

Top Hat's Face: Explaining Robert Hanssen's Treason

George Ellard

Introduction

In May 2002, Robert Hanssen was sentenced to life imprisonment after having perpetrated, in the words of a presidential commission, "possibly the worst intelligence disaster in US history." In a Sentencing Memorandum, government prosecutors described Hanssen's crimes as "surpassing evil" and as "almost beyond comprehension."

At the time of his arrest in February 2001, Hanssen was a senior Supervisory Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, five weeks away from retiring after a twenty-six year FBI career. He was apprehended in a park near his home in northern Virginia, "loading a dead drop" with critical information about US national security for retrieval by Russian agents.

Hanssen's arrest brought to an end a career in espionage that spanned twenty-three years, during which he gave first to Soviet and later to Russian agents reams of documents and dozens of computer diskettes containing, according to the presidential commission, "national security information of incalculable value." Hanssen compromised, for instance, the plan the United States would put into effect to save its political and military command structures upon sustaining a Soviet nuclear strike. This particular betrayal occurred at a time when key elements within the Soviet oligarchy were advocating a first strike against the United States, fearing that America was about to take advantage of ongoing chaos in the crumbling Communist empire by itself launching a preemptive nuclear attack.

Hanssen's malice often targeted individuals. For instance, one of his first acts of treason was to disclose the identity of "Top Hat," Lieutenant General Dimitri Polyakov, a "recruitment-in-place" for the United States and the highest ranking Soviet military intelligence officer ever to spy for the West. General Polyakov had been an American double agent for almost twenty years. He had been the source of crucially important information about Soviet military capabilities, information that helped shape US strategy in disarmament negotiations. Polyakov received no money for his intelligence work and seems to have been motivated by deeply felt hatred of the Soviet system.

A videotape of Polyakov's arrest that has made its way to the West is sobering. He is seen with his arms handcuffed behind his back, as KGB thugs rip off the clothes above his waist. Fingers cradling Polyakov's cheeks from behind turn his face directly toward the camera. The general looks straight into the lens with grim dignity. He clearly knows that the only mercy he will be shown from that moment to the time of his death will be his captors' decision to execute him after years of interrogation.

In the short time since Hanssen's arrest, the enormity of his crimes has led to at least five books, scores of articles, and a television mini-series with a screen

In the short time since Hanssen's arrest, the enormity of his crimes has led to at least five books, scores of articles . . . all trying to explain how an apparently decent human being could have perpetrated such evil.

play by Norman Mailer, all trying to explain how an apparently decent human being could have perpetrated such evil. Not surprisingly, given the depth of Hanssen's treachery, the commentary has failed to reach its mark. It is possible, however, to understand the man and his misdeeds, if one does not lose sight of Top Hat's face.

Three Phases of Treason

1979-1981. Hanssen's treason covered three periods, the first of which began around March 1979 and lasted for almost two years. Not much information has been made public about the first period. The government did not know about it before speaking to Hanssen's wife after his arrest, and, consequently, the indictment against him is silent about his initial efforts as a spy.

It is known that, in early 1979, Robert Hanssen, thirty-five years old and beginning his fourth year as an FBI agent, reached out to his country's enemies. Shortly after Hanssen was assigned to the Soviet Counterintelligence Division in the Bureau's New York

City office, he “walked” a classified document into the offices of a company run by a Soviet intelligence officer. Hanssen apparently made three “drops” during this initial period of espionage, for which he received in total \$20,000 to \$30,000. In the second drop, he compromised Top Hat’s identity. Hanssen later explained to American investigators that he had betrayed General Polyakov because he feared that the Soviet officer might learn of his espionage and inform the CIA.

Hanssen’s first period as a spy ended in early 1981 when his wife discovered a document relating to his crimes. To justify his conduct, Hanssen told his wife that he had sold the Soviets harmless information, the

In early 1979, Robert Hanssen, thirty-five years old and beginning his fourth year as an FBI agent, reached out to his country’s enemies.

“trash-for-cash” explanation for treason that CIA case officer and Soviet spy Aldrich Ames would also use. Hanssen later told investigators that the motivation for his treason was economic: the pressure of supporting a wife and three children on an inadequate Bureau salary. At the time, FBI agents, whose compensation did not reflect the cost of living in a major metropolitan area, considered the New York City office a hardship post. Hanssen’s aim, he said, was to “get a little money” from espionage and then “get out of it.”

At his wife’s insistence, Hanssen consulted an attorney and sought absolution for his sins from a Catholic priest, who told him to donate the proceeds of his immoral acts to charity. Hanssen chose a group affiliated with Mother Teresa, to which he says he proceeded to make regular contributions.

1985-1991. Hanssen’s second period of espionage began over four years later in October 1985, a week after he transferred from FBI Headquarters in Washington back to the Soviet Counterintelligence Division in the New York office. Hanssen’s spying during this period continued after he was transferred in August 1987 to a Soviet counterintelligence unit within Headquarters.

In October 1985, Hanssen wrote to a senior KGB intelligence officer, informing him that he would soon receive “a box of documents [concerning] certain of the most sensitive and highly compartmented projects of the US Intelligence Community.” (“Compartmented” information usually refers to classified data concerning intelligence sources and methods; this information, the most carefully guarded classified material, is handled within formal access control systems established by the Director of Central Intelligence.)

Once again, Hanssen was concerned about his safety. He told the Soviet officer that only a “limited number” of persons had the “array of clearances” necessary to collect the sensitive documents he would turn over, and, therefore, Hanssen warned, “[a]s a collection they point to me.” He also stressed other risks to his security, explaining that Soviet intelligence had “recently suffered some setbacks”: US “Special Services” had recruited three Soviet officers, whom Hanssen identified. Aldrich Ames also betrayed the names of these three double agents around the same time, giving the KGB the dual sources it frequently insisted on having before acting on information of such potential importance. Shortly thereafter, Hanssen also disclosed how one of the intelligence officers hid cash he received for his espionage in his luggage when he returned to the Soviet Union. The Soviets quickly recalled the agent to Moscow, where he was tried and executed, as was another of the three double agents Hanssen had identified. The third was sentenced to fifteen years in a labor camp.

Concern for his personal safety, even at the expense of the lives of others, was a constant throughout Hanssen’s career as a spy. During this second period, Hanssen asked the Soviets for an escape plan because “[n]othing lasts forever.” They devised a method by

Concern for his personal safety, even at the expense of the lives of others, was a constant throughout Hanssen’s career as a spy. . . . Hanssen asked the Soviets for an escape plan because “[n]othing lasts forever.”

which he could rapidly transport himself from his home in Vienna, Virginia, to the safety of the Soviet embassy in Vienna, Austria. So deep was Hanssen’s concern for security that on one occasion he did not appear at a prearranged dead drop because the day before FBI interrogators had mentioned his Soviet handler by name to a defector. Upon learning this, Hanssen cut off all contact with the Soviets for four months, as he studied FBI reports on the continuing interrogation to see whether information about his betrayal had surfaced.

During the second period of espionage, Hanssen perfected his “tradecraft,” the Intelligence Community’s name for the practice of espionage. He originally communicated with the Soviets through encoded radio transmissions, using a “one-time pad,” a practically unbreakable cipher he had created. Although Hanssen sometimes transmitted the material he compromised by mail, not the preferred method, he sent his packages to a Soviet intelligence officer whose residential mail he had determined the

Bureau was not monitoring. By agreement, when Hanssen used "Chicago" in the return address of the packages he mailed, a dead drop would occur the next Monday, thus making it unnecessary to specify the date explicitly. Hanssen chose Mondays to exchange documents, letters, and money because an FBI analysis called Spiderweb had concluded that Soviet intelligence services did not fill or clear dead drops or set signals on Mondays, and, consequently, the Bureau did not monitor these sites that day of the week. During the second period, Hanssen also began to transmit documents more compactly and securely by downloading them to computer disks he had reformatted to conceal the data they contained.

Hanssen and the Soviets exchanged scores of letters during the second period of espionage. At first, the letters were terse and businesslike, outlining the details of their tradecraft, establishing dead drops across northern Virginia, where material could be clandestinely exchanged, and signal sites in public places, where meetings could be arranged or contact cancelled

In their letters, Soviet agents flattered Hanssen, their "dear friend," complimenting him on his "superb sense of humor" and "sharp-as-a-razor mind."

in emergencies by placing colored thumbtacks, tape, or chalk marks on traffic signs or utility poles. The Soviets used their letters to task Hanssen to collect particular information of interest, and Hanssen often followed through. On one occasion, after the Soviets asked Hanssen to identify potential American double agents, he suggested, in a strange case of personal betrayal, that they approach Jack Hoschouer, Hanssen's one and only friend since high school. Hoschouer had been best man at the Hanssens' wedding, and they named their first son after him. Hanssen explained to the Soviets that Hoschouer, a colonel in the US Army, was embittered, having just been denied a promotion and, thus, might be a promising recruit.

In their letters, Soviet agents flattered Hanssen, their "dear friend," complimenting him on his "superb sense of humor" and "sharp-as-a-razor mind." They told him that material he had provided was of great interest to the "very top" of the Soviet establishment, and they frequently conveyed the esteem of KGB Director Vladimir Kryuchkov. Hanssen's handlers also congratulated him on a promotion that would lead to assignments outside Washington, even though they were of little value to a spy. "We wish You all the very best in Your life and career," the Soviets told Hanssen; they advised him to "do Your new job, make Your trips, take Your time."

The correspondence between spy and spymasters was sometimes bizarre. On one occasion, after Hanssen had reinstituted contact after a short break, the Soviets expressed in doggerel their appreciation that their friend had "managed to slow down the speed of [his] running life" to send a message: "What's our life, If full of care, You have no time, To stop and stare?" During a period of domestic disturbance in the Soviet Union, Hanssen suggested that the Soviets would find in Richard Daley's tenure as mayor of Chicago a model for dealing with domestic dissent. (Daley had ordered the Chicago police to use batons and mace against protestors at the 1968 Democratic Party convention.) And the ultimate irony: in a letter delivered on December 25, 1989, Soviet agents, whom Hanssen often publicly described as godless Communists, sent Christmas greetings to their FBI friend, an apparently pious Roman Catholic convert.

The zeal Hanssen displayed in the second period of treachery is astonishing. In a little more than six years and on more than thirty-five occasions, he compromised an extraordinary number of documents and more than twenty-five computer diskettes containing information vital to national security, usually classified Top Secret and involving highly sensitive, compartmented operations. Hanssen frequently gave his handlers internal reviews of FBI double-agent programs. The reviews identified over fifty actual and potential Soviet recruitments and defectors and detailed the information they had provided to the FBI. Hanssen also disclosed limitations in the National Security Agency's ability to read Soviet communications, thus undermining the United States' most valuable and

In a letter delivered on December 25, 1989, Soviet agents, whom Hanssen often publicly described as godless Communists, sent Christmas greetings to their FBI friend, an apparently pious Roman Catholic convert.

expensive intelligence programs, giving the Soviets a secure channel to transmit information. Even the sanitized description of the compromised material in the indictment the government filed against Hanssen reveals a chronicle of treachery of staggering scope.

Hanssen spent practically his entire FBI career in intelligence and counterintelligence programs, and he clearly understood the value of the information he was selling. Throughout his treasonous career, Hanssen would later explain, he "tried to stay with things" that his handlers "would find tremendously useful, immediately useful," and "remarkably useful." On one occasion, he alerted the KGB to pick up an "urgent

package” of material, which described an FBI/CIA meeting with a Soviet intelligence officer targeted for recruitment; the material also detailed information offered by a Soviet defector, and it provided technical specifications for a classified intranet system linking the entire US Intelligence Community. Hanssen’s handlers later conveyed the appreciation of KGB Director Kryuchkov for the information. On another occasion, Hanssen placed an emergency call-out signal at a site at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Q Street in downtown Washington. When the Soviets responded to the alert, they found a package of documents that included a cable with a note from Hanssen: “Send to the Center [KGB Headquarters in Moscow] right away. This might be useful.” Apparently it was, for in their next letter to Hanssen, his handlers explained:

THE CHAIRMAN OF OUR ORGANIZATION IN MOSCOW SENDS HIS CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU FOR THE LATEST MATERIAL SENT TO THE CENTER. WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR LAST EXCEPTIONALLY INTERESTING DOCUMENT.

The following month, the KGB presented several awards to the intelligence officers involved with the American FBI double agent, including the distinguished Order of the Red Banner, the Order of the Red Star, and the Medal for Excellent Service.

For over six years in the second period of treason, Hanssen provided document after document and disk after disk filled with highly classified information of

Hanssen later explained this withdrawal from “active service” as the result of accumulated guilt . . . There may be a more credible explanation: self-preservation.

incredible value. And then, in December 1991, without notice to his friends, Hanssen stopped. As his colleagues in the spy trade would put it, he went to ground.

Hanssen later explained this withdrawal from “active service” as the result of accumulated guilt that once again led him to confess his sins to a priest. There may be a more credible explanation: self-preservation. In the months before Hanssen quit the field, several Soviet republics had declared their independence of Moscow, the Berlin Wall had fallen, and plotters, including KGB Director Kryuchkov, who purportedly held Hanssen in high regard, had unsuccessfully attempted to depose Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. Kryuchkov was arrested in August as a “betrayor of the Motherland” and charged with treason. At a square outside KGB headquarters in Moscow Center, protestors toppled the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, the forerunner of

the KGB. Weeks later, Hanssen’s handlers addressed the situation in a letter:

There have been many important developments in our country lately. So many that we’d like to reassure You once again. Like we said: we’ve done all in order that none of those events ever affects Your security and our ability to maintain the operation with You. And of course there can be no doubt of our commitment to Your friendship and cooperation which are too important to us to loose [sic].

Hanssen, who knew of a massive internal FBI mole hunt, could not have been comforted by reports of unprecedented cooperation between American intelligence agencies and the successor entity to the KGB. It was indeed time for the mole to go underground.

And stay underground he did for almost eight years, with one truly odd exception: in 1993, Hanssen approached a Russian intelligence officer in a garage and identified himself as Ramon Garcia, the name he had used with the Soviets during the first two periods of espionage. Hanssen brought with him a large amount of information about FBI double agents, information he knew would prove his value and protect his security. The intelligence officer rebuffed Hanssen’s attempt to start a conversation. The Russian government protested the incident as a provocation and asserted that the person who had approached their officer had identified himself as a disaffected FBI agent. The Bureau opened an investigation in response to the protest, which Hanssen followed on an FBI automated database. Only after Hanssen’s arrest many years later was the Bureau able to resolve this investigation.

1999-2001. The third and final period of espionage began some time around October 1999, almost eight years after Hanssen’s last drop. Hanssen prepared to re-emerge by combing FBI automated case files, searching for his name, address, telephone numbers, “Ramon Garcia,” and the locations of dead drops he had used. Russian intelligence agents were delighted with Hanssen’s re-appearance:

Dear friend: welcome!

It’s good to know you are here. . . . [W]e express our sincere joy on the occasion of resumption of contact with you.

The handlers, apparently anxious to re-establish the relationship with Hanssen quickly, “guarantee[d]” him “financial help” and told him that the sum of money deposited in a Moscow bank on his behalf had grown to \$800,000. They also promised Hanssen that he would find a package containing \$50,000 at the next drop. In a businesslike fashion, they laid out the mechanics of their exchanges and in a professional way addressed Hanssen’s security:

In case of a threatening situation of any kind put a yellow tack [in a certain utility pole in Washington’s Georgetown neighborhood]. This will mean that we shall refrain from any communication with you until further notice from your side (the white tack).

Hanssen and his handlers had a difficult time in re-establishing fluid communications. In March 2000, Hanssen complained about these problems:

... I have come as close as I ever want to come to sacrificing myself to help you, and I get silence. I hate silence. ...

The manic tone of this letter was characteristic of Hanssen's communications with the Russians during his last period of treason:

One might propose that I am either insanely brave or quite insane. I'd answer neither. I'd say, insanely loyal. Take your pick. There is insanity in all the answers.

I have, however, come as close to the edge as I can without being truly insane. My security concerns have proven reality-based. I'd say, pin your hopes on 'insanely loyal' and go for it. Only I can lose.

Later on, Hanssen expressed "great joy" at seeing the Russians' signal "at last." "You waste me," he told his handlers: with a better communications system, he could have alerted his "friends" and prevented the arrest of a Russian agent caught while electronically intercepting conversations within the US Department of State. "[R]apid communications ... can save you much grief," Hanssen scolded, but instead he had received only "ominous silence." He also tweaked his friends for claiming that money had been "put away" for him in Moscow:

Never patronize at this level. It offends me, but then you are easily forgiven. But perhaps I shouldn't tease you. It just gets me in trouble.

thank you again,

Ramon

By November 2000, Hanssen's letters had lost all the crispness of the early communications:

... Recent changes in US law now attach the death penalty to my help to you ... so I do take some risk. On the other hand, I know far better than most what minefields are laid and the risks. Generally speaking you overestimate the FBI's capacity to interdict you. ...

Perhaps you occasionally give up on me. Giving up on me is a mistake. I have proven inveterately loyal and willing to take grave risks which even could cause my death, only remaining quiet in times of extreme uncertainty. So far my ship has successfully navigated the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

I ask you to help me survive. ...

Hanssen also asked his friends whether he could teach their Espionage "101 course" in his "old age," an improbable aspiration: though Hanssen did not know it, he had become the subject of an active FBI investigation because a defector had given US intelligence agents the KGB's file on Ramon Garcia. The file contained a plastic trash bag in which Hanssen had placed classified documents before secreting them at a drop site. His fingerprints were found on the bag. This did not prevent Hanssen from carrying out in November

the largest transfer of national security information in his entire career as a spy.

Three months later, at his next drop in February 2001, Hanssen found himself surrounded by FBI agents with weapons drawn. Along with the classified material he had placed under a foot bridge seconds before he was apprehended, Hanssen included a letter, in which he thanked his "Dear Friends" for their "assistance these many years" and declared that it was time for him to retire from "active service." Hanssen explained that he had recently been "isolated" in the Bureau, perhaps purposely, by being promoted to a "do-nothing ... job outside of regular access to information within the counterintelligence program." He also described "repeated bursting radio signal emanations" from his automobile that he thought came from an FBI tracking device. Nonetheless, Hanssen remained optimistic: "Life is full of ups and downs." He anticipated resuming contact "next year, same time, same place" when, he hoped, "the correlation of forces and circumstances ... will have improved." Hanssen closed the letter with "Your Friend" and signed it "Ramon Garcia."

Hanssen was indicted on twenty-one counts involving espionage. Fourteen counts provided for the death penalty as the maximum punishment upon conviction. He is now serving a term of life imprisonment, having avoided death by agreeing to cooperate with the government.

When Hanssen was arrested, his passport was found in his briefcase.

Accounts of Hanssen's Contradictory Personae

By all accounts, Bob Hanssen is a strange and contradictory man. Revelations since his arrest have shown the truth of that judgment.

Hanssen is exceedingly soft-spoken and dour, known to his colleagues as Dr. Death and the Mortician, in part because all his outer garments, aside from a white dress shirt, were usually black and often threadbare.

Hanssen appeared to be a deeply religious man, who displayed a crucifix on the wall of his FBI office, along with a representation of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Hanssen sometimes attempted to engage his colleagues in conversations about the evil of abortion, the objective character of ethics, and other moral topics, conversations they often found uncomfortable and inappropriate in a work environment. He was a member of a conservative, closed Catholic organization, *Opus Dei*, Work of God, whose members seek the Divine by striving for perfection in everyday life. *Opus Dei* participants are expected to attend Mass daily – Hanssen did so on workdays at 6:30 a.m.; they go to confession weekly and attend periodic retreats;

some of its members practice corporal mortification. Hanssen's wife was also a member of *Opus Dei*, and his six children attended Catholic schools affiliated with the organization; one daughter was a numerary, a member of the movement who had taken a vow of chastity.

Along with devotion to God, Hanssen publicly displayed a virulent anti-Communism. The Soviet Union's plan for world domination was doomed to failure, he told colleagues again and again, because it was the product of godless Communists. Without God, nothing was possible.

Hanssen's religiosity and anti-Communism fit well within the traditions of the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover, the legendary Bureau Director, is said to have favored Catholic recruits because their devotion to God usually came with an equally deep commitment to country and to the Director. When Hanssen became an agent, he signed a pledge to hold as a "sacred trust" the information that came to him by virtue of his position. He also took an oath before God to "defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Hanssen's colleagues report that he appeared to take these duties seriously and that he was

Hanssen's relationship with many of his Bureau colleagues was strained, not simply because of his attempts to engage in conversation about nettlesome topics, but also because he seemed to feel morally superior to other agents.

a hard-working, dedicated agent. Although some say that Hanssen resented other agents who rose to the heights of the Bureau's hierarchy, agents he saw as less bright and less capable than himself, Hanssen was at the top of the Government Service pay schedule in the last stages of his FBI career; he had been Chief of a unit within the Headquarters Intelligence Division and the Bureau's representative to the Department of State.

Hanssen's relationship with many of his Bureau colleagues was strained, not simply because of his attempts to engage in conversation about nettlesome topics, but also because he seemed to feel morally superior to other agents. As a member of *Opus Dei*, Hanssen supposedly strove to find God in his everyday life. It is no surprise then that he refused invitations to join his office-mates at strip joints after hours because, he told his colleagues, these establishments were occasions of sin and were unbecoming an FBI agent. Nonetheless, Hanssen frequented such clubs alone and with his old friend, Jack Hoschouer. On a now celebrated occasion, Hanssen reached out to a stripper, Priscilla Galey, urging her to reform her life

and turn to God. Over the course of several months, Hanssen gave Galey cash, a diamond and sapphire gold necklace, a laptop computer, a used Mercedes-Benz 190E sedan, and an American Express card. When Hanssen traveled to Hong Kong on Bureau business, Galey accompanied him. He reportedly told Galey that he had spent in all about \$85,000 on her.

There are conflicting accounts of whether Hanssen's relationship with Galey was sexual, but even more curious than a possible carnal liaison with a stripper is the series of stories Hanssen posted in the late nineties on an internet bulletin board, a sex chat room. The stories are smutty, if not pornographic accounts of his wife, Bonnie. They use vulgarisms to refer to portions of their bodies and to their intimate moments. Enough references are made to details of the Hanssens' life, including their first names, that the two are clearly identifiable to anyone who knew them. In fact, Hanssen posted the stories using his personal computer and his real name and e-mail address. The narratives assert that Hanssen frequently sent Jack Hoschouer "electrifying" nude photographs of Bonnie and that he allowed Jack to observe sexual relations between Hanssen and his unwitting wife, first by standing on a deck outside a bedroom window and later by watching real-time in the Hanssens' den the output of a subminiature video camera Hanssen had hidden in his bedroom. "The whole business had been no end of fun," Hanssen wrote to his virtual readers, with no apparent sense of the mortification this betrayal would surely cause the mother of his children, who taught religion at a Catholic grammar school.

On a now celebrated occasion, Hanssen reached out to a stripper, Priscilla Galey, urging her to reform her life and turn to God.

Hanssen also reportedly suggested that Hoschouer obtain Rohypnol, the "date-rape" drug, when he traveled abroad. Hanssen would slip it to Bonnie, thus allowing Hoschouer to satisfy one of Hanssen's fantasies about his wife and his best friend.

The "Compartmentalized" Self. How could Hanssen have borne so many contradictory *personae*: devout Catholic, loving husband, diligent FBI agent, patriot and anti-Communist, hypocrite who did what he condemned in others, pornographer who shamed his marriage, and the most damaging spy in our Nation's history?

Those who knew Hanssen professionally often resort to the idiom of the Intelligence Community to explain his ability to carry radically different identities. Hanssen, they say, "compartmented" or "compartment-

mentalized" many different selves. Several former colleagues refer to the "good Bob," whom they knew, and the "bad Bob," who was kept hidden. The good Bob was devoted to God, country, and family; the bad Bob betrayed his beliefs, threatened his country's existence, and disgraced those who loved him most. A Jekyll and Hyde, the former colleagues assert, a comparison Hanssen himself reportedly used to explain his crimes to a psychologist his attorney had hired.

The reference, of course, is to Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. However, the duality of a good Jekyll and an evil Hyde, frequently used to summarize the novel, does not do justice to the literary work. The novel is a complex and horrifying morality tale in which a physician, Jekyll, discovers a potion that enables him to isolate the evil but natural instincts in his psyche. Jekyll's malevolent side, Hyde, freed of the moral restraints and social ties that normally keep evil in check, grows more and more powerful, until Jekyll cannot resist the temptation to

Several former colleagues refer to the "good Bob," whom they knew, and the "bad Bob," who was kept hidden.

give his baser nature free rein. Thus, Jekyll's transformation into Hyde is a reverse evolution of an enculturated human being into an uncontrollable beast. Dr. Jekyll is a composite, in Freudian terms a unity of ego, superego, and id, while Mr. Hyde is pure id.

The notion of compartmented or multiple, independent personalities enjoys some popular currency. For instance, in the Academy Award winning film, *The Three Faces of Eve*, Eve White, a mousy withdrawn housewife, is beset by a second *persona*, Eve Black, a sexy uninhibited woman, and later by a third, Jane, a sensible intelligent person. Only gradually, do the three *personae* even become aware of the others' existence. As Eve is cured, the three become more transparent to each other. The condition, "based on a true story," is presented as the result of childhood trauma that a psychologist is able to cure by resurrecting repressed memories.

Under the compartmentalization theory advanced by Hanssen and his former colleagues, Hanssen is more like Eve than Jekyll because he had several, independent *personae*, who perhaps were not even aware of each other. The devout Catholic, loving husband, diligent FBI agent, and patriotic anti-Communist fit together to comprise one Bob; the hypocritical pornographer who betrayed his wife is another; and then, of course, there is Hanssen the spy.

The possibility of compartmented or multiple personalities is recognized in the psychiatric literature and is now called dissociative identity disorder, "the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states that recurrently take control of behavior." This disorder reflects a failure to integrate distinct identities, including memories and consciousness: "Each personality state may be experienced as if it has a distinct personal history, self-image, and identity, including a separate name." Persons who experience dissociative identity disorder usually have a primary identity under

Under the compartmentalization theory advanced by Hanssen and his former colleagues, Hanssen . . . had several, independent personae, who perhaps were not even aware of each other.

the person's given name that is passive, dependent, guilty, and depressed and alternative identities with traits that contrast with the dominant characteristics of the primary identity. Alternative identities usually take control in sequence and may be unaware of each other or critical of each other or in conflict. Again, the proper model is Eve, rather than Jekyll.

To date, five books have been published about Hanssen, each of which to one degree or another explains his treason in terms of multiple personalities. Those who suffer from dissociative identity disorder often experienced abuse during childhood, and the works about Hanssen describe his father as a psychological and to a lesser extent physical abuser of his son. For instance, Lawrence Schiller in his *Into the Mirror* describes Hanssen *père* grabbing Hanssen *fils* by the ankles, whirling him around until he vomits, and rubbing the boy's face in the mess. Cleaning himself up, the younger Hanssen discovers an evil alter ego looking out at him from the face of a mirror. From then on, the bad Hanssen counsels and sometimes commands the good in reflections from mirrors, the glass wall of a conference room, the metal door of a bathroom stall in FBI Headquarters, and even a chalice a priest raises during the celebration of Mass.

Schiller's work is based on a screenplay Norman Mailer has written for a television miniseries; it is a "novelization" of Hanssen's life, a self-described attempt to "build a psychological portrait." Schiller's analysis of Hanssen's psyche is not only dualistic; it is Manichaeian, with good and evil existing within Hanssen independently of each other:

Evil has its own energies [the bad Hanssen tells the good]. It is not the absence of good. It is a lively presence. I know. Evil is exciting.

In the end, the compartmentalization of selves that some of Hanssen, his former colleagues, and the popular literature offer in explanation of his ability to assume contradictory *personae* stands on weak foundations and explains little. The theory relies heavily on “novelization,” as speculation becomes fact, for instance, Hanssen must have felt this way or that about one or another imagined slight by his father. The explanation by compartments simply dissolves the problem of contradictory *personae* by saying that there is no problem, in effect asserting tautologically that an apparently unitary person can have contradictory selves because a person can have contradictory selves.

The compartmentalization theory also requires improbable transformations that surely would have drawn attention to a federal agent carrying a weapon. Hanssen purportedly flitted back and forth from Robert Hanssen, the dedicated FBI agent, to Ramon Garcia, the Soviet and Russian spy, probably several times a day during the second period of espionage, with an occasional afternoon transformation to another Hanssen, who left FBI Headquarters to visit

[The compartmentalization theory] is belied by the fact that at least up to the very end Hanssen was in complete control of his espionage. He was able to “shut down” his “bad side” at will when confronted by his wife or when danger arose.

strip clubs. None of Hanssen’s colleagues noticed these profound dissociations, and Hanssen, as far as we know, never reported waking up in wonder at the large sums of cash in his possession or the fact that he was placing some of it in a dancer’s thong.

The compartmentalists also trivialize the religious faith to which Hanssen publicly subscribed. According to his own account, Hanssen the Catholic was at least at times aware of his espionage, which included the betrayal of Top Hat and other Soviet and Russian agents recruited by US intelligence services. Hanssen’s wife explains that she helped her husband seek God’s forgiveness through priestly counsel at the end of the first period of espionage, and Hanssen himself asserts that accumulated feelings of guilt led him to terminate the second period by seeking absolution for his sins in a confessional. Sincere believers go to confession to seek forgiveness for their sins, to express profound regret for what they have done, and to seek divine help in transforming their lives toward the good. Could Hanssen, by all accounts a bright and thoughtful man, have become so addled by multiple *personae* as to believe that serial confession would absolve serial murder? Could Hanssen have allowed his “evil self” to condemn his soul to eternal damnation without a savage fight?

The dissociative view is also belied by the fact that at least up to the very end Hanssen was in complete control of his espionage. He was able to “shut down” his “bad side” at will when confronted by his wife or when danger arose.

Schizophrenic “Doubling.” Much more sophisticated analyses of demonic human behavior have been developed using psychological concepts akin to dissociation. One of the most impressive is Robert Jay Lifton’s *The Nazi Doctors*, an attempt to explain the psychology of genocide and specifically the process by which medical professionals sworn to heal were transformed into mass murderers.

German physicians were at the core of the Nazi death camps. Dressed in white smocks and standing near Red Cross ambulances containing the poison used in gas chambers, the doctors made the initial selection of those prisoners arriving in transports who would immediately go to their deaths. Those spared lived as slave laborers with a life expectancy of no more than three months. At the peak of the Nazi genocide, more than twenty thousand Jews were killed in Auschwitz alone each twenty-four hour period. Physicians supervised this mass murder from beginning to end, but, according to Lifton, they were not satanic figures or fanatic sadists lusting to kill. They were ordinary people who committed demonic acts.

Most Nazi doctors, Lifton observes, found the selection process so onerous and extraordinarily evil that they called forth every possible mechanism to avoid psychologically what they were doing. The ability to participate in the camps’ routine involved a socialization process, through which doctors underwent a remarkable psychological shift from revulsion to acceptance of the camps as a moral sphere separate from the rest of the world. A commitment to racial purity and other elements of Nazi ideology, combined with large quantities of alcohol, produced not only a psychic numbing, but, at least in some physicians, the conviction that killing was healing, if not for the individual then for the race.

In Lifton’s account, Nazi doctors underwent a “doubling,” a schizophrenic division into a “normal self” and a “camp self” that occurred for the most part unconsciously. The Nazi physician needed a camp self radically distinct from his normal self to function in an environment antithetical to his customary ethical standards. The camp self, according to Lifton, was autonomous when functioning within the camp environment, but the normal self endured and allowed the Nazi doctor to continue to see himself as a humane healer. Thus, Lifton’s double selves are not as profoundly distinct and independent as multiple personalities are said to be.

A full explanation of Lifton’s approach and an assessment of its success in explaining horrifically immoral

conduct are beyond the scope of this essay. Of more direct importance is Lifton's appreciation of the tension between understanding and moral judgment, as captured in the French aphorism *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*: to understand all is to forgive all. By describing the mechanisms that lead to evil we may portray wicked deeds as amoral products of natural processes. Just as we cannot be faulted if our respiratory processes produce noxious gases, so too Nazi doctors cannot be blamed for adopting radical coping mechanisms in response to the horrors of the death camps.

For Lifton, doubling remains a choice for evil: "To live out the doubling and call forth the evil is a moral choice for which one is responsible, whatever the level of consciousness involved." Whether Lifton's approach avoids

Using psychological compartments to explain Hanssen's misconduct absolves him of moral responsibility for his misconduct and calls into question the legitimacy of his prison sentence.

the psychological reductionism he decries is open to question, but he is clearly aware of the problem and strives never to lose sight of the diabolic character of the mechanisms he is trying to understand. That is not the case with the popular explanations of Robert Hanssen's misdeeds. Using psychological compartments to explain Hanssen's misconduct absolves him of moral responsibility for his misconduct and calls into question the legitimacy of his prison sentence. The treasonous, bad Hanssen is radically dissociated from the God-fearing, good Hanssen, the compartmentalists would have us believe. Consequently, it would be improper to hold the good Hanssen morally or legally responsible for the bad. As Eve White was a separate person from Eve Black, over whom the former had no control, so too the good Hanssen was not responsible for the bad and was probably not even fully cognizant of the other's existence. Bob Hanssen the spy was not the man who stood before a judge for sentencing or knelt before a priest for forgiveness.

The power of compartmentalization to explain Hanssen's perfidy is undercut viscerally by the degree to which his former FBI colleagues, who advance the theory, despise Hanssen even as they try to comprehend his treachery. Their anger and hatred would make no sense if their explanation of his behavior were correct.

Simply a Clever Fraud

There is a simpler explanation for Hanssen's contradictory *personae*: some of his public images may have been nothing more than instruments of espionage and

cover. What greater opportunity and what more effective disguise could a spy have than to be a senior FBI intelligence officer, known as a devout Catholic and a determined anti-Communist?

Some support for the view that Hanssen is simply a complex and clever fraud appears in a letter he wrote to his Russian handlers, in which he comments on his life of espionage:

I decided on this course when I was 14 years old. I'd read Philby's book. Now that is insane, eh!

Philby, of course, is Kim Philby, the notorious "third man," and the book is *My Silent War*, Philby's memoir published upon his flight to Moscow after a thirty-year career spying within British intelligence services on behalf of the Soviet Union.

When Philby joined the British secret service at twenty-eight, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, he was already a Soviet agent. Philby rose quickly within the service, eventually becoming head of anti-Soviet counterintelligence and British liaison with US intelligence services. Presumably, he is the only person to receive both the Order of the British Empire from the King for his intelligence work and the Order of the Red Banner from Moscow for his treason.

To those who struggled to understand how a member of the British establishment could have so completely betrayed his country, Philby offered "the simpler solution": he had always been first and foremost a Soviet spy.

All through my career, I have been a straight penetration agent working in the Soviet interest. The fact that I joined the British Secret Intelligence Service is neither here nor there; I regarded my SIS appointments purely in the light of cover-jobs, to be carried out sufficiently well to ensure my attaining positions in which my service to the Soviet Union would be most effective. My connection with SIS must be seen against my total commitment to the Soviet Union which I regarded then, as I do now, the inner fortress of the world movement.

"To betray," Philby explained elsewhere, "you must first belong." But he "never belonged" to any cause save "[t]he fight against fascism and the fight against imperialism." Philby also wrote about the "liberal smoke screen" behind which he concealed his "real opinions":

One writer who knew me in Beirut has stated that the liberal opinions I expressed in the Middle East were "certainly" my true ones. Another comment from a personal friend was that I could not have maintained such a consistently liberal-intellectual framework unless I had really believed in it. Both remarks are very flattering. The first duty of an underground worker is to perfect not only his cover story but also his cover personality.

Some might find it difficult to believe that Hanssen was as devious as Philby or that his professions of faith and patriotism were cover stories. But is this explanation any more difficult to accept than the notion that Hanssen was comprised of several radically contradictory, independent, and dissociated *personae*? Some

might advance a watered down explanation-by-compartment: Hanssen was a dedicated FBI agent, a devout Roman Catholic, and all the other elements of a complex human being, but he was weak and sporadically gave into his sinful self. But, again, could Hanssen's id have so dominated his psyche that this daily communicant was absolutely helpless when confronted by base instincts that would lead to eternal damnation? Could he have looked upon the priest raising the chalice without shrieking?

If Hanssen deliberately set out on a career of espionage, the question remains as to why he did so. No

There is a simpler explanation for Hanssen's contradictory personae: some of his public images may have been nothing more than instruments of espionage and cover.

one has yet found ideological leanings of the sort Philby had to conceal when he approached British intelligence for membership, although Hanssen did describe himself as "insanely loyal" to his Soviet and Russian "friends" on whose behalf he had engaged in "active service."

Hanssen has claimed that financial stress on his household led him to spy—he wanted to get a little money and get out. That explanation is problematic, however, if for no other reason than that it comes from a person who for decades led a life of deceit, betraying God, country, family, and friends. Nothing about Hanssen can be taken at face value, especially his own words.

In fact, Hanssen was not rewarded handsomely for his crimes, especially in view of the enormity of his betrayal. The publicly available information shows that he received a little more than \$650,000 for a course of espionage spanning almost twenty-three years, about \$28,000 a year, hardly a handsome sum for conduct Hanssen feared could end, as with Timothy McVeigh, with poison dripping into his veins. The bulk of this money, some \$530,000, came in the frantic second period of espionage, at the rate of about \$88,000 a year, a larger annual return, but not much greater an appreciation for Hanssen's life.

Hanssen knew the incredible value of the information he gave to the Soviets and the Russians. The rational, economically motivated spy surely would have demanded more and have worked less, maximizing gain and minimizing risk. But that was not Bob Hanssen. In the letter that initiated his first act of espionage in March 1979, Hanssen asserted that the documents he was about to compromise are "sufficient to justify a \$100,000 payment." When the Soviets responded with \$50,000, Hanssen became the humbled supplicant:

As far as the funds are concerned, I have little need or utility for more than the 100,000. It merely provides a difficulty since I cannot spend it, store it or invest it easily without tripping (sic) "drug money" warning bell. Perhaps some diamonds as security to my children and some good will so that when the time comes, you will accept by (sic) senior services as a guest lecturer.

This was the occasion when Hanssen explained that he "would appreciate an escape plan" because "nothing lasts forever," showing more concern for safety than for money. On another occasion, Hanssen characterized as "too generous" a payment of \$40,000 from the Soviets. Moreover, some time around February 1994 when Ames was arrested, Hanssen would have learned that the CIA spy had received about \$2.7 million from the Soviets for nine years of treachery, \$300,000 a year. Nonetheless, despite this tremendous disparity in pay scale, Hanssen did not complain when he resumed spying in 1999. His exclusive concern, as always, was his safety.

A public accounting has never been made of the monetary fruit of Hanssen's espionage, but his treason does not seem to have significantly improved his material condition. Aside from Rolex watches Hanssen bought for himself and Jack Hoschouer and the \$85,000 he says he spent on the stripper, Hanssen lived frugally. His clothing was old and worn; he depended on his wife's wages to supplement the income he earned; and he and his family vacationed only infrequently and then usually at his parents' home in Florida. Ames drove a new Jaguar; Hanssen, an old Ford. Hanssen knew that Ames' extravagant lifestyle had led to his undoing, and there was little if anything in Hanssen's appearance or his family's to make spy-

If Hanssen deliberately set out on a career of espionage, the question remains as to why he did so.

chasers wonder how he could do it all financially. One wonders whether there were fancies other than the stripper on which Hanssen squandered the financial wherewithal he could not publicly display.

In sum, financial gain, taken alone, is a very improbable explanation for Hanssen's treason. Fortunately, however, on the day he was arrested, Hanssen may have revealed something about the forces that motivated him. Among his last acts as a free man, only hours before his arrest, Hanssen reportedly gave the visiting Jack Hoschouer a tattered copy of his favorite novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, a phantasmagoric tale by G. K. Chesterton, the English author still renowned for his Father Brown detective stories. Chesterton was equally

famous during his day as a conservative Roman Catholic convert and a defender of religious orthodoxy. When Hanssen gave Hoschouer a copy of Chesterton's most critically celebrated work, he reportedly cautioned his old friend that "things are not always the way they seem."

The novel's protagonist, Gabriel Syme, is a self-described poet of order, law, and respectability, who sees beauty even in London's Underground: because it is so regular, the subway represents a victory in the battle against chaos. In response to an anarchist conspiracy against Family and State, Syme joins a special

Among his last acts as a free man, only hours before his arrest, Hanssen reportedly gave [his friend] Jack Hoschouer a tattered copy of his favorite novel, The Man Who Was Thursday . . .

corps of undercover police detectives, who are also philosophers, whom Chesterton describes as "the last heroes of the world." The chief of the elite cadre, sitting in utter darkness, recruits Syme because he is "sensitive to the smell of spiritual evil."

To protect order from those who would destroy it, the undercover Syme, known as "Thursday," infiltrates the Central Council of Anarchists, the high priests of the movement, each code-named for a day of the week. The Council's aim is to abolish God, destroy life, and deny the distinctions between vice and virtue, honor and treachery, right and wrong.

Hanssen is said to have identified with Syme, and, indeed, there are at least some surface similarities between Hanssen's life and Chesterton's story. In 1968 (when Hanssen might first have read Philby's *My Silent War*), the United States was in the midst of widespread civil unrest that many saw as equal to the terror anarchist dynamiters had spread across Europe in the nineteenth century. The President and his brother, a United States Senator, had recently been assassinated; millions were marching in the streets to protest American imperialism in Southeast Asia and to reject the bourgeois values of their elders; Black Panthers paraded with long-barrel weapons; and the Weather Underground executed bank robberies and other acts of "outrage."

That same year, apparently untouched by the fury that led so many to civil disobedience, Hanssen married and with his new wife moved into his parent's home, sleeping in his childhood bedroom. He also enrolled in a graduate business program, which he would later complete with a specialty in accounting. Upon graduation from business school, Hanssen improbably joined the Chicago Police Department and

became an undercover officer in an intelligence unit. Like Syme, Hanssen chose order.

There may also be more than surface links between Hanssen's life and the demonic tale he apparently adopted as an allegorical explanation of himself. Chesterton's novel, reminiscent of the Book of Apocalypse, is thoroughly dialectical, as good and evil and reality and chimera constantly transform into each other. Syme discovers, for example, one by one that all the members of the Anarchist Council are also undercover detectives fighting chaos.

Conclusion

Hanssen's quest for order as an undercover police officer, a religious convert, a husband and father, and an FBI agent led him finally and secretly to reject the certainties associated with those roles. There is no other way to explain what Hanssen knowingly did to Top Hat, to the other double agents whose lives he gave up, and to those he betrayed in myriad different ways. Hanssen did not have multiple personalities. He simply chose evil.

"Jekyll" and "Hyde" correctly describe Hanssen's psyche, if we refer to the characters in the novel, rather than the popular description of the work. Hanssen consciously gave his base side free rein. At first, the composite Hanssen, the psychic unity typical of a normally functioning person, was in control. But as Hanssen more and more frequently gave into evil, he became more and more its captive.

Why Hanssen initially made this choice we may never know. Probably, his conduct was overdetermined, with many causes contributing to the collapse of his faith in God, country, and marriage. In fact, we should expect that Hanssen's motives would be murky. For almost twenty-five years, he led a life based on lies, and lies are meant to confuse and deceive.

Undoubtedly, Hanssen's mendacity also involved a great deal of self-deception. He must have had moments of conscience, for example, in raising his children to follow a faith, and, he must have had moments of self-consciousness, for example, as an active member of civil society. Thus, to maintain sanity, Hanssen must have lied most vehemently to himself. His public piety, then, was designed not only to deceive those around him, but also to enable him to see himself (in bad faith) as a moral beacon. In this, Hanssen's life is revealed in its most pitiful state: a constant flight from public exposure and self-awareness.

Bob Hanssen walked into a Soviet establishment almost twenty-five years ago knowing what he was doing. He wittingly slopped under footbridges in suburban parks to snatch payment for his treason. Hanssen's attempt to conceal himself from himself was as deep as his treachery, but it is also the ultimate proof

that he understood the evil for which he has finally been held responsible.

George Ellard

Mr. Ellard practices law in Washington, D.C.

He was Deputy Counsel for the presidential commission appointed to examine Hanssen's espionage.

gellard6@llgm.com

Sources: *A Review of FBI Security Programs*, Commission for Review of FBI Security Programs (March 2001). David Wise quotes a psychologist hired by Hanssen's attorney in *Spy: The Inside Story of How the FBI's Robert Hanssen Betrayed America* (Random House, 2002). (Hanssen "has used the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde explanation several times. A constant struggle with the two sides of himself, the good and the bad. He's kind of proud and pleased he could quit for a time. He says, 'I was able to shut down the bad side of myself.'") The definition of dissociative identity disorder occurs in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, American Psychiatric Association, 4th ed. (1994). In addition to Wise's book, to date the four full-length works that treat Hanssen's treason in terms of multiple personalities are Adrian Havill, *The Spy Who Stayed Out In The Cold: The Secret Life Of FBI Double Agent Robert Hanssen* (St. Martin's Press, 2001); Elaine Shannon & Elaine Blackman, *The Spy Next Door: The Extraordinary Secret Life of Robert Philip Hanssen, The Most Damaging FBI Agent in US History* (Little Brown & Co., 2002); Lawrence Schiller, *Into The Mirror: The Life of Master Spy Robert P. Hanssen* (HarperCollins, 2002), and David A. Vise, *The Bureau and the Mole: The Unmasking of Robert Philip Hanssen, The Most Dangerous Double Agent in FBI History* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002). Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (Basic Books, 1986). Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (originally published in 1968 but available in a 2002 edition by Modern Library); Philby's observations about betrayal and the "liberal smoke screen" occur in Murray Sayle, *Sunday Times*, London, interview with Kim Philby, Dec. 17, 1967. Hanssen's remark to Hoschouer that "things are not always the way they seem" is quoted from Vise. G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (originally published in 1908 but available in a 1986 edition by Penguin Books).

Philosophical Dimensions of Public Policy

Policy Studies Review Annual, Volume 13

Verna V. Gehring and William A. Galston, editors

Philosophical Dimensions of Public Policy presents thirty-four articles written by research scholars in numerous fields—philosophy, political theory, medicine, law, biology, economics, ecology and sociology—treating a broad range of topics in practical philosophy. The Institute

Philosophical Dimensions of Public Policy

Verna V. Gehring
William A. Galston
editors

Policy Studies Review Annual
Volume 13

for Philosophy and Public Policy has been home for these ideas, pioneering a distinctive method of conducting inquiry into the moral dimensions of public life, and contributing to public discussion and deliberation.

Readers will find empirical data and philosophical arguments with the intention of informing public policy and public deliberation. *Philosophical Dimensions of Public Policy* is certain to be an essential research tool for scholars as well as graduate and undergraduate students.

0-7658-0100-0 (cloth) 2002 600 pp. \$89.95/£75.50

 **transaction publishers**

Rutgers—The State University
of New Jersey
Department AD2002 VGEH
35 Berrue Circle
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8042

Visit Our Website
For Online Specials*
www.transactionpub.com

*Individual credit card orders only.

In the U.K. and Europe call:
Transaction Publishers (UK)
3 Henrietta Street
Covent Garden
London WC2E 8LLJ
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7 240 0856
or fax: +44 (0) 20 7 379 0609

In Australia:
Footprint Books Pty Ltd.
Unit 4 / 92A Mona Vale Rd.
Mona Vale, NSW 2103
Sydney, NSW 2105
Australia

Tel: 61 02 9997 3973
Fax: 61 02 9997 3185

In India:
Viva Books Private Ltd.
426/3 Ansari Rd.
New Delhi, 110 002
India

Order from your bookstore
or direct from the publisher.

Toll free (US only) 1-888-999-6778 or fax 732-748-9801