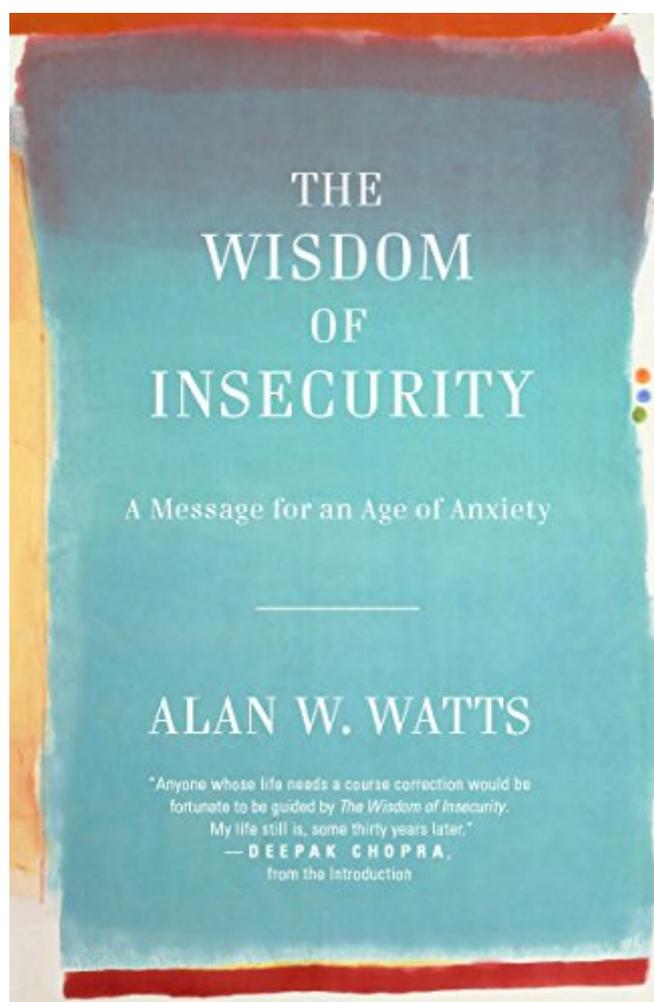


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# The Wisdom Of Insecurity



## Synopsis

An exploration of man's quest for psychological security and spiritual certainty in religion and philosophy. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am a therapist that recommends this incredibly insightful book to most of my clients, especially those suffering from anxiety disorders and control issues. Alan Watts is a century ahead of his time. "For the animal to be happy it is enough that this moment be enjoyable." For man, we often miss this moment by trying to assure the next moment will be as enjoyable. Alan's book is required reading, in my opinion, for all therapists practicing therapy in this security obsessed world. Great book! One of my psychotherapy bibles!

I'm no longer sure how I bumped into this book. I'm sure it was from a review or a list of best books to read. In any event, I'm glad I did bump into it. Alan Watts writes about the obvious. But, like so many simple things, we need his clear and effective writing to see that what he says is truly obvious. Basically, we spend too much time planning and anticipating the future and too much time

thinking about, lamenting and wishing to change the past. I have dogeared too many corners underlying too many quotes to reproduce them all here, but let me give you a flavor: "If happiness always depends on the future, we are chasing a will-o-the-wisp that ever eludes our grasp, until the future, and ourselves, vanish in the abyss of death." This quote is taped to the cover of my financial notebook that contains my financial portfolio data, 401K information and reams and reams of retirement plan calculations. He also wrote: "But tomorrow and plans for tomorrow can have no significance at all unless you are in full contact with the reality of the present, since it is in the present and only in the present that you live. There is no other reality than present reality, so that, even if one were to live for endless ages, to live for the future would be to miss the point everlastingly." This short book contains so many pearls, go get yourself a copy, pick some quotes, write them down, look at them, reread them (e-mail them to me) and get on with living today.--Joe

At the tender age of eight years, I held this book in my hands for the first time, a gift from my father. Somehow he (who then and always has known too much) felt that by allowing me to find such insight while still so young he could show me intellectual avenues that happened upon him too late. Of course at eight years old I had not lived or thought enough to understand much of the more self-centered implications of what Watts has to say, but the intellectual gyrations got me started. I've never stopped since. Since then, now nearly twenty years ago, I have revisited this book whenever I feel myself growing unclear and uneasy about the universe and my "place" within it. The only problem is that I find myself buying it over and over again because I keep giving it away, to those that, at the time, seem to need clarity more than do I. But I always come back. Oh, and if anyone becomes desperate for the answer to the anagram, I know it (after ten years of crossing my eyes at it). But it's much more satisfying to see it for yourself.

One of my favorite books of all time. I've reread it more times than any other, but never without reaching new insights and finding new inspiration. It's filled with wisdom like the following: "[I]t is a serious misapplication of psychology to make the presence or absence of neurosis the touchstone of truth, and to argue that if a man's philosophy makes him neurotic, it must be wrong. 'Most atheists and agnostics are neurotic, whereas most simple Catholics are happy and at peace with themselves. Therefore the views of the former are false, and of the latter true.' Even if the observation is correct, the reasoning based on it is absurd. It is as if to say, 'You say there is a fire in the basement. You are upset about it. Because you are upset, there is obviously no fire.'" Watts talks about the many subtle proprieties of life in which we are all engaged but which we seldom

discuss. Then, the instant you read them, you feel as if your own thoughts had been read aloud. I can't recommend this book highly enough.

This book is an excellent place to start reading philosophy. *The Wisdom of Insecurity* was obviously written for the layman, making it ideal for those who are new to this type of nonfiction. In it, Alan Watts explains to us various ways of accepting and dealing with anxiety and insecurity in spiritual matters. This technique of acceptance was clearly derived from the Hindu and Buddhist methods of establishing a calm and mellow outlook on life. Like these great Eastern religions, Alan Watts does not try to tackle issues of theological truth head-on, but instead sidesteps the eternal questions. This is not because he is incapable of dealing with more complex metaphysical issues - he does so in great depth in his other, longer works. Neither is this method of sidestepping our sources of anxiety an evasion of rational, empirical truth. This book is not a rigorous empiricist study, and never claimed to be. It is instead a psychotheapeutic work verging on the anti-intellectual, but at the same time embracing meditation and contemplation. Watts shows us ways to act out our love for wisdom and enlightenment by concentrating on the positive and accepting (but not dwelling on) disturbing questions which he considers to be unanswerable. This is not an atheistic work nor is it a tale of despair. This is a work infused with hope, while being mindful of the truth. It succeeds in treading a sort of middle ground between the love of knowledge and anti-intellectualism. The only problem with this book is its short length, although some might consider this an advantage. If you are looking for a more in-depth and rigorous study, try *Behold the Spirit* or *Psychotherapy East and West*, also by Alan Watts.

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