

**“I’m not envious, I’m just jealous!”:**

## **On the Difference Between Envy and Jealousy**

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### **Abstract:**

I argue for the view that envy and jealousy are distinct emotions, whose crucial difference is that envy involves a perception of lack while jealousy involves a perception of loss. I start by noting the common practice of using ‘envy’ and ‘jealousy’ almost interchangeably, and I contrast it with the empirical evidence that shows that envy and jealousy are distinct, albeit similar and often co-occurring, emotions. I then argue in favor of a specific way of understanding their distinction: the view that envy is a response to a perceived *lack* of a valuable object, while jealousy is a response to a perceived *loss* of a valuable object. I compare such a view with the most compelling alternative theories, and show that it accounts better for paradigmatic cases. I conclude by showing how the lack vs. loss model can handle complications: *ambiguous* cases, that is, when it is epistemically unclear whether one experiences lack or loss; *hybrid* cases, that is, when one seems to experience both lack and loss; and *borderline* cases, that is, when it is metaphysically unclear whether one experiences lack or loss.

### **1. Introduction: Two Different Green-Eyed Monsters**

Here is an exceedingly simplified version of *Othello* (spoilers ahead): Iago perceives himself as being worse off than Othello, and he is pained by this perception. He thus plots to take away his happiness and success. He makes him believe that his wife Desdemona has an affair with his friend Cassio. His plot succeeds and ruin ensues for Othello, Desdemona and many others close to them.

Iago and Othello feel emotions that most readers have no trouble recognizing: Iago is *envious*, and Othello is *jealous*.<sup>1</sup> Even though readers may use the word ‘jealous’ in both cases, they will talk about the corresponding emotions in different ways. They might say that Iago lacks Othello’s status or fortune, and wants to pull him down to his level by spoiling his fortune. Othello, on the other hand, is trying to protect his loving relationship with Desdemona. I take Othello’s and Iago’s emotions to be paradigmatic cases of jealousy and envy, respectively.

Envy and jealousy are thus symmetrical, in the sense that they motivate the agents in two opposite directions: Othello is protecting from an external threat a good he perceives himself as *having*, while Iago is coveting a good he perceives himself as *lacking*. The play’s tragic events stem from Iago’s ability to pursue his malicious aims and from Othello’s incapacity to protect his valuable relationship with Desdemona in the right way from the real threat (that is, Iago, not Cassio). Neither envy nor jealousy need always be so nefarious or unwarranted, although it is their destructive and irrational features that tend to motivate our scholarly or literary interest in them.

Even though envy and jealousy can be recognized as different and symmetrical in paradigmatic cases, they share many similar features. Both are emotions with a triadic structure: they involve an agent or subject, a good or object, and a target or the person the emotion is felt toward.<sup>2</sup> Both are *rivalrous* in that the target is conceived of as a rival or competitor, and in particular the rivalry

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<sup>1</sup> More precisely, I should say: Iago is *often interpreted as being* envious, and Othello is *often interpreted as being* jealous. But here I am interested in the layperson’s response, setting aside hermeneutical scholarly debates.

<sup>2</sup> This point is controversial and I am going to defend it later.

is conceived of in *comparative* and, often but not always, *positional* terms: the competition is such that one's loss is the other's gain, and one's worth is seen as at least partially determined by the other's.<sup>3</sup> Both are affectively *aversive*, in the sense that they are painful to experience, because they negatively affect the agent's self-esteem. Finally, they sometimes co-occur in the same agent: the same person can feel both envy and jealousy directed at the same person. It is in virtue of these similarities that envy and jealousy are often confused with one another in our everyday discourse and even in introspection.

In this paper, I argue that the difference between envy and jealousy is best understood according to a specific model of the appraisal dimensions of these two emotions, which I will refer to as “lack vs. loss model”. The first section examines a peculiar linguistic phenomenon that occurs in English and other languages: the conflation between ‘jealousy’ and ‘envy’. Such a linguistic conflation—in particular the fact that jealousy has a wider semantic scope than envy—might lead to think of envy as just a particular form of jealousy. However, this popular impression is wrongheaded: the scholarly consensus is that envy and jealousy are distinct emotions. The second section reconstructs how this consensus has come about in social psychology, while also detailing the empirical evidence concerning the ways in which envy and jealousy differ. The third section goes on to argue that such evidence is best accounted by the lack vs. loss model: envy is a response to a perceived potential or actual *lack* of a valuable object, while jealousy is a response to a perceived potential or actual *loss* of a valuable object. The fourth section

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<sup>3</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to make the comparative element more explicit.

analyzes competing models (the most persuasive of which is the view that jealousy essentially involves the need for attention while envy does not) and shows that the lack vs. loss model better accounts for paradigmatic cases, on the one hand, and empirical evidence, on the other. The fifth and final section demonstrates how my view can handle complications: *ambiguous* cases, that is, when it is epistemically unclear whether one experiences lack or loss; *hybrid* cases, that is, when one seems to experience both lack and loss; and *borderline* cases, that is, when it is metaphysically unclear whether one experiences lack or loss.

## **2. When ‘Jealous’ Means Envious: Linguistic Conflation and Empirical**

### **Distinctness**

In several languages, including English, it is common to use ‘jealousy’ and ‘jealous’ in lieu of ‘envy’ and ‘envious’. This practice is reflected in dictionary definitions.

The Oxford English Dictionary lists the following as the second non-obsolete meaning of ‘jealousy’:

“The state of mind arising from the suspicion, apprehension, or knowledge of rivalry; in respect of success or advantage: fear of losing some good through the rivalry of another; resentment or ill-will towards another on account of advantage or superiority, possible or actual, on his part; envy, grudge.”<sup>4</sup>

Both ‘envy’ and ‘jealousy’ derive from French words (‘envie’ and ‘jalousie’, respectively), and the same phenomenon of using ‘jealousy’ as a synonym for ‘envy’ can be found in French. Even though this linguistic phenomenon is not

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100958?redirectedFrom=jealousy#eid> Similar definitions can be found in Merriam-Webster: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jealous?show=0&t=1316726021>

exclusive to English, it is particularly relevant to discussing the English case, given that much of the empirical literature on the topic is authored by native English speakers, whose studies and experiments mostly target other native English speakers, and given that our linguistic practices are known to influence the way we think about our emotional experience.<sup>5</sup>

Sociologist Helmut Schoeck (Schoeck 1969: 71-2) and anthropologist George Foster (Foster 1972: 167-8), authors of pivotal works in the contemporary research on envy, lament this linguistic phenomenon as an unfortunate source of confusion for scholarly investigation. Both claim that the terms are used *synonymously*, but social psychologists have subsequently casted doubt on the claim that the two terms are perfect synonyms. Maury Silver and John Sabini (Silver and Sabini 1978) are the first to speculate an asymmetry: ‘jealousy’ encompasses a range of meanings that include those of ‘envy’, but not vice versa.

Ten years later, Gerrod Parrott, Sung Hee Kim and Richard Smith (Smith et al. 1988) provide evidence confirming this linguistic asymmetry, and also, more interestingly, they show that the two emotions are phenomenologically experienced as distinct *even by English speakers*: envy is more likely to be characterized by feelings of inferiority and self-criticism, wishfulness and longing, and a motivation to self-improve; jealousy is more likely to be characterized by feelings of suspiciousness and distrust, rejection and hurt, hostility and anger at others, and fear of loss.

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<sup>5</sup> To what extent, it is debatable (Prinz 2011). The influence of language on how we conceptualize emotions is relevant also when we think about different kinds of envy.

In later studies (Parrott and Smith 1993) Parrott and Smith made two further discoveries. First, that the *co-occurrence* of envy and jealousy is also asymmetrical: jealousy is almost always accompanied by some envy for the rival, but the opposite does not hold. Second, that envy is characteristically associated with concern for public disapproval, while jealousy is associated with self-righteousness. This second result is relevant to understanding the linguistic asymmetry: jealous people do not worry about hiding their jealousy, because jealousy, albeit condemned when excessive, is less stigmatized than envy and considered more legitimate. Consequently, it makes sense for ‘jealousy’ to incorporate some of envy’s meaning, but not the opposite.<sup>6</sup>

In the next section I will propose that such an asymmetry in social response is best accounted for by the lack vs. loss model, but for now notice that we can easily see our different attitudes toward jealousy and envy in fictional representations. The envious are usually depicted as unappealing characters, most often villains toward whom we feel no sympathy whatsoever. The jealous can be heroes, even when they commit hideous crimes, and are depicted as struggling with all too human internal demons. We hate and fear the Iagos, while we pity and empathize with the Othellos.

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<sup>6</sup> Further confirmation of both the linguistic conflation and differentiation of the two emotions can be found in a taxometric analysis performed by Nick Haslam and Brian Bornstein (Haslam and Bornstein 1996). This study goes beyond Parrott and Smith’s findings, in that it not only confirms the qualitative differences between envy and jealousy, but also shows that envy and jealousy are discrete complex affective kinds rather than different regions of the same continuous affective domain.

### 3. To Lose Or To Lack, That Is The Question

Even though most scholars agree that that envy and jealousy are distinct emotions, they disagree on what this difference consists in. A recurring suggestion across disciplines is that envy is, in some sense to be further specified, about *lack*, while jealousy is about *loss*. Anthropologist George Foster, mentioned above, may be the first to articulate this view in the contemporary debate. He describes them as typical affective reactions to different situational antecedents:<sup>7</sup>

“Envy stems from the desire to acquire something possessed by another person, while jealousy is rooted in the fear of losing something already possessed. In schematic form both emotions involve a dyad, a pair of individuals whose relationships is mediated, or structured, by an intervening property or object. The intervening object may take innumerable forms, such as wealth, a material good, the love and affection of a human being, or it may be intangible, such as fame or good reputation. The mediating property is possessed by one member of the dyad; the other member does not possess it, but wishes to. [...] Jealousy is thus seen to be the normal *counterpart* of envy” (Foster 1972: 168, my emphasis).

Foster suggests a case of romantic rivalry as an example: a man may be envious of another for his attractive partner, and, if the other man is made aware of being the target of envy, he will become jealous of him.

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<sup>7</sup> The great majority of discussion of envy and jealousy takes place, often implicitly, within the background of appraisal theories. In this family of emotion theories, emotions are differentiated by their patterns of appraisal or evaluation. I share this common assumption, and interpret the lack vs. loss view, which is present in many different disciplinary contexts, as a model that focuses on this specific appraisal dimension. While appraisal theories tend to be seen as necessarily conceiving of emotions as natural kinds, Andrew Ortony and Gerald Clore (2015) have recently argued that it need not be the case, and that the account of emotions they developed with Allan Collins (the so-called “OCC model,” from the authors’ names) is an appraisal theory that is compatible with a psychological constructionist account, that is, one that takes emotions to be “perceiver-dependent products of the human mind” (Barrett and Russell 2015: 13). I would like to remain uncommitted as to whether envy and jealousy are natural kinds. I thank an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to clarify my assumptions here.

The idea is elegant and simple and can be captured in the motto: envy covets what jealousy guards. It accounts easily for cases of envy and jealousy that are pre-theoretically taken to be paradigmatic. Consider again *Othello*: Othello is jealous of Cassio because he thinks he is threatening his relationship to her, a relationship he sees as exclusive. Iago is envious of Othello because he thinks he lacks his reputation and honorable qualities.

Romantic rivalry is the paradigmatic context in which we normally think about jealousy, and in that context it is common for envy to co-occur in the same agent toward the same target, that is, for a lover to be both jealous *and* envious of their rival.<sup>8</sup> The lack vs. loss model explains this co-occurrence easily: the lover perceives the other person not only as threatening a possession (the loving relationship), but also as having something the lover does not have (a particular quality, or the capacity to attract the beloved in a way that is disruptive of the relationship, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

This model also easily explains the asymmetries introduced in the previous section. The linguistic asymmetry (the fact that we often say “jealous” when we mean ‘envious’) is due to the desire to avoid social stigma: we trade on the similarities between the two emotions to admit only the one that is less shameful, even if sometimes we are actually feeling the other, whether we are aware of it or

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. previous discussion of Parrott and Smith 1993. Haslam and Bornstein 1996 remark that if envy and jealousy were not distinct, we could not properly speak of co-occurrence.

<sup>9</sup> Envy and jealousy can also co-occur in the same agent, but directed at different targets.



not. But what explains the different social response? The fact that we do *not* have a right to what others have, but we *do* have a right to defend what's ours.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, according to the studies comparing the phenomenology of the two emotions, envy is more strongly associated with feelings of comparative inferiority and shame than envy (Parrott and Smith 1993). Once again, this is not surprising if we think that envy involves or stems from seeing oneself as lacking what another person has, and jealousy involves or stems from seeing oneself as having something the other person does not. Of course, this is not a stable difference: intense jealousy may be a consequence of lack of self-esteem or insecurity about one's situation, and thus might involve envying the rival (I will discuss these cases in the last section).

Admitting envy thus implies admitting one's perceived inferiority. Furthermore, in most people's conception, envy also involves a desire to deprive another person of something valuable that this other person rightfully owns:<sup>11</sup> no surprise people fear envy from others and deny it when they feel it! Jealousy, on the other hand, seems more excusable, an emotion we'd rather not feel nor be the target of, but understandable as a response to a perceived threat.

The normative aspects that are at stake here become even more salient in the philosophical renditions of the lack vs. loss model. Several philosophers

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<sup>10</sup> We *do* have a right to what others have, if the distribution of goods has been unfair. But then the warranted emotion is *resentment*, not envy, a difference discussed at length in the literature.

<sup>11</sup> While envy is often perceived as malicious and implying this aggressive desire, it can actually be benign (see van de Ven et al. 2009, 2011, 2014, and Protasi, 2016). But malicious envy is a lot more salient in the comparison to jealousy and this salience determines the asymmetries discussed here.

present a version of the distinction, but I find Gabriele Taylor's account the most insightful one (Taylor 1988, 2006).<sup>12</sup>

She starts by highlighting the dimensions along which the two emotions are similar, similarities that account for the reason why they are often confused with each other: both are hostile toward the person the emotion is directed at, and are unpleasant for the agent to experience. Furthermore "[i]n both cases the person experiencing the emotion sees herself as standing in some relation to the valued good, where this good may be some material possession, a social position or position of relative power, a personal quality, or some kind of personal relationship." (Taylor 1988: 233)

I take it that by *valued*, Taylor means subjectively valued by the agent, as opposed to objectively *valuable*. Both envy and jealousy are painful for the agent because they involve something the agent cares about from a subjective perspective, even when they may not be objective goods.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Other philosophers endorsing this model are Neu 1980, Ben-Ze'ev 1990, Purshouse 2004, and Konyndyk DeYoung 2009.

<sup>13</sup> One might object to this characterization that we often desire, or even ache for, things even if we don't subjectively value them (I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing up this objection). It seems to me that there are three kinds of such cases. First, there are addictions, such as when we crave a cigarette or a drink, even though we might think they are bad for us (so we do not just not value them: we positively disvalue them). But it seems to me that addictions are a complicated case, deserving a separate treatment. The second kind of cases is when we desire things that we do not value because they are *instrumental* in conducing to something else that we value. So, for instance I might not value certain marks of professional prestige, perhaps because I think they are not based on merit alone, and nonetheless value the benefits that stem from them, such as doing one's job better. As a consequence, I may find myself being envious of someone who enjoys that kind of prestige. In that case, it seems to me that this is still a case of valuing something as good, even though one might be less aware or conscious that one holds such a value. Finally, there are cases in which entrenched rivalries cause one to be disposed to be jealous or envious of another person, quite independently of specific valued goods. Even then, though, there must be some object that has to be at least fleetingly and superficially perceived as good, what I would call "triggering good".

Another way of framing the relation between the object of envy and jealousy and the self is to think of it as connected to the agent's identity.<sup>14</sup> We do not feel envy with regard to things that we do not personally care about or within domains that are not relevant to our sense of self. For instance, one can acknowledge the value of certain sports achievements without feeling envy toward someone outperforming them in it (Cialdini et al. 1976). Nor do we commonly feel jealousy in the context of relationships that may be valuable and relevant to our well-being but do not affect the sense of who we are, such as many working relationships.

Taylor goes on to say that the relation between the agent and the good is perceived as unfavorable because:

“the good in question is thought of as either about to be lost or as not being in one's possession and probably unavailable. The person experiencing jealousy believes or imagines there to be a threat to a valued possession of hers or to something she expects or hopes to possess. The loss would, in her view, leave her worse off than she was before or hoped that she would be. Her first concern is, therefore, the protection of this possession or hoped-for possession. The person feeling envy, on the other hand, thinks of herself as being deprived in comparison with another who is, in the relevant respect, better off than she is. Unlike the jealous person, the envious one cannot be concerned with trying to maintain the *status quo*. On the contrary, she will want to eliminate the discrepancy between herself and the other, she will want in some way to better

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<sup>14</sup> Taylor mentions the role of self-image and sense of identity in various parts of the essay; see also Ben-Ze'ev 1990. Cf. Smith and Kim 2007 for the extensive empirical literature on the connection between self-identity and envy.

her position. The initial difference, then, lies in the agent's respective relation to the valued good." (Taylor 1988: 233, emphasis in the original).

In addition to the different appraisal elements already seen in Foster, Taylor articulates the crucial *motivational* difference between envy and jealousy, which stems from an opposite evaluation of the *status quo*, that is, the perception of an *unequal* relation to a valued good: in the case of envy, the agent perceives oneself as worse off, and thus yearns for the change, and is motivated to bring it about; in the case of jealousy, the agent perceives oneself as better off, and thus loathes the change, and is motivated to prevent it.

Thus, both emotions can be conceptualized as rivalrous emotions, where the person targeted by the emotion is seen as a rival or competitor. Often, this competition is seen as a zero-sum game, where only one person can win the good. This is particularly common in cases of romantic jealousy felt within the context of monogamous relationships, and is also typical of envy felt within the context of sport competitions or other cases where the good is exclusive, such as a coveted job. Both emotions, then, essentially involve a comparison between the agent and the target.<sup>15</sup>

To sum up, envy and jealousy are both unpleasant emotions targeted at another person that is conceived of as a rival or competitor of sort, who stands in a relation to a valued good in a way that is different from the agent's: in the case of envy, the target is perceived as better off, possessing what the agent lacks; in the case of jealousy, the target is perceived as worse off, lacking what the agent

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<sup>15</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to highlight this element.

possesses (at least in her perception). Consequently, the envier is motivated to overcome her comparative disadvantage, possibly by depriving the envied of the good, while the jealous is motivated to protect her comparative advantage, possibly by fending attacks from the rival and/or locking away the good.

Taylor, like virtually any other participant to this debate, highlights how the typical good at stake in jealousy is a personal relationship, often, but not necessarily, a romantic one. This is another important difference between envy and jealousy: while one may be envious of someone's partner, envy is by no means typically about another person's relationships. Rather, almost anything perceived as valuable can be an object of envy. Jealousy is, instead, almost always concerned with personal relationships. In my view, it is this very fact about jealousy that ultimately motivates the majority of competing views on the distinction between envy and jealousy, which I am going to discuss in the next section.

#### **4. Alternative Accounts**

The lack vs. loss model enjoys a wide, interdisciplinary support, and yet it is not the only model available in the literature. In this section I explore some alternative accounts, and I show why the lack vs. loss model is superior to them.

##### 4.1 Dyad vs. Triad Model

I start with the most popular, but also less persuasive alternative account, which focuses on a formal feature: the *number of parties* involved in the two emotions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. for instance Farrell 1980, whose account also shares some elements of both the lack vs. loss account and attention-based accounts. In fact, precisely because this model does not focus on appraisal, it is compatible with the lack vs. loss model, and many authors endorse both, e.g. Konstan 2006, Ben-Ze'ev

The difference between envy and jealousy is supposed to be that jealousy is a three-party relation, while envy involves only two parties. In both cases, there is an agent, the subject of the emotion—that’s one party. Then, in the case of jealousy, there are *two* other parties: the rival and the partner. Those who favor this view think of jealousy *exclusively* as a matter of triads of people involved in personal, generally romantic, relationships, and not as an emotion that can be directed toward a non-animated object (as in “He jealously guarded his possessions”). Envy involves only *one* other party, other than the subject: the coveted good.<sup>17</sup>

The problem is that such an account fails to differentiate envy from mere coveting, or wish to have an object that one lacks. Envy is experienced and conceptualized as *comparative*: the object is possessed by someone else, and it is that comparative disadvantage that is characteristic of the emotional experience of envy, not the mere lack of a desired object, as unpleasant or intense as that may be. *I envy you* because you are smarter, or you have more money than me, or you have been invited to that cool party and I haven’t. It seems, then, that envy is *also* always a three-party relation.

There is, however, a difference between envy and jealousy regarding the nature of the parties involved, due to the fact that the most intense jealousy we

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2000, and Parrott and Smith 1993. For reasons that will be clear soon, however, I find holding both views to be explanatorily redundant.

<sup>17</sup> Justin D’Arms argues that envy and jealousy are both three-*place* relations, but only jealousy involves three *parties* (D’Arms 2009: 3). I find this distinction unpersuasive, since one may well be envious of the romantic relationship X has with Y (so also envy can involve three parties), as observed in Purshouse 2004: 185, and vice versa one may be jealous of inanimate objects (therefore jealousy need not involve three parties).

feel, the one that we talk the most about, and that affects our lives the most, is relational jealousy. Thus, it is a contingent feature of jealousy that the third party involved, the object that we fear losing, is almost always a *person*, rather than a non-animated object, abstract or material. As a consequence, while envy is targeted only at one person (the envied), jealousy is often targeted at two: the beloved, and the person who is perceived as threatening the relationship with the beloved.

However, another way of expressing this difference is to say that the typical object of jealousy is a *relationship* with a person. The symmetry with envy is thus preserved: in both cases there is a subject who feels the emotion, a valued object that the subjects desires to not lose or to gain, and a *rival* who either threatens to take away the object or who already possesses it. The lack vs. loss model is thus capable of explaining away the apparent asymmetry between envy and jealousy that is highlighted in the two-party/three-party account, while preserving other more robust, empirically-supported, asymmetries.

#### 4.2 Object-Based Model

Another alternative account to the lack vs. loss model was offered by a group of psychologists that were based at Yale University in the 1980s, and who have written a series of influential articles on envy and jealousy: Judith Rodin, Peter Salovey and Susan Bers.<sup>18</sup> Their account is interesting because they downplay the difference between the two emotions: they claim that laypeople use the terms interchangeably (as opposed to using jealousy as a synonym for envy, but not vice

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Bers and Rodin 1984, Salovey and Rodin 1984, 1986, 1988.

versa) and that there is no phenomenological difference.<sup>19</sup> Thus, they adopt the terminology of “social-comparison jealousy” (for envy) and “social-relations jealousy” or “romantic jealousy” (for jealousy proper).

Bers and Rodin do acknowledge some differences between the two emotions with regard to personality and situational antecedents (that is, circumstances that elicit the emotions) and cognitive and affective consequences (in other words, appraisal and affective response to that appraisal): envy arises when one’s superiority or equality is perceived as challenged, and jealousy arises when one’s exclusivity in a relationship is perceived as threatened.

Salovey and Rodin adopt the same approach of focusing on antecedents as Bers and Rodin, and differentiate between envy and jealousy based on the *nature of the desired object* or goal: in jealousy, the desired object is a person, in envy it is not. In both cases, attainment of the desired object is threatened by another person, real or imaginary.

This account, like the lack vs. loss model, enjoys simplicity and symmetry. However, it does not account for the many, and central, cases of jealousy in which the agent *has already attained* the desired object. It seems to me that Salovey and Rodin end up focusing on what I will describe, in section 5, as *hybrid* cases of envy

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<sup>19</sup> The phenomenology claim has been disproved by the more recent research reviewed in section 2. As with regard to the claim that people use terms interchangeably, I could not find any actual evidence presented in their articles. Bers and Rodin 1984 just talks about “examining the literature” (Bers and Rodin 1984: 766); Salovey and Rodin first cite Bers and Rodin 1984 as the only evidence (Salovey and Rodin 1984: 780), and then in their 1986 article claim that “although these distinctions between jealousy and envy are frequently made in the psychological literature, we found that laypersons rarely made them when we conducted extensive pilot testing for two empirical studies of envy (Bers and Rodin 1984; Salovey and Rodin 1984). Rather, they used the words jealousy and envy interchangeably and appeared to be referring to the same feelings” (Salovey and Rodin 1986: 1100). But they do not provide the results of these pilot studies. For these reasons, I discuss their view only as an interesting conceptual proposal, rather than an empirical one.



and jealousy, where the two emotions are conjoined, and this focus may well explain their skepticism that the two emotions are really distinct.

An account only briefly sketched by Justin D'Arms may be interpreted as another view that differentiates between envy and jealousy based on their different objects: “the jealous person’s real locus of concern is the beloved—the person whose affection he is losing or fears losing—not his rival. [...] the envious person’s locus of concerns is the rival. [...] Roughly for the jealous person the rival is fungible and the beloved is not fungible. [...] Whereas in envy it is the other way around” (D’Arms 2009: 3-4).<sup>20</sup>

This account is offered in the context of an encyclopedia entry and is thus very minimal. Furthermore, it brings together different elements of different models. I mention it nonetheless, because it seems to suggest an intuitive way of spelling out the difference between the two emotions: the formal object of jealousy is a romantic relationship, whereas the formal object of envy is a competitive relationship. However, this model is also problematic, because envy’s locus of concern may well be the valued object (Taylor 1988, 2006, and Protasi 2016). Furthermore, we can be jealous in non-romantic and even non-interpersonal settings, even if that is rare. Finally, jealousy essentially involves a rivalrous and comparative attitude as well.

D’Arms’ remark on fungibility is correct with regard to jealousy, but it can be easily accounted for by the lack vs. loss model: since jealousy is a protective reaction to a threat against a valuable object, it will be triggered by any rival.

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<sup>20</sup> D’Arms references Farrell 1980 when he presents it. Purshouse 2004 correctly remarks that Farrell does not endorse the view. It is not clear to me to what extent D’Arms himself thinks it is correct.

However, the remark is not correct with envy: envy can be very particular, and thus be triggered by a specific object that matters to the agent, while the rival may be fungible. For instance, a beauty pageant contestant may envy the winner, independently of who that is.

#### 4.3 Jealousy as a Need for Attention Model

Philosophers Michael Wreen and Leila Tov Ruach (aka Amélie Rorty) present the most compelling and attractive alternative to the lack vs. loss model.

Wreen outright rejects the idea that fear of loss is central in jealousy. He claims that: “Most cases of jealousy, I would venture to say, have nothing to do with loss or believed loss, whether of love or of special attention” (Wreen 1989: 640). He goes on to argue that jealousy always involves a sentient being and it is essentially concerned with desiring to be accorded “attentive consideration”. He then suggests that envy is different insofar as it involves only two parties. Thus, he endorses the three-party relation model as well. He also thinks of jealousy as a species of envy.

As we have seen in the second section, however, psychologists interpret the available empirical evidence as showing that envy and jealousy are distinct emotions, not one the species of the other. Furthermore, anecdotal and scientific evidence shows that fear of loss plays a crucial role in the experience and arousal of jealousy, *contra* Wreen’s personal impression.

Leila Tov-Ruach presents a rich etiology of jealousy that is strongly influenced by a psychoanalytic perspective on infant development. I will set that etiology aside and focus on her general conception of jealousy and her observations on the differences with envy.

Her account positions itself somewhere in between the lack vs. loss model and Wreen's view. She acknowledges that the jealous person is centrally preoccupied with some sort of deprivation or loss, and she also remarks that this loss need not be of love. One can feel jealousy when her favorite chess partner has found another favored chess partner, for instance.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, her account may be interpreted as a version of the lack vs. loss view.

But, like Wreen, she thinks that an essential component in jealousy is the fear of losing a person's "formative attentive regard" (Tov-Ruach 1980: 467) due to the intervention of a person (generally a romantic or sexual rival, but also, as in the chess partner case, any other sort of competitor) or even a thing (such as when one is jealous of one's partner's work).<sup>22</sup>

While I agree with Tov-Ruach and Wreen that in typical cases of romantic jealousy, which are our paradigmatic case studies, the need for special and exclusive attention plays a central role, there are two reasons to not consider it the *differentiating* element. First, it is not exclusive to jealousy: there are other emotions and affective responses that are characterized by the concern of not losing another's attentive consideration. A narcissistic or very self-centered person, for instance, may desire to be at the center of attention without thereby feeling jealousy (although it might be the case that narcissists are more disposed to feel jealousy than other people, but this is just my speculation).

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<sup>21</sup> She correctly observes that we often erroneously infer love from jealousy: we are so used to thinking of jealousy exclusively in romantic terms that we take any kind of jealousy to be a symptom of love.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Miceli and Cristiano Castelfranchi (who endorse the lack vs. loss view) also stress the importance of keeping in mind non-relational cases of jealousy. Cf. Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007: 471-2.

Second, as Aaron Ben-Ze'ev has remarked, there are cases in which the subject is jealous of a rival notwithstanding the fact that they are now receiving *more*, not less, attentive consideration: consider the case of a cheating partner who becomes more loving and considerate toward the partner's needs and desires, either out of guilt or happiness (Ben-Ze'ev 1990: 494). This increased attentive consideration might not prevent the cheated partner from feeling jealousy. She might want to be the cause of that renewed happiness, for instance, and might not care about the additional attention, because what she is afraid of is losing that special role in her partner's life: being the person who makes him or her happy.

The desire for attentive consideration, then, is neither necessary nor sufficient for jealousy to arise. People value different features in their relationships, and value respect, trust, honor, or preserving their social reputation more than attention. *Loss* of attentive consideration may indeed trigger jealousy, but so may the loss of any of the above features as well.

Thus, the lack vs. loss model is broad enough to account for a variety of cases of jealousy, which includes jealousy of one's things, jealousy of a partner's work, jealousy of friends, and of sexual and romantic partners. But, at the same time, it is also sufficiently narrow to explain why attentive consideration is so salient when we think about jealousy: in the specific cases in which the good to be guarded is a romantic or sexual relationship with a person, lack of attention is often a symptom that the relationship is at risk. And, of course, it is a lamentable loss in itself, to which a defensive response is often appropriate.

#### 4.4 Desire for Exclusivity vs. Desire to Avoid Inferiority Model

A final account worth considering has been defended by Luke Purshouse.<sup>23</sup> He focuses on the difference in characteristic evaluative content of envy and jealousy. He thinks that, in order for a person to count as jealous, the following conditions have to be met:

- a. “He desires to possess a good, possibly to a certain extent, or in a certain way: for instance, exclusively or pre-eminently.
- b. He regards the actual or potential possession of this good by another person, the rival, as inconsistent with the fulfilment of this desire.
- c. He has in mind some (possibly imagined) set of circumstances in which this desire would have been satisfied.”

(Purshouse 2004: 195)

The first two conditions collectively express an understanding of jealousy as characterized by perceiving the rival “as possessing, or perhaps as potentially possessing, a good at the expense of his possessing it himself” (Purshouse 2004: 191). Relatedly, Purshouse remarks on the ineluctable *particularity* of jealousy: while enviers may be satisfied by the acquisition of a good that is similar in kind to the specific one possessed by the envied, jealous subjects care about a specific good (Purshouse 2004: 197).

Thus, Purshouse sees jealousy necessarily as a zero-sum game. The relation between the rival having the good and the subject not having it can be either causal or logical (Purshouse 2004: 192): either the rival is the cause of the agent’s

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<sup>23</sup> Rachel Fredericks defends a version of Purshouse’s account in her dissertation (Frederick 2012).

deprivation, or the rival's ownership of the good logically implies that the subject cannot possess it as she wishes. Under this second category falls the case in which the subject *already* possesses the good. Therefore, what the lack vs. loss model sees as the central, paradigmatic example of jealousy is only a subset of cases for Purshouse, which strikes me as an unpalatable consequence of the account. So many cases of jealousy are cases where the subject already possesses what she desires; the very popularity of the lack vs. loss model is an indirect proof of the prevalence of these cases.

Furthermore, the elements of the model that I do find correctly individuated—the desire for exclusive possession of a good, and the related fact that jealousy is ineluctably particular and cannot be satisfied by substitution—can be accounted for by the lack vs. loss model: when we possess, or see as possessing, or hope we can soon possess a certain important good, *and* we feel threatened in our actual or possible possession, then we become protective over it. This is not the same as saying that, when we have something, we desire to have it exclusively tout court, *in the absence of such a threat*. I may be perfectly happy that my close friend has many other friends, including other friends who are as close as, or even closer to her than, me, until I notice that she starts confiding less in me and that she prefers to go out with this other person at the expense of the time she used to devote to me. I did not previously have a desire for exclusivity, and in some sense I still don't. But I fear I am losing something I previously had, and I become jealous of the person who is seemingly responsible for this change.

A final problem with Purshouse's account is that he programmatically eschews a discussion of the affective elements, the situational antecedents and the

behavioral consequences of jealousy. All of those support an emphasis on loss: people feel afraid of losing their beloved; they feel jealousy in situations that can be aptly described as threats to existing relationships and other “possessions”; and they behave protectively toward what they have, rather than trying to obtain what they do not.

The latter is the typical behavioral manifestations of envy. Purshouse describes envy as “involving a negative attitude to a distribution on grounds that it comprises one’s own inferiority to another” (Purshouse 2004: 195). This is a very thin definition of envy, which fails to differentiate it from a general sense of inferiority. For all these reasons, I find Purshouse’s account unsatisfying.

## **5. Complications: Ambiguous, Hybrid, and Borderline Cases**

Like any theoretical model that attempts to simplify a complex and messy reality, the lack vs. loss model is not going to perfectly capture every contrast between lived experiences of envy and jealousy. In this section, I consider situations with which the view seems to struggle.

First, we have seen that envy and jealousy often co-occur. In some contexts, they co-occur systemically: think of sibling rivalry. When a new child is born, the older sibling may fear that her special relationship with her parents will be affected. Even aside from special circumstances, children often vie for the limited parental resources, and find themselves behaving at the same time defensively and aggressively. If they perceive to have a special relation of some kind with a parent, they will be afraid to lose it. If they perceive the other siblings to be better off in some respect, they will want to outperform them. As we have

seen, comparisons are widespread, often unconscious, and almost unavoidable in general, and siblings in particular are continuously, and sometimes unfairly or inappropriately, compared to each other along a variety of dimensions, not only by their parents, but also by relatives, family friends, teachers and so forth. Therefore, both rivalrous emotions of envy and jealousy are likely to arise.

In similar circumstances, it may be hard, above all from a first-personal perspective, to distinguish between what's perceived as owned but in danger of being lost, and what's perceived as lacked but potentially attainable. Young children, especially, may not have a sufficiently articulate conception of what's at stake, and their emotional experience may be less defined as a consequence: their beliefs will be primitive, their desires inchoate, their feelings mixed, intense and confusing. The emotion felt toward one sibling may not be easily diagnosed as one of either envy or jealousy. This kind of *epistemic ambiguity*, however, is not unusual when it comes to emotions, and it is to be expected in the case of close, frequently co-occurring emotions such as envy and jealousy.

More interesting are what I call *hybrid* cases, where both a loss and a lack are at stake. Imagine the following situation:

*Ugly Duckling never felt loved by her mother. Her sisters were always complimented, supported, looked after in material and spiritual ways, but since she was always the shiest and least "shiny" among them, she never got her mother's affections. Ugly Duckling is intensely jealous of her sisters.<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> This is not an unusual pattern for children, and above all daughters, of narcissistic mothers. Cf. McBride 2009. Thanks to Maria Miceli for stimulating my thoughts on this kind of case.



Notice how natural it is in this case to want to use ‘jealous’. At the same time, the emotion seems to be a mixture of envy and jealousy according to the lack vs. loss model. Ugly Duckling thinks her mother never loved her, and one cannot lose what one never had. So technically, according to our model, we would have to say that Ugly Duckling is envious. But that does not sound quite right. Wreen and Tov Ruach would make this the prototypical case of jealousy: what Ugly Duckling desperately desires is her mother’s attentive care.

I agree that this is what she desires. But notice that parents are *expected* to love their children. Maybe children do not have a right to be loved, strictly speaking,<sup>25</sup> but they certainly have a reasonable expectation to be loved, and not just reasonable, but an emotionally warranted one. By “emotionally warranted” I mean that emotionally healthy children are justified in expecting their parents to love them. So while Ugly Duckling has never had her mother’s love, she perceives it as being in some important sense “due” to her, and so do we. Jealousy is often associated, if not with entitlement proper, at least with an appearance of it: when we own something, we tend to think we have a right to it, and a right to protect it from threats. We interpret Ugly Duckling’s emotion as jealousy because in many other counterfactually near worlds Ugly Duckling *would* have had her mother’s love, and she would have every right to be protective about it.

Thus I can grant that such an example cannot count as a standard case of jealousy according to lack vs. loss model, because it is *not* a standard situation,

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<sup>25</sup> But see Liao 2015 for a defense of this thesis.

given that most parents love all of their children, even when they have preferences among them.

Another hybrid case is the following, drawn from a popular American TV series (*The Office*):

*Jim is in love with his coworker Pam, but Pam is already engaged with Roy. Pam does not know what she feels. She thinks of Jim as a good friend, but she is not yet ready to admit feeling more than friendly love. Roy is intensely jealous of Jim, and also envies him for being of a superior social and intellectual standing.*

Roy's emotions toward Jim are pretty easy to decipher and understand: he becomes aware that he has a romantic rival. Pam is clearly attracted to Jim, and Jim is—this is obvious from the audience's perspective—a much more desirable partner for Pam. But what does Jim feel toward Roy?

Jim is *not* in a romantic relationship with Pam, but would want to be in one. He lacks what Roy has, and so we would expect him to feel envy. But this does not sound right, as it did not sound right in Ugly Ducking's case. While Jim might feel a tinge of envy for the man who has what he lacks, and while he might be wounded in his self-esteem because Pam does not seem to see his being a more desirable partner than Roy, it seems that Jim mostly feels jealousy.<sup>26</sup>

Again, the proponents of an attention-based view would think of this case as central, and this may indeed be the strongest case for them. However, the lack

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<sup>26</sup> Jerome Neu analyzes a similar case: "How are we to describe the emotional state of the third party in situations where there are two lovers, one of whom is jealous over the other and fears the encroachments of the third party, while the third party has not made any advances but certainly desires to supplant the jealous lover?" (Neu 1980: 434). His verdict is that the third party feels "admiring envy". I find this response unconvincing in a case like Jim's, since he has a friendly relation with Pam. So maybe Neu and I agree: the least Jim already perceives himself as "possessing the good", the more what he feels counts as envy rather than jealousy. Neu too endorses the lack vs. loss view.

vs. loss view has again the means to account for this case. Jim is in love with Pam. While he does not have a socially sanctioned relation with her, he is her close friend and confidant, and he is emotionally committed to her. For a long time (until he comes to believe—erroneously—that she will never leave Roy) he does not date anyone else and he devotes her a great deal of care and attention. Thus, he *does* have an exclusive relationship with her that nobody else, not even Roy, has. So, on the one hand he is rightly concerned that Pam’s marriage to Roy will extinguish their relation; on the other hand, he, like Ugly Duckling, is emotionally warranted in expecting Pam’s reciprocation, and may think of Roy, consciously or not, as an obstacle to that reciprocation.

Finally, Jim’s hybrid emotion is different from a *borderline* case such as the following:

*George realizes that his husband Altman is cheating on him with another man, Wataru. He first becomes jealous and tries to win his love back, but comes to realize that the sense of betrayal has weakened their relationship and he is falling out of love for Altman. However, when he thinks of his former rival Wataru he feels envious: George perceives Wataru as a 2.0 version of himself—younger, fitter, and smarter.*

Hybrid cases are different from borderline cases. In borderline cases one is in a transitional phase from an emotion to the other. At some point in between the transition, it is *metaphysically vague* what George is feeling, whether jealousy or envy. Figuring that out may be relevant if he is trying to understand whether he still feels attached to Altman, whether he should try to preserve his relationship with him.

Phenomenological considerations, while not decisive, given that the two emotions share some feelings (such as negative affect and hostility toward the rival), may nonetheless provide some clue: if George wishes he were more like Wataru, would like to improve himself, feels ashamed and a failure, and is overall more focused on his personal inadequacy than on losing Altman, then he is probably feeling more envy than jealousy; if he is pained by Altman's absence and feels lonely and abandoned, but at the same time feels distrust toward him, then he is probably feeling more jealousy than envy.<sup>27</sup>

The lack vs. loss model nicely makes sense of this transition: George's emotions end up being different because his situation and focus change. He moves from being concerned with guarding his particular valued relationship to Altman (a good he has, but is afraid to lose) to being concerned with his inferiority to Wataru with regard to the general valuable good of being loved by *someone like* Altman (a good he currently lacks and would like to acquire again).

Ambiguous, hybrid, and borderline cases characterize our emotional experience in general and are not unique to envy and jealousy. They do, however, complicate our discussion and assessment of different conceptual tools and ways of explaining the difference between these similar emotions. I hope to have shown in this concluding section that the lack vs. loss model can handle them well.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Notice that I take feelings to be clues that inform us about the implicit, underlying appraisal, in line with an overall cognitive approach: I don't think the feelings determine the distinction itself.

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