate that as well. So Dafa disciples have to do well. Those artworks of yours that aren't good or aren't upright can't be presented to the public, because it will impact mankind. So you should not only do it in a traditional and upright way, depict what's good, depict compassion, exalt Dafa, and give glory to Gods, but also, at the same time you need to demonstrate a high level of excellence in terms of skill, and demonstrate a traditional and upright standard. *(Applause)*

Editor's note: *The translation is subject to further improvement so as to be closer to the original text. Last updated: October 19, 2003.*