

## On the Origin of Jealousy

### Assignment #3: A *Death in the Family*-Inspired Personal “On Essay”

I’m so jealous. So envious of those bestowed with *glory*, rolling around in their guiltless fame and contentment. Or just those who have something I don’t and likely will never have. Anyone from the undeserving Kardashians to my brilliant cousin, and even to the countless others who can swear so *bloody* easily — they are rude, shameless artists, but artists nonetheless.

The world a person knows only expands exponentially with their knowledge. I sit here, a nameless speck caught at the crossroads of four dimensions: here and now. The surroundings grow increasingly larger; a person becomes ever more infinitesimal. Unfortunately, this does not bode well for the bloated ego of a competitive teenager.

The worst part about it is the people; as a society, people progress, and with it a bigger world of better people. The modern world revolves around *people*. No matter how inglorious science makes mankind out to be, humans are an egocentric hub of news stations and social media binging on our great “diversity” — the famous and notorious, the wealthy and the poor, the righteous and the corrupt.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said: “small minds discuss people ... great minds discuss ideas.” By this definition, anybody and everybody has a “small mind.” Is it not inevitable that one will, at some point or another, feel pride in him and his great species? Is it not impossible to avoid using another as a point of reference to orient, to guide, or even to govern one’s life? Is it not desirable, even necessary, to seek shelter and comfort of human propinquity?

So it only seems reasonable that people love to be with their kind, to look up to others and be comforted. Then where does the envy come in, the competitive edge — I suppose with reasonable conviction that I am not alone in this jealousy — that propels people to find hostility in this same personal interaction? What causes the perception of small-mindedness that accompanies this dwelling in others’ affairs?

Greed is a good candidate for the cause. Human nature contains avarice, avarice induces dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction fosters self-deprecation, self-deprecation triggers idolatry, and idolatry inspires envy. But life is not one-sided, so a little envy from just a few aspects of a multifaceted, complex, twisted life lead to a monster named Jealousy that engulfs a person, feeding itself on the insecurities and the doubts that are formed by our innate character flaws — our want to be *better*.

Jealousy has had the better of me. I’ve heard the headlines concerning teenage prodigies accepted into renowned universities or children who have stumbled upon miracles or the utterly *average* people that have accidentally done utterly *remarkable* acts. Even when any individual act seems

superfluous in and of itself, not contributing much to the greater scheme of life and true happiness, they collectively beg the question: why not me?

It began to dawn on me that time will have its way, and fate will play its gamble. There is no way to tell what I will or will not do; there is no way to determine what I will or will not be. The concept of *not knowing* simply creates a joint coup between Jealousy and Uncertainty against Reason.

So I sulk, an ordinary boy overshadowed by giants.

But besides the group of anxious worrywarts that I connect myself to, there are, of course, the godly humans who attract the attention and envy of others. These people often seem free of this worry that is rooted in self-doubt and failure.

This points to a different direction: ignorance. However large and boasting their egos may be, the superstars of society have one less worry on their mind. In this way, they are more immune to the anxious ups-and-downs of the unstable, average aspirant. To this self-centered focus, one simply has to relax his grip.

On the other hand, the impressive self-promotion that is often exhibited by the greats of popular culture point to a similar effect, albeit in an opposite sense. Perhaps in their obsession with the achievement of others, one loses sight of their own points of envy. This is simply a matter of self-confidence, whose lack strong contributor in the early stages of jealousy. One shouldn't simply fall into self-deprecation by way of looking up to another and neglecting one's strengths, nor should one consider solely his own shortcomings without comparing them to those of the people they idol. This would cause a one-sided perspective, a weak claim rooted in thin air.

As was considered by Rufus from *A Death in the Family*, thinking that an orphaned life would be joyful is a foolish thought by common sense. When he based this thought solely on the merit of receiving unconditional and abundant gifts and pity while ignoring the presence of his loving mother, it simply becomes irrational by this reasoning: it is distorted and cannot be supported.

In my own life, my troubles were greatly abated when I realized and wrote on a certain Internet profile that "I am characteristically concise, uncharacteristically verbose. In these rare moments I deem myself a 'lexicographical physicist,' an aspiree in the worldiverse of crazilous experifungles of unmeaningful collisiverbums." Never before had I ever considered myself to be any bit unique, but stressing my exclusivity, especially in this rant to the deaf roar of the Internet, lay a comforting hand on my shoulder.

It is true that "small minds people discuss people"; this is, however, only part of the truth. It is also true that to dwell in oneself as an act of confiding is important, if not necessary. And diversity is

more than anti-discrimination statements and educational purposes; it gives the courage to look into oneself without feeling the unnecessary hatred of others. We are united in our differences.