

**THE MOTIVATING ROLE OF ENVY :
A FORGOTTEN FACTOR IN MANAGEMENT
THEORY**

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ABSTRACT

In reviewing management textbooks, the construct of envy, which plays a major role as motivator, seems to be nonexistent. In this article, the meaning, origin, and function of envy will be explored. Particular attention will be paid to ways of dealing with envy -- patterns of action which combine envy avoidance and envy-inducing components in an intricate way. Among the alternative strategies discussed are idealization, denial, reaction formation, rationalization, withdrawal, devaluation, the drive to excel, and reparation. It will be demonstrated how envy turns into a significant motivator when seen in the context of organizational life.

Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies.

Gore Vidal

Don't get mad, get even.

Joseph Kennedy

To be born without envy is the surest sign that one possesses
great qualities.

François de la Rochefoucauld

On August 17, 1661, Nicholas Fouquet, the French finance minister in the early years of the reign of Louis XIV, a man who loved beauty and pleasure in every form, gave an incomparable party in honor of his king to show off his original vision of architecture, decoration and garden design at his estate Vaux-le-Vicomte. In France's most beautiful château, the guests were extravagantly entertained with fireworks, theatre and sumptuous meals. The luxury of his life style, however, raised the envy of Louis XIV and others, and became a contributing factor to his downfall. It led to an investigation of financial irregularities of how he had enriched himself. He was arrested on the orders of Louis XIV and sentenced to life-imprisonment. The rest of his life was spent in Pignerol, a small fortress in the Alps of Savoy where he died 19 years later. As an epitaph, we can say that envy, because of too

much gaiety and magnificence, was the motivating factor which led to Fouquet's downfall.

Motivation is an explanatory concept used to make sense out of the behavior and actions we observe. Because of its importance, the field of organizational behavior is rife with theories that attempt to explain human motivation -- how an individual's needs or desires cause him or her to behave in a certain manner. The enormous interest in this topic is obviously based on the supposition that if we understand what motivates an individual we can influence his or her performance.

Theories abound. Sometimes it seems as if each researcher interested in the topic has to propose his or her own personal theory of motivation. We can find need theories (Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1961; Alderfer, 1969), two-factor theory (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Herzberg, 1968), expectancy-value or instrumentality theory (Vroom, 1964), reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953, 1976; Connellan, 1978; Luthans & Kreitner, 1975), goal-setting theory (Locke & Bryan, 1968; Locke, 1968), and equity theory (Homans, 1961; Adams, 1965), to name some of the most influential ones.

Unfortunately, existing theories of motivation have not always been very satisfactory in explaining why people act the way they do. Many of these theories often make naïve, simplistic, and

sometimes even mystical assumptions about the nature of man. Although some of the constructs used may be valuable and may even have a certain conceptual elegance, many of these conceived frameworks tend to be incomplete, often of a purely descriptive nature, and a reminder of the obstinate survival of the homo economicus. Although most of these theories are not necessarily so naïve as to assume merely maximizing behavior, there is a tendency to look at human action as a black box with inputs and outputs whereby no attention is paid to what is not directly observable. In its most extreme form, the argument becomes something like "that which cannot be observed does not exist." The intrapsychic world of the individual -- the richness of a person's "inner theater" or mental map -- is either totally disregarded or oversimplified, making for a very mechanical, two-dimensional view of man. With this outlook it is no surprise that motivation has become one of the most widely discussed but least understood topics in the study of organizational behavior. No wonder the thousands of studies on worker motivation have produced so few tangible results.

At the risk of adding to the existing state of confusion I would like to draw attention to an often-forgotten, unrecognized, or even repressed factor, which nonetheless greatly affects human motivation, behavior, and action. I am referring to the construct of envy, which plays a major role as motivator in society but seems to be a taboo topic if we look at management textbooks. In

spite of the ubiquity of the concept -- after all, competition, aspiration, and comparison are part of the human experience -- references to this very important issue are almost nowhere to be found. The objective of this paper is, therefore, to review the meaning of envy and, by looking at an individual's inner world -- taking a clinical perspective, explore its origins and its function in society. Inevitably related topics such as jealousy, greed, revenge, and vindictiveness will be mentioned. Finally, and most importantly, ways of dealing with envy will be looked at, particularly as seen in the context of organizational life. I believe that a better understanding of the envy construct will be of help in moving from the general to the particular in human motivation and will at very least bring a greater amount of realism to the study of motivation and individual action in organizations.

THE UBIQUITY OF ENVY

St Thomas Aquinas listed envy as one of the seven deadly sins. No wonder, since already in the "Ten Commandments" we can find warnings about the destructive effects of envy :

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, you shall not set your heart on his house, his field, his servant -- man or

woman -- his ox, his donkey or anything that is his"
 (Jerusalem Bible, 1966, p. 94).

The Bible stories of Cain and Joseph are well-known illustrations of the consequences of envy. In certain cultures the idea of the "evil eye" exists as a representation of envy. Its universal nature is also attested to when we look at proverbs concerning envy which are prevalent in many different societies. For example, in Bulgaria we find the saying "other people's eggs have two yolks," in Denmark, "if envy were a fever, all the world would be ill"; in Sweden, the expression "royal Swedish envy," with its strong message not to stick out and provoke envious acts.

Literature is also full of examples of envy, probably the best known being Milton's portrait of Satan in Paradise Lost. Here we see how Satan, seething with envy and wanting revenge, fabricates man's fall from Paradise. A great deal of envy is also to be found in the tales of Chaucer. And, of course, we have Iago's behavior in Shakespeare's Othello. In addition, we can note how philosophers such as Bacon and Kant have been fascinated by the phenomenon of envy. They have emphasized the critical role of envy in explaining human action. For example, Kant saw envy as an intrinsic part of human nature:

The impulse for envy is thus inherent in the nature of man, and only its manifestation makes of it an abominable vice, a passion not only distressing and tormenting to the subject,

but intent on the destruction of the happiness of others, and one that is opposed to man's duty toward himself as toward other people (1922, p. 316f).

The sociologist Helmut Schoeck talks about the universality of an "envy motive." He argues that "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" (1969, p. 1). For him, the essence of envy is the rejection of diversity. Man has a great need to equalize. For example, even a policy such as progressive taxation is said to be based on envy. Envy creates the social controls upon which society depends. In that respect Schoeck's point of view is very close to that of the advocates of the one theory of motivation found in organizational theory which -- albeit not directly but implicitly -- acknowledges the role of envy. I am referring to equity theory, which essentially argues that managers tend to compare their efforts and rewards with those of others in a similar work situation. Equity exists when employees perceive the ratios of their input (efforts) and output (rewards) as equivalent to those of other employees (Homans, 1961; Adams, 1963, 1965). If not -- if there is the belief that one is treated unfairly - the impact on motivation can be dramatic. Schoeck does acknowledge this darker side and mentions that the envy motive can have both constructive and destructive consequences. The anthropologist Foster (1972) supports him in this stand, calling envy "a particularly dangerous and destructive

emotion, since it implies hostility, which leads to aggression and violence capable of destroying societies" (p. 165).

THE MEANING OF ENVY

What is envy? Is it a conscious or unconscious state of feeling, a defensive reaction, a motive, a cognitive orientation, or all of the above? Bion (1977) once said:

Envy is typical of other elements of the personality in that everyone would be prepared to admit its existence. Yet it does not smell; it is invisible, inaudible, intangible. It has no shape (p. 54).

Bion may have been too optimistic about the willingness of man to admit to being motivated by envy. La Rochefoucauld was probably more accurate when he said that "envy is so shameful a passion that we never dare to acknowledge it." Envy seems to be a very "embarrassing" reaction, something that does not enhance our self-image. Actually, acknowledging envy may be equated to admitting a sense of inferiority. No wonder the concept is so totally suppressed that it is not to be found in textbooks of organizational behavior.

Whatever envy is, it is treated with a great deal of ambivalence. Because of envy's elusive nature we often observe only the

defenses against it. It is not the objective of this paper, however, to get involved in polemics about such matters as envy being a defensive reaction or an emotion for the very simple reason that theories of emotions still remain in the exploratory stage. For the purpose of simplification, I will take a more general view of the envy concept and look at "all of the above." What can be said, however, is that envy as an emotion can be looked at as an organizer and coordinator of the physiological and psychological processes that make up behavior (Noy, 1982). Here we should keep in mind that emotional processes are at the borderline not only of the ideational and physiological, but also of the voluntary and involuntary (Knapp, 1963, 1976). A complex relationship seems to exist between states of feeling and thinking -- how affective reactions and evaluations are tied in to cognitive and perceptual encoding processes, behavior, and actions (Plutchik, 1970; Zajonc, 1980, 1984; Lazarus, 1982).

When we look at the etymological source of the word envy, we discover that it is derived from the Latin noun invidia and the verb invidere, meaning, according to the Oxford English dictionary, "to look maliciously upon." The descriptions in this dictionary indicate that envy has to do with malignant or hostile feelings, a wish to cause harm or mischief, a feeling of mortification and ill will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages possessed by another, and the desire to emulate and equal the other in the achievement of excellence.

Webster speaks of the painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another, accompanied by a desire to have the same advantage. From these definitions it appears that at the heart of envy there is an unpleasant feeling caused by the desire to possess what someone else has, such as wealth, power, status, love, or beauty. Such a reaction may give rise to feelings of frustration, anger, self-pity, greed, and vindictiveness.

In reviewing the concept what becomes clear is that, in comparison to other passions, envy is a very complex reaction. It is different because it deals with a mixture of feelings since "the envious person shows not only desire for the possessions of others, but connects with that desire spiteful impulses against the privileged proprietor" (Abraham, 1968, p. 382). Silver and Subini (1970) go so far as to call it a "mongrel categorical term" in that it "both characterizes a single act and makes a prediction about the actor" (p.322) Moreover, envy is Janus-faced in that it generates not only fear of the consequences of one's own envy but also fear of the envy of others.

In disassembling the components making up the envy construct, Spielmann (1971, p.77) differentiates among four affect states. First, there is the desire for emulation based on a perception of excellence, which leads to a wish to equal, imitate, or surpass the envied individual. The second component is a narcissistic wound, or the sense of lacking something, connected with feelings

of inferiority, inadequacy, and injured self-esteem. The person devalues him- or herself in comparison with someone else or some specific ideal. Third, there has to be a longing for the desired possession. Finally, there is a feeling of anger at the possessor which may be expressed in mild forms as chagrin or discontent, in moderate forms as resentment or ill will, and in more severe forms as impulses to spoil or destroy the envied object or to engage in malicious, spiteful action.

A certain amount of confusion exists between the terms envy and jealousy. These human passions are often used interchangeably. (Titelman, 1981). There seems to be a fundamental difference, however, depending on the interpersonal context in which each occurs which on its part, as we will see later, has to do with its origin. One frequently made distinction holds that envy becomes applicable to two-person relationships while jealousy refers to three. Rivalry with a third party seems to be the critical differentiating variable. As Spielman (1971) said, "the jealous person fears a third person will intrude upon a two-person relationship and take possession" (p.63). In the words of Tellenbach (1974), "jealousy is not a wanting-to-have but rather a wanting-to-hold, an objection to loss" (p. 462).

Original contributors to the concept concur. In differentiating envy from jealousy, Harry Stack Sullivan defines the former as an

activity in which one contemplates the unfortunate results of someone else's having something that one does not have ... envy may be an active realization that one is not good enough, compared with someone else. Although it involves primarily a two-group situation, one of the two may be a more-or-less mythological person.

Jealousy, on the other hand, never concerns a two-group situation. It is invariably a very complex, painful process involving a group of three or more persons, one or more of whom may be absolutely fantasized. Jealousy ... involves a great complex field of interpersonal relations (1953, p. 348).

Melanie Klein, another major contributor to the concept of envy, in making a distinction between envy and jealousy writes in a similar vein. According to her :

Envy is the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable -- the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it. Moreover, envy implies the subject's relation to one person and goes back to the earliest exclusive relationship with the mother. Jealousy is based on envy, but involves a relation to at least two people; it is mainly concerned with love that the subject feels it is due and has been taken away, or is in danger of

being taken away from him by his rival (1975, p.181).

It is embarrassing to admit to envy. In contrast, jealousy, as an emotion, is much more acceptable and thus less masked.

Newspapers, songs, literature are full of examples of jealousy.

The same cannot be said about envy. We notice, however, how the behavior, cognitions and the emotions associated with envy and jealousy seem to be not that different (Bers & Rodin, 1984).

Hence, from a conceptual point of view, it may be interesting to make a differentiation but from a pragmatic point of view, this distinction becomes less meaningful. Since jealousy is derived from envy, and given the difference in society's reactions to these two emotions, we may have to accept that in everyday conversation the terms are used synonymously.

The Origins of Envy

What is the origin of emotions? And where does envy fit in? How do we explain its development? An astute observer of the general development of emotions remarked that :

The affective responses of the infant represent two basic patterns : a state of contentment and tranquility and a state of distress. These two states represent affect precursors out

of which evolve pleasurable and painful affects respectively. In the normal course of maturation the mixed affect precursor pattern separates out into specific entities. The several emotions of anger, shame, guilt, envy, jealousy, anxiety, depression, and so on identifiably evolve out of the general distress response. The process continues into the progressive refinement of emotional experiences, so that in the adult these major groupings differentiate into finer nuances of meaning (Krystal, 1982, p. 365).

In his review of the concept of envy Joffe argues that "envious feelings are complex human responses rooted in the development of ego functions and reality object relations, and should never be reduced to instinctual sources alone" (1969, p. 542). Most researchers don't object to this point of view, although there is disagreement about the point in human development at which these feelings of envy first arise.

Freud traced the origins of envy to that stage of life when the child becomes aware of the anatomical difference between the sexes (1905, 1925). This led him to postulate the controversial concept of penis envy, the female's conscious or unconscious envy of the penis and feeling that she is handicapped or ill treated because of the lack of it. He argued that such recognition of difference may give cause to injured self-esteem and may contribute to the character trait of jealousy, envy being only a precursor. In

response to this supposition, others have postulated man's envy of the woman's procreative abilities which can lead to similar feelings (Horney, 1967). At present, however, the notion of penis envy is looked at more as a metaphor (Karme, 1981) which stands for certain milestones in human development having to do with mental imagery about unification with and separation from the primary caretaker(s) the awakening of sexual awareness and societal attributions of power and helplessness.

Although Freud recognized the pre-oedipal antecedents of envy, to him it was basically a universal phenomenon of childhood related to the Oedipus complex. Subsequent child studies show, however, that we have to go to the pre-oedipal period to solve the riddle of envy; considering only the mother-father-child triad is not sufficient. Here again we have to recognize the contributions of Melanie Klein who considers envy "an oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expression of destructive impulses operative from the beginning of life" (1975, p. 176). Although she seems to imply that envy is an innate characteristic, she really emphasizes the developmental point of view when she argues that it is one of the most primitive and fundamental of emotions which comes to the fore as soon as the infant becomes aware that the mother's breast is the source of all gratification and good experiences. Accompanied by the wish to preserve and protect these good feelings come also the first stirrings of an envious desire to be oneself the source of such perfection. Thus envy is bound up with

gratifying experiences and the experience of a lack. Envious feelings start when the child becomes aware that he or she does not have the power to give such pleasures.

The arrival of a new baby obviously stirs up these envious feelings. Early envious feelings become intensified and transform into jealousy when the child watches the mother suckle or take care of a sibling. Such actions are an additional source of rivalrous feelings and lead to comparison of one's own qualities with those of the other. A sense of competitiveness is born. Here it may be interesting to quote a passage from St. Augustine's Confessions:

He was not old enough to talk, but whenever he saw his foster-brother at the breast, he would grow pale with envy. This much is common knowledge. Mothers and nurses say they can work such things out of the system by one means or another, but surely it cannot be called innocence, when the milk flows in such abundance from its source, to object to a rival desperately in need and depending for his life on this form of nourishment? (1961, p.280)

Envy becomes further crystallized as the child continues to develop (Frankel & Sherick, 1977). Originally linked to orality - being preoedipal - envy seems to be the matrix which determines many of the child's later relationships. The intensity of envy as

determined by the holding environment provided by the parents will very much affect relationships to siblings and eventually other persons later in life. As we saw earlier, in the development of envy, we must, of course, recognize how, by bringing a third person into the picture, it is transformed into jealousy. Jealousy comes really into its own at the Oedipal stage. Interestingly enough, this transformation can make emerging envious feelings less guilt ridden and more acceptable to the person involved -- the reason being that jealousy can be seen as a defense against envy since -- and we are now talking about multiperson relationships -- hostile feelings can be "split off" and displaced onto others. By acting in such a manner the sense of guilt (for envying a loved person) can be avoided.

Since we tend to look at envy as a shameful reaction, a motivator which we usually don't dare to acknowledge, it is no wonder that in spite of its ubiquitous nature we use so many forms of self-deception to conceal its appearance. Since we don't like to confess that we suffer from envy, it takes on many different disguises. The competitive world of organizations, with its many different cultures and reward structures, provides numerous opportunities for envy to flourish.

In the following pages I will discuss some of the more prominent ways people deal with envy. I would like to emphasize that these different expressions are not mutually exclusive, nor are they

necessarily stable. One way of dealing with envy will frequently evolve into another, depending on the intensity of intrapsychic conflict. The strategies employed combine in an intricate way envy avoidance and envy inducing components, i.e., they are often a mixture of those reactions that are a form of self-protection against the envy of others and those used to negate one's own envious desires.

DESTRUCTIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH ENVY

Idealization

One not unusual way of managing envy is through idealization. By idealizing individuals, groups, organizations, or other objects, we put them out of reach. Exaggeration can be seen as an attempt to diminish envy, placing the envied object beyond the range of common mortals. The rationalization is that it is one's fate not to belong to this privileged group, others have just been "luckier." Behaving in such manner tends, however, to be a precarious answer to the problem (Davies, 1980). Be it person, group, or organization, reasons will soon be found to diminish or devalue the envied object. We should not forget that no one can live up to excessive expectations for too long.

Idealization is essentially a way of managing aggressive impulses. It is an effort to prevent a "good" image from being contaminated by a "bad" one, an attempt to retain some satisfying experiences as a source of inner strength. It indicates that the individual needs to resort to "splitting" as a defense (Kernberg, 1975). What this means is that the person's sense of self is insufficiently strong to tolerate the feeling of "ambivalence" with its implication that the same "object" (meaning the other) can have both "good" and "bad" qualities. Instead, "good" and "bad" experiences, perceptions, and feelings are polarized and kept apart to prevent ending up in a world populated by spoiled objects and the corollary bad feelings.

A good example of idealization as a defensive strategy against envy is the way executives may act vis-à-vis their leaders. They often keep their envious impulses under control by exaggerating the latter's qualities and directing their negative (destructive) tendencies onto scapegoats. Thus excessive praise and admiration toward superiors may be viewed as transparent ways of concealing envy. Individuals who behave in such a manner need to create superpersons. But as astute observers of organizational life know so well, to be put at the receiving end is a very delicate proposition. The "hero" will soon turn out to have clay feet. Very little is needed for the pendulum to swing in the other direction and the leader to be pushed off the pedestal and villified.

Withdrawal

Complete withdrawal from competition is an extreme envy avoidance strategy. For appearance sake people who behave in this way seem to be driven by the desire to be inconspicuous. However, the real reason for behaving in such a manner may be their inability to tolerate envious feelings. As a matter of fact, these people may be afraid of and feel guilty about their destructive fantasies concerning others. What the outsider notices, however, is a person who doesn't even try to compete but instead devalues him or herself. Withdrawal becomes an extreme countermeasure. Such a way of acting leads to feelings of helplessness and reactions of dependency. Moreover, in an organizational setting, these people may become unpromotable and turn into problem employees.

The "fear of success" syndrome (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985; Kets de Vries, 1988b) is closely related to this pattern of behavior. These are the people who become depressed when successful in their work, being afraid -- not necessarily a conscious process -- that success will arouse the envy of others and thus potential retaliatory action. Herodotus' story of Polycrates, tyrant of Sumos, is a good illustration of this fear. Terrified by his unheard-of good fortune and wishing to forestall the envy of the Gods, Polycrates threw a priceless ring into the sea. But the ring returned in the belly of a fish served to him. Polycrates then knew that Nemesis -- the goddess of divine

retribution -- had refused his sacrifice and that misfortune would inevitably come his way. Self-defeating behavior, "snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory," is all part and parcel of this pattern. The existence of "organizational "hobos," individuals who continually get themselves into the same kind of trouble - be it fights with superiors, procrastination on the job, shoddy work or unethical practices - and have to move on to the next organization, is an all- too-common phenomenon.

Devaluation

This is probably not only the most destructive but also the most complex way of dealing with feelings of envy. Here we have to keep in mind that the previously mentioned forms of expression such as idealization and withdrawal and others such as denial, reaction formation, and rationalization may eventually end up following this route. The mental equation behind this way of acting is that the spoiled object will not arouse any envy. People behaving in this mode are usually guided by vengefulness and bitterness but at the same time may experience a sense of moral righteousness and indignation as a way of disguising and justifying their activities. They seem to be driven by a need for revenge, trying to prove that they are as good or better than the envied object. Backbiting, destructive criticism, or humiliation are common ways these feelings come to the fore. Another insidious way of dealing with them is by stirring up envy in

others.

Because of the narcissistic injury -- the deflation of one's self-image -- which accompanies envy, the wish to return injury for injury stands central. This striving for revenge or sense of vindictiveness has been dissected by Karen Horney (1948), who distinguishes three forms. First, she postulates the existence of openly aggressive vindictiveness which is uninhibited in action. Then there is a self-effacing vindictiveness whereby subversive and indirect means are used. In this instance, often the one who is envious takes on the role of the victim -- the presentation of suffering becomes an unconsciously used act to make the other feel guilty. Finally, Horney identifies detached vindictiveness. In this case, the envied person is frustrated by such acts as not being listened to, the discarding of his or her needs, the withholding of praise from him or her, or treatment as an unwelcome intruder. In all instances, what the people perpetrating such acts seem to be after is a "vindictive triumph," the satisfaction which comes with restoring injured pride. To use Horney's words, "this seems to be the flame sustaining their lives" (1948, p. 5).

People who make the vindictive triumph the governing passion of their lives seem to suffer from what has been called the "Monte Christo Complex" (Castelnuovo-Tedesco, 1974). This peculiar behavior pattern is named after Alexandre Dumas's romantic story

of organizational life. We can see this process at work particularly in those instances when a number of subordinates are jockeying for the attention of a superior. Collusion and power games in organizations often have their origin in envy.

Generational Envy

An interesting form of envy is the envy of the next generation. It can be most clearly observed in the relationship between parents and children, in which case parents may often take on an attitude of moral righteousness as a way of rationalizing their actions. They will deprive their children of certain privileges and pleasures and hide their actions with many justifications, but the real basis is frequently the envy springing from not having had these opportunities themselves when they were that age. A parallel pattern we can find in organizational settings is those instances where senior managers, by various subtle means, act vindictively toward younger managers. The bitterness they feel at not having succeeded where the newcomer might succeed may induce these people to set up traps or other impediments to cause him or her to fail. Under the disguise of giving the new executive ample opportunity and wide discretion, they look for reasons to stifle their careers. The amount of "drama" which often accompanies management succession is another clear example of the workings of these processes particularly in those instances where potential "crown princes" come to a bad end, having aroused the envy of

their bosses. While the "rules of the game" necessitate planning for management succession, the shift of power which comes with the appointment of a crown prince is not taken lightly. Vindictive action may follow (Kets de Vries, 1988a, 1988b).

Other Defensive Strategies

Very common envy-avoiding strategies come into play through the use of other defenses such as denial and reaction formation. As in previous cases, bringing envious feelings to consciousness is experienced by some people as being too unacceptable to the self-image. Thus the person tries to reassure him- or herself that there is nothing to get excited about, nothing to be envied. Apart from denial, excessive compliments and flattery may be used as a form of reaction formation to cover up these envious feelings.

Similar tactics are resorted to in order to prevent the arousal of envious feelings in others. Consequently, any personal accomplishment may be trivialized; any reason to be envied is denied. The response 'business is terrible' to the question 'how is business' (while business is actually doing very well) is a good example. Undue modesty -- not flaunting one's success -- becomes the "safer" response. In addition, various forms of rationalization are used to make it seem that what appears to be envied is not really that important.

But, as in the case of the defensive strategy of idealization, these forms of self-deception in order to forestall envy also do not always make for a very stable solution. We can wonder how long these envious thoughts and feelings can be disavowed? How long can one ward off the envy of others? How long can these feelings be kept under control? How long can one use denial, reaction formation, and rationalization? Eventually envy will catch up and begin to make its appearance through subtle actions. Backbiting, rumormongering, character defamation, malicious gossip, or giving the envied person the cold shoulder are only a few ways of expressing these feelings.

CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH ENVY

The Drive to Excel

The Spanish philosopher Gracian once said that nothing "arouses ambition so much as the trumpet blare of another's fame." It can be looked at as a form of identification with the accomplishments of others (Rosenblatt, 1988). Compared to the other forms of action, trying to excel over others as a way of dealing with envious feelings tends to be a much more constructive approach. The rationale is that if one is successful in one's own pursuits, there is no longer any reason to be envious. Of course, the other side of the picture is that acting in this way induces envy in others by increasing competitive feelings.

Another way of looking at this solution to feelings of envy is by seeing it as a form of disguised vengefulness. This drive to excel and the identification with the other can be looked at as a defense against envy. As Horney states "this I'll show you and the wish to vindicate oneself in the spirit of defiant triumph can be the determining force in any drive for success, prestige, or sexual conquest" (1948, p. 9). In many organizations, be the manifestations overt or covert, we can observe this way of dealing with envy in action. In our "search for excellence" we are competing with other organizations, departments and colleagues. This constructive way of dealing with envy is a great motivator and can lead to performance beyond expectations. And as long as we recognize the darker side of competitiveness -- if we take care that it does not get out of hand -- it can lead to very positive results.

Reparation

Finally, as the most constructive way of dealing with envy, we should mention the urge to engage in a reparative effort. Insight into one's own motivations and realizing envy's destructive potential may help to break a vicious circle of vindictiveness. Thus, instead of being vengeful, we may try to help the envied party. If this is the case, a positive effort is made to undo and overcome lingering destructive fantasies and to transform that what is envied. A first step is to change the nature of the

fantasies about the envied object in order to develop a more constructive attitude. Doing so means giving up wishing for what one cannot have, realizing that certain realities in life cannot be changed but have to be accepted, and that one can no longer resort to expedient defenses such as idealization, denial, and reaction formation. This first step will necessitate an elaborate working-through process to deal with a sense of loss, with having to let go of long-held, emotionally charged wishes. To make this possible, however, will not be easy, given the realities of human nature. But in the end what seems to be a difficult course of action may lead to a greater sense of satisfaction and enjoyment (Rochlin, 1965). In undertaking all of this, we should keep in mind Melanie Klein's observation that "envy spoils the capacity for enjoyment .. For it is enjoyment and gratitude to which it gives rise that mitigate destructive impulses, envy and greed" (1975, pp. 186-187). A sense of responsibility and mutuality -- the willingness to engage in vicarious gratification -- are the real answers for discontinuing envy's destructive impact.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Francis Bacon once said "envy never makes a holiday." That that is indeed the case has become clear from our discussion. Envy is part and parcel of the human experience, influencing all of our behavior and actions. It is an intricate part of organizational life and must be taken into consideration when making predictions

about human behavior in organizations. Doing so will make for a more realistic approach to organizational analysis. We may not like being possessed by envy, but we cannot avoid having to live with it. Actually, having a certain amount of envy directed toward oneself may even be viewed as constructive, as a sign that one has achieved something of value. As Schoeck (1966) once said :

Every man must be prone to a small degree of envy; without it the interplay of social forces within society is unthinkable. Only pathological envy in the individual, which tinges every other emotion, and the society entirely designed to appease imagined multitudes of enviers, are socially inoperative (p. 10).

We have seen how envy can appear in many guises, some constructive, some destructive. It is the excesses -- both envy avoidance and envy-stimulating behavior -- which can be so insidious and to which we must be ever alert. The critical challenge for each individual becomes keeping his or her own level of envy within acceptable boundaries. And that is not an easy task since -- human nature being what it is -- envy is always quickly aroused and may easily get out of hand.

Of course, from an organizational perspective, certain preventive measures can be taken. For example, one can take such steps as reducing hierarchical arrangements, engaging in power equalization

or participative management, eliminating certain perks, introducing profit-sharing plans and doing away with extreme differences in salary scales. The avoidance of envy-inducing behavior springing from various forms of conspicuous consumption can also have a tension-reducing effect.

In the summing up, however, in order to direct envy into more constructive channels, thus fostering creativity and adaptability, we cannot emphasize enough the advantages for the individual of taking the route of reparation and the constructive pursuit of excellence. Acting in such a way is a much more positive approach than the other ways which have been discussed. We all know that to be continuously possessed by envy does not make for a very happy life. Continuous vindictiveness will be accompanied by a lot of stress.

We must avoid being prisoners of a self created illusory balance, living in a world of self-deception where we are consumed by anxiety and tension. To prevent that from happening envy must be transcended. To do so we need a certain emotional maturity characterized by the capacity for honest self-evaluation, compassion, gratefulness, responsibility, and commitment. We also need what Erikson (1963) calls a sense of generativity: caring for others. The ability to face reality and the capacity for empathy -- to go beyond purely selfish concerns -- are, in the final analysis, the best antidote against the destructive effects of

envy. Here we should not forget that only the person freed from envy is able to see things as they really are.

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