



THE WISDOM OF INSECURITY

ALAN W. WATTS

A Message for an Age of Anxiety

\$1.65 • IN CANADA \$2.00 • V-468 • 394-70468-1

VINTAGE BELLES—LETTRES

- V-418 **AUDEN, W. H.** / The Dyer's Hand
V-887 **AUDEN, W. H.** / Forewords and Afterwords
V-271 **BEDIER, JOSEPH** / Tristan and Iseult
V-512 **BLOCH, MARC** / The Historian's Craft
V-572 **BRIDGEHAMPTON** / Bridgehampton Works & Days
V-161 **BROWN, NORMAN O.** / Closing Time
V-544 **BROWN, NORMAN O.** / Hermes the Thief
V-419 **BROWN, NORMAN O.** / Love's Body
V-75 **CAMUS, ALBERT** / The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays
V-30 **CAMUS, ALBERT** / The Rebel
V-608 **CARR, JOHN DICKSON** / The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:
The Man Who Was Sherlock Holmes
V-407 **HARDWICK, ELIZABETH** / Seduction and Betrayal: Women
and Literature
V-244 **HERRIGEL, EUGEN** / The Method of Zen
V-663 **HERRIGEL, EUGEN** / Zen in the Art of Archery
V-201 **HUGHES, H. STUART** / Consciousness & Society
V-235 **KAPLAN, ABRAHAM** / New World of Philosophy
V-337 **KAUFMANN, WALTER (trans.) AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE** /
Beyond Good and Evil
V-369 **KAUFMANN, WALTER (trans.) AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE** /
The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner
V-985 **KAUFMANN, WALTER (trans.) AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE** /
The Gay Science
V-401 **KAUFMANN, WALTER (trans.) AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE** /
On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo
V-437 **KAUFMANN, WALTER (trans.) AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE** /
The Will to Power
V-995 **KOTT, JAN** / The Eating of the Gods: An Interpretation of
Greek Tragedy
V-685 **LESSING, DORIS** / A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews,
Interviews
V-329 **LINDBERGH, ANNE MORROW** / Gift from the Sea
V-479 **MALRAUX, ANDRE** / Man's Fate
V-406 **MARCUS, STEVEN** / Engels, Manchester and the Working
Class
V-58 **MENCKEN, H. L.** / Prejudices (Selected by James T. Farrell)
V-25 **MENCKEN, H. L.** / The Vintage Mencken (Gathered by All-
stair Cooke)
V-151 **MOFFAT, MARY JANE AND CHARLOTTE PAINTER (eds.)** /
Revelations: Diaries of Women
V-926 **MUSTARD, HELEN (trans.)** / Heinrich Heine: Selected Works
V-337 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH AND WALTER KAUFMANN (trans.)** /
Beyond Good and Evil
V-369 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH AND WALTER KAUFMANN (trans.)** /
The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner
V-985 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH AND WALTER KAUFMANN (trans.)** /
The Gay Science
V-401 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH AND WALTER KAUFMANN (trans.)** /
On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo

- V-437 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH AND WALTER KAUFMANN (trans.) /**
The Will to Power
- V-672 **OUSPENSKY, P. D. /** The Fourth Way
- V-524 **OUSPENSKY, P. D. /** A New Model of the Universe
- V-943 **OUSPENSKY, P. D. /** The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution
- V-639 **OUSPENSKY, P. D. /** Tertium Organum
- V-151 **PAINTER, CHARLOTTE AND MARY JANE MOFFAT (eds.) /**
Revelations: Diaries of Women
- V-986 **PAUL, DAVID (trans.) /** Poison & Vision: Poems & Prose of
Baudelaire, Mallarme and Rimbaud
- V-598 **PROUST, MARCEL /** The Captive
- V-597 **PROUST, MARCEL /** Cities of the Plain
- V-596 **PROUST, MARCEL /** The Guermantes Way
- V-594 **PROUST, MARCEL /** Swann's Way
- V-599 **PROUST, MARCEL /** The Sweet Cheat Gone
- V-595 **PROUST, MARCEL /** Within a Budding Grove
- V-899 **SAMUEL, MAURICE /** The World of Sholom Aleichem
- V-415 **SHATTUCK, ROGER /** The Banquet Years (revised)
- V-278 **STEVENS, WALLACE /** The Necessary Angel
- V-761 **WATTS, ALAN /** Behold the Spirit
- V-923 **WATTS, ALAN /** Beyond Theology: The Art of Godmanship
- V-853 **WATTS, ALAN /** The Book: the Taboo Against Knowing Who
You Are
- V-999 **WATTS, ALAN /** Cloud-Hidden, Whereabouts Unknown: A
Mountain Journal
- V-665 **WATTS, ALAN /** Does it Matter?
- V-951 **WATTS, ALAN /** In My Own Way
- V-299 **WATTS, ALAN /** The Joyous Cosmology
- V-592 **WATTS, ALAN /** Nature, Man and Woman
- V-609 **WATTS, ALAN /** Psychotherapy East & West
- V-835 **WATTS, ALAN /** The Supreme Identity
- V-298 **WATTS, ALAN /** The Way of Zen
- V-870 **WIESEL, ELIE /** Souls on Fire

VINTAGE POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

- V-568 **ALINSKY, SAUL D.** / Reveille for Radicals
V-736 **ALINSKY, SAUL D.** / Rules for Radicals
V-286 **ARIES, PHILIPPE** / Centuries of Childhood
V-604 **BAILYN, BERNARD** / Origins of American Politics
V-334 **BALTZELL, E. DIGBY** / The Protestant Establishment
V-335 **BANFIELD, E. G. AND J. Q. WILSON** / City Politics
V-571 **BARTH, ALAN** / Prophets With Honor: Great Dissents and Great Dissenters in the Supreme Court
V-60 **BECKER, CARL L.** / The Declaration of Independence
V-513 **BOORSTIN, DANIEL J.** / The Americans: The Colonial Experience
V-358 **BOORSTIN, DANIEL J.** / The Americans: The National Experience
V-11 **BOORSTIN, DANIEL J.** / The Americans: The Democratic Experience
V-501 **BOORSTIN, DANIEL J.** / Democracy and Its Discontents: Reflections on Everyday America
V-414 **BOTTOMORE, T. B.** / Classes in Modern Society
V-305 **BREINES, SIMON AND WILLIAM J. DEAN** / The Pedestrian Revolution: Streets Without Cars
V-44 **BRINTON, CRANE** / The Anatomy of Revolution
V-30 **CAMUS, ALBERT** / The Rebel
V-33 **CARMICHAEL, STOKELY AND CHARLES HAMILTON** / Black Power
V-2024 **CARO, ROBERT A.** / The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York
V-98 **CASH, W. J.** / The Mind of the South
V-555 **CHOMSKY, NOAM** / American Power and the New Mandarins
V-248 **CHOMSKY, NOAM** / Peace in the Middle East: Reflections on Justice and Nationhood
V-743 **CLOWARD, RICHARD A. AND FRANCES FOX PIVEN** / Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare
V-383 **CLOWARD, RICHARD A. AND FRANCES FOX PIVEN** / The Politics of Turmoil: Essays on Poverty, Race, and the Urban Crisis
V-940 **COBB, JANATHAN AND RICHARD SENNETT** / The Hidden Injuries of Class
V-311 **CREMIN, LAWRENCE A.** / The Genius of American Education
V-2019 **CUOMO, MARIO** / Forest Hills Diary: The Crisis of Low-Income Housing
V-305 **DEAN, WILLIAM J. AND SIMON BRIENES** / The Pedestrian Revolution: Streets Without Cars
V-638 **DENNISON, GEORGE** / The Lives of Children
V-746 **DEUTSCHER, ISAAC** / The Prophet Armed
V-747 **DEUTSCHER, ISAAC** / The Prophet Unarmed
V-748 **DEUTSCHER, ISAAC** / The Prophet Outcast
V-617 **DEVLIN, BERNADETTE** / The Price of My Soul
V-671 **DOMHOFF, G. WILLIAM** / The Higher Circles
V-812 **ELLUL, JACQUES** / The Political Illusion
V-390 **ELLUL, JACQUES** / The Technological Society

- V-998 **EPSTEIN, EDWARD JAY** / News From Nowhere: Television and the News
- V-2023 **FEST, JOACHIM C.** / Hitler
- V-927 **FITZGERALD, FRANCES** / Fire in the Lake
- V-382 **FRANKLIN, JOHN HOPE AND ISIDORE STARR (eds.)** / The Negro in 20th Century America
- V-316 **FREEMAN, S. DAVID** / Energy: The New Era
- V-368 **FRIEDENBERG, EDGAR Z.** / Coming of Age in America
- V-378 **FULBRIGHT, J. WILLIAM** / The Arrogance of Power
- V-846 **FULBRIGHT, J. WILLIAM** / The Crippled Giant
- V-167 **GANS, HERBERT** / More Equality
- V-2018 **GAYLIN, WILLARD** / Partial Justice: A Study of Bias in Sentencing
- V-174 **GOODMAN, PAUL AND PERCIVAL** / Communitas
- V-325 **GOODMAN, PAUL** / Compulsory Mis-education and The Community of Scholars
- V-32 **GOODMAN, PAUL** / Growing Up Absurd
- V-457 **GREENE, FELIX** / The Enemy: Some Notes on the Nature of Contemporary Imperialism
- V-453 **HEALTH PAC** / The American Health Empire
- V-635 **HEILBRONER, ROBERT L.** / Between Capitalism and Socialism
- V-283 **HENRY, JULES** / Culture Against Man
- V-882 **HENRY, JULES** / Pathways to Madness
- V-465 **HINTON, WILLIAM** / Fanshen
- V-95 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.
- V-795 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / America at 1750: A Social Portrait
- V-9 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / The American Political Tradition
- V-317 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / Anti-Intellectualism in American Life
- V-686 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD AND MICHAEL WALLACE (eds.)** / American Violence
- V-540 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD AND CLARENCE VER STEEG** / Great Issues in American History, From Settlement to Revolution, 1584-1776
- V-541 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD (ed.)** / Great Issues in American History, From the Revolution to the Civil War, 1765-1865
- V-542 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD (ed.)** / Great Issues in American History, From Reconstruction to the Present Day, 1864-1964
- V-385 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays
- V-591 **HOFSTADTER, RICHARD** / The Progressive Historians
- V-201 **HUGHES, H. STUART** / Consciousness and Society
- V-241 **JACOBS, JANE** / Death & Life of Great American Cities
- V-584 **JACOBS, JANE** / The Economy of Cities
- V-433 **JACOBS, PAUL** / Prelude to Riot
- V-459 **JACOBS, RAUL AND SAUL LANDAU WITH EVE PELL** / To Serve the Devil: Natives & Slaves Vol. I
- V-460 **JACOBS, RAUL AND SAUL LANDAU WITH EVE PELL** / To Serve the Devil: Colonial & Sojourn Vol. II
- V-2017 **JUDSON, HORACE FREELAND** / Heroin Addiction: What Americans Can Learn from the English Experience

- V-790 **KAPLAN, CAROL AND LAWRENCE (eds.) /** *Revolutions: A Comparative Study*
- V-361 **KOMAROVSKY, MIRRA /** *Blue-Collar Marriage*
- V-675 **KOVEL, JOEL /** *White Racism*
- V-367 **LASCH, CHRISTOPHER /** *The New Radicalism in America*
- V-560 **LASCH, CHRISTOPHER /** *The Agony of the American Left*
- V-280 **LEWIS, OSCAR /** *The Children of Sanchez*
- V-421 **LEWIS, OSCAR /** *La Vida*
- V-634 **LEWIS, OSCAR /** *A Death in the Sanchez Family*
- V-533 **LOCKWOOD, LEE /** *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel*
- V-406 **MARCUS, STEVEN /** *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class*
- V-480 **MARCUSE, HERBERT /** *Soviet Marxism*
- V-2001 **MARX, KARL AND NICOLAUS, MARTIN (trans.) /** *The Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*
- V-2002 **MARX, KARL AND FERNBACH, DAVID (ed.) /** *Political Writings, Vol. I: The Revolution of 1848*
- V-2003 **MARX, KARL AND FERNBACH, DAVID (ed.) /** *Political Writings, Vol. II: Surveys from Exile*
- V-2004 **MARX, KARL AND FERNBACH, DAVID (ed.) /** *Political Writings, Vol. III: The First International and After*
- V-619 **McCONNELL, GRANT /** *Private Power and American Democracy*
- V-386 **McPHERSON, JAMES /** *The Negro's Civil War*
- V-928 **MEDVEDEV, ROY. A. /** *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*
- V-816 **MEDVEDEV, ZHOES AND ROY /** *A Question of Madness*
- V-112 **MEDVEDEV, ZHOES /** *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovich*
- V-614 **MERMELSTEIN, DAVID (ed.) /** *The Economic Crisis Reader*
- V-971 **MILTON, DAVID AND NANCY, SCHURMANN, FRANZ (eds.) /** *The China Reader IV: Peoples China*
- V-93 **MITFORD, JESSICA /** *Kind and Usual Punishment: The Prison Business*
- V-539 **MORGAN, ROBIN (ed.) /** *Sisterhood is Powerful*
- V-389 **MOYNIHAN, DANIEL P. /** *Coping: On the Practice of Government*
- V-107 **MYRDAL, GUNNAR /** *Against the Stream: Critical Essays on Economics*
- V-730 **MYRDAL, GUNNAR /** *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*
- V-170 **MYRDAL, GUNNAR /** *The Challenge of World Poverty*
- V-793 **MYRDAL, JAN /** *Report From a Chinese Village*
- V-708 **MYRDAL, JAN AND GUN KESSLE /** *China: The Revolution Continued*
- V-337 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH /** *Beyond Good and Evil, Walter Kaufmann (trans.)*
- V-369 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH /** *The Birth of Tragedy & The Case of Wagner, Walter Kaufmann (trans.)*
- V-401 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH /** *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo, Walter Kaufmann (ed.)*
- V-437 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH /** *The Will to Power*
- V-985 **NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH /** *The Gay Science*

- V-383 **PIVEN, FRANCES FOX AND RICHARD A. CLOWARD** / The Politics of Turmoil
- V-743 **PIVEN, FRANCES FOX AND RICHARD A. CLOWARD** / Regulating the Poor
- V-128 **PLATO** / The Republic
- V-719 **REED, JOHN** / Ten Days That Shook the World
- V-159 **REISCHAUER, EDWIN O.** / Toward the 21st Century: Education for a Changing World
- V-622 **ROAZEN, PAUL** / Freud: Political and Social Thought
- V-204 **ROTHSCHILD, EMMA** / Paradise Lost: The Decline of the Auto-Industrial Age
- V-965 **SALE, KIRKPATRICK** / SDS
- V-2067 **SAKHAROV, ANDREI D.** / My Country and the World
- V-738 **SCHNEIR, MIRIAM (ed.)** / Feminism
- V-971 **SCHURMANN, FRANZ, AND DAVID AND NANCY MILTON (eds.)** / The China Reader IV: Peoples China
- V-375 **SCHURMANN, FRANZ AND O. SCHELL (eds.)** / The China Reader I: Imperial China
- V-376 **SCHURMANN, FRANZ AND O. SCHELL (eds.)** / The China Reader II: Republican China
- V-377 **SCHURMANN, FRANZ AND O. SCHELL (eds.)** / The China Reader III: Communist China
- V-940 **SENNETT, RICHARD AND JONATHAN COBB** / The Hidden Injuries of Class
- V-405 **SERVICE, JOHN S. AND JOSEPH ESHERICK, (ed.)** / Lost Cance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service
- V-279 **SILBERMAN, CHARLES E.** / Crisis in Black and White
- V-353 **SILBERMAN, CHARLES E.** / Crisis in the Classroom
- V-850 **SILVERMAN, CHARLES E.** / The Open Classroom Reader
- V-681 **SNOW, EDGAR** / Red China Today: The Other Side of the River
- V-930 **SNOW, EDGAR** / The Long Revolution
- V-388 **STAMPP, KENNETH** / The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877
- V-253 **STAMPP, KENNETH** / The Peculiar Institution
- V-959 **STERN, PHILIP M.** / The Rape of the Taxpayer
- V-908 **STONE, I. F.** / The Truman Era
- V-231 **TANNENBAUM, FRANK** / Slave & Citizen: The Negro in the Americas
- V-312 **TANNENBAUM, FRANK** / Ten Keys to Latin America
- V-686 **WALLACE, MICHAEL AND RICHARD HOFSTADTER (eds.)** / American Violence: A Documentary History
- V-483 **ZINN, HOWARD** / Disobedience and Democracy

ALAN W. WATTS, who held both a master's degree in theology and a doctorate of divinity, is best known as an interpreter of Zen Buddhism in particular, and of Indian and Chinese philosophy in general. Standing apart, however, from sectarian membership, he has earned the reputation of being one of the most original and "unruffled" philosophers of the century. He was the author of some twenty books on the philosophy and psychology of religion, including (in Vintage Books) *The Way of Zen*; *The Joyous Cosmology*; *Nature, Man, and Woman*; *Behold the Spirit*; *The Book*; *Does It Matter?*; *This Is It*; *The Supreme Identity*; *Beyond Theology*; and *Cloud Hidden, Whereabouts Unknown*. He died in 1973.

The Wisdom of Insecurity

by ALAN W. WATTS



VINTAGE BOOKS

A Division of Random House

New York

Copyright, 1951, by Pantheon Books

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in New York by Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc. and in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

Manufactured in the United States of America

VINTAGE BOOKS

are published by

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Random House, Inc.

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	9
I The Age of Anxiety	13
II Pain and Time	29
III The Great Stream	39
IV The Wisdom of the Body	55
v On Being Aware	75
vi The Marvelous Moment	89
vii The Transformation of Life	105
viii Creative Morality	119
ix Religion Reviewed	135

TO DOROTHY

PREFACE

I have always been fascinated by the law of reversed effort. Sometimes I call it the "backwards law." When you try to stay on the surface of the water, you sink; but when you try to sink you float. When you hold your breath you lose it—which immediately calls to mind an ancient and much neglected saying, "Whosoever would save his soul shall lose it."

This book is an exploration of this law in relation to man's quest for psychological security, and to his efforts to find spiritual and intellectual certainty in religion and philosophy. It is written in the conviction that no theme could be more appropriate in a time when human life seems to be so peculiarly insecure and uncertain. It maintains that this insecurity is the result of trying to be secure, and that, contrariwise, salvation and sanity consist in the most radical recognition that we have no way of saving ourselves.

This begins to sound like something from Alice Through the Looking Glass, of which this book is a sort of philosophical equivalent. For the reader will frequently find himself in a topsy-turvy world in which the normal order of things seems to be completely reversed, and common sense turned inside out and upside down. Those who have read some of my former books, such as Behold the Spirit and The Supreme Identity, will find things that seem to be total contradictions of much that I have said before. This, however, is true only in some