

## Envy Defined

- “Envy is no more than the anxiety and impatience of a man who sees and acknowledges himself inferior to another.” (Espirit Flechier)
- “[Envy is] the passion that watches with evil disgust the superiority of those who are really entitled to the superiority they have.” (Adam Smith)
- “Envy is a tendency to perceive with displeasure the good of others, although it in no way detracts from one’s own, and which, when it leads to action (in order to diminish that good) is called qualified envy, but otherwise only ill-will; it is however only an indirect, malevolent frame of mind, namely a disinclination to see our own good overshadowed by the good of others, because we take its measure not from its intrinsic worth, but by comparison with the good of others and then go on to symbolize that evaluation.” (Immanuel Kant)
- “For something to be envied it must have two conditions: it must be valuable and it must belong to someone else. This “belong to someone else” is essential: there is no envy without an ownership. And why is it necessary that the good have an owner? Because what is envied is not the particular good, but the joy that it normally carries with it to its owner. The preoccupation of the envious is the happiness of his neighbor. But not all forms of happiness are envied: it is also necessary that the envious person misses the extra happiness that the other enjoys. Envy requires a relative emptiness of happiness and finally the acknowledgment that it cannot be filled in an acceptable space of time. Envy is the pain one feels in the presence of someone else’s happiness, a superior, desired, inaccessible, and unreachable happiness.” (Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Egalitarian Envy)

## Envy vs. Jealousy

- “Envy is pain at someone else’s happiness; jealousy is the pain we feel when we fear that someone else may interfere with the monopoly we have over the person who makes us happy. The envious wishes to deprive the other of something, while the jealous person feels dispossessed of someone he feels belongs to him.” (Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Egalitarian Envy)
- “It is peculiar to the man described as jealous that the subject believes he has a rightful claim to the possession, whereas envy is concerned not with the right to, but simply with the desirability of, what is denied; it is also a matter of indifference whether the asset is denied him *because* a third-party owns it, or whether even its loss or renunciation by the latter would fail to procure it for him.” (Georg Simmel)
- “Jealousy differs from envy in being infinitely more spiteful, as well as more impassioned and less restrained. Jealousy arises out of an opinion as to what is one’s due; it is not purely a sense of inferiority, as is envy.” (Helmut Schoeck, Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour)

## Envy vs. Indignation

- “The indignant person feels anger at the prosperity of those who do not deserve it, and the envious at that of everyone,” or “indignation is felt at the well-being of evil persons, while envy at the happiness of the good ones.” (Aristotle)

### The Effects the Envy

- “Those who envy natural gifts or personal superiorities, like beauty in women and intelligence in man, have no consolation or hope, and have no other alternative left to them but to hate irreconcilably those who have them.” (Schopenhauer)
- “Envy blinds men and makes it impossible for them to think clearly.” (Malcom X)
- “. . .envy does not provide any valid information about the surrounding environment. On the contrary, it presents the superior person as an enemy and a scandal, and not as a friend and a model; it narrows and darkens the vital horizon, instead of opening it up and shedding light on it; it identifies the envious’s path of happiness with other people’s, and this produces self-ignorance and depersonalization...” (Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Egalitarian Envy)
- “Envy is regarded by most people as a petty, superficial emotion and, therefore, it serves as a semihuman cover for so inhuman an emotion that those who feel it seldom dare admit it even to themselves. . . . That emotion is: *hatred of the good for being the good.*” (Ayn Rand)
- “Proverbs in many languages agree that the greatest damage done by the envious man is to himself. Envy is described as an utterly destructive, uncreative and even diseased state of mind for which there is no remedy.” (Helmut Schoeck, Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour)
- “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.” (Helmut Schoeck, Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour)
- “To many, the desire to overcome their envy may have been a genuine incentive for positive achievements, and hence have led to satisfaction in a sense of achievement.” (Helmut Schoeck, Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour)

### Good Explanation of Social Justice as the Term is Used in Political Philosophy

- “Central to the concept of social justice is the notion that individuals are entitled to some share of the wealth produced by society, simply by virtue of being members of that society, and irrespective of any individual contributions made or not made to the production of that wealth. Whether they are entitled to a full share or a smaller share - perhaps only some minimum of “decency,” - is a question answered variously by

different social thinkers in this tradition but the crucial point is that everyone is seen as entitled to some share as a matter of justice, not simply as a matter of charity.” (Thomas Sowell, A Conflict of Visions)

### Envy and Equality/Social Justice

- “[The envious] is not as concerned with reaching the happiness of others. . .but rather in making everyone as miserable as himself.” (Luis de Granada)
- “I have no respect for the passion of equality, which seems to me merely idealizing envy...” (Olver Wendell Holmes)
- “[The envious] prefers the equality of hell to any hierarchies of heaven.” (Germaine Necker)
- “Why [do politicians] appeal to deleterious envy rather than to creative emulation? For the reason that emulation does not accentuate the division, and division is what interests the polarized political class. Emulation distributes energy along the whole group and does not promote the formation of incompatible factions.” (Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Egalitarian Envy)
- “Demagogues appeal to envy because its universality makes potential victims of all people and because the invincible inequality of our own personal capabilities and of the irremediable limitation of many social goods makes it inevitable that the majority will feel inferior to certain minorities. The promotion of this envious feeling of inferiority is the dominant political tactic, at least in the present age. The demagogic promotion of envy, as with everything else that refers to this unpublishable feeling, is not carried out in public but undercover.” (Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, Egalitarian Envy)
- “But, naturally, the tarantulas would have it differently. ‘That the world may become full of the storms of our revenge, let precisely that be called justice by us’ - thus they talk together. ‘We shall practise revenge and outrage against all who are not as we are’ - thus the tarantula-hearts promise themselves. ‘And “will to equality” - that itself shall henceforth be the name of virtue; and we shall raise outcry against everything that has power!’ You preachers of equality, thus from you the tyrant-madness of impotence cries for ‘equality’: thus your most secret tyrant-appetite disguises itself in words of virtue. They resemble inspired men: but it is not the heart that inspires them - it is revenge. And when they become refined and cold, it is not their mind, it is their envy that makes them refined and cold. Revenge rings in all their complaints, a malevolence is in all their praise; and to be judge seems bliss to them. Mistrust all those who talk much about their justice! Truly, it is not only honey that their souls lack. And when they call themselves ‘the good and just’, do not forget that nothing is lacking to make them into Pharisees except - power!” (Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Tharathustra)
- “Many well-meant proposals for the ‘good society’ or the completely ‘just society’ are doomed because they are based on the false premise that this must be a society in

which there is nothing left for anyone to envy. This situation can never occur because, as is demonstrable, man inevitably discover something new to envy. In the utopian society in which we all would have not only the same clothes but the same facial expressions, one person would still envy the other for those imagined, innermost feelings which would enable him, beneath the egalitarian mask, to harbor his own private thoughts and emotions.” (Helmut Schoeck, *Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour*)

- “From this the merciful effect of private property is evident, though it is seldom recognized. It is not the cause of destructive envy, as the apostles of equality are always seeking to persuade us, but a necessary protective screen between people. Wherever there have ceased to be any enviable material goods or where these have for some reason been withdrawn from envy’s field of vision, we get the evil eye and envious, destructive hatred directed against the physical person. It might almost be said that private property first arose as a protective measure against other people’s envy of our physical qualities.” (Helmut Schoeck, *Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour*)
- “I have no doubt that one of the most important motives for joining an egalitarian political movement is this anxious sense of guilt: ‘Let us set up a society in which no one is envious.’” (Helmut Schoeck, *Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour*)
- “Perhaps the utopia of equality, of a society redeemed from envy, exerts so strong an attraction upon intellectuals, generation after generation, because it promises always to remain a utopia, and perpetually to legitimize new demands. Nothing could be worse for the utopian intellectual than a society where there was nothing left to criticize.” (Helmut Schoeck, *Envy - A Theory of Social Behaviour*)

#### **Other Quotes on Envy**

- “The oppressed man, the laborer, he who is exploited - or he who so regards himself - lives unavoidably under the belief that the man of means is the happier. He imagines that the rich have everything which he himself yearns for in vain. In the other conditions of life he sees only the hedonistic value. That there are in reality other values which are hidden - education, taste, knowledge - and that these are dearly paid for in effort, he does not see. He is not acquainted with the difficulty of mental work and the burden of great responsibilities.” (Nicolai Hartmann)
- “Those smoked, overheated, stale, livid and tormented souls, how can their envy bear my happiness?” (Nietzsche)
- “Our envy always lasts longer than the happiness of those we envy.” (François de La Rochefoucauld)
- “Do not overrate what you have received, nor envy others. He who envies others does not obtain peace of mind.” (Buddha)
- “When men are full of envy they disparage everything, whether it be good or bad.” (Tacitus)