

Mr Blair and Iraq. 'Was he, in a very unreal sense, right?'

by Theodore Dalrymple

Mr Blair's initial response to the Chilcot Enquiry's report on the Iraq war was entirely predictable. He said that it had not claimed that he acted in bad faith, with the implication that this in some way justified his actions. The Iraq was but the backdrop to his psychodrama.

In a sense, Mr Blair was right that bad faith had not been alleged, but this was less flattering to himself than he supposed. The words *good* and *bad faith* have no application in his case: for just a man who has no concept of the truth cannot be a liar, so Mr Blair, whose mind resembles the Goodwin Sands, is incapable of bad faith because he is incapable of good.

I have long puzzled over his particular psychopathology, which has irritated me because, while Mr Blair is, or was, important, he was uninteresting – apart, that is, from his psychopathology. It is always dangerous to diagnose at a distance a man whom one has never met, but it seems to me that Mr Blair's cardinal symptom is a *delusion of honesty*.

A delusion is a fixed false belief that is impervious to evidence or argument and that is out of keeping with a person's culture. Now it is quite clear that Mr Blair believes himself to be an honest man all evidence to the contrary: he would not have reacted to the Chilcot Enquiry's report as he did had he not suffered from this delusion.

The only question that remains, then, is whether his fixed false belief is incongruous with his culture. Here the matter

is slightly more difficult to decide: after all, he won three elections and colleagues supported him for many years. And he is by no means unique in the political class to suffer from this delusion: I leave it to readers to name others as deprived as he of a sense of truth.

Along with this peculiar truth-blindness seems to go an invincible sense of Original Virtue, so much more destructive of the personality than that of Original Sin. No action by someone possessed of Original Virtue can besmirch him. He will always be able to reply to his accuser that 'Surely you cannot believe that *I* acted from discreditable motives? Even if I was in the wrong, I was, in a deeper sense, in the right.'

Whether such people are more numerous today than in the past I am not sure. I suspect that they are: so perhaps Mr Blair does not suffer from a delusion after all.

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