

The Book of Tea and Tao

by Kakuzo Okakura (1862-1913)

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To provide editorial comments to **The Book of Tea** is presumptuous but necessary for occidental students. Kakuzo's last name, **Okakura** is formed by two Chinese pictographs, **oka**, meaning *hill* and **ura**, meaning *beyond* or *behind*, so his last name means: *behind, or beyond the hill*. His name presumably suggests that he is beyond or behind the hill as the sun rises, that is, falls within the shadow occasioned by the sunlight, as the *yin* in relation to the *yang*. So, he is the *empty* one awaiting *fullness*, as it were, listening to the *Tao*.

This *Book of Tea* is the fundamental text for Zen Buddhism and, as such, presents a meditation on human nature in its relationship to Mother nature and *Tao*. Although this editor has edited the first and original text which Okakura wrote in English in 1905, the section headings, as presented in the center of the pages are his original divisions of the *Book of Tea*. This "preface" merely provides a contextual analysis of these divisions to facilitate the reader's understanding of the *Book of Tea* itself in its relationship to the *Tao* of Lao-tzu.

An overall view shows the Zen, *Book of Tea* essentially an extension of the *Tao*:

Zen was often opposed to the precepts of orthodox Buddhism even as Taoism was opposed to Confucianism. To the transcendental insight of the Zen, words were but an encumbrance to thought; the whole sway of Buddhist scriptures are only commentaries on personal speculation. The followers of Zen aimed at direct communion with the inner nature of things, regarding their outward accessories only as impediments to a clear perception of truth. It was this love of the abstract that led the Zen to prefer black and white sketches to the elaborately colored paintings of the classic Buddhist School. Some of the Zen even became iconoclastic as a result of their endeavor to recognize the Buddha in themselves rather than through images and symbolism. We find Tankawosho breaking up a wooden statue of Buddha on a wintry day to make a fire. "What sacrilege!" said the horror-stricken bystander. "I wish to get the Shali (precious jewels) out of the ashes," calmly rejoined the Zen master. "But you certainly will not get Shali from this image!" was the angry retort, to which Tanka replied, "If I do not, this is certainly not a Buddha and I am committing no sacrilege". Then he turned to warm himself over the kindling fire.

This emphasis upon the "non-existence" of the Buddha is merely an application of the "non-existence" of Tao; human words are nothing but projections of human concepts and no human concept, indeed, as Thomas Aquinas observes, no human mind can apprehend the human, spiritual soul, except as "holding out life to the body" and no human mind can apprehend "God," except as THE cause of the *being* which all mortal entities share, but do not originate:

#1

The *Tao* which can be told of is not the eternal *Tao*. (See # 14 below)

The name which can be named is not the eternal name:

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;

The Named is the mother of all things.

Therefore, let there always be non-being, so we may see their subtlety.
 And let there always be being, so we may see their outcome. The two are the same.
 But after they are produced, they have different names.
 They both may be called deep and profound.
 Deeper and more profound.
 The door of all subtleties!

#14

We look at it (**Tao**) and do not see it;
 Its name is The Invisible.
 We listen to it and do not hear it;
 Its name is The Inaudible.
 We touch it and do not find it;
 Its name is The Subtle (Formless) (See # 1, page 4.)

These three cannot be further inquired into;
 And hence merge into one.
 Going up high, it is not bright, and coming down low, it is not dark.
 Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name;
 It reverts to nothingness.
 This is called shape without shape,
 Form without objects.
 It is The Vague and Elusive.
 Meet it and you will not see its head.
 Follow it and you will not see its back.
 Hold on to the **Tao** or (the) Old in order to master the things of the present.
 From this one may know the primeval beginning (of the universe).
 This is called the bond (or, thread) of **Tao**.

The Cup of Humanity

Tea began as a medicine and grew into a beverage.

The “Cup of Humanity” begins the book and calls the reader’s attention to reflect on an analogy, that is a cup which can hold tea to a cup which is humanity. This first chapter or division presents human nature as cup, empty and, therefore, able to accept the tea for which it is made to receive. Of course, the tea, being the smallest leafed plant itself suggests **Tao**. Then, given the fact that tea began as a medicine, that is, as an herb to restore and nurture physical and mental health, again **Tao** is medicine for human nature both to restore and nurture the physical and spiritual health of the human being.

#4

Tao is a hollow vessel,

And its use is inexhaustible!
 Fathomless!
 Like the fountain head of all things.
 Its sharp edges rounded off,
 Its tangles untied,
 Its light tempered,
 Its turmoil submerged,
 Yet dark like deep water it seems to remain.
 I do not know whose Son it is,
 An image of what existed before God.

#28

He who knows male and keeps to the female becomes the ravine of the world.
 Being the ravine of the world,
 He will never depart from eternal virtue,
 But returns to the state of infancy.
 He who knows white (**yang** being light and, thus white), yet keeps to the black (**yin** being shadow and, thus darkness) becomes the model for the world.
 Being the model for the world,
 He will never deviate from eternal virtue,
 But returns to the state of the non-ultimate.
 He who knows glory but keeps to humility becomes the valley of the world.
 He will be proficient in eternal virtue,
 And returns to the state of un-carved wood.
 When the un-carved wood is broken up, it is turned into concrete things.
 But, when the wise person uses it, he becomes the learning official.
 Therefore, the great ruler does not cut up.

#50

Out of life, death enters.
 The organs of life are thirteen (four limbs and nine external cavities);
 The organs of death are also thirteen.
 What send man to death in this life are also these thirteen.
 How is it so?
 Because of the intense activity of multiplying life.

It has been said that he who is a good preserver of his life
 Meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on land.
 Is not vulnerable to weapons in the field of battle,
 The horns of the wild buffalo are powerless against him;
 The paws of the tiger are useless against him;
 The weapons of the soldier cannot avail against him.
 How is it so?
 Because he is beyond death.

#73

To know that you do not know is the best.
 To pretend to know when you do not know is a disease.
 Only when one recognizes this disease as a disease can one be free from the disease.
 The wise person is free from the disease.
 Because he recognizes this disease to be a disease, he is free from it.

#9

To hold and fill a cup to overflowing
 Is not as good as to stop in time.
 Sharpen a sword-edge to its very sharpest,
 And the (edge) will not last long.
 When gold and jade fill your hall,
 You will not be able to keep them.
 To be proud with honor and wealth
 Is to cause one's own downfall.
 Withdraw as soon as your work is done.
 Such is Heaven's Way.

#11

Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel,
 But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the carriage depends.
 Clay is molded to form a utensil,
 But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the utensil depends.
 Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,
 But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the room depends.
 Therefore, turn *being* into advantage, and turn *non-being* into utility.

The Schools of Tea

Tea is a work of art and needs a master hand to bring out its noblest qualities.

Japan, which followed closely on the footsteps of Chinese civilization has known tea in all of its three stages: boiled, whipped and steeped. As early as the year 729 B.C. we read of the Emperor Shomu giving tea to one hundred monks at his palace in Nara.

“School”, as the translation of the Greek word, *schola* means *leisure*, so a Greek school was where one goes when one has nothing else to do except to learn. So, in Chinese society, the Buddhist and Taoist monks devoted their lives to study and to pray in their respective monasteries. Now, water in the occidental world was responsible for more deaths (as is estimated) than all the plagues and wars so when Marco Polo brought tea back to Venice, Italy about 1295, obviously the fact that the Chinese boiled water for this medicinal beverage, the occidental boiled water was purified! As Okakura comments “...from very early times...” meant that the Chinese avoided death by fetid water. On the contrary, the only thing which “saved” the

occidental world of people was what they called *aqua vitae*, literally, the water of life, or wine discovered in Egypt about 3,000 B.C.

Okakura divides tea both into three stages and into two schools: the stages of boiled, whipped and steeped tea and the schools of Taoism and Buddhism. He observes that Taoist followers of *Tao* claimed tea to be an “elixir”, or an agent through which the practitioner could nurture one’s mortal body and immortal soul back into healthy relationship and also could maintain both in a healthy state of being. The Buddhists, on the other hand, used tea to forestall sleep when they engaged in extended meditation and prayer and, thereby, enhanced their spiritual life of prayer.

#65

In ancient times, those who practiced *Tao* well
 Did not seek to enlighten the people, but to make them ignorant.
 People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.
 Therefore, he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state.
 He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.
 One who knows these two things also (knows) the standard.
 Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.
 Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching.
 And with it all things return to their original state.
 Then complete harmony will be reached.

#12

The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.
 The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.
 The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.
 Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.
 Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.
 For this reason the wise person is concerned with the belly
 and not the eyes.
 Therefore, he rejects the one but accepts the other.

#18

When the great *Tao* declined, the doctrine of humanity and righteousness arose.
 When knowledge and wisdom appeared, there emerged great hypocrisy.
 When the six family relationships are not in harmony,
 There will be the advocacy of filial piety and deep love of children.
 When a country is in disorder,
 There will be the praise of loyal ministers.

Taoism and Zennism

The connection of Zennism with tea is proverbial...The name of Lao-tzu, the founder of Taoism is also intimately associated with the history of tea. It is written in the Chinese school manual concerning the origin of habits and customs that the ceremony of offering tea to a guest

began with Kwanyin, a well-known disciple of Lao-tzu, who first at the gate of the Han Pass presented a cup of the golden elixir to the “Old Philosopher”.

70

My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to
practice,
But none in the world can understand or practice them.
My doctrines have a source, Nature; my deeds have a master, *Tao*.
It is because people do not understand this that they do not understand me.
Few people know me, and therefore, I am highly valued.
Therefore, the sage wears a coarse cloth on top and carries jade within his bosom.

#67

All the world says that my *Tao* is great and does not seem to resemble the ordinary.
It is precisely because *Tao* is great that *Tao* does not resemble the ordinary.
If *Tao* did resemble it, *Tao* would have been small for a long time.
I have three treasures; guard and keep them:
The first is deep love.
The second is frugality.
And the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.
Because of deep love, one is courageous.
Because of frugality, one is generous.
Because of not daring to be ahead of the world, one becomes the leader of the world.
Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love,
To be generous by forsaking frugality.
And to be ahead of the world by forsaking following behind -
This is fatal.
For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack.
And to be firm in the case of defense.
When Heaven is to save a person,
Heaven will protect him through deep love.

#19

Abandon being wise and discard wisdom;
Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Abandon humanity and discard righteousness;
Then the people will return to filial piety and deep love.
Abandon skill and discard profit;
Then there will be no thieves or robbers.
However, these three things are ornaments (*wen*) and are not adequate.
Therefore, let people hold on to these:
Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires.

The Tearoom

To European architects brought up on the traditions of stone and brick construction, our Japanese method of building with wood and bamboo seems scarcely worthy to be ranked as architecture...The tea room (the *Sukiya*) does not pretend to be other than a mere cottage - a straw hut, as we call it. The original ideographs for *sukiaya* mean the *Abode of Fancy*. Later the various tea masters substituted various Chinese characters according to their conception of the tea room and the term *sukiya* may signify the *Abode of Fancy* or the *Abode of the Unsymmetrical*. It is an abode of fancy inasmuch as it is an ephemeral structure built to house a poetic impulse.

#11

Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel,
But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the carriage depends.
Clay is molded to form a utensil,
But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the utensil depends.
Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,
But, it is on its *non-being* that the utility of the room depends.
Therefore, turn *being* into advantage, and turn *non-being* into utility.

#16

Attain complete emptiness,
Maintain steadfast quiet.

All things come into being.
And I see thereby their return.
All things flourish,
But, each one returns to its root.
This return to its root means tranquility.
It is called returning to one's destiny.
To return to destiny is called the eternal (*Tao*).
To know the eternal is called enlightenment.
Not to know the eternal is to act blindly and results in disaster.
He who knows the eternal is all-embracing.
Being all-embracing, he is impartial.
Being impartial, he is kingly (universal).
Being kingly, he is one with Nature.
Being one with Nature, he is in accord with *Tao*.
Being in accord with *Tao*, he is everlasting,
And is free from danger throughout his lifetime.

#45

What is most perfect seems to be incomplete;
But its utility is unimpaired.
What is most full seems to be empty;

But its usefulness is inexhaustible.
 What is most full seems to be empty;
 But, its usefulness is inexhaustible.
 What is most straight seems to be crooked.
 The greatest skill seems to be clumsy.
 The greatest eloquence seems to stutter.
 Hasty movement overcomes cold,
 (But), tranquility overcomes heat.
 By being greatly tranquil,
 One is qualified to be the ruler of the world.

#51

Tao produces them.
 Virtue fosters them.
 Matter gives them physical form.
 The circumstances and tendencies complete them.
 Therefore, the ten thousand things esteem *Tao* and honor virtue.
Tao is esteemed and virtue is honored without anyone's order:
 They always come spontaneously.

Therefore, *Tao* produces them and virtue fosters them.
 They rear them and virtue fosters them.
 They rear them and develop them.
 They give them security and give them peace.
 They nurture them and protect them.
Tao produces them but does not take possession of them.
Tao acts, but does not rely on its own ability.
Tao leads them but does not master them.
 This is called profound and secret virtue.

#62

Tao is the storehouse of all things.
 It is the good man's treasure and the bad man's refuge.
 Fine words can buy honor,
 And fine deeds can gain respect from others.
 Even if a man is bad, when has *Tao* rejected him?
 Therefore, on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers,
 Rather than present large pieces of jade preceded by teams of four horses,
 It is better to kneel and offer this to *Tao*.
 Why did the ancients highly value this *Tao*?
 Did they not say, "Those who seek shall have *Tao* and those who sin shall be freed"?
 For this reason, *Tao* is valued by the world.

#77

Heaven's Way is indeed like the bending of a bow.
 When the string is high, bring it down.
 When it is low, raise it up.

When it is excessive, reduce it.
 When it is insufficient, supplement it.
The Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and
 supplements whatever is insufficient.

The Way of man is different.
 It reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive.
 Who is able to have excess to offer to the world?
 Only the man of **Tao**.
 Therefore, the wise person acts, but does not rely on his own ability.
 The wise person accomplishes his task, but does not claim credit for it.
 The wise person has no desire to display his excellence.

Art Appreciation

Have you heard the Taoist tale of the Taming of the Harp?...The story well illustrates the mystery of art appreciation...True art is Pai Ya and we the harp of Lung Men. At the magic touch of the beautiful, the secret cords of our being are awakened; we vibrate and thrill in response to its call. Mind speaks to mind. We listen to the unspoken. The master calls forth notes we know not of.

#7

The universe is everlasting.
 The reason the universe is everlasting
 Is that it gives life to others (through its transformations).
 There it can long endure.

Therefore the wise person puts self last,
 And finds self in the foremost place;
 Regards his body as accidental,
 And his body is thereby preserved.
 Is it not because he does not live for Self
 That his Self is realized?

#29

There are those who will conquer the world
 And make of it (what they conceive or desire).
 I see that they will not succeed.
 (For) the world is God's own Vessel
 It cannot be made (by human interference).
 He who makes it spoils it. He who holds it loses it.
 For, some things go forward,
 Some things follow behind;
 Some blow hot,
 And some blow cold;

Some are strong,
And some are weak;
Some may break,
And some may fall.

Hence the wise eschew (avoid) excess, eschew extravagance, eschew pride.

#38

The man of superior virtue is not conscious of his virtue,
And in this Way he really possesses virtue.

The man of inferior virtue never loses sight of his virtue,
And in this Way he loses his virtue.

The man of superior virtue takes no action, but has no ulterior motive to do so.

The man of inferior virtue takes action and has an ulterior motive to do so.

The man of superior humanity takes action, but has no ulterior motive to do so.

The man of superior righteousness takes action and has an
ulterior motive to do so.

The man of superior propriety takes action,

And when people do not respond to it, he will reach for his arms and force it upon them.

Therefore, when **Tao** is lost, only then does the doctrine of virtue arise.

When virtue is lost, only then does the doctrine of humanity arise.

When humanity is lost, only then does the doctrine of righteousness arise.

When righteousness is lost, only then does the doctrine of propriety arise.

Now, propriety is a superficial expression of loyalty and faithfulness and the beginning of
disorder.

Those who are the first to know have the flowers of **Tao** but are the beginning of ignorance.

For this reason, the great man dwells in the thick and does not rest with the thin.

He dwells in the fruit and does not rest with the flower.

Therefore, he rejects the one and accepts the other.

#42

Tao produced the One.

The One produced the two.

The two produced the three.

And the three produced the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry the **yin** and embrace the **yang**, and even through the blending of
the material force they achieve harmony.

People hate to be children without parents, lonely people without spouses, or men without food
to eat.

And yet, kings and lords call themselves by these names.

Therefore, it is often the case that things gain by losing and lose by gaining.

What others have taught, I teach also:

"Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death."

I shall make this the father of my teaching.

#43

The softest substance of the world (that is, water)
 Goes through the hardest (when working according to the natural constitution of the animal).
 That-which-is-without-form penetrates that-which-has-no-crevice;
 Through this I know the benefit of taking no action.
 The teaching without words and the benefit of taking no action
 Are without comparison in the universe.

#49

The wise person has no decided opinions and feelings (*hsin*, literally “heart” which denotes both thinking and feeling in Chinese; indeed, knowing for a Chinese is feeling as in the belly).
 But regards the people’s opinions and feelings as his own.

The good ones I declare good;
 The bad ones I also declare good.
 That is the goodness of Virtue.
 The honest ones I believe;
 The liars I also believe;
 That is the faith of Virtue.

The wise person dwells in the world peacefully, harmoniously.
 The people of the world are brought into a community of heart,
 And the wise regard them all as their own children.

#81

True words are not beautiful; Beautiful words are not true.
 A good man does not argue;
 He who argues is not a good man.
 A wise person has no extensive knowledge;
 He who has extensive knowledge is not a wise person.

The wise person does not accumulate for himself.
 The more he uses for others, the more he has himself.
 The more he gives to others, the more he possesses of his own.
The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to injure.
The Way of the wise person is to act but not to compete.

Flowers

Surely with mankind the appreciation of flowers must have been coeval with the poetry of life.

#6

The Spirit of the Valley never dies.
 It is called the Mystic Female (the principle of *yin*).
 The Door of the Mystic Female

Is the root of Heaven and Earth.
 Continuously, continuously,
 It seems to remain.
 Draw upon it
 And it serves you with ease.

#7

The universe is everlasting.
 The reason the universe is everlasting
 Is that it gives life to others (through its transformations).
 There it can long endure.

Therefore the wise person puts self last,
 And finds self in the foremost place;
 Regards his body as accidental,
 And his body is thereby preserved.
 Is it not because he does not live for Self
 That his Self is realized?

#21

The marks of great Character (*te*)
 Follow alone from the *Tao*.
 The thing which is called *Tao*
 Is elusive, evasive.
 Elusive, evasive,
 Yet, latent in it are forms.
 Elusive, evasive,
 Yet, latent in it are objects.
 Dark and dim,
 Yet latent in it is the life-force.
 The life-force being very true,
 Latent in it are evidences.

From the days of old till now
 Its Named (manifested forms) have never ceased,
 By which we may view the Father of All Things.
 How do I know the shape of Father of All Things?
 Through These! (The manifested forms).

#23

Nature says few words.
 For the same reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning:
 Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day:
 What causes them?
 It is Heaven and Earth (Nature).
 If even Heaven and Earth cannot make them last long,

How much less can man?
 Therefore, he who follows *Tao* is identified with *Tao*
 He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.
 He who abandons *Tao* is identified with the abandonment of *Tao*.
 He who is identified with *Tao* - *Tao* is also happy to have him.
 And he who is identified with the abandonment - the abandonment is also happy to abandon him.
 It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

#50

Out of life, death enters.
 The organs of life are thirteen (four limbs and nine external cavities);
 The organs of death are also thirteen.
 What sends man to death in this life are also these thirteen.
 How is it so?
 Because of the intense activity of multiplying life.

 It has been said that he who is a good preserver of his life
 Meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on land.
 Is not vulnerable to weapons in the field of battle,
 The horns of the wild buffalo are powerless against him;
 The paws of the tiger are useless against him;
 The weapons of the soldier cannot avail against him.
 How is it so?
 Because he is beyond death.

Tea Masters

_____In religion, the future is behind us. In art, the present is the eternal.

Welcome to thee,
 O sword of eternity!
 And through Dharma alike
 You have cleft your way.

With a smile upon his face, Rikiu passed forth into the unknown.

#24

He who stands on tiptoe does not stand (firm);
 He who strains his strides does not walk (well)
 He who reveals himself is not luminous;
 He who justifies himself is not far-famed;
 He who boasts of himself is not given credit;
 He who prides himself is not chief among men.
 These in the eyes of *Tao*

Are called 'the dregs and tumors of Virtue',
Which are things of disgust.
Therefore the man of *Tao* spurns them.

#32

Tao is eternal and has no name.
Though its simplicity seems insignificant, no one in the world can master it.
If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously.
Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew.
Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all.
As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names.
As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop:
It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.
Analogically, *Tao* in the world may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea.

#33

He who knows others is wise;
He who knows himself is enlightened.
He who conquers others has physical strength.
He who conquers himself is strong.
He who is contented is rich.
He who acts with vigor has will;
He who does not lose his place (with *Tao*) will endure.
He who dies but does not really perish enjoys long life.

#35

Hold the Great Symbol (Nature, Heaven or Earth)
And all the world follows,
Follows without meeting harm,
(and lives in) health, peace, commonwealth.

Offer good things to eat
And the Wayfarer stays.
But *Tao* is mild to the taste.
Looked at, it cannot be seen;
Listened to, it cannot be heard;
Applied, its supply never fails.

#37

The *Tao* never does,
Yet, through it everything is done,
If princes and dukes can keep the *Tao*,
The world will of its own accord be reformed.
When reformed and rising to action,
Let it be restrained by the Nameless pristine simplicity.
The Nameless pristine simplicity

Is stripped of desire (for contention).
 By stripping of desire quiescence is achieved,
 And the world arrives at peace of its own accord.

#41

When the highest type of men hear ***Tao***, they diligently practice it.
 When the average type of men hear ***Tao***, they half believe in it.
 When the lowest type of men hear ***Tao***, they laugh heartily at it.
 If they did not laugh at it, it would not be ***Tao***.
 Therefore, there is the established saying:
 The ***Tao*** which is bright (***yang***) appears to be dark (***yin***).
 The ***Tao*** which goes forward appears to fall backward.
 Great virtue appears like a valley.
 Great purity appears like disgrace.
 Far-reaching virtue appears as if insufficient.
 True substance appears to be changeable.
 The great square has no corners.
 The great implement (or talent) is slow to mature.
 Great music sounds faint.
 Great form has no shape.
Tao is hidden and nameless.
 Yet, it is ***Tao*** alone that skillfully provides for all and brings them to perfection.