

Our Nature is Not Our Fate

by James Bacque

Editor's note: Below is the text of the acceptance speech written by James Bacque for the Gesellschaft für freie Publizistik, who in 2017 awarded him their Ulrich von Hutten prize for services to German letters and freedom of speech. For medical reasons, Bacque was unable to travel to Germany, but his speech was delivered in German to the general meeting of the GfP in Kirchheim, near Erfurt, on Sunday, August 27, 2017. The Gesellschaft is an umbrella group for publishers and authors dedicated to freedom and truth in writing.

Bacque was severely censored by the European, North American and UK establishment for his 1989 book, *Other Losses*, in which he documented the atrocities committed by allied forces on German prisoners of war and civilians after the Second World War. His books were best-sellers, but since the censorship he has been unable to find a North American or British publisher. Bacque views the two world wars as primarily a single European civil war. In this European civil war, no nation had entirely rational motives and all were misled by delusions about their own interests. Bacque posits that our inherent double-being as defined by St. Paul and Montaigne, among many others, leads us to errors that damage our own interests. He believes that scapegoating a few leaders (regardless of what errors they made or atrocities they committed) will not get us out of the fix we're in – we have to understand our own nature.

Herr Martin Pfeiffer, my thanks to you and to the Gesellschaft für freie Publizistik for awarding me the Ulrich von Hutten prize. My thanks also to Alfred Zips, Gerd von Schultze-Ronhof, and Ernst von Heydebrand, who took part in the preparation for this event.

I speak to you today in the name of the dead of two wars and in sorrow for the vast delusions which killed them, delusions which continue today. I am going to offer you consolation, explanation and possibly a solution.

Because your personal and collective memories were largely controlled by government-sanctioned priests of history after 1933 and entirely controlled by enemy priests from 1945 to now, what is known about Germany today is largely untrue and what is true is largely unknown. Your history and the national guilt and shame which have been forced upon you and trained into you are the greatest example in the world today of a phenomenon known as double being. This was first identified by the French writer Michel de Montaigne in about 1583, when he wrote, “We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, which is the cause that what we believe we do not believe, and cannot disengage ourselves from what we condemn.”¹ That we are double in ourselves resonates in me because I, as a young Canadian, was pressed into belief in the British Empire just as you and your fathers were pressed to believe in the German empire or its successor, the Third Reich. And then I was disabused, just as you were, though your pain was tremendous and mine was a minor bump

on the road to maturity. But doubleness of being struck me with ominous force one day in 1988 as I walked out of the US National Archives with photocopies of documents in my briefcase proving that one of the heroes of the allied victory in 1945, General Eisenhower, was a mass murderer and a war criminal. He had planned on and partly succeeded in murdering millions of prisoners of war and millions more conquered civilians as prescribed by the Morgenthau Plan, approved and signed by both Roosevelt and Churchill at Quebec City in September, 1944.

I hated and feared this knowledge for itself, and because it ruined cherished illusions of mine about the war, which I would then have to ruin for others as well. I wrote and published in my book *Other Losses* the record of these astounding slaughters which had been committed and then covered up by a cabal of army officers, politicians, journalists and historians under the myth of the only good war. This hid the slaughter, and conveniently covered the allies' ignoble motives in helping to cause that war.

I realized that I had not fully understood my research nor exhausted my topic. There was ample evidence that among the allies millions of merciful people deplored the atrocities and a few Germans, among them Konrad Adenauer, resisted the allied vengeance, so I had to write another book, *Crimes and Mercies*, accounting for them. But even those events had been ignored by the victor's historians, probably because to discuss them would reveal the crime that had necessitated the mercy.

Nevertheless, apart from my book, the original crime remained covered. How could all that have been covered up for so long, covered up even among you, the victims?

There were many ways and means by which this was done, but in the end, I realized that it had not all been done by Eisenhower, not even with

his vast powers as President of the USA, for after all even Eisenhower had said in his exit speech from the presidency in 1961 that we as citizens – he meant Americans – should resist the efforts of the Military Industrial Complex to take over and control our lives. He was right. They were doing that. And Winston Churchill made a joke of it, when he said, “History will be very kind to me because I intend to write it.” He did, and he was crowned with the Nobel Prize for it.

That puzzled me. Eisenhower had sought that power himself and then he denounced it. Churchill sought that power, achieved it and finally made fun of it. I could not understand how we accepted all this.

Partly the reason was that the vast mass of

Western population, eventually including Germany, was acceding to such control. We wanted someone to control us. We wanted a system of government and we allowed whoever was greediest, most cynical, most patriotic, most charming, the cleverest illusionist, to run that government. And we did this in

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part because our governors, and we ourselves, are double beings. They are two-faced deceivers, liars, cheats, hypocrites, and so are we. They are upright, brave, decent, loyal, and loving parents, so are we. They are double beings and so are we. But even that knowledge did not explain it all. How could this be? How does it come about? How do we become double in ourselves? How do we believe the opposite of what we believe, and do the opposite of what we preach?

I puzzled over this for a long time and now I can suggest an answer. The answer is in the theory of Double-Being: we are all born helpless needing governance from our elders and we are all born wanting to be free. This polarization causes unbearable tension in all children until they learn somehow to manage it.

Some children are resigned to it, becoming

thoughtful, quiet or passive; some relieve the tension by kicking and screaming. Some develop illusions to relieve the tensions, making up imaginary friends to share their troubles; some invent new origins for themselves, such as adoption. Those who are relieved by illusion gain both the power to create the illusion and the reason to create it. Creating this solution soon becomes a habit. This is the habitual state of mind we call character. Every human mind more or less expresses a resolution of tensions. Every mind is double.

Double-being exists in human society not just in government but in many other aspects. During the courtship phase of life in most countries, we name that temporary illusion romantic love and we stabilize it with marriage. In American public life, the illusion reconciles governance, symbolized by Uncle Sam, with freedom, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. In the UK, it is the Monarchy and Parliament. In Canada, it is the Mounties and the *coureurs des bois*. The Soviet illusion was well defined in a joke told in communist Russia: "The bosses pretend to pay us so we pretend to work." Communist Poles also joked that theirs was the best government because "under capitalism Man exploits Man but under communism it's the other way around."

Herbert Hoover, former President of the United States and a wise man in a dangerous time, foresaw many years in advance bolshevism's inevitable collapse. He said that bolshevism was not a threat to the United States because it would collapse of its own internal contradictions, which I interpret as his view of Soviet double-being.²

The society that I know of that managed best to reconcile the governance and freedom issue in children and adults was developed among North American Indians and called Iroquoian.³ This was a matriarchy in which the older women nominated young men for leadership roles. The young men then became leaders "elected" by acclamation in the larger society. According to Anishinaabe practice, which is closely related to Iroquoian, the word governance in the present theory might best be replaced by guidance. Another model that works fairly well has been invented and re-invented and applied all over the world, monarchy. The British system of a neutered monarch as the

symbolic head of state works well, especially at the moment of the transfer of power.

If this theory of mine is correct, we are all destined from birth to be double and few or none escape that fate. Then who among us uses this knowledge to arrive at power?

I model my explanation of this on the fantasy called *The Wizard of Oz*, from the great book by L. Frank Baum. In the fantasy, the citizens of Oz have been persuaded by a kindly old Wizard to believe that he has made them all wealthy and their city beautiful by building it from precious emeralds. But all he has done is give green eye-glasses to everyone. Wearing them, they believe in him.

In my explanation of our present situation, the Wizard is whoever takes power by presenting the most acceptable or comforting illusion. We then willingly put on the glasses by accepting him or her to command the system just as our ancestors accepted ambitious young clerics in the two thousand year-old church striving upwards for centuries towards the Holy See, always protecting and projecting the circumstantial illusion.

Today we support our politicians who order our young men to kill people or to risk death although much of the time our politicians do not tell us how they arrived at such a drastic policy. The German people were surprised and depressed in September, 1939, when Britain and France declared war on them for invading Poland, although their government had been repeatedly warned against this. The British cabinet twice refused, in autumn 1939 and again in summer 1940, Hitler's offer of peace negotiations. The British cabinet never allowed either the British public or Parliament to vote on Hitler's offer so Britain suffered catastrophic assault, ending in millions of deaths and the loss of the Empire which Churchill said that his war protected.

This sort of mistake happened famously and inevitably when the US and British governments told the world that they had discovered Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. This mistake was later denounced and a deception confessed, but there was no serious consequence, no accountability, not even much public shame. It is probable, ac-

According to this theory, that many people in the aggressive democracies afterwards forgave their governments because they all felt complicit.

Our present Wizards warn us that the greatest danger to us today comes from Islam, but the greatest threat to societies in the past has always been the loss of faith in themselves. The loss of interest in liberal democracy among our young people and their aversion to the cynicism of our elder politicians are terrible dangers constantly deplored and never remedied, in part because the politicians themselves, victims and beneficiaries of double being, prevent change. That loss of faith is what happened to the British vis à vis the Germans in the 19th century, the Soviets vis à vis the Americans in the 1980s, and the Chinese communists vis à vis reality after Mao Zedong.

No one has yet predicted convincingly what might be coming to us if liberal democracy collapses, but certainly in the past the first signs of great change in dominant old systems have been prophets advocating a new circumstantial illusion, usually in a book. Think of Karl Marx, Adam Smith, Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill and Mao Zedong. At this stage it is easy to see the role of the media, which is to manage, in the interest of Oz, the public acceptance of the system. Except for books, the major media are mainly supported by advertising; nearly all advertisers do not believe what they are saying, and we in the audience do not believe it either. TV commercials appear today in the USA showing people praising an automobile with the caption, "Real people, not actors." It is a double-speak game in which neither side trusts what is said but which trains people to collusion in illusion. We cooperate with the illusion not because we believe in the illusion but because it supports the present system and we all agree on the need for a system.

Today, signs of change can be seen in the trivial and the tragic: Overbook Airlines in the USA sells

a ticket to a passenger, then drags him off the plane screaming, at which point a Canadian cabinet minister with no responsibility at all proposes a new law saying that we must honour passengers' rights – as if, until that moment, it had been legal to drag paid passengers off a plane. Young men willingly go into battle and end their lives in the illusion that the enemy has Weapons of Mass Destruction threatening their system. They kill and they die deluded just as they did during the Second World War, which was then sanctified to the victors as "The Only Good War."

Sometimes we are forced to see how things are, by means of the Internet, more often by guardians of popular freedom such as some people among

you gathered here today, but many others elsewhere as well. They are Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, who wriggle free temporarily but are proscribed as soon as they frighten the

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Wizard. That is what happened to me and that is part of why it became important to me to solve Montaigne's dilemma. Not all who do evil things are themselves evil but are double-beings doing one thing while supposing it is another.

The speed and strength of the Wizard in defense of the system are apparent from Edward Snowden's story. He now appears to billions of people around the world as a courageous defender of freedom. In exile from his homeland democracy, where does he find sanctuary? With Vladimir Putin, an autocrat in the Kremlin of the dictatorial Tsars and of the mass murderer Stalin. Montaigne's doubleness lives on in the age of the Internet.

This theory is a modest formula leading to no radical conclusion, certainly not the violent revolution that will probably come if we do not adjust better to double-being. Understanding this theory in order to adjust better to double-being means largely that we see more clearly the consequences to society of our human reality. Double-being is inevitable but we can adjust to it for worse and

for better. If we do not, we are doomed, by atomic war, climate change or cynical disillusionment with liberal democracy among the young.

The first useful adjustment is to realize that this double-being is no one's fault so it cannot be fixed by driving the guilty from office. Scapegoating removes one symptomatic illusion, not the ever-lasting condition. That is of course what we do all the time – Nixon, Eden, Churchill, Hitler, Stalin. We yield to the quick fix and easy solution. Who does not?

The second adjustment makes sure that the most significant part of the Wizard's governing of us is no longer kept secret from us. The solution which I propose is transparency in government, by passing a law to make it a crime to hide from the public all cabinet discussions, contracts and decisions. Associations such as the Gesellschaft für freie Publizistik in every country should vigilantly guard this law to make sure it is obeyed. When I suggested this remedy to a senior political scientist in Toronto, he said, laughing, "That would make government as we know it impossible."

Yes. For a while. Then our natural double-being would mean that some future Wizard

would eventually find a way around this. And then our instincts to examine, temporize, compromise, postpone, forgive, disguise, obfuscate and dissemble by hypocrisy would generate yet another new provisional solution, which is humanity's way.

References and notes

1. Michael de Montaigne. "Of Glory," in *The Complete Works of Michael de Montaigne*, William Hazlitt, ed. New York: Worthington, 1889, p. 315.
2. Bacque, James. *Crimes and Mercies*. London: Little, Brown, 1997, and Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2007, p. 11.
3. And perhaps the Anishinaabe/Chippewa/Ojibwe one, according to Cathie Cunningham of Rama Reserve, Orillia, Ontario, who is regarded by some of her colleagues as an Elder. As I have learned from her, the Northeast American Indigenous societies solve the double-being problem by protecting child-freedom through guiding, not governing.

James Bacque is an historian, novelist, and playwright who lives in Ontario. He is the author of Crimes and Mercies and Other Losses.

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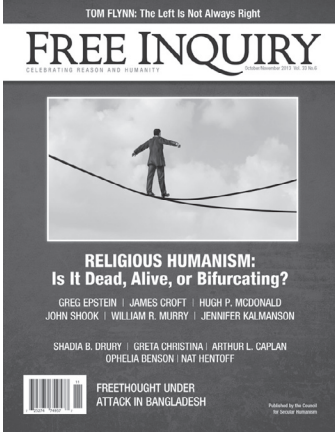
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