

# Reclaiming Your Power From the Machines in the Age of the Sick Click



From the moment the current COVID-19 crisis arrived here in China (where I live) about three months ago, it became apparent to me that we have a devastating problem. But no, I'm not referring to the virus itself (which is a massive problem, obviously enough). Instead I'm referring to the fact that far too many of us have given our power away to the machines: to the E-World of mainstream and alternative media, and to social media.

The essential dilemma is that our minds have been captured by a Matrix-like virtual world which looks remarkably similar to the real world, but is a facade designed to suck your life force away, in order to keep the machines alive.

So, its an old story, but never more relevant than it is today.

Why is this happening, and how can we reclaim that power – before it's too late?

## **About your power: Yes, I'm looking at you!**

There are various ways to think of power, and most of us wouldn't mind a bit more of it. Robert Green outlined no less than four dozen expressions of power in *The 48 Laws of Power*. Amongst his principles are: "conceal your true intentions;" "say less than necessary;" "court attention at all costs;" and "keep people dependent on you." And then there are the old favorites like: "crush your enemy totally;" and "pose as a friend, work as a spy."



Unless you are a politician, you will probably be feeling slightly uneasy at this point. But don't be (too) alarmed. I'm not talking about these forms of power in this article. Indeed, these expressions of power and their typical agendas for control often emerge in pathological expression because there is a lack of a more essential power within us.

That is the power to be here now. The power of embodied presence.

Though this human potentiality is rarely spoken of when discussing the idea of power, I want you to realise that without the power of embodied presence, all other forms of power will ultimately be of little genuine value to you.

I did not arrive at this understanding alone. It is a cumulative wisdom derived from conversations and work with many other teachers, some more learned and wiser than I. For example, the crucial importance of developing the capacity for embodied presence has long been taught by [Leonard Jacobson](#), as I outlined in [Champion of the Soul: Master of the Mind](#).

## What is embodied presence?

The power of embodied presence is the ability to bring your body to rest and your mind into a state of silent attention at will, regardless of what is occurring around you, or within you.

Embodied presence is not innate to humans. You have to develop it. You have to work at it. While children and animals are typically far more present than human adults, they cannot be said to be masters of their minds. They neither have the introspective capacity to observe their feelings and thoughts, nor to develop the “right relationship” with them.

There are two essential ways that we surrender this power:

- Firstly, we allow what arises in our own minds and bodies to perpetuate without responsible mediation. In other words, whatever we happen to think about and feel at any given moment is allowed to continue in whatever way it might, even as we *identify* with those cognitive processes. Here our thoughts and feelings run amok, like naughty children at the supermarket. If the thoughts are good we are happy; but if they are not we feel powerless

and miserable.

- Secondly, we often allow the world around us to take us in to a state of unmediated distraction. Such stimuli can include: what others say or do to us; what actually happens in our immediate experience; what is happening in our broader lives; and increasingly in today's world, what we experience online and via electronic communication. In this article I am focusing on the last of these, but in practice one cannot simply separate all categories, as the thoughts and feelings within us are often entanglements of all these things.

## **The Paradox of Power and Presence**

Therefore, the kind of power I am talking about here is not really about "power and control" in the traditional sense. Its primary aim is not establishing power and control over others or circumstances, but over your mind.

Yet if embodied presence is regularly established, it will result in a greater sense of control over life and your experience of self. A subtle distinction I wish to make is that this sense of control is a secondary quality which emerges from more fundamental shifts in behavior and attitude, and this entails a surrender to what is – both within and without. This is the essential paradox of Power of Presence. In order to access the power of presence, you must first relax into the right relationship with your body, your mind and your world.

## **How the E-World Steals Your Power**

This is where E-Worlds come in. In today's world smartphones, AI, 5G and the internet of things are becoming pervasive. We are increasingly shifting our attention onto abstract representations of the real (your car's GPS, the weather report, travel shows instead of actual travel) media and social media. We are turning away from our bodies and the

essence of consciousness.

We are giving our power away to the machines.

The present COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated that tendency. Because most of us are in an expanded state of anxiety and uncertainty, and many of us are socially isolating and away from the workplace, we are tuning into the internet and media more often than normal. By implication, in doing so we are disconnecting from our bodies and from the present moment.

Further, because of this pervasive fear, the number of articles, videos and posts on the subject of the virus has been staggering. Many of them completely contradict each other. As we stagger from one E-World to the next like dazed psychonauts, ghosts in a cosmic machine we can never quite be with, and our disembodiment intensifies, the fear and confusion spiraling into ever higher levels of intensity.



## **The mass monkey mind**

It is helpful to think of the E-World of media and social media as the mass monkey mind. In meditative traditions, the “monkey

mind" is the term used to describe your chattering, unchecked inner world, which (if I may mix my metaphors) has a tendency to wander about indiscriminately like a blind man stumbling along a crowded street without a walking stick. The blind man keeps bumping into people, either cursing them or apologizing frantically in order to deflect their anger, even as the other pedestrians apologize or curse him back. Because he cannot see, the blind man doesn't realise that all the other pedestrians are equally as blind, and all without their canes.

This image symbolically represents the essence of much of the internet during the virus crisis, as the meandering minds of the masses run amok, and with little or no capacity to unplug and return to embodied presence. Whichever way the wind is blowing on E-World on any given day, that is the direction the mass monkey mind sways, unable to move in another direction nor to simply hit the off button that is but inches away.

This is disempowerment.

## **Shifting your gaze**

[Leonard Jacobson](#) has said that when you gaze upon the vastness of the ocean, you will see the vastness within yourself reflected to you. When you gaze upon the eternity of a mountain, you will see the eternity of yourself therein. But if you gaze upon the unconsciousness of another human beings and become transfixed by that, you will become as lost as them.

The truth is that much of what is written on social media and the Internet is of little value. It does not contain much wisdom or understanding. Almost all of it is distorted by the limitations of the abstract mind, and a great deal is simply irresponsible projection from psychologically and spiritually immature individuals. If you engage this online unconsciousness at the level at which it is created, you will become lost in the shadows of the mass monkey mind, separated

from your power.

So, you have to discipline yourself when it comes to the time you spend online. It is that simple. And you have to make a commitment, to make embodied presence of higher value in your life than surfing on E-World. You have to acknowledge at a deeper level that most of what you are seeing online is a distorted and exaggerated copy of the real world. E-World is like a giant camera fixated ever-closer on a pimple on George Clooney's nose, zooming closer and closer till the formerly handsome Mr Clooney becomes nothing but a grotesque and bloated pustule. And then you scream.

## **Media and madness**

"If it bleeds it leads" was an old cliché from the days when newspapers were things you actually picked up with your hands and flipped through on the subway on your way to work. Yet the principle still applies today, only more so. In The Age of the Click everyone is battling for your time and attention.

This is not new. It's not news. We all know what I am talking about. So why then are we spending so much time in fear-and-loathing-saturated online environments?

Firstly, human beings are wired for what is called "negativity bias." This is a principle well known in psychology. The simple version is that we are biologically wired to pay far more attention to bad news than to good news, to insults than to compliments, to pain than to pleasure. Our human ancestors who survived and thrived best in physically hostile environments were those who were the fastest to spot potential threats. So those were the humans who reproduced. The rest became big cat food or got wiped out by a more aggressive tribe. Over time this characteristic of anxious alertness to potential threat was naturally selected, becoming part of the human genotype.

On a related point, when we experience fear, anger naturally follows. Biologically. As Malcolm McLaren once famously sang: anger is an energy. It seeks forceful expression. Violent, even. Ask yourself this question. Whom do you blame for the way the COVID-19 virus is impacting your country? Your community? There is a very good chance you have a very clear answer, and you have recently indignantly expressed this to others on the internet.

Online communities allow a space whereby we can express anger and frustration. In truth, your angry online expressions are probably no big deal in the greater scheme of things. If you are able to express yourself without overdue attachment to your projections, if you can then pull away, the self-damage you inflict will probably be minimal. But when billions of us are doing the same; and when you identify with that collective chorus, engage it or oppose it, you are effectively fixated by the chattering of the mass monkey mind. Thereupon the anxious cacophony inside your skull is no longer merely *your* personal voice. You are possessed.





Finally, we should not forget that every click is a dopamine hit. Web designers and IT companies know that. And that's why they have you.

## The point of fear

Fear has a very practical biological imperative, and a perfectly valid one. Fear in itself is not bad, as long as we can manage it in healthy ways.

Being afraid during a pandemic is beneficial. Those who are too blasé probably won't take appropriate precautions like washing their hands, practicing social distancing and so on. While any given individual might not suffer because of that, if ten million people in the country behave in such a way, you have a very big problem.



So rather than attempting to eliminate fear, develop the right relationship with it and act decisively upon it, when appropriate. The fear you feel is reaching out to you to deepen your self-awareness, and your awareness of humanity as a whole. It is my perception that at this time we humans are dealing with the prime issue of the fear of abandonment and death. We need to learn how to love that fear, that wound. You

might like to read more about how to deepen your relationship with your fear in [another article I wrote recently](#).

## How to Red Pill it out of E-World

Here are some simple steps you can take to launch yourself off E-World and return to the embodied presence of the real world, and begin to rediscover embodied presence.

- Delay opening the internet for as long as possible each day. When I feel I am being distracted by online spaces, I typically set myself the first six hours of the day to be here in the real world. So I avoid the E-World, except for essential tasks.
- Don't keep your phone beside your bed when you sleep. You will be tempted to open it during the night, or first thing in the morning.
- Never begin the day by going online. Meditate early in the day, or go for a walk in nature: to a place where there are trees, water or open skies. Breathe into your body and allow yourself to simply be.



- As you sense your consciousness in meditation or nature, take at least a moment or two to give thanks for your

awareness. For your life. None of us knows how long we shall continue to have that gift.

- Walk your dog.
- Chat with someone, and just enjoy being present with them.
- Given that being aware and informed at this time is important, decide what you wish to discover or know before you open the internet. Set yourself a time limit. I suggest limiting yourself to no more than 30 minutes at a time on the internet for general web browsing.
- Each time you are about to enter an online space, bring attention to your body. It may surprise you that before you even click on that page that your physiology has shifted. You may also be aware of an agenda that your mind has set up to blame or project against somebody. In other words, that you are about to give your power away as that agenda hooks into somebody else's, and become entangled in drama. Simply notice that, and make a conscious decision about whether you will allow that agenda to expand into further thoughts, comments and behaviors in your online session.
- Make a list of web sites, groups and posters who tend to drag you out of presence and into fear, anger and blame. If you cannot think of a good reason to gaze into those monkeys' minds, commit to NOT going there. This might take some self-discipline.
- Acknowledge the payoff for distraction and projection. Admit it. It feels good to blame politicians and random humans on the internet for being bad and stupid (unlike me/us, the good and smart). You get a sense of community and connection with your tribe, you get to express your pent-up anger, and you get to feel morally superior and more intelligent than those whom you project against. Are you willing to let that go, or at least bring awareness to this behavior?
- Give thanks for the small things. Gratitude has a power that most do not appreciate. If you can enjoy a cup of

tea, walk by the ocean with a friend or listen to a great song, is that not wonderful?

## **Dancing the two-step to embodied presence**

Shifting to embodied presence is not difficult, as [Leonard Jacobson](#) likes to say. All you really need to do is sit quietly and bring your attention to your breath, or a part of your body. Alternatively, bring your attention quietly to a simple external object: a chair, a candle, a cup. Maintain your attention for a few moments, then you are present. You can also become present by stopping for a moment and gently noticing your thoughts and feelings without judgment. This helps create the witnessing effect I have written of, above.



The second step is more challenging. That is, the capacity to remain present, at will. This is beyond the scope of this article to detail, but in essence it is about deepening into awareness of what it is within you that is resisting presence. Typically, the mind resists presence because it equates it with death: self-extinction. You can read more about that in [Discover Your Soul Template](#), if you wish.

# Finally

This article has focused upon a significant broader problem that has resulted from the development of the internet, and how that has become particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are tending to remove our consciousness from embodied presence, and mistake virtual worlds for the world of the real.

There are many other problems involved with both the internet and the virus situation that I have not addressed. And there are many wonderful and positive aspects of the internet that I have also left untouched.

My essential point has been to introduce the idea of the power of embodied presence. A part of that is my hope that you can avoid becoming possessed by the virtual worlds of the mass monkey mind at a time when there is a wonderful opportunity to develop a more grounded relationship with life, and a greater personal wisdom. In doing so, your actions and expressions, both in the real world and online may help us all learn and grow during a challenging time.