

## A LIBERAL ANALYSIS OF CONSERVATISM.

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THE epidemic of reactionism which set in in all countries during the Great War naturally leads the reflective mind to a consideration of the conservatism by which it was given birth. Nor was this epidemic allayed by the cessation of hostilities. Late in 1919 the *Nation* was telling us that an Englishman who visited America was simply amazed at the dogmatic intolerance of the forces of reaction, and this clear-sighted liberal journal called attention to the fact that we were in jeopardy of losing the fruits of a war ostensibly for idealism, by adopting measures for the repression of liberal opinion more stringent than those of our late autocratic foe.

The direct antithesis between the liberal and the conservative mind, their difficulty in understanding one another, their lack of sympathy with the view-point of each other and the apparent certainty of acrimonious debate whenever they come together, are well known. Yet both conservative and liberal are men, plain human animals tempted in all points alike, more or less educated, more or less capable of reasoning; men who "fulfil the demands of the love-life in mechanical routine. . . . beget children at stated intervals. . . . and face the last adventure swathed and coddled by the devices of science, substituting oxygen for the oil of sacrament."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, these "hereditary enemies" differ not in kind but in degree; the two attitudes of mind are but facets of the same cerebral substance projecting into space in opposite directions. And, as in other matters, heredity and environment decree the direction of this development. Furthermore, when this development gains a certain momentum in a definite direction the tendency is for the dogmatism of deep conviction to make a bigot in either case.

<sup>1</sup> Alice Raphael, "The Modern, *The New Republic*, May 17, 1919.

Emerson has said that "reform is affirmative, conservatism negative; conservatism goes for comfort, reform for truth."<sup>2</sup> The essential difference between the conservative and the reformer (or liberal) is that the former is static and by nature intolerant; the latter is plastic and normally tolerant. Psychologically considered the conservative has ceased to learn because he has ceased to admit the necessity for new categories of knowledge, and continues to cram all new facts, however irrelevant, into the categories already at hand. The liberal is not averse to formulating new and rational categories for facts as they come into consciousness.

To a child that round object with a yellowish exterior is a ball. And so long as it remains a ball, instead of becoming an orange, the child is a conservative. It refuses to add to its categories, but crams any object bearing a resemblance, however remote, to its plaything into its category "Ball." But liberalism usually conquers in the end almost of necessity and the new category "Orange" is not unwillingly acknowledged. And not long thereafter a lemon is confidently filed under the convenient categorical concept "Orange" where it remains until a further excursion into liberalism releases it.

Eventually a certain stage of maturity is almost inevitably reached where the distaste for forming new categories overbalances the desire for strict verity, and we have the conservative of fifty or sixty, as the case may be. The liberal is, therefore, mentally young, whatever his years; but it is an unusual liberal who can retain sufficient deliberation at sixty not to denounce vehemently the young radicals of the time. It is well known that the old take grudgingly to the scientific, political or religious advances as they appear, because of their disinclination to rearrange their mental furniture. They seek repose rather than truth. And here you have also the conservative *par excellence*.

And so man is ever the victim of two opposing tendencies. On the one hand is conservatism urging that he has already sufficient classifications for all possible contingencies and that new facts must be made to fit old convictions; on the other is liberalism declaring that knowledge is boundless and that by forever cramming new facts into old categories he will develop slovenly mental habits, eventually reaching a stage of complete inertia at which pure reasoning becomes impossible.

So divergent are these habits of mind that in case of controversy the conservative stands aghast at the latitude of the liberal; and, lacking the means of refuting facts which he cannot correlate, he

<sup>2</sup> In "Intellect."

resorts to vituperation and personalities, finally in immoderate rage to brand his opponent a dangerous intellectual heretic who merits instant suppression. The liberal, for his part, finds it difficult to retain his equanimity in the presence of what is obviously arrested mental development; he feels his impotence to make the conservative comprehend in the same manner that the adult feels his impotence to explain the law of atomic proportions to a child of eight; and he must always be on his guard against the bigotry which attacks those whose mental agility is greater, their stock of facts being so systematized as to be serviceable. For liberalism can be dogmatic indeed and the utter intolerance of the incorrigible radical surpasseth comprehension.

Conservatives may roughly be divided into two classes—first, those who cannot or will not think, and, secondly, those who, if they do not precisely think, yet go through a process which resembles thought sufficiently to deceive them. Perhaps a more simple classification would be that of intelligent and unintelligent conservatives; in either case they may or may not be educated, for sometimes intelligence bears an inverse ratio to education. Sometimes this intelligence rises into self-consciousness and a particularly illogical position is realized in all its absurdity. This is the high-water mark of conservatism and denotes the point where one is almost persuaded to seek truth rather than to enjoy ill-earned repose.

Conservatism and liberalism are in strict literalness no respectors either of age, race, color or previous condition of servitude. The former has been frequently associated with those young in years, the latter with physical decay. This may be true in countries where a college or university education inculcates the habit of thinking rather than crams the student with ill-digested facts. In America, however, there are no more hopeless conservatives, no more dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries and partisans of things-as-they-are than the average college or university undergraduate.

Furthermore, liberalism is sometimes associated with education, while the conservative is thought of as a hidebound, rule-of-thumb individual remote from the ameliorating influence of higher learning. Nevertheless, the conservative is often deeply learned in the lore of everything save cogitation proper and may possess copious alphabetical distinction of university origin. And, what is still more curious, the conservative is occasionally capable of real, out-and-out liberalism in some matters while he remains hopelessly traditional in others. The political liberal who is a religious conservative; the moral liberal who is a philosophic conservative; the scientific liberal

who is a narrow, nationalistic conservative—these types are well known.

When we stop to consider them in the cold light of reason and unmodified by the lurid haze of passion, the mental habits of some people are little short of startling. We go along moderately open-minded, not restricting our reading to a select list that coddles our personal prejudices, but browsing boldly here and there, now imbibing the cocksure conservatism of the daily press, now sipping the pungent concoctions of the dubious radical. We seek to see matters as others see them, to comprehend their view-point, always understanding that they have as much right to the possession and expression of their opinions as we have to ours. We utilize common sense and the scientific method coupled with rather a catholic philosophy in appraising various institutions and habits of life; and we finally reach conclusions which seem to us not at all startling, certainly not particularly original or unique, least of all heretical and positively dangerous.

And, having for a while lived thus benignly and indulgently all to ourselves, we go out into the rude world and constantly meet people whose attitude toward our casual opinions shocks us with its violence. Suddenly we get a pained look and some perfectly reasonable assertion is hurriedly brushed aside as Bolshevik, or anti-American, or sacrilegious, and broad hints are thrown out that it might go hard with us for these sentiments!

We meet, for instance, the man who honestly believes that all the evil in the world is contained precisely within the confines of the German Empire—(that is, we did meet this man; surely he is disillusioned now, so long after the imbecility of Versailles)—and that with the destruction of Germany "Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again" and Right shall forever occupy the throne. Or we meet that naive individual who firmly believed that the Teuton race would be actually annihilated and that the hanging of the Kaiser would fitly culminate our righteous crusade; in spite of the fact that reason militates against the murder of seventy million people as well as against one dynasty daring to risk the prestige of kingcraft by hauling another dynasty into court. Or we meet that tender girl in her twenties who hails from Alabama and who hates the Northerner with a bitterness that at least attests to the thoroughness with which Sherman lived his doctrine of war, however unnecessary and unreasonable the perpetuation of such hatred—born of the War of Rebellion—is.

Again, we meet that simple, trusting soul who was assured that

all the diabolical hideousness of war was the work of the enemy, and that "our" side marched heroically and hymn-laden to a martyr's death with their minds reverberating with noble ideals, their hearts steeled in unctuous self-righteousness, their hands unsoiled with blood and their bayonets inflicting some mysterious variety of glorified and sanctimonious wound. Or we can meet that kindly, humane and gentle individual (he really is so personally—though crazed with misdirected patriotism he it is who makes war possible) who viewed the submarine blockade of England and the harshness of the German in Belgium with wrath that knew no bounds and denunciations of passionate intensity; but who finds nothing extraordinary in the starvation of the women and children of Central Europe by reason of an inhuman peace which barbarously demands their milk and their bread even as they perish. If the German sinned, and there is no doubt about that, we certainly have done likewise. To quote Clutton-Brock—"We have no right to put any man or nation outside the pale; we are not gods, with the right or power of damnation, but men."<sup>3</sup> and we have all sinned and come short of the glory.

The day has not long passed when we knew a Paris which would never, never have aught to do with the German again; to-day that Paris is reasonably full of Germans employed by the French as before 1914. We knew the America and the Allied nations which would under no circumstances have trade dealings with the "unspeakable Hun"; recently we have observed the undignified and breathless scramble to stake out trade claims in Central Europe immediately the barriers were let down.

Perhaps we are theologically inclined. If so, we may come into contact with that cold stone wall embodied in the personality of the Evangelical minister who finds it quite correct to accept new members by letter from heterodox congregations (perhaps because that increases his own flock), but who discovers that the Almighty would be seriously offended if a letter of fellowship were given to one of his flock who desired to unite with a liberal congregation. *En passant*, what an admirable way to produce infidelity! For what intelligent man can worship a God who is supposed to stoop to such petty hairsplitting? Or, again, we may easily discover this very day individuals who hang their fate throughout all eternity, and the fate of all other humans besides, upon such tremendously important matters as the assumption that Genesis is an historical narrative, that the book of Jonah is strict truth rather than humorous allegory.

<sup>3</sup> A. Clutton-Brock, "The Pursuit of Happiness, *The Atlantic*, Dec., 1919

that Moses personally indicted the Pentateuch or that the disciple John wrote the Gospel which bears that name. We may find by hundreds those who are firmly convinced that this or that sacrament, this or that formula, this or that creedal injunction are matters of supreme importance to a Deity who is postulated as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and burdened in addition with the minutiae of an entire universe! In a land among the most enlightened as to religious toleration a President found it at times embarrassing to be a Unitarian, every public man discovers the expediency of being thought orthodox and the evils of cosmos are ever and anon righteously accredited to the Jew by some fervid divine.

Or, to view the conservative mind in a third aspect<sup>4</sup>—that of shifting facts from categories in diametric opposition in order to give a "cloak of self-righteousness to extenuate" the ruthless attainment of any desired end. In any contest the ethical values involved are usually of the nature of afterthought or accessory; thus it is often necessary to remould ethics or philosophy in order to procure ideals to camouflage aggression or worse deeds. This mental jugglery gives rise to an interesting type of mind which appears to believe two diametrically opposing things at one and the same time, the psychological explanation being that the same fact is temporarily utilized in opposing categories. Thus it is that the militarist can prove that military training prevents the very war which alone can give rise to those manly virtues which it is the province of military training to prevent war from teaching us!

Such people as these can espouse a gospel of a prince of peace while at the same time demonstrating that war is righteously justifiable whenever expedient or desirable. Some of the articles in the *Hibbert Journal* during the war were marvels of ingenuity<sup>5</sup> at proving that war and Christianity are perfectly compatible; before the war other articles proved the direct opposite from the same facts; after the war apologists demonstrated that there was truth in both contentions. These anomalous people can admit the truth of a fact in a scientific context while denouncing the same fact as false in a theological context. They can view with utmost loathing and contempt a course pursued by another nation to attain some nationalistic end while palliating their own nation for an exactly similar degradation and citing philosophical and ethical proofs in each case. Yet it must be understood that however absurd or disingenuous such action may appear on the surface, the individual is intellectually

<sup>4</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Nature of Peace*, Introduction.

honest in so far as he permits himself to be informed and is usually sincere.

However irrational it may seem to any open-minded person who would trouble himself to think calmly—rather than impulsively or emotionally—there are people of this day and generation who seriously hold the opinions mentioned (and even worse) and who are utterly intolerant of any opposing view. These are the people who continually force new wine into old bottles, who force new facts into outgrown categories, and who insert the same fact into diverse categories if it suits their purpose to do so. As Butler remarked, we do not mind a difference of opinion if we feel that our opponent has a firm grasp of our position or that he is trying to understand but fails through lack of education or defect of intellect; what displeases us is to know that he could understand if he chose—but he will not choose to do so. Obviously this last class of conservatives is less supportable than the very large class lacking in education and deficient in intellect.<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes the condition arises not from a disinclination to thought, but from an actual atrophy of the thinking faculty due either to habitually taking the predigested cogitations of others *in toto*, or to the mistaken idea of assuming to be thought what is really an emotional conflict resulting in the domination of the most powerful impulse. And, however presumptuous in a liberal to say so, the fact remains that the very tenets of liberalism require it to be attentive to conservatism and to give the statist a sympathetic hearing in the effort to comprehend, while the ultimate reply of conservatism to all forms of liberalism is, and has been down the ages, Infidel! Heretic! Dangerous radical! True enough the conservative gets "rest, commodity and reputation." But "he in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all moorings and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism and recognize all the opposite negations between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion, but he is a candidate for truth, as the other is not, and respects the highest law of his being." It is Emerson who speaks.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In terms of modern psychology the conservative might be described as the man who lives in the unconscious (or subconscious) mind where live the child and the primitive and where are seated all intolerance and bigotry and prejudice. M. K. Bradby shows in her *Psycho-Analysis* how Wilberforce was enabled to see the immorality of enslaving the black race while he saw the appeal of downtrodden British labor for justice merely as a licentious rebellion against authority. He was, in the latter case, merely a rich man with an unconscious love of power which overruled his conscious reason.

<sup>6</sup> In "Intellect."

Having now considered the matter more or less abstractly, instances of certain interesting conservatives come to mind and a few brief analyses may prove informative. There is for one the case of the man who recently asked the writer what he thought of the Jenkins case, adding in stereotyped manner—"Of course, those Mexicans are such rascals you can never believe what they say." This man was head of the scientific staff of a manufacturing concern and constituted one of the most remarkable cases of arrested intellectual development we have known. In some respects he was still positively infantile. In science he was an empiricist; practically he knew not thought at all in any matter although he was plentifully supplied with the accepted convictions then current in his social stratum.

Now the writer was far from an expert on Mexico. He had read perhaps twenty volumes on Mexico and its problems; he had read the press of the distracted country quite frequently during several years; he had had several intelligent correspondents in Mexican cities who, in addition to certain Latin-Americans he knew personally, conveyed the Mexican view-point to some extent. Finally, he had read the American liberal journals of opinion which almost alone voiced an attitude of philosophic calm and made a real effort to arrive at certain conclusions through processes of orderly deliberation. And yet this scant knowledge on the writer's part was so encyclopedic in comparison to what his interrogator knew of Mexican matters that intelligent discussion was completely inhibited. This man had his category that all Mexicans were rascals and into this he instantly packed any fact whatsoever that came up.

In other matters his process was identical. He classified the philosophic anarchist, the bombing nihilist, the parlor radical and the tepid liberal all together in his commodious category labeled "Bolshevik." He denounced everything which did not cater to the perpetuation of things-as-they-are (which condition satisfied him completely) as dangerous if not illegal. He abstracted from the newspapers blatant facts suitable to his purposes and supporting his convictions and absolutely ignored all else. The intellectual penuriousness of the average newspaper editorial agreed well with his delicately balanced mental digestive apparatus and he adopted the vested-interest viewpoint without revision.

Those of this man's kind who attend church sit enthralled in a great cathedral while a learned dean breaks the "bread of life" consisting of such stupendous thoughts as his wise dictum that present-day unrest was to be traced to the Hebrew race which, not



content with being steeped in sin through the ages, had now added insult to injury by turning radical! As if evil were exorcised if announced to be instigated by Hebrews! Or as if it were evil for any race to be the cleansing, stimulating, agitating power which should strive to lead us to better things, whether to some extent mistaken in ideals or no. For the radical—though less a radical in practice than in theory—has a most important place in the scheme of things, and his moral courage marks him as of the race of those fearless prophets who stood before kings to boldly condemn their wicked ways.

But conservatives do not all insist upon absolutely predigested mental pabulum; they are not all so ignorant that a well-informed man finds it next to impossible to discover some common ground for discussion. Many of them are deeply learned and have a large stock of misplaced facts and ideas, all so badly filed in their brains as to be nearly useless. There is, for instance, that quiet, affable, law-abiding, Godfearing colonial Britisher who, when it was insinuated that the Prime Minister of England had scant respect for the truth, took this as a personal insult! Regardless of the fact that diplomacy in secret makes lying a necessity; of the fact that a great and glorious nation might have an execrable Prime Minister, and of other things that reflection would bring to mind, he had no other course open to him than to embrace an atavism to a lower cultural and intellectual plane. For quite frequently the uneducated and the rude attempt to vindicate the honor of their state or nation by recourse to fistic encounter, but it is unusual to witness a graduate of Oxford at so great a loss to reason. Here is an instance of hopeless conservatism, for it is most flagrant utilization of the wrong category, in a man highly educated—in fact, in a real scholar.

On analysis we find him to be elderly and with his categories arranged. Nor has he any idea of making alterations other than to facts that they may fit his preconceptions. During the war he espoused all the familiar commonplaces of the extreme devilry of the enemy and wrote articles that could have been turned out wholesale by some unlettered reporter. He furnished the material which is easily and craftily manipulated by the powers that be in the interest of patriotism—that sentiment, says Veblen, “which has never been known to rise to the consummate pitch of enthusiastic abandon except when bent on some work of concerted malevolence.” He is the typical man whose way of thinking makes war easy to start and more than easy to justify. His entire inability to classify facts in any other way than redounding to the glory of the Allies

and to the degradation of the Central Empires rendered his "reasoning" deliciously myopic during the war and even on into peace. He actually wondered if he might not be risking social ostracism by corresponding by letter with a liberal several thousand miles away! And this speaks volumes for the prevalence of the distorted conglomeration of impulses that masqueraded under the guise of thought in so many communities like his. At times this interesting man appeared almost inclined really to reason along theological and philosophical lines but his tether was short and he soon became terrified at his temerity and lapsed back into the pleasant calm of repose.

This man's favorite plaint to the writer was that of his being anti-British; this is the same accusation presumably intelligent people hurled at the *Nation* when it denounced British imperialism. We may remember the Jews also who dubbed Spinoza a Christian while the Christians declared him an infidel. And then there is the book of Bertrand Russell suppressed in England as pro-German and in Germany as Allied propaganda! In each case we have instances of people who have fashioned their categories after the manner of conservatism and who insist upon shading the fact to suit the conviction already in their minds. Thus the critics of the *Nation* could not see that it fought imperialism and militarism irrespective of nationality; conservative myopic bade them classify any criticism whatsoever of the British Empire as anti-British and the wish was father to the thought.

There might also be mentioned that intelligent and relatively broad-minded preacher who complacently faced his plutocratic congregation on the matter of socialism and told them that the socialistic theory, which taught of course that bread and raiment comprised the entire needs of man, was grossly inadequate: it neglected man's spiritual side and made of him an animal. And the congregation nodded friendly approval, because to all of them things as they are were eminently satisfactory and hence their category was—anything which appears to menace the prevailing social adjustment is false, dangerous and therefore socialistic. Consequently they neglected entirely the fact that the ideal of socialism is to see that all have food and raiment so that all may equally have the opportunity to develop spiritually and culturally. A man does not have to be a socialist to comprehend this; a liberal finds it not difficult to do so, because he has arranged his categories to classify facts as they are, not as his personal prejudices would have him believe them to be.

A particularly convenient and much overworked category of the present day is that called by the unreflective "anti-Americanism."

This expression is used by conservatives to designate those Americans who oppose lawlessness whether on the part of avowed criminals or whether indulged in by legionaires and officers of the law. In somewhat similar manner the term "pro-German" was used during the war, and "Bolshevik" subsequently, to denote those persons so ungracious as to differ with the conservative on matters of opinion. Those terms have at one time or another been applied to such notorious Prussians as Romain Rolland, Arthur Henderson, Albert Thomas, Anatole France, Henri Barbusse, Bertrand Russell, and in America Max Eastman, John Haynes Holmes, William Jennings Bryan, Thorstein Veblen and hundreds of others of this ruthless and bloodthirsty ilk too numerous to mention.

An interesting intellectual conservative is Agnes Repplier<sup>7</sup> in the December, 1919, *Atlantic*. Herein we find her lauding one Samuel Gompers whose unswerving loyalty to the Allies will never be forgiven by the pacifists—"the men and women who had no word of protest or pity when Belgium was invaded, when the Lusitania was sunk, when towns were burned, civilians butchered, and girls deported." Here the connotation of the category labeled "Pacifist" is obvious. It is also of interest to remember that Mr. Gompers did not escape the pro-German category in other instances, particularly among the advanced and enlightened labor leaders of England who saw in him the type of uncompromising bitter-ender whose caustic vituperation did so much to prolong the war. It was just such loud denunciation of all things German that Bolo Pasha *et al.* used in the French papers they subsidized with German money.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, a moment's real thought demonstrates that the pacifist harbored no such cold-blooded sentiments and never did harbor them. The pacifist at the outbreak of the war was frantically pro-Ally and, as speeches of David Starr Jordan attest, he viewed the invasion

<sup>7</sup> Agnes Repplier, "Consolations of the Conservative," *The Atlantic*, December, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> A delicious morsel of intellectual conservatism is served *en casserole* by the *Unpartizan Review* of January-February, 1920, where, in elegant English, "the howlers against capitalism" are requested "to stop and take breath" on the strength of gifts to mankind by Frick and Carnegie and Rockefeller. Here is reasoning of typical moron grade. One might as well defend an assassin by calling attention to the fact that he was kind to cats. The point really at issue is not whether multimillionaires are good to their families or kindhearted at the core; but are they now merely being belatedly generous to a public which they have formerly robbed shamelessly. The assertion is not made that these gentlemen have robbed the public; attention is merely called to the fact that such is the contention of the enemies of the capitalistic system and that the bland volubility of the *Unpartizan* absolutely ignores the real point at issue. Enlightened socialism does not crave charity; it is merely striving half blindly toward some system which shall make charity a superfluity.

of Belgium as a horrible flaunting of international ethics ; it meant that what was done in China or Persia with perfect impunity was to be sanctioned by an ultracivilized nation in Europe itself. But as the war went on the not-as-that-Publican-there air of the superhuman and hypocritical self-righteousness of the Allies, their anguished impersonation of the ravished virgin, and their studied attempt to heap all evil on the head of the enemy sickened the pacifist until he came very near viewing with complaisance these lusty Teutons who boisterously acknowledged their deviltry, not pleading ethical or philosophical extenuation, but simple unvarnished military necessity. If war it must be let us then be men and not babies, thought the pacifist. Evil acknowledged is sometimes to be preferred to evil venerated with a thin coating of idealism ; that, alas, it was a venerate predatory peace of Versailles proves too well.

But the pacifist never failed to observe and to denounce the very obvious sins of the Germans, though to do so was a work of supererogation. His grievous sin against conservatism was, however, the fact that he demanded a cleansing on our own part. He dared point the finger of scorn at our sins in China, in the Congo, in Persia and in the islands of the sea. He dared assert that an Allied soldier was not *per se* an avenging deity in white raiment, and to the eye obsessed with the sins of others and blinded to sin near by this was heinous—it was pacifist—or it belonged in any of the other ambiguous categories used by conservatives to designate purveyors of philosophic calm. Exactly this process goes on in thousands of cases in various matters. The scientist dismisses spiritualism with a sneer because the term connotes silly moonshine, the spiritualist dismisses science with contempt because the term connotes pure materialism, and each painfully distorts the facts to fit his category and to prove his point ; psychologically both are conservatives.

But to leave the conservatives who are such purely and simply there is another class most interesting to contemplate which might, from a dairy-lunch nomenclature, be styled half-and-half. An excellent example of this is a minister of religion in a liberal faith who in theological and philosophical matters was almost radical! Incidentally he preached a gospel of peace and vociferously interpreted Jesus of Nazareth as a pacifist in righteous distinction from the crude un-Christian militarists in Europe, that is during the time that elapsed from the beginning of the war until America went into it. Hereupon political conservatism came to the minister's aid and he blandly preached the precise opposite making it appear that the

Nazarene had now come to sanction an appeal to collective homicide provided our cause was a righteous one.

And "our" cause is a righteous one—even in Boer and Mexican wars, the former a war always viewed with shame by the highest type of Britisher, the latter a war called unprovoked and wrong by no less an authority than General Grant. Because "the moral sense in the case may be somewhat easily satisfied with a modicum of equity, in case the patriotic bias of the people is well pronounced . . . and even very attenuated considerations of right and justice may come to serve as a moral authentication for any extravagant course of action to which the craving of national prestige may incite."<sup>9</sup> This minister could also argue most convincingly that Jesus would have us go to war with Mexico in very similar manner to that adopted by Austria toward Serbia; yet the Master was supposed to have heartily condemned the latter villainy. While such distortion of the teachings of a great leader of men is deplorable the explanation is not necessarily to be found in the dishonesty of the minister; he was merely so shaping facts as to fit into the categories at hand. This same agile mind discovered that we had long misjudged Japan in presuming her to be an autocracy; the fact that she had espoused our side in the Great War offered proof sufficient of her democracy.

This calls to mind another cultured, liberal and university-educated gentleman who had adhered to strict neutrality before our entry into the war but who then perceived in a flash that a conflict which tore a world in twain had no cause other than German rapacity. This gentleman taught himself to believe that there had not been one slightest iota of provocation to war on the part of any nation assisting the Allies. He could actually demonstrate that preparation for war on the part of Germany brought about collective homicide, while preparation for war on the part of the Allies merely conduced to perpetual peace. And in all other matters this man was a rational being; of such is the myopia of conservatism. There is also the intelligent girl who contrives to belong to the most reactionary of creeds and at the same time to approve ideas absolutely at variance with the creed when these ideas are not in a theological context.

These cases are merely variations for each depends upon bungling categories just as those which have gone before. They have additional interest by reason of the fact that development has been

<sup>9</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Nature of Peace*, "On the Nature and Uses of Patriotism."

normal in most directions and is merely arrested in one or two. When these people were presented with facts demanding a new category to make them understandable, and if these facts came in on their "blind side," they complacently classified the fact under the old heading and said "German lies," "Prussian aggression," or "atheism," as the case might be. In a similar way, when the ignorant are presented with sodium silicate they call it water-glass, because this combination of familiar categories suits them better, given their distaste for new categories.<sup>10</sup>

Finally the case of a genial Scot comes to mind, a man who desired to think so badly that his conservatism became self-conscious, and when cornered he admitted that he spoke as he did more because it gave him satisfaction than because he seriously believed himself. Emerson has said we cannot have both truth and repose; yet this man had chosen just sufficient truth to give him repose. When he declared that we should make our own goods and thus be independent of German production, and another added "and also independent of British and French production," he demurred at the amendment although the desire was as logical (and as irrational) in the one case as in the other. His wish was not to see his adopted country develop commercially but to see Germany lose trade, and he placed facts in irrelevant categories with entire nonchalance. However, his superior mentality caused him to admit the logic of the thing and to plead nationalistic bias in extenuation; he could, therefore, view his conservatism analytically, comprehend its absurdity and its limitations; yet he declared it necessary to his satisfactory existence. Also when some one remarked that the Germans had shown particular bravery in a certain engagement he characteristically said, "I know that, but it wouldn't be right for *me* to admit it!"

This, then, is conservatism most pardonable, most hopeful and most promising of development. And that man was developing in spite of his forty years. For, as we consider these various cases in the light of scientific psychology, it is apparent that each represents an instance of impaired, retarded or arrested development.

<sup>10</sup> In this connection might be mentioned the individual who asked Henry Herbert Goddard how he could believe in "that stuff" called psychology when it was very apparently all a fake. Dr. Goddard subsequently discovered that the term "psychology" connoted nothing more than "hypnotism" in this case, and, the science having been classified in that category, was discarded as valueless. (See Preface to Goddard's *Psychology of the Normal and Subnormal*.) A sentence from James is also interesting. He says, in *The Meaning of Truth*, "If a novel experience, conceptual or sensible, contradict too emphatically our preexistent systems of belief, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is treated as false." No wonder conservatism lies so deeply imbedded in human mentality!

The history of the world demonstrates that as we learn and as we progress we must think originally, increase our categories, search truth open-mindedly—in short, be liberal.<sup>11</sup> It has shown that conservatism has its *raison d'être* as the ballast force which prevents radicalism from being too impetuous. Liberalism has as its province to think dispassionately and to advance deliberately, while conservatism clings to its discredited categories, refuses to look through Galileo's telescope and denounces all creative thought as pernicious.

A fully rounded, normally developed mind must almost of necessity be liberal. The very fact that so many minds lack the time, the education or the inclination to develop normally makes it apparent that we shall never be at a loss for conservatives. The great mass is patently conservative. Furthermore, Voltaire's dictum that religious and philosophic speculation will never suddenly revolutionize the earth, because such ideas seep too slowly into mass consciousness, is still quite correct.<sup>12</sup> The blustering endeavor of conservatives in mass formation to swoop down upon some lone liberal and to crush him with sheer brute weight would be pathetic did not the vitality and the agility of the liberal often render this effort ludicrous. Rock-ribbed conservatism has little reason enough to quail in abject terror in the presence of the radical voice in the wilderness.

There must be Nietzsches and Schopenhauers—radical, unique—cleansing if not fructifying. There must be Jeremiahs to stand boldly to warn and to prophesy. There must be Lenins to shake an inadequate political system to its foundations, to prevent petrification, although they become conservative as they acquire power.

<sup>11</sup> It would, perhaps, be ungracious, if not rude, for a mere liberal to presume so far as to call attention to the similarity between the conservative and the moron; yet Dr. Goddard so clearly brings out the resemblance (*op. cit.*, p. 8) without ever once mentioning the conservative, that such scientific vindication of our attitude cannot be altogether ignored. While dismissing *Neurons of the Feeble-minded* he calls attention to the well-known fact that defectives are in the habit of endlessly repeating some simple, meaningless movement or articulation. He concludes that this oddity represents the individual's one accomplishment, and then, in the last paragraph of the chapter, he goes on to show that as we advance from idiocy, through imbecility, to the moron and dull normal, these accomplishments are increased in number; but even in the high-grade moron and the dull normal special effort on the part of the trainer is necessary for them to adapt themselves to a new environment or to modify their set way of doing a thing to suit changed conditions. "His neuron pattern is formed and it has little or no connection with any other neuron pattern and consequently there is no change." Goddard suggests that we need not stop with the dull normal when looking for persons who make constant use of a few phrases or indefinitely repeat limited activities. Certainly this precisely described the psychic state of the conservative whatever be the nature of the inhibition to thought and the impetus to credulity.

<sup>12</sup> *English Letters*, Letter XIII (on Locke).

For the liberalism of to-day is the conservatism of to-morrow; thus the trend of mental energy is toward the unavailable in the same manner as the trend of physical energy.

Nor will conservatism ever lack the right to speak for which liberalism must always fight. Mental lassitude generates conservatism and there will always be those of us who are sufficiently lazy to adopt repose in lieu of truth. It behooves us to view the radical with respect, for he has the courage of his convictions and lives a life of ideals in a materialistic age; to view the liberal with compassion, for he is the conservative of to-morrow; to view the conservative with kindly tolerance, for verily it taketh all kinds of people to make up a world, and "they have their reward."