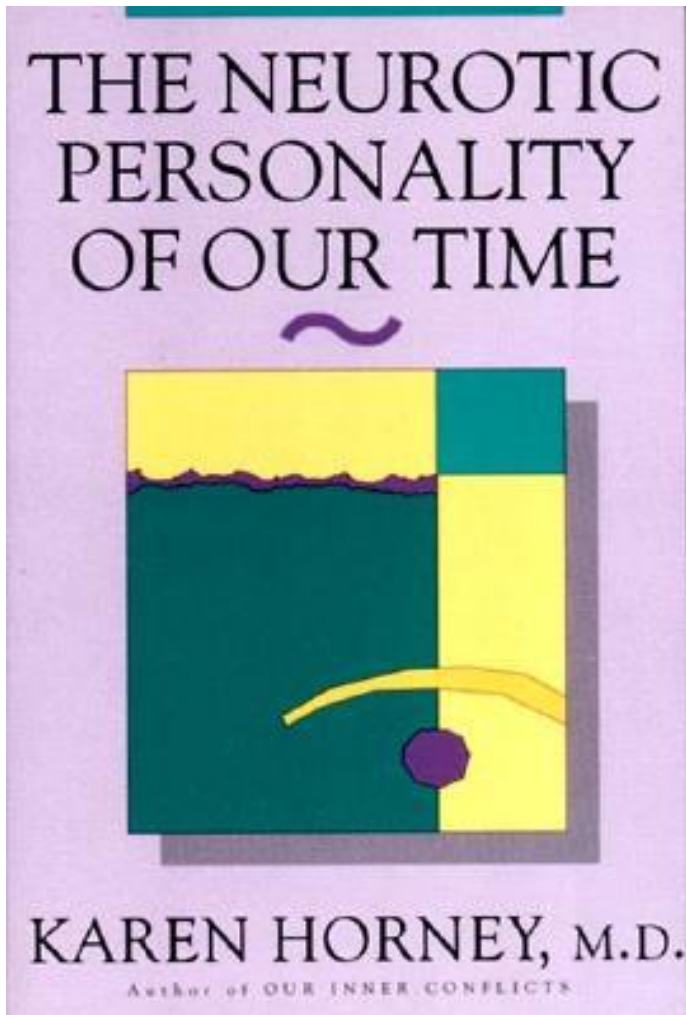

Karen Horney

The Neurotic Personality of Our Time



Title: The Neurotic Personality of Our Time

Author: Karen Horney

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Description

One of the most original psychoanalysts after Freud, Karen Horney pioneered such now-familiar concepts as alienation, self-realization, and the idealized image, and she brought to psychoanalysis a new understanding of the importance of culture and environment. In this book, Karen Horney explores the basic structure of neuroses in the context of their cultural assumptions. Her topics range from the neurotic need for affection, to guilt feelings and the quest for power, prestige and possession. Horney maintains that the conflicts found in neurotic persons in a given culture correspond to the ways of life characteristic of that culture. She writes for example, " It is only under definite cultural conditions that we find domineering or self-sacrificing mothers, and it is also only because of these existing conditions that such an experience will have an influence on later life."

Insightful reviews

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Ebrbnbrl: "The feeling of power, for example, may in a normal person be born of the realization of his own superior strength, whether it be physical strength or ability, mental capacities, maturity or wisdom. Or his striving for power may be connected with some particular cause: family, political or professional group, native land, a religious or scientific idea. The neurotic striving for power, however, is born out of anxiety, hatred and feelings of inferiority. To put it categorically, the normal striving for power is born of strength, the neurotic of weakness".

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"In searching for the conditions which produce a striving for these ends it becomes apparent that such a striving for these ends it becomes apparent that such a striving usually develops only when it has proved impossible to find reassurance for the underlying anxiety through affection".

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".. This example illustrated the typical factors that combine to generate a neurotic ambition: from the beginning she felt insecure because she felt unwanted; considerable antagonism was created, which could not be expressed because the mother, the dominate figure in the family, demanded blind admiration; the repressed hatred generated a great deal of anxiety; her self-esteem had never had a chance to grow, she had been humiliated on several occasions, and she felt definitely stigmatized by the experience with her brother; attempts to reach out for affection as a means of reassurance has failed."

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"The more the neurotic feels factually handicapped by his inhibitions, the less he is factually able to assert himself".

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"The weaker he factually becomes the more anxiously he has to avoid anything that has a faint

resemblance to weakness."

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"He has more or less contempt for all persons who agree with him or give in to emotions so closely that they always show an impassive face."

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The particular forms that such a striving for power will take depend upon what lack of power is most feared or despised."

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"Tendencies to control may be repressed to such a degree that not only the person himself, but even those about him, may be convinced of his great generosity in allowing freedom to the other."

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"Much of what appears as curiosity is determined by a secret wish to control the situation. "

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"It is a fact definitely to his interest not to recognize it and not to change it, because it has important protective functions. Nor should others recognize it, because if they do there is a danger of losing their affection. "

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"This lack of awareness has important implications for love relationships. If a lover or husband does not exactly live up to expectations, if he is late, does not telephone, goes out of town, a neurotic woman feels that he does not love her. Instead of recognizing that what she feels is plain anger reaction to a lack of compliance with wishes of her own, which as often as not are inarticulate, she interprets the situation as evidence that she is unwanted".

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"Neurotic girls cannot love a "weak" man because of their contempt for any weakness; but neither can they cope with a "strong" man because they expect their partner always to give in".

"Hence what they secretly look for is the hero, the super strong man, who at the same time is so weak that he will bend to all their wishes without hesitance."

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"Love, whatever else it may mean, always implied surrender, giving in to the lover as well as to one's feelings. The more a person, whether a man or woman, is incapable of such giving in, the more unsatisfactory will be his love relationships.

This sane factor may have a bearing also on frigidity, inasmuch as having an orgasm presupposes just this capacity of complete letting go."

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"The quest for power is a protection against helplessness and against insignificance"

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"Though he is constantly preoccupied with inflating his ego, he does it not primarily for the sake of self-love, but for the sake of protecting himself against a feeling of insignificance and humiliation, or, in positive terms, for the sake of repairing a crushed self-esteem."

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"The more distant his relations with others, the more his quest for prestige can be internalized; it appears then as a need to be infallible and wonderful in his own eyes." •

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"As the phenomenon of possessiveness is well known, particularly from its appearance in marriages, where law supplies a legal basis for such claims".

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"The three strivings I have described (power, prestige and possession) serve, as I have said, not only as a reassurance against anxiety but also, as a means of releasing hostility. Depending on which striving is dominant, this hostility takes the form of a tendency to domineer, a tendency to humiliate or a tendency to deprive others."

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".. What actually takes place, however, is that the neurotic's hostility is pressed into civilized forms and breaks out when he does not succeed in having his own way."

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"The repressed hostility may then result in new anxiety. This may manifest itself in depression or fatigue."

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"Since the occasions which arouse these reactions are so insignificant that they escape attention, and since the neurotic is not aware of his own reactions, such depressions or anxiety states may seem to have no external stimulation."

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"The neurotic person acts like a slave driver, using his helplessness as a whip in order to compel the other to serve his will

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"There may be so much hostility involved in the domineering attitude that it creates a new anxiety. This may then result in such inhibitions as an inability to give orders, to be decisive, to express a precise opinion, with the result that the neurotic often appears unduly compliant. This in turn leads him to mistake his inhibitions for an innate softness."

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"In persons in whom the craving for prestige is uppermost, hostility usually takes the form of a desire to humiliate others. This desire is paramount in those persons whose own self-esteem has been wounded by humiliation and who have thus become vindictive. Usually they have

gone through a series of humiliating experiences in childhood, experienced that may have had to do either with the social situation in which they grew up such as belonging to minority group, or being themselves poor but having wealthy relatives or with their own individual situation, such as being discriminated against for the sake of other children, being spurned, being treated as a plaything by the parents, being sometimes spoiled and other times shamed and snubbed. Often experiences of this kind are forgotten because of their painful character, but they reappear in awareness if the problems concerning humiliation are clarified. In adult neurotics, however, never the direct but only the indirect results of these childhood situations can be observed, results which have been reinforced by passing through a "vicious circle": a feeling of humiliation; a desire to humiliate others; enhanced sensitivity to humiliation because of a fear of retaliation; enhanced wish to humiliate others."

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"Any mother who acts according to the belief that the child exists to give her satisfaction is bound to exploit the child emotionally."

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"A neurotic of this kind may also tend to withhold things from others, withhold money which he ought to pay, information which he could give, sexual satisfaction which he had led another to expect."

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"He may behave and feel free and natural toward persons from whom he does not expect anything, but he will become self-conscious as soon as there is any possibility of future favors. This is true in erotic as in all other relationships. A neurotic of this type may be frank and natural with men for whom she does not care, but feel embarrassed and constrained toward a man whom she wants to like her, because, for her, obtaining his affection is identified with getting something out of him." •

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"It is an achievement of Alfred Adler to have seen and emphasized the importance of these strivings, the role they play in neurotic manifestations and the disguises in which they appear. Adler, however, assumed these strivings to be the foremost trend in human nature, not in themselves requiring any explanation; their intensification in neurotics he traces back to feelings of inferiority and to physical inadequacies."

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"Neither Adler or Freud has recognized the role that anxiety plays in bringing about such drives, not has either of them seen the cultural implications in the forms in which they are expressed."

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"The neurotic-ambitious person acts as if it were more important for him to defeat others than to succeed. In reality his own success is of the utmost importance to him; but since he has strong inhibitions toward success -as we shall see later- the only way that remains open to him is to be, or at least to feel, superior: to tear down the others, to bring them down to his own level, or rather beneath it."

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"He will, for instance, dislike or refuse a movie or a book if it is recommended by a person with whom he is competing at the time."

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"If he has done something successfully he is bound to do it poorly the next time."

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"The neurotic, in contrast to the psychotic, cannot help registering with painful accuracy all the thousand little incidents of real life which do not fit in with his conscious illusion. Consequently he wavers in his self-valuation between feeling great and feeling worthless. At any minute he may shift from one extreme to the other. At the same time that he feels most convinced of his exceptional value he may be astonished that anyone take him seriously. Or at the same time that he feels miserable and down-trodden he may feel furious that anyone should think him in need of help. His sensitivity can be compared with that of a person who is sore all over his body and flinches at the slightest touch. He easily feels hurt, despised, neglected, slighted, and reacts with proportionate vindictive resentment."•

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"It may be difficult then to see that behind all the odd vanities, demands, hostilities, there is a human being who suffers, who feels forever excluded from all that makes life desirable, who knows that even if he gets what he wants he cannot enjoy it."

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"The compulsive striving for perfection develops to a large extent out of this need to avoid any disapproval."

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"Observation of this reaction, and also the fact that sometimes he seems to arrange or provoke adverse happenings, if only inadvertently, may lead to an assumption that the neurotic person has guilt feelings so strong that he develops a need for punishment in order to get rid of them."

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"Unlike the normal person he not only fears those consequences which are likely to happen, but anticipates consequences utterly disproportionate to reality."

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"The fear of disapproval may appear in various forms. Sometimes it shows in a constant fear of annoying people; the neurotic may be afraid, for example, to refuse an invitation, disagree with an opinion, express any wishes, fail to conform to the given standards, be in any way conspicuous. It may appear in a constant fear of people finding out about him; even when he feels he is liked his inclination is to withdraw in order to forestall being found out and dropped. It also may come out in an inordinate reluctance to let others know anything about his own private affairs, or in a disproportionate anger at any harmless questions concerning himself, because

he feels that such questions are attempts to pry into his affairs."

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"To put it very bluntly, it is the whole insincerity in his personality or rather, in the neurotic part of his of his personality, that is responsible for his fear of disapproval, and it is in this insincerity that he fears detection."

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Tom: Pretty much everyone you know, including yourself, is described in detail here, sadly. Should be taught in grade schools.

Ganimarepublic: Nevrozlar insanl???n kültürel geli?me için ödemek zorunda oldu?u bedeldir. Yeni Freudcu ak?m?n öncüsü Horney, içinde ya?ad???m?z ça??n bizi ne tür nevroitik bireylere çevirdi?ini rasyonel bir dille anlat?rken, sa?l?kl? insanla nevroitik insan?n aras?ndaki fark?n niteliksel de?il niceliksel oldu?unu da gösteriyor.

Eric Aguirre: I. a. cultura y I. a. sociedad según Karen Horney, son los principales responsable de I. a. personalidad del individuo. Parte con I. a. premisa de que "Alcanzamos nuestro concepto de los angeles normalidad adoptando ciertas pautas de conducta y de sentimiento vigentes en un grupo determinado que las impone a todos sus miembros; pero olvidamos que esas pautas varían con los angeles cultura, los angeles época, los angeles clase social y el sexo". Para nuestra psicoanalista alemana el lugar, los angeles familia y el entorno en que hayas nacido, se convierte en el critical productor de neurosis en las personas. Su análisis sobre el afán de poderío, fama y posesión, así como I. a. proposal de competencia en el hombre contemporáneo es muy interesante. Este libro no lo puedo resumir en una pocas líneas, simplemente trata de conseguirlo como puedas y léelo. Probablemente entenderás mucho de ti y de las personas que te rodean.

Jeremy: totally blown away. I hate Freud, yet her idea is sublime and approachable. by no means might have thunk it.

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