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June 5, 2019: Babbling Barr

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Title: Babbling Barr

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6/5/2019--It needs more than I can write at the moment, but the extraordinary words of Attorney General William Barr must at least be noted. Here is more or less the whole quote: In an interview aired Friday on "CBS This Morning," Attorney General William Barr explains why he opened an investigation into the origins of the Russia investigation. He doesn't say what the evidence is, but Barr tells CBS News legal correspondent Jan Crawford that there is evidence that makes him believe senior government officials may have acted improperly to authorize surveillance of President Trump's 2016 campaign. He says that led to "spying" on the campaign. He said the hyper-politicized nature of politics today is a danger to longstanding institutions and he took the job of attorney general because he is at the end of his career. "Nowadays, people don't care about the merits or the substance. They only care about who it helps, whether my side benefits or the other side benefits. Everything is gauged by politics, and I say that is antithetical to the way the Department [of Justice] runs, and any attorney general in this period is going to end up losing a lot of political capital," Barr said. "And that's one of the reasons I decided I should take [the job] on. At my stage in my life, it wouldn't make any difference." "I'm at the end of my career," he said. "Everyone dies. I don't believe in the Homeric idea that immortality comes by having odes sung about you over the centuries." "In many ways, I'd rather be back at my old life, but I love the Department of Justice, I love the FBI, I think it is important that in this period of intense partisan feelings we do not destroy our institutions."

***** What does he believe immortality consists in? Clearly, he believes he is doing the right thing and that his critics are wrong. He does not expect reasoned discourse. So to do the right thing means to be criticized. But this situation is not new. It is the sort of situation John F. Kennedy described in Profiles in Courage. Except of course that Barr is not giving up anything. He is not being fired. He is remaining Attorney General. He is defending powerful people and making no sacrifice at all. He is just whining. Barr doesn't have the faith to say, "I am doing the right thing and history will recognize the truth of that. So my conscience is clear." Instead, he invokes extraordinary nihilism--we all die and that is that and so what difference does it make what people think of me? What a juvenile thing from an AG.