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The Yogi and the Commissar

The essence of the creative leader is that he is, in Koestler's phrase, both yogi and commissar. Perhaps the phrase need explaining, since the concepts it embodies are important to big organizations, which badly need both. Nobody, or virtually nobody, is pure yogi or pure commissar, but most people polarize around one or the other.

The yogi is the contemplative man, the thinker... The commissar, on the other hand, is the man of action. He has never had an idea in his life, and is incapable of questioning the assumption on which his department or the company is running...

Good commissars do not need to be chased or prodded: They have the drive inside them, they enjoy pushing things along, they find satisfaction and fulfillment in rushing around getting things done – and it is the actual doing, not the contemplation of the thing done, which is the source of their pleasure.

Good yogis and good commissars are not all that common. Obviously, therefore, the man who is a combination of both is rarer still. Nevertheless it is still vital to understand him, because although the spectacular conjunction of the brilliant original thinker with the vigorous and decisive man of action may not crop up more than once in a generation. And these are the people who can lead the creative groups, by virtue of the dual insight which the combination of these qualities gives them. In his creative group there will be some who are more yogi than commissar, some who are more commissar than yogi; clearly it is excellent if he is better than all of them in both areas, but it is not essential. So long as he is good enough to be respected by the yogis as a yogi and by the commissars as a commissar, so long as he is much more of a yogi than any of the commissars and much more of a commissar than any of the yogis, that is what matters, because he will have the one thing that none of the rest possess, namely, an understanding of the whole operation, and not merely sections or aspects of it.

Antony Jay, *Management and Machiavelli*, pp.115-118