

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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“The Great Work consists in transforming a helpless other-directed puppet into an inner-directed, unified being that understands its place in the scheme of things.”

— E.J. GOLD

ABSTRACT

We continue our inquiry into the nature of the human biological machine. E.J. Gold guides us to a deeper understanding of what the existence of the machine means in a functional sense. Its behavior is based on patterns, which govern both external behavior and the way situations are categorized and recognized.

1 Is There Really a Machine?

There may or may not be a machine. But the human biological body, mind, emotions, and all of the apparati contained in it can be treated as a machine. The reason is: it is capable of functioning without a master.

As long as it can function without a master, it doesn't have to have anybody home in order to drive it, operate it, or direct it. It operates as a reflex apparatus.

Even its thoughts are reflexive to themselves because they occur in sequence, which we call association. Emotions are also of the mental apparatus, and they occur in the same way: by association. One emotion suggests another, and so forth. One mood follows another mood by what we call suggestion.

The whole idea of suggestibility doesn't have to do with our suggestibility to outside influences as much as it does with our suggestibility to the previous thought and the previous mood. It is about our reflexion, which is a reflexiveness, our reflex responsiveness to various stimuli, whether the stimulus comes from inside or outside.

By definition, if it operates reflexively, automatically by reflex, if it has the same reflex each time to a series of stimuli or to the same type of stimuli, it's a machine. In other words, if one stimulus evokes a response, and then the same or a similar stimulus evokes the same response, you can fairly well deduce that you're dealing with a machine. For all practical purposes, it is a machine. It can be dealt with as a machine.

2 The Patterning of Behavior

The first study of the machine is to determine that we do have a machine, and that it is in fact a machine in the sense of its functioning. In other words, that it functions reflexively.

We can determine this in various ways. We can observe the machine responding to the environment. For instance, we are not the same from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from day to day, from year to year, and so on.

But let's look at, say, any given hour. And in that hour of time, let's say we have

three different encounters with three different people, and then we have five different encounters with five different situations. To begin with, we won't be exactly the same with all of the people that we associate with. We'll be slightly different.

So we have what we call a social dichotomy, or if you'd like a psychological term, we have been sociologically trained as schizophrenics, which is to say we have a definite personality which we dramatize, we manifest, with each individual that we know. And we tend to dramatize the same personality with the same people.

We see Joe Smith. And every time we see Joe Smith, we are this way. If we are different, Joe Smith will get upset. When we are with Jack Jones, we are different, not the way we are with Joe Smith. If we were the way we are with Smith in front of Jones, Jones would get upset. If we behave the way we do with Jones to Smith, then Smith gets upset. So we are taught to be schizophrenics, functional schizophrenics.

In addition to that, we are schizophrenic in another way: we respond differently to different situations. However, we almost always respond the same way to the same type of situation. In other words, if the refrigerator goes on the blink or if we lose money in a Coca-Cola machine, we'll probably respond the same in both cases.

So we respond to the situation and we respond to people, but we respond in a fixed pattern. The whole idea here is the idea of the patterning of behavior.

The machine's behavior is patterned in a very predictable way, so that if you observe the machine, you'll observe that its patterns of behavior are reflexive. That is to say, they are actually reflecting the situation or an individual. They occur in reflex: spasmodic, muscular reflex — muscular in the mental and emotional sense as well.

That's one definition of a machine: that it operates by reflex to a situation or to various stimuli, responding in the same way to the same stimulus each time.

3 Categories and Recognition Factors

The machine also develops a chain of stimuli which are similar. It views and categorizes to itself in what are called categories or chains.

A machine forms recognition patterns which it stores under the idea of similarity. This is like that; this is like that; this is like that. So everything stored under “A” is similar to its primary “A” storage. In other words, it stores what would be called “the prime” under the “A” category, and then it stores everything like that in the same category, and it measures it against that. In other words, “This is most like whatever is in the ‘A’ category.”

The fact is, the machine has very few categories. The reason that it can store quite as much as it does, and it responds quite as well as it does, is because it has a very keen recognition factor. It developed a full set of recognition factors in the first five years of life.

Everything is categorized or related to those particular categories. Everything has to fall into one of those categories or another.

If the machine finds something that doesn’t fit, that’s not in any of the categories, it simply rejects it.

References

- [1] IDHBB Talk of the Month #114, *The Essential Self and the Machine*.
<https://www.talkofthemonth.com/talkcds/digital/cdt114.html>