To the four, and occasionally five, at home

ENVY
and the Greeks
A study of human behaviour

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PREFACE

To master the translation of an ancient Greek text is no easy task. Range of vocabulary, variation of style and complexity of subject-matter, all compound the difficulty, and it is fortunate that success, even an imperfect success, is immensely rewarding. But the ability to translate does not necessarily guarantee that we also understand. Every teacher, I suspect, knows how disconcerting it is when a competent translation is followed by a blank stare as a simple question is put, 'Now what does the passage mean?' Yet this is more than a fair question, it is an essential question. It is imperative that we try to understand, and the attempt to understand what exactly an ancient author said often requires us to ask a second question, 'Why did he say what he appears to have said?' We must be encouraged to look, as it were, into the mind of our author, and if we do so we are likely to find that he thought in a way in which we do not think ourselves or in a way in which we are reluctant to admit that we think ourselves. I make my own attempt to facilitate understanding in the following pages devoted as they are to an examination of envy, an emotion which the Greeks cited time and time again in order to account for human behaviour. Envy is too deadly a sin, too irrational a passion for us today openly to acknowledge its existence and influence.

It is a sign of bravery as much as it is a sign of true friendship to read another's manuscript and to advance suggestions, and Dr. B. R. Rees and Dr. N. R. E. Fisher have proved themselves to be both brave men and true friends of the author by undertaking such a perilous mission. To them I express my sincere thanks as I do to many others, even to a reputed friend who declared the author uniquely qualified by personal character to investigate the workings of envy. My gratitude is especially expressed to Miss Carmen Larreta, a secretary whose skill in deciphering an impossible scrawl has few rivals. Indeed all my colleagues in the Department of Classics at University College, Cardiff deserve and are offered special thanks.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This monograph is about jealousy and envy and the ways in which such feelings influenced the thought and actions of the ancients from the age of Homer to the triumph of Christianity. But why am I obliged to use the two words 'jealousy' and 'envy' rather than just one or the other? Sociologists and laymen alike find it difficult, and often impossible, to distinguish between the emotion which we label 'jealousy' and the emotion labelled 'envy'. It is true that we tend to think of envy as a stronger, a more pernicious emotion, and so, when we refer to our own children, we speak of them being jealous and not of them being envious of one another. There is more than a slight suspicion of malice associated with envy, and this feeling is invariably regarded as bad, whereas jealousy may be commendable as when we talk of a person being 'jealous of his honour'. In fact if we wish to make a distinction between jealousy and envy, it will be along these lines, as, for example, George Crabb did, significantly in the nineteenth century, in his English Synonymes: 'We are jealous of what is our own; we are envious of what is another's. Jealousy fears to lose what it has; envy is pained at seeing another have that which it wants for itself. Princes are jealous of their authority; subjects are jealous of their rights; courtiers are envious of those in favour; women are envious of superior beauty.' Yet such a distinction smacks of the language of an earlier age and is hardly valid by the standard of everyday linguistic usage as we know it. Even the opinion that envy is a passion to be condemned and certainly appears to be the stronger of the two emotions, jealousy and envy, stands in need of some qualification: remarks such as 'I don't envy him trying... ' or 'I don't envy him wanting...', when all we mean is 'I don't mind him wanting...', illustrate a use of the corresponding verb where there is no strong feeling and our choice of language is more idiomatic than significant.
The Greeks also employed two distinct words and a variety of related forms: the first is *zelos* and this is conventionally translated 'jealousy'; the other is *phthonos* or 'envy'. The two words function in much the same way as their English equivalents and are used in a similarly loose fashion. They can, for example, be synonyms: thus we have surviving from the early fourth century B.C. a funeral speech by the orator Lysias, who, in a typically rhetorical flourish, speaks at one point of war between Greeks occurring 'because of jealousy (*zelos*) of what had happened and envy (*phthonos*) of what had been done' (2, 48). Elsewhere in the same speech, however, we may see the two words distinguished in use and *zelos*-forms good and *phthonos*-forms bad: thus the Spartan enemy were envious (*ephthonoun*) of the prosperity of Corinthian allies (2, 67), but a *zelos*-form is chosen when Lysias says of the Athenians whose glorious death in battle he was commemorating that they are, both in life and death, enviable (*zelotoi* in 2, 69; cf. 2, 73). Those. Lysias claims, who restored democracy to Athens are the envy (*zelountai*) of all men (2, 66) and their honour envied (*zelotai*) by all men (2, 79). The nuance conveyed is different, however, when Lysias makes a reference to the Persian king, who, in the present unhappy political situation of the Greeks, is said to be fortunate and 'in him there springs up *zelos* of his ancestors' design' (2, 60). Lysias clearly has in mind the Persian invasion of mainland Greece a century before and a fresh Persian involvement in Greek affairs. In the passage *zelos* is a desire to imitate, or better, to emulate, the kind of meaning of *zelos* which we meet in Greek proper names compounded from this word (e.g. Polyzelos = 'Much to be admired' with the implication 'Much to be imitated' or 'Much to be emulated').

But the basic distinction between *zelos* and *phthonos* is plain enough when the words occur in close proximity, as they do, for instance, in a letter ascribed to Demosthenes later in the fourth century B.C. where the relevant extract has Demosthenes saying that he hesitates to detail his services to the state as he is afraid of envy (*phthonos*), and then adds that these services were such as to make Athens envied (*zeloonthalai*) by all (2, 4-5). Equally instructive is a third orator, Isocrates, one of whose speeches is addressed to the Macedonian king Philip, who, Isocrates hopes, will solve the problems besetting the states of fourth-century Greece: the time is ripe, Isocrates argues, for Philip to unite the Greeks and to lead them against their common enemy, the Persians. If Philip is successful he will rank among the first and even failure to achieve what is expected will win him the good will of the Greeks, and that is far nobler than to capture many Greek cities by force: this produces envy (*phthonos*), and what is joined to the word envy here, namely hostility and much slander, confirms its disreputable character (5, 68). If Philip follows the advice of Isocrates, he will incur not envy = *phthonos* but will be 'admired' (*zelotai*) by the rest (5, 69). When slightly later Isocrates speaks of Philip being abused by men envious of the king, not surprisingly he employs the verb *phthonein* (5, 73), yet even *phthonos* is not wholly bad or so it would seem from another speech of Isocrates. In this other oration Isocrates has occasion to make mention of Agamemnon, the mythical leader of the Greeks who went to Troy in order to recover Helen. This force represented the combined strength of Greece and included among its members descendants of the gods and even the offspring of the gods, men not like the majority but full of passion, spirit, envy and love of honour (12, 81), and here the word I translate 'envy' is *phthonos*. That *phthonos* should be preferred in this context is perhaps strange, but it is to be supposed that Isocrates when speaking of those with divine relations is influenced by the earlier tradition of the *phthonos* *theon*, the envy of the gods, that form of envy discharged by the deities on mortal men who grew too powerful and threatened to rival the gods. And just as we may use the word 'envy' in English when it simply adds up to 'I am not unwilling' or 'I don't mind, so we find the verb *phthonein* used by the Greeks. The Nurse in the *Medea* of Euripides seeks information, saying 'don't envy me a reply' (verse 63), and by the same 'formula' Plato's Socrates encourages a reply to a question (*Gorgias* 489a); in another letter reputed to have been written by Demosthenes 'I am not envious' means 'I don't mind' (3, 32). But the meaning of *phthonos* and *zelos* and the distinction between these two words and their verbal and adjectival formations will receive abundant illustration as we trace the influence of jealousy and envy, beginning with the evidence offered by the poet Hesiod. Enough has been said for the moment.

My reader, given patience, will encounter any number of examples of jealousy and envy as the chapters which follow are consulted. It may be helpful, nevertheless, at this early stage in the investigation to list and to illustrate three basic categories of envy, the three types being what may be termed 'professional envy', 'sibling envy' and 'sexual envy'. After these introductory remarks we shall be considering
in the main literary evidence, and it is for this reason that I draw here on a different source of evidence, illustrative material from Greek folklore. A characteristic figure in all folklore is the master craftsman, the kind of person represented by Daedalus, whose outstanding achievement was thought to be the construction of the labyrinth at Knossos for King Minos. Tradition records that Daedalus was born at Athens but forced to flee the city after he had killed a nephew named Talos or Perdix. The story is common enough throughout antiquity and typical is the version preserved in the Library of Apollodorus (3, 15, 8). Apparently Talos was Daedalus’ apprentice and his master feared that Talos might surpass him in skill. According to the Roman poet Ovid, Talos, a bright lad of twelve, aroused Daedalus’ jealousy by inventing the saw and compass (Metamorphoses 8, 236-59). But details are less important for us than the brutal fact that Daedalus, consumed with ‘professional envy’, an intense dislike directed against a fellow but better craftsman, lured Talos to a cliff-top, nudged him over the edge and so murdered a potential rival.

Some sources give Talos the alternative name of Perdix or ‘partridge’. Another folklore character with a bird name is Aedon or ‘nightingale’, and we know of an Aedon, sister of Niobe. Aedon had a single son but Niobe boasted six or more sons and six or more daughters. Envy of her sister, that is, ‘sibling envy’ drove Aedon to attempt to murder one of her nephews but she killed her own child Ibylus by mistake (cf. Odyssey 19, 518-23). One of the least read Greek authors is the mythographer Antoninus Liberalis, but he did preserve for us an intriguing version of the story of Aedon. This is lengthy and I must attempt a brief paraphrase and one designed to cater for a special interest in the results of envy. This version tells how Aedon married a man with the significant name of Polytechnos (Of many skills) and they had a solitary child named Itys. The couple infuriated the goddess Hera by claiming to be more in love than Zeus and Hera, and this anger on the part of the queen of heaven is suggestive of sexual jealousy. Hera encouraged discord between the mortal husband and wife, and they became involved in a competition to be the first to complete the piece of work which they were currently undertaking. In other words, Hera was stimulating a professional rivalry. Aedon won the contest but Polytechnos was so furious that he went to the extreme of raping Aedon’s sister (Antoninus Liberalis 11, 2-5). This is merely the opening stages of a complicated plot, but already here we have added an example of professional envy and of sexual envy.

Sexual envy may assume many forms: men can quarrel over women, women over men, and man and woman over a man or a woman. Love, after all, is said to make the world go round and so often inspires jealousy and envy. The literary fame of Achilles has tended to overshadow the story of his father Peleus, whose marriage to the goddess Thetis is very much in folklore tradition, and Apollodorus’ account of the life of Peleus is highly instructive. Peleus was the son of Aeacus, who had other sons as well and a favourite among them, Phocus, who excelled as an athlete (3, 12, 6). Peleus and a third brother, Telamon, conspired against Phocus, and while Telamon actually murdered Phocus at a competition, using a discus, both brothers joined in concealing the body. Sibling envy prompted Phocus’ death and resulted in the exile of his brothers. In the course of his later adventures Peleus happened to be participating in games when the wife of the local king, Astydamia, fell in love with him and made overtures which were rejected (3, 13, 3). In revenge Astydamia sent a false message to Peleus’ wife, causing her suicide, and charged Peleus before her own husband the king with attempted rape. Hell has no fury ... and certainly Astydamia struck out wildly and wildly when thwarted, and there can be few better examples of sexual frustration and jealousy. The rest of this episode in the career of Peleus reads like the fairy-tale it really is: the king would not kill Peleus but left him behind asleep after a hunt, concealing Peleus’ sword in cow dung, but the hero was rescued and his sword restored by the centaurs. Subsequently Peleus was married to the goddess Thetis, who was herself no stranger to sexual envy: Zeus and Poseidon competed for her hand at one stage; according to one tradition recorded by Apollodorus (3, 13, 5), Thetis was unwilling to associate with Zeus because she had been reared by Hera, and Zeus in his anger wanted her married off to a mortal. It was at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, of course, that the celebrated quarrel broke out between Hera, Athene and Aphrodite as to who was the fairest and here we should recall Crabb’s illustration, ‘women are envious of superior beauty’ (see our p. I). The quarrel in turn led to the Judgement of Paris, the Rape of Helen and eventually the Trojan War and the death of Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis, but this is a different story.

But one detail is of special interest. Apollodorus mentions how Achilles was accompanied to Troy by Phoenix, who had been temporarily blinded by his father because of a false accusation brought against
him by his father’s concubine (3, 13, 8). Further details may be gleaned from Homer’s *Iliad* and these reveal how an old and a young man, even a father and a son, can compete for the love of the same woman. Homer not only provides an example of such rivalry but also of a conflict which was itself the consequence of a wife’s jealousy. Phoenix tells the story himself of how he fled from home and the wrath of his father Amyntor, and the reason for the parent’s anger was a mistress (9, 447ff.). Amyntor’s love for another woman caused him to dishonour his consort, the mother of Phoenix. Phoenix was subject to constant pleas that he should take his father’s mistress ‘that she might hate the old man’ (verse 452) and this he duly did. But his father suspected him at once and called down many a curse on his son’s head.

This slight digression by Homer is informative, as is also another not dissimilar passage. Elsewhere in the *Iliad* the poet traces the ancestry of the Trojan ally Glauclus, son of Hippolochus (6, 150ff.). Glauclus’ grandfather was the hero Bellerophon and it is Bellerophon’s story which forms the subject of Homer’s digression, and with this story we once more find ourselves moving in the realm of folklore. Bellerophon was expelled from Argos by Proitos and came to Lycia in Asia Minor. Why was Bellerophon sent into exile? Anteia, the wife of Proitos, lusted after Bellerophon but he was immune to her advances; she responded, like Astydamia in the Peleus saga, by falsely accusing Bellerophon of desiring intercourse with her against her own wishes (verses 163-65). As an alternative to death, Proitos sent Bellerophon to Anteia’s father in Lycia with a secret message that he be killed. Adopting the same circuitous approach, the Lycian king set Bellerophon three seemingly impossible tasks, all of which he completed, and then tried, equally unsuccessfully, an ambush. Finally it was realized that Bellerophon was of divine origin and he was rewarded with the appropriate princess and half the royal privileges.

It would not be difficult to quote further examples from the Greek material of the ‘Potiphar’s Wife’ motif, the theme of an unfaithful wife who retaliates by claiming that she has been raped when her overtures are scorned, and these additional examples could include wicked step-mothers such as Philonome and Phaedra. But I wish to conclude my introductory remarks with a general point. Envy inspired by professional, sibling and sexual rivalry is still rampant, however loath we may be to acknowledge its existence and power. Inasmuch as the majority continues to get married and to have children we probably are best acquainted personally with sibling envy. I am reluctant to play the amateur psychologist, though we may note in concluding that Melanie Klein, for example, considered ‘that envy is an oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expression of destructive impulses, operative from the beginning of life, and that it has a constitutional basis’ (*Envy and Gratitude*, Tavistock Publications Ltd., London, 1957, p. ix). Let me assure my readers that I have no desire to tread the path opened up by Melanie Klein’s first observation, although I would stress the opinion that envy ‘has a constitutional basis’. We are all of us desperately anxious to be ‘good’ parents and try with the utmost vigour to prevent one child feeling that he or she is less well treated than another but our offspring remain at loggerheads with one another. It is some consolation to be told by an eminent child psychologist that we are in contention with human nature itself. But I close with Melanie Klein because we shall soon learn that the Greeks believed man to be naturally envious and that belief may bother the more sensitive. It is easier for all of us to accept, however, when it is a belief endorsed by an expert of the reputation and experience of Melanie Klein. Envy has always been with us and the Greeks were honest enough to accept this fact of life and to mention it quite openly when discussing human motivation. It is unfortunate that few scholars have had the bravery of J. P. Mahaffy, who, a century ago, spoke of Greek jealousy as a quality ‘specially engrained in the texture of their nature from the earliest times’ (*Rambles and Studies in Greece*, Macmillan, London, second revised edition 1878, p. 230). Yet if one turns to the index of almost any one of the several books on Greek moral values published during the last twenty years, an entry headed ‘envy’ is missing or sparse. Helmut Schoeck found much the same to be true of social science, and remarks that ‘it is most curious to note that at about the beginning of this century authors began to show an increasing tendency, above all in the social sciences and moral philosophy, to repress the concept of envy’. Schoeck can also remark, however, that ‘every man must be prone to a small degree of envy; without it the interplay of social forces within society is unthinkable’ (pp. 9-10). We are investigating envy not for its own sake but in order to achieve a fuller understanding of how ancient society functioned.
Chapter Two: The Quality of Envy

Round here, there is no doubt about it, they wait for the big trip. They would like to see me stumble. I am positive about this. They say that no man has pigs for two years without a major break-down - and I have had them for four years. I am resented because I'm absolutely independent of them all. The whole area is a matter of indifference to me. I could do what I have to do in Scotland - or China... I find the East Anglians cold and hidden. I have never experienced such coldness before. They can be avaricious and there is an innate cruelty in them... They will help you in distress but they don't really like to see you not in distress and doing fine. They don't come and say, 'Good show! It's a pleasure to see what you have done!' They never say this. The average Suffolk farmer is one of the hardest kind of men I have ever met.

Colonel Trevor West, retired army officer and highly successful pig-farmer, as reported by Ronald Blythe, Akenfield.

The Greek poet Hesiod appears to have lived towards the end of the eighth century B.C. and two of his poems have survived in their entirety, the Theogony or 'Generations of the Gods' and the Works and Days, a didactic piece addressed to a brother named Perses who is urged to give up his idle ways and to get down to hard work. Internal evidence, admittedly inconclusive, suggests that the Theogony was the earlier composition. Thus in the Works and Days Hesiod appears to have modified what he had already said about the goddess Eris or 'Strife' in the Theogony. In that poem Eris is strife in the bad sense and this is made abundantly obvious: her companions are disreputable, Deceit, Sex and deadly Old Age (verses 224-25; cf. also 211ff.), while Eris herself in turn is parent of Toil, Forgetfulness, Famine, Pains, various forms of violent death and quarrels, Lawlessness, Infatuation and Oath, 'which most harms men when one is a willing party to perjury' (verses 226-32). But, in marked contrast, the Works and Days claims that there are two distinct forms of Eris, one being as good as the other is bad (verses 11ff.). Bad Eris prompts war and conflict, whereas her good sister encourages even the slack, such as the recalcitrant Perses, to exert himself, to plough, to sow and to set his household in order as he sees another endowed with wealth. So far so good, but what follows, however, is likely to disturb, perhaps even to shock, the modern student of Hesiod, especially a student reared in a society dedicated to the elimination of competition from its educational system. Having witnessed the principle of selection at the age of eleven largely abolished in education, non-streaming a regular feature of secondary education and mounting pressure to declassify degree results, how will the student react to the consequences of the good Eris as Hesiod proceeds to describe them in verses 23 and 24 of his poem? 'Neighbour', we read, 'is jealous (zeloi) of neighbour as that neighbour hurries after wealth.' The sentiment is repeated later in the Works and Days when, after the aphorism, 'Work is no reproach, idleness is a reproach' (verse 311), the poet continues, 'if you work, soon will the work-shy be jealous (zelosei) of your wealth' (verses 312-13). The fact that others will be jealous of our success seems a peculiar incentive to greater effort on our own part, but Hesiod's message cannot be misunderstood. A practical illustration is offered among Hesiod's instructions for the would-be farmer: if you plough at the right time, when spring comes you will not cast envious eyes on others, but someone else will be in need of you; if you plough late, however, you will end up with very little and few will envy you (verses 477-82). And Hesiod's account of the two types of Eris concludes with lines which were to acquire a proverbial force and lines which provide a classic example of professional envy: 'potter is furious with potter and craftsman with craftsman, and beggar is envious (phthoneei) of beggar and singer of singer' (verses 25-26).

Nineteenth-century editors of Hesiod could find these last two verses difficult and might even wish to delete them from their text of the poet. But there is no inconsistency with what has immediately preceded and they simply expand professional envy between farmers to embrace other ways by which a livelihood might be earned in the
ancient world. The extent of our student's response to so competitive an attitude will be determined by the particular force he attaches to the idea of jealousy and envy. It is a commonplace experience to come across the type of advertisement which urges the purchase of this or that object so that we may become 'the envy of our friends', and envy barely amounts to much, or so we are inclined to reckon, when those who feel envy are designated friends. But what if we accept the definition of envy expounded by William L. Davidson and enthusiastically approved by the sociologist Helmut Schoeck:

Envy is an emotion that is essentially both selfish and malevolent. It is aimed at persons, and implies dislike of one who possesses what the envious man himself covets or desires, and a wish to harm him. Graspingness for self and ill-will lie at the basis of it. There is in it also a consciousness of inferiority to the person envied, and a chafing under this consciousness. He who has got what I envy is felt by me to have the advantage of me, and I resent it.

(quoted from James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics 5, p. 322, Edinburgh, 1912)

Is Hesiod's use of the word envy, whether he uses a zelos-form or a phthonos-form, as innocent and innocuous as that of the copy-writer or does it serve to confirm Davidson's definition? How are we to interpret envy in Hesiod and how, therefore, to evaluate the good Eris? The good Eris certainly inspires envy but does this envy lead to selfishness and malevolence, to personal antipathy and a desire to injure, to a feeling of inferiority and a consequent resentment? It is my intention to supply an answer to this question, and the beginning of the Works and Days is simply a convenient point to start an investigation which will consider envy and those in its grip throughout antiquity. At the end, I fear, my answer may depress those still anxious to idealize the ancients and to credit them with an ethical excellence of more than Christian sublimity. Yet Hesiod's characterization of the good Eris presents us with a dilemma which the contemporary world has scarcely commenced to unravel: how are we today to reconcile the conflict between duty to ourselves and duty owed others? The Greeks were acutely aware of the problem, and they at least faced up to it fearlessly, acknowledging that man was envious and making no attempt to suppress the unpalatable fact that envy was manifest everywhere.

Man, according to the Greek, is naturally envious, envy being part of his basic character and disposition. In the second half of the fifth century B.C. Herodotus compiled his history of the Persian attack of 490 and the invasion of 480 B.C. His account of these Persian incursions into Europe occupies only the final third of his writings, and Herodotus fills in the background at length, discussing the Lydians, Persians, Egyptians, Scythians and others. One of his stories tells of the debate which was thought to have been held before Darius became Persian king, and in it one of the speakers argues against Persia remaining a monarchy; this speaker identifies as standard vices of the single-man ruler hybris and phthonos, arrogance and envy, adding 'envy is natural to man and has been so from the beginning'. (3, 80, 3). It is natural for all men. Demosthenes says in a speech a century later, to listen with pleasure to abuse and accusation (18, 3), while in another passage from the same speech he remarks that against the living there exists an undercurrent, great or small, of envy (phthonos) - this is natural (18, 315). When the exiled Spartan king Demaratus offered advice to Xerxes, his plan was opposed by the Persian Achaemenes, who claimed that Xerxes was in danger of being influenced by a man envious of Xerxes' success: Demaratus, Achaemenes maintained, was just like any other Greek - they envy success and hate the more powerful (Herodotus 7, 236, 1). When Xerxes replied, he refused to believe Demaratus disloyal, because Demaratus was a foreigner and a foreigner rejoices most of all in the success of a foreigner; it is a citizen who envies the prosperity of a citizen and is his secret enemy except in a very few cases (7, 237, 2-3). Here we have a comment which we shall be shortly discussing, the idea that it is 'equals' or near equals, people of approximately the same status, who envy each other; the gulf between Spartan exile and Persian king was too vast for mutual competition to be possible and without the possibility of competition there can be no occasion for envy. Demaratus and Xerxes, moreover, enjoy a special kind of relationship, the guest-host relationship.

Another one of Herodotus' stories confirms Xerxes' opinion. After the battle of Salamis the spoils were divided and the Greeks had to decide who was to receive a prize as the person contributing most to Greek victory in the war against the Persian invaders. Each leader voted first place to himself but the majority awarded second place to the Athenian Themistocles. Envy, nevertheless, prevented these colleagues, men of a comparable status, from reaching a decision,
though all Greece reckoned Themistocles the wisest of the Greeks, and he was paid singular honours when he visited Sparta (8, 123-24). In other words, the envy of colleagues was vented against Themistocles, who, in spite of that, received lavish praise and gifts from the inhabitants of a rival Greek state. But what happened when Themistocles returned from Sparta to his native Athens? Again Herodotus tells us: an Athenian named Timodemus, an enemy of Themistocles but otherwise of no importance, being mad with envy, denounced his fellow citizen as not deserving the honours conferred on him at Sparta - the credit was due not to Themistocles but to the city of Athens (8, 125, 1). As Xerxes observed, citizen envies the success of another citizen, just as, according to the *Works and Days*, the farmer resents the prosperity of a fellow farmer.

Herodotus may even be cited to provide an exception which 'proves' the rule that man is naturally envious. We read in the historian of the Agathyrsoi, a people living in luxury and holding their women in common, 'so that they may be each other's brothers, the members of a single family, indulging in neither envy nor hostility against each other' (4, 104). Irrespective of the fact that the Agathyrsoi anticipate the social organization so familiar from Plato's *Republic*, theirs was a most peculiar form of society by Greek standards, and it needed the abnormal if envy were not to be rampant. In fact Herodotus' description of the Agathyrsoi is one of a number of comments on the bizarre customs of outlandish non-Greeks when it comes to the treatment of women (cf. 1, 94, 1; 1, 196; 1, 203, 2; 1, 216, 1; 1, 4, 26, 2; 1, 172, 2; 4, 180, 5-6; 5, 6, 1), and by these comments Herodotus means to draw an implicit contrast with Greek practice.

Late antiquity saw the compilation of anthologies of excerpts, culled from the writers of both poetry and prose, to illustrate particular themes, and the author of one such anthology was Stobaeus. Verses 25-26 of the *Works and Days*, 'potter strives with potter, craftsman with craftsman, beggar with beggar, and singer with singer', are quoted by Stobaeus in the chapter on envy from his collection of passages. Another extract in this chapter shows us that in the fifth century B.C. the sophist Hippias claimed that there were two types of *phthonos*, just as Hesiod had earlier spoken of the two varieties of Eris. For Hippias there was a just type of *phthonos* when one envies the wicked being honoured and an unjust *phthonos* directed at the good (*Anthologium* 3, 38, 32 = Hippias *DK B* 16). The distinction would be altogether clearer if different names were applied to good and bad envy, and Hesiod does suggest a possible distinction in terminology if we compare the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*. In the former poem Hesiod has harsh things to say about society in his own times; his was an age of iron in contrast to the earlier ages of gold, silver, bronze and the heroes, and the very bonds which hold society together were in the process of being dissolved (verses 176ff.). Fathers, children, guests and hosts, companions and brothers were all at one another's throats; violence and perjury were the order of the day. The power of verses 195-201 is admirably conveyed in the spirited translation of Richmond Lattimore (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1959);

The spirit of Envy, with grim face and screaming voice, who delights in evil, will be the constant companion of wretched humanity, and at last Nemesis and Aidos, Decency and Respect, shrouding their bright forms in pale mantles, shall go from the wide-wayed earth back on their way to Olympos, forsaking the whole race of mortal men, and all that will be left by them to mankind will be wretched pain. And there shall be no defence against evil.

Hesiod's vision of the future is apocalyptic and immensely disturbing. Lattimore's 'spirit of Envy' is just *zelos* in Greek but so elaborate a translation of a single Greek word is justified, for the three compound adjectives which qualify *zelos* in verse 196, 'with grim face and screaming voice, who delights in evil', have the effect of personifying *zelos* as much as Nemesis and Aidos are personified in the following lines. One of these epithets, moreover, is shared with bad Eris (*kakochartos* in verses 28 and 196), and *zelos* in verse 195, man's companion as the social contract disintegrates, is nothing more or less than a variant of Hesiod's bad Eris, a force encouraging war and conflict. It is the end to which *zelos* is directed which appears to determine whether it is concomitant with the good or the bad Eris.
Zelos in the Theogony, however, is very different. In that poem Zelos is fully personified, being a child of Styx and one of the allies of Zeus in his war against the Titans (verses 383ff.). The facts that Zelos is an ally of Zeus and that it is coupled in the same verse with Nike or 'Victory' (verse 384) show that Zelos in the Theogony expresses the envy, or if we prefer a less emotive word, the admiration felt for Zeus by others, and admiration, we know, stimulates imitation and emulation. It is true that Zelos here is not the same as Hippias' just phthonos, envy when the wrong person is honoured, but we do see that it is possible to distinguish between phthonos and zelos, one being bad and the other a good quality. But it needed Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. with his passion for precise classification to develop the distinction between phthonos = envy and zelos = emulation, and this he does in the second book of the Rhetoric (1387b-1388b) by relating emulation not to possession by another but to ourselves not possessing: emulation spurs us on to secure for ourselves, whereas envy stops a neighbour from possessing - the 'emulous man' prepares himself to obtain what is good but the envious man prepares himself to stop his neighbour from having what is good. In short, the opposite of emulation is contempt.

Exactly what Aristotle means by emulation is well shown in a speech by Isocrates in which the recipient of the orator's advice is told to model his manner on that of kings, 'for in this way you will seem to follow their example and to emulate (zeloun) them, and the result will be greater esteem from the multitude and a firmer guarantee of royal favour' (1, 36). Another example is offered by Plutarch, an author whose writings will be cited as this study advances time and again. I make no apology for my frequent citation of this author not to possession by another but to ourselves not possessing: moral treatises and other pieces known collectively as the royal favour' (1, 36). Another example is offered by Plutarch, an author whose writings will be cited as this study advances time and again. I make no apology for my frequent citation of this author not to possession by another but to ourselves not possessing:

When Davidson goes on to consider emulation he describes it in the following terms:

It is a species of rivalry or competition, and, therefore, presupposes antagonists or opponents. But an opponent need not be viewed as an enemy to be hated: rather, he is our friend, if he braces our nerves and calls forth our energies and helps us to develop ourselves. Egoistic, indeed, emulation is, and has to be classed under the natural desire of superiority or power, but it is not selfish: it is compatible with generosity of character and good-will, which neither envy nor jealousy is.

Yet Davidson's next section is labelled 'emulation degenerating', and here he notes that emulation may readily lapse into envy. 'It is manly and proper', he writes, 'to wish to excel in a race, and to strain every nerve to accomplish that end; but, when the runner, finding himself likely to be outstripped by his opponent, tries to jostle him or to trip him up, that is emulation degraded to envy: honourable rivalry has been replaced by conduct that is dishonourable and mean.' Plato's dialogue the Menexenus provides a fitting footnote to Davidson's assessment of emulation: here we read how, after the extinction of the Persian menace, the city of Athens incurred first zelos and after zelos came phthonos, and to this statement is added a comment, 'as is apt to befall the successful at the hands of men' (242a). Unfortunately emulation does degenerate into envy only too often.

Davidson speaks of 'honourable rivalry' being replaced by 'conduct that is dishonourable'. The difficulty of distinguishing between emulation and envy is compounded throughout antiquity by the desperate anxiety of almost every Greek to enhance his personal prestige and the constant quest for honour. What motives inspire men to action, Isocrates asks, and the answer is pleasure, profit and honour (15, 217), and the third incentive here is typically Greek. Such an obsession with honour on the part of the Greeks may be illustrated from a great variety of sources, but there is perhaps no more splendid a justification for the pursuit of honour than that put in the mouth of the poet.
Simonides in Xenophon’s *Hiero*: there we learn that man in his search for honour undergoes every toil and endures every danger (7, 1ff.). It is the pursuit of honour which, for Simonides, distinguishes the real man among the animals; love of honour (philotimia) is innate neither in the senseless beasts nor in every man, but those in whom is implanted a passion for honour and praise are most removed from such animals — they are rated men and not just human beings (7, 3). Equally moving is the eulogy of honour pronounced by Pericles in Thucydides’ version of the funeral speech delivered over the dead of the first year of the Peloponnesian War: love of honour alone grows not old, and when we find ourselves old and useless it is not money, as some say, but being honoured which gives the greater pleasure (2, 44, 4).

Pericles’ sentiment is echoed in the fourth century by Isocrates, who proclaims that great wealth is ‘mortal’ but reputation ‘immortal’ (2, 32), and honour needs to be acknowledged by others and so depends on a person’s reputation or fame. In an address to Philip of Macedon Isocrates tried to persuade the king by dangling before him the reward offered by glory. We all possess mortal bodies, he argues, but share in immortality through good-will, praise, reputation and memory which keeps step with time (5, 134). Reputation is rendered by the Greek word pheme, and pheme had been much earlier said by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* never to perish when many voice her, being herself a deity (verses 763-64). The orator Aeschines quotes these lines from Hesiod, and then states that all men ambitious for public honour believe that it is from good reputation that fame will come to them (1, 129; cf. 2, 145).

But how precisely do a passion for honour and a burning concern for reputation influence feelings of envy? Why does Plutarch, when he compares the life and career of the Greek Aristides and the Roman Cato, say with commendable simplicity, “love of honour (philotimia) is difficult and most productive of envy” (5, 3)? Why does the same writer say elsewhere, “envy and jealousy directed against those superior in reputation and honour are naturally implanted especially in those who love honour” (*Moralia* 486B)? Why in yet another passage does Plutarch remark that it is glory or lack of glory which most aggravates envy (*Moralia* 537B)? Honour must be recognized by others and so depends on reputation or fame; honour is something relative, not absolute. Imagine that it is possible to quantify fame and a particular person can lay claim to X amount of fame. That person will scarcely be honoured if his companions can similarly lay claim to X or more amount of honour. Honour demands that others have an altogether weaker claim to distinction: a person’s honour is related not only to his own parentage or achievements but also to the family and achievements of his fellows. Millionaires, I should think, are less honourable in southern California than they are in a Welsh suburb. A better example is offered by the athlete who is the first to run a mile in less than four minutes and is internationally acclaimed; while he will always retain the honour which accrues to the first man to break through this speed barrier, he loses honour once his feat is no longer unique and may be almost forgotten when in time such an achievement becomes a standard performance for the long-distance runner in the top flight.

The man who becomes celebrated and thus acquires honour can develop a vested interest in making his own exploit as difficult for another to accomplish as he possibly can. A university teacher, having won academic distinction, may be strangely reluctant to bestow comparable distinction on others — his own standing in the community of scholars is threatened if top-class awards are too easily and too widely attained, and here surely, loath as we may be to admit it, we detect the pursuit of honour and a feeling of jealousy marching step-by-step together. In his *Cyropedia*, a pseudo-biography of the founder of the Persian empire, Xenophon tells a story of the young Cyrus according to which his grandfather organized a great hunt and issued orders that no one should hunt until Cyrus had had his fill of the sport. But Cyrus would have none of this and persuaded his grandfather to let everybody enjoy the hunt. Cyrus’ conduct delighted the grandfather, who noted the youth’s exuberant spirit as he pursued game: he was pleased, to, however, if we recall how such a lack of envy was not characteristic of a Greek or a crypto-Greek like Xenophon’s Cyrus. Thus later in the *Cyropedia* Xenophon has occasion to comment on the attitude of those in conflict towards judges and the verdict of judges, and his comment is as remarkable as it is revealing: it is plain that both the parties in dispute would aim at obtaining such judges as were the most powerful and most friendly to them; the loser would envy those who won and hate the judges not deciding in his favour, while the man who
won the case would ascribe his success to the justice of it, so that he considered he owed no one any thanks (8, 2, 27). This is a hard-headed approach which reveals little regard for pure justice or fairness, and it is to be seen again in what follows, for Xenophon refers to the first among the friends of Cyrus being envious of one another with the result that the majority wished to eliminate each other rather than to act together for their mutual advantage (8, 2, 28). And this behaviour could not have struck Xenophon as being unexpected, since when he mentions those aspiring to a royal friendship, he adds 'like others in cities', and later we shall be discussing envy as it revealed itself in Athenian democracy and then we shall see how valid Xenophon's addition really is. The Greeks had no time for sentiment and accepted human nature for what it is, and human nature, of course, included and still includes a very fair measure of envy.

When discussing envy and emulation Aristotle refers more than once to men of honour, remarking in one place, for example, 'those who love honour are more envious than those who do not love honour' (Rhetoric 1387b). If we glance at the speeches of Demosthenes, it will not be very difficult for us to find passages where philotimia, 'love of honour', appears again (2, 18); elsewhere the orator speaks of the report of Philip's associates that the Macedonian king was so jealous (philotimos) that he preferred his generals to fail rather than to succeed, 'wishing the most splendid deeds all to seem to be his own' (11, 12). The verb philotiméthei, 'to love honour', may also mean 'to be jealous'. It will be instructive at this point in the argument if the verb philotiméthei in the sense 'to be jealous' is examined in a particular context, and an informative example is offered in a comedy written at the close of the fifth century B.C., the Frogs of Aristophanes. In the play the god Dionysus ventures into the Underworld in order to recover the dead Euripides. The comedy opens with Dionysus visiting his brother Heracles, a character who provides plenty of opportunity for humour, being a magnificent illustration of 'brawn without brains', a glutton, a philistine, and a man who personally answers a knock at his own front-door and then proceeds to be offensive to the visitor (verses 35ff.). Heracles, of course, has earlier penetrated beneath the earth and is, therefore, an obvious source of information, and that information he eventually supplies (verses 136ff.). But he is not encouraging and Dionysus assumes that he is being deliberately deterred from the undertaking of his mission (cf. verses 144-45). When he does reach the Underworld Dionysus' suspicions are confirmed, and the god comments (verses 280ff.) that Heracles exaggerated the difficulties in an attempt to frighten him, knowing that Dionysus was a fighting man and being jealous (philotimómenos in verse 281): nothing, Dionysus adds, is as disdainful as Heracles. Dionysus here is striking a pose and his language is appropriately grandiose, verse 282 indeed being straight parody of the tragedian Euripides.

And why does Dionysus accuse Heracles of jealousy? Heracles, his brother thinks, is reluctant to see his honour reduced; Heracles had already visited the nether regions and acquired reputation and honour by this exploit; his honour would inevitably be curtailed if another son of Zeus followed in his footsteps. Heracles is jealous of his honour and so we find him accused by Dionysus, and typically he is said in verse 281 to be philotimómenos. With Dionysus and Heracles there are as well special factors: both are sons of Zeus and we shall allow for that absolutely characteristic form of envy, sibling envy. If there is any general agreement at all among psychologists as to the root cause of envy, it is argued that this is to be identified in the experiences of early childhood and especially within the intimacy of the family. Brother competes with brother to win the affection of the parents and this element of competition continues to poison the relationship between brothers throughout their adult life.

Descent into the Underworld, challenging death itself, is an heroic feat, so much so in fact that Dionysus can pray that he encounters a contest worthy of the journey (verses 283-84). Heracles, Dionysus believes, acts like the true man of honour and especially in a society as highly competitive as the world of the Greeks. But Aristotle long ago made the point for me in the Rhetoric, stating that 'those who do great deeds and the successful are envious (phthoneroi), for they reckon that everybody is carrying off what is their own ... and, generally speaking, those who love fame in anything are envious (phthoneroi) about this' (1387b), a truism readily confirmed by the situation between Dionysus and Heracles at the beginning of the Frogs. The situation might well have been cited by Aristotle when he explains
in the same passage why indignation is felt and by whom, for Heracles is certainly a person who is far from happy that such an effeminate as Dionysus (cf. verses 45ff.) should aspire to a deed reserved for the genuinely brave. As Aristotle also noted in the Rhetoric, all men more or less are fond of themselves (philautos) and, therefore, their own deeds or words are sweet to them, and thus they are fond of honour as well as of flattery, of love and of children, children being our own ‘work’ (1371b). And, Aristotle adds slightly later, ‘since for the most part we are lovers of honour (philotimoī), it follows of necessity that it is pleasant to disparage those near us’.

We read in Plato’s Laws that the greatest of evils is that expressed in the saying that every man is naturally a friend to himself, and it is urged that every man ought to flee excessive self-love (731d-732b). Only a few lines before we are warned of the dangers of envy, and a contrast is drawn between what is conferred on a state by the man free from envy and by the envious man. ‘Let every man, then, freely strive for the prize of virtue, and let there be no envy. For the unenvious nature increases the greatness of states—he himself contends in the race, blasting the fair fame of no man; but the envious, who thinks that he ought to get the better by defaming others, is less energetic himself in the pursuit of true virtue, and reduces his rivals to despair by his unjust slanders of them. And so he makes the whole city to enter the arena untrained in the practice of virtue, and diminishes her glory as far as in him lies’ (731a-b, Benjamin Jowett’s translation).

I have consciously reserved this extract from Plato until this point, partly, I freely admit, to lessen the impact which much of this chapter may have had on the susceptibilities of the modern reader. But Plato is a philosopher and although the Laws is perhaps a more practical blueprint than the earlier Republic, we shall also note at the same time that Plutarch denies the existence of a state which has not experienced envy, jealousy or rivalry (Moralia 86C). I undertook some time ago to show whether envy, as the Greeks knew it, led to selfishness and malevolence, personal antipathy and the wish to injury, to a sense of inferiority and therefore resentment. I fear that it did, and so Pericles can be made to say by Thucydides in his funeral oration that praise of others is tolerable only in so far as we think ourselves capable of doing the same; anything more than that arouses envy and disbelief (2, 35, 2).

Plato identified and appreciated the danger posed by envy and his contrast between what the man devoid of envy has to contribute to life and the turmoil created by the envious enables this chapter to conclude on not too sour a note. We shall have to wait patiently until the last chapter before we may consider solutions to the problem of envy, since in what follows we shall be surveying the evidence in chronological sequence, and it was late in antiquity that religion and philosophy formulated solutions. This chapter has discussed envy in general terms and that has caused us to commence with Hesiod, say about 700 B.C., and to end with a final paragraph in which Plato, Plutarch and Thucydides, authors living in the fourth century B.C., the first and second centuries A.D., and the fifth century B.C., have supplied us with evidence. Such a range in chronology in itself suggests that a long but, I hope, rewarding journey lies ahead of us. And what our journey will reveal is not without relevance to the contemporary situation of mankind. For the moment, however, we should note that, according to the Greeks, envy was inherent in human nature and not simply the result of environment or experience, that envy and emulation might be distinguished, though that distinction was easily confused, and finally that envy is related to the concept of honour and so an integral part of the Greek value system.
One of my sons went into the army and stayed in it for twenty-eight years. He's got a tidy old head on him. He came out of the army with a lump sum and bought a little business, but he got too big and he fell. Now he has to work for a farmer. It doesn't matter how well off you become, you can overdo it. Then you will fall. But I fancy he isn't the only one who has done something wrong.

Fred Mitchell, horseman, as reported by Ronald Blythe, *Akenfield*
Andromache's behaviour sounds quite exceptional, and what was much more likely to be expected of a woman displaced in her husband's affections was the violence of a Medea or the fearful revenge of the Persian queens, two examples of which may be quoted from Herodotus. The first features the wife of Cyrus the Great, who found herself displaced in her husband's affections by an Egyptian. Her indignation was so forceful that, according to one tradition, it persuaded her son Cambyses to invade Egypt once he succeeded Cyrus (3, 3). Much more horrific is the story of the revenge exacted by the wife of King Xerxes (9, 108ff.). The victim in this case was the mother of the woman preferred to his own wife by Xerxes: the queen indulged her spite by mutilating her rival's mother, cutting off and feeding to the dogs the woman's breasts and cutting off as well her nose, ears, lips and tongue (9, 112).

Men still revel in their sexual adventures, real or imaginary, while demanding an absolute fidelity from their sorely abused wives; Zeus may have innumerable affairs, but Hera is never guilty of adultery. Other women within the family group are also subject to the strictest restraints. Sexual jealousy in the form of a desire to protect womenfolk of the family from the advances of outsiders is revealed by Odysseus' reply to Alcinous, when the Phaeacian king criticizes his daughter for not bringing the stranger all the way home with her (Od. 7, 298ff.). Odysseus claims that Nausicaa wanted to do this very thing, but he himself was unwilling in case he provoked the anger of her parent - 'for we men are frightfully jealous', the hero tactfully remarks (verse 307). And there are 'class' barriers as well, and such barriers are made that much more rigid by the honour code, particularly between groups as distinct as those exemplified by divinities and humans: mortals are to concern themselves with what is the business of mortals (cf. Pindar Isth. 5, 16, but contrast Nem. 6, 1-7). Calypso and Odysseus enjoy an affaire and are not married, but the conviction that marriage with an inferior confers disgrace (see, for example, Xen. Hiero 1, 27) must colour the relationship between those engaged in a liaison. If Hermes had been required to argue with Calypso, he might well have expressed sentiments like those uttered by Phaedra in Euripides' Hippolytus, when this Cretan aristocrat spoke of marriage collapsing because of the poor example set by aristocratic houses where restraint is advocated but passion indulged and so corruption spread through the lower orders (cf. verses 409ff.). And it is women, though married women, who are made responsible.

It is the Hippolytus which helps us to appreciate another reason why Homer's gods should entertain jealous thoughts. By his failure to acknowledge Aphrodite Hippolytus insults the goddess and brings about his own ruin (cf. especially the exchange between Hippolytus and the Servant, verses 88-120). The gods have well defined privileges and are entitled to certain respect. Woe betide the mortal, whether a character in fifth-century drama or Homeric hero, who does not conform and pay the gods due attention. The fate of Ajax in Sophocles' play of the same name provides a salutary lesson (cf. verses 127-33 and 756ff.). In the Iliad Poseidon is furious that the Greeks have built a wall to protect their ships without paying hekatombs to the gods, a wall whose fame will cause men to forget the wall constructed for Laomedon by Apollo and himself (7, 446-53); Artemis, it is said, was incensed that Oeneus neglected to sacrifice to her alone of the gods (9, 533-36). At the archery contest which formed part of the games held in honour of the dead Patroclus, Teucer neglected to promise the appropriate offering to Apollo (23, 863ff.), and as a result missed the target, for Apollo begrudged (megere, verse 865: the verb megairein, like another verb agaasthai we shall meet in a moment, means 'to think too great') him this. An extreme example of mortal neglect of a particular deity is provided by the Bacchae story, and Homer knew this type of 'resistance' myth, referring in the Iliad to Lycurgus and his abortive attempt to suppress the ceremonies of Dionysus (6, 130-40). The gods, moreover, can be pretty malicious: in the Hippolytus all that Artemis can do in retaliation against Aphrodite is to threaten revenge against one of her sister's favourites in the future (verses 1420-22), just as in the chariot-race of Iliad 23, when Apollo casts Diomedes' whip from his hands (verses 383ff.). Athenes responds by restoring the whip and, even more, by crashing the chariot of Eumelos (verses 391ff.).

But in general, throughout the Homeric poems, we hear of the envy of the gods merely in vague statements which reflect the pessimism of Homeric man, but do not add up to anything like a theory of divine envy directed against the powerful. Thus in the Odyssey, on their reunion, Penelope can remark to Odysseus that the gods begrudged (agasanto) that they should spend their lives together (23, 211-12); Menelaus speaks of a god begrudging that Odysseus and
he should be joined together (4, 181); and Alcinous refers to hearing from Nausithous that Poseidon would begrudge the Phaeacians their function as escorts of all men (8, 565-66 = 13, 173-74); while in the Iliad the envy of Apollo (agassato) is said to check Menelaus' success on the field of battle (17, 70-71). Furthermore, the verb phthonein can be used by Homer when it means not much more than 'to be unwilling': thus in the Iliad, Hera converses with her husband Zeus and undertakes not to stand in the god's way if he should wish to destroy a city dear to herself (4, 51ff.); if you want to destroy Argos, Sparta or Mycenae, she says, I do not grudge it you, and then adds - 'for if I am jealous (phthoneo) and do not consent to their destruction, I do no good, being jealous, since you are much more powerful' (verses 55-56). In Homer's other poem the beggar Irus attempts to get rid of a potential rival, the disguised Odysseus, but meets a firm reply from the hero, who says, 'I neither do nor say anything harmful to you, nor do I resent (phthoneo) anyone giving you to, though the gift be lavish' (Od. 18, 15-16). Homeric man is conscious of the gulf which divides him from the gods, even though he may boast divine parentage or a wife related to the gods. Significant is Menelaus' reply to Telemachus in the Odyssey when the young man is greatly impressed with the splendour of the Spartan palace (Od. 4, 71ff.). Telemachus feels the palace to be like that of Zeus, so splendid is it, but Menelaus is quick to point out that no mortal would compete with Zeus, whose home and possessions are immortal (verses 78-79). The absence of competition means that there is no scope for feelings of envy.

Certainly Greek epic poetry knew of great criminals who attempted to usurp what belonged to the gods - Tityos, who offered violence to the gods, and Poseidon who tried to scale heaven. Tityos, according to the Hesiodic Catalogue (fr. 30, 12-27 Merkelbach-West), wanted to pose as Zeus. Punished though they were, they are not said to be victims of the god's envy. In fact we must wait until the fifth century B.C. before we encounter the idea of the phthonos theon striking down the haughty, and this is a concept we associate with Herodotus, Aeschylus and Pindar. Why should the idea appear first to reveal itself in our texts at this period of time? Ought we to seek for some profound and deeply portentous change in the attitude of the Greeks towards the gods? Or is a simpler explanation both possible and also more convincing? I think that it is, and this explanation is suggested by passages to which we have already referred. Thus we earlier noticed that the relationship between Heracles and Dionysus in the Frogs is clouded by the curse of sibling rivalry, the species of envy also exemplified by the clash between mythological pairs of brothers, between Polynoeicis and Eteocles or between Atreus and Thyestes. Struggle for a crown is one aspect of the struggle for territory, and Desmond Morris has pointed out how 'animals fight amongst themselves for one of two very good reasons: either to establish their dominance in a social hierarchy, or to establish their territorial rights over a particular piece of ground' (The Naked Ape, Corgi Edition, London, 1968, p. 128). The hunger for productive land and the envy which such hunger could provoke is revealed by Herodotus' report of one version of how the Pelasgians came to be expelled from Attica: given apparently useless land in Attica as payment for the wall they had built around the Athenian acropolis, the Pelasgians were able to make a success of working this land, but were driven from Attica by the Athenians who were seized by envy (phthonos) and desire of the land (6, 137, 2). The rivalry and suspicion which may mar affection between brothers is perhaps best illustrated by the procedure by which an inheritance in Greece was divided into equivalent shares and the brothers then drew lots to determine who should have a particular share (cf. Od. 14, 207-9; Il. 15, 187ff.; cf. also Pindar, Olym. 7, 54ff.).

Discussing inheritance in his study of Mediterranean peoples, J. Davis passes the following comment: 'sons are invariably reported as seeking equality of division of the patrimony: this is partly a matter of basic bilateral ideology; partly - and more directly - a matter of jealousy if one brother should have a better start in life than another' (pp. 179-80). Here Davis might well have quoted from an essay included in the Moralia of Plutarch whose subject is brotherly love (de Fraterno Amore = Moralia 478ff.), since Plutarch remarks at one point that some assign houses and fields to concubines and prostitutes but fight a duel with a brother over a house-site or a corner (482C). Our Greek goes on to observe how many a brother plays the part of a demagogue against a brother with the object of securing for himself alone his parents' favour, though he ought rather to share any indignation a father might feel towards his offspring and to try to restore harmonious relations (482Dff.), all of which brings two advantages - it reduces anger directed at a brother and also wins the father's greater affection for the brother who reconciles. As usual, it is a mixture of the moral and the utilitarian
which is advanced in order to support a particular line of action. But the real trouble comes when the father is dead: when the estate is to be divided brothers should not declare war, like the majority, and come out ready to do battle; they ought to beware of that day, the beginning of incurable hostility and strife to some but the beginning of friendship and harmony to others (483D). What does it pay to gain a slave at the expense of the affection and trust of a brother, the most valuable part of the inheritance? Disreputable and praiseworthy examples hammer home Plutarch’s message and confirmation is provided by precepts culled from Solon, Plato and Pittacus (483E-484C). A great deal more follows but that we may defer discussing until later (see our pp. 65-66), though it is worth noting perhaps just one historical example of a quarrel over leadership between brothers to set beside the examples of Polyneices and Eteocles and of Atreus and Thyestes: in the late sixth century B.C. the island of Samos was ruled by the tyrant Polycrates and we shall be hearing more of Polycrates also later (see our p. 38); Herodotus tells that at first Polycrates shared power with two brothers, but subsequently killed one and exiled the other (3, 39, 1-2).

Polyneices and Eteocles were at each other’s throat. If we look at Sophocles’ play the Antigone, we shall see that their sisters Antigone and Ismene are similarly at odds, one with the other. Yet Antigone feels the need to bury the dead Polyneices so strongly that she is prepared to defy Creon’s edict forbidding the burial of Polyneices. To be brief, Antigone appears to feel as much affection for her brother Polyneices as she feels little affection for her sister Ismene; here we have an example of rivalry and dislike between siblings of the same sex, Polyneices and Eteocles and Antigone and Ismene, but a strong bond between siblings of the opposite sex, Polyneices and Antigone. This seeming contradiction is easily explained once we remember that the Greek assigned a different function and different qualities to the two sexes: men and women are different ‘morally’ as well as physically, they fulfil a different, and quite distinct, role in society, and in fulfilling a different role they cannot compete against one another. As I remarked earlier in this chapter (see our p. 26), absence of competition means that there is no scope for feelings of envy. There can be no rivalry, and therefore no hostility, unless one is playing in the same league. In a modern Greek family brothers will be encouraged to pursue different occupations, one remaining on the ancestral farm, a second becoming a government official, and a third perhaps qualifying as a school teacher. It is almost as if advice offered by Plutarch is being followed, advice that brothers ought not to pursue honours or powers from the same sources but from different ones (Moralia 486B). It is as bad, apparently, for brothers to follow the same profession as it is for them to fall in love with the same woman (486C)!

It has been noted that rivalry between brothers is discouraged among Sarakatsan shepherds in modern Greece by each brother being credited with a specialist skill - one is reckoned best as a cheese-maker, another is a specialist in fattening up the young animals, a third has a particular skill in milking ewes. Here one recalls yet again Hesiod’s lines from the Works and Days where we are informed of the rivalry between potters, craftsmen, beggars and singers (verses 25-26) or, to turn to history, the apparently endless series of squabbles between various pairs of Spartan kings. It would seem that the dual kingship retained by the Spartans was marked by strife between the two holders of the office from its inception (Herodotus 6, 52, 8), an obvious pair who failed to co-operate being Cleomenes and Demaratus (e.g. 6, 61, 1; cf. 5, 75). Competition is likely to be as virulent between members of the same ‘profession’ as it is between siblings of the same sex.

But by now my readers may well be wondering where they are, for we are drifting far, or so it seems, from any explanation as to why the concept of the envy of the gods should have developed and be so prominent in Herodotus, Aeschylus and Pindar. But the point I wished to introduce was that envy is directed against ‘equals’, and brothers and Spartan kings qualify as equals. The Works and Days on professional jealousy is quoted by Socrates in the Platonic dialogue the Lysis, when in discussing friendship Socrates reports an argument that friendship, far from being based on the principle that like attracts like, depends upon dissimilarity: ‘by a universal and infallible law the nearer any two things resemble each other, the fuller do they become of envy, strife and hatred’ (215d). In the Rhetoric Aristotle makes the point that phthonos is a disturbing pain aimed at good fortune on the part of one who is our equal and like (1386b), and that those men will feel envy to whom there are or there seem to be others like (homoioi) them, further stipulating 'likeness' in birth, family, age, 'habit', reputation and possessions; those are envied, moreover, who are near in time, place, age and reputation (1388a). After quoting a verse, 'kinship
knows how also to envy', Aristotle then adds to the list of those envied the people with whom one competes before he tots up those we have no interest in competing against, that is, the long dead, the yet to be born, the far distant, and those far below or far beyond us - but those with whom we most compete are those pursuing the same end, an opinion reinforced by a snatch from verse 25 of the *Works and Days*, 'potter envies potter' (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a 32ff.). In other words, we envy those whose position or possessions appear to be within our own grasp. The gulf which separates envier and envied is usually not too great: the owner of a motor-cycle envies the owner of a modest family car or perhaps a sports model but not a Daimler or Rolls; the manual worker envies his white-collar neighbour rather than the managing director. Surely no one envies the Queen or the American president, except, of course, the latter's defeated rival. It is as the poet Bacchylides says (1, 62-64), the rich desire great things but the poor less. The university teacher is usually content to think in terms of becoming a fully fledged professor. A powerful affirmation of my statement that we do not envy the Queen is provided by an argument in support of monarchy set forth in a speech by Isocrates: in the relevant passage the speaker claims that men in an oligarchy or democracy injure the state because of their mutual ambitions but those in a monarchy do what is best 'not having anyone to envy' (3, 18), that is, the king is so far beyond his subjects as not to excite envy. I referred earlier (see our p. 11) to the 'Persian Debate' recounted by Herodotus, and here a similar argument is advanced to justify monarchy as the best form of government (3, 82). Herodotus also tells us how the Median king Deioces surrounded himself with court ceremonial, allowing no one direct access to his royal person and requiring communication by messenger. He did this, we are informed, for a particular reason, that those who were his equals, reared with him and not inferior in family or manliness, might not, on seeing him, grieve and plot but that he might appear to them, not having the chance of seeing him, of a different kind (1, 99). Such a special quality, maintained by elaborate court ritual, remains an essential part of royal ideology.

At several points in a comparison of envy and hate included among the *Moralia* Plutarch stresses how prosperity encourages growth of envy. But at the same time he also argues that outstanding success often quenches envy, and here he refers to the examples offered by the Greek Alexander the Great and the Persian Cyrus the Great (*Moralia* 538a-b). In fact his argument is based on the premise that world conquerors have achieved so much so as to be beyond the reach of envy; they are the ancient equivalents of our Queen or the President of the United States: like the sun, when it stands overhead pouring down its light, removes the shadow completely or makes it small, so good fortune, standing high over the head of envy, sees it reduced and retreating, exposed as it is to brightness. No one envies the wretched as we shall shortly have occasion to note (see our pp. 39-40), and so Plutarch can conclude that envy flags when fortune is extreme in either direction, up or down.

Envy is provoked by the hope of achieving comparable status or similar possessions. A Persian king was not bothered by the possibility of treachery at the hands of a Spartan exile, though that Spartan had once been a king himself (see our p. 11). The power of a reigning Spartan king was puny compared to that of the monarch of Persia. The gods were going to envy individual mortals only when there were mortal men whose powers might seem to approach those of the gods themselves, and such men became known in the Greek world when the Greeks encountered for the first time eastern potentates; at that time kings became rivals and not the proteges of the gods as they are in the *Iliad* (cf. 1, 278-79). Whatever the historical date of the society depicted in the Homeric poems, it is obvious that no mean period of time separates that society from the fifth century B.C. It is equally obvious that this interval of time saw dramatic changes, both political and economic, throughout the Greek world, and that the changes went to produce a more open society, a less rigidly hierarchical society, and the development of a more open society, I suggest, is another reason why the gods found themselves credited with envy of the high and mighty.

It is difficult to exaggerate the impact made on the Greek imagination by the wealth of the eastern rulers with whom they came into contact during the Archaic period. Midas and Croesus became proverbially celebrated for their possessions, while we have a reference to the wealth of Gyges, king of Lydia during the first half of the seventh century B.C., as early as the poetry of Archilochus. And the Gyges reference is even more informative, since the fragment reads: 'what is Gyges', rich in gold, does not bother me, nor has envy (zelos) yet seized me, nor do I longingly at the works of gods, and I do not...
long desperately for a great tyranny; for it is far from my eyes' (fr. 19, West IEG; these verses are quoted by Plutarch, Moralia 470B-C). Here we see combined the wealth of Gyges, envy, the gods and tyranny, almost to provide a summary of the topics we are now to discuss, and since the speaker of these lines seems to have been a craftsman named Charon, we can appreciate their closing comment.

Certainly there is no doubt as to the wealth of the Phrygian and Lydian kings. Herodotus informs us that Midas of Phrygia dedicated at Delphi his remarkable throne, while Gyges sent many offerings to the Greek shrine, indeed most of those of silver and an immense quantity of gold in addition, including six gold craters weighing thirty talents (1, 14, 1-3). In the sixth century Croesus created an empire which brought Greeks to his capital of Sardis, one of whom was reputed to be the Athenian poet and statesman Solon. It is in Herodotus' story of the encounter between eastern king and Greek, a tradition which stresses at every point the staggering wealth of Croesus, that we learn that 'the divinity is ever envious (phthoneron) and delights in confusion' (1, 32, 1), a belief confirmed by the fact that Croesus was later to fall victim to the anger of heaven because he thought himself the most prosperous of all men (1, 34, 1).

Even more impressive were the achievements of Cyrus, the conqueror of Croesus, and his successors as Persian kings. The envy of the gods is an idea especially associated with Herodotus and Aeschylus. How did the historian and the poet regard the kings of the East? Again, the Persian kings are always being offered advice in the pages of Herodotus. So Artabanus urges Xerxes not to invade Greece, asking the king whether he has noted how god strikes down the tallest animals, buildings and trees, 'for god is wont to put down everything excessive' (7, 10e); a large army, he adds, is destroyed by a small force 'whenever god, having become envious (phthonesen) instils fear . . . for god allows none other than himself to entertain haughty thoughts'. Life is wretched, Artabanus remarks subsequently, and though it is brief, it appears long; death is a most attractive escape, and god gives us a taste of the sweetness of life only to be found envious of his gift (7, 46, 3-4; cf. 7, 203, 2). But the gods, of course, just conform to the normal rules of human life: the Greeks were jealous of the success of another, as we saw, for example in the comment on Demaratus passed by Xerxes (see our p. 11) and as we shall shortly see again; and the Persians as they appear in Herodotus were no more generous - another advocate of caution on the Persian side was their ally Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus, who opposed the engagement off Salamis; the Persians reacted differently to her boldness, those well disposed to her fearing for her safety, but others, 'those who envied her because she was honoured beyond all the allies', were delighted at the prospect of her destruction (8, 69, 1).

Herodotus makes Themistocles tell the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, after their victory at Salamis, that they were not responsible for the defeat of Xerxes' forces, but the gods and heroes, 'who envied one man being king over Asia and Europe, a man unholy and outrageous who treated the sacred and profane alike, burning and casting down the images of the gods, scourging and enchaining the sea' (8, 109, 3). The messenger in the Persians ascribes the Persian debacle to a combination of a Greek's guile, that is, Themistocles', and the envy of the gods (verses 361-62), and then speaks of god giving the glory of the naval battle to the Greeks (verses 454-55). But for Aeschylus such envy has
a wider scope, for it strikes down not only Persian king but also his
character Agamemnon in the tragedy of the same name, and this
extension in range is made possible by the implicit comparison be-
tween victorious Greek hero and the mythological equivalent of the
Persian king, Priam king of Troy. It is not for nothing that the series
of mythological abductions with which Herodotus opens his history of
the wars between Greeks and Persians culminates in the rape of Helen;
Priam is in one sense the first eastern king with whom the Greek came
to contact. In the play Agamemnon, replying to Clytemnestra’s
request that he tread the purple path, Agamemnon asks not to be made
the object of prostration, like an Easterner (and this is a Persian custom),
and not to be exposed to envy by his wife strewing his path with gar­
ments; it is the gods who should be thus honoured, and for a mortal to
request that he tread the purple path, Agamemnon asks not to be made
mortal, not a god (verse 925). Agamemnon wants for himself the reverence owed a
object of prostration, like an Easterner (and this is a
choice does exist, and it is very doubtful that it did in the opinion of a
Greek. As Agamemnon succumbs to the blandishments of his wife, he
prays, ‘let no eye’s envy strike me from afar’ (verse 947), and the word
‘grievous is the burden of excessive praise, for from the eyes of Zeus
is cast the thunder-bolt’ (verses 468-70; cf. 750ff.). The chorus chooses ‘prosperity
without envy (aphthonos)’, although there is no guarantee that this
choice does exist, and it is very doubtful that it did in the opinion of a
Greek. As Agamemnon succumbs to the blandishments of his wife, he
prays, ‘let no eye’s envy strike me from afar’ (verse 947), and the word
‘gods’ in the preceding line makes it quite clear from where the envy
Agamemnon fears will emanate. The gods share the emotions and pas­sions of ordinary mortals, and Agamemnon has said in his opening
words that it is the rare man who respects a prosperous friend ‘without
envy’; malice attaches itself to the heart and doubles the force of the
disease; to one’s own sorrows are added groans at the sight of another’s
prosperity (verses 832-37).

Even today people will admit finding it easier to sympathize with
a friend in distress than to rejoice at a friend’s success. The ancient
Greek was less inhibited, and the idea that prosperity inevitably
engenders envy and malice is commonplace. A scrap preserved by
Stobaeus offers advice which seems not often to have been followed:
do not envy the prosperous, lest you appear to be wicked (3, 38, 3 = Chares fr. 3 Nauck). In his Ajax Sophocles puts the point concisely and clearly: envy creeps up on the man who has (verse 157). In
Euripides’ Suppliant Women Theseus claims there are three groups of
citizens, the rich, the poor and those in the middle. What does he say
of the second class? The have-nots, those who lack the essentials of
life, are motivated by envy and release ‘evil stings’ on those who have
(verses 240-42). Quite unambiguous is a comment put in the mouth of
King Cyrus in Xenophon’s Cyropedia: the most one has, then the most
people envy, scheme and become enemies (7, 5, 77). In another piece
of Xenophon’s writings, the Memorabilia, envy is said to be a kind of
pain inspired not by the misfortunes of friends nor the prosperity of
enemies - the envious are simply those annoyed at the success of
friends (3,9, 8). In a speech by Isocrates much the same is said: make
your companions not only those distressed at your misfortune, but
also those who do not envy your prosperity, for many grieve with
their friends in distress but envy them when they fare well (1, 26).
Elsewhere in Isocrates we read that we envy those who surpass us in
intelligence or in any other respect, unless we are won over by the
daily kindness of such people (10, 56); in his last work Isocrates offers
a spirited defence against his critics, and here he can refer to his being
envied by those who praise his writings ‘for no other reason than these
speeches which they approve of’, and then he asks why should we be
surprised at those who are naturally of this character and opposed to
every kind of pre-eminence (12, 15-16). In yet another speech by
Isocrates an unconvincing attempt is made to excuse the readiness
with which we feel envy at another’s prosperity: if we encounter the
unfortunate it upsets us because we are forced to share their distress
in addition to our personal troubles; if we encounter the fortunate, it
is even worse - not because we envy their prosperity but because the
prosperity of neighbours makes us see our own wretchedness more
clearly (14, 47). A brave effort at an excuse perhaps but it will
persuade few.

But at least we have seen that the fact that we envy a friend’s
success did bother the ancients just as it continues to bother us today.
The problem receives a full treatment in an essay by Plutarch which instructs us how to profit from our enemies (de Capienda ex Inimicis Utilitate = Moralia 86Bff.). In this example of Plutarch’s moralizing the pious author would have us be generous towards enemies, quoting the action of Caesar, who ordered the restoration of the statues of his defeated foe Pompey (91Aff.): the greatest advantage, he claims, of not begrudging an enemy his prosperity is the fact that it makes us least likely to envy friends or relatives who succeed. The trouble is that we start hating and envying enemies and once the habit takes root, it sticks; then from habit we start hating and envying friends. We must treat our enemies generously if we are to treat our friends generously. But as Plutarch adds (91Eff.), all human nature produces rivalry, jealousy and envy, and envy (phthonos) he qualifies by attaching to it a snippet of verse from Pindar, ‘companion of empty-headed men’ (fr. 200 Bowra). Here the answer is to direct these emotions on enemies rather than on friends. Hesiod is also cited: potter must not envy potter, nor singer his fellow singer, and neighbours and relatives are not to be jealous of one another’s success (cf. Works and Days, 25-26 and 24). If envy is a fact of life, unload it on enemies, who will render you pleasanter to your friends in their prosperity by draining your potential for envy. But there is more to it than that: Themistocles said that the victory gained by his rival Miltiades at the Battle of Marathon did not allow him to sleep; in other words, we ought to make our envy work for us in the sense that we ought to profit from the example offered us by a rival, we ought to be spurred on by a comparable energy ourselves (92Bff.), reducing envy, as it were, to emulation. Finally, it may well be that our enemies owe their success to dishonourable activities or actions, and then we may console ourselves with the thought that nothing enviable or noble is born from what is dishonourable, virtue being most valuable of all (92D-E). Plutarch, I suppose, is no more convincing than Isocrates some four hundred years earlier in finding an excuse for man’s tendency to envy the success or prosperity of others, but we must give some credit for effort, unsatisfactory though that effort may be. It is sufficient for the purpose of my argument in this chapter to note that it is equals or those approximately equal who envy one another, and thus the gods need to feel envy only when there are men whose power is so great as to make them potential rivals of the gods. Such mortals became known to the Greeks for the first time when they came into contact with eastern kings, those in Asia Minor or the Persian monarchs. Given a little time, the victims of the gods’ envy could be extended to include Agamemnon, a hero who had triumphed over an eastern king in the distant mythological past, especially as Agamemnon was as real a historical ruler to the Greeks as was Midas or Gyges or even Croesus or Cyrus.