

## THE DIVIDED ARE THE WEAK

AS "witch-hunts" proceed unabated, and as more and more intelligent and useful men suffer the consequences of possessing independent minds, the problem of freedom takes on intensely practical importance. On the one hand are those who are conducting the witchhunts, who say that their purpose is to ferret out of public service and education all those who may be regarded as poor "security risks"—and they say that they are trying to do this to *protect* our freedom. Then there are those who reply by pointing out that, as a result of Congressional and other investigations, "loyalty" is increasingly defined as mere "orthodoxy," and that the witch-hunts have been more damaging to our freedoms than anything the Communists might have been able to accomplish.

The difficulty with a debate like this one is that the witch-hunters have two great psychological forces at their disposal—the force of fear and the force of conformity—both of which become incalculably powerful in times of national anxiety. Meanwhile, the opponents of witch-hunting and loyalty purges must rely upon the strength of philosophical ideas; they have as allies to their own reason only some excellent quotations from the Founding Fathers, and to prove their case they must cite illustrations from the history of other countries. The witch-hunters can win by arousing enough fear and suspicion to deafen the public to philosophical considerations, while the defenders of freedom must not only present their arguments with forceful logic, but are obliged to contend against the great waves of hysteria which weaken the common ground of reason on which logic must make its appeal.

It is easy to bring oneself up-to-date on this debate. *U.S. News World Report* for Sept. 7 presents a long interview with Senator McCarthy, in which the arguments for the political inquisition are effectively and astutely stated. In the same

issue of this periodical, Senator Benton argues the liberal case, and readers who wish to examine the foundations of this case in detail would do well to read Alan Barth's new book, *The Loyalty of Free Men* (Viking, 1951).

Here, we propose another approach. What are the social and psychological causes which create situations like the present Freedom-versus-Security dilemma? Actually, what has happened is the beginning of a progressive breakdown of faith in reason in the United States. In both politics and education, we no longer have confidence that the truth we possess has its own power of persuasion. Perhaps we no longer are confident that we possess the truth. As Supreme Court Justice Jackson pointed out last year:

Only in the darkest periods of human history has any Western government concerned itself with mere belief, however eccentric or mischievous, when it has not matured into overt action; and if that practice survives anywhere it is in the Communist countries whose philosophies we loathe. . . . Communists are not the only faction which will put us all in mental strait-jackets.

The general principle involved in Justice Jackson's observation was well put by Thomas Jefferson in the ideal which he held out to prospective teachers at the University of Virginia:

This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error so long as reason is free to combat it.

Is Thomas Jefferson a safe guide—or rather, is the principle he enunciated a safe guide? If so, then the course of our inquiry is laid out before us: we need to determine *why* reason no longer seems adequate to combat error, forcing us to adopt other means. If not, then we might as well abandon any pretense to following the Declaration of Independence and its trust in the "self-evident"

truths which were to gain for the United States the loyalty of its citizens and the respect of other nations. The rule of reason is obviously associated with certain other ideas, also present in the Declaration of Independence. The exercise of reason in relation to the political ordering of a society inevitably leads to the ideas of equality and justice. It seems fair to say that, over the 175 years of the existence of the United States, there has been as much or more practical equality and justice here than in any other country in the world—except, of course, for the practice of Negro slavery until the Civil War, and the gross inequities suffered by the Negroes ever since. It may be argued that the rule of reason was able to become the primary political principle of the United States because the Founding Fathers succeeded in putting into practice the ideas of freedom, equality, and justice. The American Revolution was certainly a relatively rational revolution which resulted in few if any excesses of tyranny and violence, as compared to the French and Russian revolutions.

Further, the "class-struggle" idea has never been popular in the United States. The doctrine of the dignity of the individual has sunk deep in the American consciousness—as it has in England, also, despite the inherited class structure of English society—with the result that reliance on reason has been the rule rather than the exception in both these countries. Actual Communist influence, for example, has been small in England and America, whereas the Communist Parties of France and Italy are no mere "factions," but definite political forces to be reckoned with.

Briefly, we are proposing that the survival of the rule of reason is possible only under conditions of equality and justice. It is reason which establishes the dignity and equality of man—equality before the law, and equality of potential worth—and when reason is misused to serve the purposes of a regime which practices injustice and perpetuates inequality, reason will eventually be dismissed with contempt, to be replaced by

intrigue, revolutionary plots, and every kind of dissimulation.

All through history, it has been the peoples who were divided by stratified inequalities who have succumbed to imperialism from without or to subversion from within. Divided peoples are weakened peoples, and the weakness is moral rather than military. India gave way to conquest by the Moguls. Islam is an equalitarian religion, whereas Hinduism, in its decadent form, is above all a religion of separation of man into castes of unequal rights and privileges. The imperial Roman Empire gave way to the inroads of Gothic barbarians when the dignity of the individual Roman citizen was all but forgotten, and when the Roman Senate—the organ of reason in Roman government—had become little more than the catspaw of brutal emperors. The Nazi Revolution, despite its endless crimes, did succeed in giving the German people a sense of unity and equality, and it took the combined forces of Russia and the United States to administer a final defeat to the Nazi forces. The barbaric "equality" of blood may be looked upon with contempt by believers in the democratic tradition, but genuine conviction, even when barbarous, is always more powerful than halfhearted political philosophy, even when it happens to be democratic.

The problem of dealing with Communists is admittedly a difficult one. The Communists eagerly use democratic procedures of self-government, but only in order to gain the power to destroy them. For Americans, however, the dilemma is rather a moral problem than a political one involving the threatened seizure of power. The Communist threat to the Czar was very different (and so, it ought to be added, were the Communists of those days). The Czar ruled by divine right, not by reason. It was in a sense natural for the Russian revolutionists to despair of "reason" as the means to a better social order. Instead, they exploited the differences, the divisions, in Russian society, set one class against another, and rode to power in a blind, unreasoning

outburst of revolutionary fury of Russians against Russians.

In the United States, the revolutionist is—or was—invited to advocate his cause in reasonable terms; the assumption being that if his cause is just, and his reasoning is good, what he proposes ought to be adopted by a free and self-determining people. There can be but one explanation for withdrawing this invitation—that the people are no longer capable of self-government; that they must be protected from the false logic of the revolutionists; *and*, that a special group of people, namely, the witch-hunters, are the only ones qualified to separate truth from falsity in political opinions. This is a direct attack on the principle of equality in American political life. It is also a direct invitation to rule by a dictating minority, instead of rule by reason.

What lies behind this breakdown of faith in the rule of reason? So far as we can see, the explanation must be in a semi-conscious hypocrisy with respect to the power of reason. Twice within this century, we have abandoned the power of reason for the power of military force. Increasingly, the emotion of fear is shaping the foreign and domestic policy of the United States. Our government has become extremely paternalistic at home, loudly self-righteous abroad. The people have less and less to do with the practical decisions of national affairs. We are more and more a divided people, our inherited principles more rhetorical than practical. Whatever the reasons for this process, the feeling of impotence it inspires is a terrible reality. Not enough American citizens *feel equal*, any more, so that reliance on reason is no longer a power in national decision. Why else should anyone fear at all the puerile and pompous claims of Communist propaganda?

Only people without a faith of their own could be vulnerable to the sophomoric appeals of the Communists. The policies adopted by legislatures and educational institutions to oppose the spread of Communist doctrines seem to be

more a confession of failure in positive conviction than an intelligent security program. Are we interested only in mere "symptoms" of our trouble, or do we wish to get at the cause?

## *Letter from* **CENTRAL EUROPE**

INNSBRUCK.—Most Americans do not know much about Austria. They may have heard about the Alpine Tyrol and the Salzburg Festivals, or have seen a movie, dripping with romance, about Imperial Vienna. Hardly more. This is no wonder, for Austria after all, is a small country, and its six millions of inhabitants could easily find room in the city of New York. It would be a mistake, however, to judge the significance of Austria from the extent of its territory or the size of the population.

It is well known that Austria occupies an important place in history, so far as music is concerned, and many of its writers and painters are internationally recognized. It comes as a surprise, however, to learn the part played by Austria in geographical discovery. Dr. Hugo Hassinger, professor of geography at the University of Vienna, has lately published a book on this subject entitled *Osterreichs Anteil an der Erforschung der Welt* (Verlag Adolf Holzhausens Nfg., Wien). We read with interest that the discoveries started with the Crusades and pilgrimages and that they reach fully into the present. From the fifteenth century, Prof. Hassinger shows, Vienna has been a world-center for astronomy and cosmography and that the first mapping of larger parts of this globe took place there. Austrians, as individuals and in groups, by special orders or in course of freelancing, have participated in the exploration of many previously unknown territories. During the seventeenth century, one Martin Martini made an atlas of the Chinese Empire which—being based on extensive journeys of the author and containing all possible details—was used by Europeans for hundreds of years. The scientific topography of the mountain-belt between India and Central Asia is founded on experiences of Austrian explorers and the northeastern part of Africa has practically been their domain for a long time. In consequence of the adventurous manner of its discovery, South America has always been a promising field for Austrian travellers and scientists.

As most of the American geographical problems were solved by Americans themselves, the interest of Austrians was limited more or less to the American

Indians, partly from the research point of view, partly from that of the work of Christian missions. Eusebius Franz Kühn (Kino), for instance, arrived 1687 in Mexico, founded mission-stations in California, renewed the geographical knowledge of the peninsula of Lower California, discovered the origin of the Rio Grande, advanced to the Rio Colorado, travelling altogether 20,000 miles, and left an exact cartography of the territory. Ferdinand Komschak (Konsag), inspector of the California missions, mapped the region between the coast and the Rio Colorado. And Martin Steffl (Steffel) compiled a dictionary of the Tarahumara language.

There are other outstanding facts. One of them is that Australia, as well as America, was named in consequence of the assistance of Austrians. Quiros, after having landed at the New Hebrides, called them—in honor of Austria, the native land of his king—Australia. (It is a mistake to connect Australia with the Latin root, *Auster*, indicating "South." The German root of Austria means "East.") Martin Waldseemüller (Walzenmüller, or, in Latin, Hylacomilus), under the impression that Amerigo Vespucci's merits were higher than those of Christopher Columbus, proposed in his book *Cosmographiae Introductio*, published 1507 (reprinted and annotated by J. Fischer and F. von Wieser, New York, 1907), to call the newly discovered "Western countries" America—a name which soon was used generally, especially since the widespread Ortelius-maps made it popular.

Looking back across the centuries, it is surprising how little Austria sought lands overseas in order to create so-called colonies. The theory that this country is a "*Binnenland*" without maritime interests cannot conceal the fact that it once stretched to the shores of the Adriatic and that its spheres of influence went even further. It rather seems as if the Austrians set out to develop their immediate neighbours, particularly in respect to their Balkanic surrounding, instead of making wild tribes "happy" with their civilisation.

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## *REVIEW*

### "MESSAGE FROM A STRANGER"

BACK again among the omnipresent twenty-five-cent reprints, the above title introduces a fairly unusual theme for a story. Marya Mannes' novel, originally issued in 1948 by Viking Press, is built upon the author's imaginative version of what happens to the personality or "soul" after death. Few ventures of this sort are presently undertaken in the literary field, and, of these few, still less can lay claim to avoidance of excessive sentimentalism. *Message From a Stranger* seems rather remarkable in this respect, and because it is obviously not a case of special pleading for any "doctrine" of immortality.

Perhaps the first thing to note in respect to such a story is that, even from the strictly "scientific" point of view, we could well believe it worthwhile to have more novels, essays, and articles on the subject of immortality. This simply because both the arts and the sciences might logically be thought to be concerned with the subjects of greatest interest to mankind, and everyone, we think, must at least be *interested* in the possibility of immortality. Then, too, those who have already become believers in some sort of survival of the soul—on the theory that a single lifetime is hardly enough to account for the full development of human personality—will want to know what *kind* of immortality is the most reasonable.

There are two implicit contentions in *Message from a Stranger*. First, that the complexity and depth of a human being make it impossible for him to "die" all at once. Each being has entered into the personalities of those with whom he has been most closely associated. And in such personalities an atmosphere is provided for the survival of the personal consciousness. The leading character, a woman poet, describes this process:

I died on November 12, 1946, in New York City, after a brief illness. . . . This, presumably, was the final breakdown of matter.

A great peace settled over me. I had not realized until this moment how heavy was the burden of identity. This is the end, thank God, of Olivia Baird, the end of this terrible and vigilant

consciousness; the end of doubt, of pain, of error; the end, even, of emotion, and the beginning of freedom.

As usual, I was a fool.

I was a fool to think that any such drastic transition could be completed all at once, any more than an adolescent can become wholly mature overnight. Like every growth, it was a slow process. And it was to be a long time before I could really leave my life, before the severance from the world I knew was final.

In other words, a total lifetime is presented as analogous to any complex experience of familiar existence, which one cannot truly *leave* until he has assimilated all its major joys and worries, coming forth with some kind of synthesis which offers relief from unsettlement. "Olivia Baird," called invisibly into the presence of her friends, found that in some indefinable sense they were communicating with her when they needed her most, and that her "heaven" and "hell" came to her directly and alternately as she experienced the results of her close involvement with lovers, friends, and children.

The second suggestive idea of philosophical import is that of pre-existence. This subject is introduced when "Olivia" finds that she has "worked through the purgatory of dependence on the living," to the degree that all the best she had to give has been assimilated by those she had the power to help. The needs of her children were the greatest, and she philosophizes about them in her suspended, bodiless state:

Human curiosity—so intense in my life—seemed to have extended itself even into death. Especially with my children, it seemed strange that I should not know every moment of their growth as I knew it when they were little. But then, did I? There were times when Auriol, playing in the same room with me, would be enclosed in that private impenetrable world which children inhabit for their own protection. I wondered now whether this world of theirs was not indeed an extension of their state before birth; just as my death was an extension of my life, and I still shadowed by it. For if life were not the only condition of the human being, and I now knew that it was not, there must be a condition preceding life, preceding the embryo, preceding the foetus, preceding the sperm. And it was this condition, this

knowledge, that still persisted in the eyes of children, giving them a kind of inviolability.

This "intimation" of an immortality which extends both backward and forward from our known lives on earth, is, of course, the same vision as that presented by Shelley and Wordsworth, the last quotation being reminiscent of a child "trailing clouds of glory."

We have already noted that this book virtually ignores "doctrinal" issues. What *ultimately* happens to the "soul" is left completely in the air, save that one is perhaps encouraged to wonder if something mustn't always go on happening to and through each individual human consciousness. The title of the book seems to suggest that the perspective of the soul is indeed radically different from the perspective with which we are most familiar.

The author's conclusion may be taken as a complaint against the tendency of all specific dogmas, including the spiritualist variety, to insist that present shapes and forms are retained after death:

Do not demand that the dead retain their contours and their names. That is for your comfort, not for ours. I know you wish I could tell you about the other dead, about my mother and father, about a recognizable host. But that is not what happens. Nor will you want it to happen when you come this far.

If the word "perspective" occurs too often in this commentary, the excuse might be that *Message From a Stranger* is of value chiefly because it throws familiar things into a fresh focus. A striking example of this is furnished by "Olivia":

I had always believed that the emanations from human beings which we call "personality," or its components—"charm" or "aggressiveness" or "dishonesty"—had actual, if not visible, substance. They pervaded the air about these people, they penetrated their homes, they were, in fact, atmosphere. It was felt on entering a strange house or a familiar room. The atmosphere was benign or malignant, cold or warm, gloomy or gay. You felt at ease and at peace, or you felt disturbed and restless, depending on these emanations thrown out by the inhabitants.

If you took a thousand people, then, and put them together in a crowd, their combined emanations

would become a thick miasma. For some reason, this miasma was usually of a base and anarchic nature. The only "good" crowds I ever saw in life were those dedicated to music or to certain forms of sport. All other mass gatherings (and I witnessed a number after death) threw up a spiritual stench. I remember particularly some political rallies where hate rose like a black cloud to the sky, and where the heat generated by the words of some demagogue consumed what innocence and reason there was in the head of any single being.

Max could talk reverentially as he might about the "masses"; I found them often the agents of evil. That was the danger of cities. The poisons generated by the crowds in any one block in New York were powerful enough to assail and corrode the spirit of any man, alive or dead. They assailed me, and I was dead.

There are some indications that the science of sociology may one day include the study and classification of such "influences." If the results of crime statistics analysis—involving, for example a sudden occurrence of numerous similar brutalities in a given area—are compared with the extra-sensory perception research at Duke University, it may be difficult to tell where imagination and intuition begin and logic and "science" end.

The story of *Message from a Stranger* is very much a part of the realistic current of the day, and "Olivia" has her succession of lovers. One gets the impression, however, that she was a woman of a truly gentle and compassionate nature whose greatest fault was a lack of positiveness when faced with decision. Whether the book as a whole is worth reading is an unanswerable question, depending so much on the tastes, proclivities and interests of each reader. However, we can say that we found it of more value than many novels of greater reputation.

## *COMMENTARY* ORIGIN OF "AMERICA"

IT is quite true, as our Central European correspondent points out, that in 1507 Martin Waldseemüller exaggerated the exploits of one Americus Vesputius in an edition of Ptolemy's *Cosmographia*, and true, also, that his tentative naming of the continents of the Western Hemisphere after Vesputius was widely copied. Waldseemüller's passage reads:

But now these parts have been more extensively explored and another fourth part has been discovered by Americus Vesputius (as will appear in what follows): wherefore I do not see what is rightly to hinder us from calling it Amerige or America, *i.e.*, the land of Americus, after its discoverer Americus, a man of sagacious mind, since both Europe and Asia have got their names from women.

But the customary rendition of Vesputius' first name into Latin was Albericus; and actually, as is well known, Vesputius did not reach the mainland of America in 1497, before Columbus or Cabot, as Waldseemüller supposed. Discussing this comedy of errors in a small volume, *Amerigo*, Stefan Zweig remarks:

It exists, it lives, this new word, and not only by accidental suggestion of Waldseemüller, not by logic or by chance, by right or wrong, but by its inherent phonetic power. America—the word begins with the fullest-sounding vowel in our language. It is good for the cry of enthusiasm, clear for the memory—a strong, full, masculine word, fitting for a young country and a strong nation striving for development.

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If Mr. Zweig had done further research, he would have learned that a little more than "phonetic power" was responsible for the sudden popularity of the name, "America." In the *American Naturalist* for August, 1893, a writer calls attention to the fact that Congress had for twenty years been debating "whether the name 'America' given to the Western continent was not taken from a chain of mountains of a similar name which form cordilleras between Lake Nicaragua and the Mosquito Coast, rather than from the

discoverer, Americus Vesputius." "America," moreover, had various spellings in early maps and documents. Humboldt gives the spelling of "Amaraca," Raleigh uses "Amerioco" and "Amerioca," Herrera spells it "Maraca," and Mercator "Moraca." Thomas de St. Bris wrote an entire volume to prove that the name was not derived from Vesputius at all, but came from the name of the line of Inca kings, Aymara, whose land was known as "Aymaraca," or—*America*.

Here, at least, is a rival theory, strongly supported by evidence, to the myth founded upon a careless passage in Waldseemüller's book.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE last moving picture here recommended for family educational purposes was *The Broken Arrow*, a story of human courage beyond valor in battle, of a code of honor lived so devotedly by a great Indian chief that it shamed most of white society, and of a friendship and trust which grew up between two men on opposite sides of the Indian war. Apart from the obvious values of this film for young people, *The Broken Arrow* and the book, *Blood Brother* (upon which the film was based), afforded one of those much needed opportunities for seeing our generally accepted historical traditions against an unfamiliar background. When one stands with the Indian to view white civilization, that civilization and its rationalizations in regard to exploitation of the Indians and the taking of their lands seem particularly unadmirable. And a critical perspective on national and cultural prejudices is part of what young people need, to inspire original, evaluative thinking. It seems evident that established cultures outgrow attitudes of superiority and habits of exploitation but slowly, if at all, and that Americans are apt to be still doing the same things that they did to the Indians in present policies both at home and abroad, meanwhile employing the same specious rationalizations which argue a "Manifest Destiny" doctrine of white supremacy over those "less fortunately endowed."

Getting behind the facade of our day-to-day "American Way of Life" is also a necessary part of education, if that education is to inspire a desire to improve prevailing social standards. And since much of modern college life still indoctrinates American youth with "prestige" values based on the smug and superficial standard of American "success," we have the temerity to suggest that a motion picture called *Take Care of My Little Girl*—best described as an exposé of the sorority and fraternity systems—is worth seeing in the

company of university-bound teenagers. The picture is well done, actress Jeanne Crain suiting herself admirably to the part of a girl who rejects the sorority life her family background had made her fervidly desire. Snobbishness and a callous disregard of human sensitivity emerge in the "best" sorority, where wealth, social position and physical attractiveness are the only bases for acceptability.

It is not our purpose here to argue extensively against sororities and fraternities. As we have said before, it is quite possible for a young man or woman to learn more in one of the Greek Letter societies than he will learn in class—if his institution of learning is no better than the average. But we do suggest using *Take Care of My Little Girl* as a mirror of current social values in general.

Where does the sorority get its policy of excluding those with insufficient social background or wealth? Obviously, from the social life of our large cities, from the country-club sets, whose children are early intended to display Superior Associations and Contacts with all possible ostentation. Where do the policies of racial discrimination come from? Not only from "exclusive" people, but also from every source of the White Supremacy legend. Where do the ridiculous forms of preparation for initiation, known as "hell-week," come from? The ridiculous part, at least, it seems clear, comes from the antics of innumerable men's clubs, who equate a taste for childish pranks with all of the fabled joys of youth. Where do sororities and fraternities learn to sacrifice good but unconventional people, simply because they do not "fit in"? Rather obviously, again, from our fine upstanding, mature, American world of politics, which eyes with suspicion the man of integrity who cannot be trusted to choose expediency over principles, as his brothers of the Party will undoubtedly often require. Where does the admiration of the successful exam-cribber come from? Who can possibly miss in answering



this one? Our business world has long shown great veneration for success accomplished through "sharp deals."

A word of caution in respect to this motion picture is in order. By being so thoroughly "anti-sorority," it suffers from the oversimplifications of all "anti" crusades and positions. Not all the non-fraternity students will actually be such paragons of virtue and manliness as the returned war hero who captures Miss Crain's affections on a non-fraternity plank. Too, the kind of affability and convivial fellowship for which most fraternity people have a gift is not a quality to be automatically despised, while the bull sessions of a fraternity house often lead in constructive directions. We can surmise, also, that if the mental life of the university were more vital, all sorts of improvements would automatically manifest in the quality of fraternity thinking. Young men and women are much more flexible, and their prejudices easier to overcome than is the case with most of their elders. Yet if no better values are offered them than those offered by their professors, or by the world at large, they will go right on making the standards they have inherited as glamorous as possible—which is natural enough.

In connection with the paucity of genuine intellectual stimulation on most campuses, and for which lack of vitality the exaggerated attention shown fraternities is partial compensation, we suggest a consideration of the tutorial program at Santa Barbara College, as described recently in *Frontiers* (Sept. 12). Whether one is a member of a Greek-Letter society or not, any revision of our dull, medieval techniques of instruction could make college life a much richer, more mature experience.

Perhaps our own unwillingness to condemn everything about fraternities and sororities, even while calling attention to *Take Care of My Little Girl*, grows from the fact that many of the Greek traditions had philosophic depth and meaning—including the Mystery Religions from which nearly

all fraternity and sorority initiation rites have derived. Certainly, the idea of learning through discussions and argument in small groups, proposed as early as the sophomore year via the introductory "colloquium" of the Santa Barbara program is a sort of Greek Academy idea, and far superior to the indoctrination-instruction tradition so unfortunately bequeathed to us by the Middle Ages.

## *FRONTIERS* Living Religions

IT must have been with a certain confidence in the strength of the rational spirit, as well as with a desire to do justice, that the firm of C. A. Watts & Co., Ltd., London publishers of the *Literary Guide and Rationalist Review*, and numerous books oriented from the freethought viewpoint, resolved to issue *Readings from World Religions*, compiled by Selwyn Gurney Champion and Dorothy Short. The only comparable situation that we can think of is the present use as a text, in Union Theological Seminary, of Corliss Lamont's anti-religious book, *The Illusion of Immortality*.

It is natural to feel respect for the house of Watts, as this publishing venture seems to be obviously a principled undertaking. At any rate, from across the Atlantic, and judging from the titles on the Watts list, one could hardly conclude that the first Mr. Watts started this business in order to accumulate wealth. There is an atmosphere about *The Literary Guide* which suggests that the publishers and the editors perform their duties, in some measure, as a labor of love. And as most of their publications evidence uncompromising criticism of religion, especially organized, sectarian religion—and, doubtless by natural momentum, a fairly suspicious eye toward any sort of religious idea, organized or not—the issuance by Watts of a book devoted to eleven living religions is a somewhat momentous event.

First of all, *Readings from World Religions* is a completely honest book. On the other hand, it is not a particularly successful book, from the viewpoint of doing what we think such a book *might* do—although it remains a question whether any one book can adequately represent the great religions of the world. The book is honest because it strives for simple objectivity—it tries to tell what millions upon millions of human beings have believed, for centuries and more, about the nature of things. It does this by giving a number of selected aphorisms and series of quotations from the scriptures of the eleven religions, which are—Hinduism, Shintoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism,

Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. The quotations are in each case introduced by a short article outlining the religion under consideration, with a sketch of the life of its founder or founders.

But these quotations, torn from the context of living conviction, extracted from scriptures which are intimately related to national and cultural idiosyncrasy and unique tradition, are rather artifacts of religion than actual religion itself. A book about religion is very like a book about love—at best a weak and unresonant echo of the voice which speaks in the hearts of human beings. This is not to suggest that religion cannot be contained in books: it can. But the religion that may be found in books must be put into them with the fire of moral inspiration—it must be there as a labor of love, and not "arranged" in convenient "samples" by the antiquarian, the scholar, or the professor of comparative religions, whether mildly sympathetic or mildly antagonistic.

One more criticism, and then we have done with negative comments. The opening chapter of introduction assumes the accuracy of the speculations of cultural anthropology regarding the origins of religion. The usual scheme of development, starting with Animism, followed by Animatism, and this by Polytheism and Monarchism—these supposed "stages" of religious evolution being crowned by Monotheism—is presented without any particular questioning. We do not doubt the existence of evidence suggesting this analysis, but the fact remains that "history" of this sort ignores entirely the quality of immediate and intuitive communion which must have pervaded even the most primitive of religions, and overlooks, therefore, the possibility that our "objective" anthropological studies may have missed entirely the essential reality behind these differing forms. We deplore, that is, the somewhat superior and even smug mood pervading all such analyses of religion. The pleasantest sort of retribution we can imagine would be for the ghost of some ancient, wonder-working shaman to appear before a learned assembly of anthropologists and frighten them all half to death with some "miracle" which his non-academic knowledge of the forces of nature made possible.

This book, however, is quite useful as a survey of the religions of the world, in terms of differences in doctrines and similarities in ethics. It could be read by almost anyone with profit. Apart from what might be expected in such a volume are passages which show extraordinary insight into contemporary problems—the sort of problems we imagine "the ancients" knew nothing about. For example, there is the following taken from the *Laws of Manu*, having peculiar application to the modern age of excessive organization and mechanical interdependence:

Let him carefully avoid all undertakings the success of which depends on others; but let him eagerly pursue that the accomplishment of which depends upon himself. Everything that depends on others gives pain, everything that depends on oneself gives pleasure; know that this is the short definition of pleasure and pain.

"Impractical," some may say. And so it is, for our kind of society. But possibly the impracticability is the fault of our society, and the advice a basic criticism of how we have let our lives become far too dependent upon the doings of others.

Another sort of value in *Readings from World Religions* is the light it throws on religions that have been misrepresented to us—Shintoism, for instance:

In many religions God is above, man is below; God is supreme, man, by himself, nothing. Shintoism tends to exalt man to the sphere of divinity, and this is the only sense in which there is Divine Incarnation. A man, it has been said, may *become* divine and be worshipped not only after his death, but also during his life-time. The Emperor was, till lately, a God "visible in the flesh," and many men, especially those who have served their country well, have been similarly regarded. Thus we read: "A righteous man, pure in mind and just in conduct, is himself a Deity."  
...

Traditionally, the head of each family was both father and priest, and became a guardian deity after his death. It should be noticed, however, that the ancestor was worshipped because he had become a *Kami* {superior being}—rather than as an ancestor as such. Ancestor-worship is not, as often supposed, a fundamental doctrine of the Japanese. It is of Chinese origin, and has been developed mainly under the influence of Chinese ideas. In Shinto it is the

*Kami* who rule, and the ancestor may, or may not, be one of these.

The following notable passage is from a Shinto scripture:

I have no corporeal existence, but Universal benevolence is my divine body. I have no physical power, but Uprightness is my strength. I have no religious clairvoyance beyond what is bestowed by Wisdom, I have no power of miracle other than the attainment of quiet happiness, I have no tact except the exercise of gentleness.

Other facts of interest gleaned from this book include the interesting information that "Satan" was borrowed by the Christians from the religion of the Zoroastrianism; that the sixth century, B.C., was extraordinary for the founding of great religions—Lao Tze, Zoroaster, Confucius, and Gautama Buddha all lived in this epoch—and, we might add, Pythagoras of Greece.

Our space is running out, so we conclude with a passage from Confucius, also a tract for our excessively political times:

The ancients who wished to illustrate virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their own States, they first regulated their families, wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

### *Has it Occurred to Us?*

THE inventors, designers, builders, and manufacturers of mechanical brain-men have occasional regrets about the foreseeable future, when fabulous computing machines are expected to replace seven million workers. All the standard operations of filing and clerking, the "brain"-makers tell us, can now be arranged for by means of dials, levers and coils enclosed in a metal box. There would seem to be no occasion for human brains to occupy themselves day after day, week in and out, doing what electrical substitutes can accomplish in minutes.

Both genuine and crocodile tears are being shed over the displacement of human beings by these tame Frankensteins. But the mountains of mechanical detail which now shut the human worker in an airless valley of dreary routine have scarcely the makings of a "lost Eden." What would seven million people do if it were arranged that in one year every last nagging chore would be emptied into the lap of a friendly machine? Suppose no high school students and college graduates could look forward to oblivion as "office workers," but were forced to train themselves for work that no machine could steal from them? What would happen in the home, relieved of all mechanical tasks, for parents and children alike? Would there be new hours of freedom? With the oft-desired "more time," many things now crowded out of daily life *might* find a place in the family program. How often the tired business man wishes for time to read, while his overworked housewife cherishes a never-fulfilled desire to write and answer letters as she used to, years ago. Sonny hardly has time for "anything," he complains, whereas Sis spends so many hours dreaming of how she would like to occupy her hours, that she would have difficulty selecting any one pastime to indulge first.

Yet even in our present crowded days, there is more reading than thought, and heads-of-families, too, may need some of William Penn's *Advice to His Children*: "More true knowledge

comes by meditation than by reading; for much reading is an oppression of the mind, and extinguishes the natural candle, which is the reason of so many senseless scholars in the world." Perhaps Mother's letters, were she so much less busy, would be less worth writing. Mailing an abbreviated diary to one's circle of friends is not the practice of the letter-writing *art*. It might be that the "needed" letter would project less sympathy and health-giving power, when composed in some graceful leisure instead of in the press of life and duties. Sonny may discover that there is *a* time for everything—but how much *more* time, right now, would he know what to do with? And fanciful, moody, wish-thinking Sis: already she passes Time by, almost without acknowledging its greeting—why should she pay any better attention to "more of the same"?

Might not teachers, contemplating the revolution of vocational work, be even more at a loss? What kind of reading will be taught, bearing in mind that scanning for names, dates, figures, and routine information will no longer be a requisite? Ordinary arithmetic would be likely to sow a crop of inferiority complexes, seeing that the computers do so much more, so much faster, and *correctly!* Training the memory will need a new rationale: why make the brain a filing case, when the new "clerks" can't operate with human archives? Will teachers be searching with renewed earnestness for human faculties that have not (and perhaps could not) be imitated or duplicated by the cleverest mechanical men? Judgment, imagination, self-checking discrimination, sympathy, humor, love, and gratitude: where, in human society, have these ever been standardized or completed? The teaching of them is not possible. As well attempt to grow only a few special branches of a tree. All that the greatest of men can do is to refrain from diminishing, by their own injustice, the representation of Justice among mankind. Imagination is fired only by imagination; discrimination is formed by practicing accurate observation and true inference; sympathy is first a

spontaneous response, and like humor, love, and gratitude, sympathy is not something that can be added to human character.

Now, suppose the seven million people relieved of their jobs by mechanical substitutes were encouraged to bring more distinctively human qualities to bear upon their work, and, throughout the social structure, automatic action were to be delegated to electrical "brains." Suppose education meant a lifetime privilege, an unending pursuit of nobler sympathy and understanding, a careful nurture of discrimination, and of the sense of justice. Suppose human skill were measured solely by quality, by its spirit and tone—efficiency, as a multiple of speed and technique, would then no longer be as impressive as the nature of the efforts made, and the activity's general significance.

Such, it would appear, must be the reply to the menace of the mechanical age, for it will be an affirmation of the illimitable superiority of the mind-that-is-alive over all imaginable automatic devices. Technology, after all, is finally a way of dealing with human affairs and a way of thinking them. A population that changes its way of thinking and dealing would have the superstructure of bureaucracy blown off its stem as easily as our breath sends the dandelion's white top off into the air.

Has it occurred to us that a vigorous counter response to the machines which ape efficiency might, in the course of time, produce a civilization whose workings no machine could expedite? Might come a day when the level of a culture will be appraised by the number of machines it can *do without*?