THE DYNAMICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY-INSECURITY

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THE SYNDROME CONCEPT

The security feelings are a syndrome. That is, the name "security" is a generalized label for many more specific feelings which overlap and intertwine, and which are all functions of one another. Because of this common character, we may group them together and consider them in their "wholeness," in their unitary rather than in their diverse qualities. The word "security" or "insecurity" is intended as a label for this peculiar aspect of "wholeness" that may be discerned in the multiplicity of particular symptoms with which we shall deal. To describe its wholeness or unitariness the author has used the concept of "psychological flavor." We may use a homely illustration to illuminate the meaning of this phrase. In a stew, a potpourri, a concoction made of many diverse elements, but nevertheless having a unique flavor of its own, this flavor permeates all the diverse elements in the stew.

The syndrome has a certain conceptual life of its own, laws and rules by which it functions and changes and which may for convenience be considered apart from the movements of any particular characteristic which is part of the syndrome. These laws we hope to deal with at length in a future paper. Here we wish to stress only the fact that there may be a unity in diversity and that we shall now deal with a unity rather than a diversity. It would also be well at this point to make more explicit the role that we feel syndromes play in the human personality. They are not to be thought of as "traits," a number of which may be added up, their sum constituting a personality, even though they are separate from each other. A syndrome, whether it be security feeling, self-esteem, with which we have already dealt, emotionality, or activity, is a general flavor which can be detected or savored in practically everything that the person does, feels,
or thinks. In any one particular impulse that John Smith has on January 14, 1940, at 2 P.M., we may discern his insecurity, his inactivity, his high emotionality, his average strength. This is very different from saying such and such an action is *caused* by such and such a trait.

For the philosophically minded psychologist we may say that the notion of the syndrome and the technique of syndrome analysis arises from a dissatisfaction with the concept of causality and also represents an attempt to combine synthetic and analytic methodologies, so that both wholes and specificities may be dealt with without doing violence to either. More specifically, we are trying to retain our respect for the wholeness and the uniqueness of the human personality at the same time that we wish to study it analytically, dissecting it for the sake of a better ultimate understanding of its wholeness.

**PROCEDURE**

The procedure we have followed in getting at these feelings is to select people who are extremely and obviously insecure or secure, then to study them very carefully as total personalities in all their aspects. The first selection of such cases, of course, depended upon a previously held notion of what security and insecurity were. This notion was comparatively vague and was obtained mostly from previous researches by the author, from general clinical experience, from reading (and, in most cases, from discussions with) Adler, Horney, Dollard, Fromm, Plant, Kardiner, D. M. Levy, Wertheimer, Benedict, Mead, Lewin, G. and L. Murphy, K. Goldstein, R. Munroe, and other students of the subject (to whom I wish now to express my thanks). With this as a frame of reference, careful clinical studies of extreme personalities were made. With each person, of course, the notion of security and insecurity became more clear and specific. But vague as it was, it was still exact enough to enable us to distinguish between extremes, between obviously secure and obviously insecure people. Such a study becomes a process of iteration and reiteration, a spiral-like method for improving and elaborating an initially vague concept. With such a technique one may feel that one has achieved a certain finality when a long series of new subjects no longer cause him to change his fundamental formulation.\(^1\) The approximate number of subjects involved in this initial iterative research was about sixty college men and women.

\(^1\) This process of iteration is already well known to the statistician and test constructor as a means of approaching more and more closely internal consistency in a test which initially was vague and uncertain.
At this point a much more intensive semipsychoanalytic study was undertaken of about three dozen people whom I attempted to "understand" in their unconscious as well as conscious life by all the techniques now available.

A third method of gathering information was the autobiographical one. Students in the writer's classes in abnormal psychology were asked to write long self-analytic autobiographies after hearing a series of lectures on the writer's theories and concepts of security. All extreme or otherwise interesting cases were interviewed lengthily in a semipsychiatric fashion, partly to check on the validity of their statements, partly to dig deeper in certain cases. There were about three hundred such autobiographies and perhaps eighty people who were interviewed.

For obvious theoretical reasons, it was deemed necessary by the writer that he make a comparative cultural study of these personality syndromes. A summer-long field study of security and self-esteem in the Northern Blackfoot Indians was made. The results of this field study will be elaborated in a separate paper.

While this work was going on, items were gathered for a paper and pencil personality test of security and insecurity, these questions being separately validated during the course of the various interviews, in a manner described in a previous paper. A preliminary form of this test was proven to have satisfactory validity and reliability and was used in making more extensive surveys than are possible by any clinical techniques.

A Classification of Specific Security and Insecurity Feelings

The examination of lists of hundreds of specific characteristics of insecure people together with all the other observational and

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1 A word of caution and explanation is appropriate here. We do not wish to embark upon any typology and speak of secure and insecure people in a black and white fashion as if they were completely different. We must be interested rather in the psychodynamics of insecurity, in the tracing through of the particular processes, their functions, their effects, and their motivating forces. Most people in our society can be seen to be both secure and insecure. For instance, Horowitz, Lois Murphy, and others have analyzed the so-called areas of insecurity; e.g., a person secure in the intellectual world may be insecure in the social world.

Furthermore, it is not correct to imply that security-insecurity is a continuum. The truth of the matter is that while there is only one kind of security, there are many kinds of insecurity. These types of insecurity have a good deal in common it is true, but they are also in certain respects different from one another. One insecure individual may solve his problems generally by withdrawing, another by overaggressiveness, another by ingratiating, etc. If we had to express these
clinical data available indicated that these characteristics tend to cluster into groups. The following table is a classification of these groups. It should be noted that every group overlaps every other; that every item is both a "cause" and an "effect" of every other single item; that the numerical order does not imply any priority whether causal, etiological, or temporal; that all the "parts" are not parts in the ordinary sense of being discrete and independent of each other. In a word, this is a syndrome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insecurity</th>
<th>Security</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Feeling of rejection, of being unloved, of being treated coldly and</td>
<td>1. Feeling of being liked or loved, of acceptance, of being looked upon</td>
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<tr>
<td>without affection, of being hated, of being despised.</td>
<td>with warmth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Feelings of isolation, ostracism, aloneness or being out of it, feelings</td>
<td>2. Feelings of belonging, of being at home in the world, of having a place</td>
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<tr>
<td>of &quot;uniqueness.&quot;</td>
<td>in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perception of the world and life as dangerous, threatening, dark,</td>
<td>3. Perception of the world and life as pleasant, warm, friendly or</td>
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<tr>
<td>hostile or challenging; as a jungle in which every man's hand is</td>
<td>benevolent, in which all men tend to be brothers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>against every other's, in which one eats or is eaten.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perception of other human beings as essentially bad, evil, or selfish;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>as dangerous, threatening, hostile, or challenging.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Constant feelings of threat and danger; anxiety.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Feelings of suspicion and mistrust; of envy or jealousy toward others;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much hostility, prejudices, hatred.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Tendency to expect the worst; general pessimism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Tendency to be unhappy or discontented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Feelings of tension and strain and conflict; together with various</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>consequences of tension, e.g., &quot;nervousness,&quot; fatigue, irritability,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>nervous stomach and other psychosomatic disturbances; nightmares;</td>
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<tr>
<td>emotional instability; vacillation, uncertainty and inconsistency.</td>
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graphically by drawing a picture, we should not use a straight line, but rather a figure like a tree, that is, a straight line with branches at the other end.
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10. Tendency to outgoingness.


13. Relative lack of neurotic or psychotic tendencies.

The insecure person, then, perceives the world as a threatening jungle and most human beings as dangerous and selfish; feels rejected and isolated, anxious and hostile; is generally pessimistic and unhappy; shows signs of tension and conflict; tends to turn inward; is troubled by guilt-feelings; has one or another disturbance of self-esteem; tends to be or actually is neurotic; and is generally egocentric or selfish.

Further exposition of these characteristics is excluded because of limitations of space.

THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF SECURITY FEELINGS

Always as we study relatively secure and relatively insecure people we find that there are dynamic reactions to the static aspects that we have described. A purely static description is certainly incorrect theoretically and can be justified only as a utilitarian, heuristic
necessity. In this paper we separate a static description from dy-
namic aspects only because the true picture is so complex that it
would be incommunicable if we attempted to plunge directly into
the complexities. To each of the states of mind or feelings or im-
pulses or behaviors that we have described, there is always a reaction,
a drive, a motivation which sets processes going. In turn there are
reactions to the reactions, and reactions to the reactions to the reac-
tions, and so on. More specifically, it does little good to say of a
person that he feels that nobody loves him if we do not at the same
time recognize that automatically connected with this feeling are
various responses and reactions which are practically always found
when this feeling is found, e.g., attempts to win back love, undercut-
ting of the self-esteem, feelings of hatred and aggression toward
the people who are responsible, etc. This is then our connection
between the “feelings” we have described, and the motivational life.
These “feelings” are also “motives” at one and the same time.

We shall deal with these reactions separately. Again we wish
to disclaim any apparent atomism in this attempt. We separate them
for the purpose of communication only.

1. In every insecure person with whom the writer has worked he
has always found a continual, never dying longing for security.
Sometimes this has been conscious, sometimes unconscious and un-
recognized by the subject. Furthermore, there were found wide
variations in the subjects' individual definitions of the security that
they longed for. Some defined it in terms merely of safety, some in
terms of dependence upon a stronger person, some in terms of having
power and money and a few defined it in what is a more “correct”
way, i.e., as a longing to deserve and win back the love and affection
of other people. So miscellaneous are these various longings, that if
we were to be really conservative, we should say only that there was
a response of dissatisfaction and a longing for a more satisfactory
state, this more satisfactory state being defined individually. How-
ever, it is fair to distinguish at least three levels of satisfactoriness,
(1) safety, (2) belongingness, and (3) receiving love and affection.

2. Almost continual action toward regaining this individually
defined security was found in all cases. However this longed-for
state was defined, the individual almost always did something to try
to achieve it. In some people the discouragement reactions were so
intense that less “retrieving” action could be observed in them, but
they were never absent entirely, except perhaps in certain psychotics
at times. The best analysis now available of this particular kind of
reaction to insecurity has been furnished by Horney, who speaks of four neurotic paths back to safety. The insecure person may withdraw so that he will no longer be hurt; he may become dependent and submissive so that he will challenge no one; he may seek power and money so that people will love him for his achievements; or he may develop a compulsive, neurotic need for affection however attained (e.g., gratification) as a reassurance against anxiety. These classifications are of course relatively artificial. For instance, it is more usual to find samplings of all four and more types of reactions in any individual than to find only one kind. The point is clear, however, that we have only started to describe an individual when we say he is insecure. Such a statement is quite inadequate if we do not further say how he reacts to the insecurity.

3. Discouragement reactions may be a response to failure of these attempts, or to further threats to security, to introspective moods, to invidious comparisons with others, or anything else that drives home the realization of rejection, being hated, loss of love, etc. These discouragement reactions will be found frequently if one looks deeply enough for them. Sometimes they become very obvious indeed, breaking through all efforts to repress them and approaching as a limit, complete catastrophic breakdown, in which the person becomes completely disorganized, completely discouraged, sees no hope for the future and gives up altogether, as in suicide, “hysterical” outbursts, etc.

4. Revenge reactions for love already lost or for a threatened loss. Here we may speak of the general aggressiveness and hostility of the insecure person, of his bitterness, his antagonism, his tendency to hate everyone. It must be obvious that full analysis of this reaction would show tremendous complexity. We should have to deal with aggression as a reaction to deprivation of love, as a reaction to threat, as a defensive reaction, etc. If we wished to be definitive, we should have to go further and analyze out the reactions to these reactions, e.g., the reaction of guilt feelings to illegitimate hostility, and then the complex reactions to these guilt feelings, which themselves might be hostile reactions, etc.

5. Defense reactions to prevent further loss of love. The realization that a certain kind of behavior leads to rejection may lead to inhibition of this behavior or even to reaction formations; e.g., the person realizing consciously or unconsciously that stinginess will be disapproved of by other people may not only stop being stingy but may become excessively generous or extravagant. We may include
here also the various flight or avoidance reactions, which usually are largely defensive.

6. *Ameliorative reactions to make the bad situation more bearable.* Here we may have the sour-grapes mechanism in which there may be conscious attempts to save one's self from hurt by changing attitudes toward that which was desired. Here an individual may say, "After all, there are many advantages in not having too many friends or in not being married." Thus he may attempt to make the best of a bad situation.

7. *Attack reactions upon the situations which bring about the insecurity in the attempt to change or improve them.* This attack may be literal, e.g., a physical attack upon a person, or it may be more general, e.g., social radicalism to change the factors in society that bring about insecurity, such as unemployment, exploitation, etc. The attack reaction may be "good," that is a realistic one. But it may also be a blame reaction, a projective one in which the individual attempts to save his tattered self-esteem by blaming others completely when he himself is also to blame. Blame reactions may be paralyzing since they tend to make it impossible to win back real security by making it more difficult for the person to analyze his situation so that it may be improved. Thus among radicals, the psychologist must attempt to distinguish between the ones who are simply being bitter, who are attacking blindly, who are blaming others, and on the other hand the radical who realistically understands the social and economic backgrounds for personal security and who then attempts to attack and change the bad situation.

8. *The undermining of self-esteem.* Self-esteem and insecurity, although they are separable variables, tend to correlate with each other. Any attack on security tends also to be an attack on self-esteem. This is particularly true in youngsters and in neurotics. Here if we wished we could expand almost infinitely the multitudinous reactions to loss of self-esteem, e.g., the feeling of worthlessness, the feelings of inadequacy, inferiority feelings, etc. We shall mention only one as a sample, viz., the dynamic reaction of compensation, analyzed so well by Alfred Adler. The individual with inferiority feelings, whether caused by rejection or anything else, will tend to react in various compensatory ways. For instance, we have found a very common one to be in our society the attempt to appear to be higher in self-esteem than one really is by behaving in a very dominant fashion. Perhaps it is well to stress that this reaction is not, like some of the others we have discussed, a universal one. Some
people, we have found, will fight the feeling of inferiority by compensating, others will give in to it and will not fight.

9. The insecure person will tend always to hide from himself as long as possible the conscious realization of rejection, of loss of love and respect. This is another kind of defensive reaction. In the person who has not yet given in to his feelings of insecurity, who has not given up the struggle, we shall find this always to be so. That is, he will feel more insecure unconsciously than he is consciously. Consciously he may overlook completely a slight, a snub, a rejection, but this is very apt to come out in his dream that night, or in hypnosis. Another way of saying this is that the person who is still fighting against his insecurity will show a certain "optimism." The very opposite will be the case with the person who has given up. He will show the reaction of pessimism. He will be far more conscious of the snubs than of the compliments. He will, so to speak, believe the snub and not believe the compliment. This reaction will be found at times even in the person who has not given up, when he is blue, when he is tired, when he is drunk, when he is asleep, etc. See also discouragement reactions above.

10. Other processes that perpetuate the adjustment or the life style. Every adjustment tends to become high in internal consistency. To be less anthropomorphic, in every insecure person there tends to be a change in his apperceptive mass, in his world philosophy. He looks out upon the world in an insecure way. Thus he tends to be blind to all the facts that run counter to his conviction that he is insecure. He tends to remember only insecure memories. He tends to disparage traits of security within himself. He tends always to go toward the 100 per cent end of the scale; e.g., from mistrusting 75 per cent of all people, he tends slowly to come to mistrust 80 and then 90 per cent and so on until he tends to mistrust all people. If something happens that conflicts with his interpretation of the world, then he tends to twist this happening, to reinterpret it so that it fits into his world scheme. Thus, if he thinks that all people are essentially selfish, and then observes someone behaving unselfishly, he will tend to manufacture or project selfish motives upon this unselfish person. What does this mean for the understanding of the insecure individual? As he becomes more insecure in one department of life, in one area, we may expect the automatic tendency toward insecurity in all departments of life—in his thinking, his perceptions, his remembering, his forgetting, his emotions, his philosophy. This is also
true in the type of areas of security as defined by Horowitz. The person who becomes insecure in his relation to his employers tends also inexorably to become insecure in all social areas—in the sexual life, in his relations to his family, etc.

11. The effects of all of these reactions on other people serve further to perpetuate and to re-enforce the insecurity. Horney has described this well in her concept of the vicious circle. Thus if the insecure person is mistrustful, his mistrust changes his behavior willy-nilly in such a way so that other people become mistrustful of him. This in turn intensifies his mistrust which in turn intensifies their mistrust and so on. The person who for whatever reason hates other people will make them hate him, which will make him hate them even more, etc. Contrariwise, the person who loves other people is loved more by them, for easily discernible reasons. This confirms and strengthens his love for other people, which confirms their love for him, etc.

12. Limiting the base of security (or safety). Frequently enough we observe what seems at first to be a paradoxical form of security, e.g., in Dollard's description of lower class Negroes in Southern towns, in overprotected children, in Goldstein's brain injured cases. These are people who maintain an apparent security simply by narrowing the effective world in which they live. This can be done by completely giving one's autonomy up to someone else (the slave or the overprotected child), by lowering the level of aspiration very markedly, or by living only in that area of life which is absolutely familiar, safe, or predictable. In this way a kind of safety or pseudo safety can be attained which we shall call security-on-a-narrow-base. So long as there is someone else to solve all problems for the individual, or so long as he stays within his restricted world, or so long as he asks for nothing and hopes for nothing, just so long will he retain his apparent security. This security obviously depends entirely on a continuation of the necessary conditions. When these necessary conditions are disturbed, then the individual is thrown into anxiety, hostility, neurotic reactions, helplessness, and the like. Real security is security-on-a-broad-base. That is, it must not crash in the face of the ordinary exigencies of life.

13. Neurotic exaggeration of the drive for security. The more insecure the individual becomes, the greater becomes his hunger for security and, with this, the more fantastic and unreal and unattainable his conception of security becomes. He tends to overinflate the goals and the demands until eventually he makes them in reality
impossible of achievement. Thus the extremely insecure person be-
comes less and less content in his fantasies and dreams with the
modest demands that he dares in reality to make upon the world.
Instead of asking for affection and respect of most people when it is
deserved, he will demand unconsciously the complete adoration and
love of everyone whether he deserves it or not. Instead of hoping
for adequacy, capability, mastery over his problems, he will uncon-
sciously long for complete omnipotence, complete power, and will
tend to be dissatisfied with an ordinarily satisfactory degree of
achievement. The insecure husband, when analyzed deeply is usually
found to be making upon his wife demands for complete unreason-
ing loyalty, worship and devotion. The psychoanalysts speak here of
neurotic inflation of the goals, or of neurotic insatiability. There
can be no other way to describe the person who is loved by practically
everybody and then goes into a depression because one person, whom
he does not particularly care about, does not greet him with quite
enough enthusiasm.

14. The setting up of habits that may outlive their original func-
tion. One fact that tends to confuse an already complex picture is
that in most people who have changed from security to insecurity or
vice versa, there will be found habit hangovers of the former state.
Thus one may find once in a while a secure person who is stingy or
jealous. This has sometimes been clarified in my experience by the
fact that the person was formerly insecure and retained these in-
secure reactions in a way that can be described only as habitual. They
tend to disappear quickly when the person becomes conscious of
them and of their meaning. This may or may not be the same as the
fact that there tends to be a general unconscious hangover from
former states. Operationally this means that if a secure person is
hypnotized who was formerly insecure, he may be flooded easily
with memories of former rejections and may live them through
again emotionally. Also such a person tends to overvalue today what
he longed for yesterday, even if he now has plenty of it. This means
that the formerly rejected person tends to be more intensely appreci-
ciative of love, of compliments, of acceptance by others, than the
person who has always been secure. Also the person who once was
secure, and later becomes insecure, is more easily won back to secur-
ity than the person who was always insecure. It is impossible in the
present state of knowledge to know whether to call these all habit
carryovers, or to consider them examples of more complex psycho-
dynamics. In any case, they are confusing factors that the psycholog-
ical practitioner must keep in mind if he is to understand the complete individual.

15. *The tendency to defend the system of defenses.* We have no wish to be paradoxical, but we know no better way of describing the peculiar tendency of the insecure person (or for that matter, of any other person) to hang on desperately to the particular set of compromise formations, defense reactions, ameliorative reactions, attack and discouragement reactions, and the like that he has built up through a lifetime of problem solving as his answer to life's problems. This phenomenon was first discussed by Freud under the rubric of "resistance," but it has a far wider application than Freud saw. Thus we find the same tendency to hang on to the life style in the normal as well as in the maladjusted person. The person who believes that all people are essentially good, will show the same resistance to change of this belief as will the person who believes all people are bad. No matter what the defense may be, there is clearly perceptible to the psychological practitioner a resistance, even a feeling of panic, when the psychologist begins to attack them.

The writer has speculated for a long time on this fantastic phenomenon and feels that ultimately we must speak here of some fundamental tendency in human nature of psychological inertia, of a tendency to prefer the familiar simply because it is familiar. Sheer familiarity gives a certain feeling of safety, even of security; unfamiliarity means a new problem to solve, a new challenge, a new threat. The writer in his investigations has found this psychological inertia, this preference for the familiar, to be present in all human beings that he has worked with, but he has found it to be far more strong in the insecure person and in the person with low self-esteem. The secure person and the strong person either is not so urgently in need of safety, or else he has an actual liking for the novel and the unfamiliar in certain areas of life. In other areas of life he will show the same psychological inertia that can be observed in the very insecure person.

In any case, whether this hypothesis be accepted or not, the fact remains that the psychological practitioner must deal with this tendency as a fact. Specific defenses or general adjustments do not collapse easily under the attack of the psychologist's facts, suggestions, or interpretations; they must more often be battered down by repeated impact, by dozens and dozens of interpretations, by repeated proof. Whatever the person is he tends to keep on being, through sheer inertia:
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We must remember also that every adjustment, whether bad or good, is already a general solution to the person's problems. Even the most extremely neurotic outlook in the world is functional and purposeful, and orders the individual, his problems, and his world into a coherent, logical structure. It makes no difference how this adjustment was arrived at; it is the best that the individual can do at the time with all the materials available to him. Attack on the foundations of any adjustment, on its fundamental philosophy, puts the individual into a very uncomfortable situation. Attack upon his tried and true answers to life's problems will leave the individual naked, without any habitual, familiar ways of facing the everyday problems of life.

We have not the space to deal fully and directly with the important general problem that faces every psychological practitioner, viz., how it is possible for an individual to maintain an adjustment that obviously flies in the face of reality, that is "wrong" in terms of facts. Every psychologist must often have wondered how it is possible for a person to remain fixed in a bad adjustment or in the wrong style of life. If it is wrong, one will ask, how then does it happen that this adjustment is not battered to pieces by the impact of reality and by all the facts contradicting it. How is it possible to believe that all people are jealous when in fact only some are, that all people are dishonest when some are in actuality honest? Must a person not learn otherwise very soon if he believes that all people hate him and wish to hurt him? There are many approaches to an explanation of this phenomenon of the self-perpetuation of an adjustment, whether good or bad. We hope that some of the psychodynamic principles mentioned in the text will at least partially answer the question. Here we wish only to point out that what the layman calls "facts" have no psychological reality in themselves. Adler says, "We are influenced not by 'fact' but by our interpretation of facts." Thus an insecure person will be especially sensitive in his perceptions to evidences of hostility, selfishness, jealousy, and envy in others. He will be extraordinarily blind to evidences of unselfishness, affection, and fairness in others. Those links that are missing in the chain of his unconscious reasoning will, if necessary, be created. Thus a very insecure man who was highly attractive to women had to see the world in such a way that he could continue believing that no one loved him. When it was pointed out to him that many women were obviously in love with him, and when the attempt was made to prove this to him by their actions, he disagreed, and it turned out that these actions actually made him feel worse because, as he said, "Women look down upon me so much that everyone who sees me starts being maternal to me and pities me." It is only facts as perceived that we can deal with, and since, of course, a perception is always a function of a particular individual, we come back to our starting point, the personality of the individual who does the perceiving.

We speak here of psychodynamic tendencies only as they pertain to insecurity directly. For this reason we shall do no more than mention the tendency of the human being to rationalize his world, to make it orderly and neat and to give it internal consistency and logic.
and how this personality came to be. If we say that John Smith is an insecure individual, what does this mean? It means that he will perceive insecurely, just as he emotes insecurely, as he thinks insecurely, remembers insecurely, philosophizes insecurely, and does everything else insecurely. In short, he will perceive not only what there is to perceive, but what he has learned to perceive, what he is prepared or ready to perceive, or what the logic of his world outlook demands that he perceive; at the same time he will tend to be blind to what he must not or dare not see. Generally he must not perceive facts that endanger or threaten his adjustment style or that might cause him to give it up. Any perception that endangers an adjustment style, however bad or inefficient this style may be, is most often felt as painful or dangerous, and such discomfort cannot be endured.

Résumé

The reader will now understand the difficulty and even the impossibility of defining insecurity in a few well-chosen words. When one deals with such complexities as these, the only definition that is satisfactory is of the “catalogue” type, and we may then say that this whole paper has been an attempt to define security and insecurity. We have seen that, for the sake of convenience, it was necessary first to list various aspects of the static picture and then to discuss one by one some of the dynamic processes that intertwine and come from this static side. It is not only useless but possibly misleading to pick out of all this mass of facts and processes any one which shall thereupon become the single defining characteristic of insecurity. Probably we could give in a short statement 90 per cent of the truth, or thereabout, but no more. Thus it would be fair to say, if we were forced to give a short description of the insecure person for the sake of discussion, that he is a person who feels unconsciously rejected and consciously unhappy, unstable, and conflicted, who perceives the world and the people in it as dangerous to him, who reacts to these conscious and unconscious feelings by attempting to win back security in various ways, but who by the very reason that he attempts to win it back guarantees its perpetuation or even intensification, unless some “good” external influence intervenes into the vicious circle to put him on the correct path.

Even such a wordy statement is obviously oversimplified, and there are still more complexities in store for the investigator. Thus we have not spoken of the various kinds of insecurity, of the various etiologies of insecurity, all of which will give it a somewhat different flavor, of the enormously complex relationships between security and self-esteem, of the role of intelligence, reason, and humor in this picture, and so forth.
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