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# A Brief Analysis of the Intrinsic Relationship between "Shensi" and "Tixing"

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**Abstract**

*In his "Xuzhi", Xie Liu collectively referred to "Shensi" and "Tixing" as "Shensi". However, as a pivotal point in creative theory, "Shensi" is often analyzed in isolation without being viewed together with "Tixing" as a whole. By examining the original texts of "Shensi", "Tixing", and "Fenggu" from both structural and content perspectives, this paper explores the intrinsic relationship between the two essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing", demonstrating the feasibility of considering them as a whole.*

**Keywords**

*Shensi; Tixing; correlation; Zhi*

## 1.Introduction

In Xie Liu's "Wenxin Diaolong: Xuzhi (Preface Fifty)", when he self-analyzes the structure of the entire book, he summarizes the section on creative theory as "dealing with emotions, analyzing techniques, capturing the essence, depicting styles, encompassing coherence, and perceiving sounds and characters." Among these, "capturing the essence" specifically refers to the essays "Shensi" and "Tixing". "Shensi" serves as the inaugural piece of the creative theory section, playing a role akin to the "hub of literature" for the entire work, akin to how the "hub of literature" five pieces function for the entire book. It can be regarded as the "hub of creative theory". Simultaneously, this section proposes three major innovative ideas concerning the relationship between spirit and matter, emptiness and tranquility, and meaningful expression, possessing an independent and nearly comprehensive theoretical system, thus often singled out by scholars for separate analysis.

However, the structure of "Wenxin Diaolong" is coherent, ranging seamlessly from the hub of literature to literary form theory, then onto creative theory, and finally to critical commentary, each part flowing into the next with logical consistency. The order of each section is not merely additive; rather, "Shensi" and "Tixing" can be collectively referred to as "Shensi" in the "Preface", indicating an inherent and profound connection between these two essays.

## 2. Structural Correlation

Both "Shensi" and "Tixing" can be roughly divided into three sections structurally. Although not entirely identical, in the first section of "Shensi," there is a rich layering where key concepts and methodologies such as "spiritual roaming," "emptiness and tranquility," and "thought bestowing meaning, language bestowing thought" are sequentially introduced, elucidating the meaning of "Shensi" while outlining the methodology

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simultaneously. Conversely, the opening section of "Tixing" initially distinguishes between innate talent and acquired cultivation, delineating the differences in "talent," "vitality," "learning," and "practice" in four aspects of bodily disposition, followed by categorizing eight styles of literary works, primarily focusing on expounding the meaning of "Tixing." Nevertheless, there is an implicit correspondence among the three sections of the two essays.

Firstly, in the opening section of "Shensi," there is a quest for smooth "cultivation of literary thoughts," where four aspects of cultivation requirements are proposed: "accumulating knowledge to store treasures, pondering principles to enrich talents, studying extensively to illuminate thoroughly, and refining expression to convey meaning." This implies the necessity of accumulating learning, enriching talent, exploring various texts, and examining literary expressions. While the opening section of "Tixing" seems merely explanatory, the four aspects of "talent, vitality, learning, and practice" under "Tixing" actually represent four qualities influencing the characteristics of the text. Although "talent and vitality" cannot be subjectively determined, later passages in "Tixing" supplement that they can be enhanced through acquired learning and practice. Additionally, the notions of "learning has depths" and "practice has elegance" directly correspond to the requirements of "deep knowledge" and "elegant habits," implying that these four aspects also constitute four dimensions of cultivation requirements, resonating with the four aspects in "Shensi."

Furthermore, the second section of both essays uses examples from ancient times to elucidate theories, emphasizing the inherent differences in natural talent among individuals. Although "Shensi" focuses on contrasting the speed of writing and the sluggishness of literary thoughts among different writers, while "Tixing" emphasizes the impact of personal temperament on writing style, the "innate talent" in "Shensi" manifests in the flow of literary thoughts, while the "talent and strength" in "Tixing" permeate through temperament and disposition. These two aspects of talent serve to lead into the subsequent discussions, playing a pivotal role in the structure. Despite being different essays, they share a similar vein. Moreover, contrasting with the following "Fenggu" section, although also divided into three parts, the second section of "Fenggu" does not directly provide examples of writers' works but indirectly quotes the views of Cao Pi, creating a structural disjunction with the "Shensi" and "Tixing" sections, thus accentuating the close connection between these two essays.

Lastly, the conclusions of these two essays both culminate in practical methodologies, employing the metaphor of crafting objects to illustrate their points. In "Shensi," the metaphor of "viewing linen on hemp, though initially humble, through the dedication of the shuttle and spindle, it becomes bright and precious" illustrates the importance of "craftsmanship" and "originality," further highlighting the significance of "Shensi" in the process of writing. Conversely, "Tixing" employs the metaphor of "hewing timber and dyeing silk, where the effort lies in the initial stages, once the object is fashioned and the colors set, it becomes difficult to alter," emphasizing the importance of laying a solid foundation for elegance in learning.

## 3.Content correlation

In addition to the structural echo and relevance, these two articles also complement and explain each other in the starting perspective, content theme and methodology guidance, so that some of the principles of the whole creative theory are more distinct and more systematic.

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### *3.1 From the Perspective of the Writing Subject*

Whether in "Shensi" or "Tixing," the starting point for expounding theory is the author of the text, namely, the writing subject.

In "Shensi," the concept of "spiritual roaming" is proposed, which points to the intersection of the subjective world of "spirit" and the objective world of "matter." It is the process where the writing subject, the "person" or the "author," reflects the external world with their spirit, aiming to reach the realm of "connecting thoughts over thousands of years" and "seeing through a thousand miles." This is a process that starts from the core of the creative subject, diverging thinking outward and expanding imagination.

On the other hand, "Tixing" elucidates that "different talents result in varied literary styles," attributing the style of the text to the inherent talents and temperament of individuals. It emphasizes "cultivating talents based on temperament," advocating for the development of skills according to one's own temperament. This is a process of introspective exploration and self-identification.

The conception of "Shensi" and the nature of talent and temperament are both endeavors of the writing subject. The former expands outward while the latter seeks inward, forming a complementary relationship, but both originate from the perspective of the subject. At the same time, the four aspects mentioned in the previous sections of the two essays are also requirements for the writing subject rather than judgments on the objective articles.

In contrast, the following section, "Fenggu," where "feng" refers to the stylistic temperament and "gu" refers to the backbone of literary expression, presents evaluation criteria for the objective articles created by the writing subject. It is evident that the starting perspective of "Fenggu" is entirely opposite to that of the "Shensi" and "Tixing" sections. There exists a "discontinuity" in perspective between the "Shensi" and "Tixing" sections and "Fenggu."

### *3.2Emphasizing the concept of "Zhi"*

In "Shensi," there is the notion of "spirit residing in the heart, Zhipower governing its key," while "Tixing" further elaborates on "will determines expression" and "will is the essence," emphasizing the concept of "Zhi" in both essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing."

The concept of "Zhi" is not introduced for the first time in "Wenxin Diaolong." In the "Zhengsheng" section, there is the statement "full of aspirations in writing, sincere feelings in eloquence," where "Zhi" is juxtaposed with "feelings," and opposed to the outward-directed concepts of "writing" and "eloquence," indicating that "Zhi" and emotions are both internal psychological factors, and "feelings" are closely related to "Zhi." In the "Quanfu" section, there is also the phrase "displaying various styles in writing to express one's Zhi," which portrays "Zhi" through the exposition of articles, from the inside out, affirming the intrinsic nature of "Zhi."

Thus, the "Zhi" in "Shensi" can be understood as "emotional Will" or "willpower." Some scholars sum-

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marize its meaning as including emotional, idealistic, valuable, and ethical aspects, which coincides with the concept of "spiritual roaming." Since "Zhi" is the key to governing "spirit," and "Shensi" involves extensive spiritual activities, the connotation of "Zhi" must also be rich, and the "willpower" must be firm to support the almost infinite external roaming of "spirit."

Looking at "Tixing," "Zhi" appears in two places. One is the "Zhi determines expression, and expression determines Zhi" mentioned above, similar to the "Zhi" in "Shensi," which superficially refers to willpower but can be understood in the context and subsequent examples as personal interests and aspirations. The second occurrence is "expression is like the skin, Zhi is the essence," implying that "Zhi" is the backbone and essence of literary expression.

In combination, although the interpretations of "Zhi" are not entirely identical, they both play a crucial role in the spiritual roaming of "Shensi" and the expression of "Tixing." These two "Zhis" should not be viewed separately but as different aspects of the same psychological concept. "Zhi" guides the interaction between spirit and external objects in "Shensi," ultimately returning to the expression presented through "Tixing." This is a unified, coherent process, rather than "Zhi" governing the key in "Shensi" and becoming the essence in "Tixing."

### *3.3 Emphasizing the Vertical Learning Process*

Methodologically, both essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing" emphasize the vertical learning process, which entails long-term cultivation.

One of the most important methodologies in "Shensi" is "accumulating knowledge," which emphasizes the accumulation of learning. "Accumulating knowledge to store treasures" implies that accumulated learning is as precious as treasure. "Structuring thoughts to govern victories" suggests the need for perseverance akin to Dong Zhongshu, who spent "three years lecturing under the curtain." This represents a prolonged vertical process.

While "Tixing" briefly mentions the depth of learning, it emphasizes at the end that "it is the method of employing this approach in guiding literary endeavors." "Guiding literary endeavors" points towards the direction of advancing and refining one's writing skills over time. It emphasizes that only through "emulating forms to establish habits" and "cultivating talents based on temperament" can one progress on this lengthy path. This also represents a vertical learning process, requiring accumulated time and experience.

Contrastingly, the conclusion of "Fenggu" is markedly different. Whether it is "melting and casting the model of classics" or "collecting and compiling historical records," these involve extensive horizontal learning processes, aiming to prevent the proliferation of mediocre writing. This horizontal accumulation of learning differs from the vertical accumulation process emphasized in the essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing."

## 4.conclusion

The above provides a brief analysis of the intrinsic connection between the essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing." Of course, when viewed within the entire system of creative theory, isolating and analyzing these

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two essays independently would certainly be biased. Additionally, Mr. Fan Wenlan once proposed, through diagrams, that the "Ti" and "Xing" in "Tixing" should be examined separately, as they are directly related to "Xing" rather than "Ti," which holds significant guiding significance for the study of creative theory in "Wenxin Diaolong." However, I believe that by connecting the essays of "Shensi" and "Tixing" as a whole according to the classification in the "Xuzhi," and then considering "fengshi," "huitong," and "shengzi" as a whole, one might be able to analyze the structural system of creative theory from a new perspective, thus coming closer to the purpose of Xie Liu's arrangement and having certain positive significance.

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