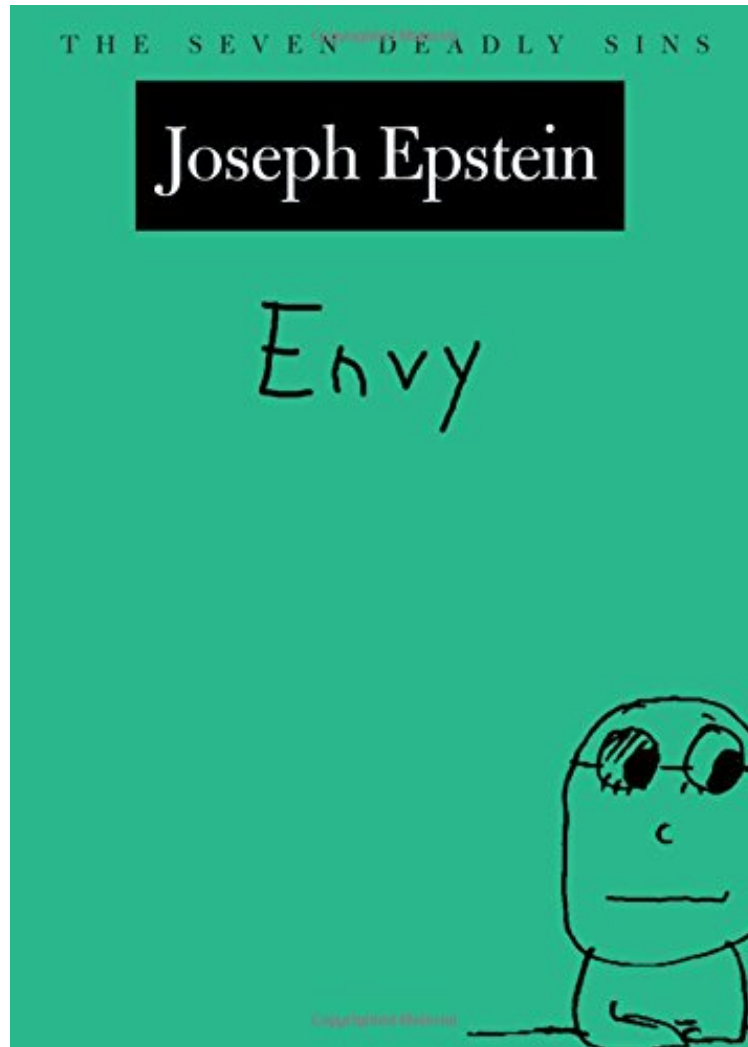


(Download) Envy: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities)

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Joseph Epstein

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Joseph Epstein : Envy: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Envy: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Jewish WorldviewBy Qalb-e-SaleemI bought this book a few hours ago and finished reading it a few minutes ago. Most reviews were not Verified Purchases, so I was wary, but I still bought it.In terms of the sin of envy, the book tends to disappoint, because it does not reach a thesis statement through research, rather the author quotes authors and philosophers to validate his preconceived notions about envy. We never

learn WHY envy is so potent a force, as the author states; the question is left in the air. We are told that wealth and power is envied universally and this is the reason 9/11 and Jewish persecution happened. Non-western non-materialistic cultures do not conform to this worldview. Till recently Hindu India was a saving oriented culture of simplicity, and so was China 30 years ago, till western corporations made inroads in both ancient lands. The author repeatedly tells us that a simplistic lifestyle and the pursuit of non-materialistic values is simply not possible. Hence the author falls short in explaining the nature of envy. His identification of the envying kind is also vague. However, there is merit in his words when he outlines the manifestations of envy, and of the differing nature of male and female envy. I am however, surprised that no one objected to the politically incorrect nature of male and female envy, which he states. What the book really conveys is the Jewish worldview, which not surprisingly conforms to the Qur'anic statements about them. The author makes no bones about the privileged status he feels as a Jew, which makes him different from everyone else, while being a part of the great nation of the U.S. He disparages the Muslims (Arabs) for hating Jews prior to the holocaust, even as Muslims have historically been the sole benefactors of the Jews. He attributes Jewish persecution to envy alone, whether stemming from religious origins or material success; he goes on to state that Jews are despised if they assimilate or if they don't. The second chapter of the Qur'an, surah Baqarah, states the exact same beliefs of the Jews; the verse was revealed circa 622 AD, and yet they call it a text which a camel riding Muhammad (pbuh) authored in seventh century Arabia!!!!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

"May you...love without desiring/all that you are not" By Kerry Walters

So wrote the poet W.H. Auden in his "Many Happy Returns," and Joseph Epstein takes it as the exhortatory epigram to this little book on envy. Part of a horribly uneven series on the 7 deadly sins, Epstein's book is one of the better ones (which is to say that it could well provoke envy on the part of the less successful authors in the series). Epstein argues that envy is the most insidious of the 7 deadlies because those of us who suffer from it rarely recognize it for what it is. Most of us know when we're angry or lustful or greedy. But envy is the "hidden" vice that masquerades as something else, and so it's difficult to recognize and overcome. To make matters worse, we live in a culture that encourages envy--although, once again, it's disguised as "competition," "improving one's lifestyle," or "making the most of one's opportunities." Epstein's analysis of envy is written entertainingly, and the text is punctuated with wryly appropriate cartoons from the "New Yorker." In his analysis of envy, he makes useful distinctions between (for example) jealousy and envy and schadenfreude and envy. His discussion of resentment (yes, that's with two s's), which he borrows from the philosophers Max Scheler and Friedrich Nietzsche, is especially useful, although of no surprise to the professional philosophers who read his book. But there are two areas where I wish Epstein had developed his theme a bit more (even as I recognize that the point of the series is to offer short, pithy treatments of the 7 deadlies). Epstein mentions in passing (Chapter 1) Aristotle's claim that not all varieties of envy are immoral or destructive, and famously cites emulation as one example. Epstein dismisses a virtuous emulative envy as "not so easily done," and quickly moves on. But it's the hard case like this that's truly interesting, and one wishes that Epstein had tackled it. Moreover, Epstein's suggestion for breaking the hold of envy, on both personal and cultural levels, is the cultivation of "self-honesty, self-analysis, and balanced judgment" (p. 97). Fair enough. But this comes close to suggesting that envy can be overcome through sheer will power, and this in turn suggests that the envious person is aware of her envy but just isn't strong-willed enough to overcome it. Yet if Epstein's starting assumption that envy is insidious is correct, things may not be this simple. Sincere self-honesty and self-analysis may not be strong enough to disclose hidden vice. Balanced judgment is irrelevant without such a disclosure.

All in all, however, a good introduction to the green-eyed monster.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Lighthearted, Cute, and Funny

By Stanley

One of the top reasons I bought the book was the cute cartoons. I wanted to copy them and send them to others I thought might enjoy them. How can you help but see humor in a smiling, obviously happy man, telling another, "I'm sorry you're having a hard time Roy, please forgive my schadenfreude." Or how about "Mister Lima Bean" thinking with envy of "Mr. Peanut?" Now that's funny stuff. The book (or rather essay) is a short and easy read with much humor and a little serious reference to scholars and philosophers. I really bought the book because I knew little about envy, I could not name a single person that I envied, well locally anyway. Would we all like Bill Gates' money? Sure, we could do a lot of good but at the same time I can walk into a Dairy Queen and not be mobbed by people. Epstein on the other hand lists all kinds of people he's envious of. People who can do back flips, who have good posture, who are tall. Maybe this is a Jewish world outlook as some other reviewers have noted. Incidentally he acknowledges that he is proud to be a Jew living in America. Now all this being said the book is still a worthwhile buy. It's cute and funny. For someone looking for a true academic book on the subject I've learned the great reference is Helmut Schoeck with his book with the same title. Schoeck spends a good part of his work on politically motivated envy. If you want a serious book get Schoeck if you want fun get Epstein.

Malice that cannot speak its name, cold-blooded but secret hostility, impotent desire, hidden rancor and spite--all cluster at the center of envy. Envy clouds thought, writes Joseph Epstein, clobbers generosity, precludes any hope of serenity, and ends in shriveling the heart. Of the seven deadly sins, he concludes, only envy is no fun at all. Writing in a conversational, erudite, self-deprecating style that wears its learning lightly, Epstein takes us on a stimulating tour of the many faces of envy. He considers what great thinkers--such as John Rawls, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche--have

written about envy; distinguishes between envy, yearning, jealousy, resentment, and schadenfreude ("a hardy perennial in the weedy garden of sour emotions"); and catalogs the many things that are enviable, including wealth, beauty, power, talent, knowledge and wisdom, extraordinary good luck, and youth (or as the title of Epstein's chapter on youth has it, "The Young, God Damn Them"). He looks at resentment in academia, where envy is mixed with snobbery, stirred by impotence, and played out against a background of cosmic injustice; and he offers a brilliant reading of Othello as a play more driven by Iago's envy than Othello's jealousy. He reveals that envy has a strong touch of malice behind it--the envious want to destroy the happiness of others. He suggests that envy of the astonishing success of Jews in Germany and Austria may have lurked behind the virulent anti-Semitism of the Nazis. As he proved in his best-selling Snobbery, Joseph Epstein has an unmatched ability to highlight our failings in a way that is thoughtful, provocative, and entertaining. If envy is no fun, Epstein's Envy is truly a joy to read.

From Publishers Weekly
The Oxford University Press/New York Public Library Seven Deadly Sins series, of which Envy is the first volume, comes hot on the heels of Penguin's successful Lives, which provocatively pairs celebrated subjects with well-known writers in compact and accessible biographies. Unfortunately, Envy is insubstantial and unambitious even for its modest size. While it might have seemed a good idea to get Epstein, author of the uneven but amusing Snobbery: The American Version, to address the related sin of envy, he does not seem to have anything very provocative to say about it. Derived from a public lecture, Epstein's opening chapters give a decent if unenlightening overview, larded with enough quotations from such greats as Schopenhauer and Lord Chesterfield to maintain interest. Over the course of 14 chapters, some of a few hundred words each, cliché turns up often (Shakespeare is "that most universal of writers," and Othello is about Iago, it turns out), yet the book's airy charm and lightly worn learning might work as diverting, high-toned amusement if not for the one-dimensionality of some of the ideas that emerge. For Epstein's notion of envy is ultimately that of the moneyed and powerful, who characterize any challenge to their power as being based on envy. Marxism? Envy. Feminism? Envy. The academy? Envy and "hopelessly radical political views." This kind of rhetoric might go over in a country club or cigar lounge, but in the world of ideas to which it is presumably addressed, it reads more like an example of the eighth deadly sin: smugness. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist
Seven writers have been invited to consider the seven deadly sins, and the results are being published in a promising series of small, cleverly illustrated, and, so far, scintillating volumes. Epstein's recent book on snobbery has met with great acclaim, making him uniquely suited to the task of analyzing envy, since snobbery is based on its cultivation, and, indeed, Epstein is a witty and thoughtful elucidator of this covert and poisonous state of mind. Of the seven sins, Epstein observes, envy is the most common and insidious and the least enjoyable. He discusses various types of envy, the differences between women's and men's envy, Freud's preoccupation with it, and worlds in which envy rages (the arts and academia may be the worst). Epstein confesses to his own struggles with envy over the course of his musings, which grow in gravitas as he moves beyond individuals to consider how envy between nations leads to war and how anti-Semitism can be interpreted as a particularly malignant manifestation of this deadly sin. Novelist and critic Prose brings her keen interest in our conflicted relationship with our bodies to her creatively, even voraciously researched and elegantly argued inquiry into the paradoxes of gluttony, a sin writ large on the body and, therefore, impossible to conceal. Prose notes that the term is rarely used now that overeating is viewed as a psychological and health problem rather than a "crime against God." Equally conversant in religious and secular perspectives, Prose turns to theology and art to illuminate the curious history of a sin rooted in a behavior essential to survival. She traces the line between gourmandism and bingeing and ponders the increase in obesity in our consumer culture and the stigma of being overweight in a society that loves excess in everything but body size. Gluttons now sin against "prevailing standards of beauty and health," and the punishment is living hell. Donna Seaman
Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "What midsummer night's feast would be digestible without Francine Prose's Gluttony; what weekend jaunt to your best friend's chateau would be survivable without Joseph Epstein's Envy? And you'll need Wendy Wasserstein's Sloth (wickedly subtitled 'And How to Get It') while you're struggling out of your deck chair."--O, The Oprah Magazine (on the series) "Whimsically packaged examinations of Lust by Simon Blackburn, Gluttony by Francine Prose, Envy by Joseph Epstein, Anger by Robert Thurman, Greed by Phyllis Tickle, Sloth by Wendy Wasserstein and Pride by Michael Eric Dyson become playgrounds for cultural reflection by authors and playwrights in Oxford's Seven Deadly Sins series."--Publishers Weekly (on the series) "Diverting, high-toned amusement."--Publishers Weekly "Epstein wields a nimble pen in this consideration of the 'most pervasive' mortal sin.... Though experiencing envy may be 'no fun at all,' under Epstein's guidance, this sin is pretty entertaining to contemplate in all its fine permutations.... Strangely comforting in its reassurance that the reader is not alone in being a petty SOB."--Kirkus "Joseph Epstein has earned his reputation as one of our most respected men of letters through his mastery of the essay.... With Envy, we are back in familiar Epstein territory.... Delightful...entertaining and provocative."--Chicago Sun-Times "Eternally fascinating to saint, sinner and everyone occupying the vast expanse between those two poles...penetrating and perspicacious.... Epstein's tone is as attractive as his judgment and analysis are sound."--San Francisco Chronicle "Will win new readers for one of the most entertaining of contemporary writers.... Epstein cites an impressive range of

authorities, from Aristotle to Gore Vidal ('Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies,' Vidal once wrote). Yet the real vim of the book comes from Epstein's honest search for envy close to home."--National Post"A stimulating tour of the killjoy sin of envy."--Books and Culture"Epstein explores this vice with candor and clarity...Though this book is compact and can easily be read in one sitting, it feels exhaustive. It delves into tortuous malebolge--resentment, schadenfreude, envy of youth, anti-Semitism, Marxism and so on--and examines how they are rooted in or fueled by envy.... The book's virtue lies less in explaining the vice than in warning of its danger. The reader who expects a smug, winking skepticism will be disappointed. Yes, Epstein has fun. (Each chapter comes with a New Yorker cartoon, but these wither in the heat of the author's wit.) He is, nonetheless, deadly serious about a sin that 'tends to diminish all in whom it takes possession.' Epstein's writing is a rare alloy of sobriety, sophistication, and warm humor that--quite contrary to the spirit of his book--I wish I possessed."--National "Epstein is a witty and thoughtful elucidator of this covert and poisonous state of mind."--Booklist"Epstein deftly untangles jealousy from envy, Othello from Iago, and Nietzsche from Schopenhauer while decoding an impressive universe of things enviable and revisiting the seeds of resentment that gave rise to anti-Semitism."--Elle