

From Chuang-tzu's Way to Jesus Christ as the Way

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The following essay is a résumé of a project the author has been working on for several years to develop a Christian theology of the Way. The text and translations are reprinted here in their original form with only minor editorial adjustments.

Introduction

Chinese Culture has had an immense influence on the whole area of Southeast Asia for the past two thousand and several hundred years, from ancient times right up to the present. The breadth and depth of Chinese Culture in the area is as magnificent in scale and achievement as anything to be found in the spheres of Western European Culture or Indian Culture. And the intellectual tradition represented by Lao-tzu's and Chuang-tzu's ideas of the Way seems to me clearly superior to anything found in those cultural spheres.

Accordingly, I should like to speak here of these ideas of the Way and their relation to Christian theology. To begin with, I would like to present a sketch of Chuang-tzu's idea of the Way. Then I will take up Matsuo Bashō's idea of the Way, and finally I will turn to a brief account of "Jesus Christ as the Way" viewed in the light of Chuang-tzu's and Bashō's ideas.

There are two reasons why I need to refer to Bashō's thought here. First, I feel it necessary to present some concrete evidence of the tremendous influence of Chinese Culture on Japanese Culture. I am reminded of Aristotle's dictum that "Everything that is received is received according to the mode of the recipient." Bashō loved Chuang-tzu and took over this thought body and soul. Still, he could not help transforming it into something his very own in the process of assimilation. It

is interesting to note that Bashō's thought, based on his appropriation of Chuang-tzu's thought, is closer in content to the idea of "Jesus Christ as the Way" than it is the original thought of Chuang-tzu. This leads me to conclude that Bashō may serve as the best guide for our journey "from Chuang-tzu's Way to Jesus Christ as the Way." This is the second reason I have chosen to allude to Bashō's thought here.

My final goal in all of this is to follow the example set by Thomas Aquinas, who was the first to succeed in establishing a grand "system of theology" by introducing into Christianity the philosophical frameworks of Platonism and Aristotelianism. Just as Thomas formulated his theology in terms of Greek philosophy, I would like to set up a "Theology of the Way" by shedding new light on "Jesus Christ as the Way" with the help of frameworks borrowed from Eastern ideas of the Way. I have been writing a series of articles on "An Introduction to a Theology of the Way" for the Japanese Catholic monthly *Century* for the past three years, and now feel that I am well on the way in my project. Here it is not possible to summarize the whole of my progress to date. Rather, I would like to concentrate on the first section, which tries to explain how Chuang-tzu's and Bashō's powerful way of communicating their ideas of the Way can serve to illuminate our belief in Jesus Christ as the Way.

If I may anticipate the conclusion of the theology of the Way, I would note here the interesting fact that there seems to be something Christian about Bashō's assimilation of Chuang-tzu's thought of the Way when viewed in terms of the vertical "working" of Jesus Christ as the Way. At the same time, Jesus Christ as the Way is seen to be both creator of all things, and a fundamental force setting history in motion as well as an inner moving power and ultimate goal leading all "human beings as wayfarers" to salvation. If Bashō's transformation of Chuang-tzu's idea of the Way in fact conforms to the Christian idea, we then have a basis for seeing Jesus Christ as the Way intrinsically at work in "Bashō as wayfarer" and thus for discerning something Christian in his thought.

Chuang-tzu's Idea of the Tao

In line with the chapter entitled "The Equality of All Things" 齊物論篇 we may summarize the thought of Chuang-tzu 莊子 as follows:

1. All things between Heaven and Earth are the dynamic embodiments of the truth of being called the Way 道. Therefore, if we act in

conformity to our heavenly natures, we are content with our lot and are able to live happily. (This is called 自得 “self-sufficiency.”)

2. We must see that all things are originally one in order to realize the Way.

3. And in order to see all things as one from such a standpoint, we must transcend all worldly things and all earthly events.

4. What we must abandon above all is our impertinent sense of discrimination that makes us distinguish between beautiful and ugly, good and bad, and so on.

5. When we deny even ourselves, our true selves are revealed and we become absolutely free and non-abiding true persons 真人.

6. It is only then that we will know for sure that we are one with all things, that everything is an embodiment of the Way, and that all things exist in joy and peace in the Way.

According to the philosophy of Chuang-tzu, such things as complete liberation 離脫 non-abiding freedom 自由無碍, the oneness of the self and all things 万物一体, and the self-sufficiency of all things 物皆自得 are dynamically interrelated. Just as all things are continually flowing from one moment to the next, the Way, the moving power in all things, flows on and on without end. In this sense Chuang-tzu differs from Lao-tzu, who conceives of the Way as the source of all things between Heaven and Earth, that is to say, as a static and ontological entity.

Chuang-tzu conceives of the Way as the dynamic force working as the moving force inherent in all things between Heaven and Earth:

The Way is the current of the dynamic force without beginning and without end. In this original current of the Way all things come and go, realizing themselves. With all its creations and evolutions, the Way will never boast having reached fulfillment. Now empty and now full, the Way never retains its form for so much as a single moment (“Autumn Water” 秋水 chapter of his *Outer Chapters* 外篇)

Aware of the dynamic working of the Way, Chuang-tzu stresses the “freedom” of mind to “play” with things (“The World of Human Beings”, 人間世篇) and to forget the self (“Heaven and Earth” 天地篇), rather than “return to the Way of the ancients” as claimed by Lao-tzu. One becomes poor and free of attachments to the secular world not in order to escape this world and flee to another, celestial world. Poverty and non-attachment rather unite with the Way and with all things between Heaven and Earth so that we may act freely, striding beyond Heaven and Earth.

Chuang-tzu dreams that he has turned into a butterfly. He is the butterfly, and the butterfly him. The free world in which Chuang-tzu lives is a world where all beings freely interchange into one another, breaking through the obstacles of discrimination set up by common sense — namely, the mind that distinguishes between one thing and another, between Chuang-tzu and the butterfly. Chuang-tzu calls such a world the “world of integration” 物化世界. Both Chuang-tzu and the butterfly are equally revelations of the Way. When we see the world in integration with the Way, we find the “world of integration” open up before our eyes with all things freely interchanging into one another.

Chuang-tzu describes the freedom of mind impressively with the image of a great phoenix in a chapter entitled “Wandering in Absolute Freedom” 逍遙遊篇. The title refers to an absolutely free way of living, unfettered by anything. Chuang-tzu compares this free and non-attached state of being to the flight of a giant phoenix 大鵬.

The phoenix was originally a huge fish with a mammoth body measuring thousands of *ri* long (a *ri* is about 3.9 kilometers). When the time came for the giant fish to be totally transfigured, it turned into a huge phoenix thousands of *ri* tall. When it “braced itself to fly,” its wings spread out across the blue of the sky like massive clouds. When it flapped its wings, it could soar to a height of over 90,000 *ri*. Looking down from such a height, it could see this world all wrapped in a single cloak of blue that absorbed all discriminations and oppositions. The phoenix flew southward across the infinite expanse of sky, unhindered.

Chuang-tzu teaches that in order to live as freely and naturally as the phoenix we must be in “non-action” 無為. “Non-action” does not mean doing nothing, but returning to our original self. It means a re-integration with the “Creator” 造物主, the Way, in order to “enjoy ourselves in the all-encompassing energy of Heaven and Earth” (see the chapter on “The Great Religious Teacher” 大宗師篇), abandoning all our human schemes, thoughts, and discriminations. “The unifying energy of Heaven and Earth” has to do with the dynamic, moving power of the universe from which all new things are born and into which all things return in extinction. Acting naturally and in conformity with the working of the “all-unifying energy of Heaven and Earth” means “enjoying oneself by acting in non-action” as Chuang-tzu puts it. (I am relying here on the reading of Fukunaga Mitsujii 福永光司, *Sōshi naihen* 莊子內篇, Tokyo: Asahi Publishing Co., 1978.) To put it more concretely, the true self will be revealed and the true person will be born if

the “self” is negated in addition to achieving non-attachment to honor, status, and property. The true person thus born is indeed the one embodying the Way. He is called “supreme person” 至人, “spiritual person” 神人, and “holy person” 聖人 by Chuang-tzu.

We may also mention in this regard the “native land of being without being” 無可有鄉, which refers to a state of being transcending all earthly things. The supreme person is one who finds repose and enjoyment in absolute freedom in “the native land of being without being.” Hence these words suggest the home of the one in whom the Way has been embodied.

Chuang-tzu not only taught lofty theories but practiced them himself. We read in the *Works of Chuang-tzu* that he rejected the invitation of the King of Ch’u 楚王 and distanced himself from anything leading to honor and distinction. In the presence of the King of Wei, Chuang-tzu assumed a free manner, dressed in tatters and completely resigned to his noble poverty. Once when Chuang-tzu met a man from his home town who was very proud of his worldly success and distinction, he could not refrain from upbraiding him with the words, “You filthy fellow, licking the piles on the hindquarters of influential men!” Such was the extent of his life in absolute freedom and non-attachment, transcending all secular and earthly things.

Chuang-tzu’s idea of the “creative working of nature” 造化 is particularly important for a theology of the Way. Let us then look more closely at the chapter on “the Great Religious Teacher” of Chuang-tzu’s work. This idea of a “creative working of nature” derives from an idea apparently stemming from his friend Tzu 子 on the occasion of a visit to a dying friend named Tzu Lai 子來:

The creative working of nature is great. It caused you to be born and is going to let you go now. At the command of his parents, a child would fly anywhere they tell him. The Way (the principle of the universe) is incomparably greater than one’s parents. If a man disobeys the will of his creator who intends to make him die soon, his resistance is selfish. A man was given his form as a human being by the hands of the creator. Heaven and Earth is a great hearth 驢, and the creator is a great founder. We should calmly obey him by abandoning ourselves to his workings in whatever way he may change us.

The terms “creator of things” 造物主 and “creative transformer” 造化主 used by Chuang-tzu might seem to suggest a personal creator,

but his idea of the creative working of nature makes it clear that his meaning is different from the Christian idea of creation by a personal, let alone trinitarian, God. It has to do rather with the control of the world by the will (or principle) of the universe. Since all things in this universe are controlled by this will, it is regarded as violation to disobey this will. That is to say, Chuang-tzu insists that it is against a person's original way of being to disobey it. In this respect Chuang-tzu's idea of nature conforms to the thought of Christianity, though, unlike Chuang-tzu Christianity teaches that it is a sin to revolt against the merciful and trinitarian God. This point of coincidence between Christianity and the thought of Chuang-tzu is important for a theology of the Way, but this is not the place to enter into a more detailed discussion.

Chuang-tzu 's Idea of the Way and the Hebrew-Christian Idea of God

Chuang-tzu's idea of the 'Way tells us Christians that the "Creator is the inner moving force behind humanity and all things. Chuang-tzu's idea of the Way helps us rediscover an important aspect of the biblical idea of God hitherto neglected in Western Christianity. In Western Christianity, under the influence of Greek thought, God is like a Platonic Idea, an eternally constant and absolute being transcending this perpetually changing and impermanent world. The biblical God, on the contrary, steps directly into the midst of history as our fellow-wayfarer or *dogyo ninin* 同行二人. Yahweh is "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Yahweh called Abraham (Gen. 3) and accompanied him on his journey as its inner moving force, spoke to him, associated with him as a friend (Gen. 18:17), and led him to the "Promised Land." Yahweh did the same with Isaac and Jacob. Moreover, Yahweh had Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land, and resided with them in their tabernacles.

Yahweh went before them by day in the form of a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in the form of a pillar of fire to give them light; thus they could continue their march by day and by night. The pillar of cloud never failed to go before the people during the day, nor the pillar of fire during the night (Ex.13:21-22).

How then does the biblical idea of God differ from that of Greek thought, and what does it have in common with Chuang-tzu's idea of the Way? The difference between Hebrew and Greek thinking is a

result of their different views of the human and their different ideas of what it is to know. The Greek philosophers defined the human as a “rational animal.” They begin by rationalizing the created world and then, through analogy, contemplate (*theorein*) the celestial God “from below.” In this way they begin with a knowledge of this perpetually changing and impermanent earthly world and from there pass on to a knowledge of God, through comparison, as an absolute, unchanging being.

In contrast to the Greek philosophers, Hebrew thinkers in the Bible speak of human beings as “*wayfarers* being guided by God.” They experience with their whole persons, body and mind, the God who works” in the midst of human history and associates with people personally. While the Greeks contemplate God from without, the Hebrews come to know God in an embodied way, “from within,” and are filled with the “working” of God. The Greek contemplation of God aims at a grasp of the supreme Good as an idea entertained by reason, whereas the Hebrews are aware with their entire being (*yādā*) of their “meta-coexistent” God, as the Source of life.

How does it come about that the biblical God has something in common with Chuang-tzu’s Way? There are two reasons. First, neither of them tries to know the Source of all things, that is, God or the Way, by means of reason. Instead, they try to realize the Source with their whole body and mind by becoming a nothingness, by becoming free from attachment to things, and by trying to live in perfect accord with the “working” of the Source. Second, both of them deny the argument from causation to God advocated by Greek philosophy. Instead of trying to deduce God’s existence and essence by appealing to a law of cause-and-effect, they resort to “meta-ethical leaps” into nothingness and self-liberation in order to live in the midst of the “workings” of the Source, in order to know (*yādā*) the Way and God. As a result, unlike Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu regards the Way as an inner moving force, and all things in this universe as dynamic beings in motion. Likewise, the biblical God is a “meta-dynamism,” infinitely transcending every kind of dynamic motion. He is in essence a “God at work.”

Bashō’s Idea of the Way

Matsuo Bashō is one of the most famous poets in Japanese history and is known as the supreme master of the *haikai* 俳諧 or seventeen-syllable poem. Bashō was born at Ueno in Iga in the twenty-first year of the

Kan'ei era (1644) and died in Osaka on October 13 in the seventh year of the Genroku era (1694). Of his fifty-one years of life, the last ten years were literally devoted to journeys. His *haikai* journals alone count for five volumes of his total output: *Nozarashi kikō* (1684), *Kashima kikō* (1687), *Oi no kobumi*, *Sarashina kikō* (1688), and *Oku no hosomichi* (1689). Apart from these recorded journeys, Bashō was often on the road.

Why did Bashō travel? The answer leads us into his historical background. The age in which he lived was one of prosperity. In the time of the Genroku era, *haikai* literature was flourishing and the *haikai* circles were at their peak of performance. Already from early on, Bashō had established himself a firm reputation in the world of poetry, having been elected one of Edo's representative *tenja* 点者 or leading *haikai* critics. In later years, Bashō would reminisce on those days, "Am one time I was so proud of myself, I wished only to outdo others."

But worldly success failed to satisfy Bashō and he began to grow uneasy about the style of *haikai* practiced by the Danrin School that had formerly fascinated him. It was around this time that he began to be filled with doubts about the way of life in the big city of Edo with its ceaseless quest for honor and distinction.

The thirty-seven year old Bashō moved to Fukagawa, an out-of-the-way place across the River Sumida from Nihonhashi in the center of Edo, to lead a life of seclusion, apparently in the attempt to put an end to his doubts and uncertainties.

Soon after his move to Fukagawa, Bashō paid a visit to the Rinzaï Zen master Butchō, and then took up residence to begin the practice of Zen under the master. He "thought of realizing his folly by learning Zen for some time" (*Oi no kobumi*). This change of mind was immediately reflected in his works. Compared with the poems he had written before his seclusion, his later compositions show a striking revolution in thinking. By this time Bashō had begun to reflect anew on literature in terms of the fundamental question of what life is all about. For the rest of his life he would pursue this same road in quest of the unification of literature and life, a quest he embodied in his wanderings.

It was during this period of his conversion that Bashō's cottage burned down in the great Edo fire. Having no place to live, he was forced to leave Edo and turn to a disciple of his in Kōshū for shelter. In September of the following year he built the hermitage of Bashō-an at Fukagawa with the assistance of his disciples. The unexpected fire brought Bashō to a point where he had nothing to call his own and urged him to a wanderer's life. In this way he was able to experience

bodily the taste of “folly” taught by his master Butchō. Instead of allowing this misfortune to be no more than a mere misfortune, Bashō made it a turning point for spiritual advance. It is no exaggeration to say that this spiritual elevation was behind his setting out on the journey of “*nozarashi*, possible death on the way.” Unexpectedly, the life of the wanderer to which disaster had driven him filled him with a sense of spiritual exaltation and an irresistible desire for non-abiding, like clouds fleeting across the sky. In this sense, seclusion from the world did not mean negative non-action for Bashō, but an awakening to an original way of human being that led one to the True Way. Furthermore, it served as a driving force behind his journeys, preparing him to die in the wilderness on the way if necessary.

As an example of Bashō’s use of the works of Chuang-tzu, the following term appears twice in his works: “the native land of being without being.” Both works that use the expression were produced around the time of his early seclusion at Fukagawa. Judging from the use of such terms, Bashō must have been touched deeply by Chuang-tzu’s ideas and way of life. With the knowledge of the “effect without effect” taught by Chuang-tzu, Bashō must have been very anxious to be liberated from all worldly things to enjoy himself freely in the “native land of being without being,” however much he might be abused as a “useless man.

Another important term he took from the Chinese classics is “nothingness,” which we find used at the outset of *Nozarashi kikō*. This term, though directly quoted from Priest Kuang Wên’s *Chiang-ch’ao Fêng-Yüeh chi*, an anthology of poems on rivers, tides, winds, and the moon, actually derives from the “native land of being without being” spoken of by Chuang-tzu. This should make it clear that Bashō appealed to the transcendental spirit of Chuang-tzu and supported himself during his long journey with the ideal of a “native land of being without being.” His spirit of resignation to death on his journeys through the wilderness was aimed at the utopia of freedom and non-attachment promised by Chuang-tzu; it was the ideal of Chuang-tzu, we might even say, that kept him alive along the way.

Bashō thus came to an awareness of history through the works of Chuang-tzu and this basic encounter kept going on, through one journey after another. He came to discover his immediate ties to the Way, despite his lack of ability or mental and personal accomplishment, as he himself writes at the beginning of his *Ushin kikō*. Bashō did not merely follow Chuang-tzu in his way of living, but discovered his own Way as a

haiku poet of Japan in seventeenth century Japan. We may rightly use Jaspers's term "existential recollection" to describe Bashō's creative awareness of history, a point we shall return to in conclusion.

Bashō took over the destiny common to all human beings as taught by Chuang-tzu, actively fulfilled the mission imposed on him by this destiny, and creatively discovered his own way, that is to say, an original way of being. Bashō's discovery of the Way must have been conditioned by his encounters with Saigyō, Sōgi, Sesshū, Rikyū, and his master Butchō. He was well aware of a oneness with these great predecessors who had lived the common destiny of all humanity and had an intuitive experience of the Way penetrating all of them.

Jesus Christ as the Way in the Light of Chuang-tzu and Bashō

The most important lesson Bashō learned from Chuang-tzu was freedom from attachment to worldly honor and openness to the total experience of poverty. He not only learned this teaching of Chuang-tzu but practiced it with his whole person, as testified by his haiku poem *Jitoku no sen* or 自得箴 "The Precept of Self-sufficiency." As mentioned earlier, the idea of *jitoku* stems from the works of Chuang-tzu. The poem, with its introductory lines reads:

As the year is drawing to a close,
I have enough gifts and alms to keep from starving to death.
Old at year end
I might be counted
Among men of bliss.

The introductory lines depict vividly the life of privation Bashō was undergoing at that time. Ordinarily, *haikai* poets would make a living by correcting poems composed by their pupils. Bashō, however, did not charge any correction fees, depending for an honest livelihood only on contributions voluntarily made by disciples who longed for his "Way of *fūga* (*haikai*)."

At first glance, it might seem that the life of poverty Bashō followed was far removed from the life of blissful persons. But for Bashō, who was content with his poverty, it was precisely this life that merited him a place among "men of bliss." The irony of this identification of poverty with bliss echoes the beatitudes of Jesus who calls himself the "Way." One can hardly fail to associate the poem with the words of the Sermon on the Mount:

How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3–12).

The coincidence is no mere fantasy. For a theology of the Way, there is nothing unusual about such a mutual resonance between Jesus and Bashō, for all of us, as wayfarers, are kept alive and supported by the “Way” of Jesus (John 14:6) on our journey, as I shall discuss later.

Poverty is bliss. The paradox of dedicated poverty as bliss is the truth experienced by any authentic wayfarer. And it is this very paradox that is the source of security, for only those who have experienced bliss in poverty are entitled to real security on earth.

Seen in this light, it is not without significance that Bashō entitled his poem *Jitoku no sen*. *Jitoku* (literally, self-acquisition) refers to one’s own enlightenment, pleasure, and security. Bashō must have realized the bliss of poverty with his whole person, must have delighted in it and found repose in the state of bliss stemming from poverty. *Sen* carries a double-meaning: self-admonition and an acupuncture needle used to cure disease. Bashō’s choice of the word *sen* shows that he was aware of the paradox of bliss in dedicated poverty both as the aim of his journey as well as means of self-admonition.

What makes Bashō different from Chuang-tzu is his tenderness of heart. Bashō calls to the sleeping butterfly to wake up and be his friend. He talks to a flock of sparrows as his friends. In my reading of Chuang-tzu, I have never come across any passage in which he treats a flower or bird or the wind or the moon as a friend. Chuang-tzu scholars are agreed that he not only shunned the world of ordinary people but was also given to ridiculing sages and turning the truth of the universe into dung. He laughs away life and all things in the universe. He could not bring himself to call any beautiful little bird or insect in nature his friend, and he seems lacking in mender-heartedness. Bashō, on the contrary, follows the tradition of Japanese poetry in which flowers, birds, the wind, and the moon are valued more highly than anything else. Hence, whereas Bashō had a profound encounter with Chuang-tzu, he eventually parts paths with him to pursue a new way of his own presumably by delving into the depths of his being, encountering his Japanese predecessors just as he turned to the depths of his being in order to first encounter Chuang-tzu.

A theology of the Way will note that what Bashō discovered in the depths of his being corresponds to the Way of St. Francis of Assisi who similarly addresses the sun, the birds, and the wind as friends. The similarity between Bashō’s Way and the Way walked by Francis suggests a

common Source supporting them both and keeping them alive. For a theology of the Way, this source is Jesus Christ the Way as the moving force driving the history of all humanity. We shall have more to say of this presently.

There is another point of difference between Bashō and Chuang-tzu. Unlike Chuang-tzu, Bashō made much of his friends and regarded companionship as important. This is substantiated in any number of his poetic and prose works. Here I would only highlight a few of them to make the point.

Bashō allied himself with a troubled disciple named Rōtsu, who had been exiled from his native home and rejected by his fellow disciples. Bashō wrought a reconciliation and asked his other disciples to help him to continue learning the way of haiku poetry. Bashō went so far as to tell his disciples that if only they deepened their personal companionship with others, they could maintain their ties to haikai even if they were to give them up. He goes on, “It is impossible to learn haikai without reliable friends.” These words of Bashō make it plain how greatly he treasured personal friendships.

Bashō’s *haikai* are not solitary monologues. He was always surrounded by disciples. Even on his journeys he was always accompanied by one or two of them.

Even though cold, The night is safe
For two sleeping together.

Bashō’s arrival at Kanazawa on the journey recorded in *Oku no hosomichi* is described in moving terms. It was to see his young disciple Isshō that Bashō came to Kanazawa. But in advance of his arrival there Isshō had prematurely left this world at the age of thirty-six. Great was Bashō’s grief at the loss of this promising disciple. It is not hard to see from the following lines how deep was Bashō’s love for him and how great his sorrow:

Let the mound be moved, too,
By my crying voice,
By the autumn wind.

The age in which Bashō lived was a time when the Edo culture had just begun to mature. Although already awakened to modern literate consciousness, it still remained an age marked by the congregation of simple communities. According to Yamamoto Kenkichi, it was “a world in which a couplet was comparable to a living, cooperative society” that

supported Bashō's *haiku* poetry. And this very world was where Bashō returned after his encounter with Chuang-tzu, urged by the "Way" that moves history. As a result, Bashō came to realize through his fundamental encounter with Chuang-tzu that living a life centered on personal companionship in a simple cooperative society meant nothing other than the true being of his original self.

From this we learn that the first revelation of the "Way" in human history was Chuang-tzu's transcendental world of freedom and non-attachment. The Way then moved Bashō to go a step beyond this world, gradually transforming it into the world of personal companionship. As mentioned above, Bashō's world is the same as Chuang-tzu's as far as the "world of integration" is concerned, where all things and events interchange into one another. But Bashō is unique in transfiguring the "world of integration" into his own world of personal companionship, and thus discovering a new way original to him. Bashō's world of personal companionship does not merely have to do with the world of human relationships. It is a wider world in which we can intimately talk to the sparrows as friends and call to the butterfly, "Wake up and let me make friends with you." The circle of such personal companionship extends infinitely beyond the limits of human beings to embrace everything in nature.

This historical transformation merits special attention for a theology of the Way, because the ultimate aim of the Way in human history lies in a world of personal companionship embracing the whole universe and in the "Cosmic Christ" envisaged by Teilhard de Chardin. Seen in these terms, the world attained by Bashō beyond the limits of Chuang-tzu's world is the world of personal companionship embracing all things in nature. And we may regard it as evidence of the Way at work within history, revealing its own personal character more vividly through Bashō.

Of all the features of Bashō's career as a poet, I would like to single out two points in particular. The first pertains to Bashō's words, "Let little three-feet-tall children compose *haikai*" (*San sasshi*). Bashō teaches us to be as pure in mind as little children and to compose our poems without calculation. This teaching of Bashō echoes that of Jesus Christ, the Way, who says, "Unless you change and become like little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3).

The second point pertains to the following words of Bashō from the work just cited:

From the pine tree, learn about the pine tree,
From the bamboo, learn about the bamboo.

These words are a concrete extension of Chuang-tzu's teaching to "be non-attached to personal opinions." Bashō's disciple Dōhō interprets the words of his teacher as follows:

To learn from a thing means to get into the thing itself and feel its mysterious essence as it is revealed to you so that a haiku poem is born of itself. Even if you say something about a thing clearly, you will not be able to express its emotion truly. Unless a poetic emotion spontaneously comes out of the thing as such, the thing and the poet are separate, and the expressed emotion will be the artful product of the poet's personal will.

The Way is thus the intrinsic moving force perpetually flowing and turning from moment to moment, transforming all things between Heaven and Earth. In order to be one with this Way, we do not have to escape from this world for another world as taught by the Greek philosophy represented by Platonism. Through purity of mind, Bashō was able to move in and out freely among the changes in nature and to renounce all preconceptions. By becoming one with the Way which works at work in and among the changing things in nature, he spontaneously composed his poems in accordance with the working of the Way. In this sense, Bashō's haiku poetry is clearly a spontaneous outlet for the Way and an embodiment of the Way. This is why his Way of haikai has left behind enduring poetic masterpieces able to move those in search of the Way. As I have stated often, even before we came to search for it, the Way was always alive and acting in us. Since the Way has been always at work within us, it is only natural that we should be moved by Bashō's haiku poems which are the concrete embodiments of the Way.

All of this helps us to forge a new viewpoint important for a theology of the Way. Its salient features are three.

First, The Way is the moving force within us. In the Christian sense of the word, the Way is the moving force of the Incarnate Son of God. He "has come to live within us" who are traveling with him essentially. It is significant that the Way working within Bashō has something in common with the Way of Jesus Christ in this respect.

Second, Bashō taught and practiced with his whole body and mind the lesson that to be one with the Way we must become poor, renounce ourselves, and become as simple as children. The Christian Way, Jesus

Christ, likewise taught us to be poor, to renounce ourselves, take up the cross and follow him, to be as genuine as little children. And all of this he practiced in his own life and death. The coincidence between Jesus Christ and Bashō in respect to the Way they share instructs those dedicated to the theology of the Way to participate fully in Bashō's Way of poverty and to be like little children in spontaneous response to the invitation of the Way.

Third, in walking his Way, Bashō made friends with everything in nature between Heaven and Earth, made a deep pledge of companionship with each one he came across in the course of his wayfaring with an appreciative feeling of *ichigo ichie* 一期一会, "a once and never-to-be-repeated encounter," thus opening up the "world of personal companionship." The Christian Way of Jesus Christ likewise teaches us the irreplaceable value of the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air created by our heavenly Father. Its ultimate goal is to guide the whole of humanity to a "world of divine and human communion.

From this correspondence between the Way of Jesus and the Way of Bashō we learn that in aspiring to a theology of the Way we must be aware of the Way in everything in nature, singing the praises of its beauty with the same keen human sensibility as the wayfarer Bashō. Going a step beyond this aesthetic appreciation of the workings of the Way, we must continue on our journey across the vast wilderness of modern technological civilization toward the "divine community for all humanity" together with Jesus Christ who is our "Way." Arid all along the way we are, and always will be, carried in the warm arms of our Father who embraces the infinite expanse of nature in his work.

Excursus 1: Encounter as Existential Recollection

According to Karl Jaspers, *Erinnerung* or recollection has three levels. The first is psychological recollection, which is what we ordinarily understand by remembering.

T. S. Eliot notes that as long as literature is nothing other than literature, it can never present the reader with any experience of actual life. But to the reader who has fully experienced the bitter taste of personal destiny, a great work of literature will show that one's own destiny is a road at one with the destiny of all human beings. For such readers, a recollection of a deeper sort is experienced through the great novel. This kind of recollection Jaspers calls *historical*.

Nikolai Berdyaev remarks that “we have to delve into historical destiny and infuse the depths of our being with it” in order to get at the mysterious significance of “what is historical.” Clearly, this refers to the moving force penetrating world history and the beings in which the inner essence and destiny of the human are embodied. It is only then that the presence of the deepest historical destiny of a person’s spirit is revealed. My historical destiny relates to all the ages of history, from primitive times to the present. “All these periods are ours in the depths of our minds” (*The Meaning of History*).

It is here that Jaspers’s third level of recollection comes to the fore. At the second level, we awaken to our original way of living not only by coming to know that we live the same destiny as the great ancients but also by actively bearing the burden of our common destiny as a duty. We are called to be our “original self” and to live creatively toward the new future by sharing the destiny with great figures of the past. This final form of recollection Jaspers calls *existential*.

Excursus 2: Jesus Christ as the Way

In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus reveals himself to his followers with the words, “I am the Way.” It is a matter of debate among exegetes whether or not these words attributed to Jesus are actual *ipsissima verba*. I leave that matter to the specialists. For my part, I mean only to insist that Jesus did make the claim, with his whole person, that he is the Way that leads to the Father, and embodied this claim by striving throughout his life and preaching to lead all people to the Father – whatever his specific words may have been. The authors of the synoptic gospels are in agreement that Jesus was sent by God and that through his mission of preaching the “Kingdom of God,” he was inviting all people to enter that Kingdom and follow his Way to the Father.

In order to understand “Jesus Christ as the Way” it is necessary to study the fundamental experience of the Israelites in the Exodus. Here I shall only mention the essentials.

We may begin by trying to read the third chapter of the *Book of Exodus* in an “embodied fashion,” with our whole person, participating in the “working” of God.

“I must go and look at this strange sight,” Moses said, “and see why the bush is not burnt.”

When the Lord saw him coming over to look at the burning bush more closely, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

He answered, "Here I am."

"Come no nearer!", God said. "Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the Lord said, "I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow, the home of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perissites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them, so come, I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

God replied, "I shall be with you, and this is the sign by which you shall know that it is I who have sent you. . . . After you have led the people out of Egypt, you are to offer worship to God on this mountain.

The most remarkable part about the above exchange is the "working" of God who himself "comes down" to "lead the sons of Israel" out of Egypt. Like the Israelites who directly experienced this "working" of God, Jesus' followers must have been immediately reminded of the great "working" of God at the time of the "Exodus" when they heard Jesus say to them at the Last Supper, "I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too (John 14:3).

As mentioned earlier, the Lord Yahweh traveled with the Israelites all the way from Egypt in signs like the pillars of cloud and of fire, accompanying them as an inner moving force throughout their long and trying journey.

According to John's gospel, "The Word (*logos*) was made flesh (*sarx*); he lives among us (*skēnoēin*)" (John 1:14). The *Word* is Yahweh's self-revealing "working" as such, that is to say, the words and phrases spoken by our Father God to a humanity lost in sin. The flesh is the whole person, the complete, weak human being dependent on Yahweh, subject to diseases and doomed to die. Like us, Jesus was born into a weak and vulnerable body, a "meta-co-sentient being," highly sensitive and aware of

the slightest movement of the weakest and most vulnerable “body” of us. *Meta-co-sentient* being refers here to the almighty power capable of sympathizing with our weakness and sins, breaking through our stony, “sluggish minds,” endowing us with the ability to perceive things from the standpoint of God and others. The term *lived among us* means “to pitch up a tabernacle and lodge there.” It does not mean taking up permanent residence, but to abide for a while during the course of a journey. The term recalls the event of the Exodus.

The God of the Hebrew bible is merciful, a God of “love in co-existence” with the human community. We see this illustrated in Yahweh’s travels with the sons of Israel to the Promised Land, his lodging with them in their tabernacles, in his protection and guidance during their journey. In the New Testament as well, Yahweh abides with us in the flesh, travels with us, and guides us toward the “Kingdom of God.”

In terms of what Ezekiel calls “mind of stone, mind of flesh,” it all comes down to this: our “body,” in which body and mind are one, became corrupted into a “mind of stone,” no longer able to see things “from the standpoint of God and others. But now God is incarnated as a meta-co-sentient being who abides with us and within us, smashing our “mind of stone” and giving us a “mind of flesh,” enabling us to feel and think “from the standpoint” of others, and guiding us to the “Kingdom of God.”

To the extent that Western theology has understood the term *Kingdom of God* in purely rational terms, the infinitely far-reaching “working” of *sarx* that embraces our whole existence has been overlooked. It seems to me that the original “message in flesh” of Jesus Christ has been turned as hard as stone.

According to the gospel of John, “Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was” (13:1). Then Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and shared bread and wine with them, saying, “This is my body which will be given for you; do this as a memorial of me” (Luke 22:19). Thus he gave his own body, to be crucified and resurrected, as “bread in provision for the journey” of Christians to the end of the world. Jesus also left the new commandment of love (John 13:34), and told his disciples:

There are many rooms in my Father’s house; if there were not, I should have told you.

I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place,

I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am
you may be too.

In these words, as in the book of *Exodus*, the idea of the Way signifies that Yahweh will “come down and lead the suffering people” out of their place of bondage.

To the doubting Thomas, Jesus clearly states that he is the Way (John 14:6). Jesus is the one to lead people to the Father. Just as Yahweh traveled with the Israelites and led them to Canaan, the land of the Covenant, Jesus travels with all people to lead them to the Father, our true homeland. Jesus is the inner moving force of our journey. He travels with us and guides us through all hardships to the Father. It is in this sense that Jesus is for us “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”