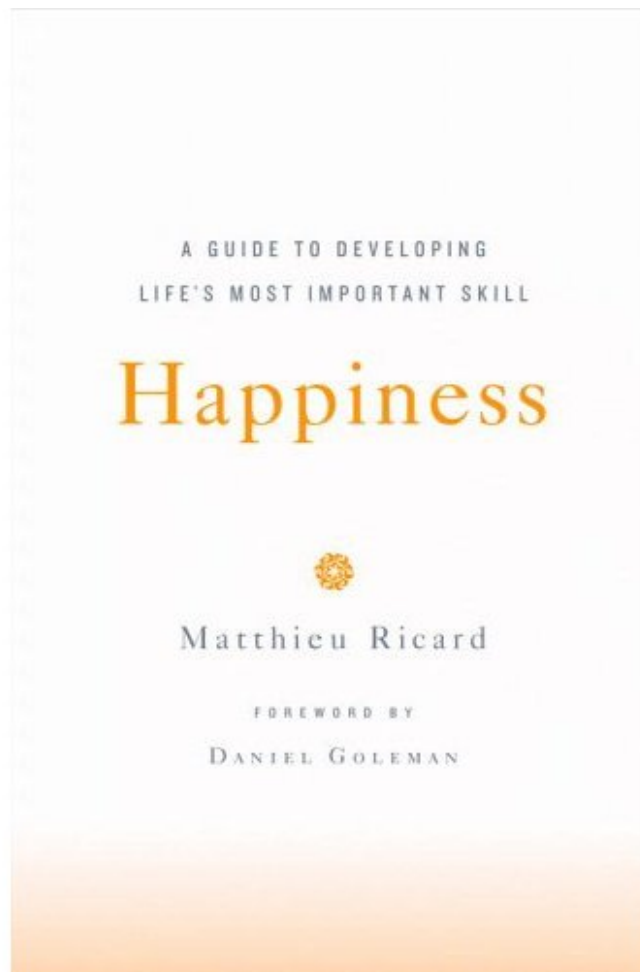


Happiness

An Extract from Venerable Matthieu Ricard's Book on Happiness

A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill

(By C. K. Wong, October 2007)



Many people criticize that Buddhism cannot help us attain happiness. They say that Buddhism is a religion talking about suffering. The word “happiness” is rarely mentioned in Buddhism books. I agree to this criticism to a certain degree. Recently I have read the book “Happiness” written by Venerable Matthieu Ricard. This is one of best-sellers in France. Venerable Ricard (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthieu_Ricard) was born in 1946. After completing his doctoral thesis in molecular genetics in 1972, he left his career and went to study Tibetan Buddhism in the Himalayas with the Kangyur Rinpoche and some other great masters of that tradition.

After reading his book, I believe that it is possible to train our mind to develop this most important skill for our life. The following is an extract from his book chapter by chapter so that readers can learn and develop the essential skills of how to become a happy person. This may be a cure for those people who always feel unhappy. The reasons of unhappiness are not necessarily related to whether they are wealthy or not. The reasons are possibly lack of understanding the causes that lead to unhappiness and lack of training their mind to become happy.



1. Talking About Happiness

- ✓ **By** *happiness*, I mean here a deep sense of flourishing that arises from an **exceptionally healthy mind**. Happiness is also a way of interpreting the world, since while it may be difficult the world, it is always possible to change the way we look at it. (p.19)
- ✓ Changing the way we see the world does not imply naïve optimism or some artificial euphoria (心情愉快;興奮) designed to counter-balance adversity (逆境). **Happiness is a purging (清除) of mental toxins**, such as hatred and obsession (著迷) that literally (實在地) poison the mind. It is also about learning how to put things in perspective (透視圖) and reduce the gap between appearances and reality. (p. 23)

2. Is Happiness The Purpose of Life?

- ✓ Without inner *peace* and *wisdom*, we have nothing we need to be happy. **Happiness is a state of inner fulfillment** (內心的滿足感), not the gratification (滿足) of inexhaustible desires for outward things.
- ✓ In order to love others, we must learn to *love ourselves*. Give due recognition to the desire to live each moment of existence as moment of meaning and fulfillment. (p. 31)

3. A Two-way Mirror (Looking Within, Looking Without)

- ✓ Wealth, pleasures, rank, and power are all sought for the sake of happiness. But as we strive, we forget the goal and spend our time pursuing the means for their own sake. (p.36)
- ✓ **Happiness is a skill**, a manner of being (生物;人), but skills **must** be learned. (p. 38)

4. False Friends

- ✓ The most common error is to confuse ~~pleasure~~ ^{pleasure} (愉快,高興) for happiness. **Pleasure** is only the shadow of happiness. It is the direct result of pleasurable sensual, esthetic (美感的),



or intellectual limit (p.40).

Pleasure from this game is temporary.

- ✓ Pleasure is the happiness of madmen, while happiness is the pleasure of sages (聖人,賢人). (p. 41)
- ✓ **Authentic** (真實的) **happiness is a profound emotional balance** struck by a subtle (微妙的) understanding of how the mind functions. (p. 42)

- ✓ **Joy** (歡樂) is equally vague. It is associated with feeling as varied as the pleasures of the five senses, e.g. amusement, contentment, excitement, relief, wonder, bliss (極樂,), exultation (狂喜), radiant (洋溢著幸福) pride, elevation (莊嚴), gratitude, etc. (p.44).



(The joy of Spring)

- ✓ Take time to explore our **inner world** (內心世界). It is a sparkling experience of inner well-being (安康), which the beauty of each thing shines through. It knows how to enjoy the present



moment. (p. 45)

Sunset is the best moment to be cherished.

5. Is Happiness Possible?

- ✓ We cannot deny the existence of pleasant and unpleasant sensations, but they are trivial with

respect to genuine well-being. (p.52)

- ✓ Eliminate the major causes of unhappiness, which are ignorance (無知,愚昧) and mental toxins. Give up the concept of original sin. (p. 52)
- ✓ Don't be affected by the "wicked world syndrome" associated with bad news by the media and presentation of violence, which will reduce the possibility of actualizing happiness. (p. 53)

- ✓ Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are wise men. Learn from the wise men. *If the wise man*



can be happy, then happiness must be possible.

Dalai Lama



(Thich Nhat Hanh (一行禪師))

- ✓ The wise man has nothing left to expect or to hope for. Because he is entirely happy, he needs nothing. Because he needs nothing, he is entirely happy. (p.55)
- ✓ It is possible to undergo serious spiritual training by devoting some time every day to meditation (默想). (p. 55)

- ✓ By **introspection** (反思,自己反省) in meditation, we can fend off mental toxins. As we free ourselves of all insecurities and inner fears, we have less to dread and are more open to others and better armed to face the vagaries (變幻無常的情況) of existence. (p. 56)

6. The Alchemy (煉金術) of Suffering

- ✓ **Suffering** will always exist as a universal phenomenon. But every individual has the potential for liberation from it. (p. 63)
- ✓ Dalai Lama says, "It would be easier not to go to all the trouble of constantly ruminating (反覆

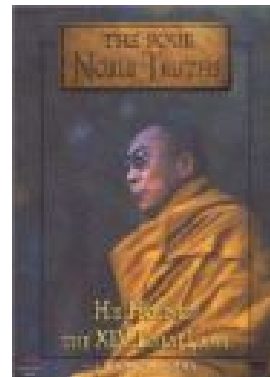
思考) over suffering. It would be better just to think about something else, go to the beach,



and have a nice cold beer”. (p.64)

- ✓ We have the potential to sweep away the veils of ignorance (無知,愚昧), to free ourselves of the selfishness and misplaced desire that trigger unhappiness, to work for the good of others and extract the essence from our human conditions. It is not the magnitude of the task that

matters, but it is the magnitude of our *courage* . (p. 65)



- ✓ The Four Noble Truths (四聖諦) of Suffering are: (p.66)
 - v Recognize suffering.
 - v Eliminate its sources.
 - v End it.
 - v By practicing the path.
- ✓ It is always better to familiarize ourselves with and prepare ourselves for the kind of suffering we are likely to encounter, such as illness, old age and death, rather than to be caught off guard and sink into anguish. (p. 68)
- ✓ We must not allow **anxiety and despondency** (沮喪) to conquer our mind. Be a host of them. (p. 72)



- ✓ Increasing **compassion** (慈悲) and **loving-kindness** (慈愛), the ultimate in positive emotions, develops our readiness to offer relief to the suffering of others while reducing the importance of our own problems. (p. 75)



7. The Veils Of The *Ego*

- ✓ We create the illusion of being separate from the world, hoping to avert suffering. (p.82)

interdependent

- ✓ The truth is, we are fundamentally **interdependent** (相互依賴的) with other people and our environment. (p.83)

- ✓ We see the world through the distorting mirror of our **illusions** (錯覺). In disharmony with the true nature, we inevitably are led to frustration and suffering. (p. 83)
- ✓ **Egoism** (自我) is always confused with **self-confidence** (自信). Egoism may be built on insubstantial attributes – power, success, beauty and physical strength, intellectual brilliance, the opinions of others. When things change and the gap with reality becomes too wide, egoism falters. However, genuine self-confidence is the natural quality of **egolessness** (無自我). (p.87)



Egoism

- ✓ When the ego is predominant, the mind is like a bird constantly slamming into a glass wall, which shrinks our world and encloses it within narrow confines. (p. 94)
- ✓ Our **attachment** (執著) to the ego is fundamentally linked to the suffering we feel and the suffering we inflict on other. Stripping the ego of all its importance is tantamount to winning

incredible inner freedom. It allows us to approach every person and every situation with natural ease, benevolence (仁慈), fortitude (堅忍), and serenity (沈著). (p. 95)



8. When Our Thoughts Become Our Worst Enemy

- ✓ The worrier fears the least event. In **depression** (消沈) all that is happening in the present is the anticipation of pain in the future, and the present qua present no longer exists at all. (p.99)
- ✓ When a painful emotion strikes us, the **most urgent thing is to look at it head-on** and identify thoughts that triggered and are fanning it. Then gradually dissolve it like snow in the sunshine. (p. 100)
- ✓ It is not easy to experience **pure consciousness** (無雜念的意識), but it is possible. It can reduce pain even before death. (p. 102) (*Pure consciousness is a silent state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception.*)



Pure Consciousness



- ✓ Never underestimate the power of the mind, which is capable of reifying (使具體化) vast worlds of hatred, desire, elation (興高采烈), and sadness (our worst enemy). (p.107)

9. The River Of Emotion (情感)

- ✓ Psychoanalysis tries to make the patient aware of past tendencies and events, fixations, and blocks, which lead to the miseries and neurosis and prevent her from functioning normally in the world. (p.113)
- ✓ Buddhism takes a different position. It stresses enhanced **awareness** (察覺) of the formation of thoughts, identifying the angry thought **when it arises** and destruction of it the next instant (p.113)
- ✓ The Buddhism method is similar to the western cognitive (認知的) therapies of Aaron Beck and the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program of Jon Kabat-Zinn, and is **concentrated on the present moment** (p. 113).
- ✓ Buddhism's sole objective in treating emotions is to free us from the fundamental causes of suffering. Buddhism has identified our three basic mental poisons: **desire, hatred and delusion** (貪·瞋·癡). The other two are pride and envy, forming the five major poisons. (p.117)

10. Disturbing Emotions: The Remedies

- ✓ Introspection (by meditation) shows that emotions are transitory events that can be obliterated by positive emotions such as **antidotes** (解毒劑). (p.123)
- ✓ By habituating your mind to **altruistic love** (利他的愛) as a direct antidote to **hatred** (利他愛心解憎恨毒), you gradually eliminate hatred as the two mind states can alternate but cannot coexist. (p.124)

greed

- ✓ **Inner freedom** at heart is an antidote to **greed** (內心自由解貪念毒) or desire which cannot coexist with the former.

anger

- ✓ **Patience** can neutralize **anger** (忍耐解憤怒毒). (p. 125)
- ✓ Liberation from anger at the moment it arises by recognizing its impermanent nature (emptiness), lack of its own existence. (p.127)

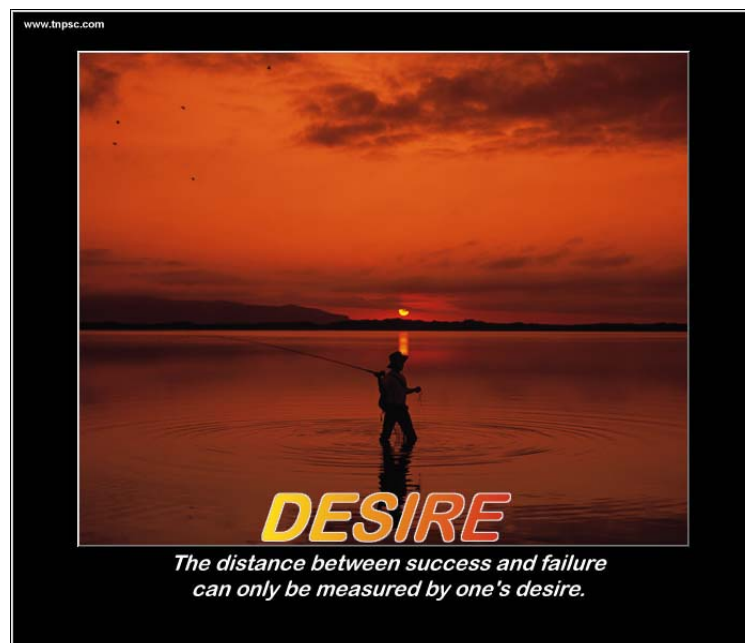
attachment

- ✓ The source of disturbing emotions is **attachment** to the self (執著自我). If we want to be free of inner suffering once and for all, we must eliminate our attachment to the ego. (p.130)
- ✓ Emotions manipulate and lead us into error. Anger will have hurt someone while leaving us in a state of deep dissatisfaction. (p.131)

- ✓ **Recognize** the emotion at the very moment it forms, **understand** that it is devoid of intrinsic existence, and **allow** it dissipate spontaneously. Avoid the chain reaction. (p.133)

11. *Desire*

- ✓ Desire is solely concentrated on craving and obsession. It can nourish our existence or poison it. It is important to make distinction between **desire** (慾望) and **aspiration** (熱望,志向,抱負). Desire is essentially a blind force while aspiration is inspired by motivation and attitude. (p. 137)
- ✓ Altruistic (利他) love is the joy of sharing life with those around us – our friends, our lovers and companions, our wife or husband – and of contributing to their happiness. Don't anxiously await some gratification (滿足) from him. (p. 143)
- ✓ Genuine altruistic love is the desire for that wish to be granted, such wish being possessed by all beings to avoid suffering and to know happiness. (p.144)
- ✓ Possessive and exclusive desire, obsession and jealousy have meaning only in the closed universe of attachment (執著). Selfless love is the highest expression of human nature that has been obscured and distorted by the manipulations of the ego (p. 145).



12. *Hatred* (憎恨)

- ✓ Of all the mental poisons, hatred is the most toxic. It is one of the chief causes of unhappiness and the driving force of all violence, all genocide, all assaults on human dignity. (p.146)
- ✓ Eliminating hatred from our mind stream is therefore a critical step in our journey to happiness (p.147)
- ✓ Malice (惡意;敵意) is less violent than hatred but more insidious and equally pernicious. (p.147)
- ✓ Once hatred has overwhelmed us, we are no longer masters of ourselves and are incapable of

thinking in terms of love and compassion. (p. 149)

- ✓ Hatred is your **real enemy** and it is hatred that you should destroy. *We must go straight to the roots of hatred and rip them up* (即時滅它). Better to exterminate the evil within a man than the man himself. (p. 154)
- ✓ There are no remedies other than personal awareness, inner transformation and perseverance (堅忍不拔). (p.154)

13. *Envy*

- ✓ What cowardice it is to be dismayed by the happiness of others and devastated by their good fortune. (p. 157)
- ✓ Envy and jealousy derive from the fundamental inability to rejoice in someone else's happiness or success. (p.158)
- ✓ It is the ego that can't bear other people's good cheer when we're depressed or their good health when we're sick. Why not take their joy as a source of inspiration instead of making a source of vexation and frustration? (p.158)
- ✓ Fear of abandonment and a sense of insecurity are closely linked to the lack of

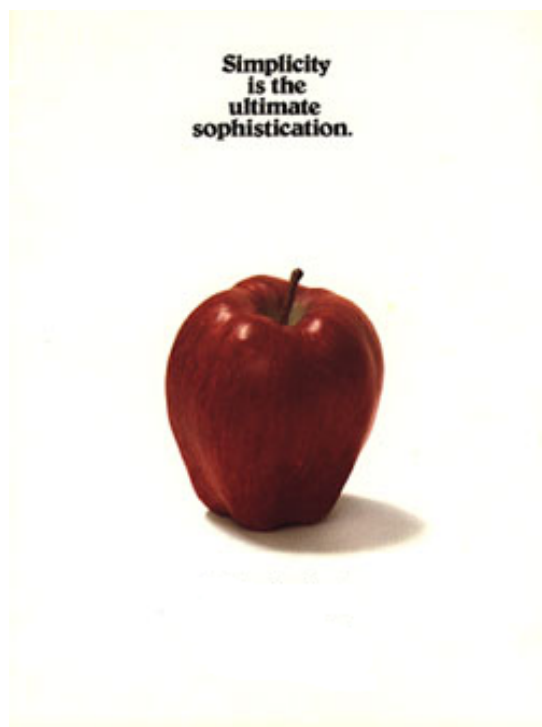
inner freedom .(p. 159)



14. The Great Leap To Freedom

- ✓ Inner freedom is above all freedom from the dictatorship of “me” and “mine”. (p.161)
- ✓ Freedom here means taking the helm(舵) and sailing toward the chosen destination. (p. 161)
- ✓ Perhaps the anxiety that some people feel likewise comes from a lack of direction in their lives, from having failed to grasp their own inner potential for change. (p.161)
- ✓ What's the point of worrying about things that no longer exist and things that do not yet exist? (p. 163)
- ✓ “Our life is frittered (浪費) by detailSimplify, simplify, “wrote the American moralist Henry Thoreau. (p. 164) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_David_Thoreau)

- ✓ To simplify our speech is, above all, to abstain from directing hurtful remarks at others. (p.165)
- ✓ **Simplicity** is freedom, buoyancy, transparency. (p. 165)



15. A Sociology Of Happiness

- ✓ People are manifestly happier in countries where personal freedom is guaranteed and democracy secure. (p. 171)
- ✓ People who are married or cohabiting are, in general, significantly happier than singles, widows and widowers, or the divorced or separated living alone. (p. 171)
- ✓ Happiness tends to be more pronounced among highly **energetic** people in **good physical** conditions. (p. 172)
- ✓ **Leisurely** (悠閒的) **activities** enhance satisfaction, especially among those who do not work (the retired, the unemployed), in part because people are more in voluntary control of what they do. (p.172)
- ✓ **One of the main sources of people's discontent comes from comparing themselves with others in their family, as their workplace, and among their acquaintances. (p.173)**
- ✓ Suicide is the cause of 2% of deaths worldwide every year. In the USA, suicide triggered by **bipolar depression** (躁鬱症), once called manic depression, is the second cause of death among teenage girls and the third among teenage boys. (p. 175)
- ✓ Buddhism is of the view that increase in the rate of depression in Western countries is due to tireless dedication of most of our time to external activities and goals, instead of learning to enjoy the present moment, the company of those we love, the peace of natural environments, and, above all, the flowering of inner peace that gives every second of life a new and different quality. (p. 176)

- ✓ An open-minded person is more skilled at battling though difficult circumstances. (p. 180)
- ✓ Altruism and a constructive outlook are essential components of authentic happiness. (p.183)

16. Happiness In The Lab

meditation
meditation

- ✓ During meditation on compassion, most experienced meditators showed a dramatic increase in high-frequency brain activity called gamma waves, never reported before. (p.191)
- ✓ People who are customarily more active on the left prefrontal cortex (腦皮層) of the brain than on the right mostly feel pleasant emotions. (p. 193)
- ✓ Research of psychologists showed that the most altruistic members of a population are also those who enjoy the highest sense of satisfaction in life. (p. 194)
- ✓ The immunity system of apprentice meditators was also boosted. (p. 200)
- ✓ If meditative training could be incorporated into the education of children, it would help them when they later become adults to achieve better quality of life. (p. 201)

17. Happiness and Altruism (利他主義)

- ✓ When we are happy, the feeling of self-importance is diminished and we are more open to others. (p. 203)
- ✓ Genuine altruism that is motivated by no other reason than to do good for others is, after all, possible. (p. 206)
- ✓ For a true altruist, it is the result that counts, not the personal satisfaction of having helped. (p. 207)
- ✓ In Buddhism, the true altruist learns to consider all beings with the intimacy of a parent. (p.207)
- ✓ Recent research conducted with long-term meditators strongly suggest that altruistic love and compassion are skills that can be extensively trained over the years. (p. 208)

18. Happiness and Humility (謙遜)

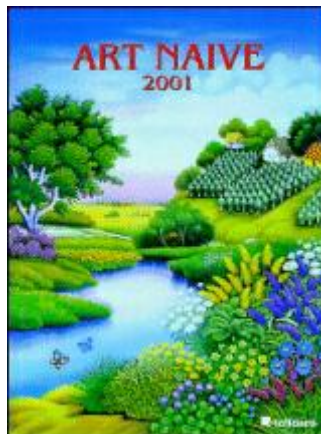
- ✓ One Tibetan saying is “The water of good qualities does no pool on top of the rock of pride”. Conversely, “Humility is like a vessel placed at ground level, ready to receive the rain of qualities.” (p. 211)
- ✓ Self-contempt is lack of confidence in our abilities and depression is linked to a sense of

powerlessness, or even to an inferiority complex or a feeling of unworthiness (p. 212).

- ✓ The humble person has nothing to lose and nothing to gain. When praised, she feels that it is humility and not herself, that is being praised. When criticized, she feels that bringing her faults to light is a great favour. (p. 231)
- ✓ In my travel with my travels with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I have seen with my own eyes the immense humility (謙遜), imbued (充滿) with kindness, of that universally revered (受到尊敬) man. (p. 214)
- ✓



19. Optimism, Pessimism, And Naivete (天真)



- ✓ Optimists have a tendency to dwell longer on pleasant incidents than on painful situations and overestimate their past performance and mastery of things. (p. 216)
- ✓ The optimist is a genial but incurably naïve dreamer. In daily life, the optimist's approach is in fact more realistic and pragmatic than that of the pessimist. (p. 216)
- ✓ The optimists do better in exams, in their chosen profession and in their relationships, live longer and in better health, enjoy a better chance of surviving postoperative shock, and are less prone to depression and suicide. (p. 217)
- ✓ Pessimists are up to 8 times more likely to become depressed when things go wrong; they do worse at school, sports, and most jobs than their talents would suggest. (p. 217)
- ✓ The sense of insecurity that afflicts so many people today is closely tied to pessimism (p. 218).
- ✓ The optimist trusts that it is possible to achieve her goals and that with patience, resolve, and

intelligence she will ultimately do so. (p. 218)

- ✓ The optimist does not give up quickly. Strengthened by the hope of success, she perseveres and succeeds more often than the pessimist. (p. 220)
- ✓ The ultimate pessimist is in thinking that life in general is not worth living. The ultimate optimism lies in understanding that every passing moment is a treasure. (p. 225)



Optimist vs Pessimist

20. Golden Time, Leader Time, Wasted Time

- ✓ Why don't we devote even the briefest moments once a day to **introspection** (内省, 反思, 自己反省). Let's look within. There is much to do. (p. 229)
- ✓ It is worthwhile to spend a moment each day cultivating an altruistic thought and observe the workings of the mind. (p. 230)
- ✓ Nargajuna (龍樹菩薩) said seventeen centuries ago. (p. 231) *How luck we are being able to wake up each day despite many difficulties!*

*If this life assailed by many ills
Is yet more fragile than a bubble on the stream,
However wonderful it is to wake up from sleep
And having loosed one's breath, to breathe in once again!*

21. One With The Flow Of Time

- ✓ A good life is one that is characterized by complete absorption in what one does. Being intensely absorbed in an activity, an experiment, or a feeling is called **flow** (p. 233). (i.e. Mindfulness)
- ✓ When one is completely involved in an activity for its own sake, there is a sense of transcending the ego and time (p. 234).

- ✓ If we have to make long-term improvement on our quality of life, “flow” must be imbued with human qualities, such as *altruism* and *wisdom*. Flow can be negative in the case of a burglar, neutral for mundane activity (e.g. ironing clothes), or positive when we are involved in a rescue operation or meditation on compassion. (p. 237)
- ✓ The awakened being remains continuously in a state of *serene*, vivid and altruistic love. (p. 238)

Serene Paradise



Ethics

22. As The Science Of Happiness

- ✓ It is not possible to live happily if one does not lead a beautiful, righteous, and wise life, or to lead a beautiful, righteous, and wise life if one is not happy. (p. 239)
- ✓ The goal of Buddhist ethics is to free all beings, including oneself from momentary and long-term suffering and to develop others to do so. (p. 240) *Inner freedom gives us authentic happiness as said before.*
- ✓ The very core of ethics is our state of mind, not the form our actions take. (p. 241)
- ✓ Everything, evil or good, occurs in our minds. Love and compassion are reflections of the true nature of all living beings - what we call basic goodness. Evil is deviation from this

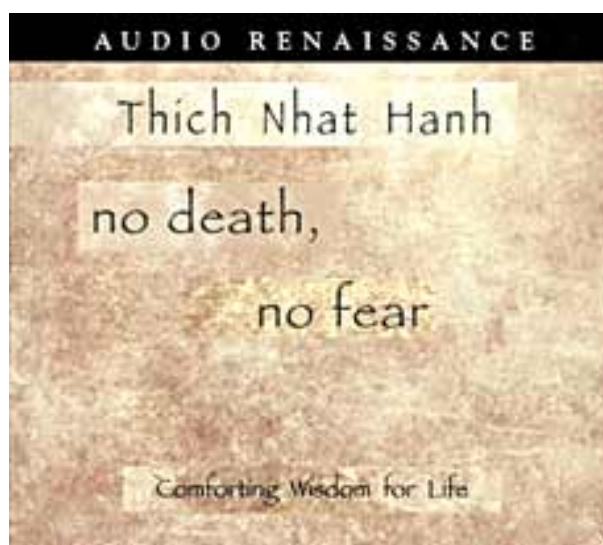
basic goodness, which can be remedied. (p. 246)

- ✓ It is only by the **constant cultivation of wisdom and compassion** that we can really become the guardians and inheritors of happiness. (p. 252)
- ✓



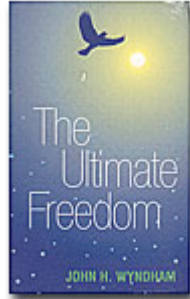
23. Happiness In The Presence Of Death

- ✓ Death often strikes us without warning. We may be in good health, enjoying a fine meal with friends, and yet be living out our final moments. (p. 254)
- ✓ In any case, it is surely preferable to spend our final moments or any moments in serenity than in anxiety! (p. 255)
- ✓ We should not wait until the last minute to ready ourselves, because it is hardly the right time to consider embarking on a spiritual journey. (p. 255)
- ✓ The wise man enjoys a very special kind of freedom: prepared for death, he appreciates every moment of life's boundary. He lives each day as if it were his only one. That day naturally becomes the most precious of his existence. When death finally comes for him, he dies tranquilly, without sadness or regret, without attachment to what he is leaving behind. (p.256)



24. A Path

- ✓ We must be the change we wish to see in the world. (p. 258)
- ✓ Our aim in taking the spiritual path is to transform ourselves with a view to helping others free themselves from suffering. (p. 258)
- ✓ Who is interested in enlightenment? This is what Buddhism calls the state of **ultimate freedom** that comes with a perfect knowledge of the nature of mind and of the world of phenomenon. (p. 263)



- ✓ In **enlightenment**, the difference between subject and object has vanished in the understanding of the interdependence of all phenomena. A state of non-duality had been achieved, above and beyond fabrications of the intellect and invulnerable to afflictive thoughts. (p. 263)
- ✓



Buddha Enlightenment

- ✓ The **enlightened being** understands all beings have the power to free themselves from ignorance and unhappiness, but they don't know it. (p. 263)
- ✓ My deepest wish is that the ideas gathered in this book may serve as tiny lights along of the path of temporary and ultimate happiness of all beings. (p. 266)

*As long as space endures,
And as long as sentient being exists,
May I, too, remain
To dispel the misery of the world.*

Summary of Essential Points

- ✓ **Happiness** is a deep sense of flourishing that arises from an exceptionally **healthy mind**.
- ✓ Happiness is a **purging of mental toxins**, such as hatred and obsession that literally poison the mind.
- ✓ Happiness is a state of **inner fulfillment** (內心的滿足感), not the gratification of inexhaustible desires for outward things.
- ✓ Happiness is a **skill**, a manner of being (生物), but skills must be **learned**.
- ✓ **Authentic** (真實的) happiness is a profound emotional balance struck by a subtle understanding of how the **mind** functions.
- ✓ Eliminate the major causes of unhappiness, which are ignorance and mental toxins of **desire, hatred and delusion** (貪、瞋、癡).
- ✓ If the wise man can be happy, then **happiness** must be **possible**.
- ✓ By **introspection** (內省, 反思, 自己反省) in meditation, we can fend off mental toxins.
- ✓ **Courage** enables us to sweep away ignorance and selfishness.
- ✓ Increasing **compassion** (慈悲) and **loving-kindness** (慈愛) helps us offer relief to suffering of others.
- ✓ Altruistic love is a direct antidote to **hatred**, the most poisonous mental toxin.
- ✓ We must go straight to the roots of **hatred** and rip them up (即時滅它).
- ✓ Inner freedom at heart is an antidote to **greed**.
- ✓ Stripping our **ego** (自我) is important to winning incredible **inner freedom**, which leads to happiness, and fosters **benevolence** (仁慈), **fortitude** (堅忍), and **serenity** (沈著).
- ✓ Our life is frittered (浪費) by detail ...**Simplify! Simplify!**
- ✓ People's discontent mainly comes from comparing themselves with others in their family, as their workplace, and among their acquaintances. **Please don't compare.**
- ✓ An **open-minded** person is more skilled at battling tough difficult circumstances.
- ✓ **Altruism** (利他) and **humility** (謙遜) lead to happiness.
- ✓ **Optimism** leads to success. **Pessimism** leads to failure and depression.
- ✓ It is worthwhile to spend a moment by meditation each day cultivating an **altruistic thought** and observe the workings of the mind.
- ✓ Everything, evil or good, occurs in our minds. Have **ethics** in your mind.
- ✓ By constant cultivation of **wisdom and compassion**, we can really become the guardians and inheritors of happiness.
- ✓ When **death** finally comes for him, he dies **tranquilly**, without sadness or regret, without attachment to what he is leaving behind.
- ✓ The **enlightened being** (覺悟的人) understands all beings have the power to free themselves from ignorance and unhappiness, but they don't know it.

The Myths of Zen

(By C K Wong, October 2007)

Recently, I have read two books, each written by a Japanese Zen monk. Each book gives a detailed account of their Zen practice experience. Based on their insight, I have found answers to some of the myths that exist in people's mind about Zen. The first book is called “Zen Life (禪的生活)” written by Monk Genyu Sokyu (玄侑宗久) who was born in 1956, and graduated from Japan's most famous private university with a degree in Chinese Literature (慶應義塾大学文学部中国文学科). He became a monk (臨済宗の僧侶) in the Kyoto Tenryuji (京都天龍寺専門道場) to入門し禅の修業を). He is also a famous novelist and was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa literary prize (芥川文學獎) for fiction in 2001. Currently, he is the deputy abbot of the monastery in his home town. (現在は生まれ故郷の福島県三春町の臨済宗妙心寺派福聚寺の副住職を務める。妙心寺派教化委員。)



玄侑宗久



天龍寺之一

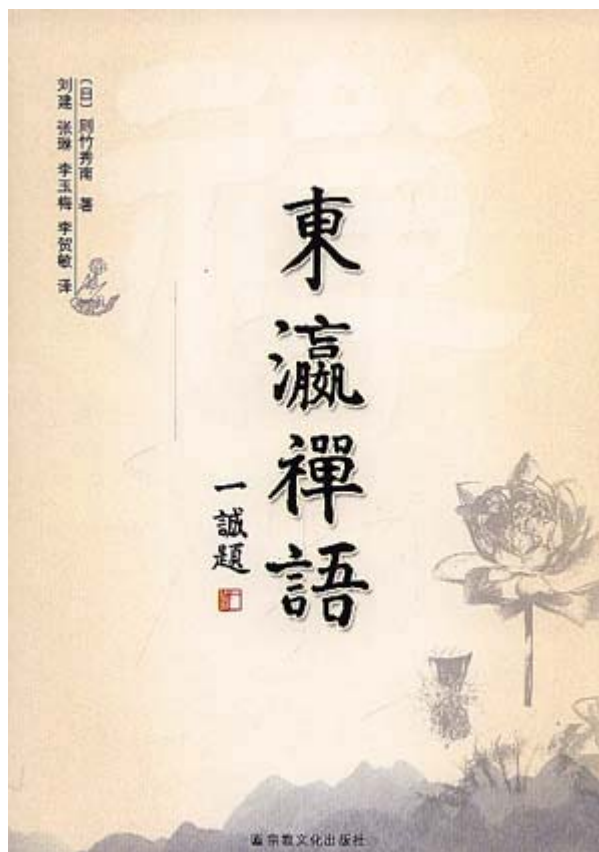


天龍寺之二



京都府京都市右京区花園妙心寺町 64

The second book is called Japanese Zen Words (東瀛禪語) written by an old Zen master Noritake Shuunan, the abbot of Linji Monastery in Kyoto (則竹秀南長老, 日本臨濟寺妙心寺派靈云院住持), who was born in 1937. This book is full of sentiments about how he started from the lowest rank and how he served and followed his master who influenced him through solemn behaviour. Master Shuunan is very humble. The second book is quite different from the first one by Monk Sokyu who wrote in a different style with logic, humour and quotations from Chinese poems (since he studied Chinese Literature in the university). Both authors told us of their decades of Zen practice experience and how to apply such experience in our daily life.



日本妙心寺靈云院則竹秀南率團參訪中國佛教協會

2006 年 12 月 15 日 佛教線上



左邊的是則竹秀南長老

The Origin of Zen

Zen was said to originate from India and was spread to China by Master Bodhidharma (菩提達摩) in about 526 A.D. In China, Zen Buddhism (previously called Chen in ancient China) was established under the Chinese culture of Taoism. Monk Sokyu commented that Zen was a branch of Taoism. More details are given in the Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>).

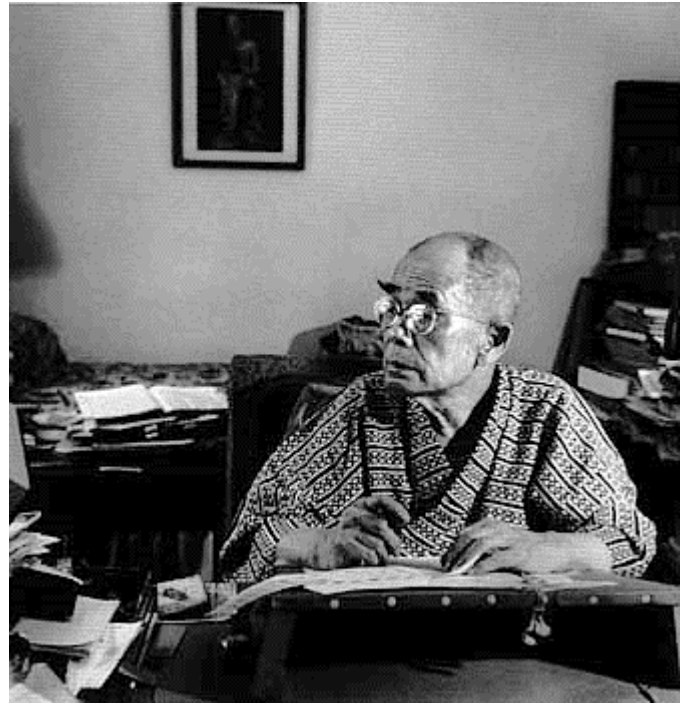
Later, Zen Buddhism was spread from China to Japan by some dedicated monks, where Zen has been well established and practised. In early 1900s, a scholar called Dr. D T Suzuki (鈴木大拙) (1870- 1966) introduced Zen to North America. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._T._Suzuki).

When I began to study Zen Buddhism in early 1990s, I read Dr. Suzuki's books first. His books, if compared with those written by Chinese scholars in classical Chinese, are very easier to understand. You can also visit this website about the interview with Dr. Suzuki in August 1957 in Mexico. When he was very young, he left university and stayed in a monastery for 7 to 8 years. <http://freehost06.websamba.com/fojiao/chan.htm>

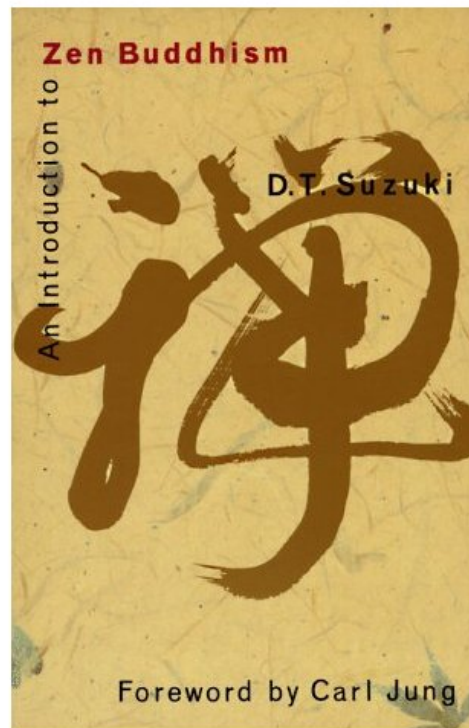
Dr. Suzuki said in the interview that the western world, which had great achievement in science, people liked to go back to oriental thinking.



Bodhidharma (菩提達摩) (470 – 543 A.D.)



Dr. D. T. Suzuki (鈴木大拙), 1950 A.D.



How did Zen start in India? There is a famous legend called Buddha smiling at a flower picked (拈花微笑). Why the Buddha smiled and what message he wanted to transmit? The story is like this: When the Śākyamuni Buddha picked up a flower on Vulture Peak to show to the assembly, only Mahakasyapa (大迦葉), his principal disciple, knew what he meant and smiled back. Therefore, the Buddha announced, “吾有正法眼藏，涅槃妙心，實相無相，微妙法門，不立文字，教外別傳之旨，以心印心之法傳給你。” This short message is difficult to understand, but the author of the second book “Japanese Zen Words” gave a detailed interpretation in plain words as follows:-

“我具有發現真理的眼睛。貪婪、嗔怒、愚癡之心蕩然無存。我所有的是顆不被任何事物來縛，不拘泥於任何事物，妙不可言之心。當我用這顆心去觀看自然時，就能看到自然真實的來來面目。青山是真實的青山，嘩嘩流淌的河水也是真實的河水。這種真實、真理是無法用語言表達出來的。這只能去內觀，去用心接受。這是不可思不可議的。這顆心只能在人們之間以心傳心地傳承。傳承中存在著的正法，將真理的慧命永續。迦葉尊者真正了解我的心。希望將這顆心能夠不間斷地永遠保持下去。”

I have attempted to translate the above important message into plain English,

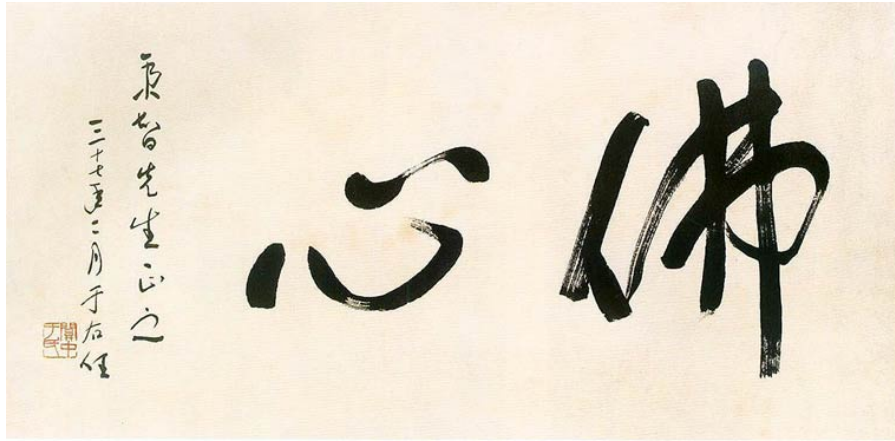
“I possess the right-dharma eyes that can discover truth. I have eliminated the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance. I possess a Citta (citta in Sanskrit means the mind; we normally call it the heart) that is not bound by anything, not sticking to anything, and too wonderful to be explained in words. When I use my Citta (now we call it the Buddha Heart or 佛心) to view the Nature. I am able to see the original true appearance of the Nature: the blue mountains are the true blue mountains; the noisy river currents are the true river currents. This real truth cannot be expressed in words, but can only be accepted with self-introspection and a good Citta. This way of viewing the Nature is incomprehensible. My Citta (or Buddha Heart) will be passed on from heart to heart, so as to forever spread the truth of the right dharma. Only Mahakasyapa is able to realize my Citta. I expect that my Citta will forever be maintained in this world.”



Vulture's Peak, view from a nearby hill



The Buddha Heart is present in every being.



Buddha Heart

In fact, the Buddha wanted to transmit a wordless citta that is full of peace, tranquility, harmony and wonderfulness, and that cannot be disturbed by any language or action. This citta is completely pure, free from desire and greed, frank and contented, optimistic, without any restraint, without trace, immovable, and eternal. This is what we call the “True Sophisticated Citta (真如妙心)” or the “Buddha Heart” (佛心) that shines on and contains all dharmas. Everybody is born with the same citta as the Buddha, who has discovered the pure citta through his hard work of practice.

Just with a flower and two smiles, Zen was transmitted from a master to his disciple at that moment an unspoken agreement was established between the two. This is also what we mean by self-awareness (自覺). Zen was then transmitted without the use of scriptures and not to be transmitted externally (不立文字, 不假外求, 直指人心, 見性成佛). Zen practice is developed on direct experience rather than on revealed scriptures, but has to be learned under the supervision of a master. Zen is thus a method of meditative religion that seeks to enlighten people in the manner that the Mahākāśyapa experienced.

In the Minji period of Japan, a Judoka was reprimanded by his master for not following the disciplinary rules and engaging on private fighting with non-Judo students. He punished himself by staying in a lotus pond and embracing a timber pole overnight. Then in the next morning, he saw the opening of a louts flower, and became enlightened of his master’s teaching about the true value of Judo. (姿三四郎荷花池悟出柔道真諦). This example shows that it needs the heart of a person to meet the truth of life. Words are less useful than one’s personal experience.



Enlightenment of the Way (悟道)

and the Ordinary Citta (平常心)

We now understand the origin of Zen and the wish of the Buddha to spread his Citta. It is important to understand the meaning of Citta (heart), as this is the goal of Buddhism practitioners. Zen practitioners wish to get enlightened of the **Way** (悟道). What is meant by the Way (道) and how to get enlightened of the Way?



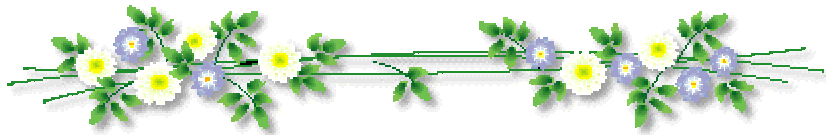
“Citta (心)” is a very important concept in the study of Buddhism. You should have heard this saying, “**Everything is made by the citta** (一切唯心造)”. This stresses the importance of citta. Buddhists believe that all things in this world are created by our citta (i.e. our mind). What Zen is looking for is a citta as clear as a mirror (i.e. the original citta as said by the Buddha at the Vulture Peak). Zen regards our citta is clean and pure. The Buddha Citta is also called the Buddha heart (佛心), Buddha nature (佛性), dharma nature (法性), original appearance (本來面目), local scenery (本地風光), true unconditioned and unchanging reality (真如; 真實如是的意思), etc. Since our citta has been polluted with value judgments (價值判斷) and crazy ideas or illusions (妄想), it has lost its purity.

Master Hui Nang (六祖惠能) once wrote on the wall when he was still a kitchen-helper, “本來無一物，何處惹塵埃; Our original citta should be pure, so how could it attract any dust?” From the Zen viewpoint, our left brain that performs linguistic and thinking functions, has developed what we deem as rational and value judgments, but Zen regards these ideas as absurd and crazy ideas and thoughts (妄想). In addition to value judgments, our citta is also full of love and hatred. But it is due to ideas and thoughts that we have created the world we are living. It will involve a very great transformation work, in the eyes of Zen masters, to clear all these value judgments and ideas before we can discover our original citta! It takes a long journey to reach the destination.

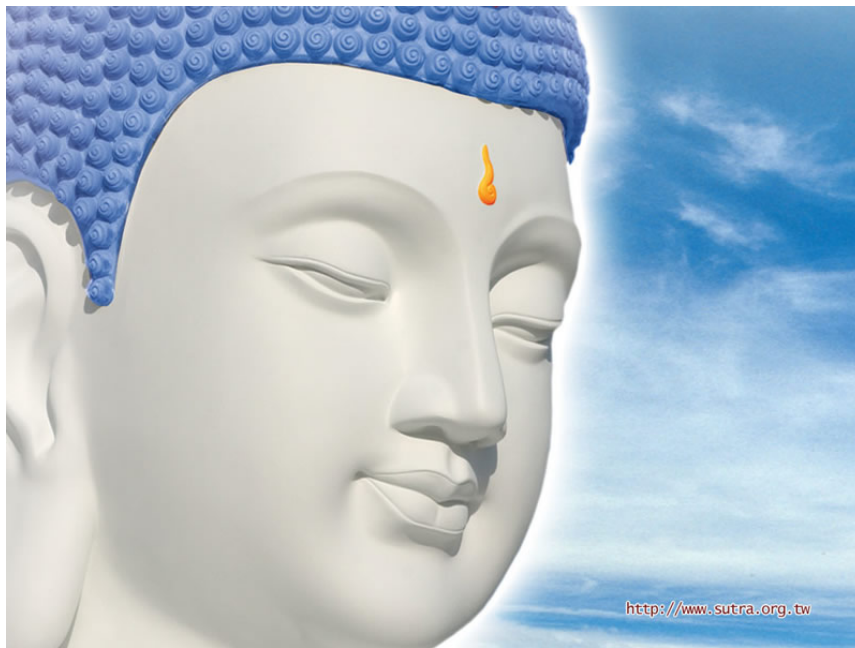


一切唯心造

Dharma-body (法身)



青青翠竹,悉皆法身.



You may have heard about the term “法身” (Dharma-body). In general terms, dharm (法) means anything, though its special meaning refers to the dharma inherited from the Buddha. What is dharma-body? “Dharma” in dharma-body means truth of life. One monk asked, “When our body realizes truth, what will the body look like?” Monk Yun-men (雲門和尚) replied, “It is what our six organs cannot absorb.” Dharma-body cannot be expressed in any word. Zen requires practitioners to realize the dharma-body by direct experience, like we need to practice swimming in water. (法身就是自己真正的生命，就是本自具足、無始無終、不生不滅、不去不來、能生萬法、不會斷滅的這念心。這念心能見、能聞、能知、能覺，而一切千變萬化的世界都呈現在這念心中；這都是法身含融一切的顯現。因此這念永不斷滅的心，就是我們法身。) If we wish to realize the dharma-body (i.e. truth of life), we need to clear the pollutants from our citta.

The **Way** is the dharma-body, the true life of us. It is stated in the Taoism Sutra (道德經, Tao Te Ching) that if the Way (“Tao”) can be explained in words, it is not the Way. We need to experience the Way ourselves (道可道，非常道). “Tao” in Taoism may refer to the “essential nature”, “principle” or “true path of life”, close to the meaning dharma-body in Buddhism.



Zen regards that when our citta meets our dharma-body, we are enlightened of the **Way** (悟道). In simple terms, when we finally discover our Buddha Citta (our original citta) by removing all the pollutants, we are enlightened of the **Way**. What shall we feel when we encounter our Buddha Citta? We will find that our citta is completely pure, free from desire, greed, anger, ignorance illusions, etc. and will feel contented, optimistic, without any restraint, without trace, immovable, and eternal. The master of the author 玄侑宗久 (Genyu Sokyu) told him that in real life, enlightenment does not exist. Monk Sokyu humbly admitted that he had not yet got enlightened. The reasons are that we human beings, through our six organs of eyes, ears, noses, tongues, bodies and mind, receive signals from the outside world, make value judgments regularly, and decide on whether we would express love or hatred as our feedback in return. However, enlightenment requires us to sweep away all these value judgments, love or hatred. Is this not too difficult?

What is meant by “**The ordinary citta is the Way** (平常心是道)” ? This stems from a famous Koan (公案, case in Zen). This so-called “ordinary citta” is not the ordinary mind as spoken by many people from common sense. Zen masters take the **ordinary citta** as the “**unpolluted citta**”. It is the original citta of us, which is free from pretence, free from being right or wrong, free from accepting or rejecting, free from being impermanent or permanent, free from feeling divine or secular. Zen masters say that a simple life is the Way. When we feel tired, we should sleep; when we are hungry, we should eat. If we are against this natural way of life, we do not possess an ordinary citta. If we can free our citta from greed, anger and ignorance, we are nearing to reaching our original citta and thus the Way. (這則公案是敘述幽默古佛的趙州從稔請教師父南泉普願禪師的公案，趙州問南泉：“什麼是道？”南泉回答說：“**平常心是道**”。**道**不用修，但莫污染。何為污染？但有生死心，造作趨向，皆是污染。若欲直會其道，平常心是道。何謂**平常心**？無造作、無是非、無取捨、無斷常、無凡無聖。經云：非凡夫行、非聖賢行，是菩薩行。只如今行住坐臥、應機接物，盡是道。)



The Ordinary Citta (the Unpolluted Citta) is the Way

Zen Practice to Reach the Original Citta

The first author Genyu Sokyu (玄侑宗久) told us of the Zen monks practice so as to reach the original citta. This is interesting and that is the reason I want to read books that contain first-hand Zen practice experience of Zen monks. Zen has been practiced in China for many decades and has been spread to Japan since Tang Dynasty. As we know, the Japanese are very meticulous people. Their monastic system of Zen practice is very strict and has preserved the original Buddhism system that once flourished in China in Tang Dynasty.

The second author Noritake Shuunan (則竹秀南長老) in his book “Japanese Zen Words (東瀛禪語)” reveals that it would take 12 years for a junior monk to become a senior monk. There are 3 stages of Zen training for a monk, the first 4 years being the junior stage, the second 4 years being the middle stage and the last 4 years being the senior stage. A junior monk has to take up all the daily chores, which include digging out of the waste from dry toilets during the midnight when there are no visitors, and disposal of the waste on the upper hills for planting purposes. They are given Zen cases (Koans; 公案) for **Zazen** (參禪; Zen sitting meditation, the core of Zen practice) and report to their mentors on their results. They have opportunities to attend university. Only after they pass the three periods of 12 years can they become a senior monk to lead the junior monks.



Meditation (冥想)

Since languages/scriptures are not useful in reaching the original citta, Zen monks use meditation (冥想) techniques to exclude all thinking processes and thus allow the body and mind to return to a “neutral” position, where there are no value judgments. This is Zen Meditation, which refers to using consciousness to control the unconsciousness function of the brain, and thus freeing us from the thinking processes and value judgments. With value judgments removed, the original appearance of our citta would turn up. Meditation thus helps us realize the true experience of the prevalent moment. (所謂冥想，顯然就是“此時此地”的真實體驗。) Like the Universe, there are still lots of unknown puzzles in our brain. Zen meditation is able to help our brain return to a neutral state before value judgments are formed. What Zen is pursuing is not a linear progress, but regress (回歸)! The Diamond Sutra (金剛般若波羅蜜多心經) states that the Bodhisattva, the great being, should produce an unsupported thought, a thought, which is nowhere supported (應無所住，而生其心。) This means that when our thoughts are not supported by any judgments of right or wrong, any feelings of love or hatred, and not preoccupied by any prejudicial views, our original citta will reappear! When this original citta reappears, it will be full of compassion (慈悲), according to the opinion of the author Genyu Sokyu (玄侑宗久).



應無所住，而生其心。

With thoughts unsupported, our original citta will reappear.

The World of the Original Citta (原來世界的模樣)

Zen practice aims to break the “Dualism (二元論)”. Dualism is the view that only two opposite concepts exist, such as good and evil, light and dark, pretty or ugly, divine and secular, lucky and unlucky, true and false, etc. In our daily life, this dualism controls our value judgments and as a result, people take actions that in turn induce karma. These values judgments also pollute their Buddha citta. Zen practice helps the practitioners embark on a journey starting from this polluted

mind, go through the deep meditation journey, and finally reach the previous horizon where value judgments have not yet arisen. At this horizon, Zen practitioners may find their original citta described by Buddha as not bound by anything, not sticking to anything, and too wonderful to be explained in words. Let's now examine what the world looks like when we reach our original citta.

When our citta becomes clear after all illusions have disappeared, sophisticated beautiful things might silently enter our citta. To describe this possible scenery, the author Genyu Sokyu (玄侑宗久) cites two stanzas of a poem (“**Nothing is inside but there is unlimited capacity to contain anything. There is a scenery of beautiful flowers, bright moon and grand buildings;** 無一物中無盡藏，有花有月有樓台”) written by the Chinese famous poet Su Shi (蘇軾) of Song Dynasty. These stanzas say that when our citta is empty of attachments/desires, our pure citta will then feel the true appearance of all things in this world. Why can't we see these beautiful things now? This is because our citta is polluted. Zen masters use meditation to clear their mind so as to reach the original citta. (人只有祛除心中自我的‘迷執’，以純淨無欲的心，才能感受到天下萬物的‘無盡藏’和豐富多彩的美好人生。)

Scientific research has shown that in deep meditation when a Zen master is on his way to enlightenment, everything perceived in the brain would not be separated from each other, all things being mixed all together. There is no feeling about space and passing of time, no distinction between one's body and the external world. Only the absolute combination exists. There would not be any thinking process; no language; no feelings; no egoism; only the pure and un-disintegrated consciousness would exist. This finding leads me to recall what is said in the Heart Sutra written by a Chinese master more than one thousand years ago, about the state of mind when enlightened (i.e. when the citta is empty of all illusions): 是故空中無色，無受、想、行、識。無眼耳鼻舌身意，無色聲香味觸法。無眼界，乃至無意識界。(So when the free Bodhisattva deeply appreciates Emptiness (Interdependence) when enlightened, he no longer relies on his form, feelings, perceptions, will, and consciousness. He no longer relies on his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and brain. He can still see, hear, smell, taste, sense, and perceive.)

In order to stop the thinking process, Buddhism meditation or Christianity praying employs a proactive method of reciting sutra stanza to let the mind focus, or perceiving the portrait of Jesus Christ. The state of mind reached by using this proactive method is called “mysterious unity (神秘的合一)”. In deep meditation, Zen masters remove the illusions, inhibit the thinking processes, and highly focus the mind. Finally, the inhibition of brain activity reaches its limit, and the transmission of signals from the external world to the brain is stopped, when Zen masters feel the “**Absolute One (絕對的一)**” condition, when they can feel the truth of life in enlightenment. This condition cannot be expressed in words.



“Absolute One” Condition? (絕對的一的境界?)

As said before, because human beings have to exercise value judgments in daily life, enlightenment (which requires us to remove all value judgment in order to reach the Buddha Citta) appears impossible. In that case, is there any use of attempting to reach enlightenment? What the Zen masters are doing daily can set good examples to us. With meditation as our daily exercise, we can alienate our preoccupied mind from thinking, illusions, desire, greed, etc. and allow our mind to be purified and reach its freedom. This is like washing our dirty clothes and bodies. Zen masters also do a lot of hard labour each day in addition to meditation. They treasure each moment as a good moment (活在當下), and each day as a good day (日日是好日). Why can't we follow their attitude?



(Being grateful in good times; being happy in bad times; being in the present)

在順境中感恩，在逆境中依舊心存喜樂，認真活在當下。

Satisfaction of life

Our citta is full of changes. With Zen practice, we are able to accept these changes. The realm of Hell or Nirvana (complete enlightenment) is determined by self-awakening in our citta. Zen practice trains us to accept new challenges to our citta, and to fully enjoy each day in our life. There is no God as in Christianity for Zen masters to depend on, except their own citta.

Life satisfaction is a great achievement of us. Let us willingly accept the present conditions of life, good or bad, rich or poor, assuming that the Mother Nature endowed them upon us. This does not mean that we should not strive for a better life, but just take each day as a good day. Each day is independent of another day. Grasping the present moment firmly allows us to lead a happy life. Monk Sokyu said that his cat and dog had never complained of the food given to it. Why we human beings are so dissatisfied with our life? We don't know if animals are enlightened. But it is true that animals are more likely to accept their fate and living conditions than we do.

I like to end this essay with two stanzas of a poem “老倒疏慵無事日，安眠高臥對青山。(When I become old and foolish, I just pass my days without doing anything. I sleep very well and am ready to be buried in the green hills opposite to my house.)”



I am satisfied!

Summary of Essential Points

- ✓ Appreciate the declaration of the Buddha at the Vulture Peak about the Buddha Heart.
- ✓ A Buddha Citta (Heart) is full of peace, tranquility, harmony and wonderfulness, and cannot be disturbed by any language or action. This heart is completely pure, free from desire and greed, frank and contented, optimistic, without any restraint, without trace, immovable, and eternal.
- ✓ The Buddha wanted the Buddha Heart to be transmitted from heart to heart without the use of linguistics or scriptures.
- ✓ Everything is made by the citta (一切唯心造). Our actions depend on our citta.
- ✓ Our Buddha Heart is covered up with value judgments and illusions (pollutants), so we cannot perceive our Buddha Heart that is present in every human being.
- ✓ Zen practice by means of meditation helps us rediscover our Buddha Heart.
- ✓ When our heart reaches Buddha Heart, we are enlightened of the Way (i.e. the truth of life).
- ✓ An Ordinary Heart is an unpolluted heart. Simple life leads us to reach an Ordinary Heart.
- ✓ When our heart is free of pollutants, our heart has enough empty space to perceive all the good things of the Universe.
- ✓ When Zen masters feel the Absolute One (絕對的一)” condition, they feel the truth of life.
- ✓ Each moment as a good moment (活在當下) and each day as a good day (日日是好日).
- ✓ Life satisfaction is a great achievement of us. Let us willingly accept the present conditions of life, good or bad, rich or poor.