

An Examination of Conscience

The theological magazine, Cross Currents, published last fall a remarkable Examination of Conscience for adults. The virtues of this ancient practice, in non-Catholic as well as Catholic settings, suggests its imitation by the Political Science profession.

Political Scientists like to recite the sins of politicians. Indeed some so maliciously enjoy this inculcation that one sees all too apparently in them the "private motive displaced onto public objects and rationalized in terms of the public advantage." Dozens of books, articles, symposia and panels have dwelt upon the morality of officials. The fancy reaches its peak in an elaboration of codes of ethics for public servants.

Expert, external moral criticism of our politicians is in general necessary and good. However, one seeks vainly for a corresponding expert and internal criticism. Do we begin each day, or each week, or each year asking whether we are morally, as well as technically, deficient, as Political Scientists? Do we ever do so? Probably not. It is likely that most of us have never considered whether there was a moral sense appropriate to and peculiar to our profession.

Yet we know, if we think of it, that we have moral problems as teachers of political science. We often commit injustices. For instance, we do not flunk enough students; we let poor students get Ph.D.'s; we play favorites; we resent bright but arrogant students; we discriminate against women students. We deliver lectures to

escape from discussing problems with live students; we preserve and increase curricular restrictions; we make it difficult for students to study elsewhere. We escape physically from our students, or we surrender to them by talking football instead of Political Science; we are often unserious, immature, hypocritical, hypercritical, clanish, gossipy; we conduct campus vendettas, and squabble over \$50 pay increases. We may even proscribe the works of men we envy, both in our classes and in our writings. We behave like organization men rather than like a community of equal scholars. We play to the crowd, preoccupy ourselves with the university's public relations, trifle away our energies on newspapers and semi-popular magazines and consume the years in superficially relevant civic behavior. We cease to read or to write.

Merely consider all of these faults that lie within us! University administrators will not banish them; no federal aid program will cure them; no inevitable and splendid march of Truth will grind them into the dust.

Consequently, it is forgivable and in order to ask for more self-criticism--even for bare listings of the criteria of self-criticism. PROD will be happy to publish them. Seven hundred years ago Roger Bacon wrote: "It is impossible that the mind should lie calm in the sunlight of truth while it is spotted with evil....virtue clears the mind so that one can better understand not only ethical, but even scientific things."

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