

What Happened on Tao or the Way?

– To the Way from a Way in a History of Chinese Thought

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I

The subject matter of this memorialized symposium is <What is happening on the Street?>. The key term <street>, needless to say, means a road in a city. I understand the aim of this symposium is to re-define a city through grasping the real meaning of an event on a street from a new perspective. But, I will talk about this theme by transforming a concrete word <street> into a metaphysical word <Way> with a capital letter. Therefore, the theme I will deal with in this symposium is changed to the problem happening on Tao or the Way, and a city disappearing from our sight.

I need to explain this change. My field of study is Chinese thought. In Imperial China, the comprehensive subject in the world of thought has been what is Tao, that is, what is the Way. In modern China, people usually write dao, but I use Tao in common use. In the Pre-Qin period (770-221B.C.), Hundred Schools put Tao into a central position and defined its significance. After Buddhism was introduced, the three doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were each put it on a firm footing. Since then, the three doctrines have struggled for supremacy over an understanding of the Way. Taoism, actually, made Tao their tenet, and hanged out the sign of a way to the letter. Buddhism, at first, called themselves Tao-jiao. In the Song Age (960-1279), Neo-Confucianism, in those days, was called Tao-xue, including the character of Way in its name. Philosophical workings for the Way have certainly faded out in history after Neo-Confucianism, but the concept of the Way has consistently played a central role in Chinese thought and life-style.

II

The original meaning of the Way is a path or a street. In Kanji cultural area, it has been used in metaphysical meaning until today, on the other hand it meant a road on which men and vehicles could come and go from ancient times. The Chinese character Way consist of road and neck, so that someone said its original meaning is not only a way, but to go and carry a human neck, that is, a human head. (Jito, by SHIRAKAWA Shizuka) SHIRAKAWA, who is a world-famous scholar of Kanji, argues that the Chinese character "Way" found on bronze ware consisted of carrying a neck. A road was a dangerous place, because anyone going on a road had a curse put on them and inevitably met with misfortune. The street

opened to a foreign country or the gate fixing the boundary was the place to contact with the outside and malicious spirits, so the rite to exorcize spirits was held rigidly. It was effective as a charm to bury an outsider's head in the boundary. The original meaning of the Way is probably the road opened to a strange land which peoples went on as exorcizing with an outsider's head. And, he continued;

Because the road opened in such way is a place where you can go feeling relieved in peace, people gave the character "way" to human actions, morals, reasons, techniques, and the only one being the source of the existence. The word of Way started from of a meaning of a rite to exorcize a road to a sublimated meaning of the most profound world. (Jito, p.656)

SHIRAKAWA's opinion is not an established theory in academic circles, and I cannot judge whether the opinion is right or wrong. When we consider seriously why the concept of the Way become a ideological idea, that is morals in Confucianism and fundamental being in Taoism, in chinese history, there is surely some doubt whether it is adequate to identify the Way with a road for people to come and go. However SHIRAKAWA's opinion may be, we can conceive that the Way originally had sacred powers.

After the Bronze Age, the Way had remained only a road, not with mythical or magical meaning, in ancient literature. According to the dictionary <Shuo wen jie zi> in 2nd century B.C., the Way was given a definition of a road which peoples walk on and goes straight to the goal. Then, we can know that the Way did have an ethical meaning at that time. The Works of Mencius in 4th century B.C. said that;

The Way of truth is like a great road. It is not difficult to know it. (Chapter VI, translation by J. Legge)

Supposing such mythical or magical meaning, it seems that the Way transferred to a road at first. But, according to a common view, it is thought that the Way transferred to a moral norm first. Confucius (551-479B.C.), the founder of Confucianism, gave the Way a higher meaning to make a takeoff from a tangible street. He said that ;

If a man in the morning hears the (right) way, he may die in the evening without regret. (Confucian Analects, Chapter IV, translation by J. Legge)

Here, the way that Confucius said is not a route to a certain place. It is the ultimate truth that a man may die without regret if he hears it. The way he usually said is, however, not a truth like a star beyond one's reach. We can express a law of the cosmos as Tian Tao, The Way of Heaven. Confucius didn't talk about man's nature, and the way of Heaven. ("The Master's discourses about man's nature, and the way of Heaven, cannot be heard. Confucian analects, Chapter V) He and his disciples were not investigators, but ascetics of the truth. A man called shi was responsible for the stabilization of people's livelihood. When

they realized their learning through social practices, people could say the Way was performed in their society. But, unfortunately, their society was far from an ideal society.

A superior man takes office, and performs the righteous duties (yi) belonging to it.

As to the failure of way to make progress, he is aware of that. (Confucian Analects, Chapter XVIII)

Confucius used the word of my way. (My way is that of an all-pervading unity. Chapter XV) He thought that this way had not been made by himself, but already created by old sages. The phrase of the way of King Wen and King Wu was used in Confucian Analects, and the phrase of the way of the ancient kings or the way of the superior men in The Works of Mencius.

The Way that Confucius and Mencius said, in the long run, was a moral norm which people had to keep in their society. To Confucius, the Way is nothing more than a norm itself, or a general term given to a norm. Later annotators explained that the Way was human heartedness and righteousness, or that the Way was propriety and music. In China moral norms are called in short "way and virtue". "Way" is a general term or a superordinate concept, virtue is a specified item. Therefore, when the Way was defined as human heartedness and righteousness, a general term was defined in terms of a specified item. OGYU Sorai(1666-1728) in the Edo period is well known as a creative thinker. He identified the Way with the way of the ancient kings, and nothing less than a political and cultural system. <Ben mei>

When the Song Dynasty organized a new political system in 10th century, Confucianism was reorganized and named the learning of the Way. The Way shined brilliantly here. Neo-Confucianism swept over East-Asia, China, Korea, and Japan. This doctrine was crowned with the Way, but its kernel was Li, that is, the principle, so named the learning of Principle. Li is the principle immanent in things that consisted of Qi, that is, Ether or vital force, whereas a supervisor of cosmos as the only one. The word of "immanent principle" is a ontologish term, but its content is indeed the path of morality, that is, human heartedness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, as Confucius had devised. Therefore, Li is apparently a general term, tong-ming, but a specified item to the Way. Zhu Xi(1130-1200) accomplished Neo-Confucianism, and said the following.

the Way is tong-ming : a general term, Li is xi mu : a specified item. <Zhu zi yu lei, vol. 6>

The concept of the Way is infinite, the concept of Li is detailed. <ibid., vol. 6>

Since Li appeared on the stage of the history of thought, the Way withdrew and gradually became ignored.

The Way is a general term. Here now, I will call the fundamental existence or norm of all things the supreme concept instead of tong ming. Tian, that is, Heaven was the supreme

concept rather than the Way for human action in Confucianism and other ancient Chinese thought. The first consideration of Heaven was the sky spreading overhead. In ancient China, it connoted God and Law. God as the second consideration creates and rules the creation, and the law as the third penetrates the creation. Human thinking develops from the concrete to the abstract, or from the outer to the inner. So I think these three considerations were to develop from sky to God, and to Law in turn. Confucianism gave the Way the position of the supreme concept with respecting Heaven, and entrusted the heart of their school to the Way. The Balance of attention shifted from Heaven to the Way even in the Taoist School, the opponent of the Confucian school. Lao-zi, the founder of Taoism, said the following in <Lao zi> (chapter 25) ;

Man models himself on earth.

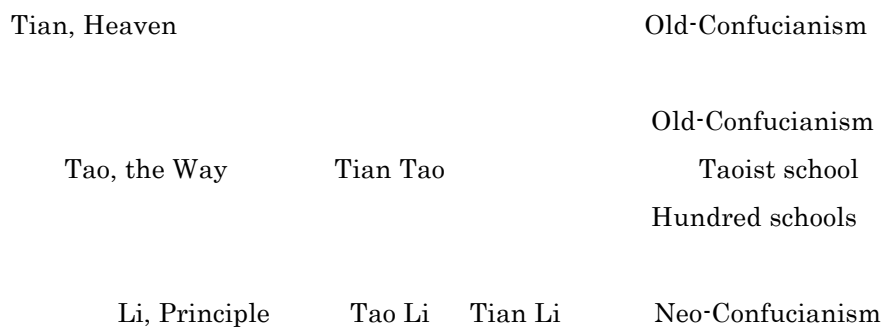
Earth models itself on heaven.

Heaven models itself on the Way.

And the Way itself on (its own) spontaneity. (translation by Ozutu Toshihiko)

In Confucianism, as previously stated, Neo-Confucianism from the 10th century had transferred the position of the supreme concept from the Way to Li. The transition of the position of the supreme concept can be surely illustrated as the following.

< Development of the supreme concept >



The cross line shows the historical trend, the oblique shows the shift of the supreme concepts along time, and the vertical line traces an interaction of each. Exactly, when Heaven goes down to meet the Way, the concept of "Tian Tao" is formed, and Heaven changes to law. When the Way met Li, "Tao Li" is ready. And, as a result of the bonding of Heaven and Li, "Tian Li" is formed. In Neo-Confucianism, "Tian Li" has a value of supreme goodness that Heaven confers to be inherent in every one. Cheng Ming-tao (1032-85), who is an important person for making Neo-Confucianism complete, boasted that he had devised the word of "Tian Li" by himself. This shows the importance of "Tian Li" in

Neo-Confucianism. Cheng's words, however, don't mean that he founded the word of "Tian Li" in the first, but that he inspired new life into this word.

Now, we may be a little far from a tangible street or a way. We must go back to the problem why that ordinary and concrete way soared up to the supreme concept in Confucianism. The Way is ambiguous in the doctrine of Confucius, but its kernel is, as mentioned above, the general term of morality people must practice to realize a good community. (The greatest virtue among them is ren, that is, human heartedness.) This results from a public and necessary and connecting character or function of a way, because Tao in Chinese is a street. Both to practice and to go, furthermore, and both to practice the way and to go on the street are expressed with the same word <xing> or <xing tao> in Chinese. Therefore, there was no serious gap between a concrete factual street to go and the normative Way to practice. Bei xi zi yi, the first philosophy dictionary in China published as a glossary of Neo-Confucianism in 13th century, mentioned this continuity between a way(or a street) and the Way as the following.

Tao is the way. Originally the meaning of the word was a path, and path means a common road for people to walk on. If it is meant for only one person, it cannot be called a road. The general principle of Tao is the principle people should follow in their daily affairs and human relations. Only what is followed by all people can be called Tao. Generally speaking, we can see intimately the idea of what is commonly followed only in daily human affairs. (translated by Wing-tsit Chan)

We can understand the continuity between a way and the Way. But, it is still open to the question why the ordinary word "way" is selected as the supreme concept. Bei xi zi yi cited above explained this in succession. That gives us a clue. It said that the origin of the Way is not man, but Heaven. It is a way or the Way that is a process or route through which all things come into being from Heaven.

If we trace its origin, it is not that in human affairs there is plainly a principle like this. Its source must be traced to Heaven. That is why Zhang zai said, "From the Great Vacuity, there is Heaven. From the transformation of material force there is the Way." This is tracing the source. Heaven is the principle. When ancient sages and worthies talked about Heaven, they mostly about talked it in term of principle. Principle has no form or shape. Because it is naturally so, it is called Heaven (Tian, nature). In terms of the physical form or body of Heaven, it is merely an accumulation of material force which is vast and boundless. In reality, what physical form or stuff does not it has ? In Zhang zai, the term of Tian means principle. Obviously principle is not something dead just lying there. As the material force of

the One Origin spread out, it produces man and things. This is what it is when one traces the source of the creative process.

III

It is not difficult to understand the takeoff from a way to the Way in Confucianism. Tao in the Taoist school has a different phase from the Way in Confucianism. <Lao zi> which is a basic classic for Taoists has also been called <Tao de jing>. On the grounds that its title has the word of Tao, it is obvious that Tao or the Way is the supreme concept in the Taoist school. It is very important that though the Way had very different contents from the Way of Confucian, it was selected by Taoists. <Lao zi> begin with the following famous sentence.

The way which can be designated by (the word) "way" is not the eternal Way. The name which can be designated by (the word) "name" is not the eternal Name.

According to popular opinion, this sentence has a defiant tone that "way" which Confucians assert is not genuine Way. Here exposes a keen ideological struggle for a sacred ground of Tao. If the writer of <Lao zi> would deny the supreme concept of Confucian, he ought to use another concept. But, he was wedded to Tao, and put new wine into old bottles. In this report, despite any doubt, I consider that the writer is Lao-zi. What was the Tao that Lao-zi said?

There is something imperceptible but real, born before heaven and earth. Silent and void, it stands alone, never changing.

It goes round everywhere, never becoming exhausted.

It may be considered the Mother of all under heaven.

I know not its name.

Forging a pseudonym, I call it the Way.

Being further forced to name it, I would call it great.

Lao-zi's Tao is chaos of the origin that has an every thing like a mother. We cannot name and define it. So we can do nothing but call it Tao at the moment. Just like a mother, Tao has every thing, but let them be and does not intervene. The Way models itself on <its own> spontaneity, hence it is almighty.

The Way is permanently inactive, yet it leaves nothing undone. (chap.37)

Whereas the Way of Confucius and Confucianism can go in human society, the Tao of Lao-zi breaks through and expands into the universe. All of Lao-zi's thought begins from Tao. He insisted that it is from Tao that people learned all ways of life, and the ruler learned all ways to reign. He said,

If lord and kings can abide by this (principle), the ten thousand things will grow up and develop of their own accord.

The aim of this report is not to mention Lao-zi's thought, so I will make no mention of it further.

There have been many interpretations and various views on Tao. In the Tang Period, when scholars tried to translate <Lao zi> into Sanskrit at the request of India, they argued whether Tao was Mrga or Bodhi. When translating into Western languages, Westerners probably troubled more about it. I will present many examples that TAKEUCHI Yoshio collected. (from "A Study of Lao Zi")

- 1, the first translation of <Lao zi> into Latin (by an unknown translator) Ratio
- 2, Abel R musat Logos that have three meanings; the highest, principle, and language. (1825)
- 3, Stanislas Julien He translated the title of <Lao zi> as "Le Livre de la voie et la vertu" , and Tao as a road. He said in his commentary that the Way was not far from nature in Western. (1842)
- 4, Archdeacon Hardwick a certain power like nature, namely "initial principle of life and order" .
- 5, Balfour nature in the sense of natura naturans to natura naturata (1881)
- 6, Straus God (1870)
- 7, James Legge Tao (transliteration)
- 8, Max M ller Similar to Rita in Veda, that is, the oldest religious literature in India. Rita had a meaning of going or a road at first as ri meant going, and turned to the meaning of the law or order of the universe before long.

Max M ller in the above 8 made an interesting comparison between the Way and Rita. Apart from the problem whether there was exchange or connection of Veda with <Lao zi>, there may have been deep hidden inner relations of the Way to the principle beyond cultural differences.

Setting Max M ller aside, we will return to our subject. Those are three problems why a concrete way turned to the supreme concept of the basic existence unrelated with a way; whether Lao-zi's Tao has a different origin from a way, and if it so, why the word of way and none other was selected.

About the first problem, various theories have been put forward, and there is no established theory still now. TAKEUCHI said that because Tao does not stop working as if a way lets peoples come and go, Tao was named so. Recently, some put forward the theory that the linear and intentional character of a way linked with emanatio theory that a way creates all things. ("Dictionary of the History of Idea in China" , Tokyo U. P.) On the other hand, UNO Shigehiko insisted that the ontology which regarded Tao as the origin of all things developed from Zhuang-zi's thought that Tao put all things on itself. ("Zhuang-zi" , chap. tian di)

In my opinion, Lao-zi had only to think about the supreme concept of a way at the time, because the word of way attained a position of itself, and he didn't have to take account of a meaning of a tangible street or path any longer. So that he won the Imperial standard by renewal of contents of the supreme concept without a restraint of the original meaning of a street or a path. If that's the case, I could say that Confucians impressed the character of Heaven on a way, and Lao-zi inversely projected the character of Earth on Tao. Heaven rules and controls all things like a father. In contrast, Earth like a mother has every thing, but let them be and do not intervene. It is not a coincidence that Tao was expressed by the metaphor of a mother, water, and an infant in <Lao zi>. It is not absurd to say that we can find a vestige of the mythological Mother Earth in Tao. But, Earth or Mother Earth comes close to a way or a path as the original meaning of Tao. Therefore, I must revise my opinion that the renewal of the Way has no restraint of the original meaning which I mentioned just a little while ago, and we can consider as a matter of course that when a writer of <Lao zi> renewed contents of the supreme concept, that is, the Way, he became conscious of the similarity between the earth and a way.

IV

The historical context on Lao-zi and Zhuang-zi is complicated. Generally speaking, Zhuang-zi followed Lao-zi. But, both of them have been completed not in one effort, but over hundreds years. Then, we cannot declare that the contents described in <Lao zi> are older than in <Zhuang-zi>. And, <Zhuang-zi> takes over the old mythological part. But, as I cannot relate in detail, I assume here that Zhuang-zi followed Lao-zi. Still more, the Taoist school includes Zhuang-zi too, and the both merged to be called Lao Zhuang.

Now, I have no time to spare to relate Zhuang-zi's Tao in detail. So I will indicate only some peculiar points. Tao in Zhuang-zi tends toward pantheism, because Tao is imagined as a great existence that is unified by transcending an individual through mental training, and as living within ants, tiles, and even just excreta.

Tao-jiao, that is, the Taoist religion had been under the influence of Lao Zhuang, and adopted folk beliefs and Buddhism, and it was systematized as religion that went toward immortality. Tao-jiao had deified Tao together with Lao-zi, so that Tao became Tai-shang-Tao-jun, and the phrase that Tao said as the following appeared in the Taoist scriptures. (Lao-zi became Tai-shang-Lao-jun.) Tao-jiao, on the other hand, insisted that people could obtain immortality by getting Tao through physical and mental training. Tao becomes the biggest mainstay of the doctrine of Taoist as its name.

In Buddhism, Lao-Zhuang's Tao played the role of the mediator on the process of receiving Indian religions in China. Buddhism was, as a matter of fact, called Tao-jiao at

the beginning. Tao in Tao-jiao is the supreme concept, and nearer to the Taoist school's Tao than Confucian's, because the Buddhistic supreme concept of buddhe, bodhi, etc. was grasped with Tao in Lao-Zhuang when the sutra in India was translated into Chinese.

Since then, the thought of Tao flows swiftly through Chinese culture and thought as a big stream. But, as stated above, the stream has two Tao-systems of Confucianism and Taoism in the end. I will end the pursuit of Tao or the Way in China for the present, and I will introduce some aspect of Japanese culture of a way in conclusion. ("Way" is pronounced michi or dou in Japanese.)

The Japanese like the word "way". Aspects of Japanese culture with a worldwide reputation usually use the word "way", pronounced dou.

Entertainment

sadou, Tea Ceremony

Kadou, Flower Arrangement

Shodou, Calligraphy

Geidou, The way of the performing arts

Martial arts, and sport

Judou

Kendou, Japanese swordsmanship

Kyudou, The Way of Japanese archery

Religion

Shintou, A natural religion indigenous to Japan

Onn myou dou, A general term of Fixing a date, Astrology, Physiognomy,
Divination, Rite to exorcize, etc.

What kind of meaning have these "michi"? I will not comment on Shinto and Onn myou dou on the grounds that they are very complicated.

At first, I will take up Shodou because it is easy to understand. Shodou was imported from China. It is called Shu fa in China. Fa is one skill or technique. The same is added the word of "way", that is, "dou" in Japan. These ways must have one allegory in Zhuang-zi as its base. When Pao-ding of a cook (his name means kitchen knife) showed his skill before the king of Wen-hui-jun, he won the highest praise from the king. The king was moved to say that man could advance in his technique so far. Pao-ding replied that I looked for Tao that was more than a technique.

In China, Wisdom is, broadly speaking, evaluated according to a three-grade system; Tao or the Way, "ji" or technique, and "shu" or art. "Ji" is a technique, and "shu" is divination. It is the learning of Tao that reigns over them. It is Pao-ding's saying that he attained Tao beyond over the technique in his cooking skill. Here saying Tao is not the Way of morality in Confucianism, but the reality or Truth that exists in the depths of the universe, and

makes the universe exist. In Shodou, its aim is set that man will become not only skillful, but one with the reality or Truth through practice of writing to learn the technique. So that writing is not practice to write well, but a training to seek the Truth.

We can fundamentally say the same thing about Sadou or Kadou. Sadou, in particular, developed originally in Japan, and give a profound philosophical significance to ordinary actions to take a tea, divided into parts, and made into a ceremony and pattern.

Our Japanese don't add Dou to modern sports brought in from Europe, but do so frequently to old Japanese martial arts. Judou was called Ju-jyutu in old times, and given the name Judo in the Meiji era. Judou's spirit is that soft methods often get the better of brute force. It is the very thing of Lao-zi's thought. (chap.36)

The martial arts called Bu-dou, however, have the aim that man improves himself and acquires courtesy through improving a technique to defeat his enemy. Dou in Bu-dou takes in the Way of the Confucian system. Bu-shi-dou is the moral code for the class of Bu-shi, that is, samurai, or warriors. It is undoubtedly The Way of the Confucian system, because its kernel is chuu-gi, that is, loyalty.

There are other cultures of michi in Japan. HAYASHIYA said that when michi became dou, the culture of the Way began to go bad. (Hayashiya Tatsusaburou and others, Nihon no michi, The Japanese Way) He said that Mononofu-no-michi, for example, existed before Bu-shi-dou, but in consequence that Michi became dou, it became authorized, stiff, and lost its creative power.

As to a tangible way, there is a culture that finds the significance in coming and going on a street or a way in Japan. It is true that we can see Jyunlei, that is, pilgrimage all over the world. But, in the Edo period, MATSUO Bashou (1644-94) completed his literature through walking on the narrow road to the deep North (Oku-no hosomichi). In the medieval period, it is nothing else but a street that was the training place and the missionary place for the Buddhist priest Ippen (1239-89).

The above shows us that various street cultures have flourished in Japan as in China. I want to take the opportunity, while I am here, to learn about Thailand's rich street culture. Walking, going, and the street are the cradle which leads to thought, and the fostering of culture.