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Espionage: Why did Hanssen do it?

Editor

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Title: Espionage: Why did Hanssen do it?

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In July 2001, Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Robert Philip Hanssen pleaded guilty to 14 counts of espionage and one count of conspiracy to commit espionage. Some intelligence authorities consider his betrayal the most damaging in United States history—including the deaths of intelligence agents and the compromise of intelligence documents and programs.

In creating a post-dictive profile—i.e., identifying the significant factors leading to espionage and conspiracy—one can quickly enter a maze of paradox. Roman Catholicism, church going, the Sacrament of Confession, membership in Opus Dei wherein ordinary life can be a pathway to holiness and sanctity. Then, allowing a friend to watch Hanssen have sex with Hanssen's wife via a television system hooked to a video camera unbeknownst to her; sending this friend nude pictures of Hanssen's wife; posting sexually explicit accounts of Hanssen and his wife on the Internet; frequenting strip clubs, having some sort of special relationship with at least one stripper, and trying to save the souls of others.

Profilers have posited that an ever-deepening Catholicism was an overcompensation for the espionage and conspiracy and/or the various sexual escapades. Others that the espionage and conspiracy were engaged in to keep at least a modicum of control over sexual desires and needs. Still others that the espionage and conspiracy and sexual desires, needs, and escapades were merely proof positive that man is born in sin and thus a great justification for deep religious brief. Yet another speculation is more psychoanalytic in nature and posits conscious and unconscious intermingling of sexual and violent instincts exemplified by the masochistic self-mortification of Opus Dei; the sadistic deaths of intelligence agents; scopophilia and sexual voyeurism via strip clubs with women dehumanized and degraded as objects—all semantically captured by the tropes of espionage and conspiracy.

Earlier in Hanssen's life, one discovers severe trauma to the dynamics of his self-esteem generated by ongoing emotional abuse from his father. To overcompensate for feelings of inferiority, Hanssen would be the best spy he could be by outwitting those he spied for and against. He would put himself into situations of power imbalance with strippers on the short end. He would attain eternal life by trying to be the best Catholic he could be—slipping up only showing the magnitude of his quest to surmount sin and eventual salvation.

But what could be more of an overcompensation than having the power of God, of being God. To the former, he had the power of life and death over which intelligence agents he compromised. To the latter, even fallen woman could rise through belief in him (Him). And, thus, it might well be true that he did not engage in common sexual behaviors with the strippers. Playing God to the fallen—playing Jesus to Mary

Magdalenes—was the ultimate sexual high tinged with the violence done to those who thereby had become the fallen.

This brief look at Hanssen underlines the problem of most personnel security programs and criteria. They explicitly detail objective criteria, while it's the subjectivity of the objective—the meaning—that sets the stage for betrayal.

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Keywords: Betrayal. Espionage. Hanssen. Personnel. Religion. Security. Sexuality. Trust.

Abstract/Description: This article describes speculative elements of a post-dictive profile on Robert P. Hanssen's convictions for espionage and conspiracy.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Science. Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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