On the Affect of Security

Monique Wonderly

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Monique Wonderly
University of California at San Diego

ABSTRACT: In the contemporary philosophical literature, the topic of security has been largely neglected, and this is especially true of the affect of security. In what follows, I aim to nudge the affect of security toward the philosophical foreground by offering a basic analysis of (one sense of) this attitude. Specifically, I sketch an account on which the affect of security is helpfully construed as a feeling of confidence in one's ability to competently and effectively exercise one's agency. Security, so construed, is an affective attitude toward one's agency that both admits of affect regulation and plays a crucial meta-affective regulatory role in facilitating and modulating other affective dispositions and occurrent emotions. Examining this attitude can help to illuminate both the phenomenology and motivational structure of agency and the nature of certain emotions.

Security is an important, if not essential, ingredient in a good life. In the fifth chapter of *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill underscores this point, referring to security as "the most vital of all interests." "Security," he continues, "no human being can possibly do without; on it we depend for all our immunity from evil, and for the whole value of all and every good, beyond the passing moment . . ." (2003/1861, 226). Whether or not we accept Mill's assessment, few would deny that security has great import. There is far less agreement, though, about how to understand the concept of security.[1]

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1. Interestingly, security has been labeled "an essentially contested concept" (Buzan 1983, 6).

Security is derived from the Latin "securitas," a combination of "se-" and "cura," literally translating as "free from care" (Arends 2008, 263). In ordinary language, we often use the term to denote freedom from danger, as in "Releasing those nuclear codes would jeopardize national security," or "We should strive to increase job security for untenured professors." In the political and social sciences, the term is frequently used in this way as well (Buzan 1983; Giddens 1990). Psychologists, on the other hand, often emphasize the *affective* character of security. Security is something that one can feel, and one's feeling of security can be just as important as the actual absence of external threats. Unless one feels sufficiently secure, both one's emotional health and one's ability to effectively exercise one's agency become compromised (Bowlby 1969; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016).

In the contemporary philosophical literature, the topic of security has been largely neglected, and this is especially true of security as an affective attitude.[2] In what follows, I aim to nudge the affect of security toward the philosophical foreground by offering a basic analysis of (one sense of) this phenomenon. Specifically, I sketch an account on which the affective attitude of security is helpfully construed as a feeling of confidence in one's ability to competently exercise and successfully effect one's agency. I offer an articulation and defense of this view in sections 1–3. In section 4, I distinguish this sense of security from related phenomena. Finally, in section 5, I discuss how attachment serves to regulate affective security, which, in turn, disposes us to have other affective experiences. Security, so construed, is an affective attitude toward one's agency that both admits of emotion regulation and plays a crucial meta-affective regulatory role in facilitating and modulating other affective dispositions and occurrent emotions.

1. SECURITY AS A FEELING

Theorists have described security in myriad ways—as a situation, a practice, a state of being, etc. (Giddens 1990; Herington 2012). As I am interested in investigating security as an affective attitude, we can helpfully group the extant relevant definitions into two broad, overlapping categories: (1) security as an absence of some mental quality or condition and (2) security as one or more specific positive psychological states.

Descriptions under which security is defined in terms of the *absence* of some mental quality or condition are quite common. Political scientist Arnold Wolfers associates security with the "absence of fear that acquired values will be attacked" (Buzan 1983, 11; Wolfers 1962, 150). Historian Emma Rothschild describes secu-

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2. Karen Jones's illuminating treatment of what she terms "basal security" (2004, 2019) and Lawrence Becker's discussion of noncognitive security (1996) represent notable exceptions. Similarly, in a recent work, Jonathan Herington (2019) offers helpful insights on affective security and its role in enhancing well-being. My account here, which draws on and develops a notion of security that I first formulate in "On Being Attached" (2016), both engages with and considerably diverges from Jones's and Herington's respective views.

rity as "freedom from the . . . fear of personal violation" (1995, 62). According to psychologist Mary Ainsworth, being "without fear" or "without anxiety" is "a very good basic definition" of security (1988, 1). Finally, in their *Handbook of Personal Security*, psychologists Patrick Carroll et al. identify security as the "absence of concern over loss" (2015, xiv).

These descriptions paint a suggestive picture of felt insecurity. They are not particularly helpful, though, if one seeks to apprehend the affective character of security itself. The person who feels secure is without (significant) worry, fear, or anxiety. But so, too, are the comatose, the dead, the grapefruit, and the lamppost, and *they* do not feel secure. A feeling cannot be understood as merely the absence of some other feeling or condition. We must look elsewhere, then, to discern the nature of felt security, and the second category seems like a suitable starting place. After all, if the absence of fear or worry has affective content, the relevant content should be articulable in positive terms.

Many theorists have described security as consisting in one or more specific positive psychological states. Philologist and political theorist J. F. M. Arends suggests that "securitas" both denotes unconcern or safety and "refers to a group of emotions" that include trust and confidence (2008, 263–64). Sociologists have also advanced views on which security is an emotion. Theodore Kemper, for example, classifies "the emotion of security" as a subclass of contentment and associates it with being "satisfied with the amount of one's own power" (2006, 99). Anthony Giddens defines *ontological security*, identified as an emotional phenomenon related to trust, as a kind of "confidence in the continuation of one's self-identity and in one's material and social environments of action" (1991, 920).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, psychologists, too, often emphasize the affective character of security. According to Joseph de Rivera, security is an emotion that facilitates a kind of "openness" to new perspectives, allowing one to "venture forth" into new territory (1977, 46–49). Abraham Maslow characterizes security as a "syndrome of feelings" that includes feelings of "being at home in the world," calm, safety, self-esteem, self-acceptance, courage, and strength (1942, 334–35). William Blatz identifies security with "a willingness to accept the consequences of one's acts," serenity, and feeling confident and effective (Ainsworth 2010, 46; Blatz 1966, 13). Ainsworth endorses a view that she gleaned from John Bowlby's seminal work in attachment theory—security as "an 'all is well' kind of appraisal of sensory input," or "an 'Okay, go ahead' feeling" (Ainsworth 1988, 1; Bowlby 1969, ch. 7).

As I noted in the introduction, relatively few philosophers discuss the affect of security in detail, but theorists have made some suggestive remarks on the topic. For example, in earlier work, I gesture at a version of the account that I develop and defend here, security as a kind of "confidence in one's well-being and one's ability to competently navigate the world" (Wonderly 2016, 231). Jonathan Herington characterizes security as a felt quality of "tranquility" or "calm assurance" (2019, 184). Lawrence Becker identifies the feeling of security as a "disposition to have confidence about other people's motives, to banish suspicious thoughts about them"

(1996, 46). Finally, Karen Jones describes "basal security," which she identifies as a type of trust, as an "unarticulated, affectively laden, interpretive framework that [agents] use in framing choice situations concerning vulnerability to the actions of others" (2004, 8–9; see also 2019, 963).

Notice that category (2) definitions do not offer a streamlined conception of felt security, but rather a hodgepodge of feelings—many of which are vaguely described and only loosely connected to others in the bunch. Fortunately, we can glean a path forward by isolating two broad clusters of feelings identified in this group. First, there is a cluster that relates to general contentment: feelings of acceptance, satisfaction, peace, safety, and so forth. We find elements of this cluster in the conceptions of security offered by Arends (safety), Kemper (satisfaction), Maslow (being at home in the world, safety, self-acceptance, calm), Blatz (serenity), and Herington (tranquility). The second cluster concerns a kind of confidence: feelings of openness to exploration, competence, courage, trust, etc. The descriptions of security offered by Arends (confidence, trust), Maslow (self-esteem, courage, strength), and Blatz (a feeling of confidence toward accepting the consequences of one's actions, effectiveness) feature in this cluster as well. And to this list, we can add Giddens (confidence, trust), de Rivera (openness to exploration), Ainsworth and Bowlby ("Okay, go ahead" feeling), Wonderly (confidence), Becker (confidence, trust), and Jones (trust).

The boundaries between the two clusters are not very refined, but we can discern one helpful, if rough, difference between them. The sense of security captured by the first cluster is marked by a kind of impassivity. The agent who feels secure in this respect feels more or less unperturbed or "at ease." The second cluster represents a sense of security that is decidedly more active. The person who feels secure in this respect needn't feel particularly calm, serene, or satisfied. On the contrary, her experience of the relevant type of confidence might be accompanied by a rush of eager anticipation for change. The affect of security in this sense, unlike the first, suggests a readiness for *action*.

I am interested in the sense of security captured by the second cluster—i.e., security as a kind of confidence. This conception of security has been obscured by its typical entanglement with its more passive relatives, but it warrants investigation as a distinct attitude. Security in this sense coheres well with the idea that it is an active feeling with evaluative content and a significant forward-looking dimension. It also affords us a conception on which affective security can elucidate our understandings of agency and (certain) emotions.

2. SECURITY AS CONFIDENCE

Confidence, like security, is sometimes described as an emotion in the social science literature, but rarely so in philosophy. There is an epistemic notion of confidence that is not obviously affective at all, but rather reflects the strength of one's

belief that a certain proposition is true or that some state of affairs will obtain. But there is also a notion of confidence that is not in the first instance a doxastic attitude, but rather an affective orientation toward its object.[3] Whether or not the relevant orientation constitutes an emotion *proper* is of little consequence here. It is enough, for my purposes, that security—and so one kind of confidence—is an intentional feeling with evaluative content, a characteristic phenomenology, and associated motivational markers.[4]

To see what I mean to pick out by these features, consider the parallel structure of fear. First, fear has a characteristic phenomenology or "feel" to it. It is a feeling with which most of us are familiar—one that typically involves, among other things, a negative valence and certain physiological characteristics such as an increased heart rate, accelerated breathing, and physical discomfort in the stomach (Lyons 1980; Marks 1982). Second, fear has *intentional* content. It typically has a "target" or "primary object," and it contains an implicit construal of its target in evaluative terms.[5] My fear of the animal charging toward me, for example, construes the animal (its target) as dangerous (where this construal represents fear's "formal object"). Finally, fear is typically associated with a tendency to engage in freezing, fight, or flight behaviors. Upon seeing the charging animal, I might stop in my tracks, prepare for physical confrontation, or flee the area in search of safety.

We can detect a similar set of features in confidence. Let's begin with intentionality. While we sometimes speak of a general sense of confidence, one is typically confident *in* or *about* something in particular. Not only does confidence typically have an object, but it involves an implicit construal of that object in evaluative terms. I suggest that the relevant evaluation is a construal of the object as *sound or reliable*. For example, my confidence in my health implicitly construes my health as robust, "in good condition," and as assured or very likely to endure into the near future. This conception of confidence's evaluative content coheres well with both our ordinary language use of the term and its more formal definitions (*OED* 2016; Rotenstreich 1972).

The phenomenology and motivational markers of confidence will vary depending on its object. I might be confident *that* I will be destroyed tomorrow or *in* your ability to run a marathon. Confidence in these cases will have very different experiential and motivational qualities. More importantly, though, in neither

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3. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev suggests that confidence may not be an affective attitude at all since it does not obviously involve a "change" capable of generating affective states (2001, 481–82). In the remainder of this section, I argue for the opposing view.

4. There is room for views on which confidence is an affective attitude that falls short of being an emotion. Robert C. Roberts, for example, suggests that the feeling of confidence might be aptly described as a "feeling of construed condition" or a "feeling of self-estimate," that is "very close to an emotion" (2003, 66–67).

5. I use the following terminology for an emotion's intentional objects. The "target" or "primary object" is what or whom the emotion is directed at on the particular occasion in question. An emotion's "formal object" is its implicit construal, or evaluation, of its target. For more on these terminological distinctions, see Scarantino and de Sousa 2018 and Helm 2009.

case is the object a suitable one for the affect of security that I am concerned to capture here. Certainty of my impending doom is clearly not the relevant sort of confidence, and while I can be secure in *my* abilities, I cannot be secure in yours. Security is, in the relevant sense, neither *about* the truth of some proposition, nor a property of some other individual. I will further specify its object in the following section, but for now it will suffice to say that the affect of security, rather, is invariably about the *self*.

Let's consider the phenomenology of confidence in oneself. As sociologist Jack Barbalet explains, confidence has a characteristic content and tone—i.e., we know when we are confident and can see confidence in others. The feeling of confidence is marked by "bodily sensations of muscular control, deep and even breathing, and other sensations of well-being" (2001, 84).

We can add to this that while confidence is a positively valenced feeling, it is not merely the experience of bodily pleasure, as when one enjoys the soothing warmth of a hot bath. Confidence is (quite often) infused with both a sense of increased capableness and an inclination to move forward.[6]

The associated motivational markers for confidence are a bit more difficult to pick out. Whereas negative emotions are typically associated with specific action tendencies, recent emotions research suggests that positive emotions tend to increase one's thought-action repertoire and to build personal enduring resources (Fredrickson 2013, 4). Whether or not confidence is an emotion *proper*, one might, following Barbara Fredrickson's characterization of similar attitudes, suggest that confidence is associated with a tendency to plan for, or strive toward, a better future (2013, 4–6).[7] Or again, one might, as Barbalet does, vaguely describe confidence as a feeling that "encourages one to go one's own way" (2001, 86). To my mind, however, it suffices to say that whether or not the relevant form of confidence inclines one toward any particular action, it *facilitates* action. It affords one a broader view of potential positive outcomes for action and the wherewithal to strive for (some of) them. Borrowing Ainsworth's terminology, one might say that the sense of confidence internal to security is the "Okay, go ahead" feeling, that better positions one to "go ahead."[8]

Confidence, as I've described it here, is well suited to capture the relevant sense of security. Security is a positively valenced affective attitude that construes its object (for now, the self) as sound and reliable. These terms reflect the sense of assuredness

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6. This notion of confidence resembles other action-oriented affects discussed in the evolutionary psychology literature. For example, psychologist Robert Plutchik associates the feeling of anticipation with exploratory behaviors such as mapping and examining (1980, 16). Also, in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin associates the affective experience of determination or decision with the performance of difficult action and describes its characteristic expression in terms of a firmly closed mouth, controlled respiration, and a distended chest (2009/1890, 246–48). Many thanks to Trip Glazer for these helpful references.

7. See Fredrickson's descriptions of hope and pride (2013, 5).

8. Barbalet seems to have something like this in mind when he calls confidence the "unavoidable basis of all action" (1993, 235).

and the significant forward-looking dimension that are commonly thought to be integral to security.[9] And finally, security, like confidence, is action oriented.

3. SECURITY AS CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S AGENCY

Above, I suggested that security is invariably about the self, but now, I will be more specific. In earlier work, I briefly described security as a kind of confidence in one's well-being and agential competence (Wonderly 2016; 2019). Here, however, I want to background discussion of the relationship between security and one's general sense of well-being and focus on its agential character in particular. On this picture, we can usefully construe (one kind of) security as confidence in one's ability to competently and effectively exercise one's agency. And here, it will be helpful to add that the affect of *insecurity* can be construed as a kind of *anxiety* about one's ability to competently and effectively exercise one's agency.[10]

These corresponding conceptions of security and insecurity invoke a broad, but familiar, notion of agency. Agency, in this respect, concerns the manifestation of one's capacity to act (Schlosser 2019). For agents like us, this involves the abilities to recognize and to respond to reasons, to employ those reasons in deliberations, plans, and decisions about how to act, and to carry out the relevant actions successfully. These abilities are a function of both our internal cognitive, affective, and volitional capacities and the environmental conditions that can facilitate or disrupt their exercise. We often employ colloquial terms to capture the relevant feelings of security and insecurity. For example, one might say that the person who feels secure feels as though she is sure footed, "on a steady course," "empowered to take on life's challenges," and so forth. Conversely, to feel insecure is to feel, in some sense, off-kilter or defective, as though one is "at sea" or has "lost one's bearings," etc.[11]

Because agential competence is presumably always desirable, one might be tempted to infer that the attitude of security is invariably good, while that of insecurity is in every case pernicious. But this would be a mistake. To start, feelings

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9. For more on the forward-looking dimension of security, see Waldron 2006 and Herington 2012. For more on the future-oriented aspect of confidence, see Barbalet 1993 and 2001.

10. Though I will employ the notion of insecurity at various points in the remainder of this paper, I will not offer a thorough analysis of it here. The idea that insecurity is a kind of anxiety coheres well with much of the literature discussed in section 1. Many of the relevant theorists have explicitly associated these phenomena (Ainsworth 1988; Blatz 1966; Bowlby 1969, 1980; de Rivera 1977; Giddens 1990; Maslow 1942). To feel insecure, most would agree, is to feel in some sense *anxious*—i.e., worried, concerned, or uncertain. For interesting philosophical treatments of anxiety, see Roberts 2003 (ch. 3.2), Kurth 2018, and Levy 2016.

11. I borrow some of these descriptions from Wonderly 2016. Iris Marion Young's description of the phenomenology of timidity, uncertainty, and hesitancy reflected in a lack of bodily confidence is also relevant here. As she explains, a person in the relevant condition might experience her body as a "fragile encumbrance, rather than the medium for the enactment of [her] aims" (2005, 34). Thanks to Trip Glazer for this reference.

of insecurity can be quite valuable under the right circumstances. To be sure, it is *unpleasant* to feel insecure. Felt insecurity, when warranted, tracks (actual or potential) threats to things *about* us that matter *to* us. The negative valence of the affect reflects the significance of the object and motivates us to act to protect it or to restore it. For example, I don't have much confidence in my ability to ice skate, but I do not feel insecure on account of it. My lack of prowess in this arena is of little concern to me. But if my abilities to navigate personal relationships, or again, to respond to moral concerns, were to become compromised—say, by a progressive neurological defect—then I would feel insecure and I would be very motivated to preserve or to restore the relevant competences by whatever means I could do so. In this way, feeling insecure can help agents to attend to things that matter deeply to them.

Just as there are circumstances in which felt insecurity can be advantageous, there are situations in which feeling secure can be harmful. For example, if an agent feels completely secure when her life is in shambles, then she fails to register the significance of her circumstances and is poorly positioned to change them. This might sound odd given that above I associated felt security with a readiness for action. But this tension is easily explained. Feeling secure facilitates action, but it might blind one to the particular type of action that is called for, given one's actual situation. The deluded, deceived, or otherwise misinformed agent—bolstered by her false sense of security—might feel quite motivated to go out into the world, solve problems, and go on as if everything is all right. She will not, though, be motivated to address her own peril because she does not see that things are in fact *not* all right.

This discussion underscores the point that confidence in (and anxiety about) one's ability to competently effect one's agency need not reflect one's *actual* agential condition. An individual might feel extremely competent despite being considerably impaired. Likewise, one might be, on the whole, quite capable of accomplishing her agential goals despite feeling otherwise. The point is that security and insecurity construe their objects in particular ways, and those construals may or may not be veridical. Interestingly, though, while one's fear of a cotton ball doesn't obviously make that cotton ball any more dangerous than it otherwise would be, how one feels about one's agency can impact one's ability to exercise it. If a person is sufficiently beset by feelings of insecurity, for example, then on account of that alone, her agency would likely be compromised. Conversely, an agent's inflated sense of security might, under certain circumstances, enable her to become a more effective agent.

Let's sum up. Security, as I have described it, is a positively valenced feeling that construes its object—one's ability to competently and effectively exercise one's agency—as sound and reliable. It is also a largely future-oriented attitude that readies us for action. Its negative counterpart, the feeling of insecurity, can be construed as a kind of anxiety about one's agential competence. It is neither invariably good to feel secure, nor invariably bad to feel insecure. Affective security and affective insecurity do not necessarily track actual agential ability, but nor are they irrelevant to it.

4. SITUATING SECURITY ON THE AFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE

In the preceding sections, I isolated a notion of security that, unlike the mere feeling of safety, captures a more dynamic affective orientation toward one's sense of agency. In order to hone and deepen this account, it will be helpful to situate this conception of security amid related, but distinct phenomena. The sense of security that I wish to capture here is not, for example, identical to the more familiar notion of self-esteem. And while the relevant brand of security shares deep affinities with what Jones labels "basal security," and with what psychologists often describe as "attachment security," it differs—though in interesting and informative ways—from both of these phenomena.

Take first the notion of self-esteem. Since self-confidence is often associated with a positive evaluation of the self, one might think that self-esteem is sufficient to capture the sense of security at issue here. This, though, would be a mistake. Self-esteem concerns the extent to which one regards oneself as worthy or valuable, and changes in self-esteem tend to track and reflect affective experiences of self-enhancement or self-diminishment (Keshen 2017; Leary and Baumeister 2000, 2). To be sure, self-esteem might be related to one's sense of security. One might think oneself unworthy *because* one is unable to competently effect one's agency—or again, one's low sense of self-esteem might be sufficiently inhibitive that it undermines one's recognition and responsiveness to certain kinds of reasons, thereby impairing one's agency. However, these phenomena often diverge. To be insecure is not necessarily to construe oneself as bad, defective, or otherwise unworthy. One can consistently construe oneself as a good person (one, for example, who is of sound character and a significant source of positive value in one's community), while feeling as though one is an ineffective agent. My ability to competently exercise my agency might be impaired, not so much because of my own constitutional inadequacy, but due to adversarial environmental factors that are understandably beyond my control. I might, for example, lack confidence in my ability to be an effective agent and locate the source of my limitation in negative qualities of other agents. If I know that other agents are actively seeking to manipulate or otherwise harm me, then I will likely feel insecure, but not necessarily unworthy.

Turn now to Karen Jones's concept of basal security, a term that refers to "a generalized underlying affective stance toward the prospect of risk at the hands of other agents" (2019, 963; see also 2004, esp. 5–8). On Jones's account, basal security is an affectively laden state that functions as an interpretive framework through which we construe the practical significance of certain kinds of risks. For individuals with very low basal security, their own vulnerability is particularly salient to them. They will be inclined, for example, to be vigilant for signs of danger, to identify relatively benign factors as such signs, and to experience perceptions of risk as especially motivating. Those with low basal security are disposed to *treat* certain circumstances and relationships as more dangerous than cool, rational evidential assessments would typically warrant. For Jones, this feature underscores

an important explanatory role that basal security plays. Specifically, basal security can account for cases in which one's willingness to enter into trust relationships diverges considerably from one's own purely doxastic evaluation of risk. A person with low basal security might believe, for example, that entering into a trust relation with a third party is all-things-considered safe, but still feel and behave as if such a relation is dangerous. In this way, basal security modulates our dispositions to trust or distrust other agents.

Jones's conception of basal security nicely illustrates how self-esteem and security can come apart and brings to the fore the affective character of security. Survivors of rape or political terrorism, for example, might consistently think themselves good and worthy, but on account of damaged basal security, be more likely to regard *other* agents as untrustworthy. What's more, those with reduced basal security might be disposed to distrust others even where they sincerely judge that the relevant parties—or again, the prospect of entering into a trust relationship with them—pose no significant threat. The affective nature of security helps to make sense of this dissonance. As this is an important aspect of Jones's account, it is worth discussing in greater detail.

Let's begin with a familiar feature of emotions. Emotions are (on many views) characterized by patterns of salience, interpretation, and motivation that do not neatly track purely doxastic evaluations. To see this, consider how my resentment might lead me to emotionally and behaviorally react to my sister as though she is slighting me when I don't strictly speaking *believe* that she is. I might, for example, affectively register her pride at earning a well-deserved raise and her carelessly nudging aside my old laptop with her new flashy electronic tablet as mean-spirited digs at my own meager wages, even where I don't really believe that she is intentionally insulting me. What's more, I might be prone to lash out with disapproving looks or defensive remarks in these cases and others, even while I find the evidence that she bears me no ill-will quite convincing. My resentment colors how I affectively register and frame information despite my calm, considered evidential assessment. So, too, with basal security. A person whose basal security is very low may be inclined to "treat" (affectively and behaviorally) others as untrustworthy, even while acknowledging ample evidence of their trustworthiness. The person in question might be especially suspicious about others' motives, excessively concerned to avoid or dissolve relations of dependence on other agents, and prone to interpret minor deviations in desired behavior as intentions to betray her or otherwise do her harm.

The form of security Jones describes is similar, but not identical, to the sense of security that I am concerned to elucidate in this paper. Both concepts of security represent affective phenomena that reflect or shape our tendencies to construe the world as "risky" or "unsafe." For Jones, basal security represents a type of trust constituted, in part, by a dispositional state that governs and modulates the affective attitude internal to three-place trust, a trust relation in which "A trusts B in domain of interaction D" (2019, 958). On her view, three-place trust is character-

ized by an attitude of optimism about the trusted agent's competence and goodwill with respect to a particular domain of interaction. In this respect, basal security has a meta-affective regulatory character. Jones expands on this feature, suggesting that (sufficiently high) basal security is an affective state might be capable of driving out certain negative emotions such as "distrust-generating fear" (2019, 964).

Similarly, the notion of security that I am concerned with in this paper also has an important meta-affective regulatory dimension. It is an affective state directed at one's agency that involves dispositions to experience discrete episodes of security "feelings" and other emotions. In this way, it both regulates and reflects other affective phenomena. More will be said about this in the next section. For now, however, I want to turn to some important differences between basal security and the relevant sense of security.

Importantly, basal security, qua type of trust, is an affective orientation that we take toward our vulnerability to other agents. The sense of security I am concerned with is not restricted in this way. To be sure, I might be insecure because other agents pose a threat to the exercise of my agency. But I might just as well feel insecure because of a threat posed by a lion, an earthquake, or a migraine. In certain circumstances, they, too, can interfere with my confidence in my ability to competently and effectively exercise my agency. This would suggest that at best, Jones's basal security is a subset of the broader phenomenon that I seek to capture here.

There is, though, another related difference worth noting. Jones's basal security seems, in the first instance, an affective framework through which we interpret the agency of others, while the sense of security with which I am here concerned focuses on one's *own* agency. The phenomenology of the latter is a feeling of, or about, one's agency and thus is capable of playing a more active role in facilitating and motivating agentive activity. If I am right, then, the notion of security that I mean to capture is both broader and marked by a stronger (or at least different) motivational force.

A third phenomenon, sometimes referred to as "attachment security," is closer to, but still diverges from, the notion of security that I intend to capture here. In her work on affective looping, Jones, herself, describes attachment security in terms of "the positive affect that attachment provides, one that can buoy us up against potential threats" (2019, 963). Developmental and clinical psychologists often identify the impact that our "attachment figures" have on our senses of security as a defining element of the bond that exists between us. There may be many individuals with whom we associate and whose company we greatly enjoy, but only a select few are capable of directly affecting our sense of security in virtue of our proximity to or engagement with them (Ainsworth 1991; Bowlby 1969; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016; Wonderly 2016). In early childhood, one's primary caregiver is typically one's primary attachment figure. In adulthood, long-term romantic partners and very close friends often play this role. Attachment figures who are responsive to our needs function both as "safe havens" to whom we can turn for support or comfort when threatened or stressed and as "secure bases" that

facilitate exploratory behavior and an increased willingness to take on new challenges (Bowlby 1969; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016).

On some interpretations, "attachment security" refers to a positive feeling about the quality of one's attachment relationship(s) or simply, the feeling of being loved (Mikulincer and Shaver 2015, 124; 2016, 497). In fully developed agents (as opposed to infants), attachment security impacts one's experience of, or feelings toward, one's own agency, and it reflects and shapes one's attitudes not only toward threats from other agents, but to threats more broadly. In these respects, attachment security doubtless shares important affinities with the sense of security at issue in this paper. But while attachment security is sufficiently broad in one sense, it is far too narrow in another. In restricting the source of the relevant brand of security to attachment relationships, this concept would leave out the possibility of security that is grounded in, or shaped by, other aspects of one's environment or one's own psychology. To be sure, as I conceive of security, healthy interpersonal attachments are key means by which we can obtain, restore, or enhance felt security, but I doubt that they are the *only* means. It might be possible for one to lack attachment bonds while still feeling secure, supposing that one has supportive environmental structures in place and a healthy perception of oneself—shaped by, for example, positive mental health practices (such as meditation and exercise), resilience and/or similar personality traits, and a history of past achievement.

Thus, if we describe attachment security as a particular kind of security that is grounded in interpersonal attachment, then it will not be identical to the kind of security that I describe in this paper. It would be, like Jones's notion of "basal security," at best a subset of the broader conception that I mean to articulate. On my view, however, what makes attachment bonds so special is not that they give rise to a unique type of security, but rather that they are especially well positioned to impact security in my broader sense.

Attachments, while not the only source of felt security, play distinctively powerful roles in shaping and regulating a general sense of security (see, for example, Feeney 2004; Sroufe and Waters 1977). Thus, in order to better understand the relationship between security, agency, and emotion, it will be useful to take a closer look at how attachments regulate affective security and help to facilitate its roles in other emotions and emotional processes. This is the task of the following and final section.

5. SECURITY, AGENCY, AND EMOTION REGULATION

As I have argued, we might helpfully construe the affect of security as a kind of confidence in one's agency. The relevant kind of security crucially concerns how we feel about ourselves as agents and our abilities to competently navigate our environment. Security facilitates, and is reinforced by, a range of emotions and emotional processes. Given these features, it is both itself a candidate for emotion regulation, and it has a meta-affective regulatory dimension through which it

reflects and governs other emotional phenomena. Above, I suggested that attachments, while not the only source of the relevant brand of security, play especially important roles in regulating it. Attending to the attachment literature on emotion regulation will help to illuminate security's dynamic character (qua feeling of agency) and its relationship to other emotions.

In early development, our emotions are regulated by our primary caregivers, and we learn to self-regulate through our engagement with them (Schore 2016, 21). Their facial expressions, tones of voice, and other bodily gestures serve as indicators about how they, and we, are doing, and our own experiences and expressions of emotion typically follow suit. When they are relaxed and smiling, we often feel happy. Conversely, when they appear concerned or upset, we tend to become uneasy and fearful. As attachment figures, our primary caregivers also regulate our emotions via the security-enhancing roles described in section 4—that is, they act as "safe havens" and "secure bases" for us.

As safe havens, our primary caregivers' comforting contact soothes us and helps to relieve our distress when we are injured or scared, thereby making us feel safe. I have been at pains to show, however, that there is a sense of affective security that is not reducible to mere safety, but rather reflects a feeling of (or about) one's agency. I think we can catch glimpses of this phenomenon in our primary caregivers' impact on our security qua *secure bases*. As secure bases, our primary caregivers not only facilitate our willingness to explore new environments by making us feel safe (thereby removing a potential barrier to exploration), but their emotional cues actively encourage us to explore by exciting an array of action-oriented positive affects. Psychologists have described these affects in terms of intense elation and excitation that can "electrify" an infant and "jump-start" his or her exploratory motivational systems (Schore 2016, 104). While as infants, we are not yet full agents, our experiences of ourselves as explorers—as *doers*—suggests a proto-version of the sense of security I mean to capture here in this paper.

In adulthood, our long-term romantic partners often function as our primary attachment figures, and in this capacity, they serve as both our safe havens and our secure bases and thereby help to regulate our emotions. Of course, as adults, most of us are skilled *self*-regulators of emotion, but external sources can aid or disrupt this process. As a result of positive interactions with our attachment figures, for example, we often learn to self-soothe by activating mental representations of those interactions and internalizing the attachment figure's supportive traits when he or she is not physically present. Positive attachments ground perceptions of ourselves as "active, strong, and competent," facilitating learning and exploration (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016, 148). The relevant support infuses us with senses of optimism and hope that both encourage us to take on new challenges and facilitate effective problem solving. We become more confident in (and competent in) our abilities to revise erroneous beliefs without excessive self-doubt, to flexibly take in new information and adjust plans accordingly, and to navigate (and to surmount) uncomfortable emotions in order to attain mastery over trying situations (Cassidy

1994, 233; Mikulincer and Shaver 2016, 189–90; Waters and Waters 2006). The resulting sense of security represents the kind of confidence in one's ability to competently exercise and effect one's agency at issue in this paper.

As I noted earlier, interpersonal attachment—though a major source of security in this sense—likely isn't the only one. Psychiatric drugs, meditation practices, and supportive environments, for example, may have a similar motivating and self-expanding effect. While the presence and enhancement of this brand of felt security is rarely discussed in the philosophical literature, one can easily detect the specter of (its corresponding sense of) insecurity in philosophers' descriptions of defective agency. Consider, for example, that Harry Frankfurt describes one "disease of the will" as the destabilizing ambivalence of the "divided self" that one faces in the absence of wholeheartedness (1999, 100). Or again, consider what Charles Taylor refers to as an "identity crisis": a "disorientation and uncertainty about where one stands as a person" (1989, 27). Whatever else is true of the agents in these scenarios, their conditions seem to be marked by a profound lack of security.

As a barometer of well-functioning agency, security might provide useful insight into both what well-functioning agency consists in and how to achieve (or maintain) it. Security, in addition to having a distinctive motivational significance for agents like us, strengthens and reflects one's sense of agency. It is plausible, then, that this attitude can help to elucidate how we are motivated to act, as well as the phenomenology and structure of agency. But this is not all. If, as I have urged, security is an affective attitude with its own meta-affective regulatory dimension, then it should be unsurprising that it can also inform certain emotions. As my intent is merely to gesture at some of the relevant connections here, we can afford to be brief.

First, take the emotion of pride. On one common conception, pride involves an appraisal of one's accomplishment, or some other feature of the self for which one is responsible, as good or valuable (Tangney and Tracy 2012, 457; Taylor 1985, 32). As we saw above, felt security provides a stable ground from which to venture forth, explore, and take risks—in short, to do the sort of things (and to become the sort of person) that inspire pride. Pride in turn validates or confirms confidence in oneself and promotes feelings of security (Taylor 1985, 27). In this way, pride and affective security are mutually reinforcing. Affective security, however, is primary and serves to regulate experiential pride. Absent sufficient confidence in one's agency and self-efficacy, one will be unable to experience pride in one's achievements.

Affective security, though invariably about the self, is deeply connected to the identity-constituting relations in which one stands to others. We are "held together" as agents, so to speak, not only by conceptions of oneself as more or less "good," but also in part, by our close relationships of mutual regard and trust. This idea anticipates the important yet often-overlooked role that security plays in love. While generally considered a paradigmatic other-regarding attitude, love involves a strong attachment that gives shape to one's identity and agency. Love not only involves care for another, but it also involves feelings of self-empowerment and

enlargement of one's own well-being (Nozick 1989; White 2001). One reason that love has such value for us is that it tends to enhance one's security, thereby positively impacting how one views oneself and how one is able to get along in the world (Wonderly 2017, 19). Affective security, in turn, also shapes how one loves. Unless one feels sufficiently secure, one will typically be unable to competently engage in certain other-directed activities that are partly constitutive of love, such as caregiving, affiliative pursuits, and sex (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016, 15). Conversely, affective security facilitates a kind of trust, openness, and active engagement that can foster and enhance interpersonal love.

* * *

I have offered an analysis of security as an affective attitude. I have suggested that (one kind of) security—construed as a kind of confidence in one's ability to competently exercise and successfully effect one's agency—is as an active, intentional feeling with a characteristic phenomenology, evaluative content, and associated motivational markers, and I have offered a preliminary account of these features. I have also suggested that affective security can help to illuminate the phenomenology and motivational structure of agency, and I have briefly explored its roles in constituting and governing certain emotions. The affect of security deserves far more attention than it has thus far been given in philosophical discourse. My hope is that I have put forth a provocative case for affective security as a fruitful source of philosophical inquiry.

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