

## An Integral Overview of Channeling

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I have studied the channeling phenomenon for the past ten years. The main thing I have learned is that channeling is not a phenomenon in the singular sense, but rather an umbrella of related phenomena that have been with us for thousands of years. As such, to better understand what channeling is we need to explore the wide range of human abilities involved.

Let's begin with a little history. There is a premodern tradition known by many different names that dates back to the earliest written records, as far back as the fourteenth century BCE, according to transpersonal psychologist Arthur Hastings:

[The] term channeling ...is current, but the process has been called prophecy, oracle, revelation, spiritual communication, possession, and the inspiration of the muses. The Biblical tradition in Judaism and Christianity says that the prophets received and spoke the words of God. Today, there are many individuals who speak words that are said to come from disembodied teachers on other levels of reality. The process, though not necessarily the content, appears to be the same.<sup>1</sup>

This tradition is still with us today. According to anthropologist Michael Brown even though modern, “Euro-American culture is unusual in its unwillingness to grant dissociation [channeling] an honored place in the human experience,”<sup>2</sup> it has “moved from the gilded ashrams of the West Coast to the living rooms and offices of the American Heartland. On the way, it has shed some of its sensational qualities in favor of a more muted approach to personal insight. It is now a well-established form of religious exploration that is likely to be with us for a while.”<sup>3</sup> Transpersonal psychologist Jon Klimo concluded that, “Since 1986, channeling has reached into the grassroots. It has entered the popular vocabulary. Channeling now is part of current mainstream consensus reality.”<sup>4</sup>

Next, we need a working definition of channeling. How do these postmodern scholars define it? Brown defined channeling as “...the use of altered states of consciousness to contact spirits—or, as many of its practitioners say, to experience spiritual energy captured from other times and dimensions.”<sup>5</sup> Hastings defined it as “...a process in which a person transmits information or artistic expression that he or she receives mentally or physically and which appears to come from a personality source outside the conscious mind. The message is directed toward an audience and is purposeful.”<sup>6</sup> Klimo defined channeling as “...a process whereby someone appears to serve as a conduit for information, messages, and guidance, or for energy of a healing capacity or a spiritual quality, which appears to come from a non-ordinary source.”<sup>7</sup>

Our integral approach acknowledges that these are all “true but partial” perspectives, so we want to include them *all*. I should mention that some don't like the term channeling, because they find it too narrow. However, until something better emerges, I'm going to stick with the term since it

has found its way into popular culture as Klimo suggested. For instance, during the 2007 World Series, one of the color commentators said that a particular picture was channeling another pitcher (who was still alive)!

Seen in this light, is it possible that there is a natural, healthy, and dissociative “intelligence” that exists but has been forced underground for hundreds of years in the premodern and modern West? Given the postmodern advances in research methodology now available in Ken Wilber’s integral metatheory (that I call AQAL-5<sup>8</sup>), a more comprehensive study of channeling may offer a radical new way to enhance human potentials, creativity, problem solving, and therapy.

In this context, I view channeling as its own intelligence in terms of how Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner defines it. Gardner is best known for his work on multiple intelligences first published in *Frames of Mind* (1983). His current definition of human intelligence is “...a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture.”<sup>9</sup> The key thing is the inclusion of the brain-mind connection *in relation* to a collective, cultural context that includes *services* such as problem solving, healing, therapy, invention, artistic expression, etc. as well as *products* such as books, music, movies, and so on.

The cool thing about Gardner’s work is that he developed his theories as a brain scientist, seeking the connection between what he calls “brain modules” that affect various functions like speech, emotions, language, mathematical skills, inter- and intra-personal skills, etc. So his research is not limited to psychological abilities, but also how the brain-body works in relationship to the mind. These are key relationships to factor in when studying channeling through an integral lens.

Next, based on the work of Klimo and Elias, channeled by Mary Ennis, we now have a much better understanding that channeling cannot be limited to just deep trance channels like Jane Roberts, but also includes a wide arrange of abilities such as conscious and open channeling. So we’re dealing with a *wide spectrum of expressions* or *types* that can generally be considered channeling, and Klimo and Elias have provided a way to organize them. For example, Klimo outlined a rich taxonomy of channeling.<sup>10</sup>

Types of channeling:

- Conscious (intuitive, telepathy, clairaudience [sound], clairvoyance [visions], clairsentience [conceptualization]).
- Unconscious full-trance, possession.
- Sleep and dream.

- Automism (a variant of conscious, but includes kinesthetic expressions of automatic writing, painting, and musicianship, Ouija board movement, pendulum movement).

Types of Sources (secondary persona):

- Discarnate spirits of “deceased” human beings (the largest category).
- Past-lifetimes.
- Advanced human beings (e.g., highly evolved spiritual teachers).
- Non-humans (e.g., “aliens,” spirit beings, angels, gods, archetypal energies, akashic, higher self).

Types of channeled content:

- General intuitive feelings of loving presence and support.
- Personal messages and guidance.
- Detailed descriptions of an “afterlife.”
- Information about the past and future.
- Artistic material (e.g., literature, painting, music performance and composition).
- Healing and medical material (e.g., Edgar Cayce).
- Scientific or technical nature.

As seen in Klimo’s taxonomy, channeling covers a broad spectrum of *dissociative* phenomena ranging from the proximate self<sup>11</sup> being consciously aware of a “secondary” creative source (e.g., bodily, linguistic, musical, artistic, etc.) all the way to the manifestation of an autonomous, secondary proximate self replete with unique cognitive, affective, moral, interpersonal, etc. traits *and* memories (what Seth called a *bridge personality* and Jane Roberts called a *personagram*). At this end of the spectrum, the primary proximate self has little or no memory of what occurs (i.e., the role of amnesia is an important consideration).

Next, Elias presented a typology of what he calls *energy exchanges*, which is his term for channeling as an interaction between the proximate self and another soul or essence *line*. He also uses the *families of consciousness* typology introduced by Seth in *The “Unknown” Reality, Vol. 2* (1979) to outline different types of energy exchanges.<sup>12</sup>

**Sumafi** = interaction/communication in the form of spoken or written language.

- “channeling”
- automatic writing
- “The **Sumafi** concern themselves with the least amount of distortion. Therefore, the **Sumafi** shall engage THIS particular phenomenon and no other.”

**Milumet** = interaction/communication with mystical beings via altered states and dreams.

- angels/heavenly “beings”
- other “beings of light”
- other-dimensional focuses
- “speaking to creatures and audibly hearing a creature speak to you within a language that you understand”
- “speaking to a tree [or other plant life] and the tree speaking to them”

**Gramada** = interaction/communication within dream states and inspiration.

- connecting with original knowledge via dream states and conscious acts of inspiration

**Vold** = interaction/communication in the form of hearing voices.

- audibly hearing “other” voices (example Joan d’Arc)

**Ilda** = interaction/communication to promote “legends of encounters of unusual origin or unusual factors.”

- interdimensional focuses
- extraterrestrials
- dragons
- leprechauns
- other “imaginary creatures or beings”

**Sumari** = interaction/communication with conventional psychic phenomenon.

- “channeling”
- automatic writing
- Ouija board
- séance
- astrology
- tarot cards
- psychic readings
- crystal balls
- all types of similar “tools that [people] view to be beyond themselves, outside of themselves, offering themselves information that they may not normally access.”
- “Psychic phenomenon is their forte.”

**Tumold** = interaction/communication within energy exchanged through other physically focused individuals.

- speaking and listening to objects, vegetation, elements (wind, fire, water, Earth)
- significant difference between belonging to:  
shamans, witch doctors, witches (“they do not hear voices as other individuals may, but they receive the information.”)
- being aligned with:  
concern themselves tremendously within physical focus in the area of healing in all of its aspects – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual.

**Zuli** = interaction/communication within physical forms.

- “within the expression of physical form, not only of human physical form but of all creatures and also of your vegetation, they may see elements within the expression of the physical form that shall offer them information.”
- bodily expression (whirling dervishes, dances, other rituals)
- vegetation, trees
- rocks
- “rituals of creatures, as [in] mating rituals”

**Borledim** = interaction/communication with children.

- children’s “invisible” playmates

Notice the similarities between Klimo’s types of channeling and Elias’ energy exchanges. While not exactly alike, they cover very similar ground, and outline wide range of abilities.

The main reason to present all this information is to show what a narrow definition many people have of channeling. When we look through the eyes of Wilber, Gardner, Klimo, and Elias we begin to sense that there is a much wider range than just a deep trance or conscious channeler. For example, in the Tibetan tradition there are dream channelers called *tertons* that access *mind treasure* (called *terma*, *gongter*). These adepts learn to “receive” detailed teachings and accurately translate them from dream into waking state. Exemplars include Namkai Norbu’s *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light* (1992) and Andreas Doctor’s *Tibetan Treasure Literature* (2005). After reading these books, I realized that Klimo’s “sleep and dream” channeling and Elias’ **Gramada** energy exchanges helped to situate the *type* of channeling described.

So this is a brief overview of some of the research I’ve done in the past ten years. It has been recently intensified by the fact that my partner-in-time, Joanne, began to channel in April, 2007, and I have had the privilege to intimately observe her behavior and development. It has also further motivated me to continue to expand my own definitions of what channeling is as well.

Therefore, I believe that channeling may be better understood as its own developmental line or intelligence per Wilber’s, Gardner’s, and my own work that exists in a wide spectrum of *states*

and *stages*. In terms of states, we include deep dissociation and secondary personalities (trance channeling) on one end, and mild dissociation and enhanced creativity (conscious and open channeling) on the other. In-between is a wide array of expressions or *types* (e.g., Klimo's and Elias'). In terms of stages, we need to factor in the seedling, sapling, and tree nature of all development in the physical domain. This means there will be immature and distorted translations during the beginning stages, so that's now predictable and therefore not a reason to condemn, but to nurture and develop, just like any ability (writing, playing music, sports, mathematics, engineering, etc.). Once we begin to factor in and create a matrix of all the different *types* within the many *states* and *stages*, we begin to see a much bigger human canvas upon which channeling may develop.

However, we also need to consider the healthy and pathological extremes of the above *types*, *states*, and *stages*. The healthy end of the spectrum presents minimal ill effects to the primary proximate self and body, while the pathological side presents a dysfunctional splintering of the primary proximate self that incapacitates basic survival (e.g., hygiene, nutrition), emotional (e.g., relationships), and mental (e.g., job/role) needs. By necessity, then, we must factor in the role of various dissociative identity disorders in relation to channeling. For example, The *American Psychiatric Association* (2000) defines four categories of dissociative pathology: dissociative amnesia, dissociative fugue, dissociative identity disorder, and depersonalization disorder. The *International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation* (2007) defines five kinds: depersonalization, derealization, amnesia, identity confusion, and identity alteration. These "true but partial" perspectives are important as well.

In summary, to better understand what channeling is we need to consider a developmental matrix of types, states, and stages and related health and pathology along the way. As always, with any channeled artifact (books, music, painting, inventions, etc.) it is the utility and cultural propriety that determines what is useful in terms of Gardner's products and services in a cultural context. What works in North America may not be worth a dam in the Serengeti, and vice versa, so there is a wide range of possibilities, contexts, and perspectives to continue to explore.

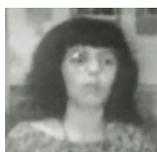
Unfortunately, in the West this intelligence has been driven underground by what Wilber calls the "disaster of modernity" – the rise of *scientism*, in which the "value sphere" of scientific method and production became valued as the *only* way to know what's real and true. As such, many postmodern and integral thinkers now understand that the creative, intuitive, feeling-based baby was thrown out with the superstitious baggage of premodern value systems. Along with that baby went any deep understanding of Consciousness or Spirit, but that's another essay.

As our planet continues its evolution, the complexity of current problems facing us can certainly benefit from this repressed intelligence being adequately studied and applied in the West. As Einstein said, "The significant problems we face can never be solved at the level of thinking that created them." To which I would add the level of channeling that created them as well, since channeling, like all developmental intelligences studied by Gardner and Wilber, unfold in seedling, sapling, and tree stages and may include pathological extremes.

Once we better situate our understanding of what channeling is, and the integral approach of Ken Wilber is a great tool to do just that, then we can better identify and authenticate this precious gift moving forward.

I want to finish this short overview with six examples of channeling that we nurture and study on NewWorldView. The following video clips show a wide array of how this intelligence manifests. And just like no two people play a Beethoven sonata, hit a baseball, or cook the same way, no two people will channel the same way. Also, keep in mind that they represent *only* two of Klimo's four types of channeling and two of Elias' nine types of energy exchanges. So what you are about to watch features examples trance and conscious channeling, which are two of the most popular and prevalent types today.

Note the difference between Jane, Mary, and Serge's personality, speaking style, and demeanor and Seth, Elias, and Kris'.



**Jane Roberts and Seth** (1:59)



**Mary Ennis and Elias** (3:54)



**Serge Grandbois and Kris** (3:42)

The above three are considered trance channels in which a fully formed secondary personality comes through during an altered state.



**Joanne Helfrich and Rose** (1:50)

(In this video clip there is only Rose speaking, so there's no chance to see Joanne's differences in expression.)



**Emmy van Swaaij and Defrene** (also Sumari singing, 3:59)

(Note the similarity between Emmy's personality, speaking style, and demeanor and Defrene. Also note the use of hand-signs.)



### **Lynda Dahl and Michael Steffen work a Ouija Board (3:41)**

(Note that Lynda is really following and Michael is leading. He can work the board by himself but prefers the connection with another.)

The above three are considered conscious channels in which their main personality does not fully dissociate or “step aside.” However, until further research is done we won’t know the extent of what *state* changes occur as they channel. From experience, I know that Joanne, Emmy, and Michael are in a light trance state, but still present to varying degrees. However, only Joanne is able to interact directly with Rose in her mind *while* channeling, though she is still in the early stage. More research is required to know if these are preliminary stages that Joanne and Emmy will pass through.

In closing, I hope this essay served as an introduction to what channeling is in practical terms through an integral perspective. Still it is much more than the examples of trance and conscious channels above. We are only beginning to adequately map out and study the incredible array of abilities listed by Klimo and Elias. I also hope this essay inspires others to recognize how this intelligence lies latent within *all of us*, and may be further developed through practice and application. It “takes a village” or “community of the adequate” to provide a safe and nurturing environment for those just starting out like the one at [NewWorldView.com](http://NewWorldView.com). Please join us there if you are interested in exploring these wonderful abilities.

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Hastings, A. (1991). *With the tongues of men and angels: A study of channeling*. Orlando, FL: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, M. (1997). *The Channeling zone: American spirituality in an anxious age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Klimo, J. (1998). *Channeling: investigations on receiving information from paranormal sources*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, p. viii.

<sup>6</sup> Hastings, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Klimo (1988), p. 899.

<sup>8</sup> AQAL stands for all *quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types*. I use the “5” to show that it is the fifth and latest version of Wilber’s metatheory. For more information see Helfrich, P. (submitted). Ken Wilber’s AQAL metatheory: an overview. *AQAL: Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*.

<sup>9</sup> Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: multiple intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 33-34.

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<sup>10</sup> Klimo, J. (1988). Channeling research: A Progress report with recommendations. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Paranormal Research*. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, pp. 894-9.

<sup>11</sup> I use Ken Wilber's definitions of the self. The *proximate self* presents the "I" or self-sense in relation to the "me" or *distal self*, and the "I-I" or ever-present *Witness*. Together, these three form the *overall self*. The proximate self shows development, however, "the overall self does *not* show a sequential or stage-like development." ~ *Integral psychology: consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*. Boston, MA 2000d, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Ennis, M. & Helfrich, P. (2001). *essence families; energy exchanges (Dream Walker interaction)*. Retrieved October 30, 2007 from, [http://www.eliasforum.org/digests/essence\\_families\\_energy\\_exchanges.html](http://www.eliasforum.org/digests/essence_families_energy_exchanges.html).