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Envy in Logic-Based Therapy

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Abstract: Contemporary research offers a more compelling account on the complex emotion of envy than the traditional view of envy as simply something bad. This essay explains how Logic-Based Therapy can use this account to coach individuals struggling with negative species of envy. Given that jealousy and envy are often equated, the essay differentiates the two; explains the conditions that make the four species of envy possible; identifies cardinal fallacies associated with negative species of envy; proposes counteractive virtues, and describes ways to help people struggling with negative species of envy acquire these virtues.
Keywords: Envy, Jealousy, Species of Envy, Virtue Theory, Logic-Based Therapy and Consultation

Introduction

Resent empirical and philosophical research on envy offers a more compelling account of this complex emotion than the traditional view of envy as a bad emotion.[1] Sara Protasi, for example, argues that envy is a distinct emotion with four species, some that are and some that are not productively related to well-being.[2] Logic-Based Therapy (henceforth "LBT") uses logic, a list of virtues and philosophical antidotes to help people cope rationally with problems of living. This requires understanding the nature and dynamics of self-defeating emotions and behaviors. LBT includes substantive analyses of emotions like anger, anxiety, depression, and grief, but hardly any of envy, despite that it can have destructive effects on human beings.[3] This essay aims to fill this gap by showing how LBT may take advantage of a more complex view of envy. Given that jealousy and envy are often equated, the first part of this essay describes how they differ. Using Sara Protasi's definition of envy, I claim that envy is an aversive reaction to a perceived inferiority or disadvantage due to the lack of an important good, while jealousy is an aversive reaction to losing an important good to another person or entity. Afterwards I describe envy's four species—emulative, inert, aggressive, and spiteful along with the two variables that explain their existence: focus of concern and perceived obtainability of the good.[4]

In the second part, I identify and describe cardinal fallacies that may inform immoral and self-defeating species of envy. I propose that existential or certainty perfectionism are likely behind inert envy, depending on the motivation enviers may have for believing that the good they covet is unavailable. Afterwards I explain how ego-centered perfectionism may trigger aggressive and spiteful envy followed by how all these perfectionisms engender other fallacies, like cant'stipation.[5]

The last part of the essay explains how the virtues of respect, objectivity, humility, gratefulness, and unselfish love can counteract the cardinal fallacies behind inert, aggressive, and spiteful envy. The essay ends with suggestions for how people can acquire these guiding virtues.

1. Four Varieties of Envy

Consider the case of Elia. Jessy, the owner of the grocery store that employs Elia, decides to offer the management position to Norman instead of Elia. Angry, Elia plots against both. He figures out how to convince Jessy that his girlfriend has been sleeping with Norman. Jessy falls prey to intense jealously and tries to fire Norman. Norman suspects that Elia is behind the plot and decides to confront him. After some time, he forces Elia to confess what he has done. Jessy, who after hearing the confession fires him, apologizes to his girlfriend and Norman.

Intuitively, Elia envies Norman because he perceives him as superior to him after Norman got the management position. Elia strongly resents Jessie for having favored Norman, while Jessie is jealous of Norman because he falsely believes that Norman is betraying him. Jessie may also envy Norman because he is younger and more intelligent. Elia may have been jealous of Norman at the beginning but then became envious of him after Norman got the promotion.

Jealousy and envy involve a three-part relation between the person experiencing the emotion (the subject), the person or entity it is directed to (the target), and the object that motivates the subject to feel this way (the good).[6] In the case of Elia, he is the subject of envy and Norman his target, and the good is Norman's management position. Jesse is the subject of jealousy and Norman is his target, while Jesse's girlfriend is the good. Besides involving a three-part relation, jealousy and envy are aversive, meaning unpleasant or painful emotions. Elia and Jesse do not enjoy experiencing them, even if both can be sometimes accompanied by pleasure at the target's misfortune. Jealousy and envy also have a competitive or rivalrous nature. Unlike filial emotions like inspiration, emulation, and love, both often create conflict and rivalry between the subject and the target.

Despite these commonalities and the absence of sharp boundaries, there are significant differences between jealousy and envy. Jealousy tends to inspire distrust and suspicion, and envy feelings of inferiority or disadvantage. Jesse is suspicious of both his girlfriend and Norman. He falsely believes that they have betrayed his trust. Elia does not necessarily distrust Norman, but he is pained that he won the promotion; it makes Elia feel inferior or at a disadvantage in comparison. Jealous people often think that they have special claims on the good that they wish to protect, but envious people may not believe this. Jesse demands exclusivity from his girlfriend and assumes that he is entitled to it, but Elia does not necessarily think that he owns the good or is more deserving of it than Norman. Envy suffers from a worse reputation than jealousy. Many traditions think of it as a vice, and since confessing it requires admission of inferiority, people tend to hide it from themselves and others, or rationalize it away. In contrast, the jealous tends to feel more comfortable expressing and acting on their feelings, and society is often more tolerant of those who decide to do so. Lastly, "envy is about lack of a good, while jealousy is about the loss of a

good."[7] Jealousy indicates fear of losing a good to another entity or person; for example, losing our privacy to the government or some other entity, while envy indicates that someone has a good that we lack that we consider important to our happiness or self-definition. Jealousy and envy, then, play different roles: jealousy motives those who feel it to protect the good that they fear losing to the target, and envy motivates individuals to resolve a perceived inferiority caused by the lack of a good.

Sara Protasi defines envy as follows: "envy is an aversive reaction to a perceived inferiority or disadvantage to a similar other, with regards to a good that is relevant to the sense of identity of the envier".[8] This definition is accurate. It implies four conditions: first, the aversive quality that it shares with jealousy. As Descartes observed, "envy is a kind of sadness".[9] Second, it requires comparing ourselves to people who are like us in some contextually relevant way. Social comparison is the tendency of human beings to compare themselves to others to form judgments about self and life.[10] It is not possible to determine who we are, our beliefs, or how well our life is going, without some relative comparison to others, and to be informative the target must be like us in some relevant way, for example, in terms of aspirations, goals, or values. Aristotle explains: "to be activated by this passion, it is necessary therefore to have equals, or those deemed such; persons with whom we compare ourselves, and with whose circumstances we naturally compare our own, such are those of the same nation, blood, age, pursuits, reputation, or fortune".[11] Third, social comparisons do not make a person prone to envy unless the good involved is relevant to their happiness or self-definition. A person may admire Tiger Woods's success as a professional golfer, but Wood's success cannot inspire envy unless their ambition is to be an outstanding golf player. Fourth, the social comparison must trigger a perception of inferiority or disadvantage to the target, which occurs when the comparison is slightly upward i.e., with someone that is doing better than us in a domain of self-relevance. To put it differently, because the target has a good that we consider important, the upward comparison has a negative impact on how we think of ourselves or our life.

Envy is a painful reaction to feeling inferior or at a disadvantage to people like us in domains of self-relevance, but it can take different forms—some good and bad—depending on what the subject cares about and what they think they can do to resolve the perceived social inequality. Protasi has identified four species of envy—emulative, inert, aggressive, and spiteful— and the two variables that give rise to them.[12] Beginning with the two variables, I turn next to a discussion of this taxonomy.

The existence of four species of envy hinges on what Sara Protasi calls "focus of concern" and "perceived obtainability of the good". Focus of concern is a normative idea representing what the envious cares more about, not what they may be attending to in their field of perception. The envious may care more about the lack of the good than outdoing the target, or vice versa. If they are more pained by the lack of the good than the target's superiority, then their focus of concern is more on the good than on the target. If they are more pained by the target's superiority than the lack of the good, then their focus of concern is more on the target than it is on the good.

Subjects with the same focus of concern may believe or not that they can resolve the social inequality between them and the target by getting the good for themselves. If they feel confident that they can do so, their aversion will be mild, and they will be inclined to self-improvement. If they do not feel confident that they can do so, they will instead feel frustrated and without much hope. In short, perceived obtainability of the good is about whether an envious person feels confident that they can resolve the social inequality between them and the target by getting the good for themselves, which in turn influences the character of the aversion and the subject's motivations.

The interaction of these two variables explains the existence of four species of envy. Emulative envy occurs when the subject is more focused on the good than the target and believes that they can get the good for themselves. It is mildly aversive, does not imply malice, and if harnessed wisely can be productively related to well-being because it motivates the subject to "level up" or engage in self-improvement. The target of emulative envy is seen as "a model, someone to emulate rather than defeat or bring down."[13] Consider the case of Ernesto. Ernesto is an assistant chef at a French restaurant. He envies his colleague, Martha, the main chef, because he perceives Martha to be more productive and successful than him. This bothers him because he wants to be a good chef, but he does not harbor hostility or malice towards Martha. On the contrary, he respects her, even likes her, and sees her as a role model (someone worthy of emulation). Ernesto feels confident that one day he can achieve her level with hard work. Their relationship is cordial, and Ernesto is happy to work under Martha's supervision, so he can learn from her how to improve. In sum, Ernesto cares about being a good chef more than outdoing Martha. He cares more about the lack of the good than his sense of disadvantage, and he is confident that he can become a good chef himself if he works hard.

An emotion may be psychologically bad (unpleasant or painful), prudentially bad (contrary to a person's interests), or morally bad (wrong or vicious). Because it does not trigger hostility or malice and motivates subjects to self-improvement, emulative envy, *qua* envy, is unpleasant, but it is not morally problematic and can be prudentially good if it results in self-improvement. Inert envy presents a different case. Inert envy happens when a similarly focused subject lacks the confidence that they can obtain the good for themselves, so they become irritated and hopeless. Unlike emulative envy, inert envy is frustrating and painful. It triggers guilt, shame, low self-esteem, and self-defeating behaviors, so it is prudentially bad. Protasi explains: "self-handicapping is a defining feature of inert envy. Its structure is, in other words, self-defeating: it aims to achieve something that it presupposes to be unachievable."[14] Yet, the person struggling with inert envy does not harbor malice, so inert envy is not morally bad. Consider the case of Ines.[15] Ines has been struggling with infertility for years. She very much wants a biological child and has been trying hard to conceive but to no avail. One day her best friend Valerie calls her excitedly to tell her that she is pregnant. Ines congratulates her, faking enthusiasm, holding back tears. She feels a painful envy that she tries to hide, and even though she does not harbor malice, she cannot bring herself to see Valerie as much as she usually does. She invents excuses, does not go to her baby shower, and overall avoids contact with Valerie. Ines cannot genuinely feel happy for Valerie and feels guilty about it, so she manages to reconnect with her best friend only after she herself becomes pregnant.

Aggressive envy happens when the subject cares more about outdoing the target than the good and believes they can do so by taking the good away from them. Since they are bothered more by the target's superiority than the lack of the good, they are willing to sabotage them. They feel confident that they can bring the target down, so their envy, *qua* envy, is painful, but also involves the pleasant anticipation of getting even. Unlike the disheartening frustration and hopelessness that characterizes inert envy, these feelings are likely to be highly motivating, although motivating towards reproachable ends. Being actively malicious, aggressive envy is morally bad, but it can be prudentially good if snatching the good brings real advantages. Consider the case of Arthur. Arthur is a professor of English. He envies David, who is his main rival. Both teach in different universities, but Arthur resents the fact that David works for a more prestigious university, which he feels gives David an advantage. Arthur believes that stealing the job from David would turn the tables. He is confident that he can sabotage David, since David's dean has told Arthur that he would offer him the position if David were to leave. Arthur convinces one of David's students to seduce him. David falls for it. The university discovers the affair and fires him. Arthur had already applied for the job, so in hearing the news, he calls David's dean and gets hired. Even if he did not get the job fairly, Arthur is happy because he cared more about pulling down David than the job.

The last species of envy happens when the subject cares more about outdoing the target than the good but does not think that they can bring them down by robbing them of their good. Like aggressive envy, spiteful envy is actively malicious, but this hostility is mostly expressed in attempts to overcome the disadvantage by sabotaging the good (and sometimes the target), because the subject does not believe that they can level things by depriving the target of the good. As Sara Protasi says, "the envied is not even a rival to be deprived of the good and thus defeated in a productive way, because the envier does not believe that can be done. Nor is the good perceived as something that can be stolen. Both the envied and the good thus become targets of destruction."[16]

In so far as it does not dispose the envier to get the good, spiteful envy is like inert envy, but it is not self-defeating in the same way, since spoiling the good is one way of resolving the social inequality that exists between the subject and the target. Yet, according to Protasi, it is the most morally pernicious since it harms both the envied and the good and does not motivate subjects to behave in ways that can improve well-being, "not even in immoral ways as in aggressive envy."[17] To illustrate, consider a modified case involving Arthur. Spiteful Arthur has the same focus as aggressive Arthur but does not think that he can get a more prestigious job than David, so he becomes convinced that his only hope of outdoing David is to spoil the good. Accordingly, spiteful Arthur thinks: "Well, if I can't get David's job, I will spoil the good. If I can't have it. He can't have it either!" He hires a student of David's to seduce him. David falls for it and ends up getting fired. Spiteful Arthur is happy that he brought down David, even that he did not obtain the job himself.

2. Cardinal Fallacies of Envy

There are no sharp boundaries between emotions. Emulative envy can turn inert if hope is lost, and inert envy can turn emulative if hope is gained. Aggressive envy can turn spiteful

if it is no longer possible to deprive the target of the good, and spiteful envy can turn aggressive if this becomes possible. There are also ambiguous, transitional, and hybrid cases that do not perfectly fit the definition of envy, or the four categories of envy that have been proposed.[18] Nevertheless, the definition and taxonomy of envy just articulated relies on true distinctions that practitioners must make to effectively coach individuals struggling with inert, aggressive, and spiteful species of envy. This part of the essay will describe cardinal fallacies that may stand in the way of achieving this goal.

Some scholars think that envy is not possible without a comparative notion of self-worth. Perrine and Timpe, for instance, argue that "what distinguishes envy from other types of sorrowing is that envy relies on a comparative notion of self-worth."[19] A comparative notion of self-worth is "a way of evaluating one's own value by comparing oneself to others."[20] Individuals that understand their value like this assume that it depends on how well they are doing compared to others, so when they perceive that others are doing better in self-relevant domains, they rate themselves negatively.

Although many instances of envy may reflect this way of construing self-worth, one can imagine that after a social comparison a person negatively rates an aspect of their life; for example, because their parents did not attend their graduation or their wedding—without demeaning themselves. In these cases, the person's envy does not necessarily reflect a comparative notion of self-worth. My point is that emulative envy is not in itself morally problematic and can motivate people to better themselves; nevertheless, if one is dealing with cases of emulative envy that reflect a comparative notion of self-worth, the person must be told that it is self-defeating to assume that their worth as a human being depends on their position in some social hierarchy. Believing this exposes them to damnation, which occurs when people devalue themselves, others, or life, because of defects or imperfections. Cases of emulative envy that depend on comparative notions of human worth make the envier vulnerable to these fallacies, thus they are incompatible with the cardinal virtue of respect and the value of unconditional acceptance that this virtue presupposes.[21]

The claim that envy is grounded on a comparative notion of self-worth is much more plausible in cases of inert envy. This subject cares more about the good than the target's superiority, but due to their conditional-worth ideas and their feelings of helplessness, they regard their inferiority or disadvantage to the target as reflecting negatively on their being. It may be that the person one is coaching believes that they desire something that upon reflection do not desire; or overestimate how happy they would be if they get the good; or have not thought much about the costs and tradeoffs of trying to get it. It is also possible that their judgments of inferiority or disadvantage are unjustified. These possibilities must be examined; however, they do not cover all cases of inert envy.[22] Ernesto and Ines, for example, want something that is reasonable to want, and they are not wrong in judging that the target is more fortunate in this respect. The key to coaching inert individuals in these cases is to challenge their conditional worth ideas and their belief that the good is not available.

Concerning this belief, it could be that the good is indeed objectively unavailable because it is exclusive to the target, like good looks; or not sharable, like winning a certain prize; or requires innate abilities, like the ability to jump high. If this is the problem, it is in the subject's best interest to accept their limitations and focus on alternatives. LBT can help them tackle irrational beliefs that may discourage them from moving forward. Existential perfectionism is likely to be one of them, meaning the demand for perfection in one's life. Existential perfectionists measure the meaning and value of their life in terms of unrealistic standards of perfection. They are convinced that the meaning and value of their life decreases unless it is exactly as they want, or if bad things don't happen to them.[23] If they suffer from inert envy, they reason like this: "Bad things, such as not being able to have goods that I deem important, must not happen in my life. Therefore, if I am not able to have goods that I deem important, then I or my life is bad. I am not able to have a good that I deem important. So, I or my life is bad, and I should resent anyone that reminds me of my flaws."

People who believe that the good is unobtainable may also do so because they lack confidence. The causes of low self-confidence are many and interact in complex ways. Psychologists talk about genetics, temperament, traumatic life experiences like bullying and discrimination, and others.[24] Philosophical counseling does not ignore causes, but its main role is to examine the reasons a person has for thinking in ways that reproduce their problem. People with low self-confidence tend to be risk averse. They demand assurances or guarantees that they will succeed, or that bad things won't happen, before they decide to act—a species of perfectionism Cohen refers to as "certainty perfectionism".[25] If they are suffering from inert envy, this demand for certainty can take the form of wanting to have it all figured out before attempting to get the good. Their anxious ruminations reflect the following reasoning: "I must always be certain that I won't fail to be who I want to be or have the goods that I deem important. Therefore, if I am not certain, then I must get anxious and worry about these possibilities. I am not certain that I won't fail to be who I want to be or have the goods that I deem important. Therefore, I must get anxious and worry about these possibilities."

Perfectionism grounds other fallacies, like Cant'stipation.[26] Can'tstipation is the tendency to declare "I can't" instead of responding creatively to difficult situations. It manifests either as blaming emotions on external causes (emotional can'tstipation); claiming that one cannot stop behaving in certain ways (behavioral can'tstipation); or exaggerating one's inability to handle difficulty (volitional cant'stipation).[27] By assuming that they must have the coveted good to be worthy or happy, or that they must be certain before acting, the inert envier may refuse to accept their limits and consider alternatives. Their reasoning may go like this: "If I find it difficult or challenging to accept my limits or reconsider important desires, then I can't do it. I find it difficult or challenging to accept my limits or reconsider important desires. Therefore, I am not able do it."

In sum, it is likely that someone suffering from inert envy thinks that their self-worth, or the value of their life, depends on being everything they aspire to be, or having goods that they consider important, so they demand this from their life, or they demand certainty, if their problem is self-confidence. These perfectionisms make them vulnerable to inert envy when they compare unfavorably to others, and they think that there is nothing

that they can do improve. Helping them control their envy requires tackling these cardinal fallacies and proposing guiding virtues that can foster acceptance of limitations, self-confidence, and sympathetic attunement to the target. I will propose counteractive virtues after discussing fallacies that can trigger aggressive and spiteful envy.

People struggling with aggressive and spiteful envy are bothered more by the superiority of the target than their lack of the good. They may care about the good, but they care more about being equal or outdoing the target. However, the aggressive envier believes that they can bring down or surpass the target by snatching the good, but the inert envier does not believe this. This results in different tendencies. The aggressive envier perceives the target as a competitor or rival to be attacked and defeated by taking the good away from them, but the spiteful envier does not think that this is possible, so they typically focus on spoiling the good, and sometimes the target. As Protasi explains: "in spiteful envy the envied in not even a rival to be deprived of the good and thus defeated in a productive way, because the envier does not believe that can be done. Nor is the good perceived as something that can be stolen. Both the envied and the good become targets of destruction. It is in spiteful envy that we find the truth of the dictum: 'envy spoils the good it covets'"[28] Because they are driven by aggression or spite, these varieties of envy are morally bad, yet in helping people overcome them, practitioners must keep in mind that they may benefit the subject.

Several reasons can be adduced to explain the focus of concern constitutive of aggressive and spiteful envy. One is that outperforming the target offers material or social advantages like money, pleasure, power, or social status, and the subject associates their self-worth or well-being with enjoying these worldly goods. Arrogance is another, meaning excessive and overbearing pride. Arrogant people overestimate their knowledge and value, look down upon those they consider to be inferior, and tend to be overly sensitive to perceived threats to their inflated ego by those they consider better. A third reason is vanity. Vain people crave the attention and envy of others to maintain an unrealistic and superficially grounded opinion of themselves. Their craving is likely to be driven by insecurities that cause them to feel threatened and resentful towards those who have the advantages they desire for themselves, thus vanity, like arrogance, can make people prone to aggressive or spiteful envy. So does pure greed for money, power, fame, and other worldly goods.

It is reasonable to seek to excel or be the best in self-relevant domains, but not if it is motivated by arrogance, greed, vanity, or overly materialistic ambitions, or sought at the expense of others. People suffering from aggressive and spiteful envy must accept this before they can develop the empathy, respect, and sympathetic attunement to the target needed to control their moral impulses, focus on the good, and find morally justifiable ways to obtain what they seek. If their issue is not a reflection of a psychological disorder like narcissism or psychopathy, LBT can help them tackle cardinal fallacies or irrational beliefs that may be fostering or reproducing their envy.

The demands for certainty and life perfection that we associated with inert envy can also appear in cases of aggressive or spiteful envy, but a more likely culprit is a species of perfectionism called "ego-centered perfectionism", which happens when people demand

that others share their desires, preferences, beliefs, or values; or that reality itself conform to their desires, preferences, beliefs, or values. Ego-centered perfectionists think that the world revolves around them. They invert the correspondence theory of truth by assuming that truth means correspondence to their beliefs.[29] If they are struggling with aggressive and spiteful envy, they are likely thinking like this: "I prefer to be equal or superior to others in domains of self-relevance. *Ergo*, it must be that way! If it isn't that way, I cannot tolerate it. If I can't tolerate being inferior or at a disadvantage to others in certain domains, then I am entitled to bring down the person that is threatening my social status."

These irrational thoughts highlight the tendency of people under the grip of these species of envy to *can'tstipate* by refusing to tolerate the target's superiority, accept real limitations, and look for morally appropriate alternatives to resolve the social inequality between them. This abdication of their will and sense of entitlement disposes them to *devalue* the target, the good, or both, a cardinal fallacy called "damnation of others", which happens when a person demeans or devalues other human beings if they do not meet their standards.[30] In short, people under the grip of aggressive and spiteful envy likely assume that reality must conform to their desire for equality or superiority, and if reality contradicts them, as is bound to happen, they feel entitled to sabotage the target or the good.

3. Virtues that Tame Envy

Negative emotions are a signal that something is amiss. Anger is often a sign of frustration or injustice, fear a sign of danger, depression a sign of despair, and sadness a sign of loss. Envy signals important desires, deficits, failures, and a sense of alienation. The subject of inert envy demeans their life or person when they feel helpless, while the subject of aggressive or spiteful envy directs their malice towards the target to bring them down. Generally, envy makes it difficult for those experiencing it to accept unavoidable limitations and overcome their sense of alienation from the target, who is often perceived as a litmus test or as someone that must be defeated. I wish now to identify guiding virtues that can help those struggling with these forms of envy cope more rationally.

It is probably true that these three species of envy have different causes, yet all of them incline the envier to devalue themselves or other people when reality contradicts their expectations. Damning oneself or others *globally* based on specific deeds and qualities assumes that what is true of the parts is also true of the whole, or that it is possible to form these judgments consistently and fairly. But, as Albert Ellis argued, "you can't measure your total self or efficacy because you are a changeable individual. You are not static. You grow, develop, progress-and retrogress."[31] Still, a skeptic may insist that a person who condemns themselves or other people is justified in so far as what they want is central to their identity or well-being. I would reply that this is bound to hurt the subject morally and spiritually for the sake of some material or social advantage. Besides, demeaning oneself or other people when standards are not met is a moral judgment. But, as Cohen points out, "even morally condemnable people can have some non-moral virtues […], which means that they are not totally devoid of value."[32] The point is that there is always good in a person's life despite their shortcomings. This truth should be deployed to encourage individuals struggling with irrational species of envy to engage in constructive criticisms that can instill gratitude for

the aspects of their life that are good, focus their energy searching for morally permissible ways to resolve disadvantages, accept unavoidable limitations, and transcend the alienation they feel towards others.

Shedding the habit of devaluing oneself and others presupposes respect. Respect implies unconditional acceptance grounded on a philosophical understanding of the inherent value of human beings.[33] Unconditional acceptance is about taking human beings and their life as they are and not as one thinks they ought to be i.e., without ever questioning their inherent dignity. It is about being compassionate, which itself entails kindness (being considerate and gentle towards oneself and others when dealing with pain or failure) mindfulness (processing painful thoughts and feelings without over identification), and the awareness that others go through similar experiences. People with this virtue can respond more creatively to their situation because they tend to be freer from the evaluative mindset that justifies damnation of self and others. They can control the anxiety that comes from putting their worthiness on the line, so they can focus on self-improvement efforts.

The envier often frames their situation as a zero-sum game with only winners and losers. Sometimes this is true; for example, when the good is scarce or not sharable, like winning a contest. In these circumstances, people should be prompted to play fair and do their best to get the good, but most circumstances are not black and white, even if the envious interprets them in that manner. Knowing when this is the case so that the envious can move forward requires objectivity: the ability to make judgments that are free from dualisms, simplistic interpretations, prejudices, or stereotypes.

Someone that respects humanity and has an objective sense of their situation should be willing to be humble and grateful. People may feel better if they can perceive or imagine themselves getting better, but sometimes this is no longer possible. It is not possible to regain lost years, force another person to return our affections, or grow back lost limbs. When it is no longer reasonable to expect improvement, it is wise to make peace with our limitations and affirm our life, despite less-than-ideal circumstances. Humility teaches us how to do this because it reminds us that we are not special without putting our worth on the line. The humble avoid arrogance and vanity by keeping their strengths and weaknesses in perspective. This allows them to acknowledge and tolerate their limitations without despairing, resulting in more openness to new ideas and advice, a greater appreciation of the value of all things, and a stronger interest in a more accurate view of the self.[34]

These habits foster gratitude. Gratitude "is a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift."[35] It can be directed to a particular person that has benefited us, or towards God, nature, or the cosmos. It is essential to counteract irrational species of envy because it disposes the envier to shift their focus away from what they lack to a better appreciation of the goods they have.

Respect, objectivity, humility, and gratitude must replace the forms of damnation, hostility, and lack of belief constituting negative species of envy. Someone in this predicament must also develop self-control to overcome their tendency to abdicate their will when confronted with the challenges of taking risks, making peace with limitations, and learning to relate better to the target. Self-control involves "*rational* control over actions,

emotions, and will."[36] It enables one to be more decisive (which the inertly envier needs to trust their ability to make and act on decisions based on probabilities), tolerant (which the aggressive and spiteful enviers need to avoid extremes and resist their immoral impulses) and temperate, which is all about taking responsibility for our own emotions.

Envy can blunt our capacity to empathize with the target and be glad for them. This is a very pernicious effect because it hampers interpersonal understanding and robs people of deeper forms of identification and joy. It is for this reason major religious traditions like Christianity and Buddhism oppose envy to the virtues of charity or unselfish love (*mudita*). Charity is disinterested love for God and by extension all its creatures. It is the disposition to "love God above all things for its own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God."[37] Charity counteracts negative forms of envy because it implies the habit of caring about others and rejoicing in their good fortune. *Mudita* or unselfish joy is like charity, but without its theological connotations. It is one of the *Brahma-Viharas* or sublime states and is the disposition to take pleasure in the happiness of others, which manifests as a tendency to search for the good in others and appreciate the good one finds. As Narada remarks: "the chief characteristic of *mudita* is happy acquiescence in others' prosperity and success. *Mudita* embraces all prosperous beings and is the congratulatory attitude of a person. It tends to eliminate any dislike towards a successful person. It destroys envy, its direct enemy."[38]

Conclusion

Envy is a painful feeling of inferiority or disadvantage to someone like us in domains of self-relevance. Although it overlaps with jealousy in important ways, envy is a response to a lack rather than a loss. There are four species, which vary in terms of focus of concern and levels of confidence. Emulative envy is focused on the good and involves confidence that it is obtainable. Inert envy has the same focus, but the subject lacks this confidence. Aggressive envy is focused on the target and disposes the subject to sabotage them, while inert envy motivates the subject to spoil the good.

Emulative envy is not morally problematic and is prudentially good but may depend on a comparative notion of self-worth. Inert envy is also not morally problematic but is self-defeating. People may feel it because they tie their self-worth to obtaining the coveted good, so they demand this from life. Low self-confidence could be another reason, in which case the inert envier tends to demand certainty. In contrast, aggressive and spiteful envy are actively malicious and, in many cases, self-defeating as well. Both often reflect ego-centered perfectionism, the demand that others or reality conform to the subject's preferences, and if this fails, they feel entitled to use violence.

The demand for perfection encourages can'tstipation and damnation of self and others. The virtues of respect, objectivity, humility, gratitude, and unselfish love can counteract these irrational beliefs and the immoral and self-defeating species of envy that are associated with them. I will end this essay by proposing some ways that can facilitate a person's acquisition of these guiding virtues.

Someone with respect knows that human beings are too complex to be judged globally, so they abstain from totalizing judgments that reduce a person to their deeds. Individuals can learn respect with exercises designed to practice unconditional acceptance by comparing normative judgments that separate the person from their deeds with normative judgments that do not do this. The ratings of the intentional object that motivate inert, aggressive, and spiteful envy are often inconsistent, prejudiced, use labels in place of empirical evidence, and rely on misguided dualisms. Learning logic, cognitive biases, and scientific method may help the envious become more objective. To counteract their envy, it is likely that they will need to accept their limitations, commit to the moral equality of all human beings, empathize with others, and value the good things in their life. Exercises that teach a person to be mindful of their limitations without over identifying with them, or that require them to keep a daily record of their blessings and write thank you letters, can help.

Self-control is also needed to resist inclinations to wallow in misery or do something wrong. Self-control is the ability to rationally manage emotions, behaviors, and volitions. Exercises that strengthen the envier's willpower by increasing their tolerance of difficulty can improve self-control.

People overtaken by envy have difficulty caring about the target and rejoice in their good, the essence of charity or *mudita.* This is not surprising. It is hard to identify with individuals that makes us feel inferior or at a disadvantage. Nevertheless, it is not impossible for someone in these circumstances to overcome their alienation from the target by taming their aversion with good will. One way is with activities that elicit empathy like *Brahmavihara* meditation, which teaches how to extend unselfish love from a dear person "to a neutral one, and after that towards a hostile one."[39] Another way is with activities that highlight the uniqueness of each human being, which can make the social comparison that triggers envy less relevant, like reflections on how each human being has a unique life to live, one that includes a unique background, personality, strengths, and weaknesses.[40] There are other possibilities, but the ones described show that there are ways to instill these virtues.

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[1] The empirical and philosophical literature on envy has grown significantly. The following sources contain some of this research. Maria Miceli and Cristiano Castelfranchi, "The Envious Mind." *Cognition and Emotion* 21(3) (2007): 449-479. Sara Protasi, *The Philosophy of Envy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Timothy Perrine and Kevin Timpe, "Envy and Its Discontents." In *Virtues and Their Vices*, Edited by Kevin Timpe and Craig Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 225-244. Niels van de Ven, M. Zeelenberg, and R. Pieters, "Leveling up and down: The experience of benign and malicious envy." *Emotion* 9 (3) (2009): 419–429. Niels van de Ven, "Envy and Its Consequences: Why It Is Useful to Distinguish Between Benign and Malicious Envy." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 10(6) (2016): 337-349.

[2] Protasi, *The Philosophy of Envy*, 2.

[3] See, for example, Elliot D. Cohen, *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions: A Case-Based Approach* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

[4] The account of envy I endorse owes much to Sara Protasi's work on the subject.

[5] LBT recognizes eleven cardinal fallacies and eleven counteracting virtues. For a good discussion, see Cohen, *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions*, 35-110.

[6] For a more detailed account of the relation between envy and jealousy, see Sara Protasi, "'I'm not envious. I'm just jealous!': On the difference between envy and jealousy." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3(3) (2017): 316-333.

[7] Protasi, *The Philosophy of Envy*, 13.

[8] Ibid, 21.

[9] Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Human Soul*. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. I, Translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 351.

[10] Psychologists use the term 'social comparison' to refer to this process. They distinguish between "upward" and "downward" social comparison. Upward social comparison happens when a person compares themselves to someone who is doing better than them, and "downward" social comparison happens when a person compares themselves to someone who is doing worse than them. Research shows that people tend to engage in upward comparison more than downward comparison, thereby becoming vulnerable to envy. The following metanalysis supports this claim: J.P. Gerber, Ladd Wheeler, and Jerry Suls. "A social comparison theory meta-analysis 60+ years on." *Psychol Bull* 144 (2) (2018): 177-197.

[11] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* Book II, chapter X. Translated by John Gillies, LL.D. (London: T. Cadwell, 1823), 295.

[12] See chapter two of *The Philosophy of Envy*, 26-66.

[13] Ibid, 45.

[14] Ibid, 59.

[15] This is a modified version of the case Protasi uses to illustrate inert envy. It is a common case. It is inspired by the phenomenon of "baby envy".

[16] Ibid, p.63.

[17] Ibid, 64.

[18] Sara Protasi discusses ambiguous and hybrid cases in chapter one of *The Philosophy of Envy*, 15-20.

[19] Timothy Perrine and Kevin Timpe, "Envy and Its Discontents." In *Virtues and Their Vices*, Edited by Kevin Timpe and Craig Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 230.

[20] Ibid, 231.

[21] Albert Ellis and Elliot D. Cohen persuasively argue that respect presupposes unconditional self, life, other, and world acceptance. See Albert Ellis, *The Myth of Self-Esteem: How Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy Can Change Your Life Forever*, (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2005), and Elliot D. Cohen's *Making Peace with Imperfection: Discover Your Perfectionism Type, End the Cycle of Criticism, and Embrace Self-Acceptance* (Oakland: Impact Publishers, 2019), 28-31.

[22] This is also true of aggressive and spiteful envy. Aggressive Arthur and spiteful Arthur want to outdo the target but doing so may confer genuine advantages and their judgments of inferiority may be justified.

[23] Elliot D Cohen, *Making Peace with Imperfection*, chapter 11, 135-138.

[24] Barbara Markway and Celia Ampel, *The Self-Confidence Workbook: A Guide to Overcoming Self-Doubt and Improve Self-Esteem* (Emeryville: Althea Press, 2018), chapter 1, pp. 3-23.

[25] Cohen, *Making Peace with Imperfections*, 160.

[26] Cohen describes perfectionism as the mother of all cardinal fallacies. As he says, "this fallacy is a basic premise at the root of many emotional disturbances." *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions*, 30.

[27] Cohen, *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions*, 83.

[28] Protasi, *The Philosophy of Envy*, 63.

[29] Cohen, *Making Peace with Imperfection*, 109-110.

[30] Cohen, *Logic-Based Therapy and Negative Emotions*, 34-37.

[31] Albert Ellis, *The Myth of Self-Esteem*, 19.

[32] Cohen, *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions*, 34.

[33] To quote Cohen, "self-respect involves unconditional self-acceptance based on a philosophical understanding of human worth and dignity." *The New Rational Therapy: Thinking Your Way to Serenity, Success, and Profound Happiness* (Lanham: Rowman & Little Field, 2007), 16.

[34] For a more detailed discussion of the benefits of humility, see chapter twenty of Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 261-475.

[35] Ibid, 554.

[36] Cohen, Making Peace with Imperfection, 32.

[37] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 23, 5 Volumes. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1948).

[38] Narada, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988), 637.

[39] For a detailed description of this form of meditation and how it can help us learn charity or unselfish love towards those we envy, see Part II, chapter IX.3 of Buddhaghosa Himi, *The Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*). Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Nanamoli (Buddhist Publication Society, 2010), 310-321.

[40] Julie Joula Exline and Anne L Zell. "Antidotes to Envy: A Conceptual Framework." In *Envy: Theory and Practice*. Edited by Richard H. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 325.