

*Studies on Suicide.* (*Psycho-analytic Review*, vol. xx, p. 241, July, 1933.) Lewis, N. D. C.

This paper, a preliminary survey, reviews a large body of facts and observations concerning suicide. The article is prefaced by a few remarks on the attitude of ancient civilizations and of the primitive towards the impulse. Statistical observations show that suicide is rarer in primitive than in cultured races.

A section is devoted to ætiological factors and to suicidal rates in different countries. Fluctuations are found to correspond with economic, political and religious conditions in national life. Especially is the rate increased in times of economic depression. The choice of method also varies according to nationality, profession and sex. Regarding the physical components in suicide, it is stated that their importance has been over-estimated. Statistics show that people rarely commit suicide on account of physical pain, consumption, or the crippling results of epidemic encephalitis. It has been observed that *status thymolymphaticus* is unusually prevalent among suicides. The association between menstruation, ideas of being a contaminating influence and the suicidal impulse has been stressed by Chadwick. There is no evidence that suicide is hereditary. The occurrence of suicide in families and of suicidal epidemics is explained as being due to the mechanisms of identification and suggestion.

Further sections deal with partial or fractional suicide, and with suicidal "gestures". Repeated massive swallowing of indigestible, dangerous objects is stated to occur in weak-minded, asocial, hyperaffective and impulsive individuals, and is regarded as an hysterical mechanism, the gain being the interest aroused.

The personality type most prone is characterized by introversion, intellectual retardation and a feeling of inferiority. It is suggested that more attention should be paid to the potential suicidal tendency of the schizophrenic, who does not give as much warning as the depressed patient, and whose impulsiveness frequently results in a fatality. The early depressed paretic, who retains insight, should also be an object of special observation.

The psycho-analytic school stresses the relation between suicide and homicide, both of which are considered to be due to the unconscious operation of the death instinct. In the one instance, the sadistic tendency of the instinct is directed inwards, manifesting itself consciously as a longing for oblivion or Nirvana; while in the other it is directed outwards, showing itself in cruelty and destructive aggression. The suicidal act itself may have a symbolic value; namely, to poison oneself is to become pregnant, to drown is to bear a child, and to jump from a height is to be delivered of a child. From the numerous successful attempts on record, from the prevalence of suicidal thoughts periodically appearing in many people who never take action, and from extensive psycho-analytical studies, the author is of opinion that this urge is universal. He concludes, however, that it only gains full expression in those who have a particular type of integration, in which the elements have a specific pathological orientation in the adaptive functions.

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*Statistics of Poisoning* [*Estadísticas de intoxicaciones*]. (*La Semana Méd.*, vol. xl, p. 980, March 23, 1933.) Buzzo, A., and Carratalá, R. E.

During the years 1926-32 the authors dealt with 3,381 cases of suicides and attempts at suicide by poisoning, 46% being men and 54% women. In 700 cases (20.7%) the poison employed was bichloride of mercury, and in 1,740 cases (51.5%) it was cyanide of potassium. During the same period there were 1,521 cases of the suicidal use of firearms, and 483 cases in which other weapons were used; there were also 52 cases of coal-gas poisoning. There also occurred 765 cases of accidental poisoning which came to the notice of the police, and 283 cases in which poison was criminally administered to another person. In view of these figures the authors urge that more instruction should be given to students on the symptoms, the differential diagnosis and the treatment of poisoning cases.

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