



Taoist Thought as a Framework for Understanding the Relationship between Humans and Animals in the History of Chinese Painting

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the interaction between people and animals in Chinese painting through the lens of Taoism. The goal is to investigate the various meanings, issues, and ideas that develop within the works. It also investigates how Taoist ideology informs the representation of human-animal connections in Chinese paintings, whether it can influence current art, and whether it is relevant in the context of international contemporary art. The first part of the article will outline the background and current state of research, the problem statement, research objectives, and research ideas. The second part analyzes and organizes the descriptions of humans and animals in the history of Chinese painting through iconographic and documentary research methods. The third part explains and analyzes which ideas of Taoism have influenced the expression of the human-animal relationship in contemporary Chinese painting. The fourth part will extend to contemporary art to explore the artistic presentation of the human-animal relationship from the perspective of Taoism. The conclusion section includes a description of the findings and limitations of the study and a look into the future. The study analyzes the connection between Taoist philosophy and fine art, reveals the expression of human-animal relationships in art, and gives readers a new understanding of works on the subject of human-animal relationships.

Keywords: Taoist Thought; Chinese Painting; Contemporary Art; Human-Animal Relationship; fine art; ink and wash painting

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1. Introduction

In retrospect, animals have left a deep imprint on mankind's political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and even military history. Whether from the perspective of evolution, ethnography, or genetic research, humans and animals have had an innate and inextricable relationship since the emergence of this planet, either laboring for us or providing us with food, companionship, or entertainment. Later, as humans and animals interacted over time, spiritual meanings such as symbolism and metaphor emerged. At one time, cave paintings confirmed our relationship. Shipman says, "Humans are the only species on earth that can have a one-to-one relationship with a member of another species. No other animal would waste resources

on an animal other than a family member, let alone another species. But we humans do. That's because, over thousands of years, we've developed quite intimate relationships with some animals, and we've adapted to develop empathy for other animals. (WOLFE, C.,2012)It's a human trait. We get so much from animals, far more than we can appreciate." (Pat Shipman,2021). As human civilization evolved, animals provided us with inspiration and pushed us to progress, but with the advent of modern civilization, the human-animal relationship has taken a new turn, and the bond that has held it together for millions of years is fraying. As technology, as well as biology, becomes more and more advanced, and with it, the biological chain is being disrupted, the environment is deteriorating, and animals are on the verge of extinction. (TWINE, R,2010) History has given mankind a new task, and in the era of ecological civilization, we should seriously consider how to establish a healthier and more mutually beneficial relationship with animals. Taoist thought can provide a reasonable and applicable framework for this.

Taoism promotes balance and harmony in relationships, believing that everything in nature is interconnected and interacts with each other. Every life in nature is not an isolated individual, but an interconnected group. Therefore, Taoism respects life, treats all things well, and treats people and animals with a pluralistic and open mind, all of which is based on the concept of harmony. The Taoist viewpoint is that all things are "mutually dependent and constrained", and that all life in nature is interdependent and mutually constrained, seeking change from opposites and contradictions to achieve balance and harmony. For example, in the concept of "yin and yang", yin and yang were originally opposites, but due to the changes derived from Tai Chi, forming a harmonious and unified whole(D.C.Lau,1963) . The interaction between humans and animals produces a variety of complex relationships.

Zhuangzi continued the Taoist thought and put forward a way of thinking known as "the unity of heaven and man," emphasizing the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. It reflects the ancient Chinese understanding of the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and man and himself. This kind of thinking is an attitude to life, a knowledge and grasp of the universe, human society, and all things in one's life. Man and heaven and earth are a whole, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, working together to maintain the balance and order of the universe. Professor Deng United emphasized that Zhuangzi realized the deconstruction of anthropocentrism with his cosmology of equality of all things(Deng United, 2014). Prof. He Huaihong suggests that ancient Chinese Taoism, especially Zhuangzi and subsequent Taoist hermits, is very close to today's Western non-anthropocentrism(He Huaihong, 2002) .

Many of the aesthetic ideas in Zhuangzi's philosophical thought system have had a significant impact on Chinese art history. Zhuangzi romanticized his universe, life, aesthetics, and epistemology. He articulated his understanding and perception of beauty and used the basic ideas of Taoist philosophy to describe the relationship between man and society and man and nature. "The world is symbiotic with me, and I am one with the world" is the core principle of his philosophical outlook. Zhuangzi experienced the aesthetic pleasure of harmonious symbiosis, the unity of heaven and man, and the unity of subject and object in his aesthetic experience. This subject and object is the philosophical conceptualization of man's relationship with the world around him. Zhuangzi compares himself to a butterfly, experiencing the free spiritual world of "the unity of things," which is similar to the allusion to "Zhuang Zhou dreaming of butterflies." In this world, the human spirit can transcend the boundaries of the subject and travel freely between the world of the subject and the world of the object and ultimately realize the "freedom" of "freedom" and understand the balance between nature and human nature(Tang Yijie, 2005). Chinese painting is transcendent because of this way of thinking. "For the artists and intellectuals of ancient China, their goal was to be an integral part of the eternal process of the Tao, the consciousness woven into the living universe." David Hinton said(David Hinton, 1997) .

Taoist philosophy offers a useful way to think and act. People encounter many obstacles and problems in modern society, and we need to better understand and experience the nature of nature, humans, animals, and life. By examining this theme in paintings, we can have a deeper understanding of humans and animals, as well as a more comprehensive and scientific understanding of ourselves. How is the human-

animal relationship expressed through the language of painting? Which relationship deserves to be depicted? When did Taoist thought influence painters to express human-animal relationships? And how did it influence you? These questions provide a new perspective for understanding the human-animal relationship in painting and Taoist philosophy.

This study will explore the relationship between humans and animals in Chinese paintings from a Taoist perspective. It is a novel perspective on painting that combines the Taoist view of the universe with aesthetics and will be different from most other paintings of the same subject in both content and form. It fills a gap in the field of Chinese ink painting, expressing the relationship between humans and animals. It helps Chinese painting to produce a new formal language and summarize new theoretical experiences. The article combines the philosophical ideas of traditional Chinese Taoism as its theoretical foundation. By tracing the historical evolution of the relationship between humans and animals in Chinese paintings, studying the philosophical basis, and analyzing influential works of art, the article can understand the many forms of the relationship between humans and animals in the expression of paintings. The aim is to analyze Chinese painting as an expression of the Taoist concepts of “unity of heaven and man (天人合一)” and harmony to depict the relationship between humans and animals. It also aims to analyze how contemporary Chinese painting techniques can be used as a medium to convey Taoist ideas of balance and duality between species. Summarizing traditional Chinese paintings of humans and animals through the ages and organizing representative paintings of human-animal relationships broadens readers' understanding of Chinese painting and helps artists reinterpret this subject matter.

The article uses the methods of literature research and art history research, as well as iconography, for our aim to trace the origins of painting concepts and ideas, to understand the historical development and philosophical influences of painting, and to organize and analyze the authors, genres, and backgrounds of paintings about the relationship between humans and animals throughout the ages. The method of image study is used to analyze the artistic expression and formal language of paintings. The main content of this paper is divided into three parts: the first part is an overview of the relationship between humans and animals embodied in Chinese paintings, the second part is an analysis of the influence of Taoist thought on the relationship between humans and animals in contemporary Chinese paintings, and the third part is an extension of Taoist thought on the representation of the relationship between humans and animals in contemporary art.

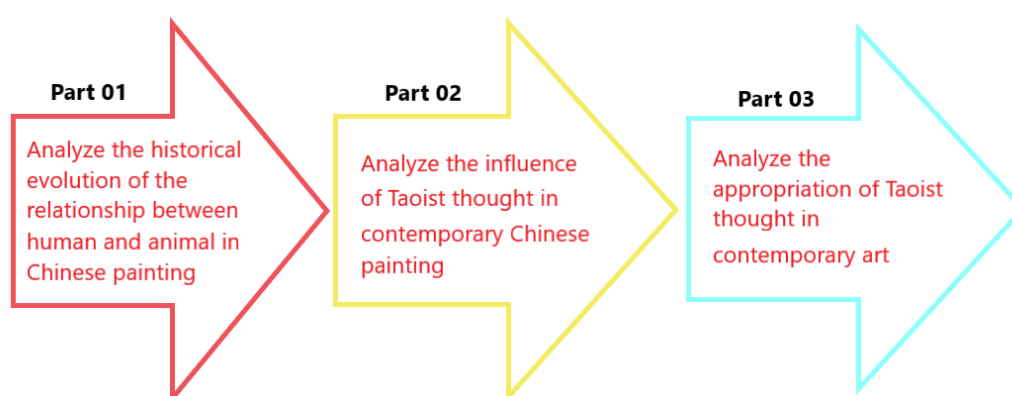


Figure 1: Research Flow Chart

2. ANALYZE THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND ANIMAL IN CHINESE PAINTING

2.1 Worship and Reverence (pre-Qin period)

Early tomb murals often featured various animal figures, symbolizing the guardians or guides of the souls of the deceased. Animals are regarded as the leaders of human beings on the other side of the world, with mysterious power; the animal images in the murals are intended to provide blessing and guardianship for the deceased. Chu tomb murals are commonly found in cloud patterns, dragons, phoenixes, and other patterns; these animals have obvious mythological colors. For example, the image of the dragon represents ascension to heaven, and the phoenix symbolizes good fortune. The animal images in the tombs indicate the belief in the continuation of life and the notion that animals can assist the spirits of the dead to enter the afterlife, and these mysterious animal forms also reflect the religious beliefs of the time. During the Warring States period, the “Characters with Dragons and Phoenixes” and “Characters with Imperial Dragons” on silk reflect that people began to face animals with their faces, which is a kind of interaction between human beings and beasts in the form of their independence(JuueN,F.,2003). At the same time, dissatisfied with the hierarchical oppression and the desire for the continuation of life, people began to turn to another world; people began to be obsessed with the magic of the gods and immortals, so once again, mankind used the spirit of animals to achieve their sublimation and fulfillment. At this time, the human-animal relationship began to change and then evolved the image of the combination of man and beast, of which the image of man riding on the beast was the most popular.

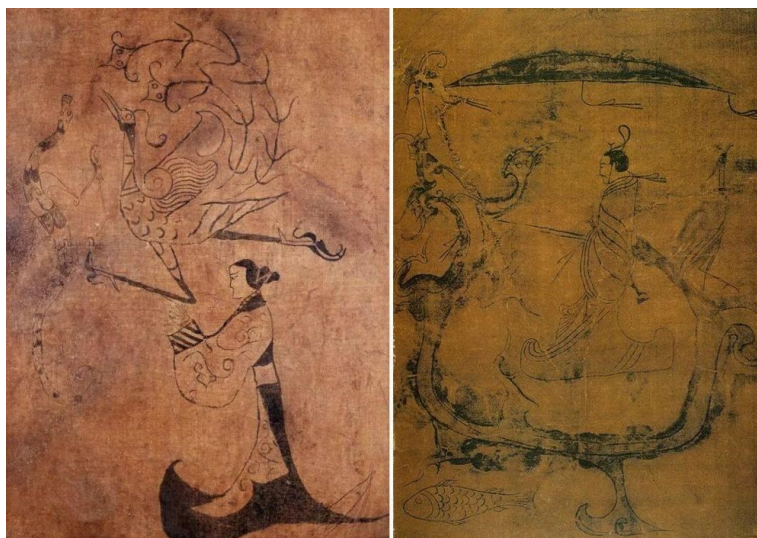


Figure 2: Painting of Figures with Dragons and Phoenixes (on silk), Pre-Qin Dynasty

2.2 Ritual symbols and cultural symbols (Qin-Han period)

During the Qin and Han Dynasties, with the strengthening of centralized power, the relationship between humans and animals was gradually ritualized and symbolized. The relationship between humans and animals shifted from mystical worship to serving the symbolic needs of social hierarchy and ceremonial culture. Through the depiction of the relationship between humans and animals, the art of the Qin-Han period expressed people's reverence for nature, their thoughts on life and death, and their pursuit of a better life.

While maintaining the art of gods and immortals, as well as the independence of human and animal life, the Han Dynasty also emphasized loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, and rule-and-regulation ethics. Rituals and customs of the human world were combined with fanciful concepts of the other realm, and humans, gods, and strange animals appeared simultaneously. The heavens and earth, the past and present, myth and history were all entwined, displaying an open and accepting world. Humans and animals, heaven and earth, everything existed in harmony and freely interacted with one another. At this point, animals had a clear orientation and began to appear in predictable ways with symbolic significance.

The crane symbolizes the divine world's spirit; the three-legged crow represents the sun; the toad and jade hare is associated with the moon; and the dragon represents freedom and serves as a messenger between man and the divine world. The dragon signifies freedom and serves as a conduit for communication between humanity and the holy realm. Man and creatures coexist peacefully and work together to create a perfect environment. Han Dynasty tomb murals depict the Han Dynasty's distinct essence. The Han people's philosophy of honoring the skies has a correspondence between heaven and man, to establish harmony between heaven and man, and it also symbolizes the Han people's distinctive humanistic character, as well as the spirit of the relentless study of cosmic space and human civilization.

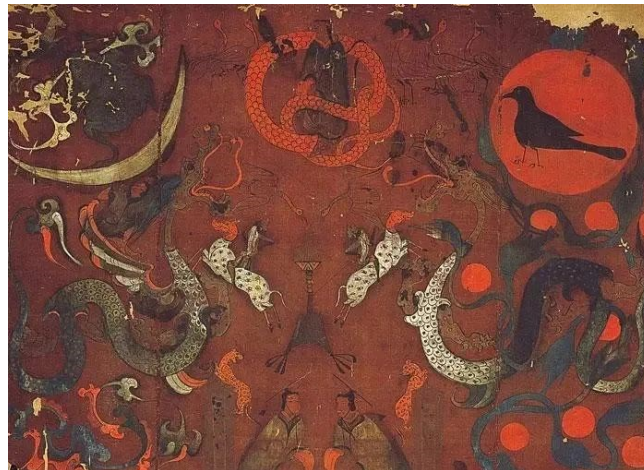


Figure 3: Non-clothing Partial (silk), Han Dynasty

2.3 Religious symbols (Wei, Jin, North and South Dynasties)

During the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, the introduction of Buddhism was accompanied by the Taoist religion, which regarded many animals as immortal beasts, such as the deer symbolizing longevity and the crane symbolizing the road to immortality. This greatly influenced the expression of the relationship between humans and animals in the plastic arts. Buddhist thought caused a transformation in the connection between humans and animals; instead of viewing animals as mere appendages or tools, people began to seek peaceful cohabitation with nature. The interaction between humans and animals was interpreted as a metaphor for dependency and coexistence. Dunhuang murals include Buddhist art from the Wei, Jin, Northern, and Southern Dynasties, and one of them, "The Deer King," is based on a Buddhist narrative about Sakyamuni's heroic actions as a deer king in another life. The image of the king of the deer represents the Buddhist notion of "compassion," in which the king of the deer willingly sacrifices himself to save others, demonstrating humanity's charity and reverence for animals. In this art, the deer represents not just the animal image but also the Buddhist spiritual virtues of mercy and tranquility, as well as the spiritual connection between humans and animals.



Figure 4: Deer King Benson Painting (Mural), Wei and Jin Dynasties

2.4 Symbiosis between humans and animals (Sui and Tang dynasties)

The aristocracy of the Sui and Tang dynasties were keen on hunting, and hunting themes became common in Tang court paintings. The figures and animals in these works are vivid and realistic, and the compositions are sparse and dense, emphasizing the interaction between the figures and animals. In the works, human beings rode horses and used animals such as falcons and hunting dogs as hunting assistants, and the animals in the picture were both hunted and helped hunting partners, showing the dependence and hierarchical relationship between human beings and animals. The hunting pictures reflect the control and conquest of animals in nature by the aristocracy and also show the power contrast and survival competition between people and animals. Through the portrayal of hunting scenes, the works conveyed the relatively antagonistic relationship between humans and animals and showed the strength and power of humans over nature. These works not only express the lifestyle of the aristocracy but also reveal man's sense of control and conquest over nature in a specific cultural context.



Figure 5: Hunting Picture (Paper), Sui Dynasty

Zhou Fang's *Ladies with Hairpins* depicts the spoiled, idle lifestyle of noblewomen. Despite their beauty and luxury, they could not hide their inner loneliness and sadness. At this point, animals became their spiritual companions. The cranes and dogs depicted in this piece are not wild cranes and hounds, but rather pet companions kept by the aristocracy, who rely on and care for one another. Painters can experience the beauty of nature and life through the harmonious interplay between animal figures and characters in their works, and they strive to express optimistic views to viewers to compensate for the lack of human spiritual civilization.



Figure 6: Painting of Ladies (silk), Zhou Fang, Tang Dynasty

2.5 Naturalism and Humanism (Song Dynasty)

Bird and flower art thrived throughout the Song Dynasty, and some of the creatures were able to restore their luster, prompting people to pay attention to the animals themselves once more, watching and researching their activities in depth. When depicting the interaction between people and animals, painters frequently used a harmonious, symbiotic picture of nature. Song artists drew inspiration from

everyday life, natural observation, and spiritual support, transforming the link between people and animals into a fundamentally humanistic concept that went beyond utilitarianism. Whether they were domestic companion animals or wild animals, Song painters presented the relationship between humans and animals as a calm, undisturbed state of harmony through exquisite expressive techniques. Through these animal images, literati painters expressed their love of nature and admiration for life, a concept of nature that reflected the Song people's deep understanding of and reverence for nature. People and animals are full of a sense of interaction, but unlike the Tang Dynasty, where there was a sense of aristocratic superiority, the relationship between people and animals at this time is more intimate, full of humanistic feelings, and at the same time reflects the beautiful ideals of society at that time for the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

Zhang Zeduan's *Qingming Shanghe Tu* provides a detailed depiction of the Northern Song Dynasty's social scene. The piece displays a wide range of animals, including horses, oxen, donkeys, mules, and dogs, and demonstrates the various connections between people and animals in city life. Horses are utilized for transportation in the artwork, dogs loiter in the streets, and cows work with farmers, graphically depicting the diverse roles that animals play in human civilization. This work not only shows the prosperous urban life of the Song Dynasty but also reflects the dependent relationship between humans and animals in daily life, emphasizing the importance and irreplaceability of animals to human society.



Figure 7: *Qingming Shanghe Tu* (silk), Zhang Zeduan, Song Dynasty

2.6 Imagery Expression and Metaphor (Ming and Qing Dynasties)

Based on the inheritance of Song and Yuan traditions, Ming and Qing dynasty paintings incorporated more diversified styles and elements, especially under the influence of Chinese and Western art exchanges at this time when the subject matter of animal paintings became more diversified. In expressing the relationship between humans and animals, Qing painters not only continued the traditional view of natural harmony but also injected more symbolic meanings, so that the relationship between humans and animals expressed auspiciousness, harmony, and cultural significance. Painters often express the harmonious coexistence of people and animals in idyllic pastoral scenes, such as cattle herding, sheep herding, and fishing. These paintings are mostly seen in the context of agrarian culture and reflect the interdependent relationship between man and nature. The rise of the realistic style of painting allowed painters to express animals through simple brushwork and exaggerated forms, and animal images became the imagery for literati to express themselves and their philosophical thoughts. Common ones, such as pachyderms, plum blossom deer, and cranes, symbolized friendship, longevity, and purity. Painters no longer simply depicted the real form of animals but conveyed thoughts and emotions through animal imagery. The relationship between humans and animals was no longer a single dependent relationship but a state of mutual dialog and care, forming a harmonious and resonant mood between humans and animals.

Zhu Da was a famous reclusive painter in the early Qing Dynasty, and his series of Fish and Bird paintings shows the sense of alienation between humans and animals in a unique style. Fish and birds often appear

in Bada Shanren's works, representing freedom and transcendence, while the animals in his works usually show a state of loneliness and indifference, symbolizing his sense of detachment from the secular society. Through his unique compositions and concise brushwork, Bada Shanren conveys a spiritual dialog between humans and animals, showing his calm observation and self-reflective attitude towards things in the world. This symbolic expression gives the work a deep philosophical meaning, expressing his inner dissatisfaction with the world and officialdom and his pride in being alone through the animal figures in his brush.



Figure 8: Fish and Birds in Ink and Water (ink on paper), Zhu Da, Ming Dynasty

2.7 Symbols of National Spirit (Modern Period)

After experiencing the turmoil of the late Qing Dynasty and the influence of Western art, modern Chinese painting gradually developed a new artistic trend. With the introduction of Western artistic concepts such as realism and impressionism, painters presented different characteristics from the traditional ones in terms of technique, subject matter, and ideas. In expressing the relationship between humans and animals, they no longer focused only on traditional imagery such as auspiciousness and harmony but showed the emotional connection and social symbolism between humans and animals through realistic techniques and personal expression of emotions, as well as exploring the national spirit and expression of human nature.

Xu Beihong expresses the horse's muscles, sinews, and bones through realistic brushwork, and the composition is simple and dynamic. The horse is full of strength and vigor in the painting, seemingly ready to break out of the picture at any time, showing an unrestrained spirit. The horse symbolizes loyalty and strength in Chinese culture. Xu Beihong's galloping horse not only shows the emotional connection between man and animal but also expresses the painter's praise for the national strength and spirit of resistance. Xu Beihong, through the galloping horse, shows his desire for national independence and freedom but also shows the modern painter with animals to symbolize the country and national spirit of innovation. His paintings of horses are mostly unharnessed horses, high in posture, free-spirited, and unrestrained, borrowing the characteristics of the horse to symbolize the expectations of the motherland's strength and hope, overflowing with a strong sense of the spirit of the times and social responsibility. This is Xu Beihong in his animal paintings in the main allegory, but also his personality and artistic ideals of the main direction.



Figure 9: Prancing Horse (ink on paper), Xu Beihong, 1941

3. ANALYZE THE INFLUENCE OF TAOIST THOUGHT IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE

PAINTING

3.1 The View of Nature in Taoist Thought

Taoism's reverence of nature extends beyond the representation of natural settings to include an appreciation for animal life. Many Taoist teachings and rituals see animals as spiritual and equal to humans. Animals are the essence of heaven and earth in Taoist cosmology, and monks can realize Tao's presence by dwelling with them and observing their behavior. The Tao is the basic notion in Taoist thought, representing both a natural order and the genesis of the universe. The Tao Te Ching states: 'Man follows the law of the earth, the earth follows the law of the sky, the sky follows the law of the Tao, and the Tao follows the law of nature.' (D.C. Lau, 1963). Tao emphasizes conformity to nature and respect for the forces and laws of nature, rather than the subjugation of nature. According to scholars such as Hsu, traditional Chinese art is rooted in the realization of the Tao, and Taoism, by emphasizing the connection between human beings and nature, has made animals an integral part of Chinese painting. Animals are seen as part of nature, reflecting the idea of symbiosis between man and all living things (Xu, 2000). According to the Taoist view of the universe, both humans and animals are part of nature and should live in harmony with each other. Taoism does not advocate human domination over nature or animals but rather promotes human integration into nature and understanding and following its laws.

Taoism is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and its core concept of "Tao" is not only a philosophical way of thinking but also influences every aspect of Chinese art creation. The relationship between human beings and animals in Chinese paintings is an important theme that runs through the past and present and is deeply influenced by Taoist thought. By exploring the relationship between humans and animals in Chinese paintings from the perspective of Taoism, we can find that Taoist thought has profoundly influenced how people and nature, as well as people and animals, are depicted in Chinese art. Taoism's emphasis on "the unity of man and heaven" and "the law of nature" not only shapes the aesthetic style of Chinese paintings but also expresses Taoism's unique view of the universe and philosophy of life through the harmonious coexistence of humans and animals. In landscape paintings, figure paintings, and bird and flower paintings, animals and humans are not opposites but part of the natural whole, reflecting Taoism's deep understanding of equality, symbiosis, and harmony.

Jia Yifu's landscape paintings frequently feature people and animals as metaphors or points of view, making a harmonious and coherent natural whole with mountains and rivers. This mode of expression fully embraces the concept of "the unity of heaven and mankind" while also imbuing the paintings with deep humanistic concern and ecological awareness. Jia's paintings depict a bond between humans and animals that is both physical and spiritual. Animals frequently represent mankind's reliance on and respect for nature. Cattle represent labor partners, whereas birds represent the desire for independence. Human actions, on the other hand, are manifestations of natural laws, such as traveling, herding livestock, or sleeping in the mountains, indicating man's deep interaction with nature. Characters and animals are portrayed in extremely fine detail, and cattle are often placed on hillsides or between valleys, constituting a picture of symbiosis between man and nature with the characters and showing a picture of man and animals working together and surviving together. This treatment is not to weaken their presence but to emphasize the magnificence of nature by highlighting the insignificance and awe of man in front of nature. Flying birds, cattle, or roosting beasts, which show exuberant vitality in the paintings, contrast dynamically with the static landscape, symbolizing the eternal cycle of life in nature. He believes that both human beings and animals are part of nature, and there is no difference between high and low. In his works, the presence of animals often symbolizes the primitive vitality of nature, while human activities are depicted as an act of conformity to nature.



Figure 10: Landscape in Ink and Wash (Ink and Wash on Paper), Jia Youfu, 1980

3.2 The Taoist Philosophy of Ease and Freedom

One of the core philosophical concepts of Taoism is 'freedom and liberty,' which profoundly reflects Taoism's understanding of life, nature, and the nature of the universe. It emphasizes inner freedom, spiritual transcendence, and harmonious coexistence with nature. The idea of freedom advocates freedom from the pursuit of worldly fame and fortune, believing that these pursuits will only bind one's body and mind. It is a state of mind that transcends the constraints of matter and reality, where one can interact with all things as one pleases and feel the vastness and freedom of life.

The primary notion of Zhuangzi is 'free transit', which emphasizes that one can only genuinely achieve freedom by transcending dependency on external objects 'no waiting'(A.C. Graham ,2002) . For example, the roc stretches its wings for 90,000 leagues, signifying the spirit of freedom that transcends world boundaries and flies between heaven and earth. The idea of freedom and liberty is founded on Zhuangzi's belief that all things are equal in nature and that humans should not view the world from a central position, but rather recognize that they are also part of nature. It advocates that mankind should transcend worldly strife and desires and return to the embrace of nature to find balance and peace of mind and body.

Jiang Shiguo's brushwork and image modeling, as well as this relationship presented by humans and animals, are all in a state of relative freedom. This kind of poetic expression is not a boundless self-expression but an ideal realm of freedom within a certain law. The brushwork is not the traditional medium stroke but utilizes the loose stroke of the brush to outline. The image is also between abstraction and realism, achieving the state of seeming to be something, seeming to be something, seeming to be real, and seeming to be something. The author often puts people and animals together with sweet fruits wine and other delicacies in the picture, making the picture full of the beauty of drunkenness and the pleasure of relaxation. In the series of 'Beautiful Life,' he describes a series of beautiful things for people in a relaxed tone, such as seaside holidays, night banquets, outings, dressing up, enjoying music, etc., and most of the pictures are about the refined and elegant living conditions of modern people. As he said, 'I want to express the beautiful life; in the picture, I must give people a visual pleasure, so I pursue simplicity and elegance; simplicity is for relaxation, and elegance is for pleasure. Before I painted 'Beautiful Life,' I painted 'Out of the Mountain,' 'Wild Wind,' 'New Territories,' and 'Illusion.' All of them are painting the kind of state of mind that I seek freedom, and I also hope that my life is free.'



Figure 11: Birds and Flowers (ink and wash on paper), Jiang Shiguo, 2015

4. ANALYZE THE APPROPRIATION OF TAOIST THOUGHT IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Contemporary art uses a variety of forms and media to incorporate the philosophical connotations of Taoism into the theme of human-animal symbiosis, providing a unique cultural perspective and way of reflection on ecological issues in modern society. The core concepts of Taoism, such as 'the unity of man and heaven,' 'the law of nature,' and 'doing nothing,' have profoundly influenced the artist's representation of the relationship between humans and animals and have aroused the audience's concern for ecological harmony, thus promoting the reshaping of the relationship between humans and animals. The artist's work has profoundly influenced the artist's expression of the relationship between humans and animals, arousing the audience's concern for ecological harmony and promoting the reshaping of the relationship between humans and animals.

Cai Guo-Qiang's animal-themed installations explore the multiple dimensions of the relationship between humans and animals with their strong symbolism and interactivity. Through animals, his works metaphorically represent the vitality and spirituality of nature while revealing the damage and sense of alienation that modern civilization has inflicted on nature. Cai's works not only convey his reverence for nature and life, but they also underline the Taoist philosophical concept of the 'union of heaven and man'. While admiring the paintings, viewers are also encouraged to consider how to better coexist with animals and nature. Return to the healthy interaction between man and nature, as well as to the serene landscape of the soul.

Legacy showcases 99 realistic animal sculptures of different species from around the world, including wolves, deer, elephants, camels, lions, and more. The animals surround a clear pool of water, quietly bowing their heads to drink, filling the entire scene with an atmosphere of serenity and sanctity. The edge of the pool is made up of white sand, emphasizing the purity and primitive state of nature. Water, as the source of life, symbolizes the basis of symbiosis and at the same time suggests the importance of natural environmental protection. The diversity of animal species and the image of them drinking together symbolize the harmony and symbiosis of nature. At the same time, the Taoist principle of 'the law of nature' is reflected in the metaphor of water. 'Water is good for all things but does not compete with them.' Water is soft but nourishes all things, representing the fundamental law of nature (D.C. Lau 1963). It is also a metaphor for people to be like water, to be kind to all things, and not to be proud of their achievements. This scene illustrates the Taoist idea of the 'unity of heaven and man,' where humans (metaphorically absent) and animals are supposed to share the same earth. The scene in Legacy is not a natural reality but an idealized state. Through this static image, Cai Guo-Qiang provokes the viewer to consider whether the animals and ecosystems of the earth can still maintain such harmony under the influence of human activities. The title of this work, 'Legacy,' alludes to the destruction of the earth and

nature left behind by mankind and whether we can preserve these resources for future generations. Against the backdrop of a deteriorating global environment, Cai Guo-Qiang's work serves as a wake-up call and a revelation. The works express concern for animal protection and the ecological crisis and call on humans to rethink their relationship with nature.



Figure 12: Legacy (Installation), Cai Guoqiang, 2013

1974, at the René Block Gallery, New York. Boyce was critical of American culture, especially the destruction of Indian culture and nature by colonialism. He chose the coyote as a profound symbol of American history, representing the wisdom and spirituality of Indian culture. Boyce arrived at the gallery in an ambulance from the airport to symbolize his isolation from the outside world. During his seven days at the gallery, he lived with a coyote (a symbol of American culture) in a series of ritualistic interactions with the artist clad in felt and carrying a shepherd's staff. The relationship between Beuys and the coyote evolved from confrontation and tentativeness to coexistence, ultimately leading to a state of harmony.

The artist does not attempt to control or change the behavior of the coyote but rather to relate to it passively. Although Boyce does not explicitly claim that his work is directly influenced by Taoism, his artistic philosophy is highly compatible with Taoist thought. The Taoist philosophy of 'equality of all things' is present throughout, demonstrating the respect and harmony between humans and animals. To live with the coyote in a way of 'doing nothing,' not interfering with its behavior but respecting its natural state, is highly in line with the Taoist philosophy of 'following nature.' As a symbol of nature, the coyote, through its reconciliation with the artist, conveys the possibility of reconnecting man and nature and achieving harmonious coexistence. Boyce is concerned about the relationship between man and nature, which has been severed by modern industrial civilization, and believes that it should return to a more primitive and harmonious state. His works express respect for the natural order and arouse the audience's concern for ecological balance. Animals are regarded as symbols of nature in his works, and by interacting with them, he reflects the dependent relationship between human beings and the ecosystem. Beuys' works go beyond the aesthetic function of art, combining performance art with social critique and pushing the public to think about the philosophical proposition of the relationship between human beings and nature. Beuys raises the question of how, in modern civilization, humans can reconceptualize the significance of animals as part of nature.

5. CONCLUSION

Human-animal relationships must evolve beyond anthropocentrism and toward a concept of ecological equality and symbiosis. We should create a partnership that is both mutually supporting and mutually controlled, based on honoring animals' instincts and rights. Such a relationship benefits not just animals, but also human civilization and enjoyment, as well as the general harmonious growth of the planet's environment. This study examines works representing the interaction between people and animals in Chinese painting history and integrates the theoretical framework of Taoism to demonstrate the representation of various Taoist concepts in painting. The human-animal connection must progress beyond anthropocentrism to ecological equality and symbiosis. Humans should form a partnership that is

both mutually beneficial and mutually restrictive, based on respect for animals' instincts and rights. Such a relationship benefits not just animals, but also human civilization, happiness, and the overall harmonious flourishing of the earth's biosphere. This research looks at works from Chinese painting history that depict the relationship between people and animals, and it uses Taoism's theoretical framework to show how many Taoist values are represented in paintings. At the same time, the growth of international art is global, but owing to cultural differences and Taoism's closed nature, there will be certain constraints in development and inheritance. To tackle the uncertain future with a positive mindset, Chinese artists must continue to evolve and innovate. In any event, we hope that Chinese painting and Chinese Taoist aesthetics can continue to stand out in the art forest, adding a strange oriental flavor to art history.

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