

Wattsean Aesthetics and the Wisdom of Ontological Insecurity

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Summary

Insecurity, though fundamental to the human condition, receives little mention in scholarly literature. Existential philosophy and psychology attempt to wrestle with the manifestation of insecurity as an inscrutable facet of human life. Alan Watts and Osho in particular published notable treatises on the topic of insecurity that inquire into how to be understanding of and thrive amidst uncertainty, ambiguity, and the paradox inherent to insecurity. Kierkegaard similarly refers to a crisis of modernity that relates to, and has helped to mass-produce, this insecurity that Watts speaks of. In this theoretical review and with particular emphasis on the life and works of Alan Watts, I present the perspectives on insecurity as represented in the writings of these thinkers. I conclude that insecurity, when embraced wholeheartedly and informed by one's empirical experience, offers potential for the greatest immersion in life.

Keywords: Alan Watts; insecurity; Osho; mysticism

Wattsean Aesthetics and Ontological Insecurity's Wisdom

Alan Wilson Watts (1915–73) is arguably most known for prolific philosophical exegeses on the nature of the human condition and the relation of life to the metaphysical realm of the universe. Contemporary philosophers and psychologists might notice repetitive arguments and superficial, though fluid, language, in Watts's numerous statements accounted in vast modalities from monographs to recorded lectures, the latter since having developed a notable Internet following.

Watts' scrutiny and attention to experiential facets of living and dying informed my own

precarious graduate studies at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, where I was a recipient of the Alan Watts Scholarship in memorandum. While my inquiry on the life and work of Watts is nuanced by empirical experience and hardly objective, and despite personal flaws outlined in his memoir *In My Own Way* (2007/1972), scholarly literature on his various postulates remains slim. This theoretical literature review explores a seminal but overlooked topic in the realm of existential philosophy and psychology – insecurity – that is surely fitting for this, the final issue of *Self & Society*, a journal (one of the few) that has published articles on Watts's contributions.

First, a firm definition of ‘insecurity’ is necessary. I will then explain why the concern of insecurity from an existential praxis is a teleological concern. I then juxtapose Watts’s extrapolation with two other thinkers: Kierkegaard and Osho.

Defining ‘Insecurity’

I commonly reference dictionary definitions to elucidate terminology that might appear nebulous to the reader in order to map the territory for discourse. Insecurity, in this instance, is no exception; it is imperative to understand how Watts himself conceptualizes ‘insecurity’.

The American Psychological Association’s *Dictionary of Psychology* (VandenBos, 2015) explains the term as ‘*n.* a feeling of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence, and inability to cope, accompanied by general uncertainty and anxiety about one’s goals, abilities, or relationships with others’ (p. 543), aligning with Watts’s conceptualization of the human condition. More succinctly, the driving vibe throughout this inadequacy, depravity of self-confidence, paradox, turmoil and lack of resources and capacity to survive and subsist direct to why I believe that Watts’s work is seeing such a resurgence in popularity, notably via audio recordings, videos, and memes circulated on YouTube in particular, though his exposure spans the wide-ranging nexus of major social-media outlets on the Internet. In relation to why Watts seems to have a particular affinity amongst creators – particularly musicians and artists (San Francisco is home to the California Institute of Integral Studies, formerly known until 1968 as the American Academy of Asian Studies, which Watts joined soon after the institution’s founding) – the backdrop of counter-culture and free-spirited bohemianism sometimes associated with him seemed at odds with the *Zeitgeist* of Western nations.

Columbus (1985) thus remarked, the ‘Oriental ways of thinking and experiencing are

increasingly being integrated with Western psychological issues’ (p. 28) in his response to ‘The wayward mysticism of Alan Watts’ by Nordstrom and Pilgrim (1980), which stands as the most circulated critique of Watts that I have seen in the literature. Watts (2017/1961) explains, ‘Nature is boundless lust and rapacity, and man has evolved from it through the ruthless struggle of natural selection. Although it was now clear from biology that consciousness had grown out of the unconscious.’ (pp. 97–8) Nouns including ‘lust’ and ‘rapacity’ and verbs akin to ‘struggle’ and ‘selection’ imply that nature – that is, life, or the human situation of living – is grounded on, and relies upon, an unceasing, unquenchable state of insecurity. R.D. Laing (1990/1960) expounded upon the inherent madness and insanity that can be derived from this human situation that, in *The Divided Self*, he describes as ‘A... sense of... presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, ... [others are] experienced as equally real, alive, whole, and continuous.’ (p. 39)

Continuity, or the subjective feeling of continuity as a singular entity unified in itself through time, establishes one’s ontological security. True stability in this instance equates to true decay, for death itself is viewed as a process of life. A ‘continuous person’, Laing identified, goes beyond feeling grounded, tangible, and sustaining in the world; others are also granted agency, aliveness, and the sense of being unique. Ejodus and Rečević’s (2021) conceptualization of ontological security paraphrases Laing’s determinations, that it ‘is maintained through routinization of self-identity narrative, which helps actors create a “protective cocoon”, thus “bracketing out” fundamental questions that are normally taken for granted’ (p. 29). Persistent unease and instability emanating out of a profound sense of uncertainty about the nature of one’s existence can occur without this self-identity narrative and existential assurance.

With regard to ontological insecurity, I previously concluded that, ‘Ontologically, one is homeless; there is no roadmap or rubric on proper existence. There is little beyond social and religious propriety that exists to provide behavioral direction, which does not address the deeper meaning of existence’ (Whitaker, 2019, p. 4) – an argument echoed by theorists proficient in depth-psychology analysis, including Tillich (1999/1987), Marcel (1949), and Kierkegaard (Hong & Hong, 1843/2004). Existentialism, the area of inquiry concerned with interpreting the nature of what it means to exist, is often attributed to these theorists. As a psychology and philosophy, existentialism does not offer much by way of method. Early writers, including Rollo May (1958, 1960) and Kierkegaard, came out of the clergy or psychoanalysis.

The very first writers in the US literature wholeheartedly tried to accept psychoanalysis as the major method by substituting out sex and replacing it with death as the central unacknowledged truth of human existence. It may be that individuals by nature exhibit motivation as living organisms to develop (Rogers, 1980) in some form, with consciousness emerging out of a desire for growth (creativity), as Combs and Krippner (2007) suggest. Gottschall (2013) maintains that human beings are centrally story-telling animals, or *Homo fictus* (see *Preface*, p. xiv). On this premise, ontological security relies upon multiple fictions about oneself that coalesce with concurrent stories about other humans; therefore, one must maintain the self-perceived status of autonomous agent situated in the framework of other individuals free to assert their agency. Furthermore, one must determine that their own agency possesses inherent value, not simply that it transcends time by being congruent as one age throughout the human lifespan. In this spirit Megna (1981) states, ‘Alan Watts says that people are wiggly...[They] resist... being pinned down, anesthetized, dissected, and “measured in coffee spoons”’ (p. 46). The

insecurity Watts (2011a/1951) depicted at length through verbal and written form is therefore known to assume continuity with existential concerns, and to be ontological in nature.

In *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety* (Watts, 2011a), he ‘at a time when his philosophical sensibilities were consonant with the notion of a *philosophia perennis*’ (Columbus, 2012, p. 69) compares the human situation to flies enticed by a concoction of honey, wherein escape is either impossible or quite challenging to achieve. The intrinsic paradox and absurdity of human life that so often proliferate ontological insecurity, Watts finds, is the basis on which the very world itself, not just life, owes it existence.

The antidote proposed for this affliction is *awareness*. Awareness as passive action is descriptively contradictory to laypersons not acclimatized to interpreting action as a passive process. Non-action is therefore impossible, because in attempting to do nothing, one performs an action. Watts believed that much of human suffering stemmed from a fundamental misunderstanding or misperception of the nature of existence, leading to feelings of disconnection and alienation, stating:

How are we to experience life as something other than a honey trap in which we are the struggling flies? How are we to find security and peace of mind in a world whose very nature is insecurity, impermanence, and unceasing change?... We need more light.... Light, here, means awareness – to be aware of life, of experience as it is at this moment, without any judgments or ideas about it. (p. 75)

By ‘light’ in this quotation is meant non-judgement; judgement entails finality, an endgame, the ceasing of discourse and lack of creativity derived from cessation of attuning too much to any singular ideal or conception. Non-judgement is challenging because, as Watts knew, it often involves embracing

ambiguity, letting go of preconceived notions, and accepting situations and other humans as-is, without immediately kowtowing to an automatic inclination to categorize persons, things, and events. Beyond conditioned response, the practice of non-judgement involves observing one's thoughts without attachment.

Utopian pursuit of unchanging-ness in a world of non-ceasing change goes against Wattsean philosophy. Rather, embracing the complexities of life without rushing to judge or label anything and everything that happens to and around oneself is not security but an explicit celebration of existence. Security is not found in this existential revelry since it is not a facet of life at all, because life, at its foundation, is insecurity. What one is to do about insecurity, when life itself is inherently insecure, begs a fallacy *ad absurdum* of flagrant, circular reasoning. Insecurity, then, is freedom to be. Order never precipitates potentiality, only chaos. Insecurity fundamentally provides a guarantee that tomorrow will not repeat today. Yet the unknown of tomorrow is problematic for so many, according to Watts (2003):

If it were perfectly clear that... 'What is being?' is, in the final analysis, the same question as 'What am I?', the circular and futile character of the question... could be taken seriously only... [through] nonlogical feeling of the need for an answer. (p. 48)

Few would dispute that the question 'Who am I?' is arguably one of the most fascinating questions that a human being can ask. Articulated differently, one could state, 'To know how to be is to know who one is'. This conclusion is non-logical in nature, and has to do with the question of security and insecurity; if I do not know who I am, I have no way to determine whether or not I am secure. Insecurity thus occurs when one does not abide by their unique teleology.

In Aristotle's *Physics* (2008), the philosopher postulates a synonymous argument. One lives

temperately and rightfully when abiding by one's *telos*, explained by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy as, 'According to teleological theories of content, what a representation represents depends on the functions of the systems that produce or use the representation' (Neander, 2012). So an organism's form and function are mutually exclusive – one implies the other. If a butterfly bears wings, it is part of her innate biological teleology to fly. A *telos* is an organism's path or purpose for existence unveiling. Horses follow a *telos* of roaming at rapid speeds in open spaces on four legs supported by hooves. In other words, horses exist to fulfil their teleology.

Existentialism distinguishes between essence (*telos*) and existence. Sunflowers exist following their essence. Human beings, conversely, are required to seek out their essence in the inscrutable backdrop of existence. Plato's (1997) statement in the *Apology* dialogue that 'The unexamined life is not worth living for men' (p. 33, 38a), and student Aristotle's consequent remark, 'All men desire to know' (p. 7) that begins his *Metaphysics* treatise, point to a singular conclusion: human beings go astray from their *telos* if they neglect or ignore philosophical inquisition. Existentialists (in particular, Sartre, 1946/2007) clarify the existence/essence difference in that existence comes before essence, and that there is no natural essence, which is a social construct.

Philosophers continue to, in some degree or other, err on asking questions that inadvertently would not point in the direction of fruitful answers. Yet the manner in which Watts lived his later years in the San Francisco Bay Area (at Sausalito, to be precise) demonstrate a *telos* oriented towards playfulness that, in his own admission, ought to be sincere, not serious. 'Life on the SS Vallejo', Garrett-Farb (2017) reminisced, 'was busy with exotic guests of Watts and a poor artist with whom he shared the boat. Good food, alcohol, tobacco, art, and

gatherings were plentiful. The Vallejo was buzzing with bohemian hedonism.’ (p. 16) The Vallejo as a poignant illustration of the counter-culture movement’s rebellion against the conformist mentality that Watts found prevalent in mainstream America demonstrated that he did not completely renounce materialism. Watts appeared to be jubilant in endorsing materialistic pursuits and consumption – albeit of a free-spirited nature. Furthermore, his penchant for finely crafted, well-loved, eccentrically charming, aesthetically pleasing possessions wasn’t hypocritical but affirming, much like Osho’s rumored fleet of Rolls Royce’s and gold watches.

Critiquing Watts for amalgamating philosophy with entertainment, and alleging his failure to delve deeply into his arguments, thereby lacking the seriousness expected (and, again, Watts admonished sincerity over seriousness), fail to take into consideration that ‘[he rejected] ontological isolation and an unavoidable trepidation of death... [as] being artifacts of Western modes of thinking’ (Columbus, 2012, p. 72). Watts did not instill baffling notions in the minds of countless truth-seekers by opportunely fashioning an Eastern vision that promoted an indiscriminate hippie ethos; and in *This Is It: And Other Essays on Zen and Spiritual Experience* (Watts, 2011b/1960), he says outright: ‘Nature is much more playful than purposeful, and the probability that it has no specific goals for the future need not strike one as a defect’ (p. 32).

In *The Republic* dialogue, Socrates (as referenced by Plato, 1997) stated that, ‘What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things’ (p. 1129, 508c). The good on this premise is the force wherein all that exists emanates from. Being, then, is an impact manifestation unveiled by the good. One might envision the Form of the Good to be of the same ilk as what the

religion of Christianity labels *God* or the Buddhist practice calls *Nirvana*.

In Book Eight of *The Physics* (2008) along the lines of Plato, Aristotle argued that an original force of creation exists, what he argued was a Prime Mover that enabled all life to flourish. He wrote, ‘If there is an eternal mover which is eternally unmoved, then what is directly moved by it must also be eternal’ (p. 163, 260a). This Peripatetic Mover is beyond the scope of human comprehension and is on an entirely different dimension from planetary life. Notice the blatant resemblances between how major organized religions envision a supreme being or force that produced the cosmos and all that reside in it. This overlap of philosophy is not coincidental, given the historical context of the time periods when those philosophers lived. Science of being is not purely theological. *Human being* envelops numerous elements, including the biological and psychological.

So ontology as a branch of study in the field of philosophy called metaphysics is not far removed either from evolution or psychology. Being suggests a physical quality. Humans generally believe their boundary to extend as far as the dermis of the skin; on that supposition, one would be all that is encased within the body, and all that is outside the body is foreign. Watts staunchly opposed this viewpoint. In the next section, ‘Unraveling Insecurity’, I draw from Osho and Kierkegaard as additional context for exploring why ontological security remains evergreen in relevance, and how their conceptualization of it assimilates with Watts’s perspective.

Unraveling Insecurity

Whether one’s being emanates out of a singular force – be it God, the Good, Nirvana, or some variation of the three, or something else entirely outside of the scope of any of them – or manifests as a by-product of

planetary mechanisms including evolution, all beings exist within an expansive sea of other beings.

If you want to avoid pain, avoid pleasure...; if you want to avoid death, avoid life... Before death, you will be dead. If you want to be perfectly secure, enter your grave and lie down there and you will be perfectly secure! Don't breathe, because if you breathe there is danger – there are all sorts of infections, a million diseases exist all around you.... So don't breathe, don't move... – just don't live. Commit suicide; then there will be no pain.... You want no pain and all pleasure? You demand something impossible; you want two plus two not to be four. You want them to become... anything else but four. (Osho, 2012, p. 69)

Without hyperbole, Osho exposed the inclination for security. Security diverges from the non-dualistic attitude of inclusiveness, replacing an either-or, black-and-white dualistic philosophy demanding labels and distinctions between places, faces, and phenomenon. Wattsean aesthetics would argue that black cannot be black without white, nor can the virtuous man come to see his virtue without an unvirtuous man as an example of difference. Even such differences imply opposing polarities of a singular expression. Virtue and immorality lie on extremes of a continuum. Bridging the two instills insecurity, as each experience will lie dispersed along the continuum. Any attempt to separate the two is a forceful aim of control, control that is akin to grabbing a bar of soap with slippery fingers; it cannot be done. The issue lies in attempting to modify reality to one's will when clearly doing so cannot be done.

Wherein can one derive meaning to life, if experience is laced with trepidation and uncertainty? Existentialist philosophers have argued that hyper-extended attentiveness to events and memories is not an adequate response to life. The existentialist grasps firmly that meaning is a concept impossible to tie down. He or she will not bother trying. In

Will to Power, iconoclast Nietzsche (2011) wrote, 'No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty' (p. 545). Melancholy instead of joy in uncertainty regarding the question 'Who am I?' is commensurate with existential distress. Who and what one is may be indefinable, and that indefinability may be foundational to his or her freedom. However, Western society does not cultivate such an attitude in individuals. Each individual encountering me, as the author of this article, will have a unique conception of who and what he or she interprets me to be. In large part, the conception they conclude derives my actions, my words, and my choices; but they will never fully know me; I am the only one who holds that potential.

Either one can decide to accept this as a source of ecstasy and freedom, or one can reject this conclusion and embrace a desolate fate of serfdom, in which one's actions, words, and choices are ordered and preordained and predictable without providing any identity of the self. Happiness is not derived from modifying and controlling one's external surroundings. A home dwelling to Watts is analogous to a bird's nest, a comment he flippantly makes during various talks throughout his career. Staring insecurity in the face, then, is confrontation, not understanding. Decision must commence, and that decision closes off other portals of experience. Grasping the understanding that life entails insecurity does free one from the trap-door of anxiety.

In Hong and Hong (2000), the philosopher Kierkegaard called humanity's insecurity 'the crisis of modernity'. In early Athens, Greece, Socrates created havoc by questioning cemented beliefs and customs. Not claiming to be more knowledgeable than the masses, he contrarily claimed to know nothing. This is an explicative case of serenity in insecurity. Additionally, Socrates kept following his internal beliefs without any grimness, although this led to a death sentence explicated in the *Apology* dialogue.

Security in social cohesion employs obvious benefits, to the detriment of the individual. In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, philosopher Boethius (2008/524 AD) reflected how capricious and unfortunate his life had become in failing to adhere to social cohesion by committing civil disobedience through dialogue with the fictional character of Lady Philosophy, who poetically stated,

I see. And I understand the cause of your sickness. You have forgotten what you are. I see why you are ill, and I also see the way to cure you. It is what you cannot remember that causes you to feel lost and to grieve.... (p. 24)

Lady Philosophy's clemency was by a reminder that only the weak rule by force, and the just meet reward in Heaven. Similarly, Plato in the *Gorgias* dialogue argued that authoritarian figures indiscriminately inflicting subjugation on to the layperson are far weaker than those not in political power. The understanding displayed by Boethius and Plato suggests that what seems true is really its opposite, and in both cases, the false appearance of knowledge or strength is, in fact, reflective of ignorance and weakness. 'For every sentient being is God' – Watts articulates early in his autobiography – 'Omnipotent, omniscient, infinite, and eternal – pretending with the utmost sincerity and determination to be otherwise, to be a mere creature subject to failure, pain, death, temptation, hellfire, and ultimate tragedy' (pp. 3–4).

Tillich (1999/1987) mentions that 'The real answer of how to regain the dimension of depth is... given the awareness that we have lost the decisive dimension of life, the dimension of depth, and that there is no easy way of getting it back' (p. 7). The solution to ontological insecurity lies in the realm of interpersonal relationships, community, and spiritual exploration. Watts advocated for a shift towards a more authentic and relational way of being grounded in genuine connections with others, and deeper meaning through lived experiences that transcend the

material world by attuning to the extraordinary in the ordinary. Attempting to structure security in one's life in fact reveals insecurity. Embracing the reality of insecurity is the most secure-creating experience for humans.

Along these same lines as the early philosophers, Cope (2012) in *The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling* defined 'dharma' by addressing the notion of *dharma* quoted in the Gospel of Thomas: 'If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.' (p. 35) Life is a call, and an invitation to bring forth what is within oneself. Security cannot be the answer, as security is stagnancy and predictability. Ignorance of one's dharma, his or her life's calling, is detrimental. Call it *dharma* or call it *telos*, the premise remains the same. One is not meant to be frozen in predictability, as humanity is not predictable. Fearing insecurity is fear that leads to not knowing life. In life, fluctuations should be expected. Gleiser (2014) reported that returning back as far as Aristotle and teleology, we well understood fluctuation (insecurity):

With his First Mover and subordinate collective of unmoved movers, Aristotle addressed two fundamental issues one faces when trying to explain Nature: how the change from rest into motion occurs, and how motion is maintained.... Aristotle missed the notion of inertia, the natural condition of a body to remain in its state of motion unless compelled to change it by a force. For that, some eighteen centuries had to pass. (p. 30)

Watts, Marcel, Tillich, Osho, Kierkegaard, and innumerable other existential-leaning thinkers regurgitated a root theme in their lives and works: that modern society, with its emphasis on materialism, technology, and individualism, contributes to a sense of ontological insecurity. Watts believed that this insecurity arises from a loss of

meaningful connections with others, a disconnection from oneself, and a lack of deeper engagement with the mysteries and spiritual dimensions of existence. The inertia Gleiser connected to Aristotle's physics on the ontic strata is propelled by diminished force; modern civilization, particularly in the Western world, depraves and stagnates the innate momentum nature offers by driving attention away from Wattsean aesthetics, and the concurrent thesis of aligning one's lived experience (and teleology) in accordance with rhythms and beats of the natural world.

Coda

Various perspectives have characterized Alan Watts, ranging from a counter-cultural sage, the foremost popularizer of Zen in the Western world, to a paradoxical figure juggling lifestyle and philosophy, a cultural emblem, a pseudo-mystic misunderstanding the essence of the traditions he drew from, and more. Watts pre-emptively acknowledged and anticipated these very critiques throughout his body of work. This fundamental acknowledgement should deter the inclination to merely criticize Watts, leading instead to a perspective that allows him to exist as he was on his own merits – an outlook that steps back and appreciates the eccentric, ingenious, unconventional, culturally assimilative, libertine, alcohol-dependent, yet exquisitely vibrant and alive opus. He was a deeply flawed, remarkably sincere human being with fatal vices and a love for communicating his incisive ideas and vivid imagination. The only persona he consciously embraced, in fact, was that of a philosophical entertainer.

Throughout his work, Watts argued for recognizing the interconnected nature of human existence, and letting go of the desire for rigid security, with individuals being able to find a sense of liberation from the ontological concerns that plague them. 'Within the plane of psychological immanence', Frankl wrote in *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, 'both consciousness

and responsibilities are and remain unsolvable problems. However, as soon as we transpose them into the ontological dimension, they cease to be.' (2018/1997, p. 36) Peripatetic analysis on teleology, taken from the vantage-point of existential inquiry and Wattsean aesthetics, isn't against empiricism but is indeed remarkably empirical, as relinquishing absolute control and certainty naturally corresponds to greater fluidity that necessitates a more flexible engagement to one's life. However, 'some order, predictability, and security are necessary for most of us in order to survive and maintain a sense of sanity. But a life devoid of mystery and risk is only half a life (Buscaglia, 1984, p. 176) Watts, and Osho (2012), would concur – a limited structuring of daily activities is advisable; doing otherwise ends with catastrophic consequences. Allocating time can be a form of meditation – disciplined due to one's enactment of what Buddhism calls 'dharma'. Cope stated, 'Yogis insist that every single human being has a unique vocation. They call this *dharma*. *Dharma* is a potent Sanskrit word... [meaning] variously, "path", "Teaching", or [even] "law" ... for our purposes it will mean primarily "Vocation" or "Sacred duty".' (p. xxi) That is the dive, the drop into the unknown. Marcel indicated that 'It is necessary to *be* in some degree... to be immediately for one's self, as it were, affected or modified. A mutual interdependence of being and having.' (p. 134) Existentialists might label the incongruence, or lack of synergy and interdependence with one's being and having that Marcel distinguished, as a *nihilistic tendency* (commonly attributed to Nietzsche, though earlier philosophers consider nihilism also), whereas Plato conceptualized this stalemate of no positive philosophical inference as *aporia*.

Anxiety stems from searching for a centre, a core, and concluding that there is none. In *The Book: On the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are*, Watts (1989/1966) reinforces that life is a game of hide and seek for an essence

one will never encounter, as ‘The universe of seemingly separate things is therefore real only for a while, not eternally real, for it comes and goes as the Self hides and seeks itself’ (p. 19). Experience entails an experiencer, and a knower requires a known. Dualism parcels out the two when separation is not needed. A third variable enters beyond duality: experiencing manifests that which experiences and experience itself. Knowing births the knower and the known. Life is not a *thing*, and it is not an *activity*. Watts would have argued that actions do not exist. Life is an ebb-and-flow. It is insecurity.

Insecurity flows, security pivots to a single point; this is why Watts wasn’t out to evangelize Eastern philosophy or religion, but ‘It is more that he want[ed] Western readers to take pleasure in Zen, to enjoy its art and its literature, and to borrow any ideas that might be of service to them in leading their lives’ (Furlong, 2001/1986, p. 142). Insecurity, like Zen, is about humbleness that allows the embodiment of the seemingly minute aspects of lifestyle. Saliency of anxiety is freedom’s earmark as a potential for potential to exist. Watts understood the present moment being *spatialized* and representations introduced that allow time to be represented rather than thought. Malleability of meaning decrees that one could spend his or her days vegetating and thinking, or thinking about vegetating. Persuasively perverse as it may be, indolence may be enjoyed as amongst the clandestine of reposes, quipping to the brink or ensnaring one completely. Thinking and loafing can turn into a sort of thinking-and-torpor.

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