

“Talk of the Month” Spiritual White Papers
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The Sleeping Machine

E.J. GOLD



Faceless Musician Blowin' Jazz in Empty Subway for Chump Change
E.J. Gold, JazzArt® stage panel, 7'x11' canvas. ©HEI.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader:

When I first read about Gurdjieff explaining “man is a machine” in a paperback copy of *In Search of the Miraculous*, it made me so angry I wanted to throw the book across the room. It was a knee-jerk reaction, typical of me, resulting in me avoiding this idea for years. This is an example of what E.J. Gold might describe as “the defense mechanism of the human biological machine against the threat of the waking state.”

What I did not understand is that work ideas are meant for use, not for mental masturbation. That they are given as tools, meant for each of us to use in our own work. That like other tools, their use must be practiced and mastered one degree at a time.

To my knowledge, the material in these white papers has never before appeared in printed form. The text is taken from the incredible series of talks published by IDHHB on their talkofthemonth.com website. These talks were given by E.J. Gold and others starting in the late 1960s. They cover “topics including personal transformation, spiritual life, the Fourth Way, Alchemy, Angels, Attention, Death & Dying, Bardo Training, the Great Work, Healing, Invocation, Metaphysics, the Man on the Cross, Reincarnation, Shamanism, Practical Work on Self, Work Traditions, Gaming and others.”

I hope you will find a way to use these ideas with wonderful results for your own work. And may your efforts be used for the benefit of all beings everywhere.



For further information, exercises, and guidance related to the ideas discussed in this white paper, please visit the Institute for the Development of the Harmonious Human Being at <https://www.idhhb.com>.

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“If we really wish to seriously work toward our possible evolution, we must clearly realize that we are sheep in sleep, that the sleeping machine is a completely mechanical apparatus, responding strictly by reflex to a variety of inner and outer influences.”

— E.J. GOLD

ABSTRACT

In this introductory discourse, E.J. Gold explains the true meaning of the common but generally misunderstood idea “man is asleep.” We are given simple, exact definitions for several of the most foundational ideas in transformational psychology: “the human biological machine;” “the essential self;” “the sleeping state;” “the waking state.” Finally, we are given the practical method of transformation, the one inner technique that underlies all transformational methods.

1 “Man is Asleep”

There is a fairly common idea that started in the West about 1924–25, when Gurdjieff first arrived in America.

You must understand that Gurdjieff has had a tremendous influence on transformational psychology as it is known in the West. At the same time, he was grossly mistranslated and grossly misunderstood by Westerners.

I am not a Gurdjieffian. I am simply stating that the influence of Gurdjieff, which has been very profound, has colored our thought in a certain way that makes it impossible to discuss these ideas until we redefine them away from the translations of Gurdjieff.

Somewhere along the line, Gurdjieff said something like, “Man is asleep.”

We must define what we mean by redefining the words “sleep” and “waking.”

2 The Machine and the Essential Self

To begin with, there is the machine. We call it the human biological machine, which is the body with its mind, emotions, motor reflexive operation, and so forth. Let us say the human body, and let us include its mind and its emotional states in that. We will categorize it as the machine and call it the machine.

People don’t necessarily like to use the word “machine” to describe it, but I can show that it is a machine in the sense that it is a reflexive mechanism.

Let us differentiate the machine from our selves, in the real sense: what we call the essential self. The essential self is not an undefinable something-or-other. It is a definitely definable thing. The essential self is that part of oneself which is not the machine.

Suppose that in recent times, you refer to those teachers who have said there’s an observer within us. An observer or a knower which is not of the body, which is not of the mind, and so forth. How would you differentiate that?

You could say to yourself: “Ah, I am observing myself walking down the street.”

Now, is that the observer? Is that the essential self? Is that what is not the machine? Or is that a part of the machine observing the machine?

Easily differentiated. If the mind is observing the machine, it will not interfere. The mind's observation will not interfere with the machine because it is part of the machine's own ongoing process.

But if something which is not the machine is observing the machine, something will happen to the machine. Something will occur. A change will occur because an observer is now in action.

This is a very loose application of the Heisenberg principle, which is that the observation of something causes a change in the thing which is being observed.

This is the basis for the waking state as well: that the observation of the essential self toward the machine begins to have a definite effect upon the machine.

3 The Sleeping State and the Waking State

The essential self, that which is not the machine, is not asleep, nor can it be asleep. It is neither awake nor asleep.

The machine, however, is asleep in the sense that it is in the sleeping state, which is to say, not the waking state.

Anyone can tell that the machine is ordinarily in the sleeping state because everyone has had tastes or glimpses of the waking state from time to time. These are those times in your life when you look back and you think, "My god, why do I remember with intimate, precise, exact detail the sights, the sounds, the tastes, every detail of such-and-such a thing? Why do I remember sitting in my high-chair," for instance, "and the sunlight gleaming in through the window, and my grandmother stirring oatmeal on the stove, and the radio blaring in the next room, the news is coming over, on and on and on ..."

Those are waking state experiences, and everyone has them. Everyone in life, every human being who's alive, has had waking state experiences. Those times when you say, "My god, I am alive! I am really alive."

Everything comes to life. Not only does oneself come to life, but everything around oneself comes to life. And everything around oneself takes on an element of

surprise. This is the waking state.

It is obvious when you compare your daily life with that waking state that you spend the majority of the time not in the waking state. It is not the essential self, but the machine, which is falling asleep.

What if the machine could be brought into the waking state at will? First of all, of what value would that be? And secondly — and more importantly — how could one do such a thing?

It's not so important what the advantages are. There are obvious advantages. There are advantages unthought-of, advantages you wouldn't even expect, for the waking state. Things which can be done with the waking state that are so unexpected and so unknown in ordinary life and so utterly unknown in the sleeping state that they can't even be guessed at.

In the sleeping state, you can read or hear or see those things about the waking state which are advantageous, which are wonderful and unexpected and unknown in the sleeping state, and yet not hear them, not see them, not understand them. In the sleeping state, it can't be understood what the waking state is and what its uses are.

4 The Essential Technique of Transformation

The waking state of the machine is what Gurdjieff was referring to. But this was mistranslated and misunderstood. He meant that the machine itself can be brought into the waking state by a particular type of action, which is called, in the Sufi tradition, “the act of attention” or “the power of attention.”

By turning the attention of the essential self upon the machine, the machine is brought, naturally and gently, into the waking state.

You'll notice that every technique and every method of transformation requires the use of attention upon the machine and expects the machine to enter the waking state.

That's why they work.

References

- [1] IDHHB Talk of the Month #109, *W.B.A.I Radio Interview — New York INTERVIEW*. <https://www.talkofthemonth.com/talkcds/digital/cdt109.html>