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Teachings of
the Zen Master
& the Grand Conditioner
Nan-in, a Japanese tea master during the Meiji era, received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured the visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could restrain himself no longer: "It is overfull, no more will go in."

"Like this cup," Nan-in responded, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?" 1

The term Zen Master may cause many people to conjure up an image of a person in a long robe with a shaved head. This person may be seen as one who teaches that there is nothing to teach, asks silly questions which don't have answers, and knocks people on the head if they aren't meditating correctly. The term behavior modifier (whom I will refer to as the Grand Conditioner 2), on the other hand, may cause many people to conjure up an image of a rigid, unemotional, calculating disciplinarian. This person may be seen as one who tries to control our behavior without our knowing it, and treats people mechanistically, as if they were rats in a laboratory.

In this book, we will try to peel away whatever preconceptions we may have about these two stereotypes and the schools of thought they represent. The first part of the book (Chapters 1 and 2) describes the teachings of the Zen Master and the Grand Conditioner. Chapter 1 discusses Meditation and the East: The Zen Master. Zen here refers to the "spirit" of Zen. This may, but does
not necessarily, overlap the type of Zen practiced in Zen monasteries. This essence of Zen embodies many of the principles of humanistic psychology and may be seen as a representative and example of that school of thought. Chapter 2 discusses Behavioral Self-Management and the West: The Grand Conditioner. I use the term Grand Conditioner here to symbolize the behaviorist analogue of the Zen Master: that is, the person who knows most about behavior therapy (social learning theory principles) and who applies those principles (behavioral self-management skills) to himself or herself. The second part of the book (Chapters 3 through 7) describes how the two schools of thought may be combined: that is, what happens When the Zen Master Meets the Grand Conditioner. As such, the second part builds on the first and attempts to provide an integration of East and West: Behaviorism, Humanism, and Beyond.