

Envy Theory

Perspectives on the Psychology of Envy

Frank John Ninivaggi, M.D.

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK



Contents

	Introduction	1
Part I	ENVY THEORY	
Chapter 1	Love and the Complex Problem of Destructiveness	17
Chapter 2	Inborn Envy	43
Chapter 3	An Introduction to the <i>Nuclear Envy</i> Concept	73
Chapter 4	Human Psychological Development: Theoretical Underpinnings	119
Chapter 5	The Subjective, Intrapsychic, and Phenomenological Experience of Envy: Envy and Related States of Mind	181
Chapter 6	The Nuclear Genesis of Envy	215
Chapter 7	A Microscopic Analysis of Envy's Dedicated Pathways	241
Chapter 8	Envy's Conscious Derivatives: Signs, Symptoms, and Surface Indicators of Envy's Inner Dialogue	267

Part II	THE HEALTHY MATURATION OF ENVY	
Chapter 9	The Healthy Maturation of Envy: Admiration, Emulation, Gratitude, Empathy, and Helpfulness	287
Part III	ENVY IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE	
Chapter 10	Recognizing Envy: Historical and Clinical Contexts	339
	Afterword	353
	References	359
	Index	373
	About the Author	391



Introduction

This book introduces *envy theory*. It is a conceptual exploration of hypotheses and conjectures about the mind's fundamental cognitive and emotional makeup—its infrastructure and developmental potentials. Introducing the *envy model* and attempting to unravel the meaning of envy illustrates this orientation. Aims are to contribute to the psychological literature, improve patient care, and stimulate new research.

Envy theory addresses basic propositions about human psychology, consciousness, and the meaning of personhood. Challenging clinical work with children and adults in psychiatric contexts over three decades has provided the data for *envy theory*. It suggests a number of explanatory factors to make it socially interesting and of practical use, for example, as a research paradigm. Many aspects of *envy theory* await testability.

The significance of envy descriptively, developmentally, and as a typical state of mind, universal but dimensional in degree, in all psychological functioning is presented. Rather than being simple and discrete, envy is a diverse set of urges, emotions, and cognitions with a tonic presence that waxes and wanes over time and experience.

Envy theory is a complex and comprehensive analysis of the conscious and unconscious factors that result in the self-destructive manifestations of envy. Unmet needs and desires pressing on consciousness and fostering feelings of envy and the actions that result can seriously undermine psychic health. Endowments of envy, however, are not as bleak and unsparing as they at first may appear. An understanding of *envy theory* would be incomplete if its

clinical significance were not recognized or underestimated. That significance pivots on the fact that, properly identified and managed, *a healthy maturation of envy* may occur from which successful advances both personally and socially may arise.

Envy theory draws from psychology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and aspects of the humanities in constructing models of envy in the human condition. The task of understanding and attempting to explain human nature and mind is far too broad to use only a single perspective, especially since there is no bedrock to understanding. Each branch of knowledge studies a subset of reality that depends on a variety of factors studied in other branches. Scientific realism suggests that conjectures arrived at in one area often help in understanding other areas. *Envy theory* presumes an intrinsic orderliness in human psychology, the details of which are mostly undiscovered. Inductions from one class of facts—for example, psychoanalytic psychology—may be shown to coincide with inductions obtained from the study of properties emergent in other classes—for example, neuroscience. This suggested complementariness and agreement, in fact, represents a consilience across disciplines, creating a common, realistic, and orderly groundwork for explaining the yet uncharted depths of how envy exists in the mind. The author has found such a bold methodology essential to explain envy.

Unconscious envy is the primitive sensation and conflated feeling of privation, powerlessness, inferiority, and hostile distress coupled with the urge to rob and spoil in the face of advantages and their enjoyment existing elsewhere.

Envy is biting the breast that feeds. This is part of envy's paradoxical nature. Ironically, envy cannot be taken personally. It is akin to a reflexive response to another based on the *envier's idiosyncratic phantasy construals*. In this sense, it is insular and "impersonal."

Phantasied omnipotence (strivings toward exerting power) and a need to control are the pillars upon which unconscious envy stands. Power in all its connotations suggests holding great resources along with the authoritative force, strength, and ability to act. Envy and an underlying sense of powerlessness go hand-in-hand. Conscious recognition of envy, for example, resides in many folklore ideas such as "evil eye" and "jinx." Both connote identifying something exceedingly good with the implication that this powerful talisman will contribute in some way to its spoiling and destruction.

The varied phenomena subsumed in the construct of "power" as played out in all human relations, from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal to the extended group, can be seen and described from different perspectives. Conceptually, power denotes sufficient force required to do work and the capacity to produce change and achieve outcomes. Power can also be defined as the

ability to control, influence, or coerce others and environments by manipulating resources. Throughout *envy theory*, “power” is given its psychodynamic appellation—namely, the construct of *omnipotence*, the unconscious platform organizing all human power strivings.

In *envy theory*, *unconscious phantasy* (Isaacs 1948)—how the mind experiences/pictures itself—represents information and its lived processing. It is largely though not entirely self-generated. In this book, this spelling of the term “*phantasy*” is used to differentiate it from conscious “*fantasy*” denoting, for example, *imagination and daydreams*. The idiosyncratic meaning attributed to experiences and, for example, the subjective feelings implied by the concept “*qualia*” used in formal psychology arise from the personally constructed matrix of unconscious phantasy.

The consciously experienced features of envy are often reflected in those who feel themselves or are seen by others to be insecure. People who feel insecure and inadequate always look outside themselves and compare what they have or feel they are with what they perceive others to be or to possess—usually something ideal. Envy arouses questions about fairness and equal distribution of resources. Scavenging for hidden treasures and exploiting the acquisition of what is perceived to be free also imply underlying envy. Envy, in isolation, can be destructive to psychological processes; envy, recognized and intelligently managed, transforms and may spur admiration, emulation, aspiration, empathy, and developmental advantages—the *healthy maturation of envy*. This is one of *envy theory*’s principal themes.

Envy theory’s focus is *unconscious* envy, the central theme of this book. Envious attitudes that are conscious may be benign (nonhostile) or contain willful maliciousness. Unconscious envy, difficult to capture empirically, however, ordinarily has malignant potential since its signature urges are primitive, robbing, and corrosively spoiling. On a conscious level, these correlate with invasion, ruthless exploitation, and scavenging the spoiled resources. Pain is felt when envy on any level is activated. The envier feels pain, but the person toward whom envy is directed feels perplexed. Surface actions mask the envier’s unconscious aims.

Pleiotropy, one innately endowed predisposition influencing a variety of different expressions as development proceeds over time, characterizes *nuclear envy*. It is a presemantic set of sensations and responsivity, independent of conscious thinking, out of which automatic attraction and responses to fear, reward, and novelty emerge. Cognitive processing, for example, partakes of envy’s cascade of iterative changes in receiving and transforming information.

What are the practical consequences of excessive envy? The details of envy’s mental mechanisms will unfold throughout this book. The following,

in principle, outlines consequences of envy—its experience-near negative effects. Envy’s infrastructure is made up of mental splitting and projection. Envy has intrinsic disintegrative properties that foster and enhance such splitting. This denotes the phenomenological experience of mental disorganization, attention that incessantly drifts and falters, and the inability to gather mental focus. This obstructs cognitive, emotional, and physical integration and engenders disorganized self-experience and “single-mindedness.” Projection denotes the ongoing attribution to all aspects of perception the intrinsic contents of the subjective mind, typically phantasy and imaginary ideals and wishes. Along with this, one’s already tenuous attention becomes identified—trapped—in this outer-directed array. Attention so trapped becomes controlled in willy-nilly and rapid ways; thinking and willful action, in turn, are disabled. Clear-mindedness, volition, and performance suffer.

When envy, however, is identified and modulated in a mindful way, its hold over attention is significantly mitigated. This enables one to think more clearly, plan more effectively, and carry out goals, aspirations, and ambitions in a more deliberate and successful manner. In other words, *the healthy maturation of envy* is an internal accomplishment that enhances odds of success for external accomplishments in real-life situations.



In *envy theory*, each human being is considered a *biomental entity*. When the physical body of the whole person is referenced, terms such as “human organism” or physical body are used. When the psychological level of the whole person is addressed, the term “self” is used.

The philosophical problem of “the one and the many” is also embedded in *envy theory*. In the developmental process, one’s sense of self slowly arises, in part, from an indistinct experience of the changing groups of mind-body functions (multiple “I’s”) toward a more cohesive sense of their “togetherness.” These multiple aspects always remain mentally active—often experienced as competing dimensions of the self. Dissociative states, indecisive and erratic thinking, and fickle-mindedness, for example, reflect an insufficiently integrated self.

As emotional and cognitive maturation and development proceed, however, conscious awareness locates itself in only one or a select few sectors of biomental experience. Gradually, a psychological character forms and an individual comes to perceive and believe that he or she is that crystallized “one self”—in isolation or dissociated from the other self aspects present. The remainder of one’s biomental functions, even though still operating, become nonconscious, not remembered. These varying aspects of the self

are often contradictory and arouse conflict. The nonconscious search for unity not only stimulates but, in part, arises from such dynamic dualisms that largely drive envy.

Envy theory expounds the meaning, functions, and significance of *nuclear envy* in self-experience and the self's experience of others, especially when its spoiling impulses arise in conscious thinking, motivation, and action. Although aspects of self (experiencer) and others (experienced) may be described in terms of "parts," there are no parts in mental apprehensions. Only "shifts of focus" are being described.



Envy theory may be regarded more an individual and interpersonal rather than social psychological perspective since its focus is studying and understanding the person as a biopsychological individual whose major axes of orientation are self-relevance (perceiving others to share characteristics similar to oneself) and maintaining a sense of self-meaning in relation to others. Yet envy is not entirely an interpersonal phenomenon; social consequences are significant and have real-life impact. Cognitive and affective pathways tempered by envy may be adaptive and health promoting or destructive when envy is excessive and unopposed by the forces represented by love (for example, affiliative attraction, empathy, mutual cooperation) in all its integrative dimensions. The quality and quantity of one's constitutional endowment of envy may be viewed as a heritable risk factor activated by environmental stress. The stress-heritability-coping model of vulnerability-resilience (mix of risk and protective factors) in adaptation correlates heavily with this.

Envy theory comprises one principal foundation on which a more general psychology can be constructed. The broadest frame of reference is psychoanalytic psychology, particularly object relations theory. This view sees all individual psychology as simultaneously engaged in and informed by intersubjective and social interactions.

The manner in which an individual idiosyncratically perceives his or her emotional and cognitive relation to others in the interpersonal world denotes that subject's "object relations." In other words, that to which the subject becomes related is the relation to the object. The term "object" used here roughly denotes the subject's emotionally charged attention, particularly the encoded mental identification, recognition, and interpretation of another person—technically termed "the object." Most important, "object" denotes the subject's object of desire. The "object" typically takes the form of a largely unconscious action image between two persons or parts of persons.

“Object” and “object of desire” emphasize the idiosyncratic nature of how other persons are construed.

This genetically endowed object relations pathway expresses itself at birth in the intimate interpersonal and extended social field of the mother-infant dyad. This reciprocity is the crucible in which the infrastructure of mind assimilates impressions and experiences that enhance growth, maturation, and development.

This infantile urgent focus is the first and becomes the primary object-specific relation. It remains the nonconscious prototype for all subsequent conscious object strivings—in other words, interests and emotionally charged preferences toward persons deemed interesting and significant.

How human minds begin to understand the world arises from how the biomental infant can act and react in relation to its mother. Somatic action patterns, cognitive pathways, and affective moods develop and coalesce early on and dynamically reconfigure throughout growth, maturation, and development. Motivation, volition, and emotion, therefore, are always about aspects of this primary relation that remains the nonconscious trigger stimulating further exploration along the developmental course of one’s life. Although an exclusive relation to the mother can vary in many ways, such as actual physical presence, duration of attentiveness, and emotional intensity, some form of it exists in everyone.

Envy theory asserts a fundamental axiom: two overarching inferred primary instincts, *life instinct and death instinct*, act as the archetypal compass directing and orienting mind and behavior. *Envy theory* denotes this use of the construct “instinct” to mean an innate biomental preparedness having an extremely sensitive, flexible responsivity, rather than absolutely automatic reflex action, that waxes and wanes as it takes concrete shape in the experiential social environment. Both classes of instinct in unison aim toward adaptive survival imbued with meaning. The strength of these biomental forces is endowed constitutionally; the developing ego and environmental facilitators and constraints, however, contribute to their activation and expression. In other words, genes do not predetermine performance; experience decides and shapes behavior.

This conjectural framework denotes that the inner “life instinct”—whatever complex biomental and neural network processes compose and correlate with it—drives the biomental self to actively seek greater and greater *degrees of affiliation, creativeness, and vivifyingness*. The power to expand and create accompanies these indefatigable life impulses. Love as experienced and enacted in all human relations may be the broadest instantiation of this life instinct. The idea of a life instinct is an archetypal construct inferred chiefly by its effects.

These impulses, however, must exist in dynamic conjunction with the inferred “death instinct” that counters this life drive by forceful impulses toward constraint, aggressive control, disintegration, and destructiveness. Varying degrees of reconciling consequences dynamically emerge and continuously reorganize these ongoing dually operating creative and destructive life scenarios. Anxiety, hateful and spoiling attitudes, and manifestations of destructive actions may be the broadest expressions of death instinct processes.

Both innate predilections and human cultural reinforcements make human subjects uniquely sensitive to experiencing intense pleasure, satisfaction, and comfort in relation to one another—the *raison d'être* behind object relations. *Envy theory* describes the milieu of “birth, breath, and breast” as the incomparable mating of subject with subject that launches for baby in states of nurturance with mother the founding moment of biomental activity and the canalization of mental space.

The first awakening of mind is a mixture of the cognitive and emotional apprehension of the animate world of relationships having idiosyncratic personal significance. Such social cognition is the infrastructure of the human infant’s intelligent and meaningful adaptation.

The use of the term “object” denotes a reference, in technical terms, to the subject’s *idiosyncratic construction of a personalized figure other than the self/experiencer*. This apprehension and encoding may be partial/featural or holistic/configural in its processing and structuralization. Detail and pattern processing, respectively, have different developmental trajectories and influence cognition and emotion differently. These crucial bias signals are established in earliest infancy and guide the flow of emotional and cognitive neural circuitry by the prototypical patterns they establish. Object relations are the foundation of all social attachments, the universal building blocks of the meaningfulness underlying culture and civilization. Object relations underlie all forms of social cognition and communication.

At the start of life, information-processing capacities have both hard-wired and software elements that develop and expand by growth, maturation, and experience with the environment, especially significant people. These capacities, which are essentially plastic and mutable, are more active than merely passive and reactive. *Envy theory* sees these as transcending mere computational mechanics. Therefore, the tenets of cognitivism in psychology and functionalism in philosophy, however useful, are only partial descriptions of how the mind, especially consciousness, works. In other words, explanations of the neural instantiation of the subjective nature of mental and bodily states are partial approaches to understanding the whole person.

For example, the elements in the bottom-up computational substrata of cognition in isolation are more passive; the entire cognitional system takes active direction from top-down sweeps of the consciousness that guide them whether consciously/explicitly or nonconsciously/implicitly. Information processing at different strata and at different times may function in a number of ways—for example, sequential or parallel, either of which may be centralized or decentralized and distributed. They become connectionist when the strength of neuron-based connectivity increases.

Sensory abilities and perception in healthy individuals is reality-oriented, able to perceive and construct realistic aspects of the real environment. Simultaneously, innate unconscious phantasies, vivid nonconscious images largely determined by the form of the human body and its action impulses (emotional and somatic feelings), arise. These phylogenetically conserved orientations are typically characterized by omnipotent strivings and expectations, and flood information processing. From birth onward, innate phantasy and realistic perceptions of external reality—the simultaneous and bidirectional operation of projection and introjection—modulate and shape one another to produce a rich tapestry of emotionally and conceptually active information-processing systems.

Envy theory also has strong features of a cognitive psychology. Cognition here connotes the encoding, processing, storage, and use of raw sensory data, perceptual information, and emotional experience. To introduce *envy theory* as a novel class among associationist, stage theories, and information-processing approaches (chapter 2), current empirical insights from cognitive developmental psychology, cognitive developmental neurosciences, and philosophy are briefly reviewed. Conscious and nonconscious cognitive processes, along with motivations arising from *unconscious phantasy*, structure the construals or epistemological constructs that an individual uses to make sense out of self and the world. Unconscious and conscious values, choice, and volitions emerge from this.

Unconscious phantasy is continually processed in dynamic fashion within two basic developmental units/positions or ontogenetic states of mind that persist throughout life. Their rudiments occur in early infancy and are elaborated thereafter. This nonconscious, regularly occurring mental activity results from the oscillation between the *paranoid-schizoid position* and *depressive position*.

These “positions” are psychoanalytic constructs that describe normative, typical, *healthy*, and expectable psychological development from birth on (Klein 1935, 1940, 1946). They are certainly grounded in neural net profiles that develop by hierarchical integration, ongoing differentiation, and

reorganization. This cognitive and epistemological theory of development suggests continuous yet distinct interactions of featural and holistic object recognition, respectively. Iterations of the affective and cognitive elements of these positions over the course of life add complexity to mental functioning. Healthy developmental successes signal that the ability to experience “absence” in novel and creative ways has been achieved.

Envy theory connotes an epistemological architecture with an initial and persisting developmental genesis. The embodied infant is situated in an embedded relationship with its primary caregiver, typically the mother. In analytic terminology, the mother is the “primary object” and all connectivity to her constitutes the basis for “object relations” during the entire course of psychological ontogenesis. Experiential envy arises from this self-generated matrix. The infant brain-mind is born in expectation of its central evolved psychological mechanism for survival—mother. In other words, *envy theory* uses this model as its framework for a developmental cognitive psychology. *Envy theory* orients itself by its emphasis on intrapsychic attachments. This complements other valuable attachment theories that are more empirical and describe measurable behaviors. The recent discovery in neuroscience of “mirror neurons” lends neuroanatomical and neurophysiological credibility to the actual measurability of real biomenal connections of identification and attachment in infantile experience—cognition, learning, affective states, and behaviors (chapters 2 and 7).



Envy theory proposes an exceedingly novel construct termed “the infant’s dilemma.” This denotes that, along with primary love, the infant experiences primary envy toward the mother. Primary love is normal attachment characterized by a raw love or elemental idealization. Primary envy, by contrast, suggests threatened attachment characterized by excessive idealization and the impulse to spoil what is sensed as ideal.

Envy theory tries relentlessly to emphasize that the inner forces of primary love and love in all its expressions are the foundations of the infant’s attachment to mother. The vicissitudes of the infant’s love establish basic trust, hope, and belief in goodness. This goodness is not merely a theoretical abstraction. Goodness for the infant is *concretely experienced nurturance*—being fed, loved, and understood. This promotes survival and enhances interest in experiencing the real world in real time.

Along with love, envy is also felt. This envy is not a craving for the advantages possessed by mother, but an intolerable anxiety that prompts the infant, in phantasy, to wish to strip and spoil those sensations, perceptions,

and emotional states that connote the very existence of such value, salience, enjoyment, and goodness not felt as self-possession.

The core dilemma is maintaining primitive love as normal idealization, not excessive idealization, which is intolerable and ultimately destructive. In earliest infancy, what later develops as more conscious and empathetic love first arises as a naked and raw impulse of affiliation in the form of normal idealization. *Excessive idealization provokes envious anxiety and leads to envious spoiling of what had been felt as extremely but unbearably good, not bad.* Envy theory correlates raw love with normal idealization and raw hate with excessive idealization leading to envious destructiveness. Cognitive processes thereby become distorted leading to adaptations that are less realistic both mentally and behaviorally.

To reiterate: The principal developmental task and achievement in earliest infancy, the paranoid-schizoid position, is that *internal loving feelings and attitudes of the infant* sufficiently supersede internal envious destructive impulses. This facilitates basic ego integration and the genesis of attitudes of admiration. The infantile ego, therefore, is enabled to receive and assimilate the nurturance—food, love, and understanding—given and shared by mother. This process makes possible the introjection of the “first good object” into the ego that, in turn, may act as the nucleus around which continued integration, less splitting, empathy, gratitude, and further healthy self-expansions may proceed. It is the basis for all further good identifications. This process, however, varies in degree and is never complete. *Envy theory* regards this *nuclear love* as a focal point of the expression of primary love.

The developmental process defines, organizes, and is the matrix out of which love and hate play out in the psyche and behavior. In other words, love and hate are dynamic processes that have organic growth by a series of progressive changes toward an end that, in itself, may change during the process. Envy, by contrast, is characterized less as a process and more as an eruption in toto, almost a *fait accompli*.

Love in all its developmental permutations as a process both opposes and modulates this core conflict—attraction and envious spoiling. Emphasis here is on the inner endowment of loving attitudes that the infant has and can mobilize. This inner complement of love has a strength and intensity that significantly influences perception, assessment, evaluation, and interpretation of everything in the environment. This makes the experience of actual “goodness” or “badness,” to some extent, subjectively determined.

Love in *envy theory* is a complex interpersonal attitude characterized by attraction, benevolent affiliation, and nonviolent mutuality. As development

proceeds, love takes on increasingly intelligent features fostering healthy adaptation and survival. This applies to the infant's loving attitudes and those of the mother and caregiving environment. Ideas that associate love with *indiscriminate sentimentality*, *cheap pathos*, *mawkish deference*, and *blind acceptance* are not included here.

The healthy maturation of envy, a novel proposition introduced by *envy theory*, enhances the capacity to tolerate envy's core unpleasantness without repugnance, ill will, and falling apart. The cognitive yield of this core dynamic is the unquenchable epistemic search for meaning to repetitively solve uncertainty and reduce confusion.

The orientation at birth toward the mother—the primary developmental object stimulus—is innate. Mother and aspects or perceptual parts of her are the most relevant and salient stimuli for infants. The brain's expectation pathways include an unconscious awareness of the breast (part-object) and the mother (whole object). The immediate and formative relationship established is termed “primary identification.” It denotes an instantaneous recognition of mother as the necessary “other” needed to sustain life and reduce distress. The mother is the infant's first mirror and acts to dynamically reflect back—in a modified way—a variety of cognitive and affective building blocks that the infant may use to establish an experiential self *in statu nascendi*. A great deal of research using neuroscientific methods and neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), especially on the role of mirror neurons and interpersonal attraction, sexual desire, love, and self-expansion, has steadily been advancing (Ortigue, Bianchi-Demicheli, Hamilton, and Grafton 2007; Ortigue and Bianchi-Demicheli 2008a, 2008b).

The infant uses the geography of the mother's body to explore the world and, in turn, correlate and assimilate these experiences with its own mental and corporeal self. By witnessing objects in the external environment, principal of whom is mother, the infant vicariously experiences anatomical parts and functions of its own body—gesture, eating, moving, spitting, urinating, and so forth. As the infant explores (detection and recognition) what it sees, hears, smells, feels, and tastes, it relates these to its own body. The mother is the primary object used by the infant to release its own innate predispositions. This occurs within the intersubjective dynamics of the mother-infant dyad. The important role of father comes to the fore slightly later in infancy. Father offers the developmentally more mature infant the first chance to explore new objects.

Identifying parts of the self with parts of the other in this early concrete fashion is the basis for the later development of abstract symbol formation, one significant achievement of the developmental depressive position around

the middle of the first year. Shortly thereafter, the use of pragmatic language reflects how words are used to refer to inner feeling states and attitudes.

In *envy theory*, *projective internalization* is the cardinal mode of cognition used both in infancy and later. At its core is the exploratory, communicational, and defensive mechanism of *projective identification* in which the developing mind looks outward in its attempts to recognize, identify, aggressively control, and so reconfigure itself. Projective identification operates nonconsciously whereas projective internalization also has conscious components. The microcosmic mind orients itself in the macrocosmic extended environment and forges links of identity.

Greater mental integration occurs, and the breadth of mental operations expands. Randomness transforms toward coherence in more unified thinking and affective attitudes. Through this *projective internalization* of perceived relationships, the infant gradually begins to imagine/feel/conceive how its own body is assembled. Mind develops. The chief vehicle used for this cognitive buildup is the mother's body and her caregiving. This shapes the infantile template of cognitive organization—attention, perceptual coordination, concept formation, memory, problem solving, and preferences—as development proceeds.



Envy theory presumes a preeminently biomental orientation. From historical precedent and inextricably embedded in language, a heuristic division has been made between the material body and the psychological mind. These dimensions of the whole person, in fact, operate in unison. Any discussion of mental processes always assumes simultaneous changes in their biological base. The body, then, is an essential part of the circuitry of thought, feeling, behaviors, and adaptations in a social context. For example, when ego integration is posited as an aim and parameter of *mental* health, psychopathology can be conceptualized as an expression of suboptimal integration, weak coordination, and dysfunction among *neural networks*.

The psychogenetic past not only influences later development but also remains a living, albeit nonconscious, part of all current mental activity. Understanding challenging real-life situations presumes understanding as far as possible their nonconscious roots. The dynamics of envy stimulate ongoing cognitive and affective exploration and motivation, while both instigating conflict—experientially irreconcilable opposites—and presenting novel opportunities for conflict resolution, self-integration, and social cooperation. *Envy theory adheres to this positive rather than bleak orientation regarding the potential value of envy.*



The scope of applicability of *envy theory* is enormous. *Envy theory* provides new avenues for future research in neuroscience and sociopolitical theory, as well as integration in clinical practice. Besides its basic contribution to a general psychology of mind, it outlines a theory of cognitive development in infancy and cognitive processing throughout the lifespan. Thinking, affect, and motivation-volition arise from the way genes, brain regions, neurotransmitter pathways, and experiences are psychologically felt and interpreted. Envy is a basic element in the intersection of objective neuroscience and the subjective sense of self and self with others. Research models and basic science measurements may develop from *envy theory's* delineated novel perspectives, especially since envy typically evades awareness, and because self-reports may be intentionally or inadvertently inaccurate. *Envy theory* attempts to probe envy dynamics beyond face, appearance, and commonsense explanations.

Envy theory can inform research in social and political sciences by new ways of exploring irrationally destructive trends—greed, aggressive control, and war—that appear related to upward social comparisons unduly resistant to change. Using *envy theory's* insights in how envy and greed operate in indolent and ultimately spoiling ways gives insight into the dilemma modern financial institutions have created. In addition, organizational consultation may benefit from insights into how enhancing helping-based, less envious interpersonal behaviors are essential to team building and can significantly improve teamwork and business efficiency. *Envy theory* presents philosophical psychopathology with a broad discussion of value attribution in its elaboration of idealization as central to cognitive processing and motivation. Viewing *nuclear envy* as a universal core in human nature expressing itself idiosyncratically in cultures by *adaptive diversification* may enrich the hypotheses of sociocultural anthropology.

Additionally, *envy theory* has pragmatic therapeutic uses when used thoughtfully, prudently, and judiciously. A leading example is its integration in clinical psychotherapy. Personal change is challenging. A fundamental prerequisite is insightful recognition of a need to change coupled with an enduring perseverance. The overwhelming difficulty of this decision and its enactment is often underestimated. Motivation and volition leading to change is complex. The interpersonal and social dimensions of psychotherapies that create conditions in which envy is identified and properly addressed are significant means facilitating envy's healthy maturation. What *envy theory* terms excessive "outsight" or focus on outer accomplishments to the neglect of inner self-development is remedied by *the healthy maturation of envy*.

The cutting edge of modern neuroscience, barely a decade old, is beginning to provide hard evidence that the brain's neuroplasticity—ability to substantively change and reorganize—is very real (*Neuropsychopharmacology* 2008, vol. 33, no. 2, whole issue). This includes responsive expansion and adaptive growth on various levels: neurogenesis, gliogenesis, synaptogenesis, axonal sprouting, dendritic arborization, receptor trafficking, and long-term potentiation (LTP). Not only can these expansions of learning and memory be stimulated by pharmacological and electrical (electroconvulsive therapies) interventions, but also by carefully targeted sensory and motor stimuli, including psychotherapies. Moreover, the latter may be regarded not only as treatment but also as a form of neuroprotection.

The pragmatic yield of *the healthy maturation of envy* enables the “power to change” as a valuable outcome. Volition on all levels is enhanced so that motivated courses of action, to whatever extent individual choice and social considerations influence these, may come to fruition. *Envy theory* boldly asserts that such a process is a “disease modifying treatment,” and not merely palliative.

The effects of psychotherapy on positively changing brain function have been demonstrated by precise volumetric measurements derived from magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) data and regional brain activity changes observed by fMRI (Carter and Krug 2009). In other words, the cortex (thought processes) may be enabled to teach the amygdala (raw emotion); mind can change brain (LeDoux 1998; McNab et al. 2009). For example, the fourth leading cause of disability worldwide with a lifetime prevalence of ~15 percent to 20 percent is depression (Rubinow 2006). *Envy theory* advances the idea that treatment-resistant depressions have a core in pathological envy that, when identified, may be influenced by psychotherapeutic interventions. This yet unexplored area opens exciting possibilities not only for further research but also for meaningful personal change.

Envy theory is advanced not as a series of answers but a range of propositions, conjectures, and questions to stimulate interest and further exploration of what it has offered as the *nuclear envy* that is dynamic in human psychology.