

1. Vindictive, inwardly tormenting, displeasure. These represent a feeling of aggression already conscious of impotence, so that from the start some of the aggression and a good measure of anguish and torment are somewhat masochistically turned back upon the subject. (24–25)
2. It is anguish to perceive the prosperity and advantages of others. Envy is emphatically an act of perception. Anyone who has a propensity for envy, who is driven by that emotion, will always manage to find enviable qualities or possessions in others to arouse his envy.
3. One begrudges others their personal or material assets, being as a rule almost more intent on their destruction than on their acquisition. The professional thief is less tormented by envy, than is the arsonist. Beneath the envious man's primary destructive desire is the realization that in the long run it would be a very demanding responsibility were he to have the envied man's qualities or possessions, and that the best kind of world would be a very demanding responsibility were he to have the envied man's qualities or possessions, and that the best kind of world would be one in which neither he, the subject, nor the object of his envy would have them. For instance, an envy-oriented politician regards a lower national income *per capita* as more tolerable than one that is higher for all and includes a number of wealthy men.

In Genesis 26:12–15 we read: ‘Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.’ (In this respect, human nature has changed little since Old Testament Times.) (25)

From these definitions we now need to distinguish between the terms, jealousy and envy.

B. Georg Simmel on envy.

In Chapter 4 of his *Sociology*, which is concerned with conflict, Simmel investigates the phenomenon of envy, which he sees as contained within the concepts of hatred, jealousy, and ill-will. Simmel is immediately confronted by terminological ambiguity:

Finally, there is a fact, which may link extreme violence of antagonistic excitement, to close proximity: Jealousy. Popular usage is not unequivocal in regard to this term, often failing to distinguish it from envy.



Simmel here underrates the precision of the German language. The big dictionaries already available in his day, could have given him a clue.

Simmel continues:

Both affects are undoubtedly of the greatest importance in the formation of human relations. In both, an asset is involved whose attainment or preservation is impeded by a third party. Where attainment is concerned, we should speak of envy, and where preservation, rather of jealousy.

It is peculiar to the man described as jealous that the subject believes he has a rightful claim to possession, whereas envy is concerned not with the right to, but simply with the desirability of, what is denied. (pp. 115–16)

Simmel's definition needs greater precision: the expression 'jealousy' should be restricted to an asset upon which there is a legitimate claim, even if the jealous man is subjectively mistaken about his possible loss of that asset.

The envious man, in certain circumstances, does not even want to have the coveted asset, nor could he enjoy it, but would find it unbearable that another should do so. He becomes ill with annoyance over someone else's private yacht although he has never wished to board a ship in his life.

Jealousy is determined by the fact that a possession is withheld from us *because* it is held by another, and that were this to cease, it would at once become ours: the feelings of the envious man turn rather upon the possession, those of the jealous man upon the possessor. It is possible to envy a man's fame without oneself having any pretensions to fame; but one is jealous of him if one believes that one is equally or more deserving of it. (115–116)

Begrudging others their assets.

Approximately halfway between the clearly defined phenomena of envy and jealousy there is a third, belonging to the same scale, which might be termed begrudging: the envious desire for an object, not because it is of itself desirable to the subject, but only because other possess it. On the one hand there is the passionate form of begrudging which prefers to renounce the object itself, would indeed rather see it destroyed than allow another to have it; on the other, there is complete personal indifference or aversion to the object, and yet utter horror at the thought that someone else possesses it. (117)

C. The Problem of Irredeemable Guilt

The French-Swiss doctor Paul Tournier (Toúr-nēar), who endeavors to combine psychoanalysis and Próttestantism in his work, has produced an uncommonly illuminating book on genuine and false feelings of guilt in his book, *Guilt and Grace: A Psychological Study* (New York: Harper, 1962).



Tournier shies away from the problem of envy. But his book is almost exclusively concerned with what happens psychologically when we are afraid of being envied.

NOTE: There is a distinct difference between jealousy and envy, Envy is directed toward an individual while jealousy is directed toward his possessions, attributes, or circumstances.

Feelings of guilt, often regarded as irrational, determine what a man does and what he fails to do. Tournier shies away from the problem of envy.

But his book is almost exclusively concerned with what happens psychologically when we are afraid of being envied. The term 'envy,' however, does not appear in the index. He is noticeably reluctant to push ahead when his observations bring him to the threshold of envy. To give an example:

'Everyone has his own rhythm, and people have different rhythms from one another. In an office, the great speed of one typist will constantly arouse in her slower fellow-workers a sense of guilt which will paralyze them still further in their work.'

Why does he not say, 'feeling of envy?' The sense of guilt comes later, particular of typists who discover that their speed may never come up to standard.

'Yet it is a simple fact of nature which should be seen objectively. There is no special merit in the speed of the rapid typist any more than there is culpability in the slowness of her colleagues.'

Of course not! But that is never the way envy reacts. Tournier comments: (309)

'Moreover, if she is at all sensitive, the rapid typist will come to feel guilty for being the involuntary cause of umbrage among others and will do many little services for them to win their forgiveness.'



No doubt the girl who is superior is not really aware of anything like ‘envy-avoidance’ and ‘envy-assuagement,’ feeling instead a vague sense of guilt. This is not due to the facts as they stand, but to the taboo with which we surround the phenomenon of envy. On the other hand, her conciliatory gesture in rendering small services will always bring about the opposite of what was intended—even greater resentment, that is, because she has again demonstrated her superiority.

Furthermore, the envious person is made really angry by such an attempt to conciliate him. In many offices, as also in schools, those who are quicker or more talented soon lower their own performance to the average level of the group so as to avoid envy.

Tournier is aware of the self-imposed limitation resulting from uneasiness or fear of envy in the less able or less willing, but again he only speaks of the sense of guilt of the superior worker, and not of the less capable one’s envy.

Tournier rightly calls that attitude ‘false guilt feeling.’ I prefer the term ‘envy-avoidance behavior.’ (310)

The envious man certainly does very often disguise his hostility, his damaging intention, giving it the form of apparently well-intentioned advice, of criticism or of mocking or insidious judgment, but that in no way alters the basic factor of envy. (311)

Tournier, although he knows it is envy as such whose existence brings about the sense of guilt, is unable to look at it squarely. He wrestles with the problem of guilt which defies all therapy and all religion.

Towards the end of Tournier’s book, in a chapter entitled “Everything Must Be Paid For,” he touches on a basic trait notable in the human psyche.



Not only the atheist and the Christian in the culture of the West and the penitents in various religions—all these are tormented by a feeling that there always remains some kind of guilt that must be expiated. Few experiences are so difficult for human beings to digest as the acceptance of a religious or secular act of grace.

Man cannot conceive that evil will ever finally disappear for it must somehow conform to the principle of the indestructibility of matter and energy.

Tournier then recalls the significant fact that according to Mosaic law there has to be two scapegoats, between which lots were cast; one offered up to God, the other was driven out into the wilderness, laden with the sins of the people. (315–316)

Further on, Tournier describes people who, driven by an implacable sense of guilt, sometimes impose upon themselves quite absurd penances in a vain endeavor to rid themselves of that guilt which, seen rationally, has long been expiated before God and man. (316)

He sees the problem as a psychological rather than a religious one, though it affects Protestants more than Catholics.

Tournier writes, “At the heart of all churches there are moralistically minded men who wish to impose upon others conditions for salvation. It is a psychological matter because it concerns a tendency inherent in the human mind, the mechanism, in fact, for covering up guilt ... which makes a show of one’s merits, virtues and abstinences for self-justification, and eagerly presents them to others as the conditions for grace.”



Tournier's observation is important in that it suggests the assumption that social controls especially those with ascetic undertones which many declare to be universally binding—might primarily have originated in uncontrolled feelings of guilt, however much they may seem to be motives inspired by envy.

Our inability really to shake off a sense of guilt although we have been forgiven might, however, have some connection with assumed or known envy of ourselves by others who begrudge us the state of innocence.

In promising the same degree of grace to all without exception, irrespective of previous deserts, it would seem to me that the New Testament preaches an unenvying mental attitude. On occasion it almost seems to throw out a challenge to the 'sense of justice,' which is unmasked as envy, as in the parables of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25–32) and the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). (316)

The depth and primitive nature of the human fear of envy in others is seen not least in the inability of even the Christian doctrine of salvation to furnish its own believers with a clear conscience, or bring them to accept without guilt what appears to be divine injustice.

The problem here is not the believer, cruelly smitten by fate, arraigning his God, but the man favored by good luck, like the sole survivor of a catastrophe, who can never stop asking himself the guilty question, "Why was I saved? Weren't many of those who died better than myself?" Only by studying the whole personality in all its aspects would it be possible to distinguish, in each case, between genuine and less genuine feelings of guilt.⁵ (317)

(End JAS-91.Rev. See JAS-92.Rev for continuation of study at p. 371.)

⁵ Helmut Schoeck, "Envy in Language," and "The Guilt of Being Unequal," in *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 17–25, 308–311, 315–31.

