

# A Comparison of Perspective in Chinese and Western Traditional Painting and the Philosophical Thought behind It

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## Abstract

There are significant differences between Chinese traditional painting and Western traditional painting in terms of expression, aesthetic pursuit, and philosophical foundation. Perspective, as an essential technique in painting, is not only a means of spatial expression but also a carrier of cultural and intellectual ideas. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the philosophical thoughts and aesthetic interests behind Perspective in traditional Chinese and Western paintings by comparing them in detail, to reveal the evolution and development of Perspective in different cultural contexts, and to explore the possibilities of exchange between Chinese and Western art and future trends.

## Keywords

Chinese Painting, Western Painting, Perspective, Philosophy, Aesthetic Sentiment, Cultural Exchange

## 1. Introduction

As one of the essential carriers of human cultural inheritance, paintings not only record the changes in history but also reflect the artistic qualities and philosophical thoughts of different peoples. Mural painting can be said to be the most primitive form of painting; it is one of the ancient ancestors to record the way of life; the earliest mural paintings were found in a cave in France, so sometimes mural paintings are also known as cave paintings, these paintings are dominated mainly by animal images, especially Altamira Cave and Lascaux Cave The cave paintings of the Altamira and Lascaux caves are of the highest value and are a record of the beginnings of Western civilization. As one of the four great ancient civilizations,

China, in addition to tomb murals showing myths and legends, historical stories, and scenes of life, also saw the emergence of rope writing and oracle bone inscriptions, which, although they were the beginning of writing, were also expressed in the form of drawings and paintings. The importance of painting in the development of Chinese and Western human civilization can be seen. As two very different art systems, traditional Chinese and Western paintings have significant differences in technique, style, and aesthetic appeal. Perspective, as one of the core techniques in painting, is the crucial bridge that connects the space of the picture with the visual experience of the viewer. Through Perspective, painters are able to create a realistic sense of space and guide the flow of the viewer's eyes, thus conveying specific emotions and moods. Therefore, Perspective is not only a matter of painting technique but also a profound reflection of cultural and philosophical thoughts.

## **2. Basic Concepts of Perspective Theory and the Development of Perspective in Chinese and Western Painting**

### **2.1. Analysis of the Concept of Perspective**

The word Perspective is derived from the Latin word “perspire,” meaning “to see through.” (Word explanation © perspective tòushì. [汉典]) In painting, Perspective refers to a technique that reproduces three-dimensional spatial relationships on a two-dimensional plane by simulating the way the human eye observes natural objects. The phenomenon of Perspective depends on the relationship between the eye, the object, and the picture. By adjusting the point of view, the direction of view, and the angle of view, and by applying specific rules of Perspective, the painter accurately and vividly presents the objects in three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane.

### **2.2. Types of Perspective**

The above is a basic explanation of the concept of Perspective; painting perspective is a form of expression of painting, painting perspective due to the availability of three factors in order to produce the phenomenon of Perspective, that is, the eye, the picture object, one of the three is indispensable, under the premise of the three have, the eye on the object of different observation angles, resulting in various kinds of Perspective. Usually divided into four categories: focus Perspective, air perspective, hidden Perspective, and scattered Perspective.

Focal Point Perspective: It is one of the perspective methods in Western painting, and its basic principle is the concept of Perspective discussed above, *i.e.*, the eye is a fixed point of view, and for the objects within the visual range, parallel lines perpendicular to the screen are made from near to far, and these parallel lines eventually converge at a point, which is called the “point of extinction” and can create a three-dimensional feeling on a two-dimensional screen. This point of convergence is called the “point of extinction,” and it makes sense of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional screen. Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*

is a classic work of focal Perspective. In the picture, with Jesus as the center, the twelve disciples extend to both sides, forming a straight line parallel to the line of sight, with the walls on both sides perpendicular to the ground, and as the line of sight gets further and further away, the more and more distant and shorter, and ultimately compared to one place, forming the extinction point with Jesus' head as the center. There are many other Western paintings like this, so it can be seen that focal Perspective is the core theory of Perspective in Western painting, which plays a crucial role in Western painting. Focal Perspective is the key to the realism of Western painting, which is in line with the reality of people's visual reflection.

Color Perspective: also known as Air Perspective, Shadow Perspective, or Ladder Perspective. Painting perspective is essential to the three elements: eyes, the object, and the picture; in natural space, when we use our eyes to watch the object, regardless of whether the object is near or far, we are not directly watching the object, but through the air, or even the mist of the medium and then watch the object. Therefore, with the object's proximity, changes in the medium will make us view the object to produce changes in color intensity. The closer the object is to the eye, the brighter the colors become, and the further away the object is from the eye, the more blurred the colors become, and the hues show some degree of variation. Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* is a good illustration of color perspective. The characters in the near distance are dressed in bright colors, with warm yellow tones and strong color contrasts. As the line of sight gradually becomes farther away, the tonal contrasts gradually become weaker, unifying the rich colors in soft grey tones, with the hues becoming blurred and pulling the distance between the distant scene and the near scene apart. This work fully embodies the importance of color perspective in Western painting for spatial expression.

Fading Perspective: Also known as the Fading Perspective, it is a crucial perspective phenomenon in Western painting. It mainly emphasizes the changes in brightness and clarity of natural objects at different distances. The closer the object is to our eyes, the brighter it is, the more apparent it is, and the more precise the outline is. On the contrary, the farther away the object is from our point of view, the brighter, more transparent, and more blurred the outline will be. This principle of Perspective is widely used in Western paintings, but the British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner used this principle most brilliantly. His painting *Slave Ship* shows the scenery filled with water vapor through this method of Perspective, and the subtle relationship between the light and the air is handled very well, with the exception of the near-wrecked ship, which has an unmistakable silhouette and a high degree of luminance. The view is hidden in the mist.

Scattered Perspective: also known as moving-point Perspective, it is also the most characteristic method of perspective expression in Chinese painting; it is a moving, multi-point perspective method. The viewer observes the object from different angles at unfixed points and can turn to observe from multiple angles. The field of view is not limited by space, and the viewer's point of view flows up and down, left and right, far and near. Therefore, the Perspective of Chinese painting

also forms a flowing space with multiple viewpoints. This principle of Perspective makes the composition of the scene more extensive, accessible, and flexible, and it can achieve the purpose of wide cable from the heart and moving. In Wang Ximeng's "Thousand Miles of Mountains and Rivers," in the form of a scroll, the country's thousands of miles of mountains and rivers in the volume of the net, high and low rolling hills and rivers, and stretches of the painting into the scroll. This long stretch of thousands of miles of rivers and mountains is not viewed from a fixed perspective and is depicted together; the painting uses the principle of scattered Perspective, the scenery that could not be seen at a glance into a scroll, and the scenery of multiple viewpoints are combined to paint a long stretch of thousands of miles of rivers and mountains. Scattered Perspective can not only show the scenery of different spaces but also incorporate the scenery of different times into one scroll. The most famous one is the Night Banquet of Han Xizai by Gu Ma-zhong, a painter of the Southern Tang Dynasty, which combines different scenes at different times into a single painting in the form of a scroll. The artist puts the scenes of listening to the music, watching the dance, resting, blowing, and dispersing the guests at five different times into a single scroll by using the scattered Perspective. Scattered Perspective not only expresses freedom in space and time but also enables the painter to roam around and the viewer to forget themselves.

Regardless of Chinese and Western paintings, Perspective plays a crucial role in paintings, and it is a way to express space. Focal Perspective is the most common and essential in Western painting. Color perspective and hidden Perspective are often accompanied by focal Perspective and scattered Perspective. In Chinese painting, scatter perspective is the primary perspective method. Therefore, this paper takes focal Perspective and dispersed Perspective as the primary research objects to explore the philosophical thoughts and aesthetic interests behind Chinese and Western paintings.

### **2.3. Overview of Perspective in Chinese Painting**

In ancient Chinese painting theory, the word "perspective" is not recorded or interpreted. However, it does not mean that Perspective is not used in traditional Chinese painting, nor does it mean that there are no relevant records and concepts elaborated in ancient Chinese painting theory.

According to the existing literature, the concept of "perspective" was elaborated in the Warring States period B.C. In the book "Xunzi—Xiezhi," it is mentioned that: "If you look at a cow or a goat from a mountain, and the person who is looking for the goat does not come down to the goat, you are far away from the big one; if you look at a wood from the bottom of a mountain, a thousand-foot wood is like chopsticks and the person who is looking for the chopsticks does not come up to the chopsticks to dismantle them, you are high up in the sky and you are far from the big one." (Xunzi, 2011 edition, p. 350, Translated and annotated by Fang Yong and Li Bo, Zhonghua Shuju Bureaux Publishing House) This passage reflects the relationship between "near big and far small." In the Mojing of the late

Warring States period, the principle of “imaging through small holes” was also elaborated to some extent, which is also a description of the phenomenon of Perspective.

Southern Song painter Zong Bing, in the “painting landscape preface,” mentioned: “and the Kunlun Mountains of the big, the pupil of the small, forced to inch, then its shape can not be seen. Very miles, then, can be surrounded by inches of eyes. The first thing I want to do is to make sure that I have a good view of the mountains and that I have a good idea of what I am doing. If the image of the image is reflected in the distance, then the shape of Kun and Lang can be surrounded by a square inch. The vertical stroke of three inches, when the height of a thousand measures; horizontal ink a few feet, the body of a hundred miles of the vast.” This passage is also an elaboration of the theory of “perspective.” (Zhang & Zhang, 2010 edition, p. 26, Selected Ancient Chinese Painting Theories, Southwest Jiaotong University Press) He clearly recognizes the importance of the function of the human eye in painting and the effects of changes in the eye. Then, he outlines the methods of expression in painting and the application of Perspective in painting.

Guo Xi, a painter of the Northern Song Dynasty, said in his book “Linquan Gaozhi”: “There are three distances in the mountains: from the bottom of the mountain and the mountain, it is called ‘high and distant’; from the front of the mountain and peeping into the mountain upside down, it is called ‘high and far’; from the front of the mountain and peeping behind the mountain, it is called ‘deep and far’; from the near mountain and looking at the distant mountain, it is called ‘flat and far.’” (Linquan Gaozhi, 2010 edition, Shandong Fine Arts Publishing House, August) “High and far,” “deep and far,” and “flat and far” will be the Perspectives of Chinese landscape painting classification in the history of Chinese painting theory called “three far Laws. In the history of Chinese painting theory, it is called the “Three Distant Methods,” and the “Three Distant Methods” has had a profound and long-lasting influence on traditional Chinese painting and occupies a pivotal position in the history of Chinese painting. And then, the Northern Song painter Han Clumsy in The Complete Works of Shan Shui Pure added: “Guo said that there are three faraway mountains, and I also said that there are three faraway ones: near the shore, near the water, and the sea. Wide water The vast and distant mountains, known as the ‘broad distance’; there is smoke and dark desert, wild water apart as if not seen, known as the ‘fan far’; the scenery to the absolute, and the faint misty, known as the ‘remote.’” (The Complete Works of Shan Shui Jun, 1985, (山水纯全集), Zhonghua Shuju Bureaus (中华书局)). HanZhuo, on Guo Xi’s basis, used the “three far methods” to make a further interpretation, which is called the new “three far methods.” This method pays more attention to the changes in the painter’s state of mind and emotions, as well as the effects of changes in the natural environment and climate on human vision. Later, Shen Kuo proposed the perspective theory of “viewing the small with the large.” In Mengxi Bianchuan, it is mentioned that “the method of landscape in most of

the mountains and rivers is to look at the small with the big, like a person looking at a fake mountain.” The “Three Distant Methods” to the perspective theory of “Viewing the Small from the Large” proves the gradual maturity of the scattered perspective method in Chinese painting.

The Yuan dynasty painter Huang Gongwang wrote in *The Secret of Landscape* He combined Guo Xi’s and Han Clumsy’s two schools of thought and said, “The three distances of the mountain theory, from the bottom of the continuous connection is called Pingyuan; from the near the relative separation is called broad; from the mountain outside the distant view is called high.” (<https://www.meipian.cn/295hk5ew>) This further completes the use of Perspective in landscape painting. The painters of this period pursued their inner feelings and the mood of the mind.

In fact, similar to the concept of “perspective” theory, as early as in ancient Chinese books have been recorded, but out of the influence of the traditional ideas of thought that we have been subjected to, the idea of “perspective” gradually tends to ShangYi sex, the pursuit of the heart and soul feelings of the scattered Perspective. The idea of “perspective” has steadily tended to be more intentional, pursuing the scattered Perspective of the heart and soul. Because of the pursuit of the mind’s mood and the soul’s freedom, Chinese painting does not study Perspective as an independent discipline, which mainly depends on traditional Chinese ideology. The concept of pursuing macro and imagery in Chinese painting has influenced the formation of the discipline of Perspective in painting. Therefore, there needs to be a professional belonging to define it.

#### **2.4. Overview of Perspective Veins in Western Painting**

Western painting did not have a precise definition of Perspective until the end of the Ancient Greek period when people began to innovate in painting and produced the “perspective shortening” method of painting. Gombrich, in his study of ancient Greek vase painting, said that the most significant discovery of ancient Greece was “perspective shortening.” (Gombrich, 2008 edition, p. 81, translated by Yang Chengkai and Fan Jingzhong, *The Story of Art*, Shaanxi People’s Fine Arts Publishing House). The paintings on the vases, as a whole, followed the rules of painting at that time, with the overall image of the side, but the position of the foot was changed to realize the Perspective.

The official record of “perspective” is in Vitruvius’ *Ten Books of Architecture*, where he says: “A perspective view is formed by the intersection of a beam of rays from an object-directed to the human eye with an imaginary plane of transparency.” (Liu, 2010 edition, p. 5, “*Painting Perspective Design Perspective—Perspective*,” Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House). To be precise, the theory of Perspective in the West originated from their architecture, in which the theory of Perspective was slowly discovered through continuous exploration, and then from there, it entered into painting, giving rise to the theory of Perspective in painting.

The actual exploration of Perspective was in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

when the West was in the stage of Renaissance, and the real beginning of the conscious exploration of Perspective in the West. The Italian painter Giotto was a watershed in the art of painting; he began to express real-life scenes through painting, explored realistic painting methods and techniques, and consciously explored how to open the distance between people and people, people and things, people and background. Traces of Giotto's exploration can be found in his paintings. In his painting *Mourning for Christ* (Figure 1), we can clearly feel his exploration of distance, volume, weight, and depth. This also shows that Giotto's paintings began to pay attention to the actual visual sensation of human beings.

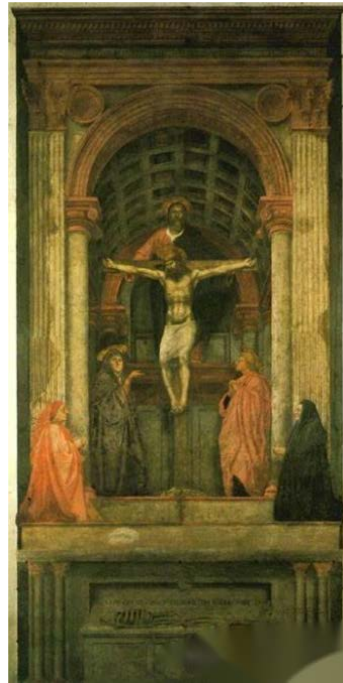


Figure 1. Mourning for Christ.

Brunelleschi, as an architect and sculptor, also made a considerable contribution to Perspective in his study of classical buildings. Because buildings require precision and rigor, he was more careful in his studies, using mathematics to arrive at the formula of linear Perspective, whereby lines recede and converge at a point, which we call the point of extinction or the center point in the painting. The emergence of this theory of Perspective enabled early Renaissance artists to understand the proportionality of objects and perspectives within a given scene. Uccello is a typical painter who used the Perspective of the extinction point to create his works.

Masaccio inherited and developed Giotto's tradition of realistic painting and Brunelleschi's theory of Perspective. With a spirit of scientific inquiry, he applied scientific anatomy and Perspective to his paintings, and his use of Perspective in his paintings became more sophisticated. In *The Holy Trinity* (Figure 2), he has a precise grasp of the human anatomy and an appropriate use of Perspective.

By the height of the Renaissance, Perspective had become a highly valued discipline for scientists and artists. Da Vinci, who was not only a painter but also a scientist, combined his sketches and creations with scientific rigor and wrote his *Treatise on Painting* from a scientific point of view. In this book, he explained the laws of linear Perspective, color perspective, and hidden Perspective in painting. The adjective complete is non-gradable and may not require a qualifier. Consider removing the qualifier more. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, through the continuous research of scholars, Perspective formed an independent academic system and had a profound influence on traditional Western painting.



**Figure 2.** The Holy Trinity.

The development and perfection of the Western Perspective can not be separated from the Western social background; the Renaissance is a period of perspective maturity; it is because the Renaissance pursued the human-centered, natural science of the idea of the rapid development of Perspective and maturity.

### **3. The Specific Embodiment of Traditional Chinese and Western Painting Perspective**

#### **3.1. Perspective Techniques in Chinese Painting**

Chinese painting uses scattered Perspective as its primary technique, emphasizing the flow and immobility of viewpoints. This kind of Perspective is not only reflected in spatial expression but also profoundly influences the composition and use of brush and ink in Chinese painting. Taking Song Dynasty landscape painting as an example, the application of the “Three Distant Methods” (high, deep, and flat) and the theory of “viewing the small with the large” made Chinese painting

more accessible and flexible in expressing the landscape mood. By constantly moving the point of view, painters can skilfully integrate different mountains and rivers with various heights and distances into the same picture, creating a magnificent and far-reaching landscape scroll. In addition, lines and ink colors in Chinese painting are also necessary means of expressing Perspective. By using different wet and dry ink colors and different shades of ink, as well as lines that are both realistic and realistic, painters can express the spatial level and volume of objects, thus making the picture more vivid and evocative.

### **3.1.1. The Three Distant Methods and the Spatial Representation of Landscape Painting**

The “Three Distant Methods” is the law of landscape painting composition put forward by the Northern Song painter Guo Xi in “Linquan Gaozhi,” which includes “high and distant,” “deep and distant,” and “flat and distant.”. “These three types of perspective correspond to different angles of observation and spatial perception. “High and far” emphasizes the majestic momentum of looking up at the top of the mountain from the bottom; “deep and far” expresses the far-reaching mood of overlapping mountains, twists, and turns; “flat and far” focuses on the expression of openness and flatness, The “far” is to express the open, flat and colorful scenery of the water and the sky. Through the use of the “Three Distant Methods,” Chinese paintings are able to create rich and varied spatial effects of landscapes, enabling the viewer to feel the infinite beauty of nature within a limited picture.

### **3.1.2. The “Big Picture” and the Construction of a Macro Perspective**

“Viewing the small from the large” is one of the unique ways of observation in Chinese painting, which emphasizes examining natural objects from a macroscopic perspective. Hong Huizhen said, “‘Viewing the small with the large’ cannot be done entirely by vision but requires the use of imagination. Searching and creating strange peaks is only active and free.” (Zong, 2005 edition, *Aesthetic Walk [M]*, Shanghai People’s Publishing House). By transcending the constraints of specific time and space, the painter observes all things in nature with a fluid vision, skilfully blending macroscopic scenes with microscopic details in the same picture. This way of observation not only reflects the broad-mindedness and profound thoughts of Chinese painters but also provides infinite possibilities for the spatial expression of the picture. For example, Zhang Zeduan’s *Qingming Riverside Painting* of the Northern Song Dynasty employs the observation method of “viewing the small with the big” to vividly reproduce the life of the prosperous city in the scroll, making the viewer feel as if he is in the life scene of that era while enjoying the painting.

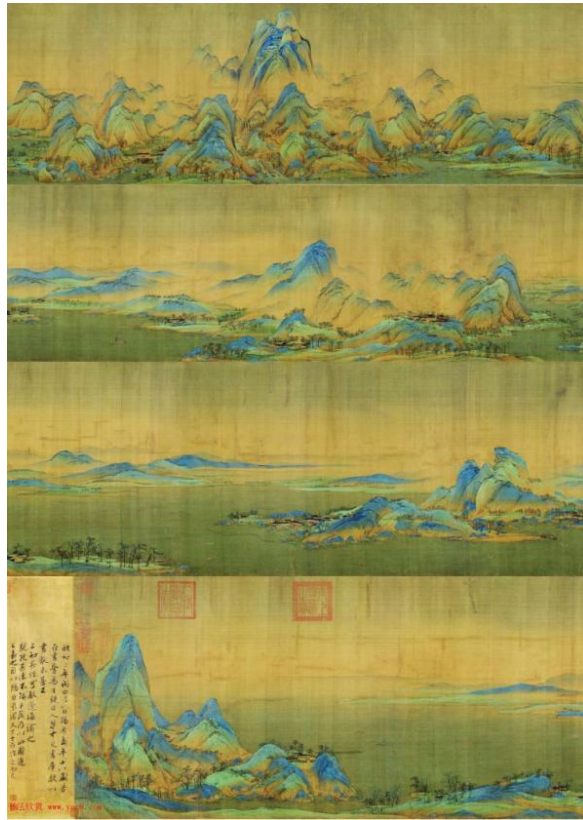
In the spatial arrangement, due to the Chinese painting following the scattered perspective way, the point of view is not static, is changeable, and non-single. Hence, the overall picture presents a “can be viewed, can be traveled, can be living” state. The Southern Song Zong Bing put forward the “lying tour,” which can be

seen through the picture of swimming in the mountains and rivers. Zong Bing of the Southern Song Dynasty proposed the term “reclining tour,” which means that one can travel in the landscape through the picture. Because in space, Chinese painting presents a “dynamic traveling and viewing” spatial effect. Chinese painting pays attention to the “mood” and “spirit,” so it will not be bound by the constraints of time and space, which, on the one hand, refers to the immobility of the point of view and, on the other hand, refers to the mobility of the object in time. Zong Baihua once said: “The perspective of Chinese painting is to refresh the spirit of emptiness, to look at the whole rhythmic nature from the position of a bird’s-eye view of the world, and his spatial position is to wander and move in time, traveling around and assembling several layers and multiple viewpoints to form a poetic painting of the transcendent image of emptiness and spirituality.” (Zong, 2005 edition, *Aesthetic Walk [M]*, Shanghai People’s Publishing House). This passage is Zong Baihua’s elaboration of the spatial context of Chinese painting, in which he shows that the space of Chinese painting is not fixed but fluid, thus forming a realm of vitality and spirituality that transcends reality and travels to the universe.

“Face to face,” “step by step” excursion observation of the subject and the object into one, is the integration of subjectivity and objectivity, abandoned the concept of inherent space and time, into the realm of transcendence. Whether it is “Han Xizai Night Banquet” (Figure 3), “Qingming Shanghe Tu” or “Thousands of Miles of Rivers and Mountains” (Figure 4), etc. many Chinese paintings use scattered Perspective, all abandoned the inherent limitations of space and time, traveling through space and time to enter the metaphysical realm, is the real and imaginary, is the flow of space and time, is the living life and the universe of the show.



**Figure 3.** The Night Banquet of Han Xizai.



**Figure 4.** A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains.

In terms of the use of media, Chinese painting has its unique painting tools, *i.e.*, brush and ink. The formal concept of scattered Perspective is in the mix, resulting in Chinese painting shaping the spiritual realm of reality and emptiness through brush and ink. Line and ink also influence the formation of the concept of scattered Perspective. The line in Chinese painting is the artist's understanding, generalization, and imagination of the object, which is then expressed through the brush and ink, which is the display of the artist's thoughts and emotions and the mind's intention—the brush and ink shape the space of virtual spirit and vividness, full of life atmosphere.

Xie He of the Southern Dynasty put forward the “six methods,” there is a point of “bone method with the brush,” where the “bone” is the line, is a brush dipped in ink on the paper painted lines, which is not only lines but also a reflection of the painter's inner feelings and rhythms. It is also more than just lines; it is the display of the painter's subjective internal power, the reflection of the painter's inner emotions and rhythm. Traditional Chinese thought pursues openness and freedom, so the lines in Chinese paintings are primarily elegant and light, with only a few strokes to write the mood of the heart. The rhythm, rhythm, and strength of the lines are the expression of the painter's thoughts and feelings. Ink has five colors, and the use of ink in Chinese painting reflects the painter's inner feelings and will to pursue. The lightness and freshness of the literati spirit are shown through the ink. “Vividness” is the rhythm formed by the ink, which is the

inner vitality of the object, and the soul and rhythm of all things in nature are expressed with ink and brush. The importance of it seems to describe the shape; in fact, the ink and brush itself show the temperament, flavor, and contained in the painter's heart of the dense changes.

The flowing space-time constructed by the brush and ink is the embodiment of scattered Perspective. Charm, mood, and spirit are the highest pursuits of Chinese painters conveyed through scatter-point Perspective.

### 3.2. Perspective Techniques in Western Painting

Western painting uses focal Perspective as its primary technique, pursuing the objective reproduction of objects and scientific rigor. The artist observes the object through a fixed point of view and applies the law of focal Perspective to accurately present the object in three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane. This kind of Perspective not only conforms to the visual habit of human eyes but also enhances the sense of reality and three-dimensionality of the picture. At the same time, Western painting also pays attention to the expressive power of color and light and shadow to strengthen the sense of space and volume of the picture through rich color layers and contrasts of light and dark.

#### 3.2.1. Focused Perspective and the Pursuit of Scientific Rationality

Focal point perspective is one of the most representative perspective techniques in Western painting. The artist observes the object through a fixed point of view so that the parallel lines converge at one point, which we call the “point of extinction” (Figure 5), thus creating a solid sense of spatial depth. This kind of Perspective not only conforms to the visual habits of the human eye but also reflects the pursuit of scientific rationality in Western culture. For example, painters in the Renaissance used focal Perspective to create a large number of works with a strong sense of space and three-dimensionality, such as Leonardo da Vinci's “The Last Supper” (Figure 6). These works not only demonstrated the painters' superior painting skills but also reflected their pursuit of scientific rationality and deep insight into natural objects.

#### 3.2.2. Creation of Color Perspective and Light Effects

Color perspective, also known as air perspective or shadow perspective, is one of the most important means of expressing spatial distance in Western painting. By

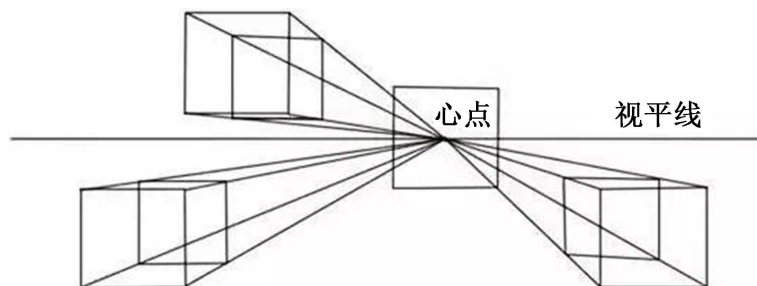


Figure 5. Extinction point.



**Figure 6.** The Last Supper.

using colors of different brightness and purity to express the relationship between the distance and the nearness of the objects, the painter presents a rich sense of hierarchy and space in the picture. At the same time, the treatment of light and shadow effects is also one of the essential aspects of Western painting, which expresses the sense of space. Painters use the contrast of light and shadow to enhance the three-dimensionality and texture of the objects to make the picture more vivid and realistic. For example, Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaner* uses a clever combination of color perspective and light and shadow effects to create a sense of space by contrasting the color shades of distant and near figures.

#### **4. The Philosophical Roots of Perspective Differences between Chinese and Western Paintings**

The differences in perspective techniques between Chinese and Western traditional paintings not only reflect the unique styles of the two art systems but also profoundly reflect the fundamental differences between Chinese and Western cultures and philosophical thinking. In the following, we will discuss the reasons for the differences in Perspective between Chinese and Western paintings from philosophical roots.

##### **4.1. The Philosophical Basis of Perspective Concept in Chinese Painting**

The philosophical background of “the unity of heaven and mankind” has led to the formation of the expression of scattered Perspective in traditional Chinese paintings, where the line of sight flows and is united with all things in the universe. Traditional Chinese philosophical thought background is that Man and nature are symbiotic and inseparable, and people should be integrated into nature and all things in heaven and earth as one. That is, the subjective world and the objective world are integrated, unified, and inseparable. The highest level of integration of the subjective world and the objective world is the realm of “unity of heaven and mankind” pursued by traditional Chinese philosophical thought, and “unity of heaven and mankind” is the primary category of Chinese philosophical thought. The “unity of heaven and man” is the primary category of Chinese philosophical

thought. It is this idea that led Chinese painters to pursue the macroscopic unity and unity of the picture, the integration and communion with all things in heaven and earth, and the unending rhythm of the universe and life, which led to the formation of Scattered Perspective.

For example, in the figure in the “mountain traveling map” and the natural mountains and rivers into one person in the landscape, the painter flows the line of sight to view the natural mountains and rivers; the line of sight is not fixed in a unique angle to observe. Huang Gongwang’s “*Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*” is also the same; the Fuchun River stretches endlessly, as far as between the feet, traveling in the natural mountains and rivers, the God of the landscape, not a fixed point of view to view, in order to show the unity of Man and the idea of heaven. Therefore, the painting of the painting allows people to be present, rather than jumping out of nature, to a third-party objective perspective to view nature, but into nature, the body and the mountains and rivers and the universe, nature, and all things, Laozi adhered to the concept of mountains and rivers and all things and for one. It is in this concept many landscape paintings are painters into the mountains and rivers, traveling to see the world made so that the viewer can also enter the natural mountains and rivers from the paintings, into the spirit of the land, to achieve the “can be seen,” “can be viewed,” “can be traveling,” “can see,” “can view,” “can travel,” “can live” realm.

Zhu Liyuan said, “The great difference between the types of ancient Chinese and Western art can be briefly summarised as the difference between the objective reproduction type and the subjective lyrical type, while the root of the ideology and culture can be traced back to the two opposing traditional modes of cultural thought, namely the dichotomy between subject and object and the unity of man and heaven.” (Zhu, 1995, “Cultural Exploration of the Differences between Chinese and Western Ancient Art Types,” 1995, *Shanghai Culture*, No. 5, p. 20). This passage shows the far-reaching influence of the idea of “the unity of heaven and man” on traditional Chinese painting. The concept of “unity of heaven and man” pursues the harmony and unity of Man and nature, the coexistence of Man and all things, the unity of Man and the universe as one, and sees all things in nature as an organic life form. During the Spring and Autumn period, Laozi advocated: “Tianren Xuan Tong.” (Lin, 2010, “[The Unity of Heaven and Man] and [the Dichotomy between Subject and Object]—An Important Perspective on the Comparison of Chinese and Western Philosophy,” *Social Science Literature Publishing House*, 2010 edition, p. 9), that is, “human law days” to seek “Xuan Tong.” Zhuangzi even directly put forward the “unity of heaven and man”; his words: “heaven and earth and I was born, all things with me as one,” stressed that Man and nature are the unity of the whole. During the Warring States period, Mencius also put forward the idea that “heaven and man are connected.” Although there are hundreds of schools of thought in different schools of thought, the “heaven” and “man” relationship is the same point of view; all advocate “the unity of heaven and Man, and advocate the subject and object integration, the concept of all

objects into one.

Dong Zhongshu of the Han Dynasty even made it clear: “Heaven and mankind are one.” ([Han] [Dong Zhongshu](#), translated and annotated by Zhou Guidian, *Chunqiu Fanlu* (Spring and Autumn Annals), published by the Zhonghua Bookstore, p. 13). The assertion of Dong Zhongshu further advanced and perfected this viewpoint. In the Song Dynasty, the philosopher Zhang Zai put forward in the *Ximing*: “Confucianism is due to the Ming to the sincere, due to the sincere to the Ming, so the celestial and human beings are united.” ([Zhang, 2008](#), Song, Zhang Zi Zheng Meng, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2008 edition, p. 239). At this point, the term “unity of heaven and man” has a clear origin. Throughout the development of traditional Chinese philosophical thought, whether it is a hundred schools of thought or schools of thought, the pursuit of this point is always surprisingly consistent; their highest state is the pursuit of “unity of heaven and man.”

The philosophical concept of “the unity of heaven and man” has had a significant influence on the spiritual culture of the Chinese people, which has also led to the pursuit of natural integration in traditional Chinese painting, which is not confined to the objective depiction of natural objects, but rather grasps the macroscopic whole and expresses the vitality of the objects, reflecting the harmony and unity of the whole picture. This gives birth to the unique Chinese concept of Perspective, which visually transcends the limitations of space and time, adopts a flowing line of sight and perspective observation, and integrates subject and object to achieve a transcendent state of unity between the object and the self. This unique Perspective is the only way to reach the Chinese pursuit of “a picture at hand, write a thousand miles of scenery. “East and West, South and North, just like the present; Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, born under the pen.” ([He & Pan, 1997](#), eds: *Tang and Five Dynasties Painting*, Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 1997 edition, p. 117).

The aesthetic way of thinking is also a unique symbol of traditional Chinese thought, which pursues the idea of “meaning,” which can be the meaning of a situation or the meaning of a person’s heart and is also the embodiment of life, the vitality of the spirit. Traditional Chinese art pursues the “standing image and exhausting the meaning”; that is, when the artist creates art, he should express his feelings through the scenery and put his feelings into the scenery, which is the embodiment of the integration of the artist’s subjective thoughts and the objective scenery. *Zhouyi-Series Rhetoric Biography* has the explanation of, “to set up the image to exhaust the meaning” “Zi said: ‘The sage set up the image to exhaust the meaning, set up the hexagrams to exhaust the meaning, and the series of rhetoric to exhaust the words.’ Here Confucius believed that the sage set up “images” and used “images” to fully express his “meaning.” Against this background of philosophical thinking, Chinese painting was also deeply influenced. Chinese painting emphasizes “meaning,” which is the subjective thought of the painter, through the fusion with the objective scenery, and expressed as “image” through the material

medium, which contains the painter's strong thought and emotion and achieves a high degree of fusion and unity between the painter's subjective emotion and the objective objects. It also confirms the concept of "unity of heaven and man" mentioned above. The concept of "the intention is kept in the brush first, and the painting is full of intention" is also a concept put forward in traditional Chinese painting, and it is in the context of such philosophical thinking that such a painting effect can be achieved. Su Shi's theory of "having a good mind" is a good demonstration of this point of view, to the late Zheng Banqiao bamboo painting proposed "having a good mind" theory of profound exploration, intended to express their spirit and spirit through the bamboo, the object to express their aspirations is said to be so.

In order to better express the "meaning," the painter breaks the limitation of vision, observes all things in nature with a flowing and uncertain vision, and integrates all things he sees with his feelings of "heart" and expresses them on the screen, so as to make the objective objects transcend their forms and incorporate the painter's emotions and thoughts to give them vitality, which is the expression of objects and the reproduction of life. This makes the objective objects transcend their forms, incorporate the painter's emotions and thoughts, and give life to the objects, which are the manifestation of the objects and the reproduction of life. Ni Zan of the Yuan Dynasty said, "The bamboo of the Yu is used to write the free air in the chest." (Zhang & Zhang, 2010, Selected Ancient Chinese Painting Theories, Southwest Jiaotong University Press, 2010 edition, p. 157). The "free spirit" mentioned here is the emotional idea in the painter's heart, which is expressed through the natural object of bamboo, pursuing the expression of emotion and the free expression of life. Traditional Chinese painting is also a reflection of the intentionality of this; the concept of the Chinese traditional painting in the development of the idea of the scattered Perspective is more prevalent.

#### **4.2. The Philosophical Basis of the Concept of Perspective in Western Painting**

The background of the philosophical thought of "people-oriented," resulting in the Western art form, is mainly the pursuit of objective reproduction, the opposition between Man and nature. Western cultural thought pursues Man as the main body and nature as the object, advocating that "heaven and man are separate." Protagoras said: "Man is the measure of all things." this sentence will be placed in the supreme position of Man: Man is the master of all things and is the measure of all things; many of the art of the ancient Greek period is also the primary goal of human performance. Ancient Greek art is also the primary goal of human performance; the Renaissance is the restoration of ancient Greek art, the pursuit of art nature is also human-centered, and the Renaissance thought is also "human-centered," is the adoration of science, the quest of human-centered, is the desire for the conquest of nature, embodies the Man and nature are separated and opposed to each other. This focus on people as the main body, the pursuit of

objectivity, the reverence for scientific thinking, and the Perspective to sprout and mature become an independent discipline. Western art in the quest for the objective reproduction of natural objects, in the context of rigorous scientific thinking, Western painters with a fixed perspective, line of sight, and view to the objective depiction of objects, the pursuit of objects is really an objective, eternal moment.

The Renaissance was the period when the idea of “human-centredness” was at its peak, and it was also at this time that the concept of “perspective” emerged and matured. As a result of this philosophical culture, Western painters used a rigorous scientific attitude to portray and reproduce objects objectively, and the theory of Perspective gradually matured and became an independent discipline.

Chong’s real nature is the Western aesthetic way of thinking because Western cultural thinking is the pursuit of objective truth, man-centered, advocating science, so the quest for truth and rationality has become a uniquely aesthetic way of thinking in Western art. Western artists emphasize the use of rational, objective thinking about objects, expressing the most real objects; rational thinking reflects the logical reasoning ability of people in the observation of objects, the pursuit of true and accurate nature, emphasizing objectivity, authenticity, rigorous scientific, is not mixed with the nature of subjective emotions, as Aristotle said: “Everything is not either yes or no!” Western painting art, in the context of such ideas, became a rational understanding of humans; the knowledge of all things natural is the beauty of nature, the beauty of rational art.

Not only do we pursue rationality and truthfulness from the Perspective of creating art, but from the Perspective of viewing, the West also advocates viewing without any subjective emotions. Just as Kant put forward the idea of “aesthetic disinterest,” that is, when viewing works of art, the viewer should remain rational and should not be mixed with any personal feelings or desires to view works of art. From the Perspective of viewing, this kind of objective and logical thinking is also present throughout.

No matter from which point of view, the Western philosophical culture of human-centredness and subject-object dichotomy, as well as the pursuit of objectivity, truthfulness, and rationality, has enabled Perspective to flourish in the West and become an independent discipline, and Western scientific and rational thinking has led to the far-reaching influence of the focal perspective view in painting.

## 5. Conclusion

With the acceleration of globalization and the deepening of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, traditional Chinese and Western paintings have shown a tendency to draw on and integrate each other’s perspective techniques. On the one hand, while maintaining its unique style, Chinese painting has begun to absorb and draw on the perspective techniques of Western painting to enrich its means of expression and artistic language; on the other hand, Western painting is also constantly exploring and attempting to incorporate the perspective techniques of Chinese painting into its creative practice in order to seek new artistic

breakthroughs and space for development.

With the profound influence of Western learning, Chinese paintings, while maintaining their unique styles, also began to absorb and learn from the perspective techniques of Western paintings to enrich their means of expression and artistic language. Some Chinese painters try to use focal Perspective to express the spatial relationship and three-dimensionality of objects in the process of creation to make the picture more in line with the aesthetic needs of modern people. At the same time, they also incorporated Western painting techniques such as color perspective and light and shadow effects into their Chinese paintings to make them more vivid, realistic, and infectious. This kind of absorption and reference not only enriches the artistic expression of Chinese painting but also promotes the exchange and fusion of Chinese and Western painting arts.

At the same time, Western painters have also been exploring and trying to integrate the perspective techniques of Chinese painting into their creative practice in order to seek new artistic breakthroughs and space for development. Some Western painters began to pay attention to the diffuse perspective technique in Chinese painting and tried to apply it to their works in order to create a more unique and flavourful visual effect. By moving multiple points of view, they skilfully integrate objects from different perspectives into the same picture to form a grand and flowing spatial layout, which makes the image more vivid, interesting, and intriguing. In addition, some Western painters also try to incorporate the expressive means of Chinese painting, such as lines and ink colors, into their creations to express the spatial level and volume of objects through different ink colors of wet and dry and other lines of real and imaginary to make the picture more expressive and infectious.

Through the comparative analysis of perspective techniques in Chinese and Western traditional paintings, we can see that Perspective is not only a difference in painting techniques but also a profound reflection of Chinese and Western culture and philosophical thinking. The pursuit of macroscopic and imaginative expression in Chinese painting originates from the philosophical idea of “the unity of heaven and mankind.” In contrast, the pursuit of objective reproduction in Western painting is rooted in the intellectual foundation of “human-centredness.” In today’s global cultural fusion, we should cherish and pass on this valuable artistic heritage and cultural essence and actively promote the exchange and fusion of Chinese and Western painting art to promote the innovation and development of art under different cultural backgrounds. In the future, with the advancement of science and technology and the cross-border integration of art, we have reason to believe that the Chinese and Western painting arts will present a more diversified and innovative development trend in perspective techniques, contributing to the prosperity of the global art ecosystem.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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