

CONFESSIONS

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Finding the body was probably the worst thing that had ever happened to the cleaner. She had arrived early to work that day, hoping to have a moment alone in the faculty common room before she had to wipe down all the surfaces in a farcical attempt to make the campus “COVID secure” for those who arrived after her. But even that measure of peace was denied to her by the obscene, sprawling, grotesque, corpse lying in front of the blackboard. Her struggles with her mental health had been life long, and on and off she had gone through dark periods of substance abuse as a form of self-medication. As the police came to secure the area and examine the scene they found her praying that she would be able to forget all this and hold it together - her family were relying on her.

The victim - M - had been a faculty member in this small department of philosophy, and so the police called in M’s three colleagues to see if they knew of anyone who might have a grudge against M. It was hence a great surprise when this somewhat routine procedure generated not leads but confessions - three of them. What follows are the statements, written and signed by each colleague, wherein they gave their own account of the events leading up to the death of M.

Confession 1 – P

The following statement, inclusive of this very statement, consists in my testimony concerning the circumstances surrounding the death of M. By “circumstances surrounding” I mean events that i) preceded, ii) played a causal role concerning, and iii) a description of which would necessarily feature in any adequate explanatory account of, M’s death.

M had given a lecture to the faculty entitled “Secularism and Prosperity: The Virtues of an Expanded Middle Class”. In this talk M purported to demonstrate that secular societies, and associated liberal-capitalist political and economic arrangements, were giving rise to new moral systems. And, further, that these moral systems are quite considerably to be

preferred to those which preceded since when put into practice they generate a) material prosperity, b) peace, and c) rational and thrifty subjects.

My colleagues were becoming agitated - as evinced by the manner in which they were shuffling in their chairs, sometimes muttering objections, and glaring, by which I mean, prolonged staring with somewhat squinted eyes, at M. I too wished to press objections, by which I mean I sought to press those objections and if I had been denied my opportunity I would have found some other opportunity to raise these points.

When I was called upon I noted that the following facts could be discerned from available histories: first, that the vaunted rise in material prosperity had been accompanied by environmental destruction which threatened to make this a long run self-defeating strategy and thus not instrumentally rational when considered at the collective level. Second that, further, the distribution of this wealth had been highly uneven, leading to concentrations of wealth that were 1) inefficient according to theories of decreasing marginal utility that are tolerably well confirmed, and 2) liable to generate imbalances in ability to command the use of future resources that would exacerbate both problem (1) and the long run collective irrationality problem. What is more, third, the “peace” discussed had apparently been compatible with multiple world wars of unparalleled destructive power (as measured both in lives and destruction of property, even with prices adjusted for inflation) and imperial competition that had bred enmity that still generates further war and inequalities whose effects I had previously mentioned. Finally, I noted, fourth, it did not seem that the age was so secular after all, considering that M themselves continued to use the basically theological and unscientific language of “virtue” by which to describe the psychological dispositions they preferred to cultivate.

M did not seem too pleased at my intervention, frowning and taking on a more high pitched tone than is typical for them in their reply. Their response, delivered in this manner, was to ask me what I would instead do to better things - I suggested that a system of government which pooled the knowledge and experiences of the full global population could avoid many of the problems I had enumerated. I hence suggested that rather than trust in the continuation of the present world order, I would prefer it if we instead sought to educate the mass of the population in methods of precise reasoning so they may understand their world and its causal order, as well as see through those who would seek to domineer over them by deceiving them. If this were done while at the same time modes of communication were found that would allow

tolerably precise transfer of ideas and sentiments across the various people of the world, and decision making or control structures were modified in order to ensure that effective control of our economic and political resources were evenly distributed, we might hope to solve the problems of collective rationality I had identified.

At this point M joined my colleagues in causing a great noise, such that I could not individuate their objections to me. Suffice it to say they did not seem satisfied with my response, and at once they started brawling. Judging by the sudden spike in my heart rate I was quite shocked at this behaviour. I attempted simply to leave, withdraw my presence from the room and hope that this would compel them to come to terms and resume discussion. M and another of my colleagues - H - did indeed soon seek me out in what I had hoped would be my refuge, the common room. I gathered that α) they had resolved their differences, but β) this was only in so far as it would be useful to work together to silence me.

They both lunged at me, and by an involuntary motion I lashed out in return. The precise details of the ensuing scuffle are difficult for me to recall, and I do not find myself sufficiently confident in much to be able to assert just what happened. Howbeit, this struggle came to an end with me striking M in such a way that they fell to the floor, hitting their head on the way down. H at that point departed the room in what I presume was a panic, given their haste, their failure to say another word to me, and the darting movements of their eyes. I performed various checks to be able to confirm that M was indeed dead. After satisfying myself on this matter, I came home and spent the evening preparing my affairs before turning myself in. As such, even if you had not called for me, I predict with some confidence that I was going to come in today and issue a statement similar to this one.

These are the events surrounding M's death such as I can recall them.

- P

Confession 2 - H

That fool M perished by my hand, and no great loss to the world either! The day that was to prove their last found me in a foul mood, travelling through the hazy smog of a decadent society to come to this accursed institution where authentic Thought comes to die. All around me I saw a

“cosmopolitan” student body, unmoored from anything that might ground them, losing themselves in the supposed pleasures of our technical society - how they sickened me! My lungs choking on the filth their vehicles filled the air with, my eyes blinded by the flashing lights of the banal amusements they flashed upon their phones, my heart sickened by the surrounding drab urbanity of a once beautiful region. Our ancestors had made this place a home by pouring their blood, their very blood, into the soil; it had been sacred to them. And now I must ask to squeeze past two androgynous blue haired degenerates, who reeked of North London smugness, simply in order to enter my office? Intolerable.

So, yes, I was in no mood for M’s lecture to the faculty that evening. In disgust I watched closely how that vile little creature preened around on the stage. Talking about how much our age - this blasphemy, this sin against all that made our nation great, this era of inauthenticity - represented the culmination of shopkeepers’ petty ambitions. This was the sickness of our race being offered as its cure! That half-bolshevik pedant P split some hairs in their typical manner, but of course they failed to get at what was fundamental, since their whole approach to life and what-passes-for-thought constitutes a systematic refusal to engage with the problem to hand. I tried to tell them as much, but they simply ignored me and sauntered off as they always do.

So when I myself had a chance to set M aright of course I took it! In no uncertain terms I told them that what they celebrated as glorious represented nothing more than a concerted effort to suppress, and forget, our actual problems. Death will come for us all, this much we can never escape no matter how wealthy, and in our primal natures we are ever somewhat, however dimly, cognisant of this fact. Rather than face the dread and anxiety this might produce we fill our lives with distracting baubles, and in so doing distance ourselves from anything like a real experience of the world as it is. But this can never suffice, and if we are to really cure what ails us we need to find a way to reconnect with those modes of life that allow us to at least spend our limited time actually encountering each other and nature in a meaningful fashion. Away with this shallow secular prosperity, return to a mode of life that would offer the chance at fulfilment and glory!

M purported to listen and for a brief moment I foolishly allowed myself to believe that something might come of this. In this way I always find myself reeling, facing the blows a cruel fate rains down upon me, as those who seek to block my - our - return to rooted being use all their guile and deception to draw me, us, in, only to better bring about chaos and ruin. For, indeed, at the end of

all this what did M do? They started talking to me about washing machines and radios! Washer women may now cut their chores by a third, M idiotically informed me in that fashion of theirs that always impressed grant agencies. I still shudder at the glee with which M recounted that harlots and fools may dull their minds with podcasts or k-pop or whatever else as they perform their duties.

I will not suffer to be mocked. I am the heir to a people who drove back the Romans, who communed with the wolves of the black forest, who felt in our breasts the language and poems of Goethe before they were ever put to pen. So at this I went to my office and took out my letter opener, then sought out M, who I found in the common room, no doubt in an effort to collude with P. I set upon M with a force like lightning. I slept soundly last night, and before you was my handiwork this morning.

I regret nothing. Though you may now seek to slander me with lies, I am sure a grateful future will look back and see in my deed the call to arms for a race too long abused by M and their like. Tomorrow belongs to me! – H

Confession 3- T

I write this document through tears, and while calling upon the saints to intercede for me, for it is a confession of the deepest and most mortal sin. In full knowledge that life is God's to give or take, and Christ Himself while He was personally present commanded mercy, I yet slew professor M. I should sooner never speak of these events outside the seal of confession, but the secular authorities require that I give an account of myself so I comply, rendering unto Caesar as his is due.

Seeking not to excuse but explain my actions, I should note that I had spent the day in prayerful meditation on the false hopes implanted in our students by the father of lies. I saw people blessed with the gift of intelligence come in and, with no thought to God, turn their attention to utopian projects. I had heard some excitedly talk of "machine learning for social justice" today. I was moved by their idealism, but could not hold back my sadness at how vain their efforts were! Outside of the Word there will be no justice, without His constant aid and assistance there can be no success, and left to our own devices our prideful sin will soon turn even the most idealistic of human designs towards avarice.

So it was perhaps unsurprising that M's lecture shook me so violently. On the evening of their death M spoke to us, attempting to show that by his own power man could bring about a heaven on earth, and do so by actively spurning faith in God and the resurrection. The content was nothing short of a recapitulation of the Ophian heresy, close in fact to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. I was much grieved to hear M succumb to this, for it seemed that my dear colleague was among those propagating the lies that cause our students to fall from grace. I tried to respond in a sensible manner, praying under my breath for the salvation of M's soul and all similarly lost. Fervently I prayed that they would realise that the happiness they sought for us in this world was an illusion, that only the Heavenly City promised to us would let us live in true wealth and security, that without grace the hearts of men would turn all these designs to the great evil which we are disposed to.

But the devil is like a lion who roams about looking for souls to devour, and on this day he found mine. For after the talk, during some dispute, the deceiver roared into my heart words of wrath, and that sin overcame me. I found myself thinking that rather than suffer Christ be mocked, I should defend His word here and now, by whatever means necessary. With a rosary for a garrotte I finished M off - oh, mother Mary, I pray that you will beg your Son that I be forgiven! - then with a cross I desecrated the body, as my soul was at that point in the throes of a devilish rage that I hope never again to experience.

Immediately I left the scene, but it was only after I got home that night that I realised the enormity of what I had done. I knelt down in prayer, and have been praying ever since, not yet sleeping since the ghastly act was done. But even in the depths of my wretchedness God is kind, and shortly before dawn He granted me a vision of M's soul. Now in purgatory, I heard M lamenting the sins that had earned them such sore punishment before they may be admitted unto the Kingdom. I was touched that among the sins they lamented was included the failure to make the best of mine own teachings, and they also were vexed that it was by exploiting contradictions in their own system that such monstrous sinners were made of P and H. Most strange of all was that the vision concluded with M begging God to forgive them the sin of suicide.

What I have seen I do not fully comprehend, but I suppose that God wishes me to be reassured that M is at least not eternally lost, and is seeking forgiveness for sins in life — perhaps including the spiritual suicide of heresy? Most of all I suppose that the Lord is telling me to seek such forgiveness

myself and hope that I may yet be redeemed, great is His mercy in offering us the sacraments.

I here end my testimony, and accept whatever punishment secular law sees fit to offer me. – T

The police had been worried this case would generate media attention. Fortunately, however, a royal affair involving the daughter of a famous football player broke at just the right time to keep everyone quite busy. That was the only luck they caught, as no substantial further evidence was recovered beyond the three contradictory confessions. Reviewing the file some months later an exasperated detective inspector exclaimed “are these three lunatics all we have to go on here!?” only for a sergeant to laconically reply “Four lunatics, sir, if you credit Divine revelation.” And that was the last word the police said on the matter. M was dead, that much was apparent. But it was as if everybody in their world had conspired to bring it about without any one of them clearly doing the deed. How such a thing could be possible was a matter for a subtle metaphysician, but unfortunately the best such known to the Met was now permanently indisposed.

The cleaner was laid off soon after. Haunted by the image of the body, she was unable to sleep and grew increasingly listless at work. No tenure for her, and the university’s oft-expressed sympathy did not extend to keeping an inefficient cleaner on the payroll. It is not clear what will come next for her, but she has no reason to believe it will be any better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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