

In the first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx tells the story of Mary Ann Walkley, twenty years of age, who died of over-work while employed in a highly-respectable dressmaking establishment of London. This girl worked, on an average, sixteen and a half hours a day, and during the busy season often thirty hours without a break, whilst her failing labour-power was revived by occasional supplies of sherry, port, or coffee. When she died, Mary Anne Walkley had worked without intermission for twenty six and a half hours, with sixty other girls, thirty in one room, which had only one third of the cubic feet of air they required.

Ruth Benedict's 1946 book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* explains the meaning of the concept *strike* in Japan by commenting on an article in the magazine *Time* of 18 February 1946: "Throughout Japan strikes do not slow up production. The favourite form is for the workers 'to occupy the plant, continue work and management lose face by increasing production. Strikers at Mitsui-owned coal mine barred all management personnel from the pits and stepped daily output from 250 tons to 620. Workers at Ashio copper mines operated during a *strike*, increased production, and doubled their own wages".

In one of the stories of *The Flowers of St. Francis*, Brother Ginepro, frustrated by not being able to join the brothers when they go to preach due to his task of preparing the meals, decides to improve efficiency by cooking all of the food that the Franciscans have accumulated at once into a broth. The broth will last for two weeks, thinks Ginepro, thus granting him the freedom to preach instead of cooking supper for the brothers. When the brothers return from praying, he discovers with disappointment his naiveté, as the food, instead, has spoiled. Francis then grants Ginepro permission to preach, on the condition that he begin each sermon with these words: “I talk and talk, yet I accomplish little”.

François Caradec in his 1997 biography of Raymond Roussel explains the peculiar eating habits of the aristocratic writer: “His mother definitively set the order of his meals and Raymond Roussel had to comply without changing anything. However, because he often got up late after having worked all night, and wanted to be free in the evening to go to the show, the preordained number of meals was no longer suitable. So he adopted a solution that combined tradition and respect with his need for freedom: he had four meals in one service that successively included breakfast, lunch, five o’clock tea and dinner... If one believes André Guillot, the cook, the *meal* invariably took place from 12:30 to 17:30”.

“Can God cook a meal so big that he himself would not be able to eat it?” is a traditional formulation of the so-called *omnipotence paradox*. This question is similar to “Could God make a burrito so hot that he himself cannot eat it?” that was posed by Homer on an episode of *The Simpsons*. The point of the question is to prove God isn’t almighty: If he can make it, but cannot eat it, than he isn’t all-powerful. If he cannot make it, that he also isn’t all-powerful. This is a question that leads to a syllogistic error. You cannot compare an infinite being (God) to a finite thing (a hot burrito or heat).

Max Liebermann was an artist founder of the group Berlin Secession. He was also president of the Prussian Academy of Arts. He resigned in 1933, when all areas of German life were under the control of the Nazi regime and the Academy decided to no longer exhibit works by Jewish artists. While watching the Nazis celebrate their victory by marching through the Brandenburg Gate, Liebermann was reported to have commented: “Ich kann gar nicht so viel fressen wie ich kotzen möchte” (‘I cannot eat as much as I would like to vomit’). He died a little later, in 1935.

Marguerite Porete, a French mystic, was burnt at the stake for heresy in Paris in 1310 after a lengthy trial, as she refused to remove her book *The Mirror of Simple Souls* from circulation or to recant her views. Written originally in Old French at a time when Latin was the prescribed language for religious literature, it explores in poetry and prose the seven stages of *annihilation* the soul goes through on its path to oneness with God through love. Chapter 23 of the book is a conversation between Love and Reason, in which Love says that the Soul is inebriated by divine love. She is inebriated “not only from what she has drunk, but very intoxicated and more than intoxicated from what she never drinks nor will ever drink”.

In the 1939 film *Ninotchka*, Leon, a decadent capitalist, tries to elicit a laugh from a stern Russian commissioner, played by Greta Garbo, who is visiting Paris. He tells her a series of jokes and becomes progressively more upset due to his lack of success. Finally, almost shouting at her, he tells her one he says made him laugh himself sick when he first heard it. A man comes into a restaurant. He sits down at the table and says: “Waiter, bring me a cup of coffee *without* cream”. Five minutes later the waiter comes back and says: “I’m sorry, sir. We have no cream. Would it be all right without milk?”. The joke is later quoted by Werner Herzog in his book *Conquest of the Useless*, a diary-like account of the difficulties of making his 1982 film *Fitzcarraldo*.