

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 memorial 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.), the Hundred Schools put Tao into a central position and defined its significance. After Buddhism was introduced, the three doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism 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 hung out the sign of a way to the letter. Buddhists, 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 with a metaphysical meaning until today, on the other hand it has also from ancient times meant a road on which men and vehicles could come and go. The Chinese character Way 道 consists of road 辵 and neck 首, so that some say 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" 道 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 make contact with the outside and malicious spirits, so rites to exorcize spirits were rigidly upheld. It was thought effective as a charm to bury an outsider's head on the boundary. The original meaning of the Way is probably the road opened to a strange land which people went on after exorcism 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 as the source of all existence. The word Way started from meaning a rite to exorcize a road to become 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 became an idea in Chinese history i.e. morals in Confucianism and fundamental being in Taoism, there is surely some doubt whether it is adequate to identify the Way with a road for people to come and go on. Whatever SHIRAKAWA's opinion may be, we can conceive that the Way originally had sacred powers.

After the Bronze Age, the Way remained in ancient literature only a road, without mythical or magical meaning. According to the dictionary <Shuo wen jie zi> in the 2nd century B.C., the Way was given the definition of a road which people walk on and goes straight to the goal. Therefore, we can know that the Way did have an ethical meaning at that time. The Works of Mencius in the 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 referred to a road at first. But, according to a common view, it is thought that the Way referred to a moral norm first. Confucius (551-479B.C.), the founder of Confucianism, gave the Way a higher meaning transcending 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 describes is not a route to a certain place. It is the ultimate truth which if a man hears it he may die without regret. The Way he usually talks about is, however, not a truth like a star beyond one's reach. We can express the

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 ascetic followers 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 term "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, the Way of King Wen and King Wu was used in Confucian Analects, and the phrase, the Way of the ancient kings or the Way of the superior men in the Works of Mencius.

The Way that Confucius and Mencius spoke of, was in the long run 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 the 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 the Principle. Li is the principle immanent in things that consist of Qi, that is, Ether or vital force, whereas a supervisor of the cosmos is the only one. The word "immanent principle" is an ontological 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 of the Way. Zhu Xi(1130-1200) the accomplished Neo-Confucianist, 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>
From when 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 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.

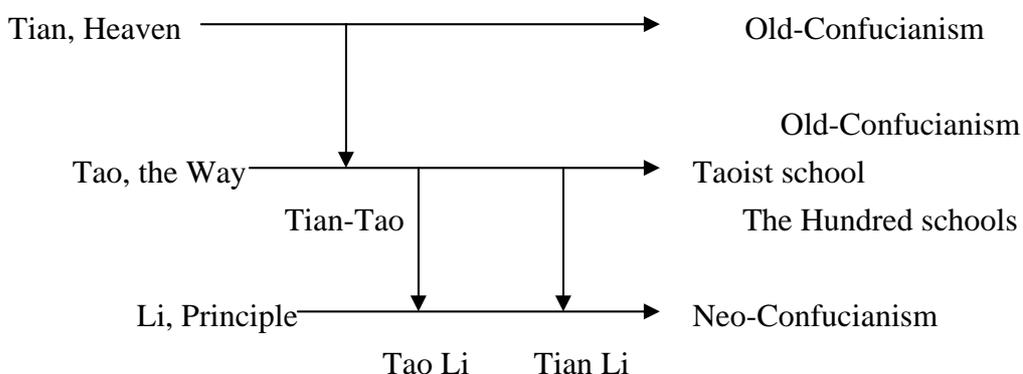
Earth models itself on heaven.

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 in 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 the interaction of each. Exactly, where

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 which Heaven confers as inherent in every one. Cheng Ming-tao (1032-85), who is an important person in making Neo-Confucianism complete, boasted that he had devised the word "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 "Tian Li" in the first, but that he breathed new life into this word.

At this point, we may be a little far from a tangible street or a way. Therefore we must go back to the problem of why that ordinary and concrete way soared up to become the supreme concept in Confucianism. The Way is ambiguous in the doctrine of Confucius, but its kernel is, as mentioned above, the general term for the 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 on and the normative Way to practice. Bei xi zi yi, the first philosophy dictionary in China published as a glossary of Neo-Confucianism in the 13th century, mentioned this continuity between a way(or a street) and the Way as follows:

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 of why the ordinary word "way" was selected as the supreme concept. Bei xi zi yi cited above explained this in terms of 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 talked about it in terms 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 it not have ? In Zhang zai, the term Tian means principle. Obviously principle is not something dead just lying there. As the material force of the One Origin spread out, it produced 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 transition 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 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 Confucianism, it was selected by Taoists. <Lao zi> begins 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 the genuine Way. Here is exposed a keen ideological struggle for the sacred ground of Tao. If the writer of <Lao zi> would deny the supreme concept of Confucianism, he ought to use another concept. But, he was wedded to Tao, and put new wine into old bottles. In this report, despite any doubts, I consider that the writer is Lao-zi. What was the Tao that Lao-zi spoke of ?

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 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 lets 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 operates 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 discuss Lao-zi's thought, so I will make no further mention of it.

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 Mārga or Bodhi. When translating into Western languages, Westerners probably troubled more over 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 thought. (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 Müller: Similar to Ṛita in Veda, that is, the oldest religious literature in India. Ṛita had a meaning of “going” or a “road” at first as “ri” meant “going”, and changed to the meaning of the law or order of the universe before long.

Max Müller No.8 above made an interesting comparison between the Way and Rita. Apart from the problem whether there was an exchange or connection between Veda and <Lao zi>, there may have been deep hidden inner relations of the Way to a principle beyond cultural differences.

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

About the first problem, various theories have been put forward, and there is still no

established theory till now. TAKEUCHI said that because Tao does not stop working, the same as a way lets people come and go, Tao was named so. Recently, some have put forward the theory that the linear and intentional character of a way is linked with emanatio theory, in 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 "way" had attained a position of itself, and he didn't have to take account of the meaning of a tangible street or path any longer. So he won the Imperial standard by renewal of the contents of the supreme concept without the 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 not the restraint of the original meaning which I mentioned just a little while ago, and we can consider as a matter of course that when the writer of <Lao zi> renewed the contents of the supreme concept, that is, the Way, he became conscious of the similarity between the earth and a way.

The historical context on Lao-zi and Zhuang-zi is complicated. Generally speaking, Zhuang-zi followed Lao-zi. But, both of them were completed not in one effort, but over hundreds of years. Therefore, we cannot declare that the contents described in <Lao zi> are older than in <Zhuang-zi>, or that, <Zhuang-zi> took over the old mythological part. But, as I cannot relate in detail, I will assume here that Zhuang-zi followed Lao-zi. Furthermore, the Taoist school includes Zhuang-zi too, and they 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 existing within ants, tiles, and even excreta.

Tao-jiao, that is, the Taoist religion had been under the influence of Lao Zhuang, and had adopted folk beliefs and Buddhism, and it was systematized as a 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 such as "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 acquiring Tao through physical and mental training. Tao becomes the biggest mainstay of the doctrine with Taoism as its name.

In Buddhism, Lao-Zhuang's Tao played the role of mediator in the process of receiving Indian religions into 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 as 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 a Japanese culture of '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.

Firstly, 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. To 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, 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 note that man could advance in his technique so far. Pao-ding replied that he looked for Tao and that 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 over and beyond technique in his cooking skill. Here, 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 reality or Truth through the 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 gave a profound philosophical significance to ordinary actions to take tea, divided into parts, and made into a ceremony and pattern.

The 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 olden 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 techniques 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 of Michi becoming dou, it became authorized, stiff, and lost its creative power.

As to a tangible way, there is a culture that finds significance in the 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.