

“Talk of the Month” Spiritual White Papers
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The Master of Attention

E.J. GOLD



Jazz Jam II

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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“It’s a terrible waste of opportunity of human life, a genuine sin to have failed to use the human biological machine for our possible evolution.”

— E.J. GOLD

ABSTRACT

The human biological machine and the essential self each have their own particular type of will, as well as their own particular type of attention. In this white paper, E.J. Gold discusses the distinction between the two wills and the two attentions. He explains how the special attention of the essential self, when directed toward the machine over time, cumulatively results in the awakening of the machine.

1 The Will of the Machine

There's a second way in which the machine is a machine. That is that the machine has a will of its own.

I'm not going to define or be very specific about what I mean by "the machine has a will of its own." Suffice it to say that there is a distinct difference between the machine's will and the will of the essential self, or what we call the non-phenomenal self, or the being, or the essence, or however you like to say that. That part of us which is not the machine has a particular type of will, and only this one type of will.

So if you see this will, then you're talking about the essential self. The type of will that it has is called "the will of attention." In other words, the essential self has the ability to place its attention.

That's its only will. That's the only thing that the essential self can do. That's what it does best, but it's also the only thing that it does.

It can place its attention in any way, shape, or form. In other words, it is a master of attention. If it has learned how to use attention, it can do a variety of things.

The non-phenomenal self cannot exert any kind of will that we call "will" over the machine. It might suggest to the machine. It might persuade the machine in one way or another. But it can not possibly force the machine to do something.

For instance, it can't force the machine to live according to its higher ideals. We know that for a fact, right?

We can gather the evidence that the machine lives not in accordance with our higher ideals. So we will call the higher ideals our own will, our own preference, our own way of life. This is the way of life of that which is not the machine.

We can demonstrate that the machine is exerting its own will because it operates not according to that way of life. It goes quite against it.

So the machine exerts its own will toward the situation, which takes a variety of forms. For instance, it will think in associative categories. It will also experience moods in associations.

In other words, it will experience mood by association, thought by association. It will also respond to different external and internal situations. It can turn its

attention toward its own thoughts, toward its own moods, or toward activities outside or activities inside the machine as well.

2 Two Wills and Two Attentions

The non-phenomenal self has two characteristics: simple presence and will of attention. Period. That's all it has. So if it's anything other than that, it isn't the non-phenomenal, essential self.

How is the machine to be brought under harness? Let's remember what we are trying to do. We are trying to bring the machine into function as a transformational apparatus.

In order to do that, we're going to have to rip it from its ordinary pursuits, or at least change the machine's attitudes and outlook toward those pursuits.

We know one thing about the machine, and that is that its attention generally is fickle. The machine has attention as well as the essential self; this is important to realize.

The non-phenomenal self has attention. The machine also has attention. The non-phenomenal self has a type of will. The machine also has a type of will. So we have to be very careful what we mean: whether we mean the machine's attention or the machine's will or whether we mean the will of the essential self or the attention of the essential self and so forth.

There are a number of things that we use in the same way: we may use an idea to mean something belonging to the machine, or something belonging to the essential self.

3 Special Attention as an Evolutionary Weapon

The will of the essential self is only the will of attention. That is its only weapon. It is a weapon toward the evolution of the essential self. In other words, it is only an evolutionary weapon.

This is the only weapon the essential self can use against the machine's tendency to follow every will-o'-the-wisp through running and chasing after this and that, against the machine's tendency to wander and to sink itself into organic pursuits.

The essential self has one great enemy, and that is its tendency to identify. In other words, if the essential self is identified with the machine and the machine is asleep, the essential self will fall into the sleep of the machine. It has no will of its own other than will of attention, so obviously it can't do anything but fall into identification with the machine's sleep.

The machine's will is far more powerful than the essential self's will. We know that the machine's will is far more powerful, because it can run away with you at any time.

If it's that powerful, then because the essential self is subject to suggestion, it falls into identification with the sleep of the machine. It can't tear itself away from the machine in any ordinary way. So its only weapon is the weapon of attention.

The essential self turns its attention toward the machine. This special attention slowly, almost homeopathically, very gently, over a long period of time, cumulatively awakens the machine. Attention focused on the machine awakens the machine.

That's the only weapon the essential self has. Once the machine is awake, its will is now stopped. In other words, an awakened machine has no will. A sleeping machine exerts its own will.

As soon as the machine is awake, it has no will. That's one way you can tell that the machine is awake. The machine has lost its will. It no longer exerts its will upon the situation.

The machine's will is a function of negative energy or negative emotion. Negative emotion is the food of the machine's will. When there is no negative emotion — and there isn't when the machine is awake — then there also is no machine will, because the machine will has nothing upon which to feed.

The machine becomes completely apathetic in terms of the situation. In other words, it no longer cares about the situation and no longer responds to the situation. It no longer exerts its own will upon the situation.

At this point, no matter how weak the will of the essential self might be, eventually it begins to assert itself because the machine has no will whatever. The machine

will, which is normally dominant, is completely missing.

So the machine is like a lucid piece of glass, where before it was opaque. At this point, the essential self can begin to exert its will of attention.

References

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