

Anti-Theology and the Riddles of Alcyone

by

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Some readers of this journal may have come upon the writings of Alan Watts and wondered why he apparently aligned his outlook for a time with the work of Schuon, Guénon, and Coomaraswamy —only to draw away again. The answer is simple: a speculative intelligence brought him hither, and a spiritual unintelligence removed him thither—thither being in modern parlance the "anti-guru" mode of intellection for which Krishnamurti can be considered a leading exponent. Watts, an Anglican-trained theologian who has dipped into Oriental metaphysic, sets forth the pattern of this transition in *Beyond Theology, The Art of Godmanship*,¹ a crazy pastiche of esoteric insights and false deductions, yet typically symptomatic of the ills to which so much of the pseudo-spiritual flesh of our times is heir.

He tells us he broke away from the *philosophia perennis* outlook because "there is not a scrap of evidence that the Christian hierarchy was ever aware of itself as one among several lines of transmission for a universal tradition", whereas "the so-called 'traditionalist school'... regards every orthodox spiritual tradition as a more-or-less deliberate adaptation of the *philosophia perennis* to the needs of different cultures." The truth is, exclusivity is not the prerogative of Christianity: there never has been a religion East or West that did not require what Watts calls "an all-or-nothing commitment", and certainly none of the above named proponents of the perennial wisdom ever claimed otherwise. It is quite another matter that a few sages in all traditions have recognized the same transcendent unity underlying divergent forms—Sri Ramakrishna, for example, where he says that "It is one and the same Avatara that, having plunged into the ocean of

¹ Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, 1968

life, rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, and diving down again rises in another place and is known as Christ", or Nicholas of Cusa (whom Watts would appropriate to his ends) when he says "Hence there is a single religion and a single creed for all beings endowed with understanding, and this religion is presupposed behind all the diversity of rites".

The author of *Beyond Theology* assumes a stance which he begs the reader not to mistake for blasphemy, or even "the Devil himself", but to accept simply as the role of "Jester" at the Court of Heaven presiding as it were over a masque being played out between Atman and the human ego. Watts, however, is no Omar Khayyam: to qualify for the Fool at Court, one has both to know the palace rules and who holds command, whereas our Jester knows neither—a diplomatic gaffe compounded by his total cynicism as to the possibility of there being any Court or King at all. "Seriously, is it plausible to conceive our universe as something run on the lines of Egyptian, Persian and Byzantine monarchies, with their thrones and judgments, their dungeons, torture chambers and scaffolds? To say that the traditional Christian imagery of God as the heavenly King is to be understood as myth rather than fact... is only to say that the general climate of twentieth-century knowledge and thought has made it [the existence of such a being] thoroughly implausible and slightly comic. And so long as we are exhorted in church services to address ourselves (for example) 'with a pure heart and a humble voice unto the throne of the heavenly grace,' the very idea of God will be contaminated with this now ridiculous image. It is simply unimaginable that the universe of modern astronomy and physics, biology and chemistry, should be the creation of any such pompous potentate; our world is much too astonishing for any explanation of that kind to be meaningful... To sophisticated theologians it may seem somewhat naive... to whip such a dead horse." Watts can think he has learned something from the Hindus about Immanence, but anything to do with Transcendence is beyond his grasp, being as he is in complete ignorance concerning metaphysical principles and by consequence the theory of emanations descending from the noumenal to the phenomenal world. For him the doctrine of the archetypes is a dead letter; yet it is this doctrine that enables Hermes, for example, to say that earthly kings "hold their sovereignty after His likeness", that is, "the supreme King of the universe."

God can as well lack majesty ("Highness") as a mountain can lack height.

As for the palace rules, the author of this manual on "Godmanship" could not care less, but the fact is that religion being by definition profoundly aristocratic, its language will necessarily be characterized by dignity and nobility. Watts is a skillful writer who knows perfectly well how to turn a phrase, and he has chosen to punctuate his points with consummate vulgarity. Indeed, the author leaves the reader with the impression that he has been traumatized by a frightful Anglican public-school syndrome. "Raised in this atmosphere, children never cease to feel that this is a world in which they do not really belong. Thus educated, men go through life on tiptoe, ever fearing to offend the mysterious Authority behind things, and the claim to be one Self with the eternal Ground of the world is felt to be the ultimate impertinence and effrontery. Christianity does not have to remain in this nursery and boarding school atmosphere... The ultimate identity of man with God is not identity with this Commander-in-Chief of the universe".

All this notwithstanding, Watts manifests a genuine appreciation of spiritual forms, such as the Latin Mass, Gregorian chant, the *Philokalia*, and "cathedrals, abbeys, priories, parish churches and oratories in the enchanted stone of Romanesque (Norman) and Gothic masons." And no one could surpass his strictures on the Protestant Establishment: "The insides of most Protestant churches resemble courthouses or town halls, and the focal point of their services is a serious exhortation from a man in a black gown. No golden lights, no bells, incense, and candles. No mystery upon an altar or behind an iconostasis. But people brought up in this atmosphere seem to love it. It feels warm and folksy, and leads, on the one hand, to hospitals, prison reform, and votes for all, and, on the other, to sheer genius for drabness, plain cooking ungraced with wine, and constipation of the bright emotions—all of which are considered virtues. If I try to set aside the innate prejudices which I feel against this religion, I begin to marvel at the depth of its commitment to earnestness and ugliness. For there is a point at which certain types of ugliness become fascinating, where one feels drawn to going over them again and again, much as the tongue keeps fondling a hole in a tooth. I begin to realize that those incredibly plain people, with their almost unique lack of colour, may after all be one of the most astonishing reaches of the divine *maya*—the Dancer of the world as far out from himself as he can get, dancing not-dancing."

Yet with all this, Watts has no sense of the sacred: "Every Easter Sunday should be celebrated with a solemn and reverent burning of the Holy Scriptures, for the whole meaning of the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven ('which is within you') is that God-manhood is to be discovered here and now inwardly, not in the letter of the Bible." And again: "Is it really of any great interest to ask whether Jesus was literally and historically born of a virgin and resurrected physically after his death? This kind of emphasis makes him a human freak, like a two-headed baby." With how many heads was that similitude coined?

The central argument of the book, based on a misconstruction of the Hindu teachings on *lilâ* and *mâyâ*, is that no meaningful solution to the ills of existence is ever going to be achieved in Christian theological terms of an Absolute Potentate lording it (in the vein of the author) over a creature arbitrarily produced *ex nihilo*, then banished by the Fall, and ever after sadistically condemned—out of "loving chastisement"—to a moral rectitude in view of Redemption that by human definition is never achievable—until man goes *beyond theology* in a game of "Godmanship" where he discovers the delightful joke that he has really all along been the Divine Self (*Atman*) disguised (*mâyâ*) as the ego in an "eternal dance of hide-and-seek" (*lilâ*). The tables are now turned: what was formerly thought to be outside or above ourselves is all at once seen to be within our very most center; "we" in reality are only so many variants of the one "I" whose "sport" is to scare "Himself" senseless with the most frightful nightmares He can invent about "otherness", until when the universe is rent with shrieks of horror, the "Divine Jokester" calls the whole thing off by awakening with laughter that turns the agony into the ecstasy which all along it really was in disguise.² The point is, "as soon as you realize that you *are* the Center, you have no further need to see it, to try to make it an object or an experience. This is why the mystics call the highest knowledge unknowing ... When the material world is no longer asked to provide the eternal home it is suddenly and amazingly transfigured. Its impermanence becomes a dance instead of a mockery... It is likewise the body resurrected and the Paradise Garden. For death and the Last Day are when our conventional identity comes to the end of its tether and we `give up the ghost' of the isolated ego." By thus

² A theme already developed in Gerald Heard's *Pain, Sex and Time*.

reducing eschatology to its proper perspective, we are delivered on the one hand from "the tedium of immortality" and "the monstrous notion of a physical universe containing the risen bodies of all our friends and relations permanently pickled in Spirit", and on the other from "the Church's disagreeable insistence on the reality of the totally malignant spirit of cosmic evil, [and] on everlasting damnation". Seen within this new framework, "the Christian mythos has the possibility of blossoming into the most joyously exuberant, swinging, colourful, and liberated religion there ever was. Heaven need not wait for the grave." We have more than an echo here of the Rev. Harvey Cox's carnival-spirit religion. For Watts, the pure materialist "is either a slob or a bore", while the pure mystic "is more of a Euclidean proposition than a human being". But the author, like R. C. Zaehner, believes the moment has arrived for "a really thoroughgoing spiritual materialism... a true marriage of Heaven and Earth"; and in this sense Karl Barth's term "theology of crisis" points up the providential nature of the thorny aspects of Christianity, as being "the writhings which precede revelation; they are like the pangs of a woman in labour, but here in labour for the birth of a new kind of consciousness and a new apprehension of man's identity."

And now Watts draws us into his confidence: "In writing this book, I am to some extent letting the cat out of the bag by publishing things which should be communicated in secret.... The esoteric is... what we communicate with winks rather than words.... But the very fact that sexual love and overt sexual imagery is the principal Christian taboo points directly to what must be, in fact, the *mysterium tremendum*, the inner and esoteric core of the religion.... The Church reeks of sexuality because it is the one thing intentionally and obviously absent, the one thing definitely concealed, and thus the one thing really important." His argument runs that prudery is all part of the cosmic play intentionally cultivated to intensify sexual pleasure, whereas a libertine indulgence would glut the joy. Repressed sexuality is even seen as being at the core of the Inquisition. By joining in this cosmic game of "lust/guilt, prudery/prurience", man is participating in "the eternal oscillation of in/out, lost/found, and yes/no. And this oscillation is also the *vac*, the primordial sound or word, AUM, whereby all things are brought into manifestation, and thus the equivalent of the Word in Christianity." Hence, "if Christianity really means what it says about the union of the Word and the Flesh, the resolution of the problem must be

the divinisation of sexuality."

One has to insert a parenthesis here and ask where the author relates his own intelligence to the teachings of Christ. "Poor Jesus! If he had known how great an authority was to be projected upon him, he would never have said a word. His literary image in the Gospels has... become far more of an idol than anything graven... so that today the most genuinely reverent act of worship is to destroy that image. In his own words, 'It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit) cannot come unto you'.... To insist on the historicity of the Christian myth is to remove Christ to the sterile distance of an archaeological curiosity."

After this sobering *mise au point*, we can return to the more serious business of "Godmanship", or what the author calls "making 'celestial whoopee'... The Indian image of the universe as a manifestation or emanation of the divine is such a simple and plausible game-form... It permits gut-shaking seriousness up to the very last micro-second—to the bullet in the brain, or to the twist of some demon's red-hot trident in the tenderest vitals of a hypocrite in hell, so that just beyond the point when everything reaches final and perfect evil, the scream turns suddenly into the ringing voice that says, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End!' Thus is the "sadism" of Christian theology "transfigured" into the more comprehensive "masochism" of Oriental doctrines.

It is likewise the encounter of the "I" with the "Eye". In the chapter "Who Is Who?", Watts describes this union: "If only I had the rubber necks of the people in the hymn who aspire

Prostrate before thy Throne to lie,

And gaze and gaze on thee!

"At the same instant I become aware of those Eyes watching me right through the back of my head—Eyes that bore implacably into the most tender and disreputable centers of my soul... until everything is just one Eye. And because there is no brow, no face, I cannot tell what expression that Eye has. It just looks, and I can't stand it. I start running, running in blind panic down the corridors of the temple; but every way I turn I am running straight into that Eye. I drop to the floor, curl up, shut my eyes, and cover my head. Yet the Eye comes at me from deep inside me—vaster than ever, filling all thinkable space.

"There is nowhere—nowhere at all—left to go... The only shred of myself that I can find is just the terror, the running away from that Eye... There is nowhere for terror to go, no one to answer the screams, no darkness to cover me, no place to bury the body. And, just then, I am the Eye. For 'the eye with which I see God,' said Eckhart, 'is the same eye with which God sees me.' "

It only remains now to find out how we, too, can share in this oneness. The secret comes through not desiring it. "The final meaning of negative theology, of knowing God by unknowing, of the abandonment of idols both sensible and conceptual, is that ultimate faith is not in or upon anything at all. It is complete letting go." For the technique of mastering this "negative theology"—a misnomer for "anti-theology"—Watts on the final page of his book turns the reader over to Krishnamurti.

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Inspired by certain Messianic speculations of Madame Blavatsky, two of her disciples in the Theosophical Society, the Rev. C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant (a "reincarnation" of Giordano Bruno, and prior to that, Hypatia), undertook to expedite the coming of the future Maitreya Buddha by themselves fixing on a vessel of election for the purpose. Thus within the first decade of our century a young Hindu, J. Krishnamurti, predestined through thirty previous "incarnations" and an "Initiate" of the "Great White Lodge" somewhere in Tibet, was recognized as the providential vehicle to incorporate the Second Advent; he was accordingly invested at Adyar, India, with the name *Alcyone*, made head of an Order ("Star in the East"), and sent to Oxford to complete the polishing necessary for the mission.

He repudiated the whole comedy in 1929, dissolving the Order, rejecting Theosophy as just another "system", and renouncing all claims to be a World Teacher. His sobriquet has been kept in this article, however, since even if he left the Theosophists, he has retained the "*samskaras*" (members of the Society still revere him) and done nothing to dispel the illusion that he has a crucial message for mankind about the possibility of an inner transformation of the individuality with its consequent outward transformation of society. Give what explanation one will—his charisma, the social unrest and personal

insecurity of his audience, the flattery of an "anti-doctrine" that disowns orthodoxies and commitments—Krishnamurti has attracted masses for some half a century who buy his books, sit spellbound at his lectures, follow his seminars at Saanen, Switzerland, and now send their children to his Educational Center at Brockwood Park in Hampshire. A glance at the dialogues reproduced in any of his numerous books betrays a bourgeois banality camouflaged solely by a smoke screen of sophistries and by what Marco Pallis calls "the rather repellent sophistication of his mode of expression".

As a prerequisite for understanding his "method", Krishnamurti says it is essential that we discard all our previous thought reflexes and conditionings. The first notion to get rid of, then, is that this work has anything whatever to do with religion—with religion orthodox, revealed, or in any way consecrated—unless the word is to lose all meaning. This is given on his own authority (although he says "there is no authority whatsoever") throughout his teachings which hold the revelations and practices of the world faiths in contempt: "Thought has cleverly said that there is a permanent, eternal self in yourself.... Thought has created the idea of an eternal self—the soul, the Atman—in order to find safety, hope" (*Talks and Dialogues Saanen 1967*, Netherlands: Servire, 1969). To follow him means not belonging "to any particular dogma, religion, church, and all that immature nonsense" (*ibid.*). "A devout Catholic, practising his belief day after day, will experience the figure of Christ in his vision or dreams. That only strengthens his conditioning, therefore such a person is not free to observe; he remains a little bourgeois, caught in his own particular belief, his own particular dogma, inviting the world to enter his cage" (*Talks and Discussions at Brockwood Park 1969*, Servire/Wassenaar, 1970). "So one depends inwardly more and more on something—a drug, a Master, a guru, a belief and so there is more dependence and more resistance and more fear" (*ibid.*). We read further on that the mind has everlastingly sought "the immortal and the timeless", which can only be attained in that freedom which comes from going beyond mind: "Because I have no principle—which is a conclusion—I have no ideology and there is freedom." Mind is the result of conditioning, he tells us elsewhere in the same book. "When we are violent and angry, that violence is part of the animal. We have evolved from the higher apes, we have got that violence in us. Aren't you the result of yesterday? ... The whole Asiatic world believes that there is a soul, that there is the Atman. You can be conditioned to believe

anything."³

Again, "there are innumerable gurus all over the world... who practise various systems of meditation... A system implies not only the authority of the one who has achieved and who says, 'I know', but it also means to practise, day after day, in the hope of achieving some particular result... If I practise something daily... my mind becomes more and more dulled as it gets caught in the habit of a routine. So one has to reject all systems because they are unintelligent" (*ibid.*).

How, then are we to get beyond mind? By cultivating awareness: "An essential part of meditation is this understanding of the difference between concentration and attention. Concentration demands effort; awareness or attention does not... Where there is concentration there is exclusion and resistance; and where there is resistance there is conflict and the way of duality. I think that is fairly clear?" (*ibid.*). What is clear is that the speaker does not know the etymology of the word he is attacking, for it means a centering or "synthesis" (*samâdhi*) of our powers, an inclusive faculty transcending and resolving dualities, and exclusive uniquely of distractions, of the conventional mind activity which the speaker himself maintains must be stilled.

But since Krishnamurti claims not to be a teacher, what is the sound all about? He claims that a teaching received "is already a secondhand thing"; therefore who is beguiling whom? Is he the dupe of his audience, or vice versa? The answer is: both—it is only through their mutual ignorance that the comedy is perpetuated. While criticizing the thought of his questioners for "chasing its tail", he is doing nothing other himself. To use another metaphor, he sits on the branch on which he sits; for in default of a common denominator or minimal cognitive adequation between agent and recipient, no communication is possible, and ideas are voided in a flux of empty utterances.

Furthermore, either his "message" is timeless, in which case it is madness to believe Krishnamurti the first to promulgate it, or it is not, in which case it is a passing fad without interest. The man is in fact a victim of the very thought conditioning he would

³ It is fantastic that one Asiatic alone should think he has escaped this "conditioning". Thus are his arguments rendered nugatory, following the dictum of Aristotle (Met. XI. 8. 30) : "A science of the accidental is not even possible ... for all science is of that which is always or for the most part, but the accidental is in neither of these classes."

reject, being a product of the Brahmanic heritage from which he has deviated. The violence of his reaction against religion is a manifestation even of exactly the sort of antagonism, resistance, opposition, and conflict which he pretends to be rejecting. Moreover, every spiritual anomaly is nothing but the distortion of a truth. With Watts it is a perversion of negative theology and a confusion between the ego and the Self. Krishnamurti's aberration is the same thing in a more "Hindu" mode, a distortion of the *via negativa* (*neti, neti*) of Advaita Vedânta. If he were a caste Hindu practicing the *sâdhanâs* and *dharmaiâstra*, he could have an ashram and pursue the Sankaran method of "non-identification of the self with the non-Self". For it is perfectly true that the map is not the country it portrays, that spiritual attainment can only be had through a reversal of values, a rupture with habit, a spontaneous immediacy that cannot be "communicated", and hence a "leap into the dark". But these are things that every spiritual master knows.

Let us, however, envisage the manner in which Krishnamurti himself might answer these charges. For this we can now hold an *imaginary* forum where his questioners bait him with some of the objections just put forth:

Question: Some people say you are sawing the branch you sit on.

ANSWER: Who is sitting on the branch? Is thought sitting on that branch? Because if so, then it is good, because that is precisely what we want, namely, to saw thought off from its own habit-formed foundations. If thought ceases to see the duality between itself and the branch, then who is there to stay on the branch or fall off? If on the other hand thought remains conditioned to the idea of sawing at something in order to obtain a result, then when the branch comes down the situation creating the complex is dissolved and so in either case release is obtained.

Question: Sir, spiritual teachers claim that the Truth is always one and the same, being beyond all relativity and change. If, therefore, we admit that the founders of all the great religions of the world were adequate vehicles of the Truth, what is it you have to tell

us that they did not already teach? According to this view, if what you say is true, then it has always been true; and if it is something that has only been discovered now, then it belongs to the realm of relativity and thus has no value.

ANSWER: I like this question. It is a good question, because it betrays all the errors with which thought is plagued. Did Jesus create a system? Did Krishna, or Buddha? Jesus said, "the wind bloweth where it listeth." What system do we find here? Krishna says in the *Gîtâ*: "Giving up all Dharmas, come unto Me alone for refuge." And the Buddha, what did he say? Do you know the Flower Sermon, Sir? He held up a flower. That was all!

One understands something before the thought enters. But we are prejudiced with the human habit to formulate and separate into systems, and so we have Hinduism and Christianity, Capitalism and Communism, Catholics versus Protestants. And then we have religious wars, political wars; people want peace and their very desire for it breeds conflict. In our striving we become neurotic. I have a neurosis. I want love, and then there is a sexual desire--not the sex, but the habit bred by thought that without the desire I cannot find satisfaction. And so I pursue my desire, and this brings jealousy, the fear of being betrayed, the idea I have of how I should be loved, and not obtaining it. And what then, Sir, happens to love, to living in pure creative energy? Is it not uselessly dissipated because I am neurotic? And so you ask if this possibility for energy is something that has only been discovered now, and I answer that it has always been there, otherwise of course it is not true. But these things are not conjectures, and the proof is that you can see for yourself that there is neurosis and conflict in the world; it is not I who invented them. And there is always the wish to end the conflict and live in peace, which shows that something stands in the way of happiness. And is this thing not time? And what creates time? Time is the creation of thought, brought about by planning and organizing and systematizing what should be spontaneous. And so we are kept in duality, and kept from gaining access to spontaneous energy outside of time. Therefore, Sir, if you ask if these ideas are new, I answer that new and old can have no meaning outside of time, and so if we can get rid of

time, then the problem is solved of itself and the question has no more meaning!⁴

Question: I am not satisfied that this answers the point that was raised. You appear to evade the issue by constantly shifting your reasoning and...

ANSWER: Madam, please do not go further; I want all of you to stop on these words; consider carefully the trap we are getting into! Does this not illustrate just that conditioning which reason has built into all of us through centuries of automatic prejudice against change? You have the opportunity to profit from what you call shifting reasoning only if you can cultivate the awareness necessary to accept change with a quiet mind and then...

Question: Sir, I throw in the sponge.

ANSWER: Oh, I beg you not to do that, for you are thereby only creating a new conflict, a series of tensions; you are simply reinforcing your sense of separativity and fragmentation, thus obliging us to start the whole discussion over again from where we just left off.

⁴ In case this is confusing the reader, let him know that error is also "timeless"—in the way that hell is.

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People like Heard, Huxley, Watts, Zaehner, Krishnamurti, Teilhard de Chardin, Aurobindo, Gopi Krishna and so forth are only the tip of the iceberg, but whatever their point of departure and particular persuasion, they are all in one way or another spokesmen for a New Religion (Watts even has a name for it, the "Church of All Fools") and have in common these salient characteristics: *a patent individualism, a scientific and moralistic humanism, evolutionism, a relativistic "intuitionism", inability to grasp metaphysical and cosmological principles and the realities of the Universal domain, a mockery (latent or overt) of the sacred, a prodigal dearth of spiritual imagination, no eschatological understanding, a pseudo mysticism in the form of a "cosmic consciousness"*.

A patent individualism: As just one example, both Watts and Krishnamurti say that the illusive separativity between the ego and "Atman" is engendered by the very feeling one has of separativity. How then can we get rid of this feeling? By dropping even the desire to get rid of it! ("holy cunning"). For the life of the ego is perpetuated in a self-conscious dualism forever oscillating between yes and no, pleasure and pain, hope and deception, desire and frustration. Watts gives by way of illustration the dilemma of wanting to be humble, and being proud of one's humility, and proud of seeing through one's pride in one's humility, ad infinitum; or again, the predicament of the religious praying for the grace to have pure love of God, and being tormented by the secret apprehension that self-will lurks in the shadow of this effort at selflessness. Admittedly the ego 'as such has no means of transcending individuality, but that is not the problem; and the preoccupation of the authors in question with artificial stalemates of this kind actually betrays a dualism on their part that is irresolvable thanks purely to their "closed system" of egocentric subjectivity—the forfeit of their individualism. In reality the soul is more than just the ego, as appears in the Gospel passage : "Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief"; there is also its immortal, transpersonal center (*duo sunt in homine*) whose natural abode is the supernal world; and a contemplative on the spiritual path is centered in the sacraments—of non-human origin—so that the workings of the ego are peripheral

and already in some way external or foreign to himself—a commotion removed to the outer horizon for which he can only feel detachment or holy disdain (*contemptus mundi*).

A scientific and moralistic humanism: The New Religion school unequivocally advocates a materialistic faith with man at the center, a faith wedded to technology for the betterment of the human race. In its view, science—the product of discursive reasoning born of that "fuller consciousness" which is at once the fruit and ransom of the "Fall"—has outstripped dualistic reasoning's ability to keep pace; and the remedy for this lies in some sort of "yoga" capable of healing on a higher plane the present scission between the rational but divisive ego and the cosmic All, thus endowing man with the "vision" to exploit technology for purely philanthropic ends.

Evolutionism: Progress is for these anti-dogmatists notwithstanding an uncontested dogma. As indicated just above, they conceive the human race prior to the "Fall" composed of sub-rational creatures enjoying through their faculty of instinct an "existential" identity with the cosmos (Teilhard's "collective co-consciousness"); the "Fall"—quotation marks are used because for these people it is really an evolutionary advance—is a picturesque fable to describe the conscious accession of free will and reason, although these evolutionists are pleased to exploit the theological term, since effectively there is in the ego's emergence a "descent" into discursive, analytical thought ("the knowledge of good and evil"), and a certain taint of "sin": self-will perforce begets pride. "Redemption" (at-one-ment) must accordingly be construed as the next evolutionary breakthrough to be achieved when the social tensions of the present day have reached their ultimate crisis point (kairos), thus exploding into the birth of the superman, the apocatastatic Parousia, at one again with the cosmos—and all his gadgetry along to boot. What traditional doctrines without exception teach is exactly the inverse: namely, that prelapsarian humanity lived in unity by the light of the Intellect (which can only be called "instinct" at the risk of admitting that apes likewise were created "in the image of God"), that the Fall came from the veiling of this Intellect through various causes, and that macrocosmic salvation is tantamount to the unveiling once more of this Intellect through the reversal of these causes, and the restoration of salvageable man-kind to its pristine state.

A relativistic "intuitionism": This is characterized by thought which is "floating", sentimental, and vague—albeit clever, or even "scintillating". Reason here is "dynamic" and subjective, and thus prone to attribute purely psychological motives to even the greatest manifestations of spirituality and wisdom; it scorns intellectual, contemplative, and "static" objectivity as being pharisaism or "retreat-ism", while leaning uncritically at the same time towards parapsychology, the phenomenal, and other prolongations of extra-sensory exoticism.

Inability to grasp principles: Watts believes the idea of God can only become intelligible and central when we transpose concepts of *height* into terms of *depth*, or the Ground of all existence. If he understood the hierarchy of the states of being, "descending" or "exteriorizing" from the Universal to the individual order, questions of spatial orientation would be a matter of terminology; but as precisely he conceives of "up" and "down" in a purely individual, quasi-physical sense, to relegate Heaven to the Abyss is not just a figure of speech. Admittedly an abstract Ground may flatter the sophistications of intelligence in a way that a Personal God "on high" does not; however, there still remains the metacosm, and the macrocosm with its essences, exemplars, principalities, and archetypes, and the relationship of the microcosm to all this; in fact, when it comes to how the visible world is produced from the invisible, these authors are singularly silent. Their data seems limited to what science has to teach about pure energy being the substratum of phenomenal existence, with the reservation that this force or "vibration" is considered by them to be endowed with some kind of "intelligence".

Mockery of the sacred: That may seem a strong word, but the attitude de facto of these New Religion partisans amounts to this; totally foreign to their "fixation" on change and becoming is a world view based on the finality of an Absolute, unchanging Principle, Eternal, Infinite, always the same unto Itself, and which in differing modalities—of non-human, timeless origin—reveals Itself through Avataric descents, sacred scripture, and by extension the divine aspirations of saints and sages. When belief in infallibility no longer prevails, the certitude in unshakable authority crumbles, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, Lao-tse are relegated to the fallible, individual plane, and everyone is henceforth on his own, making impertinence well-nigh irresistible.

A prodigious dearth of spiritual imagination: This follows of itself from what precedes. For a few very bright gentlemen of our century, university-trained in Western culture, to speak as though they have discovered spiritual truths of which the entire humanity of the world has hitherto been in ignorance,—that untold millions of Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Confucianists, Shintoists, Jews, Christians, Muslims, plus countless other ethnic groups have all shared in common the same errors concerning a Personal God, an afterlife, the immortality of the soul, the necessity of rites, and so on—and for these personages to hold forth as though there had never been Solomon, Sankara, Plato, Ibn `Arabi, Eckhart, Nâgârjuna, Chuang-tse, and the rest—for such a phenomenon to be possible surely the politest explanation one can give is lack of imagination.

No eschatological understanding: The expression in the first paragraph of this article, "dipped into", is used advisedly, as anything deeper than a dilettantish approach would force the minimal recognition that Oriental doctrines are no more accommodating than Christianity: all religions basically agree in their eschatologies, in their moral injunctions and stress on virtues relative to man's ultimate ends, in their promises and warnings of future rewards and punishments pertaining to beatitudes and immensities for which the present world is but the threshold. To the New Religion school, however, all this is a closed book.

"Cosmic consciousness": There is the conviction here that man has potential access to vastly extended realms of consciousness underlying his habitual perceptions, and that the mystics—whatever their exaggerations and excesses and supernatural embroidering, and despite the clumsiness of their trial-and-error asceticism, plus the portion that, can be written off as pure hysteria—do in fact have the not unappreciable merit of being forerunners in this direction by pointing to some common ground of awareness or reality that exists beyond any reasonable doubt. The awaited consciousness of the future is "cosmic" in that it will reunite the ego—stranded since the "Fall"—with the common Ground of all existence; and this, in the words of Watts, "is the mighty self-abandonment which gives birth to the stars".

Provided, that is, the stars have yet to be born.

This essay can best be terminated with the following clarification by Frithjof Schuon:

"All these movements are characterized by the detachment they affect in respect to pure doctrine, the incorruptibility of which they hate; for them this purity is `dogmatism'; they fail to understand that the Truth does not deny forms from without, but transcends them from within".

"Orthodoxy contains and guarantees infinitely precious values which man could never draw from himself" (*Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, ch. IV).

We love and tend the body, the least agreeable and most vile of all things! For if we had to tend our neighbour's body for ten days only we could not bear it. Consider what it would be to get up in the morning and clean some one else's teeth, and then to perform some other necessary office for him. Truly it is wondrous that we should love that for which we do such mean services day by day. I stuff this bag; then I empty it; what could be more tiresome? But I am bound to serve God. That is why I stay here and put up with washing this miserable body of mine, and giving it fodder and shelter; and when I was younger, it laid other commands on me as well, and yet I bore with it. Why then, when Nature, who gave you your body, takes it away, can you not bear it?

Epictetus.