

## The Two Aspects or Sides of Reality from a Chan/Zen Perspective

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<b>Shih (or Ji) 事</b>	<b>Li (or Ri) 理</b>
<b>relative:</b> dimension of reality in which each and every thing is identified and defined by relative positions and qualities	<b>absolute:</b> dimension of reality in which each and everything is part of a seamless whole
<b>phenomena:</b> all that manifests and happens	<b>principle:</b> truth or reality underlying, or manifesting through, phenomena
<b>form:</b> short for the five skandhas, or form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness; everything that can be touched, sensed, conceived, or experienced	<b>emptiness:</b> the quality of all things being empty of inherent, independent, enduring self-essence
<b>individuality, uniqueness:</b> the reality that no two things, moments, or beings are the same	<b>sameness:</b> the reality that all things share the same nature (empty, part of a seamless whole, independent)
<b>many, myriad, separateness:</b> the countless things and beings in the universe	<b>one, unity:</b> being empty, nothing can be differentiated from anything else in an ultimate, permanent sense
<b>difference:</b> the relative reality where there are effective and important differences between things (harmful vs helpful, deluded vs wise, etc.)	<b>equality:</b> the way in which all things are marked by emptiness, sameness, and unity, while all differentiations are relative and impermanent
<b>interdependence:</b> each thing is defined by its relationships to other things, and by what it is <i>not</i> , so insofar as it can be differentiated, each thing is dependent on all other things <i>by definition</i>	<b>independence:</b> each thing has absolute value given its unique place within the seamless whole, or “merit expressed according to function and place” (Sandokai)
<b>attributes:</b> the qualities and circumstances that define our individuality and affect our experience; the unique flavor of our lives and personal karma	<b>true nature:</b> the luminous, self-sufficient nature of each thing and being based on absolute qualities and completely independent of relative ones
<b>conditional:</b> the relative differentiations we make in order to live our lives, which are always based on conditions and subject to change	<b>ultimate:</b> the unchanging, absolute aspect of reality, which is not limited by conditions, space, or time; it was before we were born and will be after we die
<b>mundane:</b> the way we experience reality when we are only aware of the relative, and our fixed ideas label things as ordinary, or relatively unremarkable and unworthy of our attention	<b>suchness, thusness:</b> the luminous, precious, miraculous quality of phenomena when they are experienced with an awareness of the absolute