**family/家(Jiā)**

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The original meaning of the word “Jia” (family, 家)is “dwelling”. There are two interpretations of the form of this Chinese character. One is that it is a pig under “宀”, the pig “豕”represents wealth, or is sacrificed to ancestors; the other explanation is that what under "宀" is the character “亥”（Hai）, which is a combination of the shapes of a man and a woman, in which the woman looks pregnant, and at same time “Hai” represents October, which also means “giving birth to a child” in October. Either way, “Jia” represents a family and the place where it lives.

Family has a very important position in Chinese cultural tradition, which is due to its metaphysical presupposition, and family is the carrier of this spirit. Different from the Western philosophical tradition that emphasizes the unchangeable permanent Being, *the Book of Changes*, which is the first book of the Chinese classics, emphasizes “In its capacity to produce and reproduce we call it ‘change’”. At the same time, there is no personal God in Chinese mainstream culture, and Chinese culture advocates and adapts to the natural changes of heaven and earth. Therefore, the understanding of the immortality of life and the hope for the future are all tied to the family of “eternal life”.

Under the premise of the “Production-Reproduction” of life, man/woman is no longer regarded as isolated individuals, but as being in a continuity of life, so Chinese culture emphasizes that “your body and hair all are given by your parents.” As a result, a theory of “kinship affection” is developed. Because all things are born, the affection between generations are highlighted. Compared with Western culture, which attaches great importance to Eros, Philia, and Agape, Chinese cultural traditions pay more attention to “the love between parents and Children”. *The Doctrine of the Mean* says that “Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving between parents and children.” “Kinship affection” is not only a universal human emotion, the most natural and simple affection, but also the basic passion or the archetype of love in Chinese cultural tradition. The love between parents and Children highlights the love between generations. So, the most important virtue in Chinese cultural tradition is filial piety, which is the basis of all other virtues. The Chinese character “filial piety” is composed of the shape of the “old man” and the “son”, shows a strong relationship between generations. Compared with Heidegger's “being-in-the-world”, the Chinese culture reveal another existential dimension “being-between-generations”. When Wang Guowei (1877-1927) explains the transformation between Yin (1600B.C.-1046B.C.) and Zhou Dynasty(1046 B.C.-256 B.C.) in his *System of Yin and Zhou*, he also emphasized that Zhou culture on which the Chinese cultural tradition based paid special attention to the affection of kinship and respect for elder, and made it an institutional principle.

Based on kinship affection, filial piety is developed, and based on filial piety, benevolence is introduced. *The Analects of Confucius* said that “filial piety is the foundation of benevolence”. Mencius (372B.C.-289B.C.) emphasized that kinship affection is good conscience and good ability which does not need to be learned, and is also the heart of a child. Based on filial piety, benevolence is developed, and compare to filial piety, benevolence is a more general moral sentiment. Mencius said, “Respect my old parents, and then extend it to other elders, take care of my young children, and then extend it to other children; ... the kindness is extended to protect the whole world...” The importance of kinship affection is not that it includes all kind of love, but that it is the starting point of all kind of love. It is a basic love that can be extended to whole beings.

As the smallest ethical unit, the family needs to coordinate the relationship between family members and establish norms of ethical behavior; at the same time, parents teach children by words and deeds, and children are immersed in environment, which is also the beginning of cultivation. As a result, a very rich family education tradition has been established in Chinese culture, and a health personality is developed through family. Various cultures of family have also developed in the Chinese cultural tradition, such as the very complicated surname culture. Because of the most complicated kinship relationship, the kinship appellation system is very finely created. In addition, various festivals in a year express the life rhythm of one cultural tradition. Western festivals are mostly marked by commemorating Christ, while Chinese festivals are more about family.

The core values of Chinese culture are all based on family: kinship affection, filial piety, benevolence, and universal love for the whole world; family has become the origin of the significance and value of Chinese culture, the basic prototype and motif, and it is also the basic model for Chinese to understand the whole world. In Western languages, family and home are two concepts, but in Chinese language they are the same word; we also call our hometown my “Jiaxiang”，our country my “Guojia”. And we regards all human beings as family members, “the world is one family”, and “under heaven are all brothers”.

Luo Rufang (1515-1588), a scholar in the Ming Dynasty, grasped the core position of family in Chinese value order very keenly, and said: "the fate of the universe is eternal, life will be produced and reproduced; for human being, you will be given by your parents, and you will give birth to your children, sons and grandsons, even great grandsons. Therefore, the fate of the universe have been incarnated in parents, brothers, and descendants; respecting parents, elder brothers, and loving your children is essentially protection of the fate of the universe. In term of time, it can connect the past and the present; in term of social space, and it can extend to the country and the whole world. Confucius said: Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving between parents and children. Just using one sentence to summarize the core ideas of these two classics *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the mean*.” From the creation of the universe to the continuity of life, from the self-cultivation to keeping a family, to public governance of the country, to the peace of the world; the family occupies a pivotal position in this cross-shaped order.

But Family has been forgotten for a long time in modern China. During the New Culture Movement, which begin in 1915, there was a great debate on the issue of individualism and familism. Family and filial piety as the core values in Chinese cultural tradition were severely attacked. Fu Sinian (1896-1950) wrote an article called “The Origin of All Evil”, which means that the source of all evil is China's family; Wu Yu (1872-1949) wrote an famous article “The Family System is the Foundation of Despotism”, which seemed to have found the cultural foundation of Chinese despotism immediately. Many modern scholars all hold similar positions. Based on the standpoint of modernity, they adopt a critical and exclusive attitude towards the family culture, forming a strong “anti-family, anti-filial piety” stance in modern Chinese culture. But in fact, they do not distinguish between the historically institutionalized expression of family and the existential structure of family.

As far as the West philosophy is concerned, there is a certain tradition of rejecting the family. In Plato's *Republic*, in order to defend the city-state, the defender's family life must be rejected. In *the Gospel of Matthew*, Jesus Christ also ask his believers regard their parents and children as enemies, otherwise they did not deserve to be believers of Christ. In modern times, once the equal and free status of individual is established, the biggest enemy encountered is family. In the family there is a natural hierarchy of authority, and there is also a certain natural power relations between father and son. When modern philosophy establishes the concept of individual, it must be constantly dismantling the power of family. Hobbes reinterprets the problem of family through contract. Not only is there a contract between husband and wife, but also a contract relationship between parents and children, which is a relationship of subordination and protection. Under the influence of Hobbes, Locke and others philosophers continued this contractual family structure.

Hegel saw the independent value of family to legal rights and morality of individuals, and family is the first moment of ethical life. Hegel recognized the other side of the independent and free individual, an emotional dependence. The dependence between husband and wife, the dependence between parents and children, Hegel criticized the understanding of family in a contractual way, and opposed the simple interpretation of marriage by romantic love. He emphasized the ethical responsibility between family members, and saw family as the important ethical archetype to human life. Therefore, in the level of civil society and state, he invented the concept of the second family or the universal family, in order to emphasize that society and the state have a certain welfare or ethical responsibility to the individual, which is similar to that of the family to its members.

On the issue of family, another great philosopher worth mentioning is E. Levinas, who analyzed the Eros between men and women, and the existential structure between parents and children and among brothers in *Totality and Infinity*. He believes that scholars often overlook the complex structure of family because of the superficial biological feature of family relationships. Actually it is an ontological structure unfamiliar to the West since Parmenides, it is also an important dimension for human existence. Levinas' analysis can find an echo in the Chinese cultural tradition.