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On the “Virtual and Real” and Blankness in Chinese Landscape Painting

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Abstract

The abstract should summarize the contents of the paper and written below the author information. Use the word “Abstract” as the title, in 12-point Times New Roman, boldface type, italicized, centered relative to the column, initially capitalized, fixed-spacing at 13 pt., 12 pt. spacing before the text and 6 pt. after. The abstract content is to be in 11-point, italicized, single spaced type. Leave one blank line after the abstract, and then begin the keywords. All manuscripts must be in English. When it comes to the issue of “virtual and real” in traditional Chinese painting, the first impression is to describe the problems of painting strokes and ink, layout of pictures, etc., but it runs through the initial conception of the work, creation in the middle and aesthetic appreciation of the work. It exists in the whole process of artistic creation and appreciation. In essence, it is a problem of aesthetic thinking and philosophical thinking. Because the traditional Chinese painting theory is influenced by Taoism, when the concept of “virtual and real” is implemented in the specific picture of Chinese painting, it is contained in the specific shape of “physics”, that is, the painting theory research of “blank space” in the picture. Based on the traditional Taoist philosophy of China, this paper takes the “virtual and real” view in Lao Zhuang’s thought as the research object, deeply analyzes and compares its relationship with the “virtual and real” in Chinese landscape painting, and finds out their artistic spirit, essential characteristics and how to present them. This paper mainly discusses the internal relationship between Taoist philosophy and “virtual and real” in Chinese landscape painting from the following aspects. The introduction expounds the origin, purpose, significance, innovation and research methods of the topic. This paper analyzes the philosophical thoughts about landscape in the philosophical thoughts represented by Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi. The development of Chinese traditional aesthetics theory is closely related to Taoist philosophy, which has laid the foundation and pointed out the direction for the development of Chinese painting theory since ancient times. It also discusses the influence of the Taoist philosophy of “the combination of the virtual and real” on the emergence and development of the artistic conception of landscape painting. Firstly, through the analysis of the artistic conception of landscape painting and its constituent factors, it is pointed out that the artistic conception is affected by the personality and the painting artistic conception. Secondly, through the Taoist thought of “the combination of the virtual and real” in landscape painting, so as to reflect that it is the source of the artistic conception of Chinese landscape painting. It is the unique spiritual concept of “Yin and Yang” and “virtual and real” that creates the unique “blank space” aesthetic realm of Chinese painting in the composition of the picture. Finally, it focuses on the “nothingness” in Taoist philosophy and the “blank space” in Chinese landscape painting. The connotation of the “blank space” in Chinese painting exceeds its own expressive significance, which makes the picture form the aesthetic principle of emotional blending, virtual and real combination and dynamic and static integration. Through the “blank space”, it deepens the artistic characteristics of the picture and sublimates the expression of “form” in Chinese painting.

Keywords: Landscape painting, Taoism, Virtual and real, Blankness, Existence and nothingness

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Chinese painting is produced on the basis of Chinese traditional philosophy and culture. As an important vein of the development of Chinese traditional culture, it is closely related to Chinese Taoist philosophy. They have the same goal in spiritual connotation and essential pursuit.

The unique blank part in traditional Chinese landscape painting is not only a blank in the layout of the picture, but also a kind of philosophical thinking that runs through the whole creation of Chinese painting. The blank space in the work needs to correspond with the relationship between black and white, virtual and real as a whole. The form of the blank space should also be consistent with the abstract space behind it, leaving a blank space for infinite imagination. For example, Lao Tzu said return to “nothing”. At the same time, “There is an image in trance, but there is nothing in it.”[1] That is to say, it seems that there are images in it, but it seems that there is no real object. Therefore, the blank space is not limited to its noumenon, but an expandable space for the black and white, virtual and real, concrete and abstract of the whole work.

This paper focuses on the combination of Chinese traditional excellent landscape painting works and Taoist philosophy, explores the mutual penetration and two-way interaction between them, connects the unique blank space of Chinese painting presented by painting techniques with the traditional philosophical wisdom of the ancients, and then deeply studies the spiritual connotation of the blank space in landscape painting works, so as to find out the deeper theoretical basis and aesthetic orientation behind its emergence.

Firstly, This paper focuses on the “landscape thought” in Taoist philosophy as the starting point, and makes an in-depth and systematic research on the artistic spirit and basic characteristics of Chinese painting, so as to make it clear that Taoist thought has a more direct and close guidance to Chinese landscape painting and explore the spiritual source behind the blank part of Chinese painting. Secondly, from the perspective of Taoist “landscape thought”, this paper takes the unique “blank space” of Chinese landscape painting as the object of investigation, deeply analyzes and arranges the clear logical relationship between them, as well as their aesthetic concept, aesthetic realm and aesthetic personality, and creatively improves the depth of the blank space of Chinese traditional painting. Thirdly, while studying Taoist philosophy and Chinese landscape painting, explore its contemporary value. Landscape art and Taoist philosophy reflect the importance of harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature. Through the analysis of the spiritual level between the two, it leads people to re-examine nature and self, which plays a unique role in solving the ecological environment.

Research methods: First, the writer read the materials and books related to this thesis, such as *Lao Tzu*, *Zhuangzi*, *the History of Chinese Aesthetics*, *the History of Chinese Landscape Painting* and other works before writing the thesis, to find out the development context of Taoist philosophy and Chinese landscape painting, sort out the internal logical relationship between them, and seek the logical system of Taoist philosophy on “landscape spirit”. Second, combined with the traditional excellent landscape painting works, this paper makes a comparative analysis and image analysis of the excellent classics of Chinese painting theory and philosophical thought, and then verifies the importance of valuing and carrying forward the spirit of Taoist philosophy through the interpretation of the works. Third, the writer combines his own perception in creation with theory again, and add the perception in landscape painting creation to the study of “blank space” and Taoist “landscape thought”, so as to better explore the relationship between the two.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TAOIST PHILOSOPHY AND CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING

“Tao” is the ideological core of Lao Zhuang’s philosophy. It pursues plain innocence, and it is not only a metaphysical existence, but also a law of nature and a criterion of life. According to Lao Tzu, “Tao” is the

source of creation. Its generation takes precedence over anything in the world. It both creates everything and is attached to everything. Zhuangzi said, “heaven and earth have great beauty without words.” (Outer Chapters of Zhuangzi: A Journey to The North). His philosophical foundation also supports Chinese landscape painting as well as provides nutrients for the development of Chinese landscape painting.

First, in the initial period, the relevant theories of Chinese landscape painting originated from Taoist thought, which was integrated by painting and Taoism. During this period, Taoist philosophy became the theoretical support for the construction of the ideological system of Chinese landscape painting. Lao Tzu proposed that “Tao patterns itself on what is natural” and “Great form is beyond shape.” and “Great wisdom appears stupid” [2], and Zhuangzi believed that “heaven and earth have great beauty without words.” (Outer Chapters of Zhuangzi: A Journey to The North). Both of them advocated returning to nature and being free and unfettered, which were widely respected by later generations of painters. It is the Non-action theory based on “Tao” which was constructed by Lao Zhuang’s philosophical thought that has laid the philosophical foundation for the theoretical development of Chinese landscape painting. On the basis of these ideas, After the continuous mutual reference and integration of the theories and practices of Chinese painting in the past dynasties, it has brought profound influence on the development of landscape painting. Many landscape painting theories are closely related to Lao Zhuang’s philosophy, such as the theory of “Painting requires learning from nature and feeling from the heart.” (*Records of Famous Paintings in past Dynasties*, Zhang Yanyuan), “the combination of the virtual and real” and movement of steps and shift of scenes. Therefore, it can be seen that Lao Zhuang’s philosophy has a profound influence on the development of landscape painting.

Second, Lao Tzu holds that the real effect of things is usually the effect produced by the opposite side of things when they are separated from the style shown by the positive side. This also shows that the “real” and “virtual”, “existence” and “nothingness” of things exist mutually, so that they can play a role. This is the truth that “Existence and non-existence lies upon each other.” If there is only “reality” without “blankness” and only “existence” without “nothingness”, things will also lose their original function. This thought has a direct impact on the development of later painting theory, and it suggests that when painting, we should not only pay attention to the parts which are real, black and with ink forms, but also start from the parts that are virtual, white and without ink forms, so as to achieve good artistic effect. Da Chongguang, an artist from Qing Dynasty, believes that we should integrate emptiness into reality and make nothingness into existence. Only by starting from the opposite and breaking through the convention can we get a wonderful situation.

3. TAOIST PHILOSOPHY OF “THE COMBINATION OF THE VIRTUAL AND REAL” AND THE ARTISTIC CONCEPTION OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

“Artistic conception” is a typical representative of Chinese classical art and classical aesthetics, and it is also the supreme goal pursued by Chinese landscape painting. At the same time, its aesthetic generation brings together the wisdom of Chinese Taoist philosophy. The concept of “virtual and real” in Taoist philosophy promotes the development of artistic conception of Chinese landscape painting and becomes the theoretical and philosophical basis of landscape painting.

3.1 Artistic Conception in Landscape Painting

3.1.1 The Meaning of Artistic Conception

When creating or appreciating a landscape painting, the criterion for judging its advantages and disadvantages is not the true reproduction of the object it depicts, but the pursuit of “realm” in the work. Therefore, paying attention to the creation of artistic conception is one of the aesthetic characteristics of

Chinese landscape painting. The subtle and thought-provoking atmosphere is conveyed through the drawing paper, so that the viewer can integrate the emotion with the scenery and produce infinite and rich associations in the limited space. Li Keran said, "artistic conception is the combination of scenery and emotion; landscape painting is the expression of emotion. Landscape painting is not the explanation and illustration of geography and natural environment."^[3] This shows that the artistic conception of excellent landscape painting works needs to be guided by the picture so that the viewer can enter the scene of the picture.

3.1.2 The Composition of Artistic Conception

The artistic conception of traditional landscape painting usually consists of two parts, namely the realm of personality and the realm of brush and ink. The realm of personality refers to the literary accomplishment and spiritual cultivation, including the traditional poetry, philosophical thinking, aesthetic temperament and interest, and the present state of mind experience. It is more of a metaphysical feature that is separated from the specific intuitive modeling, and it is a collection of psychology and emotion outside the vision. According to the different perception degree of these contents in each individual, there is a distinction between high and low, which is also the level of realm.

The realm of brush and ink refers to the control of brush and ink, the quality of lines, the creation of opening and closing of gullies, the layout of pictures and other tangible features in the process of painting. Through visual observation, these image symbols are transformed into the thinking in the brain for comparison, so the difference between high and low is produced, among which human nature accounts for more.

The artistic conception of traditional landscape painting is produced under the action of the above two, and they complement each other. Lao Tzu said, "People all over the world know that beauty is beautiful because there is ugliness. We all know that the reason why good is good is because evil exists. So existence and nothingness exist in each other, the difficult and the easy complement each other, the long and the short bring out each other, the high and the low enrich each other, the sound responds to the sound, the front and the back follow each other." If the personality realm of the work is strong but the brush and ink realm is weak, then the artistic conception can not be conveyed smoothly. If the personality realm is weak and the brush and ink realm is strong, then the expressed artistic conception is pale and lacks connotation and depth. Therefore, the realm of personality and the realm of brush and ink complement each other and coexist harmoniously, so as to form a perfect artistic realm of landscape painting.

3.2 The Combination of "existence and nothingness" and "virtual and real" in Landscape Painting

When it comes to "existence and nothingness" and "virtual and real", people often intuitively think of the problems of brush and ink modeling and composition in the picture. In fact, its formation is not only a problem of artistic expression, but also a problem of the combination of aesthetic thought and Taoist philosophy. Under their joint action, they promote the emergence and development of the artistic conception theory of landscape painting.

3.2.1 Taoist Thought and "existence and nothingness" and "virtual and real" in Landscape Painting

The "emptiness" mentioned in landscape painting has two meanings. One is that there is no object in a closed space, which is also a blank space; the other is that it is compared with reality to produce different contrast relations, such as strong and weak, soft and hard. The two interact and harmonize each other. Only with the weakness of virtual can the strength of real be highlighted, and the contrast of the virtual and the real

makes the picture produce richer effects.

The concept of “virtual” in Taoist philosophy was first put forward by Lao Tzu. It is mentioned in *Laozi* that “we should try our best to make the emptiness of the soul to the extreme and keep the life quiet and not be disturbed by the outside world.”[4] Lao Tzu proposed to realize the unity of being and nothingness, reality and emptiness. Later, Zhuangzi inherited and developed the concept of “emptiness and stillness”. The “virtual and real” mentioned in Lao Zhuang’s thought represents the pursuit of noble life and personality. And this pursuit was materialized in the realm of landscape, which was continuously enriched in practice by art theorists and painters in the later dynasties. They both have the same important position so we can’t be obsessed with one and ignore the other. In landscape painting, we should not only arrange the “virtual layout”, but also “real layout”, “virtual real” is carried out synchronously in the layout of composition and the operation of brush and ink.

The part with brush and ink in landscape painting can convey the spirit and produce artistic conception. Only by integrating the existence and nothingness, emptiness and reality, can we show the flowing artistic conception.

3.2.2 Emptiness Leads to Stillness---Landscape Painting Turns Real Scene into Emptiness

In the appreciation of traditional Chinese landscape paintings, “stillness” is the most respected. Lao Tzu believed that “All things in the world come from existence, and existence comes from nothingness.” This kind of relationship between the virtual and the real is the embodiment of Taoist thought in Chinese painting. Only emptiness can lead to stillness, and emptiness is the prerequisite of stillness. Use the virtual as the real, and the real is used to set off the virtual. This reflects the highest realm of emptiness and stillness in Chinese landscape painting.

In “Boating on a Flat Lake”(as shown in Figure 1) by Xia Gui, a painter of the Northern Song Dynasty, two ancient pines are placed near the bottom left of the picture. In the middle of the picture, there are several people floating in a light boat on the misty lake. The lake in the distance is shrouded in a vague mist, leaving no ink in the picture. The reality of pine trees and boats is in sharp contrast to the large area of lake and sky, The whole work blurs the real scene of the lake and the sky, forming a large area of blank, which is a typical way to turn the real scene into a virtual one. The scene shown to the viewer in the picture is not the scene that the author saw when facing the natural landscape. There are both the appearance of the objective scene at that time and the superposition of the painter’s subjective idea, which gives the viewer a great space for free imagination, and the sense of tranquility in the picture is born leisurely. Compared with the real scenery, the work is a virtual image, but compared with the empty artistic conception conveyed by the works, it is also a real image. The combination of the virtual and the real in the painter’s work created the form of brush and ink in the landscape painting, which enriched the ideological realm of “truth” and “beauty” in the work, and expanded the symbolic significance behind it.

The “lines” in Chinese landscape painting is the combination of “virtual and real”and “image and abstraction”. It is the generalization of nature and the sublimation of natural landscape by painters of all dynasties. The image of “line” itself is limited, but the realm of expression is infinite. “Calligraphy and painting art uses reality to describe emptiness and uses existence to describe nothingness. What it pursues is the realm of the combination of emptiness and reality and the coexistence of existence and nothingness.” This is also Lao Tzu’s artistic realm of “Great music has the faintest notes, and great form is beyond shape.”[5]

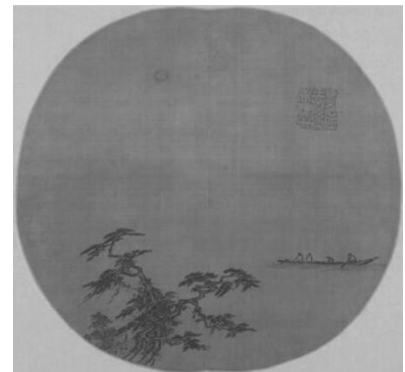


Figure 1. Boating on a Flat Lake, Xia Gui

3.3 “Hiding before exposing” in Landscape Painting and “Hide his light under a bushel” in Taoism

The creation of landscape painting emphasizes the relationship of “hiding and exposing” between objects and images. In Chapter 56 of *Laozi*, it is said that “reduce your sharpness, free yourself from disputes, hide your light, and merge with the world.”[6] This is Lao Tzu’s view of “inaction”, and it is consistent with the thought of “hiding and exposing” in Chinese landscape painting. Tang Zhiqi, a painter of Ming Dynasty, said in his *A Small Talk About Painting*, “When painting overlapping peaks and cliffs, if the “hiding and exposing” of the paths, villages and temples can be clearly laid out, the distance and proximity of the picture will be very clear, and the picture will be full of interest. There is another layer on top of another, and another hidden among the layers. When it is well hidden, the viewer will not know whether the mountain is in front or behind, whether the mountain is on the left or right, and how many trees there are. Isn’t it an exposure ?[7] These words reflect the consistency between “hiding and exposing” in painting theory and the thought of “hide his light under a bushel” in Taoism. In excellent works, the paths, cottages and temples are hidden clearly and properly, which makes the picture interesting. If the scenery in the painting has “hiding and exposing”, and the hidden part is more than the bare part, it will arouse people’s interest in exploration and the picture will be full of infinite interest. A landscape painting by an anonymous person in Song Dynasty (as shown in Figure 2) depicts a scene of visiting friends in the mountains. The first thing that comes into view is the three people standing in the blank space at the bottom left of the painting. Looking along the direction they face, one person is playing the piano under a huge cypress tree. The scene behind the three people is obscured by a huge boulder and miscellaneous trees. The horse and the roof of the carriage are half exposed, and the hidden carriage points out the theme of the painting. It shows that the three people in the painting came all the way into the mountain by carriage, or came to visit friends purposely, or came to find the melodious sound when passing through the mountain. In short, through the “hiding” of the carriage behind the boulder, and the “exposing” of the three people, a closely related and mutually contrasting relationship is formed. At the same time, it enriches the expression level in the painting and increases the depth of space. The artistic conception of the whole picture is deep and serene, which gently and implicitly conveys the author’s intention, and the melodious piano sound seems to be dispersed from the painting, so that the viewer can integrate into the painting.



Figure 2. A landscape painting

4. “NOTHINGNESS” IN TAOISM AND THE BLANKNESS IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

In traditional landscape painting, the extreme expression of “virtual” is blankness. There are various applications of blankness in works. In different paintings, the blankness itself reflects different meanings, which is also one of the most artistic characteristics of Chinese painting. Of course, the formation of this expression form is mainly affected by the “nothingness” in Taoism.

4.1 “Nothingness” in Taoism

The word “nothingness” appears frequently in *Laozi*. “Existence” gives people the form of things, but “nothingness” plays their real roles.”[8] It shows that “existence” is a condition, and “nothingness” is the result. “Nothingness” is the ultimate function of the object itself, and the purpose of “use” is achieved through the “form” of the object. “All things in the world are from existence, and existence comes from nothingness.”[9]

Here Lao Tzu pointed out that the origin of all things is “existence” and “nothingness”. The two come from each other, but have different names. They are the source of all things in the world. However, the sequence of their emergence shows that “nothingness” is the real original existence and the origin of the ultimate level. “Nothingness” mentioned here does not mean nothing. “Everything comes from existence”. The “existence” is only an intermediate link, not the source of everything. It has certain limitations. Therefore, it still needs to return to “nothingness”, which is the source of everything. In the era of the contention of various schools of thought, as the essence of Taoist thought, it is obviously different from other schools. The art theory based on this has promoted the development of Chinese painting since ancient times and has become unique spiritual and cultural characteristics.

4.2 The Blankness in Landscape Painting

The blankness in Chinese painting is its unique artistic form and expression method. Under the infiltration of Taoist thought “nothingness”, it reflects the dialectical characteristics. In landscape painting works, the blank is formed when the object image is “virtual” to the extreme, which is also the expression of strong contrast between “virtual and real”. The creation of the “blank” space in the picture has a unique artistic expression language, which is the key to the vivid charm in the painting. It has endless aesthetic feeling, and also reveals the aesthetic guidance that the tangible can be seen in the invisible.

“Existence” in landscape painting usually refers to the place rendered by brush and ink, and the object image is limited. The “blank” space is the place without brush and ink rendering, which can contain everything and is an infinite space. There are various forms of blankness, which are usually divided into two kinds. One is the blank with specific images, and the other is the abstract blank without specific images.

4.2.1 Blankness with Specific Images

Blankness with specific images refers to the representation of a certain object in a specific environment and position in the painting. For example, in landscape painting, the blankness at the top of the picture represents the sky, which has a broad meaning; The blankness between the surrounding peaks represents the misty clouds, which makes the ethereal sense of the mountain arise spontaneously; The thin strip of space between the two mountains represents the waterfall; The blankness with twists and turns at the foot of the mountain generally represents streams and so on. The shape and layout of the blankness are in contrast to the reality, which brings rich reverie to the viewer when watching. The blankness in landscape painting can be roughly divided into the following categories.

(1) Blankness represents road

In the painting of *Scattered Grazing* (as shown in Figure 3), an anonymous painting of the Northern Song Dynasty, the large blank space at the bottom of the painting represents the road, which is completely plain without any brush and ink modification. It forms a virtual and real contrast with the person holding cattle on the road and several cattle following on the left. The wide road better sets off the herders holding cattle and highlights the main part of the picture, so that the viewer can intuitively and clearly observe the moving scene of this life. There are weeds on the edge of the road, which makes a clear distinction between the road and the blank space in the upper part of



Figure 3. *Scattered Grazing*

the picture. The blank space in the distance is not depicted by shape, and is completely blurred with cloud or water, leaving a rich imagination space for the viewer.

(2) Blankness represents cloud

In the painting of *Seclusion by the Lake* (as shown in Figure 4) by Xia Yao of the Southern Song Dynasty, when you look from bottom to top, there are several houses hidden in a bamboo forest at the lower left of the picture. The woods and bank in the distance begin to blur due to fog. Then, under the large cover of rising clouds and fog, several distant mountain peaks appear, which greatly increases the space of the picture. The large area of cloud and fog forms a “nothingness” space, giving people a feeling of emptiness and mystery, which is in sharp contrast to the “existence” of the bamboo forest in front of the house. The interaction between “existence” and “nothingness” makes the viewer relaxed and imaginative.

(3) Blankness represents streams and lakes

Li Shan’s *Landscape Painting* (as shown in Figure 5), is full of movement. The branches above the water bank sway to one side under the strong wind. The blankness in the upper half is rendered with light ink, showing that the surging clouds and fog make the mountain looming. The springs in the mountain form a waterfall at the foot of the mountain, flowing and converging into a pool of streams. A large area of blank space is left here to represent the stream, which is outlined with lines to show the water spray caused by the waterfall, The woodcutter in the picture moves against the wind and wants to get home quickly before the storm. The whole work gives people a sense of urgency that “Coming events cast their shadows before.”

(4) Blankness represents snow

Xia Yao’s painting, *Meeting Friends on Snowy Days* (as shown in Figure 6), represents the white snow in nature with blankness. The author renders the sky and the water in the lake with light ink to set off the white snow on the ground, roof and mountains. The painting shows the chilly air by the water in the south of the Yangtze River in winter, and the dry trunk also reflects the sense of bleakness. Everything is shrouded in the cold of winter.

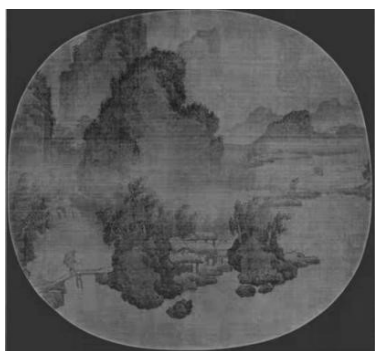


Figure 4. *Seclusion by the Lake*



Figure 5. *Landscape Painting*



Figure 6. *Meeting Friends on Snowy Days*

4.2.2 Abstract Blankness without Specific Images

The abstract blankness is corresponding to the blankness with specific images. It has neither a specific form nor a reference, so it can not represent specific objects such as cloud, water and road, so it is more abstract. It just confirms Lao Tzu’s saying that “Great music has the faintest notes, and great form is beyond shape.” The

real meaning of “Tao” is profound and broad and has no name. Therefore, most blankness in the painting has no specific images.

For example, in the painting of *Apes and Egrets* (as shown in Figure 7), an anonymous painting of the Southern Song Dynasty, the pine trees, apes, egrets and other scenery in the painting are depicted very carefully and delicately. There is no ink or specific images in the large blankness of the background. The main scene is presented in front of you like a silhouette, which is in sharp contrast to the blankness of the background and a sense of tranquility and elegance arises spontaneously. According to the viewer’s own feelings, it can be imagined as the edge of a rippling lake or a corner in the mountain forest. Therefore, this abstract blankness enriches the picture, setting off the subject on the one hand and expressing his own infinite meaning on the other.



Figure 7. Apes and Egrets

5. CONCLUSION

The philosophical thought of Chinese Taoism is extensive and profound, which has a deep logical relationship with the formation and development of Chinese traditional painting. The dialectical philosophical views of Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi are different from western philosophy and artistic views. They emit a unique Oriental light and constitute the spiritual pillar and unique artistic form of Chinese painting. This paper takes the artistic conception of Chinese landscape painting and the “blankness” in the painting as examples, combined with the “virtual and real” view in Taoism, and deeply explores the essence of these problems in landscape painting.

As mentioned in Chapter 21 of *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu, it seems that there are objects and images in the indistinct appearance, which reflects the relationship between “virtual and real”, and also reflects the mutual inclusion of “Yin” and “Yang”. Because both Taoist philosophy and Chinese painting theory have no specific forms. Because both Taoist philosophy and Chinese painting theory have no specific form, it is not enough to appreciate it only by heart. When it comes to specific painting, how to achieve the combination of the virtual and real through a few strokes, or show the existence in the “nothingness” through brush and ink? This will return to the theory of Wei Yuan in the Qing Dynasty. Only when the painting technique reaches its peak, can we approach the “Tao”. And only by mastering the expression methods, brush and ink skills and other practical applications of Chinese painting, can it be possible to show the artistic conception of a painting. Otherwise, the realm of “virtual and real” in Taoist thought can not be reflected in the picture. In this way, the blankness in Chinese painting can carry the existence of cloud, water, road and snow which is represented by it, and it can also run through the whole painting vividly.

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