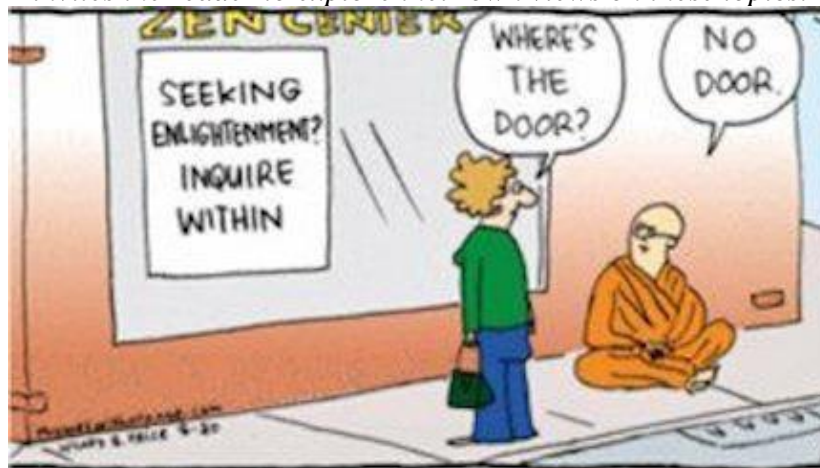


# CHASING THE BULL....NO BULL!?

## ACCEPTANCE AND CHANGE

### CLEANING DUST ON THE MIRROR, OR WHAT DUST, WHAT MIRROR?

*This monograph offers an exploration of “Channel One” and “Channel Two” views about the nature of the universe and human nature (and potential bridges in between), and then invites the reader to explore their own views on these topics.*



In Channel One, all is perfect, unity, One. In Channel Two, we seek to control our negative thoughts, emotions and feelings. As an example of the two channels, the classic Zen Ox-herding pictures begin with chasing the bull (ox) which from a Channel Two perspective can represent out of control thoughts and feelings, what Buddhists call “dust on the mirror” which the person is trying to change. The final picture is empty, signifying in Channel Two, that the bull has been corralled, the mirror polished of dust. No bull! Some interpret this final empty picture from a Channel One perspective, no negative emotions, no bull, no mirror, no self, all part of the cosmic Isness.. Total acceptance, because all is perfect.

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**ABSTRACT.** Each philosophical, psychological, and religious tradition has a view of the ultimate nature of the universe at the deepest level and a view of how humans fit into the “cosmic puzzle.” The differing views of human nature include the degree of free will and choice we have, how much we can and should try to make changes within ourselves and the world, and how much to accept and surrender. They also include the nature of “self,” issues of “good and evil,” and our limits and potential to effect positive, purposeful, meaningful control over our lives. These views and beliefs effect how experience is framed and interpreted, create an understanding about the nature and extent of human potential, inform how we see and define the barriers to our reaching our human potential, and ways we might most effectively do so.

Borrowing from the “channel” concept of Ram Dass, this article explores the idea that there are (at least) two channels. Borrowing from the contemplative, mystical schools of understanding, and poetic utterances, Channel One is understood as the “ultimate” nature of reality. For theists this can be God (e.g., Jewish “Echad”), Islam’s Allah (there is no God but God), the “Father and I are one (Christian); One without a Second (Advaita Vedanta). For non-theists this can be the Way (Tao); the cosmic void (xujing); Buddhist non-dual emptiness (sunyata) that is fullness (tathata). With the exception of the rare individual, these Channel One views also acknowledge that the mystical contemplative, non-dual altered state does not last. Channel Two is a short hand for how we perceive reality most of the time. Therefore, all of the above traditions not only honor and recognize Channel One, but also have an understanding, guidelines, and suggestions of how to most skillfully try to live the journey in Channel Two (even if it is only to recognize Channel Two as “maya, an illusion). In Channel Two, the non-theistic existential perspective argues that no non-dual Channel One exists, but rather the universe at the deepest level is random, amoral and indifferent.

This monograph attempts to articulate and wrestle with these different perspectives (and channels) as a way to 1) hold up a mirror to each tradition, so that the assumptions and views can be seen as clearly as possible 2) to foster dialogue and discussion among those in the helping and healing professions to help us all more consciously look at the philosophical/nature of the universe context in which our theoretical orientation and use of techniques (e.g., meditation, self-regulation strategies) may be embedded; and 3) to help each of us as individuals on a journey on this planet in our own efforts to articulate, address and live our own understanding of these two channels.

## Section 1:

### EXPLORING THE “TWO CHANNELS” ..... 5-17

CHANNEL ONE.....	5-6
BRIDGING CHANNEL ONE AND CHANNEL TWO:	
DIMENSIONS OF AGENCY AND MODE.....	6-11
<i>Self power and other power: Agency</i> .....	6-8
<i>Assertive/change and yielding/accepting modes of control</i> .....	8-10
Assertive/Change Mode: World and Self	
The Yielding/accepting mode	
Negative Sides	
Wisdom	
<i>Breath cycle, the modes, and agency</i> .....	10-11
FURTHER INTEGRATIVE EXAMPLES OF	
“BRIDGING” THE TWO CHANNELS .....	11-16
<i>Nothing to do. You are already there</i> .....	11
<i>A journey: From where we are to where we are</i> .....	11-12
<i>A journey as evolving and transforming</i> .....	12-13
Zen Ox Herding Pictures	
Jewish Shema	
<i>Other examples of bridging</i> .....	13-15
<i>No Channel One exists:</i>	
<i>An alternative Channel Two view</i> .....	15-16
SUMMARY, SECTION ONE.....	16-17

In the foreword to Shauna Shapiro and Linda Carlson's book, *The Art and Science of Mindfulness*,<sup>1</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn talks of the task of

the *development* of the next generation of mindfulness-based interventions that need to remain true, as always, to the *non-dual wisdom nature* of such practices and understandings, yet also need to be accessible and commonsensical to those who ...may *benefit* enormously from *engaging* in them.(xi-xii). (ital ours).

In this comment he raises one of the central challenges (and seeming paradoxes) which this article seeks to address—the relationship of *developing* the next generation of techniques (e.g., mindfulness), so that individuals can benefit from “*engaging*” in the practice of them while at the same time holding to a view of the nature of the universe as “non-dual.”

A clear and simple way to dichotomize this paradox is found in the Zen tradition in two poems by those seeking to express the true Buddha nature and become the Sixth Patriarch. The head monk, Shen Hsiu,<sup>2</sup> wrote:

The body is the wisdom-tree,  
The mind is like a clear mirror.  
At all times we must strive to polish it,  
And must not let the dust collect.

His view was that our basic nature is like a mirror, clean, pure, accepting all, non-dual. Yet, sometimes dust accumulates on the mirror. The dust can be unskillful habits such as laziness, greed, inappropriate and hubristic pride, unbridled anger, and our task is to clean the dust, and awaken to our true nature.

The other poem was by Hui Neng which read:

Fundamentally no wisdom-tree exists,  
Nor the stand of a mirror bright.  
Since all is empty from the beginning,  
Where can the dust alight

This view says that from an experiential understanding and direct awakening to the non-dual nature of reality, there is a realization that there is no dust, no mirror. Therefore, why engage in the practice of trying to “cleanse” illusory dust?

One view (Shen Hsiu) suggests that life is a journey, and there are ways we can learn to develop ourselves, grow, evolve and become better individuals and in so doing “uncover” our true nature. The other view (Hui Neng) believes, based on the experience of “awakening” that ultimate nature is non-dual “emptiness, and therefore there is nothing to uncover, no “self” to take the journey, no journey necessary.

## ***EXPLORING THE “TWO CHANNELS”***

In this paper we explore whether there is a way to understand, and possibly “bridge” if not integrate these two seemingly opposing views suggested by the two poems above. To help us in our task, we borrow from Ram Dass’ concept of “different channels” when you watch TV. Watching a show on a channel (our normal life), we get involved in the drama, characters, story. Sometimes we may not realize, or forget, he says, that a different channel (alternative reality) even exists. For the purposes of our discussion, as a shorthand, we’ll call that “alternative reality” Channel One, and our normal lived reality “Channel Two.”

**CHANNEL ONE.** Channel One is the “perfect” world as it is. Though we have used Hui Neng and a non-theistic (Buddhist) example of non-duality, Channel One can involve both theistic and non-theistic views. For example, nearly three decades ago, in a collaborative book *Beyond Health and Normality*,<sup>3</sup> Roger Walsh and Deane Shapiro explored exceptional psychological health and well-being from theistic and non theistic perspectives, and different psychological and spiritual wisdom traditions with chapters by Ken Wilbur, Dan Goleman, Jack Kornfield, Arthur Deikman, and Huston Smith, among others. In that book, and a follow up conference on mystical understanding,<sup>4</sup> several examples of a non-dual universe were stated:

- There is a transpersonal Self which is immortal, timeless, a historical; one does not learn to become a Buddha, one simply discovers or remembers that one is already a Buddha (Wilber);
- The journey itself is illusory, unnecessary, and ends where it begins; what we are looking for is that which was looking (Walsh);
- The truth is here right now; things are as they are and nothing need be changed (Kornfield);
- Our real nature is liberation, but we imagine that we are bound to make strenuous efforts to get free, although all the while we are free...In a sense, speaking of self-realization is a delusion - the self always is the self and there is no such thing as realizing it. Who is to realize what, and how, when all that exists is the self and nothing but the self? (Ramana Maharishi).
- Everything is perfect just as it is (Huston Smith)<sup>5</sup>

This “Channel One” “Oneness” can be understood in Judaism through the last word of the Shema prayer: “Echad—One. Theistically, it is what Huston Smith means when asked to describe the universe at the deepest level, and says “Everything is perfect just as it is.” It is the ecstatic poetry of Rumi <sup>6</sup>beyond the fields of sin and not sin; and of the vision of the Bengali mystic, Ramprasad,<sup>7</sup> who said, “Once you’ve seen, the world is a place of joy and mirth.” It is Ramakrishna from the Advaita Vedanta saying when you climb the stairs to reach the roof, you realize the stairs are no different from the roof: One without a second.<sup>8</sup>Atman (the personal self) and Brahman (the Universal) are One. It is contemplative Christian mystics such as Brother David Steindhal Rast talking of “Ultimate belonging; of Jesus saying “the Father and I are One. It is the Sufi mystic’s union with the divine. Non theistically, it is the final version of the ox herding picture which is empty: no self, no bull. It is the “xujing” of Chinese philosophy, the cosmic void which comes before, and which

contexts all form of yin and yang. It is Taoism's The Way, and, as we have seen it is the poem of Hui-ning: no dust, no mirror; Buddhism's emptiness (sunyata) is fullness (tathata). A Haiku written about experiences in the Daitoku-ji Zen monastery in Kyoto expresses this non-duality:<sup>9</sup>

The puddle mirrors  
Rain drops dissolving in the  
Image they contain

Channel One, as we are using it here, is, as noted a shorthand for the non-dual (ONE/EMPTY) and it includes all other channels. It is the felt non-dual experience, that creates a powerful belief in its truth. Ram Das would say that even though it's a belief, he knows it's really the Truth with a capital T. Often this ineffable experience is described in a loving, lyrical way, in song and poetry.

### **BRIDGING CHANNEL ONE AND CHANNEL TWO: DIMENSIONS OF AGENCY AND MODE.**

Contemplative theistic traditions—Jewish Kaballah, Christian mystics, Islamic Sufis, Hindu Advaita Vedanta-- have a belief in (and experience of) the non-dual nature of Channel One. Non theistic traditions—Taoism, Buddhism--also have a belief in and experience of the non-dual nature of Channel One. By definition, for those who believe in Channel One (non dual, One), Channel Two is part of Channel One. In a “pure Channel One,” there is no self, no other, no need to be assertive and try to change things (e.g. cleanse dust, chase the bull); no need to try to be serene and accept, for all is encompassed by the vast oneness/emptiness of non dualism.

However, for most mortals, even when privileged and blessed to have had the experience and “taste” of Channel One, there is also the “felt experience” of Channel Two. As Huston Smith has noted, the “altered state” awakening for most does not last. For those individuals, the question then becomes, how to live in Channel Two, even when we believe (and may have experienced) that a Channel One exists?

Jung<sup>10</sup> (1966) has used the term “Gnostic intermediary” to refer to someone who seeks to bring universal spiritual truths and awakening experience (Channel One in our discussion) into the world and make them relevant by translating them in a way that can be understood by the time, place, and culture (Channel Two). Like Buddha, or the Bodhisattva, the Gnostic intermediary is willing to come back into the lived world (versus the Arahat, who goes off into Nirvana, staying in Channel One) and seek to prescribe ways to help alleviate suffering for those of us still in Channel Two. This is similar in process to Buddha's four Noble Truths that there is suffering, but there's a way out of it through the Eightfold path.

This is more than description (which is all Channel One can be), it is prescription.<sup>11</sup> It is helping guide us in ways out of our suffering. As Ramakrishna discusses, having gone up the stairs to escape the many for the One, the Gnostic intermediary is willing to return, to embrace in love the many as the One. It is theistically, the journey of the Shema starting with “wake up” you who struggle with and toward God, and ending in Echad (One). It is non theistically the ox herding pictures, chasing the bull, learning to control our mind and passions; then realizing that there is no self, no bull.

For the purposes of our discussion, and helping to “translate” and create a “bridge” from Channel One to Channel Two, there are two concepts we would like to introduce: “self – control/power and other control/power; assertive/change and yielding/accepting modes of control

**“Self power and Other power: Agency”** On one dimension of agency, there are two ways this bridge between Channel One and Channel Two might occur. Huston Smith <sup>12</sup> has noted that each tradition has a range of options along a continuum regarding the relative emphasis placed on self-power (the role and responsibility of the individual for attaining enlightenment) and other-power (the role of powers beyond our individual control in attaining enlightenment). In Buddhism, some schools tend to emphasize more self-power (like Zen), where great effort is used to learn self-discipline of the mind. For example, there is a story told of a man chased by a ferocious tiger.

He runs until he reaches a cliff, then starts to crawl down a ways, hanging from a frail vine. Far below are crashing waves dancing off jagged rocks. Two mice, one black, one white, begin gnawing on the vine. The man looks up at the fierce tiger’s sharp teeth, and down at the deadly rocks. Then he notices a strawberry growing out of the cliff. The story ends with the words,

“How sweet it tasted.”<sup>13</sup>

Faced with the vagaries and challenges of life, we can learn to focus our attention in a way that allows us to choose to enjoy the sweetness available. Another Zen story tells of a master facing a taunting, sword-drawn samurai warrior who says “Don’t you know who I am...I can run you through with this sword without blinking.” The Master replies: “Don’t you know who I am: I can be run through by your sword without blinking.”

Other traditions focus more on “Other power” such as Amidha Buddhism, where salvation occurs just by saying the name “Amidha.” Smith notes that even in Zen’s self-effort, there is at least the belief in Buddha’s experience as context (the role of other power)\*; and in Amidha Buddhism, the person at least has to say the name (self-effort).

An example of a theistic counterpart involving self and Other power can be found in Christianity where certain traditions place more relative emphasis on grace (Other power), others on deeds (self-power). In Judaism, there are examples emphasizing the need for human efforts, even with an “all powerful God.” For example, Moses, at the Reed Sea, being chased by the Pharaoh’s army, starts praying to God, saying how great God is. God, in effect, says, Moses, stop praying and start walking. Humans need to take responsibility and act (self-power) and then miracles can happen (e.g., Other power) the “parting of the sea.”

In many traditions, however, no matter how much the role of self-power is emphasized, it’s limitations are also noted. In the Christian tradition, we find the saying, “Not my will but

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\*Stronger expressions of “other” in certain Buddhist traditions can include “taking refuge” in the Dharma, the sangha, the Buddha.

Thy will be done.” The Hindu tradition reminds us that “God is the doer.” In Judaism, we find the prayer sung at the end of the Sabbath (Havdalah), “Into Your arms, Your loving arms, I entrust my soul.” In Taoism, we are encouraged to let go, flow like water, and recognize our unity with the flow of Life (the Tao). And the root word for “Islam” means “surrender” (of self to Allah).

There are also stories which involve both self and Other power. Recall the story of Jacob in the Bible (Genesis 28) fleeing from his brother Esau and laying down to rest (Channel Two). While asleep, he has a dream of angels going up a ladder to and from heaven. When he awakes, he says “God was in this place and I did not know it” (a recognition of Channel One). The Hebrew word “Malachai” means “angels” and also “messengers.” From one perspective—angels, or messengers—going to heaven, part of our human task is to find ways to strive to reach toward heaven, what Rabbi Heschel wrote about in his book “Man in search of God.” Another view is that angels are coming from heaven bringing us spiritual messages to help us “wake up”—what Heschel describes in his book “God in Search of Man.” An example of “Other” power is humorously depicted on the T-shirt: “Be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet.” And an illustration of a combination of self and Other power can be found in the Native American saying:

Who you are is God’s gift to you  
Who you become is your gift to God.

On a health related psychological level, research has shown both self-effort and belief in “others” can be beneficial. For example, women with breast cancer do well when they believe there is something they can do about their health (eg., self efforts such as diet, exercise). They also do well when they feel trusting in the Doctor and medical care (referred to as control by a powerful benevolent other. ) Extrapolating this to the “nature of the universe” many of us may gain a sense of comfort by feeling that a powerful benevolent Other (i.e., God) is watching out for us. Reb Zalman tells the story of a woman he was counseling and reminding her that we are all children resting in the hand of God.<sup>14</sup> The woman closed her eyes, and tried to feel and experience this. Then, in fear, she opened her eyes and said ,

“God just threw me out of God’s hand. Now what?”  
“That's okay,” Reb Schacter-Shalomi laughed, “Because wherever you land  
will also be God!”

***Assertive/change and yielding/accepting modes of control.*** In both theistic and non-theistic traditions, there are two primary ways by which individuals can gain, regain, and maintain a sense of control.<sup>15</sup>

**Assertive/Change Mode: World and Self.** An assertive, change mode of control can be positive (striving for excellence, self-improvement) seeking to change one self and the world in positive, healing direction. The Greek myth of Prometheus stresses the importance of humans learning to have a desire for control, to overcome their passivity and helplessness in the face of nature’s vagaries, and employing an assertive mode to actively change and alter their



lives in a positive direction. Prometheus is said to have taught humans how to plow, plant, and harvest the earth; develop healing salves and medicines for the body; and use the stars to help navigate. These all point to the importance of acting assertively and courageously to make the world a better place.

There are also several traditions which stress the importance of changing ourselves, or learning to make ourselves better people, more in control of our thoughts, behavior, and actions.

“A disturbed mind is forever active, jumping hither and thither, and is hard to control; but a tranquil mind is peaceful; therefore it is wise to keep the mind under control. –Buddha

The most excellent Jihad (Holy War, struggle) is the conquest of the self  
Mohammed

But, as often as the heart/Breaks—wild and wavering—from control, so oft/  
Let him recurb it, let him reign it back/to the soul’s governance; for perfect bliss  
Grows only in the bosom tranquilized—Bhagavad Gita

He who is slow to anger is better than the strong man and a master of his  
passions is better than the conqueror of a city. –Rabbi Tarfon, the Pirke Avot  
(cf Proverbs 16:32)

**A yielding, accepting mode** of control can be positive (at peace with self, gratefulness for what you have) and involves knowing when a sense of control can better come from letting go of active control, and being ‘patient,’ ‘trusting,’ ‘accepting.’ For example, Lao-tzu’s way of water, says that to yield and flow around a rock, is a wiser, more skillful strategy.\* There is a wonderful story cited in Shauna Shapiro and Linda Carlson’s book on Mindfulness about a heavy rock. The monk asks the disciple if the rock is heavy. When the disciple replies that it is indeed heavy, the monk smiles and says, “It’s not heavy if you don’t try to lift it.” This story suggests that sometimes our positive assertive/change efforts are misguided; we try to lift rocks that are better left alone.

The Master sees things as they are/without trying to <actively> control them,  
She lets them go their on way/and resides in the center of the circle.  
Lao-Tzu, *Tao-te-ching*

But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right  
cheek, turn to him the other also.  
Jesus, Matthew 5:39

No drives, no compulsions, no needs, no attractions: Then your affairs are  
under control. You are a free person. Chuang Tzu

Be non attached to the fruits of your actions. Bhagavad Gita

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\*The yielding mode and the assertive mode, do not need to be mutually exclusive. As one example, Lao-tuz’s “way of water” which yields to the rock, also can wear away the rock--yielding can be a strategy of strength and power, and bring change. (For more, see Ref 15, CT manual, section 2.4)

**Negative sides.** Each of these modes can have a negative side. Negative assertive can involve being “overcontrolling” and trying to change (pejoratively: manipulate) that which cannot or should not be changed. As Lao-Tzu said “Oversharpening a blade causes its edge to be lost.” Further, the desire and efforts for control can become a problem if pursued excessively. This can result in manipulation, overcontrol, micromanaging, coercion, and aggression. An example of this negative view of control occurs when Prometheus challenges the gods and takes fire from the throne of Zeus, only to pay a terrible price for his hubris.

Negative yielding involves thoughts and behaviors that reflect a sense of helplessness and lack of control when in fact control might be beneficially asserted.

**Wisdom.** From a theistic perspective the two positive modes are well captured in the Protestant theologian Reinhold Neibhur’s prayer

God grant me (*Other power, Channel One*)  
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; (*positive yielding*)  
the courage to change the things I can; (*positive assertive*)  
and the wisdom to know the difference (*Channel Two*).

In Chinese philosophy, there is a term *dongjing*, which is a marvelous word, the equivalent of which does not exist in the English language. It means finding the perfect proportion of yin (yielding) and yang (assertive) action for a given situation.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, in this philosophical view, the world, initially (and ultimately) is a formless cosmic void (*xujing*, Channel One). With that as a context, in the world of form (yin and yang, Channel Two), there is the assumption and belief that if we come from a centered place (i.e., remembering *xujing*), we can always find the exact right response to a situation. That very belief can give a sense of control and self-trust. Further, having a word in the language embeds the very idea of looking to integrate the assertive mode and the yielding modes.

***Breath cycle, the modes, and agency.*** The breath cycle can be a learning for understanding experientially the different modes of control, as well as agency—self and other power (depending upon your perspective.)

POSITIVE ASSERTIVE. Take a conscious in-breath. You are in control of that breath. As we mature, we no longer need to be passive, helpless victims of fate. The in-breath can symbolize the positive assertive mode.

NEGATIVE ASSERTIVE. Now keep breathing in. More. Still more. If we continue to take in air in an active way, we find that no more will go in. We have reached the limit of assertiveness. What was positive becomes negative.

POSITIVE YIELDING. What needs to happen next in the breath cycle? We have to let go. Ahhhh. Breathing out (positive yielding) can be an antidote to negative assertive.

NEGATIVE YIELDING. If we continue to breathe out, we find that eventually what was positive and necessary becomes passive (even life threatening), i.e., negative yielding.

As a simple tool, our natural breath cycle (in-breath, pause, out-breath, pause) can be a reminder of the four modes. Regarding agency, notice that the language we have used presumes the “self” as agent during the breath cycle, and voluntary, “willful” breathing: e.g., “Take a

conscious breath in.” But we also know that at night we breathe, even though we aren’t “consciously” doing so. Who is the agent then? ☺

### **FURTHER INTEGRATIVE EXAMPLES OF “BRIDGING” THE TWO CHANNELS.**

At one end of the continuum, there are Channel One traditions which state that Channel Two does not really exist, and is just an illusion (maya). At the other end of the continuum, there are Channel Two traditions which state that Channel One doesn’t exist, and is just an illusion (e.g., non-theistic existentialists). In between, there are several traditions which have sought, as noted above, to bridge the two channels. Below we discuss several of these, including both theistic and non-theistic traditions.

***Nothing to do. You are already there.*** A strict channel one view suggests that there is “nothing to be done”, no need to practice, take a journey, grow, evolve, because “you” are already there. Everything is perfect as it is. There is no real “you”, no “self” (non theistic). Or theistically, the small self (e.g., Atman) is really part of the universal self (e.g., Brahman). This is represented by the poem of Hui neng and the comments in Channel One above. Another common metaphor is that we are all part of the universal ocean. Although we may sometimes experience our “self” as a unique “wave” eventually the wave comes from that from which it was born, and returns to that which it is. For those espousing a strict Channel One view, techniques and spiritual practice are not needed. However, sometimes there will be the “technique of no techniques”: i.e., as Kenneth Roshi’s book title “Selling water by the river” suggests, a Master has nothing to teach that isn’t already before our very eyes. We have referred to that as the “teaching of no teaching.”<sup>17</sup>

***A journey: From where we are to where we are.*** Another view in Channel Two is that although there may be nothing to gain from enlightenment—i.e., the journey may only lead us to uncover what was already there-- the journey itself may be important. And the journey itself may change us, as we realize there is nothing to realize. Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki quotes a three stanza Zen poem<sup>18</sup>:

"Before Zen men are men and mountains are mountains;  
during Zen, things become confused: men are mountains and  
mountains are men;  
after enlightenment men are men and mountains are mountains,\*

As a result of the journey, we go from a naïve (unenlightened) pre Zen naïve awareness, to an enlightened awakened consciousness (with our feet a little off the ground)! This story has many counterparts. One is of a poor Jewish person from a small village in Hungary, who has a dream that a treasure awaits him at a specific location in a far away land. The dream is so vivid that he borrows money to travel to the foreign country, and, after a long arduous journey, tracks down the exact location, where he digs several feet deep, and finds a box in

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\* There are a couple of different endings to this poem. In one version, the third stanza repeats the first stanza. The difference is the shift in consciousness of the journey—having gone through the second stanza. In another version the words “only one's feet are a little off the ground” to the third stanza to signal more explicitly this shift.

which the treasure is buried. In the box is a note saying the treasure is to be found in a small village in Hungary in his own home. Often, the treasure is right before our eyes, in our own home, but it takes a journey of awakening before we can see and realize it. Ramakrishna says the journey is like climbing the stairs to get to the roof; then, once you reach the roof, you realize it is no different than the stairs.

***A journey as evolving and transforming.*** Still other views suggest that the journey is important, and helps us grow and change and evolve into better people, cultivating our true nature and “awakening” our latent capacities. Further, in this journey, “self” efforts are necessary and important part of our growth. We not only grow in awareness, but in ***becoming*** better people. At the end of that process, we also realize that all is Channel One non-dual. Let’s look at two examples of this self “journey” position, one non-theistic—the Zen Ox Herding pictures; and one theistic, the Jewish Shema as a contemplative meditation. Both the ox herding pictures and the Shema may be understood as examples of ways to “bridge” the two channels. In other words, even if the world is non-dual (Zen) or “One” (Judaism), there are tasks for we humans as part of our developmental journey while on earth—to become “better” more “God-like” people, to cleanse our dust.\*

**Zen ox herding pictures.** The Zen ox-herding pictures first shows a bull running through a market place, and then a young person chasing the bull (the mind and self) to gain control of it. In the middle pictures the person is riding the bull--learning to control, tame, and rein in the mind, passions, and desires. As in Shen Hsiu’s poem, our task is to cultivate positive, skillful qualities, and work to diminish negative, unskillful qualities— i.e., to clean the dust off the mirror. There are two “Final” ox herding pictures. One is an empty frame. This signifies awakening to enlightenment (the empty mirror), in which there is neither self nor bull! An alternative final picture is of an old wise person meeting a young person, and, in a Bodhisattva like generative act, is going to transmit the wisdom to the next generation: they are about to go back into the market (where the young person will see the bull).

**The Jewish Shema.** This prayer begins with the words “Shema, Israel.” Shema means “hear, listen, wake up” and Israel means “you who struggle with or toward God.” These words may be seen as a theistic counterpart to the “wake-up” call in the ox herding pictures, when the person realizes a bull exists, and starts to chase it. We are on a journey. We need to wake up and pay attention to those qualities in ourself that are less than God-like, and to strive toward being a more holy, compassionate, wise person, raising the sparks of God in ourself and striving to help heal the world. In the Shema, the next two words after “Shema Israel” are “Adonai Eloheinu.” Adonai is the transcendent, impersonal, vast God of all and everything; Eloheinu is the personal loving “our God.” Whereas in the ox herding picture, it is up to the young man to personally tame the bull, in the Shema “journey” we can be aided in our task of waking up by both the vast, awesome God and this close personal

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\*We have already discussed the “journey” illustrated in Zen by the three stanza poem. Another “journey” story in Judaism is the Passover story, in which the Israelites are enslaved and in exile in Egypt. Egypt in Hebrew (mitzrayin) means narrow place. We each have our narrow places (Zen dust?!), which exile us from God (our highest nature). The journey is one of waking up to our enslavements and narrow places, to escape from the super-egoic pharaoh which limits us, cross the Reed Sea (crossing over to a higher state of consciousness), and journey through the wilderness (stanza two of the Zen poem) in search of the promised land.

intimate God helping us to “wake up” in our struggle.\* And the final word of the Shema is “Echad.” Like the last ox herding picture of non dual emptiness, we who are seeking to wake up, who struggle toward and with God, a God who is transcendent and imminent and personal, all is “One”

In the ox herding pictures, there is self effort (chase the bull--learn to control your mind, feelings, behavior), and in so doing becoming a better, wiser person. Then there is the realization of the illusion of the self and the non dual nature of reality (an empty picture--no self, no bull). In the Jewish Shema, there is also self-effort (to wake up) in Channel Two, calling on Channel One for guidance and help; and then realizing and affirming the “Echad” Oneness.

***Other examples of “bridging.”*** There are a myriad examples of ways in which different traditions have tried to bridge and integrate these two channels. We share several below. As you read these, please pay careful attention to the language (e.g., words such as “develop,” “allow,” “cultivate”) and the “assumptions”/beliefs, and Channels to which they might be referring (either implicitly or explicitly). In addition, please note the dimensions of self/other effort; and assertive/yielding modes of control in the bridging of the channels (we have offered our views in italics). As you go through these, we also invite you to reflect on your own beliefs and how these different dimensions and channels might apply.

“Everything is perfect .” (*Channel 1*)

And we must fight evil with everything we have.”

(*Channel 2, self-effort, positive assertive*).

Huston Smith, author, *The World’s Religions*

Act as if everything depends on you (*assertive mode, self-agency, channel 2*)

Know that everything depends on God (*yielding mode, Other agency, channel 1*)

Rebbe Nachman

The winds of God’s grace are always blowing (*Other control, Channel 1*),

but you must raise your sails (*self-agency, assertive mode, channel 2*). \*\*

Ramakrishna

Strengthen your will power so that you will not be controlled by circumstances,

but will control them. (*positive assertive, self effort*)

“O Divine Sulptor, chisel Thou my life according to Thy design.

(*positive yielding, Other effort*);

Paramahansa Yogananda

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\* For example, the following suggest the power of trust in God: “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.(Isaiah 40.31). The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him and I am helped (Psalm 28)

\*\* A non-theistic version of this was a billboard in Northern California that featured a Buddhist monk in orange robes on a surf board. The caption: “You can’t control the waves, but you can learn to surf!”

Nasrudin, the wise fool of the Sufi stories, learned there were many camel- stealing robbers in the vicinity. A worried camel rider asked him, “Should I trust Allah, or should I tie my camel to the tent?”

Nasrudin replied, “By all means, you should trust Allah, (*Channel 1, Other control*)  
...and tie your camel.” (*Channel Two, self-effort*).

There once was a seeker after knowledge. One day, he is walking in the mountains, carrying a heavy bundle, when he meets the Buddha (disguised as a poor peasant). The seeker greets the Buddha by saying he has been searching for enlightenment for many years, is frustrated and tired, and wonders if the poor peasant has any advice. (*Self-effort, the search in Channel Two for Channel One.*)

“Put down your bundle,” says the Buddha. (*Channel One wisdom shared as Gnostic intermediary in Channel Two.*)

The seeker drops the bundle and in that moment becomes enlightened. He recognizes the essential need to trust in the universe, to let go of his burdens, even the burden of seeking, of trying to change himself and the world, and to just accept what is (positive yielding mode). With that, he recognizes the Buddha. (*Awakening to Channel One through the yielding, accepting mode of control: drop the bundle!*).

After a pause, the recently enlightened seeker says, "What do I do now?" to which the Buddha responds, "Pick up your bundle and continue your journey." (*Continuing on in a positive assertive mode in Channel Two, but with awareness of Channel One as context.*)\*

The Jewish mystical tradition, the Kaballah says

All is One (*Channel One*)

and also says “The world is a university for the soul.” (*In other words, there are lessons to be learned in Channel Two to help make us wiser beings.* )

St Theresa; May there be peace within. May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be. (*This is a Channel Two statement, (within a Channel One context). Note in particular the word “may”, a Channel Two word. In Channel One, the statement would be something like “There is peace within, you are where you are meant to be, and actually, there is no you, no trust needed.”*),

*Gandhi believed in the non-dual Advaita Vedanta (Channel One) and said (regarding what we’re calling Channel Two):*

Life is but an endless series of experiments

Its mission is to strive after perfection, which is self-realization.

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\* All of us, no matter whether we believe in a Channel One context or not, need to find ways to drop the bundle, and take a time to recenter, reoperate, and recover. A lovely depiction of this can be found in Camus’ *The Plague*, in which Dr. Rieux has been battling the plague incessantly. Finally, in exhaustion, he takes a swim. Camus’ description of the stress leaving Rieux’s body, and the joy and sensual pleasure he finds in the swim is beautifully described. Even Sisyphus must time to rest and drop the bundle. Note the use of “changing external environments” that Rieux uses, in order to deal with the stress and pressures. Samurai warriors used to do this by leaving the battle for a tea ceremony. As Paul Reps said, “With a sip of tea, I stopped the war.” Similarly, the internal environment can be changed—see our discussion below on different types of ways with dealing with negative thoughts. (Reps poem, of course, could also refer to not only stopping the external wars, but also the “internal wars” within oneself.)

*His philosophy of non-violent protest to win Indian independence incorporated both respect for the person with whom you are disagreeing, and swarj, self-rule—both politically, but also personally (Channel Two):*

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”\*

"All Bodhisattvas (Compassionate Ones) should **develop** a pure mind which clings to nothing whatsoever; and so he should **establish** it."

"Diamond Sutra": *Note the use of the words “develop, cultivate (bold ours, (Channel Two words).*

Why stay in prison when the door is so wide open?

Rumi. (*Note the concept of “prison”—i.e., Channel Two. This is not just description it is prescription (and motivation) for the implied “waking up” to Channel One.*)

*The minister of Finance in Holland, a Sufi, commented during a conference on Meditation in Amsterdam (nicely reflecting self and Other power, Channel One and Two “bridges”:<sup>19</sup>*

During the day, God chases me  
During the night, I chase God.

The Days of Awe in Judaism are a time of self-reflection, self-change, offering and asking forgiveness, and Teshuvah (returning to God). God will accept us (*Other power*) but we have to do our part (*self-power*). In the Rosh Hashanah service it says The soul you have given me is pure. (*Channel One, Other power*). That which urges me to do right, challenges me to reach toward it; in me is a spark of your divinity; to seek God more earnestly, to submit myself to Your will. (*Channel Two, self-effort*) Here I am-- mould me guide me, command me, let me by Your co-worker, an instrument of Your redemptive purpose; help me to banish from myself whatever is mean, ugly, callus cruel, stubborn or otherwise unworthy of a being created in Your image. Purify me, revive me, uplift me. Forgive my past, and lead me into the future resolved to be your servant. (*Self and Other effort; acceptance and change*).

”Though my view is as vast as the sky, (*Channel One*)  
my attention to the law of karma is as fine as a grain of barley flour.”

(*Channel Two*)

Padmasambhava

**No Channel One exists: An alternative Channel Two view.** In Channel Two, the non-theistic existential perspective argues that no non-dual Channel One exists, but rather the universe at the deepest level is random, amoral and indifferent.

Therefore, existentialists, believing that the universe is random and meaningless, place a singular emphasis on what Victor Frankl called “man’s search for meaning;” the need for human agency to, in Andre Malraux’s words “deny our nothingness.” As Camus describes the myth of

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\* There is a Hopi prayer which has elements similar to this “self-effort, positive assertive change mode: It says , do not look outside for a leader, but realize “we are the ones we have been waiting for.”

Sisyphus, it is up to humans to keep pushing the rock up the mountain, knowing it will only fall back again—and even in that act of futility, Camus asserts, “one must imagine Sisyphus happy.” As William James said, “My first act of free will be to act ‘as if’ I have free will.”

It is up to we humans to choose both our freedom, and our attitude. It is our task to “stand forth” and create ourselves, to make authentic choices and face the responsibility and challenges of our freedom and aloneness. In existentialism, it is our human task to challenge the “illusory gods.”

Further, though Taoism, Zen, and existentialism are all non-theistic, in existentialism, there is no “Taoist Way” and emptiness (sunyata) is definitely not fullness (tathata). Therefore, existential nothingness is quite different than Zen “emptiness” or Chinese “cosmic void” and does not believe that a Channel One exists.

**SUMMARY, SECTION ONE.** In this first section we have looked at several non-theistic and theistic traditions. Some traditions, from the perspective of Channel One argue that Channel Two doesn’t exist (i.e., is an illusion) and some Channel Two traditions (e.g., non-theistic existentialism) argue that Channel One doesn’t exist (i.e., is a human illusion, projection). Beyond those two points of view, we have sought to explore the ways individuals and traditions have sought to create a bridge between the two Channels. Some views suggest that there is nothing to learn and that we are “already there”—even if a journey or awakening may be need to teach us that. Others suggest that there is “work” and learning that can be gained in Channel Two, to help make us better, wiser, more compassionate individuals, even if Channel One remains the context (and vision). For example, from a non-theistic perspective, Buddha said that all is One (the non-dual emptiness of the ox herding picture, sunyata/tathata), and also offered guidance through the eight fold path on how to live in Channel Two (right speech, right action, right livelihood, etc)—i.e., ways to “chase the bull.” Chinese philosophy sees the world as a cosmic void—xujing—(Channel One) from which form (yin and yang) emerge. Wisdom involves centering oneself and remembering the oneness of the void (xujing) before choosing the best action for a given situation (dongjing) a nuanced integration and blending of yin yielding and yang assertiveness\*.

Even those traditions that believe in Channel One: God as “One” –Echad in Judaism, One without a Second in Hinduism, trusting Allah in Islam, what Huston Smith means when he says “Everything is perfect”—also often offer guidance to individuals in Channel Two about how to live on the “earthly plane”—“raise your sails”, “fight evil”, “cleanse the dust,” “tie your camel”; “act as if everything depends on you,” practice “self-rule” “wake up,” engage in right speech, right action, and learn to let the “world be a university for the soul.”

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#### REFERENCES AND ENDNOTES

##### SECTION ONE

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\* A theistic analogue to dongjing may be found in the Jewish view of Sefirot,—ten divine emanations from Ein sof (the Limitless, without name, the One (Channel One) in which the task is to use these holy energies in the proper balance and integration in Channel Two: e.g., how to mix, blend, balance: the sefirot of love (chesed) and boundaries/strength (gevurah), and so on.



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