

## Research on Chinese Painting under the thought of the unity of nature and man

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### Abstract

Chinese landscape painting is one of the classics of Chinese traditional culture, its ideological basis is the Taoist philosophy of Lao Zhuang. Taoist thought had a profound influence on the creation and theory of Chinese landscape painting. Confucius' ritual optimism has become the core of Confucian criticism. Confucianism has played a normative role in the moral value and ideological content of Chinese figure painting and promoted figure painting to play a positive political and ethical function in society. And Lao Zhuang's Taoist theory became the spiritual source of creation and criticism of landscape painting. It is Lao Zhuang's Taoist theory that contributed to the wild and unprincipled Chinese landscape painting, and also contributed to the colorful theory and criticism of landscape painting.

### Introduction

Chinese landscape painting developed rapidly from Gu Kaizhi and others in the Eastern Jin Dynasty to Wang Wei of Zong Bing in the Liu and Song Dynasties, Wang Wei and Zhang Bo in the Tang Dynasty. Landscape painting in the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties gradually dominated Chinese painting. Chinese landscape painting has become one of the classics of Chinese traditional culture. Chinese landscape painting has become a great view, and its ideological basis is the Taoist philosophy of Lao Zhuang. Confucius' ritual optimism has become the core of Confucian criticism. Confucianism has helped form the critical standards and traditions of Chinese art criticism to become civilized and to judge the

wise and the virtuous. It has played a normative role in the moral value and ideological content of Chinese figure painting, and promoted the figure painting to play a positive political and ethical function in society.

Taoism advocates inaction and the harmony and unity among heaven, earth and human beings. Under the suggestion of this thought, many literati break away from society and step into nature, In the process of getting close to nature, expressing their affection to nature and writing about nature, they also equated the life realm of nature doing nothing, simple and tranquil with the artistic thought, forming the aesthetic thought characterized by "Tao Tao nature" and the aesthetic concept of "unity of nature and man".

It is because of the influence of the Taoist spirit that the natural landscape as an independent artistic theme emerged more than one thousand years earlier in the West. The spirit of the natural world is reflected in the heart of the painter, and the spirit of the painter is also reflected in the natural mountains and rivers in their eyes. This is the spiritual essence of Chinese landscape painting that is different from Western landscape painting. The aesthetic concept of Chinese painting directly points to the spiritual world of "unity of nature and man", and strives for people's inner perception and expression of the natural law, namely "Tao". In terms of techniques, it is not limited to the specific description and detailed characterization of natural objects. This painting concept focusing on image rather than concrete image is quite different from the painting way of western landscape painters striving to express the appearance, shadow and space feeling of nature.

Under the influence of this aesthetic concept, the language of Chinese painting is not only the imitation of natural objects, but also the technique of painting. This point is most prominent in landscape painting. Landscape painting is not only the most close to nature in terms of the object of expression, but also the discussion of related issues in the painting theories of the past dynasties is very exquisite. In his "Bi Method Record" of the Five Dynasties, Xinghao developed the "Six methods" proposed by early theorists for figure painting into the "six requirements" of landscape painting, requiring the creation of landscape painting from the six aspects of "qi, rhyme, thinking, scenery, brush and ink". In the specific use of brush, he also proposed "sines, flesh, bone and qi" and "four potentials", thoroughly applying Taoist thoughts into the creation of landscape painting.

In his eyes, the natural landscape not only has a rich image, but also has a distinct emotion. He said, "The spring mountains are light and

mellow like smiles, the summer mountains are green like drops, the autumn mountains are bright and clean like makeup, and the winter mountains are bleak and like sleep." He regarded the natural mountains and rivers as living creatures with the posture of laughter, vitality and breath of life. In fact, he reflected his heart in the natural mountains and rivers, which is in line with Wang Wei's "love" attitude towards mountains and rivers in the Southern Dynasty. In the creation and appreciation of landscape, the aesthetic orientation of harmony between nature and man is generated, which determines the aesthetic tone of Chinese landscape painting creation.

#### Quotation

Chinese painting is famous for its very different appearance from Western painting. It leaves a lot of things to the imagination of the audience, so people can get a strong subjective impression of things, but it does not completely express the artist's self like the western modernist painting, so that it is not understood by the public. Chinese painting pursues a high degree of harmony between man and nature. How does this aesthetic feature come into being?

In Chinese culture, the unity of nature and man is the basic mode of Chinese philosophical thinking. The concept of "unity of nature and man" is considered by Qian Mu, a contemporary scholar, as "the destination of the whole Chinese traditional cultural thought." Chinese students pursue the highest academic goal of "studying the changes of the past and the present". Shao Yong, a neo-confucianist in Song Dynasty, believed that "learning without studying nature and man is not enough to be called learning. The thought of "the unity of nature and man" has profoundly influenced the artistic thinking of the Chinese nation. The aesthetic significance of "the unity of nature and man" is recognized by the academic circle, but its impact on painting is still lacking of

detailed discussion. Western traditional painting is the art of representation, to modern painting believes that art lies in expression. And Chinese painting is characterized by the integration of subjective performance and objective reproduction, that is, the unity of nature and man. This paper attempts to explore the influence of the thought of the unity of nature and man on the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting through the investigation of the ancient thought of the unity of nature and man, the comparison of traditional Chinese painting and Chinese painting theory, and the comparison with the essential characteristics of western art

### **Overview of Chinese philosophy and Chinese painting**

#### **2.1 The unity of nature and man and the essential characteristics of Chinese painting**

Why is Chinese painting so different from Western art? Because art is the carrier of culture, the different development of culture leads to the distinction of artistic characteristics. The differences in the art of various nations in the world reflect the differences in the psychological consciousness of all nations, and the consciousness characteristics of any nation are rooted in the history. The reason why Chinese and Western art has long been separated from each other is mainly because of their different philosophical thinking modes. In the west, subject and object are divided, while in the East, subject and object are integrated. In western philosophy, beauty is first regarded as the imitation of "idea", and then as the expression of "self". In the art circle, it is the "mirror" reflection of rationalism (Duffin). The latter is the "self-expression" of irrationalism. Chinese painting advocates that the essence of art lies in the unity of objective natural representation and the author's subject spirit, which reflects the Chinese philosophical thinking of the unity of nature and man

#### **2.1.1 Essential characteristics of Western painting**

Starting from Plato, western classical philosophy proposed that "idea" is the origin of the world, and Aristotle proposed that "reason" is the last motivation and first principle of the world. Until Hegel, the concept of "idea" was still used. Plato believed that art imitates the real world, while the real world imitates the idea, so art is a "copy of the original". Aristotle said, "The painter, like any other image-maker, must choose one of three ways to imitate; Things are imitated as they are, as they are said and thought, or as they ought to be." Aristotle believed that art embodied the real world

The characteristic is the tomb imitation. Aristotle's parody dominated Europe for more than two thousand years. During the Renaissance, with the development of science, art became increasingly scientific. At that time, perspective science, anatomy, color science were applied to painting creation, resulting in a lot of very realistic paintings, such as the Mona Lisa, The Last Supper, Spring and so on. Leonardo Da Vinci said, "Painting is indeed a science." Leonardo Da Vinci liked to compare the mirror to the painter. He said, "The mirror is the teacher of painting the image." "The heart of a painter should be like a mirror, often taking in the colors of the things it reflects, and taking in as many images as there are things in it." Alberti, a famous sculptor and painter at that time, also said in his "On Sculpture" that "a sculptor should be realistic, and in the case of a statue, he should try to resemble a human." Later, realism, classicism, naturalism, Impressionism, etc., are the continuation and development of this tradition.

In short, Western traditional art believes that art lies in the representation of the object, while western modern art believes that art lies in the expression of the subject.

#### **2.1.2 Essential characteristics of Chinese painting**

In addition to these two systems, there is a third system of world art, that is, Oriental art, represented by Chinese painting, which is the art of reappearance and expression. Chinese painting is neither "imitation" nor "performance"; It is the unity of form and expression. It requires the unity of natural beauty and spiritual beauty, the unity of appearance and abstraction. When we look at the landscape of Shi Tao, Huang Binhong and Fu Baoshi, and the flowers of Xu Wei, Bada Shanren and Shi Lu, the images are very real and moving at a glance, but when we look closely at the pictures, there are some lively brush Daozi and Motuanzi, which seem to be nothing. It's both concrete and abstract.

Why does Chinese painting present such characteristics? This is related to the Chinese thinking mode of the unity of nature and man. In Chinese culture, the understanding of the nature of everything runs through the idea of the unity of nature and man. In his book *The History of Chinese Thought*, Mr. Qian Mu said, "Chinese thought holds that there are things in heaven and earth, people in everything, and people in me. As far as I am concerned, I am not the center of man, man is not the center of everything, and I am the center of its center. It is neither relative nor absolute in relation to people, to things, to heaven, to nature." Chinese philosophy holds that man and nature are composed of the same origin, which is "Tao". And the highest level of human cognitive development should be expressed in the unity of heaven and man, and this unity point is "Tao". Tao is the highest category of Chinese philosophy. Tao refers to the ultimate foundation of all things in the universe, which is not only the infinitesimal unit of material elements but also the infinite core of essential laws. Tao thinking is a kind of bipolar thinking. Lao Tzu said: "The Tao born one, life two two born three, three things." The basic form of Tao is "one", the two instruments which contain opposites are "two", and the two cannot be separated from one is "three". The

characteristic of bipolar thinking is that when you think about a problem, you think about the opposite poles at the same time, and you think about the two poles as a whole, as one. This kind of dual thinking of the unity of nature and man is reflected in painting, which is the unity of subject expression and object representation.

Chinese painting says "painting Dao" Painting Dao is the expression of the Dao of nature and man in painting. "Picture Nowen Records, Hidden Biography": "Zhang's seat is famous in the sea for his teaching of painting." Song · Han Zhuo "landscape pure complete" cloud: "where the painter, tacit understanding of nature, with the same machine." Qing Wang, Yun Shouping Yun Yun - ping in the "picture kam" comment also cloud: "subtle reason, a few in the road." "Yi and" Wu DaoXuan article called Wu Daozi, Gu Kaizhi, Zhang Seng "all with skills into the road." He also said, "I do not know that art is Tao, and Tao is art." After watching Zhang's painting scene, Tang Fu Zai said, "Zhang Gong's art is not painting, but true Taoism." ("Tang Cultural essence, View Zhang Yuwai painting pine stone preface "Qing Dynasty Liu Xizai put forward:" the art of the shape of the road also ". Chinese painting rebrushwork and do not give up the likeness, the pursuit is the great beauty of the unity of man and nature.

In a word, Western traditional art focuses on the representation of nature (heaven), while modern art focuses on the expression of self (man) to separate heaven from man. Chinese art, on the other hand, combines subjective expression with objective representation and is an art of harmony between nature and man.

### **The unity of nature and man and Chinese painting**

#### **3.1.1 The unity of nature and man in the Spring and Autumn Period**

The idea of the unity of heaven and man was established mainly in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States period. "Unity of

nature and man" is the common thought of all schools of thought. After Laozi put forward the theory of Tao, Chinese thinkers rarely said that heaven was a god, and the meaning of heaven more represented the heaven of nature or the supreme principle

Lao Tzu clearly pulled down the heaven from the throne of God, he said: "Heaven and earth are unkind, to all things for humble dogs." (Lao Zi · Five Chapters) Taoism summarizes the unity between heaven and man as "Tao". Lao Zi puts forward: "Man laws the earth, the earth laws the Tao every day, and the Tao laws the nature." "Tao gives birth to one, life to two, two to three, three to all things. Heaven, earth and man are derived from "Tao", so of course heaven and man are unified. Lao Zi's theory of Tao started the tradition of cosmology in ancient Chinese philosophy. Chuang Tzu inherited this thought of Lao Tzu and put forward more clearly that "heaven and earth are born together with me, and all things are one with me" (Chuang Tzu on Qi Wu), which means that all things in heaven and earth and human beings are born in the same Tao, so they are one with us. Heaven and man belong to the nature, "Zhuangzi Grand Master" cloud "the mean distance to know my so-called heaven is not human? What is the difference between man and nature?" "Zhuangzi · Mountain and Wood" : "Man and heaven, one also"

In the pursuit of the ideal of life, Taoism believes that it is necessary to transcend the constraints of social reality and return to nature, so as to realize the "unity of nature and man" at a high level. In Laozi's philosophy, "natural inaction" is the most important concept. "Nature" is the inner nature of human beings, and also the highest realm of life. Laozi's concept of "nature" actually starts from the unity of nature and man, and finally comes down to the subjectivity of man. He wants to turn man into a "natural" man by "renunciation of sanctity and wisdom" to "embrace simplicity", return to nature, and realize the life

ideal of "virtue and truth" by "practicing it in the body", so as to realize the unity of nature and man. If Lao Tzu's expression of the ideal of life was vague and simple, then Zhuang Zi became clear and rich. Zhuangzi advocated unity with heaven and integration with nature. He pursued "heavenly happiness", which is in harmony with the way of heaven. "His life is also in the way of heaven and his death is materialized" (Zhuangzi · The Way of Heaven). In Zhuangzi, The Grand Master, Zhuangzi pointed out: "One is an apprentice to heaven, but not to man. Heaven and man do not win is called real." The "one" here means the unity of heaven and man and the unity of all things. The one who recognizes this unity is the real person of the same kind as heaven. "Heaven and man do not win" means that heaven and man cannot be opposed to each other. Zhuangzi's ideal of being one with heaven should not only follow nature and melt in nature, but also reach the spiritual realm of "communicating with the spirit of heaven and earth". He said in Zhuangzi · Carefree Travel that "taking advantage of the right of heaven and earth, and navigating the debate of the six Qi to swim infinity", which is the highest realm of this ontology experience. "Zhuangzi · Tianxia" said that Zhuangzi "alone with the spirit of heaven and earth" and "with the creator of the world", "Zhuangzi · Grand Master" said that "to arrange the transformation, is to enter the solitary Tianyi", and so on, they all talk about the realm of spiritual freedom beyond self realized through the noumenal experience.

Confucianism emphasizes social order, so it leads "Tao" to ethics. In the eyes of Confucianism, Tao is the norm of daily human relations. Confucianism links human virtue with the mandate of heaven. Confucius threw away the personality of heaven and the appearance of God, but he thought heaven had will and was the supreme ruler of the world. He said, "How can God say that? How do you do in four hours? What can you say?" "The Analects of Confucius, Yang Huo" means that

although heaven is silent, it controls the changes of nature and the birth and death of all things. He also said that "innate virtue is due to Yu" ("The Analects of Confucius"), "When convicted of a crime in heaven, there is nothing to pray for" ("The Analects of Confucius"), "a gentleman has three fears: the fear of the destiny of heaven, the fear of adults, and the fear of the sage's words" ("The Analects of Ji").

In the Doctrine of the Mean, Zi Si said, "The mandate of heaven is called sex, the spontaneity is called Tao, and the cultivation of Tao is called teaching." "If you can do what you do, you can do what you do; If you can fulfill the nature of things, you can praise the cultivation of heaven and earth, and you can participate in heaven and earth." "Honesty, the way of heaven, honesty, the way of people." He believes that heaven is the source of man's way, which is interlinked with humanity.

Mencius was an early philosopher who constructed the idea of the unity of heaven and man. Mencius said, 'He who uses his heart knows his nature; To know its nature is to know the day. Keep its heart, keep its sex, so the day also.' ("Mencius · One's Heart") Heart is the organ of thinking, the ability to think is "heaven and me" ("Mencius · Jiaozi"), the content of sex is "everyone has" the "heart of compassion", "the heart of shame", "the heart of respect", "the heart of right and wrong," (Similarly), so the heart is able to understand, understanding knows heaven. If you can strengthen self-cultivation, preserve the heart does not make the loss, good self-cultivation does not make the damage, this can serve. Mencius' "heaven" is very clear, that is, the inevitability of historical development. He said: "Don't do it for heaven, don't do it for life." Mencius went on to say, "To be honest, the way of heaven is also; The way of thinking is sincere." (Mencius Lielou Shang) According to the Tao of Heaven, the nature of heaven is "honesty", the goodness of human beings is innate, and heaven and man are originally one.

From the perspective of humanity, the fundamental responsibility of human is to realize the "sincerity" of the Heavenly Way, so as to achieve the consciousness of unity with the Heavenly Way. Mencius regarded "heart" as the root of human cultivation (because "heart" can reflect the origin of the universe one day Tao), and believed that if a person could "heart" and "think honestly", he could achieve the realm of "all things are ready for me" and "up and down flow with heaven and earth" ("Mencius · Heart")

### 3.1.2 Dong Zhongshu's thought of the unity of nature and man

By the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wudi had a monopoly on Confucianism. Dong Zhongshu established a complete system of feudal theology. He clearly emphasized that "Heaven and man become one" ("Spring and Autumn Dew · Deep Investigation of Names"). In the history of Chinese philosophical thoughts, the thought pattern of the unity of nature and man has been basically consolidated and finalized. Dong Zhongshu believed that heaven and earth, Yin and Yang, all living things and human beings are composed of qi. He said, "Heaven is virtuous, earth is virtuous, and man is virtuous. The weather, the atmosphere, the popularity in the meantime." The so-called "heaven and earth" means that heaven and earth vaporize things. Here, Qi is the embodiment of life and spirit. Because Qi plays a role, all things will be endless and full of life. On the similarity of heaven and man, Dong Zhongshu believed that heaven and man are similar in physical nature. Put forward: "Heaven also has anger, sorrow and happiness of the heart, and people, with the same kind of combination, heaven and man also." ("Spring and Autumn dew · Yin and Yang Yi") "The human body, first and member, like the day. Hair, like stars also. As cruel as the sun and the moon. Nose and mouth breathing, like the atmosphere also. In the chest to know, like the gods also. The stomach is full and empty, like all things." "Spring and Autumn Dew ·

Deputy days" Dong Zhongshu also put forward the "heaven and man induction" said. He believed that heaven could intervene in human affairs, and that human actions could sense Heaven.

### 3.1.3 Thought of the unity of heaven and man in Song Dynasty

In the Song Dynasty, the study of "the unity of nature and man" was achieved. Various theories of "the unity of nature and man" showed a confluence trend in the Song Dynasty. Scholars in the Song Dynasty are quite consistent in the aspect of "unity of nature and man". Zhang Zai clearly put forward the proposition of "unity of nature and man". He said, "Confucianism leads to honesty because of its brightness. Because of honesty leads to brightness, heaven and man are integrated, and learning leads to sanctification. Cheng Gu said: "Heaven, earth and man, there is only one." "Tao does not have the distinction between heaven and man, but in heaven it is the way of heaven, on earth it is the real way, and in man it is humanity." "The mind is also sex, in heaven, in human nature. What it is all about is really just a Tao." The way of heaven is heaven, and the earth is earth, and all who are born between heaven and earth are sex." All these dissertations show that there is a consistent unity between human nature and the Tao of heaven. As a human being, we should master the unity of the Tao.

### 3.2 Core meaning of the thought of "unity of nature and man"

As mentioned above, the idea of "unity of nature and man" was very common in ancient China. In terms of cognitive mode and way of thinking, ancient Chinese emphasized that man and nature are an organic whole, and the universe is a universal harmonious system. The core meaning of the unity of heaven and man is that man and nature are constituted by the same ontology, and human society and nature follow the same laws. "Tao" is considered as the

noumenon of the universe in Chinese philosophy. Heaven and man are born from Tao, and their common law is also Tao. Therefore, heaven and man are unified in Tao. In a broad sense, the social life of human beings is also a part of nature. Therefore, no matter the combination of man with heaven in Taoism or the combination of heaven with man in Confucianism, it is the unity of man and nature. That is to say, the man as the subject and the objective world as the object are originally one, and to maintain harmony with the development of things in nature, people's understanding must achieve the unity of the subject and object.

**Figure 1 Ode to the Goddess of Luo by Gu Kaizhi**



**Figure 2 Fan Kuan's Picture of Snow and Cold Forest in the Northern Song Dynasty**





**Figure 3 Ma Yuan's Picture of Fishing Alone on the Cold River in the Southern Song Dynasty**



**Embodies the thought of the unity of nature and man on modern Chinese painting**

**4.1 The embodiment of the unity of nature and man in the form of Chinese painting**

Painting in the form of composition can be summarized as four factors, which are natural image expression factor, brushwork expression factor, abstract form expression factor and abstract tone expression factor, they can also be called the four dimensions of painting. The expression factor of the natural image refers to the description of the natural image, while the other three factors reflect the subjective creation of human spirit. The form of Chinese painting is characterized by the unity of the four principles, which reflects the Chinese art view of the unity of nature and man.

**4.1.1 Interpretation of the four factors of painting form composition**

Brushwork expression factor is brushwork. Painting shapes images on the plane, mainly by the tool of the pen, the pen falls on the painting, there will be strokes. At first, people use the pen just to draw images. In practice, they find that the pen not only shapes images, but also expresses people's temperament and emotion.

Different people in the world can not draw the same brush strokes, the same painter under different emotions, also can not draw the same brush tone. Song · Guo Ruoxuyun: "All painting, the spirit of the heart, God color born in the pen." It can be said that the painting is like the person, the brushwork is like the person. An accomplished painter also reflects all his learning and natural life force in his brushwork, and plays a role in resonating, enlightening, improving and nourishing the audience's spirit. In theory, Nanqi Heshi listed "bone method with pen" as the second of the "six methods", next to "vivid Qi charm". Tang Zhang Yanyuan also put forward that "the backbone form is based on the intention but depends on the use of the pen". Since modern times, the West began to attach importance to the expressive force of brushwork. For example, some painters in the Romantic School, Impressionism and Fauvism, and simple abstract brushwork painting also appeared in the modern school. As for engravings and other forms of writing with knives, knife marks and etched marks have similar meanings to brushwork

Tonal abstract expression factor is abstract color in painting. Painters realize in practice that even if color does not depict any shape of natural objects, its hue itself can express people's temperament and feelings, and bring spiritual infection to the audience. Color in nature is extremely rich, but color in painting is limited. This requires the painter to abstract and generalize the color of nature. In painting, different colors have different emotional tendencies. Different color configuration produces different meaning mood, it is like the rhythm of music, playing the writer's heart. This is the painting of the fourth four elements, we call tonal abstract expression factors. Chinese painting has accumulated rich experience in color expression. Song people say "red yellow, autumn leaves fall; Red green, flowers cluster; Green between purple, is better than death; Pink cage yellow, Sheng



Zengguang "" A little red in the green" and so on, are the formula of the legend. Wu Zhen quotes Chen Jianzhai poem cloud: "Meaning foot does not seek color like, the predecessor Xiangma nine Fang" is to break through the limitations of natural shape color. Zhang Yanyuan Yun: "Ink and five colors, that is proud." Ink is a highly abstract tone. Since modern times, especially after Impressionism, Western painting began to pay more attention to abstract tonal expression method. The exploration of color abstraction in modern school made the West more aware of the significance of abstract tonal expression factors. And accumulated valuable experience.

#### 4.1.2 The division and combination of the four factors of painting and the artistic view of Chinese and Western painting

Since Plato and Aristotle, western philosophy has basically continued a rationalist system. After Hegel, irrationalist philosophy turned to prosperity and formed extreme opposition to rationalism. In thinking, the influence of metaphysical logical thinking has been dominant. That the essence of art is either based on the imitation of nature or self-expression; It's either rational or irrational; It's either objective or subjective, one or the other. This kind of thinking will naturally lead to the separation of artistic factors. In the way of cognition, we think that things in the world can and must be classified and analyzed constantly to understand and grasp. Therefore, the rise of the branch research method, that is, the research field is divided into smaller and narrower. In the exploration of art form, there appears the obvious separation of various factors and the single pursuit of individual factors branch. European realistic paintings aimed at imitation mainly use natural image expression factors; Modern abstract expressionist paintings, such as Mondrian and some cubist painters, mainly use the abstract form expression factors; And Kandinsky and Maurice Louis, Olitsky and other people's abstract color painting, is to play

the color abstract expression factor. Many works by Picasso and others combine the decomposed natural image with abstract expressive factors. Many works by Crane, Pollock, Hoffman and others in the United States mainly use abstract expression factors. Western painting sometimes presents the combination of some factors, but it fails to carry out a comprehensive and unified expression of the four principles.

#### 4.2 The unity of heaven and man and the shape of Chinese painting

Different from Western Europe, Chinese philosophical thinking tradition holds that man and the universe are always an inseparable unity. Heaven and man are in harmony with "Tao". The eastern way of thinking centers on the "Tao", which is the unity of nature and man, and the Tao itself is the contradictory unity of two opposites. "Lao Zi" said "life two", "all things negative Yin Yang, Qi thought peace. Zhouyi says that "One Yang is called Tao". Buddhism teaches "no two" and "no treatment". Painting is the product of the unity of nature and man. Its essence is the corresponding unity of imitating external nature and expressing internal self. It is the corresponding unity of rationality and irrationality. Lao Tzu said, "The simple powder is a tool, and the sages use it as officials." Again cloud: "return to Park". In the exploration and application should be divided, in essence grasp should be combined. Under the influence of this philosophical thinking, Chinese painting requires the unity of the four main principles in the separate exploration. Chinese masters must have high attainments in the four elements of painting, and be able to combine the four elements perfectly in their works to achieve a unified expression.

#### Conclusion

Compared with the essential characteristics of Western painting, the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting lie in the unity of nature and man. Compared with Western culture,

Chinese culture generally holds an ultimate cosmological view of "unity of nature and man". The belief that heaven and man share the same "Tao". The idea of the unity of nature and man has different expressions in different historical periods. Generally speaking, the unity of nature and man is the unity of man and nature. The idea of the unity of nature and man is embodied in Chinese painting as the unity of the spiritual expression of the subject and the natural representation of the object, which is the essential characteristic of Chinese painting.

Chinese painting embodies the concept of the unity of nature and man in its form composition, shape characteristics, creation process, subject classification and evaluation. In the form of composition, Chinese painting by the natural image expression factor, brushwork expression factor, abstract form expression factor, abstract tone expression factor of four into one. The natural image expression factor is the reproduction of the objective nature, and the last three are the artist's subjective expression factor. In terms of modeling, "the beauty of Chinese painting lies in the similarity and dissimilarity", which is the integration of concrete and abstract, subjective and objective. Chinese painting is based on the unity of spirit and nature of life. Therefore, in terms of branches, Chinese painting is divided according to certain themes rather than painting expression factors. Among them, the purview of landscape painting reflects the life ideal of the integration of nature and man of Chinese literati. In terms of creation, Chinese painters have carried out long-term exploration of rationality and irrationality, and combined the two into one. The highest realm of creation is the unity of nature and man, in which "I forget both of the natural objects in a wonderful way". In the evaluation, Chinese painting attaches importance to the expression of the sense of life, which is consistent with the concept of "life" of the harmony between nature and man. The evaluation of Chinese painting considers the "natural", "exquisite" and "divine" works as

the highest level works, which are all excellent works that have reached the state of unity between nature and man.

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