

# The Application of Philosophical Thoughts in Chinese Painting Creation\*

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**Abstract**—Chinese painting is deeply influenced by the philosophy of the Chinese nation. Chinese painting as a product of a kind of spirit, the traditional Chinese philosophy is the ideological basis of the Chinese painting. The ideological concept of Chinese painting is not only the reflection of the ideological concept of Chinese society, but also the reflection of the ideological concept of Chinese philosophy. The relationship between Chinese traditional five elements philosophy and Chinese painting art has a long history, and the relationship between them is inseparable. Chinese painters can not only use the theory of the Five Elements Theory to appreciate Chinese traditional paintings, but also use the theory of the Five Elements Theory to guide the creation of Chinese paintings.

**Keywords**—Chinese painting; philosophy; the five elements philosophy; painting creation

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the emergence of the Five Elements Theory, over continuous development and improvement, until the introduction of Western culture in the late Qing Dynasty, it was widely accepted and widely used by the ancients. As one of the important contents of Chinese traditional culture, it was born in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties and formed in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. It has been widely used in politics, culture, science, and number of operations for a long time. After long-term use and recognition, the Five Elements Theory has penetrated. To all aspects of the ancient people's understanding of activities and ideas, it has become a cultural foundation that governs ancient social psychology. It has an important historical position in Chinese traditional culture and has a profound impact on Chinese traditional culture. The Five Elements Theory has its own unique connotations, especially in the field of traditional Chinese painting.

The baptism of Chinese painting in the vicissitudes of thousands of years still has such a shocking and touching charm, because of its rich internal cultural connotation and unique external form meaning. The five elements philosophy has interacted with China's political economy, ideology and culture for thousands of years, and has become the core and skeleton of Chinese traditional culture. It has had a major impact on the circulation and development of Chinese painting. As everyone knows, Chinese painting is deeply

influenced by the philosophical thoughts of the Chinese nation. Chinese painting is a product of the spirit. The traditional Chinese philosophical thought is its ideological basis. The ideology of Chinese painting is not only the reflection of the ideology of Chinese society, but also the reflection of Chinese philosophy.

## II. IN THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE PAINTING, THERE IS A REFLECTION OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE YIN-YANG AND FIVE ELEMENTS OF ART IN THE PAINTING

Chinese traditional painting is inseparable from Chinese philosophical culture and cannot be separated from the concrete manifestation of the five elements of traditional philosophical thoughts in Chinese paintings. The relationship between Chinese traditional five elements philosophical thoughts and Chinese painting art has a long history, appreciating Chinese traditional paintings with the theory of five elements. Especially the painters of the Tang and Song Dynasties pay more attention to the five elements of painting, such as the Five Dynasties Jing Hao's "Kuangu painting", the "Gaoshi painting" of the Five Dynasties Wei Xian, the "Gui Zhichuan migration painting" by Wang Meng of the Yuan Dynasty, the "Tiange painting" of the Southern Song Dynasty, and the "Fishing Son" of the Northern Song Dynasty Xu Dao Ning, etc., all of which are "the yin and yang five elements in the painting". For example, the three works of "Gaoshi painting", "Kuangu painting" and "Tiange painting" are taken as examples: ("Fig. 1")



Fig. 1. "Gaoshi painting", the Five Dynasties, Wei Xian.

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"Gaoshi painting" is a landscape painting of the Five Dynasties Wei Xian. The work shows the story of the Eastern Han Dynasty hermit Liang Hong and his wife's "husband and wife treating each other with courtesy". The upper part of the picture depicts the distant mountains with towering peaks, the trees on the peaks are lush; the lower part of the picture depicts the trees, rocks and streams surrounding a small farmhouse. The close-up of the picture is clear, the mid-level valley is deep, and the distant view is huge. From the analysis of the five elements, the mountain with the towering peaks in the upper part of the painting is a "fire" shape. The small stone in the lower part of the painting is "wood" shape, and the "water" surrounded by the middle stream is the whole picture. The whole picture shows "water generates wood", "wood makes fire" the long-term five-element winning theory. ("Fig. 2")

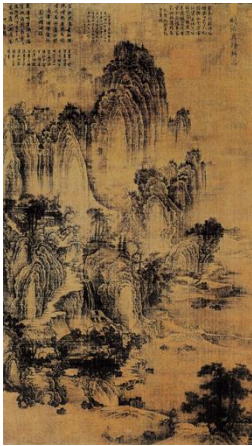


Fig. 2. "Kuanglu painting", the Five Dynasties, Jing Hao.

"Kuanglu painting" is a landscape painting of the Five Dynasties Jing Hao, which shows the scenery of Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi province. The upper part of the picture depicts the strange peaks of the peak slopes that have been scraped by the knife. The waterfalls flow down the mountain and merge into streams and flow into the bottom of the mountain. There is a mountain road in the middle of the picture. A small house is located in the middle of the mountain. There are small trees on the ridge, and the foot of the mountain is paved. The bridge twists and turns, and it is hidden in the forest. Surrounded by trees, it is magnificent and beautiful. Looking down the mountain, there are people riding on the mountain road. There are small boats and fishermen near the water. The picture is full of natural beauty and life. From the analysis of the five elements, the peak of the distant view of the picture is "fire" shape, and the mountain path of the middle scene is "wood" shape. The whole picture shows the five elements theory of "wood making fire". ("Fig. 3")



Fig. 3. "Tiange painting", the Southern Song Dynasty, Ma Yuan.

The author of "Tiange painting" is Ma Yuan in the Southern Song Dynasty. The peak of the middle scene in the upper part of the picture is strange and steep. The misty woods are covered with flying dragonflies. The peaks stand sideways, leaving a lot of blank space. Through a misty cloud, it shows the strange peaks and groves that line the sky. The trunks of the mountains are distorted, and the cornices of the temples are faint. A lot of clouds in the middle of the picture divide the whole picture into two areas, and the clouds lift up the top of the mountain. The close-up view of the lower part of the picture is the scenery of the countryside. The seeding in the farmland on the side of the mountain road grows prosperous. The small stone bridge connects the mountain road. The winding water flows through the bridge. There is a tall bamboo tree in the side of the road. The branches are high and the wicker is sparse. On the other side, there is a big stone. On the small road at the bottom of the mountain at the lower end of the screen, four old farmers are walking and dancing with interest. At the left side of the road, a farmer and her baby are looking back with great interest. In a close-up view of "Tiange painting", the big stone on the left side is "Metal" shape, the steep peak of the distant view is "wood" shape, and the mist of the middle scene is "water" shape. The whole picture shows the five elements theory of "metal raw water" and "water generates wood".

From the above traditional Chinese paintings such as "Gaoshi painting", "Kuanglu painting" and "Tiange painting", it can reflect the theory of the Five Elements and the Chinese painting art. "There is the expression of the yin and yang five elements of art in the painting". Therefore, the relationship between Chinese traditional five elements philosophical thoughts and Chinese painting art has a long history.

### III. EVERY ASPECT IN THE PROCESS OF CHINESE PAINTING CREATION HAS ITS CORRESPONDING FIVE-ELEMENTS RELATIONSHIP

Chinese painters can not only use the theory of the Five Elements Theory to appreciate Chinese traditional paintings, but also use the theory of the Five Elements Theory to analyze and judge the art of Chinese painting. In the process of Chinese painting creation, the five aspects of the concept, content theme, expression technique, composition, and ink

color have their corresponding five elements relationship. From the perspective of Chinese painting, Chinese painters can use the "metal, wood, water, fire, soil" theory in the five elements to correspond to the Chinese traditional painting artistic creation in the process of intention, content, expression techniques, composition, ink color, and so on.

The "wood": from the content theme of Chinese traditional painting works, the theme of flower-and-bird painting, which expresses the natural scenery of stretch, belongs to "wood"; from the point of view of the idea of painting works, the intention of pursuing the "outside-painting environment" outside the image belongs to "wood"; from the composition of the picture, the high vertical rectangle and straight thin rectangular composition belongs to the "wood"; from the presentation of painting and expression language, do not outline the lines directly with the ink block of "no bones" painting belongs to the "wood"; from the pen and ink techniques of painting, the pen style belongs to "wood", the ink method "thick ink, heavy ink" belongs to "wood", and the color "green" belongs to "wood".

The "water": from the Chinese traditional paintings of the content of the subject matter, the expression of soft flowing water, love and love of the painting subject matter of "water"; from the point of view of the idea of painting works, the idea of expressing the painter's pride and independence, being far away and empty, and the cold and cold "desert and cold land" belongs to "water", and from the aspect of composition of the picture, the zigzag "S" and "wave" forms belong to "water", and "water" is the concept of "water" in the form of "S" and "wave". From the performance of painting and expression language, only using water and ink to express sound dripping, infiltration of the picture effect of "ink" painting belongs to "water"; according to the ink technique of painting, the pen style belongs to "water", the ink "wet ink, light ink and light ink" belong to "water", and the "black" color belongs to "water".

The "fire": according to the content theme of traditional Chinese painting, the content subject matter of revolutionary, political or religious theme belongs to "fire", and from the point of view of the intention of painting works, the intention of "mental state" is "fire". From the point of view of the composition of the picture, the sharp angle and triangle composition belong to the "fire", from the point of view of the expression technique and expression language of the painting, the "freehand" painting method of expressing the charm of the object image is "fire" by using the concise and vertical strokes to express the charm state of the object image; According to the ink technique of painting, the meaning of pen belongs to fire, the breaking and pouring of ink in ink belongs to fire, and the color of red belongs to fire.

The "soil": according to the content theme of Chinese traditional painting works, the theme of landscape painting is "soil", which is thick and profound, and the subject matter of landscape painting is "soil". From the point of view of the idea of painting works, the meaning of the imaginary "virtual quiet land" is "soil" with a large amount of white space, and the composition of horizontal rectangle and square belongs to "soil" from the aspect of composition of painting, and

from the point of view of the composition of painting, the composition of horizontal rectangle and square is "soil", and the composition of horizontal rectangle and square is "soil". From the point of view of the expression and expression language of painting, the drawing method of "white drawing", which is not modified by algae, belongs to "soil", which uses single ink line to sketch the object image; From the point of view of ink painting techniques, "pen method" belongs to "soil" in pen method, "ink accumulation and ink stain" in ink method belongs to "soil", "yellow" color belongs to "soil".

The "metal": from the content theme of Chinese traditional painting works, animal painting and figure painting which express the phenomenon of human and animal life belong to "metal"; From the point of view of the intention of the painting works, the concept of "the bleak land", which expresses the bleak and comfortable spirit, belongs to "metal", and from the aspect of the composition of the picture, the composition of the semicircle and the circle belongs to the "metal", and from the aspect of the composition of the picture, the semi-circular and circular composition belongs to "metal". From the point of view of the expression and expression language of painting, the painstaking reappearance of "craftsmanship", which is detailed and detailed, belongs to "Jin"; according to the ink color technique of painting, "pen power" belongs to "metal" in pen method, "Jiao ink", "dry ink" and "persistent ink" in ink method belong to "metal", and "white" color in design color belongs to "metal". ("Fig. 4")



Fig. 4. "Five Oxen", the Tang Dynasty, Han Fang.

That is to say, the five aspects in the process of Chinese painting creation, such as intention, content subject matter, expression technique, composition and ink color, all have their corresponding five element relationship. These corresponding five elements reflect the mutual infiltration and influence of the five elements theory and Chinese painting for thousands of years. These relations have had a great influence on the spread and development of Chinese painting.

#### IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL HARMONY BETWEEN THE FIVE ELEMENTS IS THE AESTHETIC STANDARD OF THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE PAINTING ART "THE BEAUTY OF HARMONY"

The ancients said, "The five elements of heaven are distributed in order to transport ten thousand kinds of things".

In the theory of five elements of China, "Metal, wood, water, fire, and soil" has a cycle principle of mutual existence. The cycle of mutual promotion between the five elements is: metal generates water; water generates wood; wood generates fire; fire generates soil; soil generates metal; the cycle of mutual restriction between the five elements is: water restricts fire; fire restricts metal; metal restricts wood; wood restricts soil; soil restricts water. In the traditional Chinese painting, Chinese painters use the five elements of the principle of raw grams to guide the creation of painting.

The relationship between the five elements in Chinese painting should reach the middle and the peace. The various elements in the painting need to be interdependent and balanced, and the contradictory relationship needs to be harmonious and unified. Therefore, in the five-element relationship of Chinese painting, if the "wood" of five elements is overemphasized, the picture will appear strange shape, or the structure is scattered, or the craftsmanship is too heavy; and if the "water" of the five elements is overemphasized, the picture will appear humidity and decadent; if the "fire" of the five elements is overemphasized, the picture will make people feel mad or arrogant; if the "soil" of the five elements is overemphasized, there will be stagnation and dullness of the picture. If the "metal" of the five elements is overemphasized, the picture will appear bitter or sharp. Therefore, nothing can overemphasize one aspect. If it is overemphasized, there will be loss of control and confusion. This is true of all things in the world, and so are the five elements.

Chinese painting emphasizes the beauty of harmony. Chinese painters can use the principle of "Metal, wood, water, fire, and soil" in the five elements as the aesthetic standard of "reconciliation beauty" of Chinese traditional painting art. At the same time, in order to achieve the "harmonious beauty" of traditional Chinese painting art, it is necessary to know that the relationship between the five elements of life is dialectical. The following is an analysis of how to achieve the beauty of harmony in the application of the circulation principle between the five elements in the creation of Chinese painting.

The "wood": water generates wood; metal restricts wood.

In Chinese paintings, when the picture appears "wood" shape, it must be moistened with "water". For example, when a picture appears as a "wood" pen and ink line to shape the image structure of the object, the line is used to outline the structure and then rendered by some ink method, the effect will be very good. However, once the "water" is empty, it is difficult to produce "wood". On the other hand, when there is a surplus of "wood" in the picture, it is necessary to use "metal" to suppress and restrain. Of course, when there are too many sturdy and tough lines of the "metal" appearing on the screen, then the "wood" temperament of the picture will be lost. Therefore, the relationship between the five elements of "water generates wood" and "metal restricts wood" must be flexibly grasped and applied in the process of painting creation.

The "fire": wood generates fire; water restricts fire.

In Chinese paintings, when the picture appears "fire" shape, "wood" must be used to increase and enhance the "fire" charm and momentum. Once the "wood" is empty, it is difficult to produce a "fire". For example, the shape structure of the "wood" in the picture is not flexible and vivid, so it is more difficult to express the theme and concept of the work as "fire", that is, the "wood" shape can enhance the "fire" potential. On the other hand, when the "fire" shape of the picture is too strong or even arrogant, then "water" is needed to control and suppress. The saying "incompatible with water and fire" comes from the relationship of five elements of "water restricts fire". For example, when the screen appears, the pen is too heavy, and there are too many pens and pens. At this time, you can use the wet pen and the rendering technique to run it. Of course, excessive use of wet pens and rendering techniques will weaken the temperament and momentum of the picture. Therefore, the relationship between the "wood generates fire" and "water restricts fire" in the creation of Chinese painting requires flexible use and application.

The "soil": fire generates soil; wood restricts soil.

In the Chinese paintings, when the picture shows the "soil" shape, the thickness of the connotation of the paintings belonging to "soil" can be enhanced by the temperament and momentum of the "fire" in the paintings. If the "fire" is not prosperous, it is difficult to produce "soil". On the other hand, if the "soil" of the picture is too heavy, for example, the picture appears to be too heavy and thick in a large area, then you can use the random lines of "wood" to pick out the thickness of the "soil". Of course, if the line of "wood" in the work is overemphasized, if the line is too casual, it will produce a sense of floating and lightness, and the work will lose the thickness of the painting meaning of "soil". Therefore, the relationship between the five elements of "fire generates soil" and "wood restricts soil" needs to be flexibly grasped and utilized in the process of Chinese painting creation.

The "metal": soil generates metal; fire restricts metal.

In the Chinese paintings, when the picture shows the "metal" shape, the thick and deep of the "soil" in the painting works can be used to strengthen the pen power in the paintings belonging to "metal", for example, using the "soil" in the ink method of "Ink accumulation and ink stain" enhance the conciseness of the "metal" pen. Of course, if the "soil" is not enough, it is difficult to produce "metal". On the other hand, if the "metal" of the picture is too strong, you can use the momentum and charm of the "fire" to suppress and regulate. Therefore, the relationship between the "soil generates metal" and "fire restricts metal" must be flexibly grasped and applied in the process of Chinese painting creation.

The "water": metal generates water; soil restricts water.

In the Chinese paintings, when the picture appears as "water", the use of the "metal" brushless ink in the painting can enhance the rendering effect of the "water" in the painting. Of course, if the "metal" is insufficient, it is difficult to produce "water". On the other hand, if the "water"

gas in the picture is overflowing and overflowing, it can be controlled and suppressed by layered ink and ink staining, that is to say, by increasing the thickness of the "soil" in the picture, the overflowing of the "water" in the picture can be restrained. The same is true of the saying "water comes to soil to cover up". Of course, if too much emphasis is placed on the depth of the "earth" of the picture, for example, the layers of ink in the screen are too cumbersome, it is easy to lose the charm of the "water" of the picture. Therefore, the relationship between the "metal generates water" and "soil restricts water" must be controlled in the process of Chinese painting creation.



Fig. 5. "Landscape Works", modern, Huang Binhong.

It can be seen from the above ("Fig. 5") that the application of the raw line principle of the Five Elements to Chinese painting is extensive and profound. The principle of "metal, wood, water, fire and soil" in Chinese five elements theory is the aesthetic standard of "beauty of harmony" in Chinese painting art. In order to achieve the "beauty of harmony" of Chinese traditional painting art, Chinese painters must flexibly grasp and apply the relationship between the five elements.

#### V. USING THE FIVE-ELEMENT RELATIONSHIP TO COMPENSATE AND CORRECT THE DISCOMFORT IN CHINESE PAINTING

In the Chinese painting creation, Chinese painters often have improper image processing. For example, painting works appear as "sweet and vulgar", "tough and intrepid", "stiff and dull" and "heavy and thick" and so on. In fact, the expressions appearing in Chinese paintings are the problems of the five element balance of the picture. Chinese painters can use the relationship between the five elements to make up for and correct these inadequacies in Chinese painting.

The "sweet and vulgar" of the paintings refers to the appearance of glamour and softness in the picture. The reason is — either use the pen to weakly drag, or use the color to be sweet and turbid, or use ink to float and frivolous. The use of these ink colors is easy to appear "sweet and vulgar" of the picture, from the theory of the Five Elements,

"sweet and vulgar" in the picture appears due to the excess of "water" in the five elements of the painting. As the saying goes, "Water comes to soil to cover up", this is an example of the relationship between five elements of life, that is, the use of the five elements of "soil restricts water", and the same is true of Chinese painting. Therefore, when the picture appears "sweet and vulgar", It can be corrected by the "ink accumulation and ink stain" in the ink method of "soil", or by the drawing method of "white drawing", which is not modified by algae, but by drawing objects with single ink lines belonging to "soil". Or use the flat square and square composition of the soil to make up and repair. Whether by pen method, ink method or composition method, the "sweet and vulgar" in painting can be removed.

The "tough and intrepid" of paintings means that the appearance of the picture looks majestic and powerful, but in reality the inside is weak and weak, giving people a feeling of being strong outside. The reason for the "tough and intrepid" is that -either the pen has no ribs and no meat, or the color is exaggerated, or the ink is mad, and the use of these pens, inks, and colors makes the picture appear "smothered", from the theory of the Five Elements, the appearance of "tough and intrepid" in the picture is due to the excess of "fire" in the five elements of the painting. So, when the picture appears "tough and intrepid", you can make use of the relationship of "water restricts fire" in the five elements, and use the "wet ink, light ink and bright ink", which belongs to "water" in ink method, has been repaired and corrected in order to remove the "tough and intrepid" in the paintings.

The "stiff and dull" of the paintings refers to the feeling of stagnation in the picture. The reasons are: either using a pen of clump branch, or using a dull old color, or using a stagnation of ink, these ink colors are easy to produce pictures of "stiff and dull". From the theory of the five elements, the appearance of "stiff and dull" is because the "metal" of the five elements in the paintings is too strong. At this time, Chinese painters can use the temperament and momentum of the "fire" in the paintings to restrain and suppress the excess "metal". For example, in terms of the original idea or the theme meaning of the picture, Chinese painters should set new ground, break through the stereotypes, and let the intention and ideological connotation of the painting belong to "fire" to decipher the stagnant "metal" atmosphere in the painting work. In this way, the "stiff and dull" in the painting can be removed.

The "heavy and thick" of paintings refers to the unclear feeling of the picture. The main reason is that either the pen has no charm, or the ink is too thick, or the color is too black. The use of these ink colors makes the picture appear "heavy and thick". From the theory of the Five Elements, the appearance of "heavy and thick" in the picture is due to the excess of the "soil" of the five elements in the painting. Therefore, when the picture appears "heavy and thick", Chinese painters can use the relationship of the "wood restricts soil" of the five elements theory, using the "wood" of the brush method to correct, in order to remove the "heavy and thick" in the painting. ("Fig. 6")



Fig. 6. Part of "The Yangtze River Miles", modern, Zhang Daqian.

Therefore, all kinds of discomforts in Chinese paintings are problems in the balance and coordination of the five elements of paintings. Chinese painters can use the five element relationship to make up for and correct them. The five elements of the theory of Chinese painting, in fact, the ultimate goal is to make all aspects of Chinese painting can be moderate and peaceful, using the relationship between the five elements, so that the elements between the various aspects of the painting are interdependent, between the various elements. The contradictory relationship is harmonious and unified. The five elements of the theory can help and create harm to Chinese painting. It can be destroyed or suppressed. Only by adjusting the application of the five elements principle to the best condition can Chinese painters really make their painting become a good work.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In a word, the relationship between Chinese traditional five elements philosophy and Chinese painting art has a long history, and the relationship between them is intermingled with each other and cannot be separated from each other. Chinese painting is deeply influenced by the five elements philosophy of the Chinese nation, and the traditional five elements philosophy of China is the ideological basis of Chinese painting. Chinese painters cannot only use the theory of five elements to appreciate the traditional Chinese painting, but also use the theory of five elements to guide the creation of Chinese painting.

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