

# *Enjoying the Way*

## *Introductory Lecture*

Jeff Shore

*Enjoying the Way* is the title of an early Chinese Zen poem that will be presented here for the first time in English translation. But let me begin with some introductory remarks.

Recently I have been traveling in Europe and North America. Buddhist statues are everywhere: in shops, gardens, living rooms. What is their appeal, even for many who do not consider themselves Buddhist?

These statues, often of a Buddha seated in meditation, give a sense of composure or calm repose. The statues are of varying quality, but the better ones express imperturbable calm, a boundless composure that cannot be disturbed. This is a central facet of Buddhism.

But that is not all. There is also a boundless joy. For example, look at the garish “laughing Buddha” statues that greet you at the entrance to Chinese restaurants worldwide, or better yet, at the fine ink paintings depicting the legendary Hanshan [Kanzan 寒山 eccentric Chinese “Cold Mountain” monk].

Calmness and joy might even seem conflicting attitudes: if really calm, you’re not joyful; if joyful, you’re not calm. Yet these two – and much more – are clearly expressed in fine

Buddhist sculpture, painting, and so on.

From where does this boundless calm and this boundless joy arise? These concrete depictions in wood, metal or on paper are actually abstract embodiments of awakening. What is that? It is what we are here to realize and go beyond.



Hanshan and Shide, by Liang-kai (Chinese; 12-13<sup>th</sup> c.)

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There is much confusion surrounding Zen Buddhist practice – and some of it is related to this imperturbable calm and boundless joy. For example, Zen practice is described as letting things calmly and naturally unfold. Others speak of it as a willful striving to break through to a joyous enlightenment. Like a poorly made Buddha image, such descriptions present merely one facet in a distorted manner.

Zen practice is not willful striving. You will never get there by mere will power. In fact, you do not need more energy than you now have. You **do** need to focus on the matter at hand, to properly direct that energy and not waste or disperse it. Throughout the retreat we will learn how to do this.

Is Zen practice then a matter of letting things naturally unfold? Zen Buddhism **is** simple and natural. Buddhism, however, is not just a physical posture, nor is it merely a mental discipline. Since of old, Buddhism has been described as a practice of body, speech, and mind. Many people **speak** of Zen as simple and natural. But are **they** simple and natural? Ask one real question, or look at the lives they live.

What about us? Can we really let ourselves **be as we are**? Can we just let everything be as it is? More to the point, **should** we let everything – problems, pain, living and dying, good and evil – just be as it is? If we cannot discern this, of what use is our practice?

What motivates you in your practice, and in your life? What fuels and drives you? Is your practice being fueled now? This

intense retreat will likely be difficult, cause discomfort, even pain at times. Why are you doing it? Is it because you have realized the greater *dis-ease* of ignoring it?

It is like having a high fever. You go to the doctor and he examines you, perhaps prescribes medicine, suggests an injection, or even admits you to the hospital. Would you then say: “But the treatment must not cause any discomfort!” Stubborn illness may require bitter medicine. We certainly don’t want to **cause** discomfort; but neither can we ignore the underlying *dis-ease* that we do have.

With proper treatment the fever breaks and health returns. You know it, are glad and rejoice. That is what we are doing here. By proper practice, *dis-ease* naturally comes to an end. Is this worth looking into and even tolerating some discomfort? I leave it to you to decide.

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I will also touch on relationships, love and caring. Zen monastic life seems to underplay such “worldly” concerns. After all, monastics have left the world, have left home and family to devote themselves to the Way. Despite the significant role that lay Zen has played, monastics tend to assume that it is a minor exception to the monastic norm.

This must change; indeed, it already is changing. In 2007, head abbot Keidô Fukushima of the major Rinzai monastery complex of Tôfukuji in Kyoto stated: “While American Zen has certainly learned a great deal from Japanese Zen, I think it is now time for American Zen to stand on its own two feet. In

contrast with the ‘monastic Zen’ of Japan, American Zen is essentially a ‘lay Zen’”[*SLP* xvii]. And this phenomenon is not limited to America.

The joys and sorrows of family, home and career are not the focus of monastic life – how could they be? But make no mistake: Zen Buddhism overflows with great compassion and caring, and with precious practical guidance for all. Monastic Zen may be limited to the monastery; Zen Buddhism is not.

What is needed here and now – in our home and work, among our family, friends and co-workers? The answer is not found in an ancient Chinese text or behind monastery walls. It is our task to find out by opening up and seeing for ourselves. Then we can appreciate the greatness of the Zen Buddhist tradition and bring it to life in our world, rather than as some artificial accessory or ill-fitting appendage.

Presiding over rituals and memorial services, Japanese Zen priests and nuns played an important role in Japanese society. They have little place in ours. In fact, they are becoming irrelevant in Japan as well.

The Japanese priest is not a useful model for us. We do not live 300 years ago in Edo Japan, or 2,500 years ago at the foot of the Himalayas. All pomp and circumstance aside, what Japanese priests do in their **job** (and that’s what it is) is no more “religious” or worthy, no more important or valuable, than what we do in ours. We are not second-class because we are lay people.

Monastic or lay, we devote our lives to practice. What is that? Is it what you're doing now? At any rate, it is not leaving one home for another, not renouncing one world to enter another, as made clear by Linji [Rinzai 臨濟 d. 867; father of Rinzai Zen; see *RL188*]. It is certainly not a matter of replacing one set of clothes, hairdo, or given name with another.

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One thing we can learn from monastic life is the value of **constant, sustained** practice, a **life** of practice. As valuable as retreat is, practice must continue throughout daily life. Monastics in that sense have it easy since lay people provide for them.

Lay people on the other hand practice in the midst of the world, contributing to society and supporting their families. In that sense, we must be at least as dedicated and committed as monastics. Retreats like this are proof that we can be; sustained practice at my hermitage in Kyoto provides an opportunity to take it further.

Devote yourself wholeheartedly to sustained practice for a week, a month, or years if you can. I myself did so; it was invaluable. It provides a good start, a solid foundation. But we cannot remain there; we must go beyond that, to truly **bring it home**.

Whether monastic or lay, Zen Buddhism is not an escape from *dis-ease*, nor is it a denial of our daily concerns. Put simply, Zen is about seeing into the source of those concerns so

that they can be truly addressed. Zen practice offers ways to do this, including warnings about dangers on the way. The following is from the Ming dynasty Zen monk Boshan [Hakusan博山1575-1630]:

Practicing Zen, the worst thing is to become attached to quietness, because this will cause you to be engrossed in dead stillness without realizing it. People tend to dislike disturbances, but they don't mind quietness. Having lived amidst the noise and restlessness of worldly affairs, once you experience the joy of quietness, you crave it like the sweet taste of honey or a long slumber after hard work. It's difficult to recognize your mistake. [PZ 67 rev.]

做工夫、最怕耽著靜境、使人困於枯寂、不覺不知。動境人厭、靜境多不生厭、良以行人一向處乎喧鬧之場、一與靜境相應、如食飴食蜜、如人倦久喜睡、安得自知耶。 X 63, 756a-b

Enough about monastics not knowing our problems! After all, monastics may not be familiar with changing diapers or paying taxes, but they were born into this world just like us. As a matter of fact, when it comes to dead stillness, **they** are the ones in greatest danger. We don't have the luxury to fall into it – at least for very long. Here and now, let us all together, monastic and lay, vow to give ourselves fully to practice and support each other as we do so.

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Genuine Zen, including Zen texts, reveals both the **way** to get home and **where** that home really is. What is this way,

this path? Are you on it now? Do you sense it? Where's the peace, the real home that you seek? And if you seek to leave home as a monastic, where is that home-leaving to be found?

When all the activities of consciousness have been stilled, as happens in real zazen, an entrance is found. True practice begins when, to paraphrase Linji, the activities of the ceaselessly seeking self are brought to rest [See *RL155*]. The activities of ego-self come to a full and complete stop.

Even in sound sleep, when self is temporarily disengaged, it has not come to a full and complete stop. For the self-complex returns the moment you wake from sleep. Every morning you **wake up as yourself**, and every night you let go of yourself as you fall asleep. While thoughts, emotions and so on are somewhat subject to conscious control, the self-complex itself is beyond conscious control. You are subject to it; it is not subject to you.

Do you see how pervasive and total the *dis-ease* of self is? Do you see why Zen Buddhism is not concerned with states of consciousness or experiences, however subtle or enlightening? Such states and experiences are still states and experiences of the self.

And do you see why sitting through the nights in sustained zazen is a hallowed Zen Buddhist practice? Conscious delusions can be dealt with fairly easily – after all, they are conscious. So-called unconscious or non-conscious delusions cannot be dealt with so easily. It is not enough just to stabilize and quiet consciousness a while, for the self-complex remains.

This is why many people attempt meditation for some time, then grow disillusioned with it and give up. Failing to penetrate the surface, they are honest enough to recognize that their minds are still going in the same old circles.

As you'll see, it's not difficult to sit through the night if you're practicing properly. And this helps to dislodge not only the conscious delusions, but also the unconscious delusions. These unconscious delusions are what lie at the core of the self-delusion that is the delusion-of-self. Who wakes up every morning and falls asleep every night? If you really knew that, would you struggle in confusion during the day?

Unconscious delusions will not be uprooted easily. We have been grasping onto them and identifying with them all of our lives. They have become what we **are**. They're not going to disappear just because you hear a lecture about them or sit in meditation for a while.

With patient and proper practice, however, it's not difficult – for they **are** delusions, and they cannot persist if we do not feed them. A simple example: we may not even be conscious of some of our predilections and fixed views. But they can be strong and stubborn. So when we encounter someone, these preconceptions start to work and we end up encountering **them**, not the person in front of us. With patient and sustained practice, those preconceptions unravel and lose their hold. This allows us to see others for who they really are, rather than who we think they are. It allows us to see who and what we really are too.

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*When hungry, eat;  
Tired, sleep.  
Fools laugh at me,  
But the wise know its wisdom.*

When tired, sleep – and we were just discussing the virtue of sitting through the nights! (*Laughter*) This is one of the most famous quotes from *Enjoying the Way*.

Zen **is** eating when hungry, sleeping when tired. But isn't that what we all do anyway? Is it? How easily the deluded self trips over its own delusions. The early Chinese Zen master Huihai [Ekai 慧海] was asked by a *Vinaya*-precepts teacher about this:

“Reverend, do you still make efforts in your practice of the Way or not?”

Huihai: “Yes, I do.”

“What efforts do you make?”

Huihai: “When hungry, eat; tired, sleep.”

“Everybody does that. Aren't they making the same efforts as you?”

Huihai: “No they're not.”

“Why not?”

Huihai: “When they eat they're not eating, but instead are preoccupied with a hundred different desires. When they sleep they're not sleeping, but instead are plagued by a thousand thoughts. So they're not the same.”

The *Vinaya* teacher made no reply.

[IA 67 rev.]

有源律師來問。和尚修道還用功否。師曰。用功。曰如何用功。師曰。饑來喫飯困來即眠。

曰一切人總如是同師用功否。師曰。不同。曰何故不同。師曰。他喫飯時不肯喫飯。

百種須索。睡時不肯睡。千般計校。所以不同也。律師杜口。

T 51,247c

When hungry, eat. Simple enough? And yet, as a matter of fact, when we eat we are often preoccupied with all kinds of things. Does anyone not recognize this? Huihai was very kind in his answer.

Nowadays many people in the First World have forgotten what hunger is – we snack so compulsively that we don't have a chance to experience real hunger. We eat when we're **not** hungry and that's a **huge** problem. We eat to relieve stress and boredom. We even have a bizarre term for it: comfort food. Blindly seeking to soothe our discomfort, we indulge in comfort food.

When hungry, eat. See how hard it is? – Because it's so simple! What gets in the way? When you see that, the Buddhist path opens underfoot.

Linji spoke of putting to rest the activities of the seeking self. In other words, the self that seeks for some enlightenment experience, seeks to escape from discomfort by eating or by fasting, seeks to be satisfied the way it is. **That** very self comes to its own end. How to do this is the subject of our retreat.

And once the seeking self has come to rest, then we can start afresh, in the midst of our busy lives, responding to the real

needs of the world and of others. Zen practice is not escaping from things. That is precisely what Zen practice is – **not** escaping from anything. It is seeing what really is, being what you really are.

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*Let go in front, let go behind, let go in between:*

*Gone beyond all that is,*

*Mind released in every way,*

*You do not come again to birth and decay.*

[*Dhp* #348; *ZB* 22, 131 rev.]

This verse is from the *Dhammapada*, a well-known Buddhist text from the Theravada canon. According to the commentaries, Gotama Buddha spoke these words to an acrobat doing somersaults balanced atop a tall bamboo pole.

The acrobat, named Uggasena, was engaged in his craft. Like us, he was a layperson working. Do you think his mind wandered when he worked? Does your mind wander when you work? Does it wander when you do zazen? Do you think your position is any safer or more secure than his? If you do, you're not doing zazen – you're dreaming.

Upon hearing Gotama's verse, layman Uggasena, engaged in his work – balanced on top a bamboo pole! – “attained arahantship,” in other words, was liberated. Do you think you're any different?

“Let go in front, let go behind...” Commentaries explain that

this refers to past and future. Nothing new here: we should not get hung up with the past or be preoccupied with the future. This much is common sense.

And yet, how often is your zazen lost in past memories or future plans? Indeed, it is necessary to be fully present in the present. Without this, we cannot even begin practice.

The real point, however, is what follows: “let go in between” – that is, let go in the middle, let go of the present as well. It is certainly important to let go of both past and future. But if you’re trying to balance in “the present moment” you’re still stuck. In 1775 Samuel Johnson said: “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” In the present context, “Present moment is the last refuge of the self.”

Where is this present moment – Now? Or is it now? How about now? Can you contain it? Does it contain you? Freed of past and future, **now** is the delusion ego-self maintains in order to preserve itself. Look! There is no present moment, nor is there any self in the present moment. As Gotama’s verse makes clear, by letting go of the past, the future – and the present – one is “Gone beyond all that is, Mind released in every way, You do not come again to birth and decay.” This is what Buddhism is all about. It is **not** being in the present [See *BwS* 81, 196]. Now, where are you?

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A kind of calm courage is necessary to see this practice through and let the seeking self come to rest once and for all. How do you practice with self to bring an end to self? If you are

entangled in self-delusion, you need to practice in a way that lets it go. Otherwise, you may end up increasing the delusive seeking.

There are practices to help bring the self-delusion to rest. There are also practices for when the self-delusion has been laid to rest. Then the real work begins. For example, in complete openness we can heal emotional damage and really help others and ourselves – and be helped by them.

One day years ago, after a hard day's work at university, I came home and got angry with my teenage son over something. He responded that I was blowing it out of proportion and that my anger wasn't just about him. Some parents might say that's exactly the kind of excuse teenagers will give. But he's no dummy. He was right. He had the calm courage to respond that way, and it made me realize that I had carried some emotional baggage home and poured it on him. At that moment he became my teacher.

Now I am there for my son when he tires of the race. And sometimes we enjoy running beside each other, sharing our experience.

In the throes of no-self awakening, nothing remains – all delusions are gone without a trace. And yet, some delusions will probably return – in a certain situation you may find old patterns of emotion and thought arising, those old gears churning again. We need to be aware of this and see through them, thankful for being shown our blind spots and weaknesses. This kind of practice is at least as important as

awakening.

# *Enjoying the Way*

[*Ledao ge/Rakudô-ka* 樂道歌]

attributed to *Nanyue Mingzan*

[*Nangaku Myôsan* 南嶽明瓚 aka *Lanzan* 懶瓚; 8th c.]

## I

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. Serenely carefree, nothing to change; | 兀然無事無改換 |
| 2. Carefree, what need for words?        | 無事何須論一段 |
| 3. Real mind doesn't scatter,            | 真心無散亂   |
| 4. So no need to stop worldly cares.     | 他事不須斷   |
| 5. The past is already past,             | 過去已過去   |
| 6. The future can't be reckoned.         | 未來更莫算   |
| 7. Sitting serenely carefree,            | 兀然無事坐   |
| 8. Why would anyone pay a call?          | 何曾有人喚   |
| 9. Seeking to work on things outside –   | 向外覓功夫   |
| 10. It's all foolishness!                | 總是癡頑漢   |

## II

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 11. As for provisions, not one grain;        | 糧不畜一粒 |
| 12. If a meal is offered, just gobble it up. | 逢飯但知嗎 |
| 13. Worldly folk full of needless care,      | 世間多事人 |
| 14. Always chasing, they never get it.       | 相趁渾不及 |

## III

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|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 15. I neither desire heavenly realms, | 我不樂生天 |
| 16. Nor want blessings in this world. | 亦不愛福田 |

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|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 17. When hungry, eat;             | 饑來即喫飯 |
| 18. Tired, sleep.                 | 睡來即臥眠 |
| 19. Fools laugh at me,            | 愚人笑我  |
| 20. But the wise know its wisdom. | 智乃知賢  |
| 21. It's not being stupid –       | 不是癡鈍  |
| 22. It's what we originally are.  | 本體如然  |

#### IV

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|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 23. When you have to go, go;          | 要去即去  |
| 24. When you have to stay, stay.      | 要住即住  |
| 25. Over shoulders, a ragged robe;    | 身被一破納 |
| 26. Below, bare feet.                 | 脚着孃生袴 |
| 27. Talking, talking, more and more – | 多言復多語 |
| 28. Always leads to mistakes.         | 由來反相誤 |
| 29. If you want to save others,       | 若欲度衆生 |
| 30. Better work on saving yourself!   | 無過且自度 |

#### V

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|--|-------|
| 31. Don't rashly seek the true Buddha; | 莫謾求真佛 |
| 32. True Buddha can't be found.        | 真佛不可見 |
| 33. Does marvelous nature and spirit   | 妙性及靈臺 |
| 34. Need tempering or refinement?      | 何曾受勳鍊 |
| 35. Mind is this mind carefree;        | 心是無事心 |
| 36. This face, the face at birth.      | 面是孃生面 |
| 37. Even if the kalpa-rock is moved,   | 劫石可移動 |
| 38. It alone remains unchanged.        | 箇中難改變 |

## VI

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|---|-------|
| 39. Carefree is just that –                 | 無事本無事 |
| 40. What need to read the words?            | 何須讀文字 |
| 41. With the root of delusive self gone,    | 消除人我本 |
| 42. All falls into place right where it is. | 冥合箇中意 |

## VII

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|--|---------|
| 43. Rather than get worn out over this and that, | 種種勞筋骨   |
| 44. In the woods, serene, just take a nap.       | 不如林間睡兀兀 |
| 45. Raise your head and the sun's already high;  | 舉頭見日高   |
| 46. Scrounge for food, then wolf it down.        | 乞飯從頭噉   |

## VIII

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|--|------|
| 47. Intent on getting good results,        | 將功用功 |
| 48. You merely fall deeper into ignorance. | 展轉冥朦 |
| 49. Try to grasp, it can't be gotten;      | 取則不得 |
| 50. Let go and there it is.                | 不取自通 |

## IX

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|---|------|
| 51. I have one "word";                        | 吾有一言 |
| 52. With it, all concepts and relations gone. | 絕慮忘緣 |
| 53. Clever explanations cannot get at this,   | 巧說不得 |
| 54. Only mind conveys it.                     | 只用心傳 |

## X

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|--|------|
| 55. Again this single "word,"          | 更有一語 |
| 56. Directly expressed without medium. | 無過直與 |

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|--|------|
| 57. Smaller than small,                        | 細如毫末 |
| 58. Originally without direction or place.     | 本無方所 |
| 59. Originally whole and complete –            | 本自圓成 |
| 60. Not something strung together with effort. | 不勞機杼 |

## XI

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 61. Lost in worldly cares               | 世事悠悠 |
| 62. Is far from mountain stillness.     | 不如山丘 |
| 63. Where pines obscure sunlight,       | 青松蔽日 |
| 64. Clear green streams flow on and on. | 碧澗長流 |
| 65. Lying down beneath wisteria vines,  | 臥藤蘿下 |
| 66. Head pillowed on smooth stone.      | 塊石枕頭 |
| 67. With mountain clouds as curtain     | 山雲當幕 |
| 68. And night moon as a hook.           | 夜月為鉤 |
| 69. Not rising for the emperor,         | 不朝天子 |
| 70. Why envy royalty?                   | 豈羨王侯 |
| 71. Not even birth-death concerns me –  | 生死無慮 |
| 72. What remains to grieve over?        | 更須何憂 |

## XII

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|--|-------|
| 73. Moon reflected in water has no fixed form;     | 水月無形  |
| 74. That's the way I always am.                    | 我常只寧  |
| 75. Each and every thing as it is,                 | 万法皆爾  |
| 76. Originally unborn.                             | 本自無生  |
| 77. Sitting serenely carefree:                     | 兀然無事坐 |
| 78. Spring comes, the grass grows green of itself. | 春來草自青 |

## *Retreat Lectures*

This song, a kind of free-style tone poem, is attributed to an early Chinese hermit-monk who lived in the eighth century. He is known as Nanyue Mingzan, but he was also called Lanzan, or “Lazy Zan.” Little is known about him or his song. This is partly due to his affiliation with what came to be called the Northern School of Chinese Zen, in contrast to the Southern School of the Sixth Patriarch. No need to go into detail, but for sectarian and political reasons, this Northern School was eventually condemned for holding onto dualistic, gradual, step-by-step, “polishing-the-mirror” practices. Before long, this school disappeared. If you look at the poem, however, no such teachings or practices are mentioned.

In contrast to this Northern School, the Southern School of the Sixth Patriarch was lauded for its teaching of “originally there is not a thing”[本来無一物] and “immediate awakening”[頓悟]. (Often distorted in English as “sudden enlightenment” – a poor translation since it is neither sudden nor enlightenment. Sudden suggests quickness in time, whereas it is *im-mediate*, *un-mediated*. The self-confinements of time and space – not to mention the present moment – are gone. The self-separation that maintains such delusions has come to an end.)

About a century later, Linji (Rinzai in Japanese) took up this torch of immediate awakening. He even stated that the Buddhist teachings are toilet paper to wipe your butt with

[See *RL* 222-3]. But what are the teachings that **he** quoted and relied on? Lines found in *Enjoying the Way* were some of his favorites, as we will see.

The title 樂道歌 could be literally translated as “Song of Enjoying the Way,” although it was probably not given that title or its present form until long after. At any rate, the title is not unique; it is generic and used for a whole genre of songs.

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Who is Lazy Zan? In case 34 of *The Blue Cliff Record* the following story is found. Lazy Zan secluded himself in a stone cave. The emperor heard of him and sent a messenger to summon him to court – the honor of a lifetime. The messenger announced the imperial command to the hermit-monk: “Reverend, you should rise and acknowledge the Imperial Benevolence!” Lazy Zan did not even answer but simply remained hunched over his cow-dung fire; he pulled out a roasted yam and began eating it. It was wintertime and snot ran down his chin. Finally the messenger laughed and said: “Reverend, at least you could wipe the snot away!” “Why should I bother for a worldly man?” replied Lazy Zan. After all, he did not rise. The messenger returned and reported this to the throne. The emperor was filled with admiration [*RL* 172 rev.; *T* 48, 173b]. Hard to believe there is not **some** historical truth in such detail.

*The Blue Cliff Record* concludes the section on him with this eulogy: “Someone so pure and calm, so clear and direct as this, is not at the disposal of others; he just holds still, as though

made of cast iron” [BCR 214]. “Not at the disposal of others” – who is other to such a one?

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What does this eighth-century ode to leisurely contentment have to do with us? If it merely celebrates the joys of a rustic life away from worldly concerns, well then it certainly has little to do with our lives, except perhaps as a dreamy ideal, like a Chinese landscape painting hung on our office wall. Something to remind us of how far away we are, perhaps allow a moment’s escape into its jagged, misty contours.

But what if this song is singing about our reality – including our workaday world and family life? What does this ancient ode really have to say to us – nothing? Or perhaps everything?

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Let us now return to the song, verse by verse. (The division into twelve verses is based on the rhyming tone scheme, which I have not attempted to imitate here. No such divisions exist in the four versions found in the Buddhist canon.)

## I

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|--|---------|
| 1. Serenely carefree, nothing to change; | 兀然無事無改換 |
| 2. Carefree, what need for words?        | 無事何須論一段 |
| 3. Real mind doesn’t scatter,            | 真心無散亂   |
| 4. So no need to stop worldly cares.     | 他事不須斷   |
| 5. The past is already past,             | 過去已過去   |
| 6. The future can’t be reckoned.         | 未來更莫算   |
| 7. Sitting serenely carefree,            | 兀然無事坐   |

8. Why would anyone pay a call?

何曾有人喚

9. Seeking to work on things outside –

向外覓功夫

10. It's all foolishness!

總是癡頑漢

To give an impression of how subtle and nuanced this is, let me briefly unpack just the first four Chinese characters of the first line. The first two characters, pronounced in Japanese *gotsu-nen*, form a phrase I have translated as “serenely.” The English expression “dead to the world” or “oblivious” could also be used. It is an ancient expression that brings to mind the Taoist image of a withered tree or dead ashes. Yet it can include a positive sense of towering and steadfast, ingenuous, uncontrived, unruffled, unhindered by affectation or conscious manipulation, ungraspable, beyond sensuous experience and knowing.

The third and fourth Chinese characters of this first line, pronounced in Japanese *bu-ji*, are translated here as “carefree.” Literally the two characters mean “no thing,” i.e., no matter or no affair, nothing at all to do or accomplish. Like the previous phrase *gotsu-nen*, it includes a positive sense of free of all doings, free of things, done seeking, as-it-is with nothing superfluous. “Without a thing” is fairly literal, but “**contented** without a thing” captures it better. This was a favorite term of Linji and it expresses the essence of his Zen.

Sound foreign and opaque? Consider Meister Eckhart's Godhead as the “silent desert where distinction never gazed, where there is neither father nor son nor holy spirit” [ML 162]

or his descriptions of the soul as eternally virgin and without hindrance, “as free as it was when it was not” [See *UW* 52-7, *WJ* 9ff, *MT* 140]. Now let us look at the first verse.

The first line sums up the entire song – it’s all there. Realizing for ourselves what lies behind those first four Chinese characters, it should be clear that “nothing to change” (which completes this first line) is not merely passive acceptance but a matter of “doing nothing – **yet nothing is left undone**”[See *Dao De Jing* chapter 48, *Zhuangzi* chapter 22].

The second line playfully gives us words as it takes them away – for words are useful, but not necessary here. Zazen manuals give step-by-step instructions, and they are certainly useful. None are offered here – instead, the third and fourth lines directly and immediately point out the heart of the matter. No gradual practices in this poem; no means or methods for the ego-self to corrupt.

The sentiment of the fifth and sixth lines we’ve seen before; the seventh, which repeats the first four characters of the first line, speaks of sitting (meditation). What is this sitting that is serenely carefree? Is it sitting seeking to get there, or sitting that has arrived? Or is it sitting free of all such distinctions?

The eighth line is perhaps sung with self-effacing humor; why would anyone want to visit this old fart? We will return to this in verse eleven. The ninth and tenth lines are quoted by Linji in one of his most powerful statements:

A man of old said: “Seeking to work on things outside – It’s all foolishness!” Just **be** every situation that arises, and wherever you stand is true. Whatever circumstances come, they cannot upset you. Even though you bear the influence of past delusions or the karma from the five cardinal sins, these of themselves become the ocean of emancipation! [RL 186 rev.]

古人云。向外作[覓]工夫。總是癡頑漢。爾且隨處作主。立處皆真。境來回換不得。縱有從來習氣五無間業。自為解脫大海。 T 47, 498a

This statement from *The Record of Linji* was used for many years at Kyoto Station as an advertisement for the Zen-affiliated university where I teach. Marvelous statement – although it may have been a bit over the top for many as they scurried by! What do you think they got from it? What do you get from it?

By the way, one edition of *Enjoying the Way* in the Buddhist canon has an apparent scribal error (内 instead of 向) so that line 9, “Seeking to work on things outside” reads “Seeking to work on things inside or outside.” Suggestive, especially in light of Linji’s take on it.

## II

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 11. As for provisions, not one grain;        | 糧不畜一粒 |
| 12. If a meal is offered, just gobble it up. | 逢飯但知嗎 |
| 13. Worldly folk full of needless care,      | 世間多事人 |
| 14. Always chasing, they never get it.       | 相趁渾不及 |

A monk naturally has few provisions. But “not one grain” – what is he referring to? Line twelve speaks of gobbling up a food offering. Is this eating due to stress or boredom? Worrying and needlessly seeking, sitting endless hours in zazen: when will you **get it**?

You may feel frustrated at this point in your practice: working hard yet getting nowhere. It seems endless. But the content of consciousness **is** limited. Like the small, hourglass-shaped egg timer in the kitchen: turn it over and in a few minutes you can see that the top half is empty. Not one grain.

The practice we are doing will not be completed in a few minutes. If it’s done properly, however, we can confirm for ourselves soon enough that the content of consciousness is limited.

Why doesn’t it seem that way? Because although the restlessly seeking self turns over the timer, in a minute self grows anxious, bored, or confused – then turns it over again! And again. Well, in that case it **is** endless. You will never get to the end – even though it is limited and only takes a few minutes.

That’s what the seeking self, the wavering mind, does. Even when it attempts to practice or to meditate. A retreat is turning the timer over and seeing what happens if you leave it be and just sit through. Then you can confirm yourself that the content of consciousness is limited. No need to trust my words.

### III

15. I neither desire heavenly realms,	我不樂生天
16. Nor want blessings in this world.	亦不愛福田
17. When hungry, eat;	饑]來即喫飯
18. Tired, sleep.	睡來即臥眠
19. Fools laugh at me,	愚人笑我
20. But the wise know its wisdom.	智乃知賢
21. It's not being stupid –	不是癡鈍
22. It's what we originally are.	本體如然

Once the seeking self has come to rest of its own accord, the first two lines almost sing themselves. The next two lines could hardly be more prosaic: eating when hungry, lying down and closing one's eyes when drowsy. As already mentioned, these simple, daily acts are almost impossible for self to do purely and wholly – why is that? What gets in the way?

When hungry, eat – this isn't just about you. How many people in the world today don't **have** food to eat? See the challenge laid at our feet with these three words? To be “serenely carefree” is to hunger as long as one person cannot eat.

For the ceaselessly seeking self, nothing it comes across will give lasting satisfaction. Once the seeking self has come to rest, the most ordinary and commonplace is quite enough. “When hungry, eat; Tired, sleep.” The fool indeed may laugh: You call that the summit of a life of religious practice? Yet how extraordinarily ordinary are the everyday, immediate events

of our lives – when freed of tedious manipulations and self-centered seeking. Nothing esoteric, up in the clouds. Far from being dull or stupid, this is intrinsic wisdom. And it naturally works in the world.

The following statement of Linji overflows with the spirit of *Enjoying the Way* and ends paraphrasing lines seventeen to twenty:

As to *Buddhadharma*, no effort is necessary. Just be ordinary and carefree: shitting, pissing, dressing, eating, and lying down when tired. Fools laugh at me, but the wise understand. [RL 185 rev.: cf. 282]  
 佛法無用功處。祇是平常無事。屙屎送尿著衣喫飯。困來即臥。愚人笑我。  
 智乃知焉。 T 47, 498a

#### IV

- |                                       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 23. When you have to go, go;          | 要去即去  |
| 24. When you have to stay, stay.      | 要住即住  |
| 25. Over shoulders, a ragged robe;    | 身被一破納 |
| 26. Below, bare feet.                 | 脚着孃生袴 |
| 27. Talking, talking, more and more – | 多言復多語 |
| 28. Always leads to mistakes.         | 由來反相誤 |
| 29. If you want to save others,       | 若欲度衆生 |
| 30. Better work on saving yourself!   | 無過且自度 |

The first two lines remind us that this is not merely indulging in quietism, but rather doing what must be done. How much of our time is spent daydreaming, seeking to be

somewhere else? The ragged robe and bare feet suggest freedom from attachment and from ambition, nothing superfluous, nothing remaining. Bare feet is literally “the leggings received from mother [at birth]” – spiritually naked and free.

Lines twenty-seven and twenty-eight return to the limit, the trap, of language, how words can get in the way. The last two lines require that we really see through the words. The first of our *Four Great Vows for All*: “Numberless beings – set free” [lit.: “Vowing to set free numberless beings” 衆生無邊誓願度]. This is where, and how, we **begin** practice. Can you discern, in the last two lines, a precious warning about the ambitious desire to save others?

The tone and tenor of this verse, especially the first two lines, is again echoed in *The Record of Linji* – which seamlessly leads to the next verse:

Conforming with circumstances as they are, [the true follower of the Way] exhausts his past karma; accepting things as they are, he puts on his clothes. When he has to walk he walks, when he has to sit he sits. He doesn't have one thought of seeking Buddhahood.

[*RL* 171 rev.]

但能隨緣消舊業。任運著衣裳。要行即行。要坐即坐。無一念心希求佛果。

T 47, 497c

## V

31. Don't rashly seek the true Buddha:

莫謾求真佛

32. True Buddha can't be found.	眞佛不可見
33. Does marvelous nature and spirit	妙性及靈臺
34. Need tempering or refinement?	何曾受勲鍊
35. Mind is this mind carefree;	心是無事心
36. This face, the face at birth.	面是孃生面
37. Even if the kalpa-rock is moved,	劫石可移動
38. It alone remains unchanged.	箇中難改變

Why can't true Buddha be seen, without or within? Only the living and naked reality will do here, not statues or mind-states. As Linji was fond of saying: "True Buddha is without form" [See *RL* 228, 262, 263].

There is much need for patient tempering and careful refinement. *Enjoying the Way* sings of the fundamental reality that is beyond all such tweaking and tampering. ("Nature" here refers to our original and true nature, not the world of nature.)

And where we end up is "this mind carefree." **You** – free of self. Done with seeking. Nothing transcendent or esoteric. Your face at birth. Or, if you seek to be more Zenistic, your original face before the birth of your parents.

The kalpa-rock moved or worn away refers to an endlessly long time. Even longer than some of those painful zazen periods. It – what is that? – remains unchanged. **This** – does it come or go, can it be tempered, tweaked, or tampered with? Relieve stress as much and as often as you like; you will never attain **this**.

## VI

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 39. Carefree is just that –                 | 無事本無事 |
| 40. What need to read the words?            | 何須讀文字 |
| 41. With the root of delusive self gone,    | 消除人我本 |
| 42. All falls into place right where it is. | 冥合箇中意 |

The first two lines return to the theme of words and their limits. When you know, you know. Is there value then in reading these verses? Listen: Lazy Zan is laughing joyfully with us!

The term rendered as “the root of delusive self” also suggests striving for advantage over others. Once this is removed, we find that, at bottom, nothing was lacking in the first place. Then we cannot but endlessly work, with body, speech, and mind, with blood, sweat, and tears, for those who hunger and thirst. **That** is carefree (*bu-ji*) activity.

## VII

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 43. Rather than wear yourself out over this and that, | 種種勞筋骨   |
| 44. In the woods, serene, just take a nap.            | 不如林間睡兀兀 |
| 45. Raise your head and the sun’s already high;       | 舉頭見日高   |
| 46. Scrounge for food, then wolf it down.             | 乞飯從頭噉   |

Is the author falling into dead passivity and quietism here? (How about you?) Or is there an unself-conscious dynamism at work, untouched by worldly ambition or desire?

“A day without work is a day without eating.” Baizhang [Hyakujô 百丈 720-814], who made this his life’s motto, is also credited with creating unique rules for the Zen monastery. He is considered one of the founders of the Zen school, along with Bodhidharma and Linji (Rinzai).

It is said that when master Baizhang got old, his monks hid his tools to save him from the chore of working. When Baizhang could not find his tools that day, he did not work. But he also refused to pick up his chopsticks and eat. That was how seriously he lived by his own words: “A day without work is a day without eating.” This was his Zen-at-work – brimming with wisdom and compassion.

Is this the same as “When hungry, eat”? Gobbling it up and wolfing it down? How would coal miners, trapped for weeks with little food, survive? If you just blindly accept these Zenistic expressions, rather than breathe life into them, you and the expressions are both dead!

## VIII

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 47. Intent on getting good results,        | 將功用功 |
| 48. You merely fall deeper into ignorance. | 展轉冥朦 |
| 49. Try to grasp, it can't be gotten;      | 取則不得 |
| 50. Let go and there it is.                | 不取自通 |

Did you hear the flock of geese fly overhead in the early morning zazen?

*Wild geese do not intend to leave traces,* 鴈無遺蹤之意。  
*The water has no mind to absorb their image.* 水無沈影之心。 ZS 461

**You** – you are the water, with no mind to receive the image.  
**You** – you are the geese flapping through boundless sky. Is this dead quietism, or the source of dynamic activity? It's all here, alive and well, every flapping wing flawlessly reflected – yet without self-conscious intent.

As if commenting on this, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote in the first of his *Duino Elegies*:

You *still* don't get it? Cast the emptiness out of your arms  
into the space we breathe, so that the birds  
may feel the expanding air with their deeper flight.

[Jeannette Stowasser translation]

*Weißt du's **noch** nicht? Wirf aus den Armen die Leere  
zu den Räumen hinzu, die wir atmen; vielleicht daß die Vögel  
die erweiterte Luft fühlen mit innigerm Flug.*

## IX

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 51. I have one "word";                        | 吾有一言 |
| 52. With it, all concepts and relations gone. | 絕慮忘緣 |
| 53. Clever explanations cannot get at this,   | 巧說不得 |
| 54. Only mind conveys it.                     | 只用心傳 |

After repeating that there is no need for words or language, he now raises his one word. If all concepts and relations are

gone with it, what kind of word is that? The term for “convey” in the last line can also be translated as “transmit,” suggesting the Zen Buddhist transmission of mind – by, for, to, as – mind. Mind transmitting mind. What kind of mind is this? Enough said.

## X

55. Again this single “word,”	更有一語
56. Directly expressed without medium.	無過直與
57. Smaller than small,	細如毫末
58. Originally without direction or place.	本無方所
59. Originally whole and complete –	本自圓成
60. Not something strung together with effort.	不勞機杼

Again he raises this word – yet it’s direct and unmediated. Is it his? Yours? Are you going to perfect or polish it? Realizing **this** – “Originally whole and complete” – we work with blood, sweat, and tears to perfect what should be perfected, to polish what needs to shine.

It is not a state of mind, not an experience or event, however lofty or illuminating. The self is certainly subject to such states and experiences. But that is not Zen. Thus Linji speaks of the seeking self itself coming to an end. However profound or lofty, if the self-complex remains, any mind-state or experience can become an entanglement, can do more harm than good. Beware!

## XI

61. Lost in worldly cares	世事悠悠
62. Is far from mountain stillness.	不如山丘
63. Where pines obscure sunlight,	青松弊日
64. Clear green streams flow on and on.	碧澗長流
65. Lying down beneath wisteria vines,	臥藤蘿下
66. Head pillowed on smooth stone.	塊石枕頭
67. With mountain clouds as curtain	山雲當幕
68. And night moon as a hook.	夜月為鉤
69. Not rising for the emperor,	不朝天子
70. Why envy royalty?	豈羨王侯
71. Not even birth-death concerns me –	生死無慮
72. What remains to grieve over?	更須何憂

This verse, with stunning natural imagery, is the climax of the song. Don't take the images **too** literally. We don't have to be surrounded by mountain stillness or underneath wisteria vines – just not wrapped up in our selves.

Lines sixty-nine and seventy refer to the emperor's messenger (cf. verse 1, line 8, and p. 21 above).

## XII

73. Moon reflected in water has no fixed form:	水月無形
74. That's the way I always am.	我常只寧
75. Each and every thing as it is,	万法皆爾
76. Originally unborn.	本自無生
77. Sitting serenely carefree:	兀然無事坐

Line seventy-seven is identical with the seventh line of verse one. The last two lines are often quoted. Like much of the poem, these last two lines can be taken as mere passive resignation. To put it bluntly in my own poor language, “Sitting serenely carefree” is sitting without self. When you are truly without self, it is apparent that **all** is without self. Realizing this, the precious dignity of each and every thing is manifest. It is not passive resignation.

\*   \*

Let me briefly introduce a verse in praise of Lazy Zan from the Song dynasty master Xutang Zhiyu [Kidô Chigu 虛堂智愚 1185-1269]. With penetrating insight and superb literary skill, he is a Zen master’s Zen master. The compact verse, four lines of four characters each, concisely sums up Lazy Zan’s Zen – and much more:

<i>Stone bed freezing cold.</i>	石床冰冷。
<i>Smell of dung-roasted yams.</i>	糞火芋香。
<i>Probe deep, here it is:</i>	深撥淺得。
<i>Flavor lingers everywhere.</i>	滋味最長。

T 47, 1031a; KK 159

The first two lines set the stage by giving much of what little is known about the man: Lazy Zan lived in a stone cave and

happened to be roasting yams in a dung-fire when the imperial messenger arrived. Have you picked up the scent?

The third line has been freely rendered. Literally, the four characters say something like: “probe deep, attain shallow.” This contains many allusions; it suggests that by deep and patient probing, what had seemed hard to reach finally appears close at hand. This refers to the roasted yams, as well as the result of thoroughgoing practice in service to all. Then the flavor lingers on, instead of becoming the stink of Zen.

Family, friends and coworkers have made sacrifices so that you could be here for this retreat. Do make good use of the remaining time here, and be grateful when you return home. Don't go back half-baked.

Just as you threw yourself into practice here, when you return to home and work, throw yourself into what needs to be done there. Then there will be no gap in your practice.

There **will** be challenges and problems for sure. Be grateful for them. Bow in thanks and they become your teacher. Then nothing can really get in the way; the fine flavor will linger everywhere.

\* \*

Let me send you off with an excerpt from one more song delighting in the way:

*Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,*

*Healthy, free, the world before me,*

*The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.*

*Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.*

*The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.*

*(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)*

Which great Zen master penned these lines? This is the opening of Walt Whitman's 1881 version of *Song of the Open Road*. "Need nothing" in the second verse could be a translation of *bu-ji*.

The last verse quoted is especially pertinent since it takes up the Bodhisattva ideal in a way that *Enjoying the Way* does not. What are these "delicious burdens"? Why can't they be gotten rid of? I leave them with you.

Revised transcript of retreat lectures given throughout Europe and the States in the summer of 2010.

Translation based on 『祖堂集』 edition as found in 「懶瓚和尚『樂道歌』攷-祖堂集研究會報告之三-」(土屋昌明、衣川賢次、小川隆)『東洋文化研究所紀要』第141冊、125~195頁(2001.3).

Cf: T49: #2036, 606b-c; 佛祖歷代通載卷第十四; T51: #2076, 461b-c; 景德傳燈錄卷第三十;

X66, #1298, 744b-c; 禪門諸祖師偈頌下之上; X83, #1578, 424a-b; 指月錄卷之二.

*SLP=The Sayings of Layman P'ang: A Zen Classic of China*, James Green translator (Boston: Shambhala, 2009).

*RL=The Record of Linji*, Ruth Fuller Sasaki translator (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009). Helpful detailing Linji's debt to *Enjoying the Way*.

*PZ=The Practice of Zen*, Chang Chen-chi (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

X=卍新纂續藏經 (CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Normalized Version).

*IA=The Zen Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening*, John Blofeld translator (Leicester: Buddhist Publishing Group, 1987).

T=大正新脩大藏經 (CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Normalized Version).

*Dhp= Dhammapada*.

*ZB=Zen and the Taming of the Bull: Towards a Definition of Buddhist Thought*, Walpola Rahula (London: Gordon Fraser, 1978).

*BwS=Being Without Self*, Jeff Shore (Rotterdam: Asoka, 2008).

*BCR=The Blue Cliff Record*, Thomas & J. C. Cleary translators (Boston: Shambhala, 1992).

*ML=Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, Michael A. Sells (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

*UW=The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart's German Sermons*, Bruce Milem (Catholic University of America Press, 2002).

*WJ=Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy*, Reiner Schürmann

(Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2001).

*MT=The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid*

*Nothing*, Bernard McGinn (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001).

*ZS=Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice*, Victor Sōgen Hori

translator (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

*KK=『國譯虚堂和尚語録』* 国訳禅宗叢書、第六（東京：国訳禅宗叢書刊行会、

1974年）。The Japanese Rinzai commentary for this verse of Xutang sums

up the sectarian attitude toward Lazy Zan: “We don’t admire this elder’s [i.e.,

Lazy Zan] lineage style, but we do admire the purity of his practice.” 虚堂下で

は此の老の家風を貴びはせぬ、只だ工夫の純一を貴ふ。 *KK* 159