Chapter three is an analysis of Liang's theory of the evolution of literature and his objective is to improve the state of society. Liang Chi-chao (1873 - 1929) was a prominent scholar in the late Ching and early Republican period. In his lifetime, Liang exercised his intelligence in a great many aspects of life. He was not only a politician, a thinker, a historian, but also a literary man. Through his powerful pen and voluminous writings, Liang exerted a great influence on the intellectuals of his time.

In the Ching period, writers tended to draw their inspiration from the past. Living in a period of chaos, and as a Reformist, Liang wanted to use the power of the word as a means to achieve his political end - to spread the idea of reform into the people's minds. So he and his associates initiated the 'Literature Reform Movement'. Writers were urged to be more conscious of the realities of the times and to reflect these conditions in their works. Though the achievements of the Movement were limited, they nevertheless had prepared the way for the 'Literary Revolution' of 1917.

So the study of Liang's literary thought in this crucial transitional period may thus be regarded as an important interest. While critical works and research on his writings are plenty, they concentrate only on his political works and neglect his literary achievements. This exercise intends to redress, in a small way, the remiss of critical emphasis on his political works alone.

Liang's literary thought is scattered in his works, the Yin-Ping-Shih-Ho-Chi (Collected Works and Essays from the Ice-drinker's Studio 欣冰室合集), which consists of Wen-chi (文集), 16 volumes, and Chu-an-chi (集中), 24 volumes. I have made a careful and analytical study of these materials in order to find out his ideas on literature in a more systematical way. The study is arranged as follows:

Chapter one, which is introductory, supplies the relevant facts of his times, his life, and some of his ideas. In the second chapter, I discuss his idea of the role of literature in society. The purpose of his writing, which is propagandistic, is aimed at influencing
readers and his objective is to improve the state of society. Chapter three is an analysis of Liang's theory of the evolution of literature. Literature, he thinks, must change and adapt itself to society as the latter changes and alters itself, and the writer is a kind of sensitive needle who reflects the tensions of his changing society. In the fourth chapter, I discuss his insistence that a writer should be virtuous for it is by virtue only that a writer can hope to influence his readers. Chapter five is the discussion of his ideas on the craft of writing. There are six points he noted in this respect: firstly, he emphasizes that a writer should not write in a florid style, but adapt the style to the subject matter in an appropriate manner; secondly, he is strongly against imitation and emphasizes the originality of the author; thirdly, a writer must have a strong conviction of his own sentiment; fourthly, a writer must be born a genius for the craft of writing cannot only be learned; fifthly, a writer must be acutely observant and must be able to organise his materials into a coherent piece of art, and his choice of words should also be precise and not vague; and sixthly, regarding the writing of poetry, the poet needs not follow strictly the traditional forms but there must be a distinct pattern of rhyme and rhythm in his works. In chapter six, I discuss his ideas of criticism, which should be based on a clear knowledge of the author's social, political, and economic conditions, and how these have influenced the matter and manners of what have been written.

From the above, we can conclude that 'realism' is the basic principle of Liang's literary ideas. In his opinion, a writer should record as well as reflect the conditions of his society. This is the basis that all writers start from, and will be found to permeate all good works of literature in one way or another.

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