

MATERIALISM, SPIRITUALISM, AND THE MIDDLE ROAD

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If we discuss human psychic abilities with an official representative of modern science, we would soon realize that the scientist considers humans as machines and anything that is, broadly speaking, “psychic” a result of chemical reactions, electrical interactions, photon exchanges etc. For the scientist, a human is pretty much a robot governed by a sophisticated and complex computer that is essentially deterministic. Spirit does not exist and is an illusion, therefore any study of it is shunned and considered a waste of time. The scientist is a MATERIALIST.

On the other hand if we talk to a Tibetan Lama, it will soon be apparent that for him everything physical is an illusion, and that the only thing that counts is of a spiritual nature. According to him, all the attention dedicated to the physical world is time wasted. There is no need for technology, gadgets, laboratory tests and anything related to them. He is a SPIRITUALIST.

Who is right? One of them? Or does each one have a limited view and the truth straddle both - is it as Horace once said, *in medio stat virtus* (virtue stands in the middle)?

Here is an example to clarify. Suppose we are a team of military specialists tasked with examining a captured enemy aircraft; we note the aircraft has no pilot, is capable of taking off, completing a mission, and landing without human intervention. Since it is equipped with sophisticated computers, we can pull it apart, analyze the details, and after much in-depth study eventually understand how its sensors and on-board computers work.

We would discover that, as expected, these respond deterministically to well-defined algorithms able to control the same computers’ behaviours and therefore of the Drone itself (because we’re dealing with a UAV - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle). A simple machine able to carry out algorithms in response to signals generated by its sensors, behaving according to pre-defined plans, and hence something completely MATERIALISTIC. If we now look at its transceiver, we note that via electromagnetic waves it is capable of linking by satellite and communicating, even visually, with a similar device located who knows where. By altering the drone’s instructions, the link device allows an external controller to command the drone as needed, changing both the source data for the algorithms and even the algorithms themselves. We could say that the drone’s ‘commander’ is the computer’s controller located away from the drone itself and correctly conclude that we have a SPIRITUALISTIC scenario.

This example illustrates the point that by ignoring the existence of an intangible connection with the external computer, the machine’s function can still be described precisely, albeit with no understanding of its true abilities. On the other hand, if we say the external controller can do “everything”, we overlook the fact that without the machine to carry out commands, the distant controller can’t do much of any use. We can surmise therefore that if we want to fully understand this drone, we need to fully consider both the machine itself and the external controller, including all the machine’s physical characteristics and all the psychic factors related to the controller. This is the MIDDLE ROAD.

English translation by Cinzia Evangelista.