**heart/心(Xīn)**

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| Chinese Perspective | SUN Xiangchen | 17 Feb 2022 |

The Chinese word "*Xin*" (心) is a very old concept, which has an important meaning in Chinese philosophy. Its pictogram describes the human heart and its location in the body; but the meaning of the word "heart" (*Xin*) is quickly evolved to be associated with "thinking". In the *Book of Songs* (11th century BC to 6th century BCE), we can find lines like the following: "My heart is full of sorrow, and cannot shut out my thoughts". We see here that "heart"(*Xin*) often means the same as "thinking". In Chinese, "heart" and "thought" are often used together. In addition, influenced by Buddhism, "heart" has a broader meaning, and all spiritual phenomena are called "heart". Therefore, "heart"（*Xin*）roughly has three meanings. First, it refers to the "heart", which is in the center of the body, and based on this meaning, it is also extended to be mean center and core, and the heart means the power of dominance. Second, according to Mencius, the function of the heart is mainly "thinking". So, the "*Xin*" is equivalent to mind, which is related to cognition and emotion. Therefore, "*Xin*" is always related to mental phenomena such as thoughts, ideas, feelings, and mood. Third, all spiritual phenomena are determined by the "heart", and then "the Doctrine of heart" has been developed in Chinese philosophy in Song and Ming Dynasties (1127-1644), which uses the "heart" (*Xin*) to indicate the ontological ground of the universe.

In *The Analects*, "heart" is not a concept that appears very frequently. The most famous occurrence is when Confucius said, "At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing the norms". Here, "heart" represents the power to do whatever you want. As a form of desire, heart is what’s inside, which is opposite to external rituals and norms. At the same time, "heart" is also the root of inner virtues, and "norms" is the external rule. The perfect stage of the superior man is, then, the unity of inside and outside, of inner freedom and external rules, showing a supreme stage of life.

In the *Mencius*, "heart"(*Xin*) is a very important concept. Mencius (372B.C.-289B.C.) put forward a basic proposition: " All men have a heart which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others", and more specifically, the "Four Principles" are used to explain human heart. The "Four Principles" are the feeling of commiseration, the feeling of shame and dislike, the feeling of modesty and complaisance, and the feeling of approving and disapproving. Here, the "heart"（*Xin*）is the source of all virtues. Therefore, Mencius said that "What belongs by his nature to the superior man is benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. They are rooted in his heart, and their growth and manifestation are harmony appearing in the countenance." Mencius also proposed the concept of "the Child's Heart": "The great man is the one who does not lose his child's-heart." The "Child's-heart" is used to express the innate purity and kindness of the heart.

In Mencius' philosophy, the "heart" is not only related to man, but also to the universe, to Heaven. He especially emphasized that "He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven." From this, "Heart"(*Xin*) is associated with Heaven. In Mencius's view, by fully reflecting the "Four Principles" in his heart, he could understand his innate "goodness" and his true and inner human nature, and then he will be able to understand "Heaven", or transcendence. In theory, through the heart, superior man could understand the human nature and then know Heaven; in practice, superior man preserves one's mental constitution, nourishes one's nature, and then to serve Heaven.

In Chinese philosophical tradition, "heart" and "knowledge" are related. Zhu Xi (1130-1200) said: "Knowledge is what in my heart, principle is what is in thing itself. To know the principles, there will be a debate between the subject and the object." The heart is the god of man, and all kinds of "principles" are reflected in the heart. So the person who has the universal principles in his heart could responds to all things. But this kind of "principles" is not derived from the heart's self-reflection, but discovered by the method of "Investigating the nature of things ". In this sense, the heart has a strong cognitive meaning. In addition, "heart" is also related to concepts such as "human nature" and "emotions"; in Zhu Xi's doctrine, "human nature" is related to the principles of heaven, reflected in the heart; "emotions" is related to human temperament, which is the reaction when encountering things. The heart is a kind of emotional activation, and lies between "human nature" and "emotions". All kinds of clues come from "heart", which is why Zhu Xi said "heart governs human nature and emotions".

Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193), a contemporary of Zhu Xi, put forward the proposition that "the universe is my heart, and my heart is the universe", and he is called the pioneer of the "Doctrine of Heart". A key issue of this doctrine is how to understand the universe starting from yourself, "heart is a metaphysical principle". Its ontological presupposition is that heaven and man are one. "T the great man could integrate all things between heavens and earth as one, and it's not done by consciousness, but by the benevolence of the heart, which is one with all things between heaven and earth." "Heart" is the source of all norms in the world. This is consistent with Mencius's doctrine. They believed that the heart is so great, that if you can exhaust your heart, you can know Heaven. The meaning of "learning" also lies in this: people are often deceived by their opinions and lost their original heart, and by learning we could overcome the interference of various opinions.

Wang Yangming (1472-1529) inherited this idea and made his own proposition that "there is nothing outside the heart". "Human is the heart of heaven and earth, and the heart is the lord of heaven and earth. " The heart is not only the spirit of man, but also the lord of heaven and earth. Wang Yangming went on to introduce the concept of "the moral knowledge."(*liang zhi*) According to this theory, "the moral knowledge" is the feeling of right and wrong that "can be learned without learning, and can be known without thinking". It is the direction initiated by the heart, which is regarded as the noumenon of the heart. At the same time, "the moral knowledge is the spirit of the nature. These spirits give birth to heaven and earth, and become ghosts and kings; all are born from then on, and there is really nothing against the heart." "The moral knowledge" is where everything comes from, and the human heart is the root of everything in the universe. So, a disciple asked Wang Yangming, what does it have to do with my heart when the flowers bloom and fall in the mountains? Wang Yangming replied, when you did not look at this flower, the flower went into silence with your heart. When you looked at this flower, the color of this flower became clear immediately. Therefore, this flower was not outside your heart. It sounds similar to Berkeley’s proposition "to be is to be perceived".

Since "heart" is the foundation, moral philosophy in Chinese cultural tradition is also understood through "heart" as the core. Two concepts: "the original heart" and "the lost heart" are put forward. Human behaviors are determined by their hearts, but people often lose their "original heart". Therefore, if people let loose their heart, then they will lose their benevolence; If they hold onto their original heart, they will preserve their benevolence. So, in your daily life, you should "seek your lost heart", and nourish your heart by reducing desire. "The reason why a superior man is different from ordinary people is based on his heart. A superior man will use benevolence and propriety for preserving his heart." One's cultivation is to remove these barriers, to restore the noumenon of the heart which is the original heart of human beings. Wang Yangming further put forward the concept of “realization of the moral knowledge” , acting in good faith, [rectify](https://context.reverso.net/%E7%BF%BB%E8%AF%91/%E8%8B%B1%E8%AF%AD-%E4%B8%AD%E6%96%87/rectify)ing one's heart, and improving his own morality.

The concept of "heart" is not only about individual, but also about the public. In *The Analects* Confucius once said that "He revived states that had been extinguished, restored families whose line of succession had been broken, and called to office those who had retired into obscurity, so that throughout the kingdom the hearts of the people turned towards him."  That is, the concept of "the hearts of people" express the opinions and thoughts of the people. It seems to correspond to the concept of public disposition, a kind of public emotion and opinion, "It is impossible that any one should become ruler of the people to whom they have not yielded the subjection of the heart. " In this sense, the heart (*Xin*) is also a concept of Chinese political philosophy.

The "hear" (*Xin*) in Chinese is associated with several English words: mind, heart and spirit. Different from the concept of mind, which contains the meaning of "cognition", "*Xin*" is not only merely the pure intellectual. Therefore, "*Xin*" is closer to the English word "heart", which has a strong emotional meaning. But it is by no means pure emotion, but the emotional foundation of morality or a certain intuition which is a way to understand reality holistically, like Pascal’s difference between geometric spirit and *esprit de finess*. The Chinese word "*Xin*" contains these two meanings: geometric spirit and *esprit de finess*. At the same time, "heart" is not only related to "people", but also to the universe, to "heaven and earth". In Chinese cultural traditions, there is no strong concept of personal God. So, its transcendence dimension is mainly reflected in heaven and earth. In this sense, the relationship between "heart" and the universe is equivalent to the position of "spirit" in Western cultural traditions. The subjective spirit is also the manifestation of the Absolute. This is very vividly embodied in Hegel's phenomenology of spirit. Therefore, "*Xin*" in Chinese corresponds to many concepts in Western language, such as mind, heart, and spirit in different contexts respectively.