Jealousy and jealousy: From the classical literature to the scientific view

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Jealousy is a relatively common, everyday emotional experience that has been one of the favorite topics of philosophy and art since antiquity. However, as a topic of systemic or scientific research it has attracted the attention of behavior sciences - mostly from the fields of sociology, psychology and psychiatry - only in the last 3-4 decades. It is not therefore, surprising that many issues regarding its nature and its relationship to love, to delusional jealousy and above all to the issue of physiological or "pathological" jealousy are still unresolved. In this paper, we tackle these issues first from within the texts of the classical literature, and later from the data of the current science. The first part deals with the issue of jealousy as an element of our everyday life, the various - mostly philological - definitions of jealousy and its derivatives, as well as with its relation to other emotions, such as love. In the second part the psychological definitions of jealousy are offered as well as its differentiation based on the gender, its aetiology, its evolutionary view, and finally the pathological version of jealousy. In the second part, we undertake a systematic presentation of the psychological construct of jealousy. Jealousy can be understood as an emotion, different from the emotion of envy - although there is a considerable overlap between the two - as well as a complex behavioral pattern that besides the emotional component includes ideational and behavioral components. The term "jealousy" with the later meaning - not as an emotion but as a complex behavioral pattern - is adopted in this paper in order to study its normal and pathological manifestations. Subsequently the differences between male and female jealousy are described as well as whether jealousy is inherent or not. We also comment on the normal and pathological forms of jealousy and we present its evolutionary aspects. We end up by describing in detail the clinical picture of morbid, not delusional, jealousy. In brief, in this paper we adopt the position and suggest that jealousy exists on a continuum, ranking from normal jealousy to morbid jealousy, in which the later can reach the extreme form of a delusional state. Thus, romantic jealousy - the most common form of jealousy - can exist throughout the whole range, however its pathological expression occupies only a part of the continuum. We hope that progress in this area might increase knowledge and ways of dealing with jealousy when it reaches a clinical status.

Key words: jealousy, morbid jealousy, delusional jealousy.

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