

# Emotional Self-Knowledge

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## Chapter 10

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### Hostile Affective States and Their Self-Deceptive Styles: Envy and Hate

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# 10 Hostile Affective States and Their Self-Deceptive Styles

## Envy and Hate

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### 10.1 Introduction

Though the link between hostility and self-deception is not causal, it is a commonplace that people experiencing hostile affective states (hereafter HASs) such as envy, jealousy, anger, resentment, hate, and Ressentiment tend to deceive themselves about what they are experiencing.<sup>1</sup> More precisely, a negative self-evaluation is transformed into another, less negative one to the self so that the subject's positive sense of self is preserved. In current literature, authors working on “emotions of aggression” such as Landweer (2020) and on “emotional mechanisms” such as Salice and Salmela (2022) (see also Montes Sánchez and Salice 2023) have examined the processes of transformation of a negative emotion into another, more acceptable one and, though employing different conceptual tools, they have shed light on how HASs might lead to self-deception. In this vein, Landweer claims that the transformation or re-interpretation of one emotion into another is socially embedded and takes place within a normative framework which sanctions emotions of aggression. Having internalized such normative reasons, the subject of an HAS regards her own mental state as inappropriate so that a transformation and/or re-interpretation occurs. For instance, a subject might transform her envy into the less stigmatized emotions of resentment and/or indignation to cope with a situation of frustration. Drawing on Elster (1999), Salice, and Salmela argue that when a given emotion such as envy, shame, or anger generates hedonically unpleasant feelings of inferiority and/or impotence in the subject, it sets in motion unconscious and distinctively patterned mental processes so that the emotion is transmuted into another which does not imply a negative sense of self. As they argue, since the prior emotion is usually socially condemned or the subject feels that she is powerless to change the situation, the subject cannot express the emotion, so a modification of the appraisal at the basis of the emotion takes place and the original emotion is discarded and replaced by another one. In this respect, emotional mechanisms are—as Salice and Salmela put it—“coping mechanisms”.

In this chapter, I am interested in another aspect in which a painful self-evaluation might lead the subject to deceive herself in order to preserve a positive sense of self. While the accounts mentioned above explain how a negative self-evaluation elicits a self-deceptive transformation of one HAS into another affective state, my focus here is on how the negative self-evaluation motivates a self-deceptive upliftment of the sense of self so that the HAS in question is more bearable, independently of a possible transformation of this HAS into another emotion. In particular, I am interested in how the negative self-evaluation sets in train a set of self-deceptive maneuvers to cope with the negative self-evaluation, in turn generating an unreal and fictitious positive sense of self without necessarily transforming the HAS in question into another state. In other words, instead of examining how a negative self-evaluation makes me transform my envy into indignation or my envy into hate (an issue investigated by the authors mentioned above), my focus is on how the negative self-evaluation experienced in envy motivates the envier to generate an upliftment of her own self, for instance by claiming that the rival does not deserve the good, without transforming her envy into something else. This issue has been explored in relation to Ressentiment (e.g., Aeschbach 2017; Rodax et al. 2021; Salmela and Capelos 2021). As illustrated by Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes, the person in the grip of Ressentiment devaluates the object that she cannot achieve in order to compensate for her feeling of powerlessness. In these analyses, the subject is described as attempting to compensate for feelings of powerlessness with an upliftment of the sense of self. Yet here my aim is to provide an account which can be applied to HASs other than Ressentiment.

To develop my account, I will interpret the negative self-evaluation involved in several HASs as a diminution in the subject's "feeling of self-worth".<sup>2</sup> The introduction of this concept is important in two respects. On the one hand, while speaking of a negative self-evaluation could be interpreted in cognitive terms, i.e., as a judgment made by the subject about her own mental state, the term "feeling of self-worth" underscores its affective nature. Therefore, here the negative self-evaluation has to be understood as an affective apprehension of the subject's own value: the subject *feels* diminished in worth. On the other hand, feelings of self-worth refer to a specific class of affective phenomena. As such, they have to be distinguished from the emotions. While emotions are responses to certain evaluative properties of the environment (e.g., fear is a response to a danger), feelings of self-worth are a form of apprehending the value of one's own self. Note that as I use it, the concept of "feelings of self-worth" encompasses a wide array of episodic and occurrent feelings in which the subject senses a positive or a negative fluctuation in one's own value. While positive fluctuations involve feelings of being superior, empowered, being at an advantage and feeling favored, etc., negative feelings of self-worth involve feeling inferior, feeling powerless, feeling at a

disadvantage, feeling disfavored, and so on. Thus, a negative feeling of self-worth indicates a diminution in the subject's episodic self-esteem and is responsible for the negative hedonic valence of several HASs and in particular of HASs leading to self-deception independently of the subject's dispositional self-esteem which is an enduring feature of her character.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that it is a feeling of self-worth that motivates self-deception has strong implications for the model of self-deception endorsed in this chapter. According to the standard view, self-deception is an intentional and doxastic state. In this vein, Davidson (1986) argued that, operating behind the self-deceiver's back, there is an intention to deceive herself so that a false belief is maintained in spite of there being evidence for the opposite belief. As a result, a tension emerges that is typical of self-deception: the subject maintains the false belief despite knowing that the opposite belief is true. In contrast, non-intentionalist accounts argue that, rather than resulting from the subject's intention to deceive herself, the self-deception arises from emotions and/or desires (e.g., Lazar 1998; Mele 2000) and non-doxastic accounts explain self-deception as involving a tension between elements other than beliefs (e.g., Gendler 2007). Given that in my model, the self-deception experienced by the subject of an HAS is motivated by a negative feeling of self-worth so that a positive feeling of self-worth is generated, the model endorsed here is non-intentional and non-doxastic in nature. Yet, unlike the circulating non-intentionalist accounts, in the proposed model, what motivates the subject of an HAS to deceive herself is neither an emotion nor a desire but a negative feeling of self-worth. In turn, the tension arises here between this negative but real feeling of self-worth and the positive but fictitious feeling of self-worth elicited by the subject to compensate for it.<sup>4</sup>

Section 10.2 begins by exploring the main arguments that explain why several HASs involve a feeling of diminution in the subject's own value (Section 10.2). Next, it offers an analysis of how the negative feeling of self-worth motivates self-deception. While in extrinsically motivated self-deception (EMSD), the subject feels diminished in worth after negatively evaluating her own HASs, in intrinsically motivated self-deception (IMSD), the negative feelings of self-worth are constituent elements of the hostile affective state in question (Section 10.3). Cases of IMSD are particularly intriguing because in them the motivation for self-deception is inherent to the hostile affective state, independently of external reasons. I coin the expression "self-deceptive style" to capture the distinctive form in which each hostile affective state intrinsically motivates changes in the architecture of the mind (e.g., perception, imagining, memory, judgment) in order to generate an upliftment of the self (Section 10.4). To show the descriptive and explanatory function of this concept, a comparative analysis of the self-deceptive styles of envy and hate is provided (Section 10.5). The conclusion summarizes the main findings and explores directions for further research (Section 10.6).

## 10.2 Hostile Affective States and Negative Feelings of Self-Worth: The Social, the Phenomenal, and the Modal Arguments

This section focuses on a particular aspect of HASs which in my view is crucial to explain its link with self-deception, namely that they usually exhibit a negative hedonic valence and are experienced as painful. In several HASs, the subject experiences a diminution in her own value. In what follows, taking different lines of reasoning found in current research, I elaborate three arguments that explain why several HASs entail negative feelings of self-worth.

### 10.2.1 (A1) *The Social Argument*

According to the social argument, HASs have a negative hedonic valence by virtue of being socially sanctioned states (Landweer 2020; Salice and Salmela 2022). This argument goes as follows:

*P1:* HASs involve overt or covert aggression toward the target.

The aggression can adopt several real and/or symbolic forms. For instance, it is real when the subject takes steps toward physically annihilating, damaging, or destroying the target. It is symbolic when the subject harms the target's reputation, discredits her work in front of others, etc. Note that insofar as aggression involves the tendency to damage and inflict harm, it has to be distinguished from mere aversion. Though aggressive states are also aversive, not all forms of aversion involve aggression. For instance, fear is a form of aversion toward what represents a danger to our integrity and the integrity of what we care about (see Kolnai 2004 and 2007), but this emotion is not usually considered aggressive. The person who fears reacts only with fight when flight is not possible.

*P2:* Aggression is usually socially condemned.

There are several societal norms which condemn aggression to protect the integrity and stability of a society and its members.

*C:* Therefore, there are social reasons for a subject experiencing a hostile affective state to evaluate it negatively, experiencing, as a result, a diminution in her own value.

The social reasons for the negative self-evaluation can be normative and/or prudential. Such reasons are normative when the subject evaluates the HAS negatively because it flouts a social norm. They are prudential when the negative self-evaluation aims at avoiding social exclusion.

Note that the social argument does not necessarily imply that the HAS in question is intrinsically painful. Rather, the HAS acquires a negative hedonic valence after an evaluation has taken place whereby the subject regards it as socially unacceptable. The misogynist who experiences contempt toward women, the xenophobe who hates foreigners, and the victim of crime who hates her aggressor might find these HASs to be pleasant experiences (for the case of hate, see Hampton 1988; Pfänder 1913/1916). However, as the social argument states, she might feel diminished in worth after she evaluates the HAS in question to be socially unacceptable.

### 10.2.2 (A2) *The Phenomenal Argument*

According to the phenomenal argument, HASs have a negative hedonic valence by virtue of being constituted by painful feelings of being diminished in worth (Salice and Salmela 2022, also Elster 1999).

P1: HASs are constituted by painful feelings of being diminished in worth.

According to this premise, feelings of a diminution in self-worth are constitutive elements of certain HASs. The painful feelings of being diminished in worth usually mentioned in the literature are feelings of inferiority and/or impotence. However, in my view, negative feelings of self-worth also include feeling at a disadvantage, feeling disfavored, and so on. Note that while not all HASs are constituted by such feelings of being diminished in worth (consider the cases of contempt and hatred mentioned above), the kinds of HASs at stake in this argument are cases such as envy, jealousy, and Ressentiment<sup>5</sup>, which have negative feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, being at a disadvantage, being disfavored, and so on, as their main ingredients.<sup>6</sup>

P2: Feelings of diminution in self-worth exhibit negative phenomenal properties.

Feelings of being diminished in worth such as feeling inferior, powerless, being at a disadvantage, and being disfavored are painful experiences. They exhibit negative phenomenal properties and are by nature unpleasant.<sup>7</sup>

C: Therefore, those HASs which have feelings of being diminished in worth as constituent moments are necessarily unpleasant.

HASs have a negative hedonic valence by virtue of entailing negative feelings of self-worth which are constituted by unpleasant phenomenal properties.

The phenomenal argument works only for a particular kind of HAS: the subgroup of HASs which have the feeling of diminution in one's own value as a constituent element. These HASs are intrinsically hedonically negative (independently of the fact that the subject can also evaluate them negatively on the basis of social norms).

### 10.2.3 (A3) *The Modal Argument*

HASs might exhibit a negative hedonic valence by virtue of the subject's bad prospects to overcome them (Salice and Salmela 2022). This argument runs as follows:

*P1:* HASs entail unpleasant feelings of a diminution in one's own value.

This premise states that HASs involve negative feelings of self-worth. Though the literature mentions here feelings of inferiority and/or powerlessness, again we should understand the full range of feelings of diminution in one's own value. Note that this premise does not specify why HASs entail such feelings: it can be the case that the HAS acquires these feelings after the subject evaluates it negatively, drawing on social considerations (as in A1), and/or these feelings are constituents of the HAS itself (as in A2).

*P2:* The subject of an HAS evaluates her possibilities of overcoming the unpleasant feelings of diminution in self-worth as being bad.

There are several reasons that might lead her to evaluate the options to change as bad. It might be the case that she lacks the resources or that a change is not possible for external reasons (e.g., a change is excluded because the community in which she lives makes it impossible).

*C:* Therefore, a HAS is hedonically negative by virtue of the subject's bad prospects to overcome the unpleasant feelings of being diminished in worth.

According to this argument, the subject experiences a feeling of being diminished in worth after realizing her lack of options to overcome the HAS in question. Though it can be the case that the feeling of self-worth is experienced as having a negative hedonic valence either because it is intrinsically painful or because it is painful after we have evaluated it as infringing social norms, the point of the modal argument is that it explains the negative charge of a HAS in terms of the subject's evaluation of her options to overcome it.

These arguments are not mutually exclusive. In fact, a subject experiencing, for instance, envy might have an intrinsic explanation and two extrinsic explanations of why she feels diminished in worth. To begin,

her envy is hedonically negative because it entails painful feelings of diminution in one's own value (e.g., inferiority, powerlessness) as ingredients. The evaluation of her own envy as being socially condemned can also elicit feelings of being diminished in worth (e.g., she might feel morally inferior) and the prospects to overcome it might evoke in her more feelings of being diminished in worth (e.g., she might feel at a disadvantage).

### **10.3 Negative Feelings of Self-Worth and Self-Deception: Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivations**

This chapter takes negative feelings of self-worth to be crucial in explaining why the subject who experiences a HAS tends to deceive herself by means of generating an upliftment of her own value. Since feelings of diminution in one's own value are extremely unpleasant and painful, the subject who is unable to overcome them by positive means tries to compensate for this painful experience by setting in motion a series of self-deceptive processes regarding herself. Yet, though my focus here is on how negative feelings of self-worth can motivate self-deception, I take these feelings to be a necessary though not sufficient condition for a HAS to lead us to deceive ourselves. Indeed, one can experience a diminution in one's own value and not deceive oneself. An envious person might be aware of her envy and how painful it is without deceiving herself about it. In this respect, other elements such as having a bad character, lacking maturity or emotional resources might also play a role in leading a subject to self-deception.

To explain the motivational power of negative feelings of self-worth, a distinction needs to be made between extrinsically and intrinsically motivated self-deception. In the arguments I presented above, in HASs, feelings of self-worth are at play in two distinct forms. The feeling of being diminished in worth can be acquired after the subject adopts a stance toward her own HAS. This possibility is at work in the scenarios spelled out in the social (A1) and the modal arguments (A3). According to these arguments, she experiences a diminution in self-worth after negatively evaluating her HAS. In this respect, the feelings of being diminished in worth are "extrinsic" to the HAS in question. By contrast, in the scenario at stake in the phenomenal argument (A2), the feeling of being diminished in worth is a constitutive part of the HAS in question. They are "intrinsic" to it. In this respect, the negative feeling of self-worth can motivate the self-deception extrinsically or intrinsically.

#### ***10.3.1 (EMSD) Extrinsically Motivated Self-Deception***

When the feeling of diminution in one's own value is experienced after a negative evaluation of one's own HAS, we have a case of EMSD. The self-deception is extrinsic because the HAS in question is not necessarily painful but also acquires a painful hedonic valence



after the subject's evaluation. The subject judges her own HAS as reproachable (for moral and prudential reasons) and this judgment casts a bad light on herself (for instance, showing that she is unable to cope with situations in which she is not in a privileged position and/or is herself evil, because it discloses her bad character, because it shows that she is motivated by the wrong reasons, etc.). It can also be the case that the subject evaluates her HAS negatively after judging the options to overcome it as bad. As a result, she feels diminished in worth. This feeling might motivate her to deceive herself about what she is experiencing.

Take as an example a person feeling contempt. This person might be extrinsically motivated to deceive herself and interpret her contempt in terms of indignation after evaluating her contempt to be socially unacceptable.

### *10.3.2 (IMSD) Intrinsically Motivated Self-Deception*

When the feeling of diminution in self-worth is constitutive of the HAS, the subject can be intrinsically motivated to deceive herself. All HASs which have feelings of diminution in self-worth as constituents, such as envy, Ressentiment, and jealousy, are extremely unpleasant, independently of the stance that the subject takes toward them. Thus, by virtue of being the kind of HASs that they are, they entail a tendency to deceive oneself about what one is experiencing. The self-deceptive processes which serve to cope with a situation of frustration and pain are intrinsically activated without the intervention of extrinsic factors (which might be given or not).

Consider envy. The envier tries to compensate for feelings of inferiority and powerlessness by claiming that the rival does not deserve the good and generate in this way a positive sense of self. In this case the self-deception is intrinsically motivated. However, note that the envier can also be extrinsically motivated to deceive herself if she realizes that envy is socially condemned and/or that she cannot overcome her inferiority, powerlessness, and so on.

The distinction between EMSD and IMSD suggests that feelings of diminution in one's own value can motivate self-deception in distinct ways. Cases of IMSD are particularly intriguing because they suggest that the tendency to deceive oneself can be constitutive of some HASs, independently of external reasons. Indeed, while experiencing a HAS which is not intrinsically unpleasant can lead to self-deception for extrinsic reasons, a subject who experiences a HAS of the kind that entails feelings of diminution in one's own value will be intrinsically motivated to compensate such hedonically negative feelings, generating an unreal uplifting of the self.

#### 10.4 Intrinsically Motivated Self-Deception and the Upliftment of Self-Worth: What is a Self-Deceptive Style?

This section examines in more detail how the negative feelings of self-worth constitutive of HASs can intrinsically motivate a series of self-deceptive maneuvers leading to an upliftment of the subject's own value. More precisely, my aim is to explore how the negative feeling of self-worth changes the architecture of the subject's mind so that a positive but artificial feeling of self-worth might arise. I take here as my point of departure the idea that like other affective states, the feelings of self-worth are also able to exert a systematic influence on other mental states. Like emotions, feelings of self-worth select specific features of the environment, provide them with salience, guide our attention, make specific memories stand out, elicit imaginings, alter perception and belief, and so on.<sup>8</sup> Emotions and feelings of self-worth affect our mind outside the subject's control. In both cases, this happens unintentionally. Though we might be aware of this influence, it is not uncommon that these changes happen "behind our back". Insofar as they are able to alter the architecture of our mind, they can also shape our apprehension of reality, lead to a biased view of the world and on certain occasions motivate self-deception.

My thought here is that the negative feeling of self-worth intrinsic to a HAS might change the architecture of the subject's mind by means of a series of self-deceptive maneuvers concerning specific mental states. To begin, the negative feeling of self-worth intrinsic to HASs might motivate us to deceive ourselves about what we *perceive*, by making some objects more salient than others, by changing the way in which we perceive them or by discarding them from our perceptual horizon (1). It can also motivate us to *imagine* (2) and to *remember* (3) certain objects rather than others. It also leads us to deceive ourselves about our *judgments* about the target, one's own subject, the situation, etc. (4). It can lead to an alteration of our *inner awareness* by means of numbing, repressing, making salient, etc. some affective states over others (5). It can also lead us to alter our *apprehension of values*, for instance, by deploying an object of its value (6). It might influence what we *prefer* (7). It can also lead to changes in our *desires* (8). Though this list is not exhaustive, it provides a picture of how the negative feeling of self-worth can exert its influence on the self-deceiver's mind.

Yet, interestingly, these changes motivated by negative feelings of self-worth take different shapes depending on the HAS we are experiencing. That is, though self-deception is motivated by the feeling of diminution in one's own value inherent to a HAS, the specific HAS we are experiencing will determine the distinctive manner in which we deceive ourselves. Indeed, while the envier deceives herself about what she is experiencing and interprets it in terms of feelings of injustice but is simultaneously aware of the value of the rival and the coveted good, the person in the

grip of Ressentiment deceives herself not only about what she is experiencing but also about the target's value who is denuded of her worth. In both cases, negative feelings of self-worth motivate self-deception but the self-deception itself takes a different form. In other words, not all HASs lead us to deceive ourselves in the same way. Rather, each HAS distorts and changes our mind following a distinctive pattern. To capture this distinctive and unique pattern of deceiving oneself, here I coin the expression "self-deceptive style". The term is not just descriptive; but it also has an explanatory function, i.e., it enables us to distinguish between distinctive patterns of self-deception associated with each HAS.

To speak about "styles" in the context of our mental states requires some clarification. The notion of "style" has been employed with several different meanings, and given that I use it for affective states in particular, some clarificatory remarks are in order. As Huemer argues (2016, 195), "style is attributed to entities of very different ontological categories" such as persons, collectives, epochs, and psychological entities. Moreover, as he notes, what these categories have in common is that they are related to the performance of actions as a *way* to perform an action, as the *subject* of the action, or as the *object* result of it (Ibid.). While in current literature, some authors such as Cassam (2019) employ the concept of "style" to refer to ways of thinking, I do not see anything odd in applying this concept to the particular way in which a HAS leads to self-deception. By employing the notion of "style", I take psychological entities such as HASs to be bearers of style. In addition, and to be precise, when I argue that these affective states have a style, I refer not only to the subject or the result of self-deception, but rather to the way in which the self-deception is performed. That is, HASs have ways of performing the self-deception by means of changing, modifying, biasing other mental states such as perceptions, imaginings, emotions, and beliefs so that the illusion of an upliftment of self-worth takes place. Self-deceptive styles are ways of perceiving, imagining, emoting, believing, etc., in which self-deception is performed when we are in a specific HAS.

Note that as psychological entities, affective states belong to a subject and subjects might be themselves bearers of style which influences how they perform the self-deception. For instance, some people are more sibilant than others and will tend to lie without remorse, others are more prone to fantasize, while others have a low self-esteem, etc. Yet here my focus is on the self-deceptive styles associated with particular HASs and not on the style of the subjects to which this affective state belongs (though the latter might give the former a particular shape). Therefore, though the subject as a bearer of style can be responsible for individual variations, these will not be examined here.

With the concept of self-deceptive style, my aim is to offer a micro-analysis of the particular ways in which each HAS might lead to us deceiving ourselves through an upliftment of the sense of self. Rather than

being interested in how one hostile emotion transforms into another (this is what Salice and Salmela's notion of emotional mechanism tries to explain), my focus is on how the subject of a HAS changes the architecture of her mind and tries to compensate for the painful feelings of being diminished in worth by generating an upliftment of her own value but without transmuting this HAS into another one. Section 10.5 explores the descriptive and explanatory power of the concept of self-deceptive style by offering a comparative analysis of envy and hate.

## **10.5 The Self-Deceptive Styles of Envy and Hate: A Comparison**

### *10.5.1 Envy's Self-Deceptive Style*

Though some authors have argued that envy can be benign, here I will focus on malicious envy as a form of hostility toward the rival who possess the coveted good (e.g., possessions, achievements, talents, and the other's being). In the literature, this envy has been described as encompassing "feelings of inferiority" (Ben-ze'ev 1992, 552 and 556; Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007, 252; Protasi 2016, 537), "feelings of disempowerment", or "powerlessness" regarding the envier's possibilities to overcome her inferiority (Fussi 2019; Salice and Montes Sánchez 2019; Scheler 2010), "feelings of helplessness and hopefulness" which make the envier feel depressed regarding the vision of obtaining the good (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2007, 457), and "feelings of disadvantage" in which the subject feels the possibilities to obtain the good as unlikely (Vendrell Ferran 2022). All these feelings are feelings of being diminished in worth which lead the envier to experience an episodic diminution in her episodic self-esteem and a degradation of her occurrent self-value. Note that this claim should not be conflated with the much stronger claim put forward by Taylor (2006) according to which envy always involves low dispositional self-esteem. In fact, given that people with high dispositional self-esteem (see Vrabel, Zeigler-Hill, and Southard 2018, 103) might nonetheless be envious and experience episodes in which they feel diminished in worth, envy is not only experienced by people with low dispositional self-esteem.

In order to get rid of such feelings, a series of self-deceptive mechanisms can be set in motion behind the envier's back. The link between envy and self-deception has been noted in the literature. However, there remains an open question as to how to interpret the self-deception more precisely. While Miceli and Castelfranchi (2007, 459) argue that the envier's "talent to disguise" consists in illegitimately persuading herself that her hostility is based on an injustice suffered, for Taylor (2006, 49) what envy protects is the appearance of an esteem-worthy self which she and others can respect. In my view, however, what the envier aims at protecting is her own positive sense of self, i.e., her sense of self-worth.

She does so by setting in motion a series of self-deceptive maneuvers which follow the pattern of envy's own self-deceptive style.

Envy's self-deceptive style can be characterized as follows. To begin, envy leads to a narrowing of our perception to the good and the rival (1) which can be a source of pain for the envier (motivating her to either achieve the good or disguise her pain). Moreover, envy is linked to upward counterfactual imaginings (2) in which the envier has obtained the good (Smith 2000, 179). These imaginings are also a source of pain because she realizes that there is a disparity between reality and desire (they might motivate the envier to obtain the good, but when the good is unobtainable, the imaginings increase the envier's pain). It also involves imaginings about how to obtain the good, how the rival loses it, or how to inflict pain on the other. In addition, envy involves memories (3) about moments which could have led the envier to obtain the good, causing him regret, for instance, because she could have made better decisions, etc. Regarding her judgments (4), the envier believes that she and not the other is the one who deserves the good. In this respect, envy involves counterfactual thinking: "It could have been me" (Ben-ze'ev 1992; Crusius and Lange 2021; Protasi 2021, 70–83). Because envy is unpleasant, it might motivate a change of the belief about the emotion we are experiencing so that envy is disguised as indignation or a feeling of injustice.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite the envier's attempts, she is unable to numb her feelings of being diminished in worth: given that she cannot divert her attention from the good and the rival, the comparison with the other keeps her in a situation of felt inferiority, powerlessness, etc. (5). Interestingly, the envier's apprehension of value remains unmodified (6). She is able to apprehend the value of the good and of the rival and she apprehends herself as diminished in worth. Despite claiming that the rival does not deserve the good, or that the good is worthless, and despite claiming that she is not feeling devalued, the apprehension of these values is not distorted. The envier's preferences also remain unchanged (7). She prefers the good possessed by the rival over other goods. Finally, the desire to achieve the good and/or to be in the rival's place remains unchanged (8).

As a result, in envy, the feeling of being diminished in worth leads the envier to unintentionally change, distort, alter, and modify her own imaginings, memories, and beliefs, so that she deceives herself about the possibilities of her obtaining the good, about who deserves the good, and about the emotion she is experiencing. These might lead her to believe that she "can" or at least "could have" obtained the good (independently of whether this is true or not). In so doing, her feeling of self-worth is uplifted. Yet, despite these changes, the envier continues to experience her envy as painful and her value as diminished. Indeed, intrinsic to envy are not only these tendencies that lead to an upliftment of self-worth, but also tendencies which go in the opposite direction. As we have seen, envy involves a narrowing of perception; it generates

counterfactual imagining and regretful memories that remind the envier that she could have obtained the good; envy elicits the counterfactual thought that the envier deserves the good. Moreover, given that she still apprehends the good as valuable, the rival as better positioned, herself as inferior and powerless, etc., and given that she still prefers and desires the good possessed by the rival over other goods, envy is not totally deceptive and but also remains a source of pain. These changes lead the envier to experience herself as diminished in worth and this cannot be compensated for by the fictitious upliftment of self-value provided by changes in imaginings, memories, and judgments. In sum, envy's self-deceptive style is configured by intrinsically motivated changes at the level of imaginings, memories, and judgments, while inner awareness, apprehension of values, desires, and preferences exacerbate the envier's feeling of being diminished in worth.

### *10.5.2 Hate's Self-Deceptive Style*

Although hate, like envy, might come in different forms (Hampton 1988; Sternberg and Sternberg 2008; Vendrell Ferran 2021), my focus here is on a specific form of hate which is in my view able to intrinsically motivate self-deception. In this respect, "ideological hate", exemplified above by the xenophobe whose hatred toward foreigners is motivated by internalized prejudices circulating in her environment (Szanto 2020; Sartre 1976, 20; Sánchez and Salice 2023), does not intrinsically motivate self-deception. The ideological hater does not feel inferior, at a disadvantage, powerless or helpless, and hopeless regarding her target. Rather, the opposite is the case. Therefore, there is no intrinsic feeling of being diminished in worth which can motivate her to deceive herself. For similar reasons, cases of "normative hate" in which we hate what breaks societal norms (e.g., hatred of criminals) might also involve an upliftment of the self and as such cannot intrinsically motivate self-deception. Finally, cases of "retributive hate" (Brudholm 2010; Murphy 2016; Salice 2020a), which is experienced as a response to someone who has damaged us, might also be intrinsically pleasant and involve an upliftment of the self. In fact, it has even been considered therapeutic (Miller 2007).<sup>10</sup> In sum, in ideological, normative, and retributive hate, when the subject deceives herself, she does so for external considerations because these forms of hate do not entail as constituent moments negative feelings of self-worth. These forms of hate do not necessarily feel bad and can even be enjoyed (Hampton 1988; Pfänder 1913; Shand 1914; Steinbock 2019).

In my view, the form of hate which can intrinsically motivate self-deception is what I call "malicious hate". Unlike ideological and normative hate, the targets of which can be anyone who belongs to a hated general category (e.g., foreigners, criminals), the object of malicious hate is irreplaceable. Moreover, unlike retributive hate, in malicious hate, the

attribution of evilness to the target is indeterminate, i.e., it is not clear to others why the subject regards the target as evil. Usually, malicious hate has envy, jealousy, and other nasty affective states as its sources. This is, for instance, the kind of hate experienced by someone who hates another who is intellectually, socially, etc., better placed than her. Importantly, in contrast to the aforementioned forms of hatred, malicious hate entails as constituent moments strong feelings of diminution in one's worth. When we claim to hate another because she is morally better than us, more beautiful, more intelligent, etc., this hate involves feelings of being diminished in worth. These feelings are probably inherited from the envy, jealousy, etc., that fuel this hate. Thus, malicious hate can intrinsically motivate self-deception in order to cope with negative feelings of self-worth and generate an upliftment of the self.

In particular, the self-deceptive style of malicious hate can be described as follows. First, the subject focuses her attention on the target and narrows her perception to her, which she considers to be irreplaceable. This phenomenon has been described by Ortega y Gasset as "falling in hate" (1988) (1). Hate is linked to imaginings related to how to harm the target so that the original injury can be compensated for (2). Memories are focused mainly on how the target has damaged, provoked, or injured us (3). In malicious hate, there is a change of our beliefs about the other to whom we attribute the property of being evil (e.g., the other is evil for having attacked us, for being disgusting, and morally low.) (4). Moreover, the hater can change her beliefs about her own affective states and reinterpret her hate in terms of indignation, resentment, or anger.<sup>11</sup> Yet, despite the subject's attempts, the malicious hater is inwardly aware of the feeling of being diminished in worth (5). This hater attributes to the other the property of evil in order to feel an upliftment of her own self, for instance, in feeling morally superior to the other (6).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the hater still acknowledges the other's values: she hates the other for being a better philosopher, for being more beautiful, for enjoying more social recognition than her. As long as she perceives the other as embodying these positive values, her apprehension of the other's values remains objective. Malicious hate, unlike the phenomenon usually described as Ressentiment, is not totally blind to the other's values. Furthermore, the subject's preferences remain unchanged since the other is still regarded as worthy (despite the subject's claims to the contrary) (7). Finally, desires (8) are not changed in malicious hate. The hater might still desire to be like the other, for instance.

In sum, changes in imaginings, memories, beliefs, and the apprehension of one's own affective states, as well as the illegitimate attribution of evilness, aim at relieving the pain caused by the feeling of a diminution in one's own value, generating a fictitious upliftment of self-worth. Yet, since the hater is focused on the target, she is still aware of the other's

value, and given that she is aware that the attribution of evil is unjustified, she does not change her preferences and desires. This leads to a tension between the unpleasant feeling of being diminished in worth and the fictitious upliftment of self-worth generated by biased cognitive states and attributions. As a result, the malicious hater, like the envier, is in a state marked by tension and pain.

Despite having similar self-deceptive styles, envy is, in my view, more painful than this kind of hate. Though both the malicious envier and the malicious hater do see the other's values and desire them, the malicious hater's attempt to devalue the other is stronger than the envier's attempt. Indeed, while the envier claims that the other does not deserve the good, the hater attributes to the other the property of evil. Therefore, the malicious envier is less blind than the malicious hater.

## 10.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have argued that HASs entailing feelings of diminution in self-worth as constituent elements might intrinsically set in train a series of self-deceptive maneuvers that generate an upliftment of the subject's sense of self. I have introduced the notion of "self-deceptive style" to capture the distinctive ways in which each HAS performs the IMSD and generates a fictitious upliftment of the self. I have suggested that each HAS has its own self-deceptive style and I have illustrated this claim by analyzing the cases of envy and hate.

To conclude, let me briefly mention two possible directions for further research. The first consists in examining how the concept of self-deceptive style might contribute to current research on emotional mechanisms. While Salice and Salmela examine how emotions linked to feelings of inferiority and impotence are transformed into less painful ones and develop a model of emotional mechanisms, I focus on the specific way in which the feeling of a diminution in one's value intrinsically motivates a distortion of the subject's mental architecture so that an upliftment of the self takes place. Though these are different projects, self-deceptive styles can be regarded as offering a micro-analysis of tensions encountered at the level of the HAS, tensions which as such can contribute to activate the emotional mechanisms of transmutation of this HAS into another one.

Finally, the kind of micro-analysis of the internal structure of a HAS developed in this chapter can shed light not only on how one HAS can transform into another, but also on how emotions such as envy participate in the formation of sentiments such as hate which are enduring attitudes which can be punctually felt. In turn, work on self-deceptive styles can be used to explore how both emotions and sentiments participate in the formation of affective attitudes such as Ressentiment.



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## Notes

1. In this chapter, I employ the expression “hostile affective state” in a broad sense to encompass emotions (e.g., envy), sentiments (e.g., hate), affective attitudes (e.g., Ressentiment), and all the other phenomena that belong to the family of the affective.
2. Though I borrow this expression from Voigtländer (1910), my usage differs from hers in different respects. First, while Voigtländer considered feelings of self-worth all affective states which entail an apprehension of one’s own value, I distinguish here three different phenomena: (1) the apprehension of value in feelings of self-worth (e.g., feeling inferior, feeling powerless); (2) the emotions (e.g., pride); and (3) the character traits responsible for making us prone to experience such feelings (e.g., courage). Moreover, in my view, feelings of self-worth can be constituent moments of other affective experiences. For instance, envy entails feelings of being diminished in worth such as feeling inferior and powerless.
3. See, for the distinction between both forms of self-esteem, Salice (2020b) and Bortolan (2023). Some hostile affective states might also entail low dispositional or trait self-esteem but since my focus here is on the feelings of being diminished in worth, my interest is only on episodic self-esteem.
4. A similar model has been developed for the particular case of Ressentiment by Voigtländer (1910) and drawing on her work, Aeschbach (2017).
5. Though in the literature, Ressentiment is not always regarded as an affective state (see, for instance, Salice and Salmela 2022), I take Ressentiment here to be a hostile affective state in the broad sense mentioned in endnote 1. More precisely, Ressentiment is an affective attitude or disposition, i.e., a long-lasting state which emerges over time and whose phenomenology can be explained only in terms of the phenomenology of other affective states.
6. An implication of this claim is that regarding their respective hedonic valences, HAS does not constitute a unitary class.
7. This does not exclude the possibility that we might take a positive stance toward them, for instance, we might come to enjoy sadness when we know the object is imaginary or fictional (this is the so-called paradox of tragedy). However, the emotional experience of sadness feels bad by nature.
8. For an analysis of emotions’ influence on cognition, see de Sousa (1987, 195) and Brady (2016). For the role of emotion in self-deception, see Lazar (1998) and Mele (2000).
9. Note that I focus here on changes of belief motivated intrinsically by the unpleasant feeling of being diminished in worth and leave aside changes of

- belief motivated by extrinsic reasons (e.g., the interpretation of envy in terms of feelings of injustice).
10. When Fischer, Halperin, Canetti, and Jasini (2018) and Salice (2020a) claim that hate involves feelings of powerlessness, they have in mind cases of retributive hate but not cases of ideological and normative hate. I agree with the idea that in order for retributive hate to arise, the subject must feel diminished in worth by the target. Yet, retributive hate as such has, in my view, the function to protect the self and to restore her value. In this respect, Solomon writes that hate entails “a degree of self-esteem” (1993, 267), while Hampton describes hate as entailing an advancement of the self (1988).
  11. Again, my focus here is on intrinsic changes of beliefs and not on changes of beliefs due to extrinsic reasons.
  12. Note that malicious hate, unlike retributive hate, is not a response to the property of evil; rather this property is attributed to the other because we hate it (for a different view, see Salice 2020a).

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