

3 Suicide and Faith in God

This text consists of excerpts from two translated chapters ('The Causes of Suicidal Tendency' and 'Civilisation, and the Tendency to Suicide') and the complete closing chapter of the book Der Selbstmord als sociale Massenerscheinung der modernen Civilisation, published in 1881. The work is based on Masaryk's second thesis, submitted to the University of Vienna in November 1878. A Czech version of the book, published for the first time in 1904, was a translation by Antonín Žáček. The English translation appeared in 1970 under the title Suicide and the Meaning of Civilisation. Masaryk accorded this early work a key importance among his writings, declaring toward the end of his life: 'Today I could say it better, but in essence I could not add anything.'

THE CAUSE OF THE SUICIDAL TENDENCY

On the previous pages we have studied and examined all the causes of the suicide tendency with the exception of the conditions of spiritual culture, and we have found that they do not provide a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon in question. *The true causes of suicide must lie in the conditions of spiritual culture.* We have seen again and again that most conditions in fact have merely a disposing and little determining effect, but that in both cases their effectiveness is relatively weak. Now it is time to ask what is disposed and what is determined? Man.

Every freely chosen action springs from the character of man; and is the more characteristic, the more important it is for the individual. Now there can hardly be a more important decision than whether to be or not to be, and it is therefore clear that suicide arises from the whole character of man in a special way. It directly depends on a person's whole outlook on life and the world; it depends on the judgement which the individual can pass on the worth of human life for the universe and especially for mankind; this decision is man's

verdict about the world. How terrible this decision reads if one thinks of the enormous number of suicides at the present time!

Next to this, what are all the cries and jeers of the pessimists à la Schopenhauer!

The most proximate cause of suicide is always a misfortune that the victim considers so terrible that he no longer can bear life; therefore, the statistical evidence concerning the number of suicides is a measure of human misfortune; this measure is certainly not perfect because it tells us little or nothing concerning the intensity, frequency, duration, and extent of misfortune; nevertheless, it says enough.

The misfortune that a man experiences can be real or it can be imagined, depending on his intellectual and moral constitution. For those affected it is certainly always decisive, always great enough to surrender life; but in most cases the objective observer sees that the cause was trivial in relation to the loss, and he is astounded that small and insignificant causes often produce such results. He soon perceives that an intellectual or moral defect has almost always darkened the suicide's judgement. Not without basis does suicide appear incomprehensible and frightful to normal human understanding, because in fact every halfway normal and reasonable man does not commit it. Every healthy outlook on life and the world ascribes a high value to life and seeks to maintain it, following the natural drive for self-preservation. We understand perfectly, for example, why a prisoner can stubbornly bear the most terrible tortures thinking of the gallows to which his confession would bring him, but we are horrified that a man should willingly end his life.

The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Shakespeare. *Measure for Measure*, Act III, Scene 1.

It is our task to examine the present outlook on life and to discover how it happens that in spite of all the progress in almost every area of practical life, men feel not happier, but, on the contrary, unhappier. We must investigate which conditions of spiritual culture are inimical to life to such a high degree.

Intellectual Education

From the fact that the tendency to suicide increases each year in all civilised countries, while the education of the people and their instruction is everywhere improving, one sees that a greater education in any case does not impede the appearance of the suicide tendency. One can reach the same conclusion from a comparison of the city and the province. But the great correspondence of the suicide frequency of entire countries and in certain areas with the general state of education, the fact that among uneducated peoples suicide is less frequent than among the educated, leads one to expect that a causal connection exists between education and suicide tendency.

Statisticians must answer the question whether criminality rises or declines with increasing intellectual education, and many have spoken for and many have spoken against the idea. From the beginning it is clear, with respect to this question, that intellectual education in and of itself does not necessarily influence criminality and morality, and statistical induction in fact shows that certain crimes increase; murder, crimes against morality, rape, infanticide, general moral relapses increase in the most highly educated nations; similarly, crimes become increasingly frequent which require lying, treachery, deceit, and fraud for their execution, the so-called 'refined crimes', while the grosser crimes become less frequent. From this we see that higher level of education suppresses only certain crimes, and contrariwise, that it permits others to occur more readily and with greater frequency. We should have to discuss this at length were we to decide what is our position; at this time we can only affirm that *intellectual education brings with it a certain refinement but not improvement nor higher morality*; intelligence can be both good or evil.

The situation is similar in our case. A higher intellectual cultivation does not, as such, lead more readily to suicide; but it refines man, makes his life richer and many-sided, brings him into new and more difficult situations, and through this, confronts him sooner with the question to be or not to be than the less refined person who, because of his narrower horizons, loves life through his simplicity and diffidence, and the question to be or not to be never enters his head. Now, higher intellectual education does not mean proper and true intellectual education; on the contrary, we may expect that between the extremes of noneducation, as is represented in our states by the simplest peasant, and the high education of a university professor,

there exists a middle education or, more properly, a half-education of the most manifold gradations and shadings. And in fact it is so, but this half-education is dangerous if, as is mostly the case, it is identical with inharmonious, disunified, and unmethodical organization of the mind. If one closely examines the 'educated' and asks of what use their public school, high school, and university education has been to them, the conviction grows that the incompleteness of education stands in direct relation to the degree of schooling. Men know much, very much, but their knowledge has not nearly the influence of their lives that it should; and therein lies the great defect: *we learn much too much for school and not enough for life*. Therefore, half-education disposes to the suicide tendency, entirely overlooking for the moment that intellectual education at the present time is acquired at the expense of moral education.

We can say, *ceteris paribus*, *the suicide tendency is greatest in those countries and nations where unmethodical and impractical half-education is greatest*. Knowledge which cannot be used makes its possessor a victim of fantasy, of hypercritical nonsense, destroying the desire for useful labor, creating needs which cannot be satisfied, and leading in the end to boredom with life.

Religious Education

The morality of man, his whole labor and striving, preserves in religion that essential inspiration which stamps man with the mark of the divine. It is not our problem to investigate what religion is and how it appears among men; it is sufficient for us to know that it exists and that, like the invisible fragrance of the flower, it invests man with his true value. Remove the fragrance of the flower and it will delight your eye, but you will no longer find it so delicate; remove religious feeling from man and you have made of him a creature which you respect and perhaps even admire, but one which you cannot love with a full heart.

Religion – I am thinking especially of monotheistic religion – gives man comfort in all situations of life through theism and the belief in immortality, hope in the face of adversity, and the stimulus for the love of mankind. The religious man is therefore joyful in all the circumstances of life; his faith, his conviction, and his assurance bind him not only to heaven, but also to earth, to life.

The living practice of religion, the subjective feeling, naturally leads to an inner union of like-minded men and expresses itself

in the life of the church. Thus arises religious organisation, which permeates the entire life of society. All agree that humanity needs a spiritual guide to the true, the good, and the beautiful, but this guide can only possess that power which is able to fill the innermost depths of the human soul, and that is religion. Thus, the power of religion is so great and is visible in all the works and ways of men. This spiritual power over the people, however, is wielded by the church (public religious opinion and, in particular, the clergy), the religious organisation of society.

If the practice of religion disappears, the power of the church disappears, along with comfort, hope, and joy in life. Individual spirits may well be able, as they believe, to live the true, the good, and the beautiful without any religion, yet that is really mere deception. For example, if Mill wishes to found a religion of humanity without theism and belief in immortality, he still wants it to be a religion; and the only thing we would have to investigate is whether religious feeling is even possible without these two doctrines, as often stated. Mill wants no Christianity, but he wants a religion – surely he himself lacked most a genuine and warm religious feeling. Those familiar with Mill's works, especially his ethical and sociological writings, will have noted his deficiency. Comte, who founded a religion of humanity, has deep religious feeling and is certainly Christian, but he seeks to unite this religious feeling not with God, but with men. A man like Mill, who seeks to surpass positive religion in goodness with his philosophy, will naturally provide for himself, to a certain degree, that which any of the better religions could have afforded him. But the great mass of people have no substitute at all if they give up their religion. But how many spirits like Mill are there? I know very few, and yet I know many philosophers and educated people. One often hears the opinion that religion is for the masses only, not for us – the educated. The educated! Of the thousands who say that, there is hardly one among them who even approaches the education of Mill; rather, these are the men of this half-education whose worth we have described previously.

In fact, the modern half-education and lack of moral principle appear as irreligiosity; and thus we finally conclude that the modern tendency to suicide has its true cause in the irreligiosity of our time. The above exposition of the meaning of religion for the life of humanity makes this understandable. A harmonious religious worldview makes life tolerable under all circumstances, even the life of a Job; irreligiosity makes it unbearable with the first blow.

Many objections can be raised to our conclusion. For example, a German cultural historian does not consider irreligiosity as the cause of the modern suicide tendency because many men, brought to religious frenzy, take their lives – on account of religion! It is not to be believed. Religious feeling, if it is misguided, naturally leads to mental illness, like every other misguided feeling. If men become insane from joy, is joy therefore an evil? And if such an unfortunate person takes his life in his madness, has he taken it from joy?

Block the French statistician and national economist, has given more thought to the problem. He believes that the connection between religion and the suicide tendency is not certain for the following reasons: variations in religion occur along with variations in education and wealth; religion is very poorly taught and thus has little effect; a large number of suicides are committed by the mentally ill; many motives are unknown, and many are falsified.

I answer: Variation in religion coincides, to be sure, with the variation in education and wealth; but what follows from this? Only that one may not make religion the sole cause of the tendency to suicide without qualification. But to the extent that religion, considered along with all other causes, plays a significant or the most significant role in the life of mankind, its effect is stronger and more visible than the other simultaneous causes. Concerning education in particular, we know that a higher degree of education is directly favorable to the development of the suicide tendency; and it is quite evident to all that in our day it is the educated people who are not spiritual and even less religious. The connection between these two phenomena will be treated in following sections; but this much is now evident, that a man without religion and morality – and we have found that for the most part the tendency to suicide also rests upon immorality – cannot endure the labors of life like the religious-moral man.

CIVILISATION AND THE TENDENCY TO SUICIDE

The basic tenet of the Christian teaching is its exalted and pure monotheism, the belief not only in a just and holy, but also in a loving God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe and of man, His child. Such a faith gives man support in all situations and vicissitudes of life, fills him with hope, bestows confidence upon him, and blesses him with strength. Thus all monotheistic religions are inimical to

the appearance and extension of the suicide tendency: Christianity, Judaism, Mohammedanism. (Pantheistic Buddhism encourages suicide, and it is not without meaning that Stoicism, the philosophy of suicide, was pantheistic.)

From the belief in God the Father it follows, as has already been indicated, that Christ entrusted His entire life to the guidance of an all-knowing and infinitely good Providence; all that God ordained for Him He accepted in humble submission, considering this earthly life as a necessary preparation for eternal life after death. The belief in an omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely good God and the conviction that man has an immortal soul never allow the good Christian to despair, but they make him love and value life in all circumstances.

The belief in a loving father defines as a consequence the relationship of man to man: all are brothers from one and the same father.

Christ gave love a new birth, a boundless love which should itself extend to one's enemies. In possession of this love, Christ knew how to order His life to be pleasing to God under all circumstances; love is the bond which unites Him not only with heaven, but also with earth. Who could despair of life if he had only a particle of this love which Paul describes in the unsurpassed hymn to the love of a Christian? There is a soothing balm for the sufferings of a Job in this holy love.

This exalted system of theism, united with the belief in immortality and the morality of love, has a living foundation and cornerstone in the mediation of the Son of God, in Jesus Christ. With faith in Him, all that is abstract, inaccessible and incomprehensible in his religion vanishes for the Christian, because Christ, the Son of Man, becomes for him the object of faith, of hope, of love, of devotion, of self-sacrifice, of veneration, of worship. The life of Christ in its consistent accomplishment of His own teaching gives for life not a dry, but a living lesson, which the faithful are able to live in and with Christ. Can there be a better, more elevated, more godlike life than Christ's? Rousseau answers, 'If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, then Christ lived and died like a God.'

The entire life of Christ is truth; the Son of God taught sublime simplicity, and demonstrated perfect purity and holiness in the proper sense of the word. Nothing external clings to Him and His life, no formalism, no ritualism; all came from within Him; all is true, beautiful, and good. He restricted himself only to the Old Testament in His teaching, avoided all artifice, rhetoric, and unnecessary erudition, but nevertheless instilled a new life into His

whole system. His teachings and commandments He gave without any illusions, clearly, precisely, authoritatively; He, the mildest, most gentle, most humble, is forceful, energetic, powerful. He, the Son of God, was born in a despised town in poverty, and yet angels and the entire world served Him: His kingdom is not of this world. He, the Man of God, finally suffered the most ignominious death for his conviction. Can there be a better example of how we should live?

Christianity created a new moral world by the sanctification of the relation of man to God; it raised perfect selflessness to a fundamental ethical principle, created a new principle of life in which every believer could participate. Christianity was a new reality which placed the Christian infinitely above the heathen with respect to ethics; an unphilosophical Christian is better prepared than a philosophical pagan.

Christianity became the true teaching for life; the Gospels teach the love of life and not death. Thus, this new message rescued and saved the dying pagan world; Christianity nipped in the bud the morbid suicide tendency of ancient polytheism and returned life to man.

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Since the Renaissance, lack of faith, scepticism, and religious indifference has increased in all Christian countries; the positive folk religion – Christianity – daily lost the beneficial influence which it had formerly exercised. Thousands and thousands might ask with Strauss: *Are we still Christians? and answer: No! Do we still have religion? Yes – and no!*

This 'we' refers to the educated, and those who, correctly or incorrectly, count themselves among them; the (rural) people are still positively faithful, although the educated, to whom their leadership, more than is good, is entrusted, serve them as a model. We wish to believe, and thus, with Strauss, differentiate positive religion from religion in general, but everything in the positive view that we cannot fit into our own views displeases us. Guizot characterises this religious striving of our day as a negation of the supernatural in the destiny of man and of the universe, an abrogation of the supernatural element in the Christian, as in every religion in general. And we add to this: the educated proclaim this with a zeal which does not fall short of the religious fanaticism of the Middle Ages.

The various ecclesiastical sects, irritated and challenged by the negation of religion which comes in part from the side of science, are now experiencing a great activity. Their effort seldom leads to a reconciliation but to a suppression of thought, just as science labors toward no true reconciliation. The most decisive but also the most unreasonable protest against human knowledge came from Rome, where the Pope in all seriousness declared himself infallible – it was thus that Augustus at one time introduced the cult of the Emperor, because the religious consciousness of the Romans had declined. In fact, science now dominates the mind of the masses, as can be seen in the influence of the press. The popularisation of science, carried out in great style, and the corresponding zest for reading by the public show that the need exists which religion and the church are no longer able to fulfill. But science only satisfies the mind; it is an insufficient guide for life and death. It is therefore only partially satisfactory, and offers no moral support; it is not able to lead the masses.

We surrender our intellects to learning, our feelings to a religion and a church in which we no longer believe and which we no longer trust – that is the single, but atrocious failure of our civilisation. *In all our schools, large and small, only the intellect is cultivated.* The school does not concern itself with ethical guidance, but surrenders this function to positive religion. Thus, modern society is led by two spiritual forces, learning and religion, but because these forces are engaged in a struggle with one another, the guidance is both insufficient and destructive. For lack of a unified world-view, no perfect character can be created, only an intellectual and moral chaos. Every war hurts the victor as well as the vanquished, and the *Kulturkampf* is no exception to this rule.

In such a time spiritual anarchy can produce no widespread, fundamental culture, only a half-education, a half-culture, and our civilisation is characterised by an incompleteness, with all its terrible implications for head and heart, which is unable to attain unity and harmony. Fools and clever people, Goethe says, are harmless; only the half-fools and the half-wise are dangerous.

But intellectual and moral incompleteness increases with the increase in the extent and advancement of learning, for it is inconceivable that one could obtain fundamental knowledge with ease: knowledge is won and digested only with difficulty.

The dangers of half-education, the superficial sipping of each and

all to the complete neglect of a basic and serious study of general knowledge, are greater today to an even greater extent than previously, as the greater and more extensive grow the demands made on every truly educated person, and as the more often such attempts to sip everything become fruitless . . . The moral influence of this intellectual decline and dullness appears most often where individuals rise, in the worse cases, to a complete disdain for all knowledge and every high purpose in life, the result of which is almost always the wildest, most unbridled life and complete depravity.

(H. Beckers, *Über das Bedürfniss einer zeitgemässen Regelung der allgemeinen Studien an Deutschlands Hochschulen*, 1862.)

Along with a deadening indifference, vexing scepticism and disgusting cynicism are spread; men are dissatisfied and unhappy, and, more and more loudly and menacingly raising their voices, they do not shrink back from a revolutionary reorganisation of society.

Bacon has already said that a half-knowledge leads men away from God. To the degree that incompleteness spreads, it produces atheism, or worse, observable irreligiosity. There are few true atheists, but there are many doubters and men who have rejected the old faith without replacing it with anything new. But irreligiosity among most men, if not among all, leads to dissatisfaction. As things are, man still needs moral support in life and death in addition to knowledge, but only religion can really offer him this. If he loses such support, if it is unscrupulously taken from him, his peace of soul vanishes with it.

TOWARD A REMEDY FOR THE MODERN SUICIDE TENDENCY

In the preceding research we have furnished a diagnosis of the social illness of our time; the therapeutic must obviously fit the diagnosis, and will consist of the removal of the causes which condition the evil.

The social therapeutic must proceed as does the medical: first attempt to alleviate the existing malady, but then – and this is more important – seek to prevent its genesis. Once any malady is firmly rooted, no therapy is usually of much avail. Sociologists, ethicists, and medical doctors are gradually coming to the conclusion that the

true task of all practical disciplines consists in hygienic prophylaxis. The times have passed in which one expected, or could expect, the curing of all evils by decree; particularly ineffective would be laws regarding a social evil of the nature of the modern suicide tendency.

Man must above all become healthy, physically and morally; we must accustom ourselves to unqualified obedience to the established prophylactic rules of modern science.

Science gives us the means at hand to protect ourselves from the harmful effects of nature. It teaches us how we can shape to our advantage all the conditions we studied in the chapters on bodily organisation, general societal conditions and psychoses. Why do we not so shape them? Because we do not want to.

Nearly all theoreticians and practitioners seek to alleviate the evils of modern society through economic and political reforms. General attention is certainly fastened on these efforts, and very much is generally expected of them, but I am not able to share these hopes. The political and economic conditions of a people are only the external manifestations of the inner spiritual life; they are conditioned by this spiritual life, upon which the physician must therefore focus his attention. Often the programs and quarrels of our parliament, our politicians, and our national economists appear to me remarkably petty and vain. In any event, political and economic concessions and major or minor reforms will not rescue society. A morsel of justice and money, more or less, will not put an end to the pessimistic weariness with life.

I can cite as my opinion on this, which will appear highly heretical to all practical politicians, a magnificent example from history: Christ. The Roman world in the time of Christ was pretty much in the same desperate frame of mind as contemporary society. Then, as now, a morbid suicide tendency ruled; men were dissatisfied and unhappy; yearning for a redeemer was widespread. Who redeemed mankind? No politician, no national economist, no socialist or demagogue. It is truly magnificent to see how Christ, in such politically and socially agitated times as those, abstained from all politics. How easy it would have been for Him to win converts by political and social incitements! But He insisted upon the ennobling of character; He insisted upon the intensification of religious feeling; He desired that men become good, for He knew that only then would they find peace for their souls.

We, too, shall find the desired peace for our souls when we have become good.

Since the modern suicide tendency is ultimately the product of increasing irreligiosity, the malady can only be completely healed if the irreligiosity and its accompanying 'half-ness' are arrested. We must step outside ourselves. We must stop grubbing in our innards and cease to use our understanding as the executioner of our hearts. We must find interests in the external world and in society. We must learn to give of ourselves: we lack true and genuine love. Certainly we believe that we are able to love, that we are capable of the most delicate feelings, but that is not true. Morbid sentimentality is not identical with true, genuine, warm, vital, and original feeling. *If one wants to remove the morbid suicide tendency, he should develop in man the capacity for the harmonious and thorough cultivation of ideas and feelings, imbue them with power and energy, and give them a moral basis.*

Some investigators, Renan, Treitschke, and others, believe the people should be brought up to be religious, while the educated should be allowed to remain free. But that is to sanction the existing 'half-ness', and is happening anyway. Should one perhaps create a strictly distinct aristocracy of education? Where does this education begin, and where does it leave off?

More consistent are those who, with their denial of positive religion, postulate only a unified scientific world-view. The question, however, is whether religion can and should be dismissed so quickly. I believe man needs religion to live as much as he needs air to breathe. Historical development also indicates that concurrent with the development of thought there is a corresponding development of religious-moral life and feeling. Comte commits a gross error in his positive philosophy when he allows progress in the religious sphere only to a certain point, and from there on simply casts aside all religious life.

Many find in art, especially certain styles, a substitute for religion, and so believe art will rescue modern society. But this is equally false. A refined, esthetic enjoyment of art is as incapable of making the problems of life endurable as is an aristocracy of science. The creative artist, especially the great artist, is surely expressing the same thing as the founder of a religion, but the seeing or hearing of a work of art does not replace sympathy for or appreciation of its universal religious content. A shallow view of life is revealed by the belief that the riddle of the universe can be concertised away from mind and heart. Art may always enter the service of religion but is unable to replace it.

We need a religion; we need to be religious.

The thought comes to mind of regarding Christianity as the saving religion. But what form of Christianity? This is a difficult question to answer. If humanity could become strictly Catholic, the suicide tendency would certainly disappear. For Catholicism, by virtue of its Church organisation, could most easily, quickly and effectively create universal acceptance for a unified world outlook. But the course of history cannot be ignored; the Reformation would again break out, just as it did before. Moreover, it is not only a matter of removing the suicide tendency, but removing it by the proper means. For us, however, Catholicism has become impossible. Should we then become Protestants? So far as we deny Catholicism, we are already Protestants; but the question remains, whether and in what form we can remain Christian.

I believe from the depths of my soul, after the most mature reflection, that the teaching of Christ, cleansed of priestly adulteration and properly understood in its expression according to our own limitations, is the most perfect system I can think of for affording world peace and joy most quickly, most powerfully, most surely, and to the greatest number of people.

(Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Vermischte Schriften*, 1844, 2:67.)

I also believe that any one of the many Protestant sects could be the desired religion; but, to the extent that they should have to accommodate themselves to progressive times, these Christian sects would really bring about a new religion.

It is as if our era were made for a new religion. Just as at the time of the Roman Empire, society has been shaken to its foundations: men feel unhappy; dissatisfaction and the wish for a saviour is widespread. But especially favourable for the spread of the new teaching in the Roman Empire were the general nervousness and pathological agitations which are also characteristic of our society. Like all religions, the new teaching would take more a psychological than a logical path to its victorious end. Since religion, although in truly Protestant fashion a matter for the individual, must nevertheless at the same time be a popular religion through which the hearts of all men without exception would be united, this would not, then, permit its theoretical component to ascend the heights of intellectual accomplishment. I think rather that this religion, like the Catholicism of the Middle Ages, could inaugurate a new and better Middle Ages, after which a new period of free thought would begin again, until at

last, through alternating periods of belief and disbelief, 'one flock and one shepherd' would appear. Or it may happen quite differently. The historical development of man is, in proportion to the time which humanity has yet to live, so short that our conclusions as to the future can be made only with great caution and reserve. It is possible that a new upswing of religious feeling would take place without ecclesiastical unification. Perhaps the Congregational or some similar method and organisation could even bring to a definitive conclusion and stabilise that religious individualism to which Protestantism has so far attained.

I am afraid that the conclusions at which we have arrived will not be satisfying to many of my readers. Perhaps some will see in me a fatalist: how shall the social therapeutic be possible if the organisation of a new religion must be awaited? What can the individual do if, as was indicated, the morbid suicide tendency at certain times naturally and periodically develops?

I admit that I am definitely a determinist, but I reject even more definitely the reproach of fatalism; indeterminism would lead to fatalistic views, but no trace of this outlook is to be found in this book.

That we must die, that death is a physical necessity, a natural law, is well known; but it is not a natural law that we must die perchance by poisoning. If someone commits suicide, he obeys no natural law, but chooses death as a consequence of secondary laws which, under other circumstances, prevent suicide; the good and the bad, the useful and the pernicious, men do according to the same laws, which obviously are no ultimate law but the interaction of many laws. One who has taken poison can save himself through an antidote; only for natural death does no cure exist.

Much of what happens to us certainly happens of necessity, without our cooperation. Man is linked to his immediate and more distant environment by thousands and thousands of threads, and to a certain extent is independent of it. But man is no blind product of the forces of nature; we do not depend completely and exclusively on the external world. Our consciousness faces the external world, a psychological whole which perceives the external world according to its own laws. It is a psychological totality endowed with memory and recall. Every simple and complex effect of the external world are equally independent; our relation to it is that of reciprocity, not simple dependence. Knowledge gives us the power to intervene in the causal relationship; we can set certain purposes as ideals, and

we are able to choose the appropriate means. But because we always follow the strongest motive, we are not blind, because other motives also affect us. We reflect before our decision, choosing and seeking those means which best suit our purpose. The choice itself is the result of our character, but this we form ourselves for the most part. We are just as responsible for a malformed will as we are for inadequate logical operations of thought; like the intellect, the will must be trained and educated. And only because it is determined is it capable of training and education: we form our will through our appetites, tendencies, dislikes, habits, and guiding principles. One can certainly not develop will out of will alone; one cannot simply cast out of himself a malformed will. But we can modify our present will by education, by self-discipline, as it is modified by the education which comes to us from others. We can employ all dispositions, habits, and traits of character which we know from experience must lead to certain results under certain conditions.

The indeterminist cannot do this; rules and guides for action are for him completely unnecessary and superfluous, since he cannot know at all whether he will later be able to adhere to them: his will cannot be determined, so he uses no leading, determining principles. According to indeterminism, man is an idle spectator of that which happens in him; he is the inactive stage on which actions proceed in and with him. The connection between subject and action is broken, the chain that binds act and actor snapped. Thus, if the will is indeterminate, we are also entirely lacking in responsibility for our will and its corresponding actions; all training and education of the will is impossible, and no one can be led to virtue. The indeterminist does not need to avoid immorality, does not need to strengthen his will, since he has no assurance that future action will be thus improved, and since his will appears in him in any case without any causes. Today he acts in one way, tomorrow in another way; he has no control over such action precisely because his will is indeterminate. The indeterminist therefore does not punish, because he knows he has no right to punish; if punishment has the purpose of improving or discouraging behavior, what basis has the indeterminist for punishment? For him there are no purposes at all. How can the fear of punishment, the memory of unpleasant correction, act as motives to prevent the same or a similar act? If the will were indeterminate, then punishment is certainly unnecessary and superfluous, for a moral chaos, a blind fate, prevails. Humanity has nothing to strive for, since, according to the teaching of indeterminism, a foreknow-

ledge of that which men aspire to is impossible. Since the law of causality has been abrogated, a prediction of things to come is impossible. Social reforms are not possible, because they are superfluous; there is no science of sociology, because no rules can be established for the indeterminate appearance of the will of man.

It is evident that an ethics, a sociology, or any science is possible only from a deterministic standpoint, and if the word 'freedom' is to be employed at all, it can only be used by the determinist. Only the determinist can, by virtue of his teaching, attain the freedom of ethical perfection. He is capable of reaching a state in which he always prefers the better, when he has recognised it. Only for the determinist is holiness a goal to be strived for, only for him is there a striving toward the freedom of perfection.¹

In contrast to this true interpretation of determinism, various false and unclear views have been entertained, both about the teaching itself and its opposite. Typically, the determinists themselves have brought discredit to their teaching, in that they were not always in a position to refute the charges of fatalism and its attendant consequences brought against them. Indeed, the determinists were often practically fatalists.

The statisticians in particular have not realised that foreknowledge of many social phenomena not only does not lead to fatalism, but is rather the sole means to fight fatalism, for only through advance knowledge can we bring our activities into conformity with what is to come. If we learn that 3000 men in a certain country have previously committed suicide in one year, we correctly infer that approximately as many will die the following year. This conclusion, however, assumes that the same circumstances will persist. But nothing forces society to remain in the same state. It can, if it so desires, alter its conditions in such a way that suicides are no longer committed. Statistics does not arrive at natural laws by the simple enumeration of suicides, murders, etc., but only at secondary – empirical and derived – laws. These and similar crimes do not have to occur, but they do occur as a result of conditions which at present exist, but which have not and will not always exist. Therefore the number of suicides fluctuates from year to year, and the statistical evidence, in accordance with the workings of secondary causes, does not show any terrible 'constancy'.

Perhaps these very fluctuations might cause alarm to some, who would find in the statistical data a proof of indeterminism, and, in consequence, of fatalism. One could conclude from the uncertainty

of prediction that there existed an objective chance and therefore an objective indeterminateness, the necessary consequence of which would have to be fatalism.

One may not consider subjective chance as objective, however, nor mistake subjective probability for the mathematical variety. At the moment there are still many barriers to our knowledge; we still know too little to be able to predict with certainty; but the meagerness of man's knowledge may not be viewed as a universally valid objective law. We are not yet able to survey the causal connections of social phenomena; thus it is our ignorance that alarms us, not our knowledge. It is our problem to pierce ever more deeply into the total mechanism of the universe, through unceasing labours, until we finally grasp how the whole affects man. Only through precise knowledge of the universe and its effects on man, and of the laws that govern the psychological phenomena of man, are we in a position to achieve freedom and perfection through active intervention in the course of mankind's development. The complex combination of agents affecting mankind is indeed great and almost incalculable. In spite of this, they are amenable to scientific analysis, which shows that the actions of man do not occur without his cooperation; that while the will of man is determined, it is not for that reason unfree. So far as we are able to analyse the causes and motives of acts of will, we are able approximately to measure the effects of individual factors, and, on the basis of this measurement, we are able to direct our whole lives in such a way that we can happily and successfully accomplish the realisation of ethical ideals. Like every disease, the modern suicide tendency can also be cured by insightful effort.

Perhaps the reader further expects a detailed guide for a therapeutic of the suicide tendency. It may be objected that our central rule is too general, that in practice one needs more particular statements appropriate to individual cases.

The complaint is justified, but the criticism of generality applies not only to this, but to every sociological work involving a therapy for social conditions. The theoretician cannot possibly consider all particular cases, especially in problems of such large scale, and must therefore leave it to the practitioner to apply the general rule to the special case. We have done what we could: we have tried to set forth the individual causes of suicide with all possible care, and we can therefore ask of a therapeutic that it remove these causes.

This lack of particular rules may actually be most noticeable in what is most important: the establishment of a unified world-view,

the removal of 'half-ness', and the ending of the terrible *Kulturkampf*. But even with the best intentions I am scarcely able to propose more than two prescriptions, which have long been stated by outstanding thinkers. 'You who are more clever than the rest, who wait fretting and impatient on the final page of the primer [the Bible], take care!' Lessing warns in his *The Education of the Human Race*. 'Take care that you do not let your less able classmates notice what you are beginning to sense, or even see! Until these less able fellows of yours have caught up with you, it is better that you should return again to this primer and examine whether that which you now consider only applications of methods, didactic devices, are not also something more.' If men did not transgress against this rule, there would be no *Kulturkampf*, no suicide tendency. On their way from primitive barbarism to education and true enlightenment, mankind must pass through innumerable intermediate stages. If it were possible to guide the great masses systematically, logically, step by step from the simple to the complex, from the easy to the difficult, from error to truth, from naïve conviction to conscious insight, there would be no struggle between conflicting views, no 'half-ness', and every new accomplishment would represent the consistent development of previous stages of culture.

But because this principle is so sharply ignored, the question arises of how to proceed in these cases. We cannot and will not go backwards; therefore we must press forward, if we do not wish to stand still. Alexis de Tocqueville says:

When the religious views of the people have once been shaken, there is no greater despair, but one must promote enlightenment at any cost, because, although an enlightened and sceptical people may indulge in a tragic view of life, there is nothing more terrible than a nation at the same time ignorant, coarse, and unfaithful.

I have nothing further to add, and I wish only that my book may move the reader to reflection, for it is the problem of the writer in the social sphere, if anywhere, not to offer the reader final answers, but rather to move him to thought and – to action.

Note

1. The word 'freedom' will probably be understood in the same sense as indeterminism, but with great injustice. We connect the idea of freedom with an idea of true strength; but indeterminism robs us of such strength