

I'm next
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Management philosophy
Collection of articles

From afar I could see that he couldn't scream. A long skewer pierced his lips from top to bottom and another crossed his cheeks. Both formed a cross. Blood had already soaked his shirt. He was tied with a thick rope to a pole. A log about 4 meters high. The rope held him by going over his shoulders, chest, waist, and legs. The *faggots*, those little pieces of firewood, were stacked around him to the chin level. One of the executioners threw the torch between his feet.

Many victims of the stake avoided a gruesome, slow death by paying the executioner to break their necks just before the punishment began. This was not the case. It was as if the executioners, this time, wanted to ensure that everyone witnessed the pain and suffering of the punishment. I managed to recognize the heretic. It was Adam Campanella.

The flames quickly reached the fabric of his garments. With his mouth semi-stitched, he could only produce muffled moans that were appalling. The temperature rose rapidly. It was hell. The wind blowing to where I was carried a foul smell of roast meat. Occasionally, through the thick smoke, the burning body could be glimpsed. Some watched with curiosity, others with savage cruelty and some celebrated the scene. As the wood creaked, above that hiss, the executioner's words were heard with a condemning and loquacious tone:

By direct decree of Cardinal Roberto Berlarmino and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious mother the Virgin Mary we apply the penalty of burning at the stake to this unrepentant and stubborn heretic. - The executioner looked at the audience while pointing with his outstretched arm back, and pointing with the index finger, at the man engulfed in flames. Then he continued:

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— This, gentlemen, is not just any heretic. He has permanently cast doubt on the most sacred beliefs of our doctrine. And as if that were not enough, he accept and does not regret doubting the existence of God. He is a heretic of the most dangerous, he is a leader of heretics, an organizer, a rioter who poisons the souls of the Lord.

While trying to assimilate what was happening, I wondered: How can it be? How could something like this happen? I knew Campanella. One could say that we became friends. He was an Italian who had arrived in the country a few years ago. He lived alone in a small cabin at the entrance to the town. He was like a guide who was gaining recognition in his community. We met during the construction of a bridge that connected his town with mine. From the beginning I knew that he had intellectual training. We shared long days talking about different topics: the origin of the universe, the laws of nature and the way of thinking of the ancient philosophers.

Campanella's obsession was to learn from nature. He was convinced that natural phenomena do not have to be explained from any god. He told us that it is possible to understand the behaviour of nature from causes found in nature itself. "The search for the principle acting behind the natural phenomena. We owe that idea to the philosophers of Miletus", he said. "We can learn from nature from observation and thought" that was his creed.

It was admirable to see how Campanella applied these ideas in his daily activities. When faced with a problem, he would tell us: "Before you start doing things, you have to think first". If the matter was difficult, he asked for time and locked himself in his little cabin. A day or two later, he would come out saying, "I have an idea we can put to the test". Then he devised a way to try out the idea and corrected it, over and over again, until the problem was solved. I think it was in this way that, little by little, he began to be recognized in his town.

One day we were celebrating a group of 15 or 20 people, resting from the work day in the field. We heard the rumour that the Inquisition was going to be installed in Cartagena and that very soon several important clerics were going to visit us. Campanella, with a few too many drinks, said: "I don't think we need a supernatural and heavenly dictatorship to be able to distinguish between good and evil. I believe that one can be good without needing a God to watch over him. And I know that you agree with me". Several agreed, and toasted. Others ignored the comment. I am sure that was his Sentence.

From when the Inquisition was installed in Cartagena and the interrogations began, people began to distance themselves from Campanella. Those of his village ignored him. They acted as if they didn't know him. It was pure fear. After only a short time he was interrogated. It was behind closed doors, but it was leaked that Campanella did not deny his ideas, on the



contrary, he kept to them. Their trial lasted a couple of months and a week ago they had the verdict: Guilty of heresy. Until the last moment, the ecclesiastical authorities insisted that he retract, that perhaps in this way he would obtain mercy. He did not.

After the bonfire had been consumed, Adam's remains were reduced to ash by hammer blows and the ashes scattered in the wind to avoid the temptation that someone might keep some of it as a relic.

Why does it have to be this way? Why does a religious belief have to be imposed by force? I don't agree with the Bible either, but that doesn't make me a bad person. Nor do I agree with the opulence and corruption of priests of the church. And I know that many people think the same as me. I prefer to live in a world where critical discussion of ideas is possible. A world where we can all participate, think and discuss. (That is another memory that Adam shared with me from Ancient Greece).

The unbearable heat makes me lose track of ideas. Then comes the memory of the visit I had last night. It was Luciana. We plan to get married next year. I feel deep sadness. I remember now. She handed me a bottle that she had managed to sneak inside. "It's poison", she told me. "Take it early in the morning and it will take effect in an hour". I remember now. I feel nauseous and my stomach burns. I try to move. I realize that I cannot. The executioner walks towards me. He brings two spikes in his left hand. I remember now. I am next.

