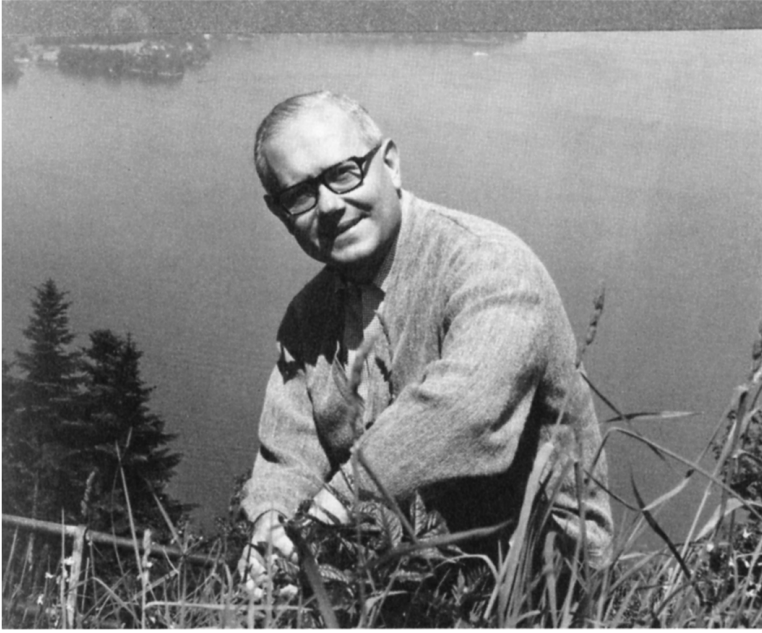

ENVY



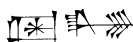
Helmut Schoeck was born in Austria in 1922. He was a student of medicine and psychology at the University of Munich from 1941 to 1945. He received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Tübingen in 1948. In 1950, he came to the United States and taught at Fairmont State College in West Virginia. From 1953 to 1954, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Yale. From 1954 to 1965, he was a professor of sociology at Emory University. Since 1965, he has been a professor and the director of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Mainz in the Federal Republic of Germany. He became a naturalized United States citizen in 1956.

Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour (1969) was first published in German as *Der Neid: Eine Theorie der Gesellschaft* (1966). The book has also been translated into Spanish (1970) and Italian (1974). Other work includes *Was Heisst Politisch Unmöglich?* (*What Means Politically Impossible?*) (1959) and *Geschichte der Soziologie* (1974). The latter has been translated into Spanish (1977) and Italian (1980). His most recent books are *Das Recht auf Ungleichheit* (*The Right To Be Unequal*) (1979) and *Die 12 Irrtümer unseres Jahrhunderts* (*The 12 Errors of Our Century*) (1985).

ENVY

A Theory of Social Behaviour

by Helmut Schoeck



Liberty Fund

Indianapolis

This book is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a foundation established to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.



The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (*amagi*), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

Copyright © 1966 by Helmut Schoeck. English translation copyright © 1969 by Martin Secker & Warburg Limited. Originally published in German under the title *Der Neid*. Reprinted 1970 as a Helen and Kurt Wolff Book by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York. Reprinted 1987 by Liberty Fund, Inc. All rights reserved.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

The author and publisher would like to thank the following for permission to quote from copyright material:

George Allen & Unwin Ltd., and Humanities Press, Inc.: *Ethics*, Volume I, by Nicolai Hartmann.
W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.: *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* by Harry Stack Sullivan, M.D., by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1953 by The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation. Copyright renewed 1981 by The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation.

The Viking Press, Inc.: *The Portable Melville*, edited by Jay Leyda. Copyright © 1952 by The Viking Press, Inc. Copyright renewed 1980 by Jay Leyda. Reprinted by permission of Viking Penquin, Inc.

The Hogarth Press Ltd. and Basic Books, Inc.: *Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*. Authorized translation by Joan Riviere and Alix and James Strachey. Published by Basic Books, Inc., by arrangement with The Hogarth Press Ltd. and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London. Reprinted by permission of Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schoeck, Helmut.

Envy: a theory of social behaviour.

Translation of: *Der Neid*.

Reprint. Originally published: New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.

Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

1. Envy. 2. Envy—Social aspects. I. Title.

BF575.E65S3213 1987 152.4'34 87-3080

ISBN 0-86597-063-7

ISBN 0-86597-064-5 (pbk.)

C 10 9 8 7
P 10 9 8 7

Liberty Fund, Inc.
8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46250-1684

Contents

1	MAN THE ENVIER	3
	<i>The world from the viewpoint of the envier The loneliness of the envious man Good luck and bad luck Repression of the concept of envy? Acting as though there were no envy</i>	
2	ENVY IN LANGUAGE	17
	<i>Envy and jealousy in English Envy and emulation Causal delusion in envy A definition in German Envy in proverbs Imputation of envious motives Confessing one's envy</i>	
3	THE ENVIOUS MAN AND HIS CULTURE	33
	<i>Are any societies devoid of envy?</i>	
4	ENVY AND BLACK MAGIC	40
	<i>Envy and suspected witchcraft The enemy in our midst The Lovedu Competition is impossible Black magic versus persons unknown: envy of the other's easier future Envy between generations</i>	
5	THE ENVY-BARRIER OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	57
	<i>Institutionalized envy Fear of the evil eye 'Whoever helps me is my enemy' The buyer is a thief 'Loss of face' in China and avoidance of envy Habitual avoidance of envy and the inhibition of development The envy-barrier to vertical mobility in ethnically stratified societies The crime of being a leader in the community Fear of success</i>	
6	THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENVY	77
	<i>Sigmund Freud's view of envy The social function of sexual jealousy Further psychoanalytical aspects Guilt and shame Do animals seek to avoid envy? Further ethological studies in aggression The pecking order Experiments in social psychology and the reality of envy Conformism and the fear of envy The braggart experiment</i>	

7	ENVY AS SEEN BY THE SOCIAL SCIENCES	106
	<i>Individual and group Power and conformity Envy in the sociology of conflict Conflict without envy Sociological ambivalence Georg Simmel on envy Jealousy or envy? Begrudging others their assets Sociology of sexual jealousy The blind spot in regard to envy in the present-day behavioural sciences Theories of hostility The guilt of the attacked Why a society of unenvious equals?</i>	
8	CRIMES OF ENVY	129
	<i>Murder from envy Vandalism Envious building Vengeful violence</i>	
9	THE ENVY OF THE GODS AND THE CONCEPT OF FATE	141
	<i>Agamemnon's homecoming The Greek concept of fate Nemesis Acting in the face of divine envy 'Pleasure is forbidden!' The hour of fate in Scandinavian mythology Shame and guilt Religion without envy New Testament ethics and the modern world</i>	
10	THE ENVOUS MAN IN FICTION	162
	<i>Herman Melville The reluctance to attribute envy The blind spot in Melville scholars towards the envy-motive in Billy Budd Eugène Sue's Frederick Bastien: Envy A psychotherapy of envy Yuri Olesha's Envy: The problem of envy in Soviet society Envy and the commissar 'Things don't like me' L. P. Hartley's utopian novel Facial Justice The Equalization (Faces) Centre Envy and equality in Utopia Chaucer and Milton Envious intrigue among literati</i>	
11	ENVY AS THE SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY	194
	<i>Aristotle Francis Bacon Tactics to counter envy A mortgage with the world bank of fortune? Adam Smith Immanuel Kant The psychology of ingratitude Schopenhauer on envy Sören Kierkegaard The age of levelling Friedrich Nietzsche Envy among the Greeks Schadenfreude Resentment Max Scheler Resentment and revenge Resentment types Nicolai Hartmann Social eudaemonism Eugène Raïga Envy-indignation Envy in France Envious political parties</i>	
12	POLITICS AND THE APPEASEMENT OF ENVY	233
	<i>The appeal of envy in politics Envy as a trap for dictators The basic error of socialism A golden crown of thorns: The 1896</i>	

	<i>United States presidential election, from the viewpoint of envy</i> <i>Gold—the bogeyman Ostracism—democracy and envy in</i> <i>ancient Greece</i>	
13	IN PRAISE OF POVERTY: FROM SUMPTUARY LAWS TO CONTEMPT FOR THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY <i>Truth and welfare Goethe's 'crime' Social agnosticism High</i> <i>incomes 'socially just' in the socialist society of scarcity, 'unjust'</i> <i>in the affluent society of 'capitalism' Luxury Prohibitions on</i> <i>luxury To indulge in luxury is to provoke envy 'Conspicuous</i> <i>consumption' How luxury remains politically acceptable The</i> <i>cult of poverty Chiliastic movements</i>	253
14	THE SENSE OF JUSTICE AND THE IDEA OF EQUALITY <i>The sense of injustice Resentment and the demand for equality</i> <i>Freedom and equality Good and bad luck, chance and opportu-</i> <i>nity Contentment Equality of opportunity Inequality of</i> <i>opportunity as an alibi 'Social justice'—private patients but no</i> <i>private schools Housing envy Bogus equality and conspicuous</i> <i>consumption Legitimate and illegitimate envy Socialism and</i> <i>envy How to diagnose justifiable envy? The envious man as</i> <i>informer The 'de-envified' society Empathy in the rebel</i>	277
15	THE GUILT OF BEING UNEQUAL <i>Paul Tournier The 'socially permissible' holiday The modern</i> <i>'solution': the envied man is wholly to blame Irredeemable</i> <i>guilt Social justice The masochism of the Westerner Ethics—</i> <i>sensibility or sense? 'Love for the distant' as an alibi for lack of</i> <i>relation Emotional need for reassurance The vulnerability of</i> <i>the class system</i>	308
16	THE EMINENT IN THE SOCIETY OF EQUALS <i>Social conscience in the egalitarian personality Ministers'</i> <i>salaries Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre Arthur Koestler Be</i> <i>what you are The envious guest One of David Riesman's cases</i>	327
17	THE SOCIETY REDEEMED FROM ENVY—A UTOPIA <i>Sense of justice and freedom from envy The kibbutz as a labora-</i> <i>tory for equality A form of future society? Problem of authority</i> <i>in the kibbutz Motives of the founders Children of the kibbutz</i> <i>The sin of privacy Martin Buber and the kibbutz Jealousy in</i> <i>the group Freedom from envy, a task for the individual, not for</i> <i>society Utopias</i>	341

18 IS OWNERSHIP THEFT?	361
<i>The economic policy of the least envy in the greatest number</i>	
<i>Welfare economics Does social justice mean less all</i>	
<i>round? Private property Hired goods instead of property</i>	
19 SOCIAL INDIGNATION	377
<i>'Give us this day our daily bread' Individual precautions are</i>	
<i>unsocial Envy in fellowship in misfortune</i>	
20 ENVY AS TAX COLLECTOR	385
<i>Progressive taxation Ethnological data towards an under-</i>	
<i>standing of the motive of extreme progression</i>	
21 SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS	394
<i>Types of revolutionary situation Anti-colonial movements</i>	
<i>Envy's targets prior to revolution Oswald Spengler on revolution</i>	
<i>The role of the envious man in innovation Cultural contacts</i>	
<i>Envy in the French Revolution Primitive rebels and social</i>	
<i>bandits Envy as a decimating factor in the developing countries</i>	
22 A THEORY OF ENVY IN HUMAN EXISTENCE	413
<i>Power domesticated by envy The limits of envy Pressure of envy</i>	
<i>as a civilizing factor The meaning of envy in the phylogenesis of</i>	
<i>man Capitulation to the envious</i>	
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	429
NAME INDEX	439
SUBJECT INDEX	443

ENVY

Man the Envier

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, in all stages of cultural development, in most languages and as members of widely differing societies, men have recognized a fundamental problem of their existence and have given it specific names: the feeling of envy and of being envied.

Envy is a drive which lies at the core of man's life as a social being, and which occurs as soon as two individuals become capable of mutual comparison. This urge to compare oneself invidiously with others can be found in some animals but in man it has acquired a special significance. Man is an envious being who, were it not for the social inhibitions aroused within the object of his envy, would have been incapable of developing the social systems to which we all belong today. If we were not constantly obliged to take account of other men's envy of the extra pleasure that accrues to us as we begin to deviate from a social norm, 'social control' could not function.

Man the envier can, however, overshoot the mark and arouse or release inhibitions which have a retarding effect on the ability of a group to adapt to new environmental problems. Envy can also turn man to destruction. Almost all the fragmentary literature which has hitherto dealt with envy (essays, belles-lettres, philosophy, theology, psychology) has constantly seen its destructive, inhibitory, futile and painful element. In all the cultures of mankind, in all proverbs and fairytales, the emotion of envy is condemned. The envious person is universally exhorted to be ashamed of himself. And yet his existence, or the belief in his ubiquity, has at the same time always provided enough latent apprehension of other people's views to allow a system of social controls and balances to evolve.

Although some schools of modern psychology have practically deleted the word 'envy' from their vocabulary, as if it simply did not exist as a primary source of motivation, the available evidence leaves no doubt whatever of its universality. In almost all languages, from those of the simplest primitive peoples to those of the Indo-European group, in Arabic, Japanese and Chinese, there is invariably a term to indicate envy or the envious person. Proverbs of the most varied cultures deal with it in hundreds of different forms. Aphorists and philosophers have touched on it. For instance envy had a particular significance for Kierkegaard, who even attributed envy to those who aroused envy in others. In fiction envy often plays a role and sometimes a major one; and every one of us has encountered envy in his own life. It is the great regulator in all personal relationships: fear of arousing it curbs and modifies countless actions.

Considering the key role played by envy in human existence, and that nothing new in the way of conceptual apparatus was needed in order to recognize it, it is truly remarkable how few works have dealt exclusively with it. They include an essay by Francis Bacon; a short book by the Frenchman, Eugène Raiga, written in the late 1920s, and a Russian novella, *Envy*, of the same date; besides these, there is a novel by the almost forgotten nineteenth-century French author, Eugène Sue, several aphorisms in Nietzsche and a study by Max Scheler which in fact deals more with the special case of resentment than envy proper.

This book may disturb many readers, including those with widely differing opinions on social and political issues. I believe, though, that I can demonstrate two things: first, that envy is much more universal than has so far been admitted or even realized, indeed that envy alone makes any kind of social co-existence possible; secondly, however, I believe envy as the implicit or explicit fulcrum of social policy to be much more destructive than those who have fabricated their social and economic philosophy out of envy would care to admit.

That our fellow man is always potentially envious—and the probability as well as the degree of his envy increases in ratio to his proximity—is one of the most disturbing, often one of the most carefully concealed yet most basic facts of human existence at all levels of cultural development. The inadequacies, the historical limitations of so many respected social philosophies and economic theories, become obvious

when it is realized how much they depend on the assumption that human envy is the outcome of arbitrary, haphazard and purely temporary circumstances—in particular that it is the result of gross inequalities and may disappear once these are removed: in other words, that it can be permanently cured.

Most of the achievements which distinguish members of modern, highly developed and diversified societies from members of primitive societies—the development of civilization, in short—are the result of innumerable defeats inflicted on envy, i.e., on man as an envious being. And what Marxists have called the opiate of religion, the ability to provide hope and happiness for believers in widely differing material circumstances, is nothing more than the provision of ideas which liberate the envious person from envy, the person envied from his sense of guilt and his fear of the envious. Correctly though Marxists have identified this function, their doctrines have remained blind and naïve when faced with the solution of the problem of envy in any future society. It is hard to see how the totally secularized and ultimately egalitarian society promised us by socialism can ever solve the problem of the residual envy latent in society.

However, it is not only the determining philosophical and ideological content of a culture but also social structures and processes, themselves in part supported by or derived from ideological factors, which exert an influence on the part played by envy.

The world from the viewpoint of the envier

We must begin by looking at the world as seen by the envious man. A certain predisposition to envy is part of man's physical and social equipment, the lack of which would, in many situations, simply result in his being trampled down by others. We use our latent sense of envy when, for instance, we examine social systems for their efficiency: before joining an association or firm we try to discern whether it has any intrinsic structure which might arouse strong envy in ourselves or in others. If so, it is probably an organization which is not very well adapted to particular functions. In the recent past a few American colleges and universities have tried to attract able academic celebrities as professors by offering salaries perhaps twice as high as those earned by the

standard full professor. I know of several cases of a man being unable to bring himself to accept the offer because, as he told me, he could not bear the thought of being the object of so much envy in the faculty.

Further, potential envy is an essential part of man's equipment if he is to be able to test the justice and fairness of the solutions to the many problems which occur in his life. Very few of us, when dealing with employees, colleagues, etc., are able to take a position which consciously ignores the existence of envy, such as that adopted by the master in the Biblical parable of the toilers in the vineyard. No matter how mature, how immune from envy a personnel manager or plant manager may himself be, when he has to deal with the taboo subject of wages or staff regulations he must be able to sense exactly what sort of measures are tolerable, given the general tendency to mutual envy.

The phenomenon described by the word 'envy' is a fundamental psychological process which of necessity presupposes a social context: the co-existence of two or more individuals. Few concepts are so intrinsic a part of social reality yet at the same time so markedly neglected in the categories of behavioural science. If I emphasize envy as a pure concept representing a basic problem, I am not claiming that this concept, or the theory of the role of envy, explains everything in human life, in society, or in cultural history. There are various related concepts and processes, as there are various other aspects of man's social existence, which cannot be explained by reference to his capacity for envy. Man is not only *Homo invidiosus*, he is also *Homo ludens* and *Homo faber*; but the fact that he is capable of associating in lasting groups and societies is primarily due to his being subject to a constant, frequently subliminal urge to be envious of all those deviating from a norm.

If we are to recognize the role of envy this phenomenon must be unmasked, as sex has been unmasked by psychoanalysis. I do not wish to give the impression, however, that I consider the tendency to envy as a universal ultimate cause: envy does not explain everything, but it throws light on more things than people have hitherto been prepared to admit or even to see.

Envy has the advantage of other modern terms such as ambivalence, relative deprivation, frustration or class war, in that as a concept it has a pre-scientific origin. For centuries, indeed for millennia, countless people who have never regarded themselves as social scientists have

consistently and unanimously observed a form of behaviour—envy—which they described in words that were often the etymological equivalents of the same words in other languages.¹

An exhaustive study of envy in its active and passive roles in social history is important not only because this emotion and motivational syndrome are crucial in individual human life; it is also relevant to politics, since the right or wrong assessment of the phenomenon of envy, the under- or over-estimation of its effects, and above all the unfounded hope that we can so order our social existence as to create people or societies devoid of envy, are all considerations of immediate political significance, particularly where economic and social policies are concerned.

If envy were no more than one of many psychological states such as homesickness, desire, worry, disgust, avarice and so on, one might be prepared to admit that on the whole most people know what envy is and what it involves. It would still be a rewarding task, and one of great importance to many fields of study such as child psychology, educational science or psychotherapy to classify systematically all that we know about envy and to develop it methodically into a theory. This book is also an attempt to do that. But a proper appraisal of man's potential for envy, a realization of its universality and persistence, could in years to come determine how much common sense is exercised in the domestic social and economic policies of parliamentary democracies, as well as in their dealings with the so-called developing nations. As we shall show, we are least capable of acting sensibly in economic and social matters when we face, or believe we face, an envious beneficiary of our decision. This is true especially when we mistakenly tell ourselves that his envy is a direct

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski once criticized the tendency to hide concrete phenomena, for which we have perfectly good terms, under pretentious neologisms: 'I must admit that from the point of view of field-work I have never been quite clear how we are going to test, measure or assess these somewhat formidable yet vague entities: euphoria and dysphoria. . . . When we try to translate the state of being satisfied . . . into concrete cases, we are faced not with the communal state of consciousness but rather with such individual factors as personal resentment, thwarted ambition, jealousy, economic grievance. . . . In any case, why not study the concrete and detailed manifestations of resentment and of satisfactions instead of hiding them behind euphoria and dysphoria writ large.' (In his introduction to: H. Ian Hogbin, *Law and Order in Polynesia*, London, 1934, pp. xxiv ff.; Hamden [Conn.], 1961.)

consequence of our being better off, and will necessarily wane when we pander even to unrealistic demands. The allocation of scarce resources, in any society, is rarely optimal when our decision rests on fear of other men's envy.

The loneliness of the envious man

The extent to which envy is a social form of behaviour, i.e., necessarily directed at someone else, is also apparent from the fact that without the other person the envier could never envy. Yet as a rule he specifically rejects any social relationship with the envied person. Love, friendliness, admiration—these approaches to another person are made in the expectation of reciprocity, recognition, and seek some kind of link. The envier wants none of this: he does not—exceptional cases apart—wish to be recognized as envious by the object of his envy, with whom, given the choice, he would prefer not to associate. The pure act of envy can be described thus: the more closely and intensively the envier concerns himself with the other person, the more he is thrown back on himself in self-pity. No one can envy without knowing the object of envy, or at least imagining him; but unlike other kinds of human emotional relationships the envier can expect no reciprocal feelings. He wants no envy in return.

As people have always realized, however, the envier has little interest in the transfer of anything of value from the other's possession to his own. He would like to see the other person robbed, dispossessed, stripped, humiliated or hurt, but he practically never conjures up a detailed mental picture of how a transfer of the other's possessions to himself might occur. The pure type of envier is no thief or swindler in his own cause. In any case, where that which is envied is another man's personal qualities, skill or prestige, there can be no question of theft; he may quite well, however, harbour a wish for the other man to lose his voice, his virtuosity, his good looks or his integrity.

The motives for envy, the stimuli of envious feelings, are ubiquitous, and the intensity of envy depends less on the magnitude of the stimulus than on the social disparity between the envier and the envied. The kind of maturity achieved by an individual which enables him to conquer his own envy does not seem to be a universally attainable attribute. The

reasons for the varying role or effectiveness of envy in different societies must be sought, therefore, in the ethos of the respective cultures. Both the envier, who must somehow come to terms with observed inequalities in his life, and the envied person in trying to ignore the other's envy (and both these emotional processes can sometimes occur simultaneously in one and the same person) will make use of creeds, ideologies, proverbs, etc., which will tend to reduce the power of envy and thus allow daily life to proceed with a minimum of friction and conflict.

Good luck and bad luck

It is not true, as many social critics would have us believe, that only the more fortunate people in this world, those with inherited possessions or chance wealth, have a vested interest in an ideology that inhibits envy. Such an ideology is in fact much more important to the envy-prone person, who can begin to make something of his life only when he has hammered out some sort of personal theory which diverts his attention from the enviable good fortune of others, and guides his energies towards realistic objectives within his scope.

One of the beliefs capable of repressing envy is the concept of the 'blind goddess' Fortune. A person is either lucky or unlucky, and whatever number he draws in life's lottery is unconnected with the good or bad fortune of his neighbour. The world has, as it were, an inexhaustible supply of good and bad luck. The most envy-ridden tribal cultures—such as the Dobuan and the Navaho—do not in fact possess the concept of luck at all, nor indeed the concept of chance. In such cultures no one is ever struck by lightning, for instance, without a malignant neighbour having willed it out of envy.

It is not easy to conclude from the general nature of a culture its degree of development or its economic institutions, e.g., which of its elements are generally regarded as immune from envy and which most vulnerable. Almost everywhere it is felt that universal values, such as personal health, youthfulness, children, have to be protected from the evil eye, the active expression of envy, and this is evident in the proverbs and the behaviour patterns that are employed by so many peoples to ward it off. It can, perhaps, be safely assumed that between individuals within a culture there is relatively little potential for envy in respect of those

values and inequalities which serve to integrate their society, e.g., the formal pomp and luxury exhibited by a head of a state, such as that still displayed by some of the remaining monarchies in Europe.²

The capacity for envy is a psycho-social datum, not infrequently accompanied by marked somatic epiphenomena. Envy, as an emotion, can be treated as a problem of individual psychology; but there is far more to it than that, for it is also a sociological problem of the first order. How is it that so basic, universal and intensely emotional a constituent of the human psyche as envy—and the fear of envy, or at least the constant awareness of it—can lead to such different social consequences in various cultures? There are cultures which are obsessed by envy; virtually everything that happens is attributed to it. Yet there are others which seem to have largely succeeded in taming or repressing it. What causes such differences? Is it perhaps the varying frequency of certain types of personality and character? A considerable amount of research points in this direction. It may well be that certain cultural patterns encourage the envious or the less envious to set the tone; but this still does not explain what originally produced that tendency in a particular culture.

Although 'envy' exists in our language as an abstract noun and is used as such in literature, there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as envy. There are people who envy, even some people habitually prone to envy, and we can observe emotional stirrings in ourselves and others which would be defined as feelings of envy; yet it is impossible to experience envy as an emotion or as a mood in the same way that we can feel anxiety or sadness. Envy is more comparable with 'being afraid'; we envy something or someone in the same way that we are afraid of something or someone. Envy is a directed emotion: without a target, without a victim, it cannot occur.

A susceptibility to envy exists to a much greater degree in man than in any other creature. A prime cause of this is the duration of childhood, which exposes the human individual far longer than any animal to the

² A group which in 1966 might have been specifically classified as resentful of the monarchy and the display of royal pomp were the Amsterdam Provos. A dispute as to whether the crown may still fulfil an envy-free function in a society developed between Edward Shils and N. Birnbaum (see E. Shils and M. Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation,' in *The Sociological Review*, Vol. I, December 1953, pp. 63–81; and N. Birnbaum, 'Monarchs and Sociologists,' *idem*, Vol. III, July 1955, pp. 5–23).

experience of sibling jealousy within the family. On rare occasions, as in certain poems, envy is invoked as a stimulant, as something sublime or constructive. In such cases the poet has made a poor choice of words; he is really referring to emulation. The really envious person almost never considers entering into fair competition.

Envy as such no more exists in a concrete sense than do grief, desire, joy, anxiety and fear. It consists, rather, of a set of psychological and physiological processes occurring in the individual which indicate certain qualities and which, if interpreted as the constituents of a whole, correspond to the meaning of one of these abstract words. In the most diverse languages the term 'envy' is sharply differentiated from other similar phenomena, yet it is remarkable how seldom 'envy' has been personified in art. Grief, joy and fear obviously lend themselves much more easily to representation. Nor can envy or an envious person be shown without some other point of reference. We can depict a person who is woebegone or joyful, but it is practically impossible to represent a man by himself in such a way that anybody who looks at the picture will instantly grasp that this man is envious. To do so requires a social situation, or symbols whose connection with envy is common knowledge to everyone within the particular culture.³

The case is different in regard to the institutionalization of envy in a social structure. Envy can become more easily institutionalized than, say, desire or joy. We hold days of national mourning or rejoicing, but it is hardly possible to give to any emotion other than envy the status of an institution. As examples of envy manifested in social forms one might perhaps cite instances such as steeply progressive income tax, confiscatory death duties and corresponding customs among primitive peoples, such as the 'muru raid' of the Maoris.

Envy represents an almost entirely psychological and social phenomenon. Conceptually it can be differentiated much more sharply from other or similar psychological processes than can the processes deriving from it, which the behavioural sciences today employ as conceptual

³ In earlier centuries envy (or the envious man) was sometimes depicted as a man riding on a dog with a bone in its mouth, e.g., the illustration 'Envy' on p. 14 of Heinz-Günter Deiters' *Die Kunst der Intrige* (The Art of Intrigue), Hamburg, 1966. The picture is taken from a series of woodcuts entitled 'The Seven Deadly Sins' by an anonymous master from the Constance region, ca. 1480–90, in the Albertina, Vienna.

substitutes for envy. Aggression, ambivalence, hostility, conflict, frustration, relative deprivation, tension, friction—all these terms are justified, but should not be employed to mask or conceal the basic phenomenon of envy. Until the end of the nineteenth century, indeed in occasional instances up to about a generation ago, most authors who had cause to deal with this side of human nature were quite familiar with envy as a clearly defined phenomenon. Not all cultures possess such concepts as hope, love, justice and progress, but virtually all people, including the most primitive, have found it necessary to define the state of mind of a person who cannot bear someone else's being something, having a skill, possessing something or enjoying a reputation which he himself lacks, and who will therefore rejoice should the other lose his asset, although that loss will not mean his own gain. All cultures, too, have erected conceptual and ritual mechanisms designed as protection against those of their fellow men who are prone to this condition.

Most of the concepts and conceptual sequences by which we modern members of large, complex societies regulate our public affairs are inexplicable to a member of a primitive tribe, but our anxiety not to arouse envy and the situations which give rise to envy are immediately comprehensible to him and he can sympathize with our concern. This is quite clear from an abundance of ethnographical data.

Repression of the concept of envy?

It is most curious to note that at about the beginning of this century authors began to show an increasing tendency, above all in the social sciences and moral philosophy, to repress the concept of envy. This I regard as a genuine instance of repression. The political theorist and the social critic found envy an increasingly embarrassing concept to use as an explanatory category or in reference to a social fact. In isolated cases, and then only as a rider to other remarks, some modern authors have referred to envy as to something obvious, but even then they have almost invariably played down its significance. It may be invoked to explain a localized problem—why, for instance, some over-specialized critics refuse to find anything good to say about a book intended for a general readership; but the concept of envy is avoided if its recognition as an

element of social reality would lead to the fundamentals of social policy being questioned.⁴

The indexes of relevant periodicals in the English language during recent years have been remarkably unproductive for the study of the concept of envy. There is not a single instance of 'envy,' 'jealousy' or 'resentment' in the subject indexes of the following periodicals: *American Sociological Review*, Vols. 1–25 (1936–1960); *American Journal of Sociology*, 1895–1947; *Rural Sociology*, Vols. 1–20 (1936–1955); *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1949–1959; *American Anthropologist and the Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 1949–1958; *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vols. 1–20 (1945–1964). It is true that individual articles may be found here and there in these periodicals over the course of the years in which short and very penetrating observations are made concerning envy, clearly attributing significance to the term. But to the people who made the indexes, terms such as 'envy,' 'resentment' and 'jealousy' were so remote that they disregarded them. Under terms as vague as 'aggression' a few contributions may be found in which 'envy' sometimes makes an appearance. In the anthropological journals it was not difficult to find phenomena which, conceptually speaking, should properly be termed envy by looking under 'witchcraft' or 'sorcery' in the index. But oddly enough, the term 'evil eye,' which is the concomitant of envy, is, without exception, again omitted from the aforementioned indexes.

Now and again we find envy and its problems mentioned under veiled or misleading titles, or as part of a treatise on something else, yet it is quite remarkable how often scientists have evaded this emotional syndrome. Why is it that for well over a generation writers have avoided tackling this subject, affecting as it does every human being? In such

⁴ Oliver Brachfeld, for instance, wonders why 'Envy, curiously enough, has been rather neglected by the psychologists; one hardly comes across it except in some disguise, e.g. that of jealousy, etc.' (*Inferiority Feelings in the Individual and the Group*, New York, 1951, p. 109). Is it mere coincidence that so articulate an author as the young German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, for instance, managed to write his *Theory of Social Conflict* without once using the word 'envy'? I do not think so, because elsewhere he has had no hesitation in ascribing, twice on one page, feelings of mutual envy to American and European intellectuals. (*Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland* [Society and Democracy in Germany], 1965, p. 320.)