

*Suicide*  
A STUDY IN SOCIOLOGY

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**BOOK ONE EXTRA-SOCIAL FACTORS**

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 36th-43rd degree of latitude   | 21.1 suicides per million inhabitants  |
| 43rd-50th degree of latitude   | 93.3 suicides per million inhabitants  |
| 50th-55th degree of latitude   | 172.5 suicides per million inhabitants |
| Beyond 55th degree of latitude | 88.1 suicides per million inhabitants  |

Suicide is therefore at a minimum in the South and North of Europe; it is most developed in the Center. More exactly, Morselli has stated that the space between the 47th and 57th degrees of latitude, on the one hand, and the 20th and 40th of longitude on the other, was the area most favorable to suicide. This zone coincides approximately with the most temperate region of Europe. Is this coincidence to be regarded as an effect of climatic influences?

Morselli advanced this thesis, though somewhat hesitantly. Indeed, the relation is not readily discernible between temperate climate and the tendency to suicide; to require such an hypothesis the facts must be in unusual agreement. Now, far from there being a relation between suicide and a given climate, we know suicide to have flourished in all climates. Italy is today relatively exempt; but it was very frequent there at the time of the Empire when Rome was the capital of civilized Europe. It has also been highly developed at certain epochs under the burning sun of India.<sup>2</sup>

The very shape of this zone shows that climate is not the cause of the numerous suicides committed there. The area formed by it on the map is not a single, fairly equal and homogeneous strip, including all the countries having the same climate, but two distinct areas: one having Ile-de-France and neighboring departments as a center, the other Saxony and Prussia. They therefore coincide with the two principal centers of European civilization, not with a clearly defined climatic region. We must therefore seek the cause of the unequal inclination of peoples for suicide, not in the mysterious effects of climate but in the nature of this civilization, in the manner of its distribution among the different countries.

Another fact, already mentioned by Guerry, and confirmed through new observations by Morselli, which is fairly general though not without exceptions, may be similarly explained. In the countries outside the central zone, their regions closest to it, whether North or South, are those most stricken with suicide. Thus, it is most developed in

<sup>2</sup> See below, Bk. II, Chap. 4.

**B**UT if individual predispositions are not by themselves the determining causes of suicide, perhaps they are more active in combination with certain cosmic factors. Just as the material environment at times causes the appearance of diseases which, without it, would remain dormant, it might be capable of activating the general and merely potential natural aptitudes of certain persons for suicide. In that case, the suicide-rate need not be regarded as a social phenomenon; due to the cooperation between certain physical causes and an organic-psychic state, it would spring wholly or chiefly from abnormal psychology. It might, to be sure, be hard to explain how, in such cases, suicide can be so intimately typical in each social group; for the cosmic environment does not greatly differ from country to country. One important fact, however, would have been seized: that at least some of the variations connected with this phenomenon might be accounted for without reference to social causes.

Among such factors an influence on suicide has been attributed to only two: climate and seasonal temperature.

### I

Suicides are distributed as follows on the map of Europe, according to the varying degrees of latitude:

<sup>1</sup> *Bibliography*.—Lombroso, *Peniero e Metoro*; Ferri, *Variations thermométriques et criminalité*. In *Archives d'Anth. criminelle*, 1887; Corre, *Le délit et le suicide à Brout*. In *Arch. d'Anth. crim.*, 1890, p. 109 ff., 259 ff.; by the same, *Crime et suicide*, pp. 605-639; Morselli, pp. 103-157.



Italy in the North, while in England and Belgium it is more so in the South. But there is no reason to ascribe these facts to the proximity to the temperate climate. Is it not more probable that the ideas and sentiments, in short, the social currents so strongly influencing the inhabitants of Northern France and of Northern Germany to suicide, reappear in the neighboring countries of a somewhat similar way of life, but with less intensity? Another fact shows the great influence of social causes upon this distribution of suicide. Until 1870 the northern provinces of Italy showed most suicides, then the center and thirdly the south. But the difference between North and Center has gradually diminished and their respective ranks have been finally reversed (See Table X). Yet the climate of the different regions has remained the same. The change consists in the movement of the Italian capital to the center of the country as a result of the conquest of Rome in 1870. Scientific, artistic and economic activity shifted in the same manner. Suicides followed along.

One need dwell no further on an hypothesis proved by nothing and disproved by so many facts.

TABLE X.—Regional Distribution of Suicide in Italy

|        | Suicides per Million<br>Inhabitants |         | Ratio of Each Region Expressed in Terms<br>of the North Represented by 100 |         |         |
|--------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|---------|---------|
|        | 1866-67                             | 1864-76 | 1884-86  | 1866-67 | 1884-86 |
| North  | 33.8                                | 43.6    | 63   | 100     | 100     |
| Center | 25.6                                | 40.8    | 88   | 75      | 93      |
| South  | 8.3                                 | 16.5    | 21   | 24      | 37      |

## II

The influence of seasonal temperature seems better demonstrated. The facts are invariable though they may be variously interpreted.

If without reference to them one were to try to foretell logically what season should be most favorable to suicide, one might easily assume the season when the sky is darkest, and the temperature lowest or most humid. Does not the desolate appearance of nature at such times tend to incline men to reverie, awaken unhappy passions, provoke melancholy? Moreover, this is the time when life is most difficult, because a more abundant sustenance is necessary to replace the lack of natural warmth, and because this is harder to obtain. For this very reason Montesquieu considered cold, foggy countries most favorable to the development of suicide, and this opinion was long

held. Applying it to the seasons, one would expect the height of suicide to occur in autumn. Although Esquirol had already expressed doubts as to the exactness of this theory, Falret still accepted it in principle.<sup>3</sup> Today statistics have definitely refuted it. Neither in winter nor in autumn does suicide reach its maximum, but during the fine season when nature is most smiling and the temperature mildest. Man prefers to abandon life when it is least difficult. If the year is divided into two halves representing respectively the six warmest months (from March to August inclusive) and the six coldest, the former always include more suicides. *Not one country is an exception to this law.* The proportion is everywhere almost exactly the same. Of 1,000 annual suicides from 590 to 600 are committed during the fine season and only 400 during the remainder of the year.

The relation of suicide to the variations of temperature may be determined even more precisely.

If it is agreed to call winter the three months from December to February inclusive, spring the three months from March to May, summer, from June to August and autumn the three following months, and if these four seasons are classified according to the importance of their suicide-mortality, summer is found to have the first place almost everywhere. Morselli was able from this point of view to compare 34 different periods among 18 European states, and has established that in 30 cases, or 88 per cent, the maximum of suicides occurs during the summer season, in only three cases in spring, and in only one case in autumn. This last irregularity, observed only in the Grand-Duchy of Baden and at a single moment of its history, is valueless, for it results from a calculation bearing on too brief a period; besides, it never recurred. The other three exceptions are scarcely more significant. They occur in Holland, Ireland and Sweden. For the first two countries the available figures which were the base for the seasonal averages are too uncertain for anything positive to be concluded; there are only 387 cases for Holland and 755 for Ireland. In general, the statistics for these two peoples are not wholly authoritative. For Sweden, finally, the fact has been noted only for the period 1835-51. If we consider only the states concerning which there are authentic figures, the law may be held to be absolute and universal.

<sup>3</sup> *De Phychochondrie*, etc., p. 28.

The period of the minimum is no less regular: 30 times out of 34, or 88 per cent it occurs in winter; the other four times in autumn. The four countries departing from the rule are Ireland and Holland (as in the case above), the canton of Berne, and Norway. We know the import of the first two anomalies; the third has still less value, having been observed only from among 97 suicides in all. In short, 26 out of 34 times, or 76 per cent, the seasons come in the following order: summer, spring, autumn, winter. This relation is true without exception for Denmark, Belgium, France, Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Württemberg, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Spain.

Not only are the seasons identically ranked, but the proportional share of each barely differs from country to country. To emphasize this uniformity, we have shown in Table XI the share of each season in the principal European states in relation to the annual total considered as 1,000. The same series of numbers is seen to recur almost identically in each column.

From these incontestable facts, Ferri and Morselli have concluded that temperature had a direct influence on the tendency to suicide; that heat by its mechanical action on the cerebral functions stimulated a person to suicide. Ferri even tried to explain how it produced this

**TABLE XI.—Proportional Share of Each Season in the Annual Total of the Suicides of Each Country**

|        | Denmark<br>(1858-65) | Belgium<br>(1841-49) | France<br>(1835-43) | Saxony<br>(1847-56) | Bavaria<br>(1858-65) | Austria<br>(1858-59) | Prussia<br>(1869-72) |
|--------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Summer | 312                  | 301                  | 306                 | 307                 | 308                  | 315                  | 290                  |
| Spring | 284                  | 275                  | 283                 | 281                 | 282                  | 281                  | 284                  |
| Autumn | 227                  | 229                  | 210                 | 217                 | 218                  | 219                  | 227                  |
| Winter | 177                  | 195                  | 201                 | 195                 | 192                  | 185                  | 199                  |
|        | 1,000                | 1,000                | 1,000               | 1,000               | 1,000                | 1,000                | 1,000                |

effect. On the one hand, he says, heat increases the excitability of the nervous system; on the other, since in the warm season the organism does not need to consume as much material to maintain its own temperature at the desired degree, there results an accumulation of available energy naturally tending to seek employment. During summer, for this twofold reason, there is a surplus of activity, an abundance of life demanding expenditure and able to find manifestation only in violent action. Suicide is one of these manifestations, homicide another, and thus voluntary deaths increase during this sea-

son simultaneously with sanguinary crime. Moreover, insanity in all its forms is supposed to develop at this period; thus, he says, suicide naturally develops in the same way, as a result of its relation to insanity.

This theory, of tempting simplicity, at first seems in agreement with the facts. It even seems that it is merely their direct expression. Actually, it is a long way from accounting for them.

### III

First, this theory implies a most debatable conception of suicide. It assumes that its constant psychological antecedent is a state of over-excitement, that it consists in a violent act and is only possible by a great exertion of energy. On the contrary, it very often results from extreme depression. Granted that excited or exasperated suicide occurs, suicide from unhappiness is as frequent; we shall have occasion to prove this. But heat cannot possibly act in the same way on both; if it stimulates the former, it must make the latter less frequent. Its possibly aggravating influence on certain persons would be offset and discounted by its moderating influence on others; hence it could not appear through the data of statistics, especially in any perceptible fashion. The seasonal variations shown by the statistics must therefore have another cause. To accept the explanation that sees in them a mere consequence of similar, simultaneous variations of insanity, a more direct and closer connection between suicide and insanity would have to be conceded than exists. Besides, it is not even proved that the seasons affect the two phenomena identically,<sup>4</sup> and even if this parallelism were certain, the question would still remain whether it is the seasonal changes of temperature which cause the curve of

<sup>4</sup> The distribution of the cases of insanity among the seasons can be estimated only by the number of admissions to the asylums. Such a standard is very inadequate; for families intern invalids not immediately but some time after the outbreak of the disease. Also such data as we have are a long way from showing perfect agreement between the seasonal variations of insanity and those of suicide. According to figures of Carazuevilh, the share of each season in 1,000 annual admissions to Charenton is as follows: Winter, 222; Spring, 283; Summer, 261; Autumn, 231. The same calculation for the total of insane admitted to institutions of the Seine gives analogous results: Winter, 234; Spring, 266; Summer, 249; Autumn, 248. It appears, first, that the maximum occurs in Spring and not in Summer; moreover, the fact must be kept in mind that for the reasons indicated the real maximum has to be earlier; and secondly that the seasonal differences are very slight. They are much more marked for suicides.

insanity to rise and fall. Causes of a very different sort may possibly produce or contribute to this result.

But, however this influence attributed to heat is explained, let us examine its reality.

Certain observations do seem to show that too great heat excites man to kill himself. During the Egyptian campaign, the number of suicides in the French army seems to have increased and this growth was attributed to the rise in temperature. In the tropics men are often seen to throw themselves abruptly into the ocean under the direct rays of the sun. Dr. Dietrich relates that in a trip around the world from 1844-47 by Count Charles de Gortz he noticed an irresistible impulse among the sailors, called by him *the horrors*, which he describes as follows: "The affliction usually appears in Winter when the sailors, landing after a long voyage, group themselves incautiously about a hot stove and, as is customary, indulge in all sorts of excesses. On returning on board the symptoms of the terrible *horrors* appear. Those stricken by it are irresistibly impelled to throw themselves into the water, whether overcome by dizziness in the midst of work at the mast-tops, or during sleep, from which they start up violently with frightful cries." The *sirocco*, likewise, which produces a stifling heat, has been observed to have a similar effect on suicide.<sup>5</sup>

But this effect is not peculiar to heat; violent cold has the same result. Thus, during the retreat from Moscow our armies are said to have been stricken by numerous suicides. Such facts therefore cannot be used to explain the usually greater number of voluntary deaths in Summer than in Autumn and in Autumn than in Winter; for all that can be drawn from them is that extreme temperatures of whatever sort favor the development of suicide. Clearly, moreover, all sorts of excesses, abrupt and violent changes in physical environment, disturb the organism, derange the normal play of functions and thus cause species of deliria during which the idea of suicide may arise and be put into effect, if not checked. But these unusual, abnormal disturbances bear no likeness to the gradual changes of temperature in the course of every year. The question then is unsolved. Its solution must be sought by the analysis of statistical data.

If temperature were the basic cause of the variations noted, suicide would vary regularly with it. This is not true. Far more suicides

<sup>5</sup> We take these facts from Briere de Boismont, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.

occur in Spring than in Autumn, although it is a little colder in Spring:

|        | France   |                                     | Italy  |                                     |
|--------|--|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
|        | Proportion of 1,000 Annual Suicides in Each Season | Average Temperature of the Seasons* | Proportion of 1,000 Annual Suicides in Each Season | Average Temperature of the Seasons* |
| Spring | 28.1   | 50.36 degrees                       | 297  | 55.22 degrees                       |
| Autumn | 22.7   | 51.98 degrees                       | 196  | 55.58 degrees                       |

\* Fahrenheit. Durkheim gives the figures in centigrade.—Ed.

Thus, while the thermometer is rising 1.62 F. degrees in France and .36 F. degrees in Italy, the number of suicides decreases by 21 per cent in the former country and 35 per cent in the latter. Likewise, in Italy the winter temperature is much lower than that of Autumn (36.14 F. degrees instead of 55.58 F.) and yet suicide-mortality is about the same in both seasons (196 cases as against 194). Everywhere the difference between Spring and Summer is very slight for suicides but very high for temperature. In France the difference is 78 per cent for the one and only 8 per cent for the other; in Prussia it is 121 per cent and 4 per cent.

This independence as regards temperature is still more noticeable if the monthly, not seasonal, variations of suicide are observed. In fact, these monthly variations obey the following law, found in all European countries: *Beginning with January inclusive, the incidence of suicide increases regularly from month to month until about June and regularly decreases from that time to the end of the year.* Usually, in 62 per cent of the cases, the maximum occurs in June, 25 per cent in May and 12 per cent in July. The minimum has occurred in 60 per cent of the cases in December, 22 per cent in January, 15 per cent in November and 3 per cent in October. The greatest irregularities, moreover, usually appear in series too small to be very significant. Wherever, as in France, the development of suicide can be followed over a long extent of time, it is seen to increase till June, then decrease until January, and the distance between the extremes averages not less than from 90 to 100 per cent. Suicide therefore does not reach its height in the hottest months which are August or July; on the contrary, beginning with August it starts to diminish perceptibly. In most cases, likewise, it reaches its lowest point not in January, the coldest month, but in December. Table XII (see p. 112) shows for

each month that the agreement between variations of the thermometer and of suicide are quite irregular and intermittent.

In one and the same country, months with an essentially similar temperature produce a very different proportion of suicides (for instance, May and September, April and October in France, June and September in Italy, etc.). The reverse is no less common; January and October, February and August in France have a like number of suicides in spite of great differences in temperature, and the same holds true for April and July in Italy and Prussia. Moreover, the proportional figures are almost exactly the same for each month in these different countries, although the temperature of the respective months varies greatly from one to another country. Thus May, whose temperature is 50.84 F. degrees in Prussia, 57.56 F. in France and 64.4 F. in Italy, has 104 suicides in the first, 105 in the second

are the monthly temperatures not the same but they vary according to different laws in the different countries; thus, in France, the thermometer rises more from January to April than from April to June, while the reverse holds true for Italy. The thermometric variations and those of suicide are without any relation to one another.

Moreover, if the temperature had the supposed influence, it should be felt equally in the geographic distribution of suicides. The hottest countries should be those most stricken. The deduction is so evident that the Italian school itself refers to it when undertaking to show that the homicidal tendency also increases with the heat. Lombroso and Ferri have tried to show that, as murders are more frequent in Summer than in Winter, they are also more numerous in the South than in the North. Unfortunately, in the case of suicide the evidence refutes the Italian criminologists: for it is least developed in the southern countries of Europe. Italy has only one fifth as much as France; Spain and Portugal are almost immune. On the French suicide map, the only white area of any extent consists of the departments south of the Loire. Of course, we do not mean that this situation is really an effect of temperature; but whatever its cause, it is a fact inconsistent with the theory that heat is a stimulant to suicide.<sup>7</sup>

The perception of these difficulties and contradictions made Lombroso and Ferri slightly modify the school's doctrine, without relinquishing it in principle. According to Lombroso, whose opinion MorSELLI follows, it is not so much the intensity of heat which provokes suicide as the incidence of the first warm weather, the contrast between the departing cold and the beginning of the hot season. The latter is supposed to shock the organism as yet unaccustomed to this new temperature. But a glance at Table XII is enough to show that this explanation is devoid of all foundation. If it were correct, the curve representing the monthly variations of suicide should remain horizontal during Autumn and Winter, then rise abruptly precisely at the appearance of the first warm weather, the cause of all the

<sup>7</sup> It is true that, according to these authors, suicide is only a variety of homicide. The absence of suicides in southern countries would thus be merely apparent, being offset by an excess of homicides. We shall see later what this fusion amounts to. But is it not already clear that this argument turns against its authors? If the excess of homicides observed in hot countries offsets the lack of suicides, why does not the same offset occur during the warm season as well? Why is the latter fertile both in self-murder and in the murder of others?

TABLE XII \*

|           | France (1866-70)    |                                  | Italy (1883-88)           |  | Prussia (1876-78, 80-82, 85-89) |                                |
|-----------|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|           | Average Temperature | No. of Suicides per 1,000 Annual | Average Temp. Rome Naples | No. of Suicides Monthly per 1,000 Annual | Average Temperature (1848-77)   | No. of Suicides Monthly Annual |
| January   | 36.12               | 68                               | 44.24                     | 69                                       | 32.50                           | 61                             |
| February  | 39.20               | 80                               | 46.76                     | 81                                       | 33.31                           | 67                             |
| March     | 43.52               | 86                               | 50.72                     | 81                                       | 37.93                           | 78                             |
| April     | 50.18               | 102                              | 56.30                     | 98                                       | 44.22                           | 99                             |
| May       | 57.56               | 105                              | 64.40                     | 103                                      | 50.84                           | 104                            |
| June      | 62.96               | 107                              | 71.42                     | 105                                      | 57.29                           | 105                            |
| July      | 66.12               | 100                              | 76.82                     | 102                                      | 59.39                           | 99                             |
| August    | 65.30               | 82                               | 75.74                     | 93                                       | 58.48                           | 90                             |
| September | 60.26               | 74                               | 70.16                     | 75                                       | 52.88                           | 83                             |
| October   | 52.34               | 70                               | 61.34                     | 65                                       | 46.02                           | 78                             |
| November  | 43.70               | 66                               | 51.62                     | 63                                       | 37.27                           | 70                             |
| December  | 38.66               | 61                               | 46.22                     | 61                                       | 33.08                           | 61                             |

\* All the months in this table have been reduced to 30 days. The figures relative to temperature are taken for France from *l'Annuaire du bureau des longitudes*, and for Italy from *Annali dell' Ufficio centrale de Meteorologia*. [Temperatures are here given in Fahrenheit; Durkheim's original figures are in Centigrade.—Ed.]

and 103 in the third.<sup>9</sup> The same holds true for almost all the other months. The case of December is especially significant. Its share in the annual total of suicides is exactly the same for the three societies compared (61 per thousand); and yet at this time of year the thermometer registers on the average 46.22 F. degrees at Rome, 49.10 F. at Naples, while in Prussia it never rises above 33.20 F. Not only

<sup>9</sup> This stability of the proportional figures cannot be too much emphasized and we shall revert to its significance below (Bk. III, Chap. I.)

trouble, and fall as suddenly, as soon as the organism has had time to acclimatize itself. On the contrary, its course is perfectly regular; while the rise lasts it is practically the same from one month to another. It rises from December to January, from January to February, from February to March, that is, throughout the months when the first hot weather is yet distant, and descends steadily from September to December, when the warm weather has so long since disappeared that this decrease cannot be attributed to its disappearance. Besides, when does the warm weather occur? It is generally assumed to begin in April. Actually, the thermometer rises from March to April from 33.52 F. degrees to 50.18 F.; the increase is thus 57 per cent, while it is only 40 per cent from April to May, 21 per cent from May to June. An unusual increase of suicides should therefore be observed in April. Actually, the increase at that time is no higher than that found from January to February (18 per cent). In short, as this increase not only persists but rises, though more slowly, until June and even July, it seems very difficult to ascribe it to the action of Spring, unless this season is prolonged to the end of Summer, exclusive only of the month of August.

Besides, if the first hot weather were so deleterious, the first cold weather should have the same effect. It also suddenly attacks the unprepared organism and disturbs vital functions until readaptation is accomplished. But no rise occurs in Autumn even faintly resembling that observed in Spring. It is thus not clear how Morselli could add, after recognizing that according to his theory the change from hot to cold should have the same effect as the reverse change: "This action of the first cold weather is verifiable in our statistical tables, or even better in the second rise of all our curves in Autumn, in the months of October and November, that is, when the change from the hot to the cold season is most sharply felt by the human organism and especially by the nervous system."<sup>8</sup> A mere reference to Table XII will show that this assertion is wholly contrary to the facts. From Morselli's own figures the number of suicides in almost every country is shown not to increase from October to November, but rather to diminish. Exceptions exist only for Denmark, Ireland and for one period in Austria (1851-54), and the increase is negligible in all

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

three cases.<sup>9</sup> In Denmark the numbers rise from 68 per thousand to 71, in Ireland from 62 to 66, in Austria from 65 to 68. There are likewise in October increases in only eight of thirty-one cases observed, namely during one period in Norway, one in Sweden, one in Saxony, one in Bavaria, Austria, the Duchy of Baden, and two in Württemberg. In all others there is a decrease or no change. To summarize, in twenty-one cases out of thirty-one, or 67 per cent, there is a regular diminution from September to December.

The perfect continuity of the curve, both in its progressive and its regressive phases, thus proves that the monthly variations of suicide cannot result from a brief organic crisis, occurring once or twice annually as a sudden, temporary interruption of equilibrium. They can depend only on causes themselves varying with the same continuity.

#### IV

It is now possible to perceive the nature of these causes.

If the proportional share of each month in the total of annual suicides is compared with the average length of the day at the same time

TABLE XIII—Comparison of the Monthly Variations of Suicides with the Average Length of Day in France

|           | Length of Day * |      | No. of Suicides per Month in 1,000 |                     | Increase and Diminution Increase |
|-----------|-----------------|------|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
|           | Hr.             | Min. | Annual Suicides                    | Diminution Increase |                                  |
| January   | 9               | 19   | 68                                 |                     |                                  |
| February  | 10              | 56   | 80                                 |                     | From Jan. to April, 50%          |
| March     | 12              | 47   | 86                                 |                     |                                  |
| April     | 14              | 29   | 102                                |                     | From April to June, 5%           |
| May       | 15              | 48   | 105                                |                     |                                  |
| June      | 16              | 3    | 107                                |                     |                                  |
| July      | 15              | 4    | 100                                |                     | Diminution                       |
| August    | 13              | 25   | 82                                 |                     | From June to Aug., 24%           |
| September | 11              | 39   | 74                                 |                     | From Aug. to Oct., 27%           |
| October   | 9               | 51   | 70                                 |                     |                                  |
| November  | 8               | 31   | 66                                 |                     | From Oct. to Dec., 13%           |
| December  | 8               | 11   | 61                                 |                     |                                  |

\* The indicated length is that of the last day of the month.

<sup>9</sup> We omit the figures for Switzerland. They are calculated for one year only (1876) and consequently nothing can be concluded from them. Moreover, the rise from October to November is very slight. Suicides increase from 83 per thousand to 90.

of the year, the two numerical series thus obtained vary in exactly the same way. (See Table XIII).

The parallelism is perfect. The maximum occurs at the same moment in each case and the minimum likewise; during the interval, the two orders of facts progress *pari passu*. When the days grow longer quickly, suicides increase greatly (January to April); when the increase of the former slows down, so does that of the latter (April to June). The same correspondence reappears during the time of decrease. Even the different months when days are of approximately the same length have approximately the same number of suicides (July and May, August and April).

So regular and precise a correspondence cannot be accidental. There must be some relation between the progress of the day and that of suicide. This hypothesis not only follows directly from Table XIII, it explains a fact which we have previously noted. We have seen that in the chief European societies suicides are distributed in a manner rigorously similar among the various portions of the year, seasons or months.<sup>10</sup> The theories of Ferri and Lombroso could afford no explanation of this curious uniformity, for the temperature varies greatly in the different European countries and evolves differently. On the contrary, the length of the day is appreciably the same for all European countries we have compared.

But what definitely proves the reality of this relation is the fact that in every season the majority of suicides occurs during the daytime. Brierre de Boismont was able to examine the records of 4,595 suicides committed in Paris from 1834 to 1843. Out of the 3,518 cases the moment of which could be determined, 2,094 had been committed by day, 766 during the evening and 658 at night. Those of the daytime and evening therefore are four-fifths of the sum total, and the former alone, three-fifths.

Prussian statistics have assembled more voluminous data on this subject. They refer to 11,822 cases occurring in the years 1869-72. They only confirm the conclusions of Brierre de Boismont. As the

<sup>10</sup> This uniformity relieves us of making Table XIII more involved. It is not necessary to compare the monthly variations of the day and those of suicide in other countries than France, since both are everywhere appreciably the same, unless one compares countries of very different latitude.

relations are appreciably the same each year, we will give, for brevity's sake, only those of 1871 and 1872:

TABLE XIV—Number of Suicides at Each Time of Day Among 1,000 Daily Suicides

|                | 1871  | 1872  |
|----------------|-------|-------|
| Early morning* | 35.9  | 35.9  |
| Later morning  | 158.3 | 159.7 |
| Middle of day  | 73.1  | 71.5  |
| Afternoon      | 143.6 | 160.7 |
| Evening        | 53.5  | 61.0  |
| Night          | 212.6 | 219.3 |
| Time unknown   | 322   | 291.9 |
|                | 1,000 | 1,000 |

\* This term means the time of day immediately succeeding sunrise.

The preponderance of suicides by day is obvious. Therefore, if daytime is richer in suicides than night, the suicides naturally grow more numerous as the day lengthens.

But what causes this diurnal influence?

To explain it one could certainly not refer to the action of the sun and the temperature. Actually, suicides committed in the middle of the day, that is, at the moment of greatest heat, are far fewer than those of the afternoon<sup>11</sup> or later morning. It will even appear below that a considerable decrease occurs at full noon. This explanation being discarded, we have but one other possible, namely, that day favors suicide because this is the time of most active existence, when human relations cross and recross, when social life is most intense.

Whatever information is available as to how suicide is distributed among the different hours of the day or the different days of the week confirms this view. On the basis of 1,993 cases observed by Brierre de Boismont for Paris and 548 covering all of France assembled by Guerry, the following are the chief oscillations of suicide during the twenty-four hours:

|                    | Paris | France                    |
|--------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| From midnight to 6 | 55    | From midnight to 6        |
| From 6 to 11       | 108   | From 2 to 6               |
| From 11 to noon    | 81    | From noon to 2            |
| From noon to 4     | 105   | From 6 to noon            |
| From 4 to 8        | 81    | From 6 to midnight        |
| From 8 to midnight | 61    |                           |
|                    |       | Hourly Number of Suicides |

<sup>11</sup> The French text here reads "evening." But those committed in the evening are not more numerous than those committed in the middle of the day. A look at Table XIV makes it indubitable that Durkheim meant "afternoon."—Ed.

There are clearly two climactic periods of suicide; those when existence is most active, morning and afternoon. Between the two periods is one of rest when general activity is briefly interrupted; suicide pauses momentarily. This calm occurs in Paris at about eleven and at about noon in the other departments of France. It is longer and more definite in the departments than in the capital through the simple fact that non-Parisians take their chief meal then; the pause of suicide is accordingly longer and more definite there. The data of Prussian statistics given above would confirm this view.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Guerry, having determined for 6,587 cases the day of week on which they happened, constructed the scale reproduced in Table XV. This shows that suicide diminishes toward the end of the week beginning with Friday. Prejudices concerning Friday are known to retard public activity. On this day railroad travel is much less than

TABLE XV

|           | Share in Per Cent of Each Day in 1,000 Weekly Suicides | Proportional Share of Each Sex |                |
|-----------|--|--------------------------------|----------------|
|           |  | Per Cent Men                   | Per Cent Women |
| Monday    | 15.20  | 69                             | 31             |
| Tuesday   | 15.71  | 68                             | 32             |
| Wednesday | 14.90  | 68                             | 32             |
| Thursday  | 15.68  | 67                             | 33             |
| Friday    | 13.74  | 67                             | 33             |
| Saturday  | 11.19  | 69                             | 31             |
| Sunday    | 13.57  | 64                             | 36             |

on others. On this day of ill omen people hesitate to make contacts and undertake business. An initial slackness commences on Saturday afternoon; in certain districts idleness is widespread; the prospect of the next day also perhaps has a calming effect on the mind. Finally, on Sunday economic activity stops completely. If activities of another sort did not replace those that have ceased, and recreation areas fill as studios, offices and shops empty, the decrease of suicide might conceivably be yet more noticeable on Sunday. This, it will be noted, is the day when woman's relative share is greatest; then also she most

<sup>12</sup> Another proof that social life experiences a rhythm of rest and activity at the different times of day is the variations of accidents by hours. They are distributed as follows according to the Prussian Bureau of Statistics:

|                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| From 6 to noon | 1,011 accidents per average hour |
| From noon to 2 | 686 accidents per average hour   |
| From 2 to 6    | 1,191 accidents per average hour |
| From 6 to 7    | 979 accidents per average hour   |

frequently departs from indoors, her shelter during the rest of the week, and mingles somewhat with the life of others.<sup>13</sup>

Thus everything proves that if daytime is the part of the twenty-four hours most favorable to suicide, it is because it is also the time when social life is at its height. Then we have a reason why the number of suicides increases, the longer the sun remains above the horizon. The mere lengthening of the days seems to offer wider latitude to collective life. Its time of rest begins later and is sooner over. It has more space to operate in. Thus its accompanying effects must develop simultaneously and, since suicide is one of them, it must increase.

But this is the first, not the only cause. If public activity is greater in Summer than in Spring and in Spring than in Autumn and Winter, this is not merely because its setting enlarges as the year progresses, but because this activity is directly aroused for other reasons.

For the countryside, Winter is a time of rest approaching stagnation. All life seems to stop; human relations are fewer both because of atmospheric conditions and because they lose their incentive with the general slackening of activity. People seem really asleep. In Spring, however, everything begins to awake; activity is resumed, relations spring up, interchanges increase, whole popular migrations take place to meet the needs of agricultural labor. Now these special conditions of rural life must have a great influence on the monthly distribution of suicides, since more than half the total of voluntary deaths comes from the country; in France, from 1873 to 1878, the country accounted for 18,470 cases out of a total of 36,365. They therefore naturally occur more often as the inclement season becomes remote. They reach their maximum in June or July, when activity is

<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that this contrast between the first and second parts of the week recurs during the month. The following, according to Briette de Boismon, *op. cit.*, p. 424, is the distribution of 4,595 Parisian suicides:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| During the first ten days of the month | 1,727 |
| During the next ten days of the month  | 1,488 |
| During the last ten days of the month  | 1,380 |

The numerical inferiority of the last ten days is even greater than the figures show; for because of the 31st day it often includes 11 days instead of 10. The rhythm of social life seems to reproduce the calendar's divisions; there seems to be renewed activity whenever a new period is entered and a sort of slackening as it draws to an end.

greatest in the country. In August when everything begins to settle down, suicides diminish. They do so rapidly only beginning with October and especially November; perhaps because several harvests do not occur until Autumn.

The same reasons also affect the entire land, though to a lesser extent. City life itself is more active during the fine season. Communications being easier then, people travel more readily and inter-social relations increase. Below are the seasonal receipts of our great railroad lines, for express service only (for 1887):<sup>14</sup>

|        |                      |
|--------|----------------------|
| Winter | 71.9 million francs  |
| Spring | 86.7 million francs  |
| Summer | 105.1 million francs |
| Autumn | 96.1 million francs  |

The inner life of every city exhibits the same phases. During this same year, 1887, the number of passengers travelling from one point in Paris to another regularly increased from January (655,791) to June (848,831), then decreased as steadily to December (659,960).<sup>15</sup>

A final instance confirms this interpretation of the facts. If, for reasons just indicated, urban life must be more intense in Summer and in Spring than during the rest of the year, nevertheless the difference between seasons should be less marked there than in the country. For trade and industry, art and science as well as fashionable activities are less interrupted in Winter than agriculture. The occupations of city-dwellers may continue with approximate regularity throughout the year. The greater or lesser length of days especially should have little effect in great centers, because artificial lighting there restricts darkness more than elsewhere. If then the monthly and seasonal variations of suicide depend on the irregular intensity of collective life, they should be less noticeable in great cities than in the country as a whole. The facts strictly confirm this

<sup>14</sup> See the *Bulletin du ministère des Travaux publics*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* The following may be added to all the other facts showing the increase of social activity during the Summer; namely, that accidents are commoner during the fine season than at other times. Here is their distribution in Italy:

|        | 1886  | 1887  | 1888  |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Spring | 1,370 | 2,582 | 2,457 |
| Summer | 1,623 | 3,290 | 3,085 |
| Autumn | 1,474 | 2,560 | 2,780 |
| Winter | 1,190 | 2,748 | 3,032 |

If from this point of view Winter sometimes awfully follows Summer, this is merely because folks are commoner due to ice and because the cold itself produces special accidents. If we discount such accidents, the seasons assume the same order as for suicides.

conclusion. Table XVI (see below) shows that whereas in France, Prussia, Austria and Denmark there is a difference of 52, 45 and even of 68 per cent between the minimum and the maximum, at Paris, Berlin, Hamburg, etc., this averages from 20 to 25 per cent and even reaches 12 per cent (at Frankfurt).

It is clear, moreover, that the maximum generally occurs in Spring in great cities, unlike the rest of society. Even where Spring is surpassed by Summer (Paris and Frankfurt), the increase in the latter season is slight. This is because during the fine season a veritable

**TABLE XVI—Seasonal Variations of Suicide in Several Large Cities Compared with Those of the Whole Country**

|        | PROPORTIONAL FIGURES FOR 1,000 ANNUAL SUICIDES |                    |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|--------|--|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|        | Paris  | Berlin             | Hamburg   | Vienna    | Frankfurt | Geneva    | France    | Prussia   | Austria   |
| Winter | 218  | 231                | 239       | 234       | 239       | 232       | 201       | 199       | 185       |
| Spring | 262  | 287                | 289       | 302       | 245       | 288       | 283       | 284       | 281       |
| Summer | 277  | 248                | 232       | 211       | 278       | 253       | 306       | 290       | 315       |
| Autumn | 241  | 232                | 258       | 253       | 238       | 227       | 210       | 227       | 219       |
|        | (1888-92)                                      | (1882-85-87-89-90) | (1887-91) | (1871-72) | (1867-75) | (1852-54) | (1835-43) | (1869-72) | (1858-59) |
|        |  | (1838-47)          |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |

  

|        | PROPORTIONAL FIGURES FOR EACH SEASON EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF THE WINTER FIGURE REDUCED TO 100 |        |         |        |           |        |        |         |         |
|--------|---|--------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
|        | Paris   | Berlin | Hamburg | Vienna | Frankfurt | Geneva | France | Prussia | Austria |
| Winter | 100   | 100    | 100     | 100    | 100       | 100    | 100    | 100     | 100     |
| Spring | 120   | 124    | 120     | 129    | 102       | 124    | 140    | 142     | 151     |
| Summer | 127   | 107    | 107     | 90     | 112       | 109    | 152    | 145     | 168     |
| Autumn | 100   | 100.3  | 103     | 108    | 99        | 97     | 104    | 104     | 118     |

migration of the chief public personages takes place and public life accordingly shows a slight tendency to slow down.<sup>16</sup>

To recapitulate: we first showed that the direct action of cosmic factors could not explain the monthly or seasonal variations of suicide. We now see the nature of its real causes, the direction in which they must be sought, and this positive result confirms the conclusions of our abstract analysis. If voluntary deaths increase from January to

<sup>16</sup> It should also be noticed that the proportional figures of the different seasons are substantially the same in the great cities compared, though different from those of the countries to which these cities belong. Thus, the suicide-rate is found everywhere stable in the same social environments. The suicidal tendency varies in like manner at different times of the year in Berlin, Vienna, Geneva, Paris, etc. One thus realizes in some measure the full extent of its reality.



July, it is not because heat disturbs the organism but because social life is more intense. To be sure, this greater intensity derives from the greater ease of development of social life in the Summer than in the Winter, owing to the sun's position on the ecliptic, the state of the atmosphere, etc. But the physical environment does not stimulate it directly; above all, it has no effect on the progression of suicide. The latter depends on social conditions.

Of course, we are yet uncertain how collective life can have this effect. But it already appears that if it contains the causes of the variation of the suicide-rate, the latter must increase or decrease as social life becomes more or less active. To determine these causes more exactly will be the purpose of the following book.

**B**UT before searching for the social causes of suicide, a final psychological factor remains, the influence of which must be determined because of the great importance attributed to it with respect to the origin of social facts in general and of suicide in particular. This factor is imitation.

That imitation is a purely psychological phenomenon appears clearly from its occurrence between individuals connected by no social bond. A man may imitate another with no link of either one with the other or with a common group on which both depend, and the imitative function when exercised has in itself no power to form a bond between them. A cough, a dance-motion, a homicidal impulse may be transferred from one person to another even though there is only chance and temporary contact between them. They need have no intellectual or moral community between them nor exchange services nor even speak the same language, nor are they any more related after the transfer than before. In short, our method of imitating human beings is the same method we use in reproducing natural sounds, the shapes of things, the movements of non-human beings. Since the latter group of cases contains no social element, there is none in the former case. It originates in certain qualities of our representational life not based upon any collective influence. If, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> *Bibliography*.—Lucas, *De l'imitation contagieuse*, Paris, 1833.—Despine, *De la contagion morale*, 1870. *De l'imitation*, 1871.—Moreau de Tours (Paul), *De la contagion du suicide*, Paris, 1875.—Aubry, *Contagion du meurtre*, Paris, 1888.—Tarde, *Les Lois de l'imitation (passim)*. *Philosophie pénale*, p. 319 and ff. Paris, F. Alcan.—Corre, *Crime et suicide*, p. 207 and ff.

more readily transmissible by contagion than suicide, yet we have just seen that this contagiousness has no social effects. If imitation is so much without social influence in this case, it cannot have more in others; the virtues ascribed to it are therefore imaginary. Within a narrow circle it may well occasion the repetition of a single thought or action, but never are its repercussions sufficiently deep or extensive to reach and modify the heart of society. Thanks to the almost unanimous and generally ancient predominance of collective states, they are far too resistant to be offset by an individual innovation. How could an individual, who is nothing more than an individual,<sup>25</sup> be strong enough to mould society to his image? If we were not still reduced to conceiving of the social world almost as crudely as the primitive does the physical world; if, regardless of all scientific induction, we were not still reduced at least tacitly and unconsciously to admitting that social phenomena are not proportionate to their causes, we would not even pause to consider a conception which, though of biblical simplicity, is at the same time in flagrant contradiction to the fundamental principles of thought. We no longer believe that zoological species are only individual variations hereditarily transmitted;<sup>26</sup> it is equally inadmissible that a social fact is merely a generalized individual fact. But most untenable of all is the idea that this generalization may be due to some blind contagion or other. We should even be amazed at the continuing necessity of discussing an hypothesis which, aside from the serious objections it suggests, has never even begun to receive experimental proof. For it has never been shown that imitation can account for a definite order of social facts and, even less, that it alone can account for them. The proposition has merely been stated as an aphorism, resting on vaguely metaphysical considerations. But sociology can only claim to be treated as a science when those who pursue it are forbidden to dogmatize in this fashion, so patently eluding the regular requirements of proof.

<sup>25</sup> By this, we mean an individual stripped of all power possibly acquired by collective confidence or admiration. Clearly, a functionary or a popular man embodies not merely his individually inherited powers but social powers resulting from the collective sentiments of which they are the object, which give him influence over the progress of society. But only in so far as he is more than an individual does he possess this influence.

<sup>26</sup> See Delage, *La structure du protoplasme et les théories de l'hérédité*, Paris, 1895, p. 813 ff.

## CHAPTER I HOW TO DETERMINE SOCIAL CAUSES AND SOCIAL TYPES

*T*HE results of the preceding book are not wholly negative. We have in fact shown that for each social group there is a specific tendency to suicide explained neither by the organic-psychic constitution of individuals nor the nature of the physical environment. Consequently, by elimination, it must necessarily depend upon social causes and be in itself a collective phenomenon; some of the facts examined, especially the geographic and seasonal variations of suicide, had definitely led us to this conclusion. We must now study this tendency more closely.

### I

To accomplish this it would seem to be best to inquire first whether the tendency is single and indestructible or whether it does not rather consist of several different tendencies, which may be isolated by analysis and which should be separately studied. If so, we should proceed as follows. As the tendency, single or not, is observable only in its individual manifestations, we should have to begin with the latter. Thus we should observe and describe as many as possible, of course omitting those due to mental alienation. If all were found to have the same essential characteristics, they should be grouped in a single class; otherwise, which is much more likely—for they are too different not to include several varieties—a certain number of species should be determined according to their resemblances and differences. One would admit as many suicidal currents as there were distinct types, then seek to determine their causes and respective im-

portance. We have pursued some such method in our brief study of the suicide of insanity.

Unfortunately, no classification of the suicides of sane persons can be made in terms of their morphological types or characteristics, from almost complete lack of the necessary data. To be attempted, it would require good descriptions of many individual cases. One would have to know the psychological condition of the suicide at the moment of forming his resolve, how he prepared to accomplish it, how he finally performed it, whether he were agitated or depressed, calm or exalted, anxious or irritated, etc. Now we have such data practically only for some cases of insane suicide, and just such observations and descriptions by alienists have enabled us to establish the chief types of suicide where insanity is the determining cause. We have almost no such information for others. Briere de Boismont alone has tried to do this descriptive work for 1,328 cases where the suicide left letters or other records summarized by the author in his book. But, first, this summary is much too brief. Then, the patient's revelations of his condition are usually insufficient, if not suspect. He is only too apt to be mistaken concerning himself and the state of his feelings; he may believe that he is acting calmly, though at the peak of nervous excitement. Finally, besides being insufficiently objective, these observations cover too few facts to permit definite conclusions. Some very vague dividing lines are perceptible and their suggestions may be utilized; but they are too indefinite to provide a regular classification. Furthermore, in view of the manner of execution of most suicides, proper observations are next to impossible.

But our aim may be achieved by another method. Let us reverse the order of study. Only in so far as the effective causes differ can there be different types of suicide. For each to have its own nature, it must also have special conditions of existence. The same antecedent or group of antecedents cannot sometimes produce one result and sometimes another, for, if so, the difference of the second from the first would itself be without cause, which would contradict the principle of causality. Every proved specific difference between causes therefore implies a similar difference between effects. Consequently, we shall be able to determine the social types of suicide by classifying them not directly by their preliminarily described characteristics,

but by the causes which produce them. Without asking why they differ from one another, we will first seek the social conditions responsible for them; then group these conditions in a number of separate classes by their resemblances and differences, and we shall be sure that a specific type of suicide will correspond to each of these classes. In a word, instead of being morphological, our classification will from the start be aetiological. Nor is this a sign of inferiority, for the nature of a phenomenon is much more profoundly got at by knowing its cause than by knowing its characteristics only, even the essential ones.

The defect of this method, of course, is to assume the diversity of types without being able to identify them. It may prove their existence and number but not their special characteristics. But this drawback may be obviated, at least in a certain measure. Once the nature of the causes is known we shall try to deduce the nature of the effects, since they will be both qualified and classified by their attachment to their respective sources. Of course, if this deduction were not at all guided by facts, it might be lost in purely imaginary constructions. But with the aid of some data on the morphology of suicides it may be made clearer. Alone, these data are too incomplete and unsure to provide a principle of classification; but once the outlines of this classification are found, the data may be used. They will indicate what direction the deduction should take and, by the examples they offer, the deductively established species may be shown not to be imaginary. Thus we shall descend from causes to effects and our aetiological classification will be completed by a morphological one which can verify the former and vice versa.

In all respects this reverse method is the only fitting one for the special problem that we have set ourselves. Indeed we must not forget that what we are studying is the social suicide-rate. The only types of interest to us, accordingly, are those contributing to its formation and influencing its variation. Now, it is not sure that all individual sorts of voluntary death have this quality. Some, though general to a certain degree, are not bound or not sufficiently bound to the moral temper of society to enter as a characteristic element into the special physiognomy of each people with respect to suicide. For instance, we have seen that alcoholism is not a determining factor of the particular aptitude of each society, yet alcoholic suicides



TABLE XVII—Share of Each Category of Motives in 100 Annual Suicides of Each Sex

|                                    | FRANCE * |         |         |         |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                    | Men      |         | Women   |         |
|                                    | 1856-60  | 1874-78 | 1856-60 | 1874-78 |
| Poverty and losses                 | 13.30    | 11.79   | 5.38    | 5.77    |
| Family troubles                    | 11.68    | 12.53   | 12.79   | 16.00   |
| Love, jealousy, debauchery, etc.   | 15.48    | 16.98   | 13.16   | 12.20   |
| Various types of distress          | 25.70    | 23.43   | 17.16   | 20.22   |
| Mental sickness                    | 25.67    | 27.09   | 45.75   | 41.81   |
| Remorse, fear of criminal sentence | 0.84     | .....   | 0.19    | .....   |
| Other causes and unknown cause     | 9.33     | 8.18    | 5.51    | 4.00    |
| Totals                             | 100.00   | 100.00  | 100.00  | 100.00  |
|                                    | SAXONY † |         |         |         |
|                                    | Men      |         | Women   |         |
|                                    | 1854-78  | 1880    | 1854-78 | 1880    |
| Physical pain                      | 5.64     | 5.86    | 7.43    | 7.98    |
| Family troubles                    | 2.39     | 3.30    | 3.18    | 1.72    |
| Losses and poverty                 | 9.52     | 11.28   | 2.80    | 4.42    |
| Debauchery, gambling, etc.         | 11.15    | 10.74   | 1.59    | 0.44    |
| Remorse, fear of prosecution, etc. | 10.41    | 8.51    | 10.44   | 6.21    |
| Unhappy love                       | 1.79     | 1.50    | 3.74    | 6.20    |
| Mental troubles, religious mania   | 27.94    | 30.27   | 50.64   | 54.43   |
| Anger                              | 2.00     | 3.29    | 3.04    | 3.09    |
| Disputes with life                 | 5.58     | 6.67    | 5.76    | 5.76    |
| Unknown causes                     | 19.58    | 18.58   | 11.77   | 9.75    |
| Totals                             | 100.00   | 100.00  | 100.00  | 100.00  |

\* According to Legoyt, p. 342.

† According to Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, Tables appended, p. 110.

It is practically certain, then, that the social causes for suicide are not the same for both. Now, not only are the suicides of these two categories of persons attributed to the same reasons, but the respective importance of these different reasons is supposed to be almost exactly the same in both. Following are the actual percentile shares of the chief motives for suicide in these two occupations in France during the years 1874-78:

|   | Agriculture | Liberal Professions |
|---|-------------|---------------------|
| Loss of employment, financial losses, poverty | 8.15        | 8.87                |
| Family troubles                               | 14.45       | 13.14               |
| Disappointed love, jealousy                   | 1.48        | 2.01                |
| Intoxication and drunkenness                  | 13.23       | 6.41                |
| Suicides of criminals or minor offenders      | 4.09        | 4.73                |
| Physical sufferings                           | 15.91       | 19.89               |
| Mental sickness                               | 35.80       | 34.04               |
| Disputes with life, varied disappointments    | 2.93        | 4.94                |
| Unknown causes                                | 3.96        | 5.97                |
| Totals  | 100.00      | 100.00              |

Except for intoxication and drunkenness, the figures, especially those of most numerical importance, differ little from column to column. Thus, through consideration of motives only, one might think that the causes of suicide are not, to be sure, of the same intensity but of the same sort in both cases. Yet actually, the forces impelling the farm laborer and the cultivated man of the city to suicide are widely different. The reasons ascribed for suicide, therefore, or those to which the suicide himself ascribes his act, are usually only apparent causes. Not only are the reasons merely individual repercussions of a general state, but they express the general state very unfaithfully, since they are identical while it is not. They may be said to indicate the individual's weak points, where the outside current bearing the impulse to self-destruction most easily finds introduction. But they are no part of this current itself and consequently cannot help us to understand it.

We therefore do not regret that certain countries like England and Austria are abandoning the collection of such supposed causes of suicide. Statistical efforts should take quite a different direction. Instead of trying to solve these insoluble problems of moral casuistry, they should notice more carefully the social concomitants of suicide. For our own part, at least, we make it a rule not to employ in our studies such uncertain and uninformative data; no law of any interest has in fact ever been drawn from them by students of suicide. We shall thus refer to them only rarely, when they seem to have special meaning and to offer special assurance. We shall try to determine the productive causes of suicide directly, without concerning ourselves with the forms they can assume in particular individuals. Disregarding the individual as such, his motives and his ideas, we shall seek directly the states of the various social environments (religious confessions, family, political society, occupational groups, etc.), in terms of which the variations of suicide occur. Only then returning to the individual, shall we study how these general causes become individualized so as to produce the homicidal results involved.

*but the current itself cannot help us to understand it.*

*but the current itself cannot help us to understand it.*

may conceivably be the reason for the lesser development of suicide which we have just mentioned. If one wishes to avoid this source of error and determine more definitely the influence of Catholicism and Protestantism on the suicidal tendency, the two religions must be compared in the heart of a single society.

Of all the great states of Germany, Bavaria has by far the fewest suicides. There have been barely 90 per million inhabitants yearly since 1874, while Prussia has 133 (1871-75), the duchy of Baden 156, Württemberg 162, Saxony 300. Now, Bavaria also has most Catholics, 713.2 to 1,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, if one com-

609 FIRST let us see how the different religious confessions affect suicide.

I

If one casts a glance at the map of European suicide, it is at once clear that in purely Catholic countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, suicide is very little developed, while it is at its maximum in Protestant countries, in Prussia, Saxony, Denmark. The following averages compiled by Morselli confirm this first conclusion:

|  | Average of Suicides per Million Inhabitants |
|--|---|
| Protestant states                      | 190   |
| Mixed states (Protestant and Catholic) | 96  |
| Catholic states                        | 58  |
| Greek Catholic states                  | 40  |

The low proportion of the Greek Catholics cannot be surely attributed to religion; for as their civilization is very different from that of the other European nations, this difference of culture may be the cause of their lesser aptitude. But this is not the case with most Catholic or Protestant societies. To be sure, they are not all on the same intellectual and moral level; yet the resemblances are sufficiently essential to make it possible to ascribe to confessional differences the marked contrast they offer in respect to suicide.

Nevertheless, this first comparison is still too summary. In spite of undeniable similarities, the social environments of the inhabitants of these different countries are not identical. The civilizations of Spain and Portugal are far below that of Germany and this inferiority

Prussia  
Wurttemberg

Bavarian Provinces (1867-75) \*

|                    | Provinces w. Catholic Minority (less than 50%) | Suicides per Million Inhabitants | Provinces w. Catholic Majority (50 to 90%) | Suicides per Million Inhabitants | Provinces w. More Than 90% Catholic | Suicides per Million Inhabitants |
|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Rhenish Palatinata |  | 167                              | Lower Franconia                            | 157                              | Upper Palatinata                    | 64                               |
| Central Franconia  |  | 207                              | Swabia                                     | 118                              | Upper Bavaria                       | 114                              |
| Upper Franconia    |  | 204                              |  |                                  | Lower Bavaria                       | 19                               |
| Average            |  | 192                              | Average                                    | 135                              | Average                             | 75                               |

\* The population below 15 years has been omitted.

609 pares the different provinces of Bavaria, suicides are found to be in direct proportion to the number of Protestants and in inverse proportion to that of Catholics (See Table above). Not only the proportions of averages to one another confirm the law but all the numbers of the first column are higher than those of the second and those of the second higher than those of the third without exception. It is the same with Prussia:

Prussian Provinces (1883-90)

|                     | Provinces with More Than 90% Protestant  | Suicides per Million Inhabitants | Provinces with from 89 to 68% Protestant | Suicides per Million Inhabitants |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Saxony              |  | 309.4                            | Hanover                                  | 212.3                            |
| Schleswig Pomerania |  | 172.9                            | Hesse                                    | 200.3                            |
|                     |  | 171.5                            | Brandenburg and Berlin E. Prussia        | 226.3                            |
| Average             |  | 264.6                            | Average                                  | 220.0                            |
|                     | Provinces with from 40 to 50% Protestant | Suicides per Million Inhabitants | Provinces with from 32 to 28% Protestant | Suicides per Million Inhabitants |
| W. Prussia          |  | 123.9                            | Posen                                    | 96.4                             |
| Silesia             |  | 260.2                            | Rhineland                                | 100.3                            |
| Westphalia          |  | 107.5                            | Hohenzollern                             | 90.1                             |
| Average             |  | 163.6                            | Average                                  | 95.6                             |

There are only two slight irregularities among the 14 provinces thus compared, so far as detail is concerned; Silesia, which because of its relatively high number of suicides should be in the second category, is only in the third, while on the contrary Pomerania would be more in its place in the second than in the first column.

Switzerland forms an interesting study from this same point of view. For as both French and German populations exist there, the influence of the confession is observable separately on each race. Now, its influence is the same on both. Catholic cantons show four and five times fewer suicides than Protestant, of whichever nationality.

|             | French Cantons                      |              | German Cantons |                | Total of Cantons of All Nationalities |                |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
|             | 83 suicides per million inhabitants | 87 suicides  | Catholics      | 87 suicides    | Catholics                             | 86.7 suicides  |
| Catholics   |                                     |              |                |                |                                       |                |
| Protestants | 453 suicides per million            | 293 suicides | Protestants    | 293 suicides   | Mixed                                 | 212.0 suicides |
|             |                                     |              | Protestants    | 326.3 suicides | Protestants                           | 326.3 suicides |

Confessional influence is therefore so great as to dominate all others.

Besides, in a fairly large number of cases the number of suicides per million inhabitants of the population of each confession has been directly determined. The following figures were obtained by various observers:

TABLE XVIII—Suicides in Different Countries per Million Persons of Each Confession

|             |           | Persons of Each Confession |           | Names of Observers |
|-------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|             |           | Protestants                | Catholics |                    |
| Austria     | (1852-59) | 79.5                       | 51.3      | Wagner             |
| Prussia     | (1849-55) | 159.9                      | 49.6      | Id.                |
| Prussia     | (1869-72) | 187                        | 69        | Morsell            |
| Prussia     | (1890)    | 240                        | 100       | Prinzling          |
| Baden       | (1852-62) | 139                        | 117       | Legoyt             |
| Baden       | (1870-74) | 171                        | 136.7     | Morsell            |
| Baden       | (1878-88) | 242                        | 170       | Prinzling          |
| Bavaria     | (1844-56) | 135.4                      | 49.1      | Morsell            |
| Bavaria     | (1884-91) | 224                        | 94        | Prinzling          |
| Wurttemberg | (1846-60) | 113.5                      | 77.9      | Wagner             |
| Wurttemberg | (1873-76) | 190                        | 120       | Wagner             |
| Wurttemberg | (1881-90) | 170                        | 119       | Durkheim           |
|             |           |                            |           | Id.                |
|             |           |                            |           | Morsell            |
|             |           |                            |           | Prinzling          |
|             |           |                            |           | Legoyt             |
|             |           |                            |           | Morsell            |
|             |           |                            |           | Prinzling          |
|             |           |                            |           | Morsell            |
|             |           |                            |           | Prinzling          |
|             |           |                            |           | Wagner             |
|             |           |                            |           | 65.6               |
|             |           |                            |           | 60                 |
|             |           |                            |           | 142                |

Thus, everywhere without exception,<sup>1</sup> Protestants show far more suicides than the followers of other confessions. The difference varies

<sup>1</sup> We have no data on confessional influence in France, Leroy, however, tells us the following in his study on Seine-et-Marne: in the communes of Quincy, Nanteuil-les-Meaux, Mareuil, Protestants show one suicide to 310 inhabitants, Catholics 1 to 678 (*op. cit.*, p. 205).

between a minimum of 20 to 30 per cent and a maximum of 300 per cent. It is useless to invoke with Mayr<sup>2</sup> against such a unanimous agreement of facts, the isolated case of Norway and Sweden which, though Protestant, have only an average number of suicides. First, as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, these international comparisons are not significant unless bearing on a considerable number of countries, and even in this case are not conclusive. There are sufficiently great differences between the peoples of the Scandinavian peninsula and those of Central Europe for it to be reasonable that Protestantism does not produce exactly the same effects on both. But furthermore, if the suicide-rate is not in itself very high in these two countries, it seems relatively so if one considers their modest rank among the civilized peoples of Europe. There is no reason to suppose that they have reached an intellectual level above Italy, to say the least, yet self-destruction occurs from twice to three times as often (90 to 100 suicides per million inhabitants as against 40). May Protestantism not be the cause of this relatively higher figure? Thus the fact not only does not tell against the law just established on the basis of so many observations, but rather tends to confirm it.<sup>3</sup>

The aptitude of Jews for suicide is always less than that of Protestants; in a very general way it is also, though to a lesser degree, lower than that of Catholics. Occasionally however, the latter relation is reversed; such cases occur especially in recent times. Up to the middle of the century, Jews killed themselves less frequently than Catholics in all countries but Bavaria; <sup>4</sup> only towards 1870 do they begin to lose their ancient immunity. They still very rarely greatly exceed the rate for Catholics. Besides, it must be remembered that Jews live more exclusively than other confessional groups in cities and are in intellectual occupations. On this account they are more inclined to suicide than the members of other confessions, for reasons other than their religion. If therefore the rate for Judaism is so low, in spite of this

<sup>2</sup> *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, Supplement, Vol. I, p. 702.

<sup>3</sup> The case of England is exceptional, a non-Catholic country where suicide is infrequent. It will be explained below.

<sup>4</sup> Bavaria is still the only exception: Jews there kill themselves twice as often as Catholics. Is there something exceptional about the position of Judaism in this country? We do not know.

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aggravating circumstance, it may be assumed that other things being equal, their religion has the fewest suicides of all.

These facts established, what is their explanation?

## II

If we consider that the Jews are everywhere in a very small minority and that in most societies where the foregoing observations were made, Catholics are in the minority, we are tempted to find in these facts the cause explaining the relative rarity of voluntary deaths in these two confessions.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, the less numerous confessions, facing the hostility of the surrounding populations, in order to maintain themselves are obliged to exercise severe control over themselves and subject themselves to an especially rigorous discipline. To justify the always precarious tolerance granted them, they have to practice greater morality. Besides these considerations, certain facts seem really to imply that this special factor has some influence. In Prussia, the minority status of Catholics is very pronounced, since they are only a third of the whole population. They kill themselves only one third as often as the Protestants. The difference decreases in Bavaria where two thirds of the inhabitants are Catholics; the voluntary deaths of the latter are here only in the proportion of 100 to 275 of those of Protestants or else of 100 to 238, according to the period. Finally, in the almost entirely Catholic Empire of Austria, only 155 Protestant to 100 Catholic suicides are found. It would seem then that where Protestantism becomes a minority its tendency to suicide decreases.

But first, suicide is too little an object of public condemnation for the slight measure of blame attaching to it to have such influence, even on minorities obliged by their situation to pay special heed to public opinion. As it is an act without offense to others, it involves no great reproach to the groups more inclined to it than others, and is not apt to increase greatly their relative ostracism as would certainly be the case with a greater frequency of crime and misdemeanor. Besides, when religious intolerance is very pronounced, it often produces an opposite effect. Instead of exciting the dissenters to respect opinion more, it accustoms them to disregard it. When one feels himself an object of inescapable hostility, one abandons the idea of con-

<sup>5</sup> Legoyt, *op. cit.*, p. 203; Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, p. 654.

ciliating it and is the more resolute in his most unpopular observances. This has frequently happened to the Jews and thus their exceptional immunity probably has another cause.

Anyway, this explanation would not account for the respective situation of Protestants and Catholics. For though the protective influence of Catholicism is less in Austria and Bavaria, where it is in the majority, it is still considerable. Catholicism does not therefore owe this solely to its minority status. More generally, whatever the proportional share of these two confessions in the total population, wherever their comparison has been possible from the point of view of suicide, Protestants are found to kill themselves much more often than Catholics. There are even countries like the Upper Palatinate and Upper Bavaria, where the population is almost wholly Catholic (92 and 96 per cent) and where there are nevertheless 300 and 423 Protestant suicides to 100 Catholic suicides. The proportion even rises to 528 per cent in Lower Bavaria where the reformed religion has not quite one follower to 100 inhabitants. Therefore, even if the prudence incumbent on minorities were a partial cause of the great difference between the two religions, the greatest share is certainly due to other causes.

We shall find these other causes in the nature of these two religious systems. Yet they both prohibit suicide with equal emphasis; not only do they penalize it morally with great severity, but both teach that a new life begins beyond the tomb where men are punished for their evil actions, and Protestantism just as well as Catholicism numbers suicide among them. Finally, in both cults these prohibitions are of divine origin; they are represented not as the logical conclusion of correct reason, but God Himself is their authority. Therefore, if Protestantism is less unfavorable to the development of suicide, it is not because of a different attitude from that of Catholicism. Thus, if both religions have the same precepts with respect to this particular matter, their dissimilar influence on suicide must proceed from one of the more general characteristics differentiating them.

The only essential difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is that the second permits free inquiry to a far greater degree than the first. Of course, Catholicism by the very fact that it is an idealistic religion concedes a far greater place to thought and reflection than Greco-Latin polytheism or Hebrew monotheism. It is

not restricted to mechanical ceremonies but seeks the control of the conscience. So it appeals to conscience, and even when demanding blind submission of reason, does so by employing the language of reason. None the less, the Catholic accepts his faith ready made, without scrutiny. He may not even submit it to historical examination since the original texts that serve as its basis are proscribed. A whole hierarchical system of authority is devised, with marvelous ingenuity, to render tradition invariable. All *variation* is abhorrent to Catholic thought. The Protestant is far more the author of his faith. The Bible is put in his hands and no interpretation is imposed upon him. The very structure of the reformed cult stresses this state of religious individualism. Nowhere but in England is the Protestant clergy a hierarchy; like the worshippers, the priest has no other source but himself and his conscience. He is a more instructed guide than the run of worshippers but with no special authority for fixing dogma. But what best proves that this freedom of inquiry proclaimed by the founders of the Reformation has not remained a Platonic affirmation is the increasing multiplicity of all sorts of sects so strikingly in contrast with the indivisible unity of the Catholic Church.

We thus reach our first conclusion, that the proclivity of Protestantism for suicide must relate to the spirit of free inquiry that animates this religion. Let us understand this relationship correctly. Free inquiry itself is only the effect of another cause. When it appears, when men, after having long received their ready made faith from tradition, claim the right to shape it for themselves, this is not because of the intrinsic desirability of free inquiry, for the latter involves as much sorrow as happiness. But it is because men henceforth need this liberty. This very need can have only one cause: the overthrow of traditional beliefs. If they still asserted themselves with equal energy, it would never occur to men to criticize them. If they still had the same authority, men would not demand the right to verify the source of this authority. Reflection develops only if its development becomes imperative, that is, if certain ideas and instinctive sentiments which have hitherto adequately guided conduct are found to have lost their efficacy. Then reflection intervenes to fill the gap that has appeared, but which it has not created. Just as reflection disappears to the extent that thought and action take the form of automatic habits, it awakes only when accepted habits become disorgan-

ized. It asserts its rights against public opinion only when the latter loses strength, that is, when it is no longer prevalent to the same extent. If these assertions occur not merely occasionally and as passing crises, but become chronic; if individual consciences keep reaffirming their autonomy, it is because they are constantly subject to conflicting impulses, because a new opinion has not been formed to replace the one no longer existing. If a new system of beliefs were constituted which seemed as indisputable to everyone as the old, no one would think of discussing it any longer. Its discussion would no longer even be permitted; for ideas shared by an entire society draw from this consensus an authority that makes them sacrosanct and raises them above dispute. For them to have become more tolerant, they must first already have become the object of less general and complete assent and been weakened by preliminary controversy.

Thus, if it is correct to say that free inquiry once proclaimed, multiplies schisms, it must be added that it presupposes them and derives from them, for it is claimed and instituted as a principle only in order to permit latent or half-declared schisms to develop more freely. So if Protestantism concedes a greater freedom to individual thought than Catholicism, it is because it has fewer common beliefs and practices. Now, a religious society cannot exist without a collective *credo* and the more extensive the *credo* the more unified and strong is the society. For it does not unite men by an exchange and reciprocity of services, a temporal bond of union which permits and even presupposes differences, but which a religious society cannot form. It socializes men only by attaching them completely to an identical body of doctrine and socializes them in proportion as this body of doctrine is extensive and firm. The more numerous the manners of action and thought of a religious character are, which are accordingly removed from free inquiry, the more the idea of God presents itself in all details of existence, and makes individual wills converge to one identical goal. Inversely, the greater concessions a confessional group makes to individual judgment, the less it dominates lives, the less its cohesion and vitality. We thus reach the conclusion that the superiority of Protestantism with respect to suicide results from its being a less strongly integrated church than the Catholic church.

This also explains the situation of Judaism. Indeed, the reproach to which the Jews have for so long been exposed by Christianity has

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created feelings of unusual solidarity among them. Their need of resisting a general hostility, the very impossibility of free communication with the rest of the population, has forced them to strict union among themselves. Consequently, each community became a small, compact and coherent society with a strong feeling of self-consciousness and unity. Everyone thought and lived alike; individual divergences were made almost impossible by the community of existence and the close and constant surveillance of all over each. The Jewish church has thus been more strongly united than any other, from its dependence on itself because of being the object of intolerance. By analogy with what has just been observed apropos of Protestantism, the same cause must therefore be assumed for the slight tendency of the Jews to suicide in spite of all sorts of circumstances which might on the contrary incline them to it. Doubtless they owe this immunity in a sense to the hostility surrounding them. But if this is its influence, it is not because it imposes a higher morality but because it obliges them to live in greater union. They are immune to this degree because their religious society is of such solidarity. Besides, the ostracism to which they are subject is only one of the causes producing this result; the very nature of Jewish beliefs must contribute largely to it. Judaism, in fact, like all early religions, consists basically of a body of practices minutely governing all the details of life and leaving little free room to individual judgment.

### III

Several facts confirm this explanation.

First, of all great Protestant countries, England is the one where suicide is least developed. In fact, only about 80 suicides per million inhabitants are found there, whereas the reformed societies of Germany have from 140 to 400; and yet the general activity of ideas and business seems no less great there than elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Now, it happens at the same time that the Anglican church is far more powerfully integrated than other Protestant churches. To be sure, England has been customarily regarded as the classic land of individual freedom;

<sup>6</sup> To be sure, the statistics of English suicides are not very exact. Because of the penalties attached to suicide, many cases are reported as accidental death. However, this inexactitude is not enough to explain the extent of the difference between this country and Germany.

but actually many facts indicate that the number of common, obligatory beliefs and practices, which are thus withdrawn from free inquiry by individuals, is greater than in Germany. First, the law still sanctions many religious requirements: such as the law of the observance of Sunday, that forbidding stage representations of any character from Holy Scripture; the one until recently requiring some profession of faith from every member of political representative bodies, etc. Next, respect for tradition is known to be general and powerful in England: it must extend to matters of religion as well as others. But a highly developed traditionalism always more or less restricts activity of the individual. Finally, the Anglican clergy is the only Protestant clergy organized in a hierarchy. This external organization clearly shows an inner unity incompatible with a pronounced religious individualism.

Besides, England has the largest number of clergymen of any Protestant country. In 1876 there averaged 908 church-goers for every minister, compared with 932 in Hungary, 1,100 in Holland, 1,300 in Denmark, 1,440 in Switzerland and 1,600 in Germany.<sup>7</sup> The number of priests is not an insignificant detail nor a superficial characteristic but one related to the intrinsic nature of religion. The proof of this is that the Catholic clergy is everywhere much more numerous than the Protestant. In Italy there is a priest for every 267 Catholics, in Spain for 419, in Portugal for 536, in Switzerland for 540, in France for 823, in Belgium for 1,050. This is because the priest is the natural organ of faith and tradition and because here as elsewhere the organ inevitably develops in exact proportion to its function. The more intense religious life, the more men are needed to direct it. The greater the number of dogmas and precepts the interpretation of which is not left to individual consciences, the more authorities are required to tell their meaning; moreover, the more numerous these authorities, the more closely they surround and the better they restrain the individual. Thus, far from weakening our theory, the case of England verifies it. If Protestantism there does not produce the same results as on the continent, it is because religious society there is much more strongly constituted and to this extent resembles the Catholic church.

<sup>7</sup> Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, p. 626.

Here, however, is a more general proof in confirmation of our thesis.

The taste for free inquiry can be aroused only if accompanied by that for learning. Knowledge is free thought's only means of achieving its purposes. When irrational beliefs or practices have lost their hold, appeal must be made, in the search for others, to the enlightened consciousness of which knowledge is only the highest form. Fundamentally, these two tendencies are one and spring from the same source. Men generally have the desire for self-instruction only in so far as they are freed from the yoke of tradition; for as long as the latter governs intelligence it is all-sufficient and jealous of any rival. On the other hand, light is sought as soon as customs whose origins are lost in obscurity no longer correspond to new necessities. This is why philosophy, the first, synthetic form of knowledge, appears as soon as religion has lost its sway, and only then; and is then followed progressively by the many single sciences with the further development of the very need which produced philosophy. Unless we are mistaken, if the progressive weakening of collective and customary prejudices produces a trend to suicide and if Protestantism derives thence its special pre-disposition to it, the two following facts should be noted: 1, the desire for learning must be stronger among Protestants than among Catholics; 2, in so far as this denotes a weakening of common beliefs it should vary with suicide, fairly generally. Do facts confirm this twofold hypothesis?

If Catholic France is compared with Protestant Germany merely at their highest levels, that is, if only the upper classes of both are compared, it seems that France may bear the comparison. In the great centers of our country, knowledge is no less honored or widespread than among our neighbors; we even decidedly outdistance several Protestant countries in this respect. But if the desire for learning is equally felt in the upper reaches of the two societies, it is not so on their lower levels; and whereas the maximal intensity is approximately the same in both, the average intensity is less among us. The same is true of the aggregate of Catholic nations compared with Protestant nations. Even assuming that the highest culture of the former is about the same as the latter's, the situation is quite otherwise as regards popular education. Whereas among the Protestant peoples of Saxony, Norway, Sweden, Baden, Denmark and Prussia, from

1877-1878 among 1,000 children of school age, that is, from 6 to 12 years, an average of 957 attended school, the Catholic peoples, France, Austria-Hungary, Spain and Italy, had only 667, or 31 per cent less. Proportions are the same for the periods of 1874-75 and 1860-61.<sup>8</sup> Prussia, the Protestant country having the lowest figure here, is yet far above France at the head of the Catholic countries; the former has 897 pupils per 1,000 children, the latter only 766.<sup>9</sup> In all of Germany, Bavaria has most Catholics and also most illiterates. Of all Bavarian provinces, the Upper Palatinate is one of the most profoundly Catholic and has also the most conscripted men who do not know how to read or write (15 per cent in 1871). In Prussia the same is true for the duchy of Posen and the province of Prussia.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in the whole kingdom there numbered in 1871, 66 illiterates to every 1,000 Protestants and 152 to 1,000 Catholics. The relation is the same for the women of both faiths.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps it will be objected that primary instruction can be no measure of general education. The degree of a people's education, it is often said, does not depend on the greater or smaller number of illiterates. Let us agree to this qualification, though the various degrees of education are perhaps more closely interrelated than seems to be the case and the development of one is difficult without the simultaneous growth of the others.<sup>12</sup> In any case, although the level of primary instruction may only imperfectly reflect that of scientific culture, it has a certain reference to the extent of the desire for knowledge of a people as a whole. A people must feel this need very keenly to try to spread its elements even among the lowest classes. Thus to place the means of learning within everyone's reach, and even legally to forbid ignorance, shows a national awareness of the indispensability of broadened and enlightened intelligence of the individual for the nation's own existence. Actually, Protestant nations have so stressed primary instruction because they held that each individual must be able to understand the Bible. Our present search is

<sup>8</sup> Oettingen, *Monatsschrift*, p. 586.

<sup>9</sup> Bavaria slightly exceeds Prussia in one of these periods (1877-78); but only this once.

<sup>10</sup> Oettingen, *ibid.*, p. 582.

<sup>11</sup> Morselli, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>12</sup> Moreover it will appear below that both secondary and higher education are more developed among Protestants than among Catholics.

for the average intensity of this need, the value attached by each people to knowledge, not the standing of its scholars and their discoveries. From this special point of view, the state of advanced learning and truly scientific production would be a poor criterion; for it would show only what goes on in a limited sector of society. Popular and general education is a more accurate index.

Having thus proved our first proposition, let us attack the second. Does the craving for knowledge to the degree that it corresponds to a weakening of common faith really develop as does suicide? The very facts that Protestants are better educated and commit suicide more than Catholics is a first presumption for this. But the law can not only be verified by comparison of one faith with the other but also be observed within each religious confession.

Italy is wholly Catholic. Public instruction and suicide are identically distributed (See Table XIX).

**TABLE XIX \*—Comparison of Italian Provinces with Reference to Suicide and Education**

| First Group of Provinces  | Per Cent of Marriages with Both Husband and Wife Literate | Suicides per Million Inhabitants |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Piedmont                  | 53.09   | 35.6                             |
| Lombardy                  | 44.29   | 40.4                             |
| Liguria                   | 31.13   | 47.3                             |
| Tuscany                   | 32.91   | 41.7                             |
| Averages                  | 39.09   | 40.6                             |
|                           |   | 41.1                             |
| Second Group of Provinces |   |                                  |
| Venice                    | 19.56   | 32.0                             |
| Emilia                    | 19.31   | 62.9                             |
| Umbria                    | 15.46   | 30.7                             |
| Marche                    | 17.95   | 34.6                             |
| Campania                  | 12.95   | 21.6                             |
| Sardinia                  | 10.74   | 13.3                             |
| Averages                  | 15.23   | 32.5                             |
| Third Group of Provinces  |   |                                  |
| Sicily                    | 8.98  | 18.5                             |
| Abruzzi                   | 6.35  | 15.7                             |
| Apulia                    | 6.81  | 16.3                             |
| Calabria                  | 4.67  | 18.1                             |
| Basilicata                | 4.35  | 15.0                             |
| Averages                  | 6.23  | 14.7                             |

\* The figures for literate couples are from Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, supplement, Table 85; they refer to the years 1872-78, suicides to the period 1864-76.

Not only do the averages correspond exactly, but the agreement extends to details. There is a single exception; Emilia, where under

the influence of local causes suicides have no relation to the extent of literacy. Similar observations may be made in France. The departments containing most illiterate couples (above 20 per cent) are Corsica, Côte-du-Nord, Dordogne, Finisterre, Landes, Morbihan, Haute-Vienne; all relatively free from suicides. More generally, among departments with more than 10 per cent of couples unable either to read or write, not one belongs to the northeastern region which is classical territory for French suicides.<sup>13</sup>

If Protestant countries are compared with one another, the same parallelism will be found. More suicides occur in Saxony than in Prussia; Prussia has more illiterates than Saxony (5.52 per cent compared with 1.3 in 1865). Saxony is even peculiar in that the school population is above the legal requirement. For 1,000 children of school age in 1877-78, 1,031 attended school: that is, many children continued their studies after the required time. The fact is not met with in any other country.<sup>14</sup> Finally England, as we know, is the one Protestant country with the fewest suicides; it also most resembles Catholic countries with respect to education. In 1865 there were still 23 per cent of naval seamen who could not read and 27 per cent unable to write.

Still other facts may be compared with the foregoing and confirm them.

The liberal professions and in a wider sense the well-to-do classes are certainly those with the liveliest taste for knowledge and the most active intellectual life. Now, although the statistics of suicide by occupations and classes cannot always be obtained with sufficient accuracy, it is undeniably exceptionally frequent in the highest classes of society. In France from 1826 to 1880 the liberal professions lead, with 550 suicides per million of the professional group, while servants, immediately following, have only 290.<sup>15</sup> In Italy, Morselli succeeded in computing the groups exclusively devoted to letters and found that they far surpass all others in their relative contribution. Indeed, for 1868-76, he estimates it as 482.6 per million members of this profession; the army follows with only 404.1 and the general average of the country is only 32. In Prussia (1883-90) the corps of

<sup>13</sup> See *Annuaire statistique de la France*, 1892-94, p. 50 and 51.

<sup>14</sup> Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, p. 586.

<sup>15</sup> General report of criminal justice for 1882, p. CXV.

public officials, which is most carefully recruited and forms an intellectual elite, surpasses all other professions with 832 suicides; the health services and public instruction, though much lower, still have very high figures (439 and 301). Bavaria shows the same picture. Omitting the army, the position of which is exceptional from the point of view of suicide for reasons to be given below, public officials hold second place with 454 suicides and almost achieve first place, for they are barely exceeded by business, with the rate of 465; the arts, literature and the press follow closely with 416.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, the educated classes in Belgium and Württemberg seem less gravely afflicted; but professional nomenclature in these countries is too imprecise to permit much importance being attributed to the two irregularities.

Further, we have seen that in all the countries of the world women commit suicide much less than men. They are also much less educated. Fundamentally traditionalist by nature, they govern their conduct by fixed beliefs and have no great intellectual needs. In Italy, between 1878-79, there were 4,808 married men out of 10,000 who could not sign their marriage contract; of 10,000 married women, 7,029 could not.<sup>17</sup> In France, the proportion in 1879 was 199 husbands and 310 wives per 1,000 couples. In Prussia the same difference is found between the sexes, among Protestants as well as among Catholics.<sup>18</sup> In England it is much less than in other European countries. In 1879, 138 illiterate husbands were found per thousand to 185 wives, and since 1851 the proportion has been practically the same.<sup>19</sup> But England is also the country where women come closer to men with respect to suicide. To 1,000 suicides of women there were 2,546 of men in 1858-60, 2,745 in 1863-67, 2,861 in 1872-76, while everywhere else <sup>20</sup> suicides of women are four, five or six times less frequent than those of men. Finally, circumstances are almost reversed in the United States, which makes them particularly instructive.

<sup>16</sup> See Prinzing, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31. It is noteworthy that in Prussia journalism and the arts show a rather ordinary figure (279 suicides).

<sup>17</sup> Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, supplement, Table 83.

<sup>18</sup> Morselli, p. 223.

<sup>19</sup> Oettingen, *ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>20</sup> Except Spain. But not only is the accuracy of Spanish statistics open to doubt, but Spain cannot compare with the great nations of Central and Northern Europe.

Negro women, it seems, are equally or more highly educated than their husbands. Several observers report <sup>21</sup> that they are also very strongly predisposed to suicide, at times even surpassing white women. The proportion in certain places is said to be 350 per cent. There is one case, however, in which our law might seem not to be verified.

Of all religions, Judaism counts the fewest suicides, yet in none other is education so general. Even in elementary education the Jews are at least on a level with the Protestants. In fact, in Prussia (1871), to 1,000 Jews of each sex there were 66 illiterate men and 125 women; for the Protestants the numbers were practically the same, 66 and 114. But the Jews participate proportionally more, particularly in secondary and higher learning, than the members of other religions, as the following figures taken from Prussian statistics (years 1875-76) <sup>22</sup> show.

|  | Catholics | Protestants | Jews |
|--|-----------|-------------|------|
| Share of each religion in 100 inhabitants of all sorts | 33.8      | 64.9        | 1.3  |
| Share of each religion in 100 secondary school pupils  | 17.3      | 73.1        | 9.6  |

Taking into account differences of population, Jews attend Gymnasia, *Realschulen*, etc., about 14 times as often as Catholics and 7 times as often as Protestants. It is the same with higher education. Among 1,000 young Catholics attending institutions of learning of every sort, there are only 1.3 at a university; among 1,000 Protestants, 2.5; for the Jews the proportion increases to 16.<sup>23</sup>

But if the Jew manages to be both well instructed and very disinclined to suicide, it is because of the special origin of his desire for ~~knowledge~~. It is a general law that religious minorities, in order to protect themselves better against the hate to which they are exposed or merely through a sort of emulation, try to surpass in knowledge the populations surrounding them. Thus Protestants themselves show more desire for knowledge when they are a minority of the general

<sup>21</sup> Baly and Boudin. We quote from Morselli, p. 225.

<sup>22</sup> According to Alwin Petersilie, *Zur Statistik der höheren Lehranstalten in Preussen*. In *Zeitschr. d. preuss. stat. Bureau*, 1887, p. 109 ff.

<sup>23</sup> *Zeitschr. d. pr. stat. Bureau*, 1889, p. XX.

population.<sup>24</sup> The Jew, therefore, seeks to learn, not in order to replace his collective prejudices by reflective thought, but merely to be better armed for the struggle. For him it is a means of offsetting the unfavorable position imposed on him by opinion and sometimes by law. And since knowledge by itself has no influence upon a tradition in full vigor, he superimposes this intellectual life upon his habitual routine with no effect of the former upon the latter. This is the reason for the complexity he presents. Primitive in certain respects, in others he is an intellectual and man of culture. He thus combines the advantages of the severe discipline characteristic of small and ancient groups with the benefits of the intense culture enjoyed by our great societies. He has all the intelligence of modern man without sharing his despair.

Accordingly, if in this case intellectual development bears no relation to the number of voluntary deaths, it is because its origin and significance are not the usual ones. So the exception is only apparent; it even confirms the law. Indeed, it proves that if the suicidal tendency is great in educated circles, this is due, as we have said, to the weakening of traditional beliefs and to the state of moral individualism resulting from this; for it disappears when education has another cause and responds to other needs.

#### IV

Two important conclusions derive from this chapter.

First, we see why as a rule suicide increases with knowledge. Knowledge does not determine this progress. It is innocent; nothing

<sup>24</sup> In fact, the following shows the variation of Protestant enrollment in secondary schools in the different provinces of Prussia:

|           | Proportion of Protestant Population to Total | Average Proportion of Protestant Pupils to Total No. of Pupils | Difference Between First and Second |
|-----------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1st group | 98.7-87.2%                                   | Average 94.6   | — 3.8                               |
| 2nd group | 80 - 50 %                                    | Average 70.3   | + 5                                 |
| 3rd group | 50 - 40 %                                    | Average 46.4   | + 10.4                              |
| 4th group | Below 40%                                    | Average 29.2   | + 31.8                              |

Thus, where Protestantism is in a great majority, its scholastic population is not in proportion to its total population. With the increase of the Catholic minority, the difference between the two populations, from being negative, becomes positive, and this positive difference becomes larger in proportion as the Protestants become fewer. The Catholic faith also shows more intellectual curiosity when in the minority. (See Ottingen, *Moralstatistik*, p. 650).

is more unjust than to accuse it, and the example of the Jews proves this conclusively. But these two facts result simultaneously from a single general state which they translate into different forms. Man seeks to learn and man kills himself because of the loss of cohesion in his religious society; he does not kill himself because of his learning. It is certainly not the learning he acquires that disorganizes religion; but the desire for knowledge wakens because religion becomes disorganized. Knowledge is not sought as a means to destroy accepted opinions but because their destruction has commenced. To be sure, once knowledge exists, it may battle in its own name and in its own cause, and set up as an antagonist to traditional sentiments. But its attacks would be ineffective if these sentiments still possessed vitality; or rather, would not even take place. Faith is not uprooted by dialectic proof; it must already be deeply shaken by other causes to be unable to withstand the shock of argument.

Far from knowledge being the source of the evil, it is its remedy, the only remedy we have. Once established beliefs have been carried away by the current of affairs, they cannot be artificially reestablished; only reflection can guide us in life, after this. Once the social instinct is blunted, intelligence is the only guide left us and we have to reconstruct a conscience by its means. Dangerous as is the undertaking there can be no hesitation, for we have no choice. Let those who view anxiously and sadly the ruins of ancient beliefs, who feel all the difficulties of these critical times, not ascribe to science an evil it has not caused but rather which it tries to cure! Beware of treating it as an enemy! It has not the dissolvent effect ascribed to it, but is the only weapon for our battle against the dissolution which gives birth to science itself. It is no answer to denounce it. The authority of vanished traditions will never be restored by silencing it; we shall be only more powerless to replace them. We must, to be sure, be equally careful to avoid seeing a self-sufficient end in education, whereas it is only a means. If minds cannot be made to lose the desire for freedom by artificially enslaving them, neither can they recover their equilibrium by mere freedom. They must use this freedom fittingly.

Secondly, we see why, generally speaking, religion has a prophylactic effect upon suicide. It is not, as has sometimes been said, because it condemns it more unhesitatingly than secular morality,

nor because the idea of God gives its precepts exceptional authority which subdues the will, nor because the prospect of a future life and the terrible punishments there awaiting the guilty give its proscriptions a greater sanction than that of human laws. The Protestant believes in God and the immortality of the soul no less than the Catholic. More than this, the religion with least inclination to suicide, Judaism, is the very one not formally proscribing it and also the one in which the idea of immortality plays the least role. Indeed, the Bible contains no law forbidding man to kill himself <sup>28</sup> and, on the other hand, its beliefs in a future life are most vague. Doubtless, in both matters, rabbinical teaching has gradually supplied the omissions of the sacred book; but they have not its authority. The beneficent influence of religion is therefore not due to the special nature of religious conceptions. If religion protects man against the desire for self-destruction, it is not that it preaches the respect for his own person to him with arguments *sui generis*; but because it is a society. What constitutes this society is the existence of a certain number of beliefs and practices common to all the faithful, traditional and thus obligatory. The more numerous and strong these collective states of mind are, the stronger the integration of the religious community, and also the greater its preservative value. The details of dogmas and rites are secondary. The essential thing is that they be capable of supporting a sufficiently intense collective life. And because the Protestant church has less consistency than the others it has less moderating effect upon suicide.

<sup>28</sup> The only penal proscription known to us is that mentioned by Flavius Josephus in his *History of the War of the Jews against the Romans* (III, 25), which says simply that "the bodies of those who kill themselves voluntarily remain unburied until after sunset, although those who have been killed in battle may be buried earlier." This is not even definitely a penal measure.

### CHAPTER 3 EGOISTIC SUICIDE (continued)

**B**UT if religion preserves men from suicide only because and in so far as it is a society, other societies probably have the same effect. From this point of view let us consider the family and political society.

#### I

If one consults only the absolute figures, unmarried persons seem to commit suicide less than married ones. Thus in France, during the period 1873-78, there were 16,264 suicides of married persons while unmarried persons had only 11,709. The former number is to the second as 132 to 100.<sup>1</sup> As the same proportion appears at other periods and in other countries, certain authors had once taught that marriage and family life multiply the chances of suicide. Certainly, if in accordance with current opinion one regards suicide primarily as an act of despair caused by the difficulties of existence, this opinion has all the appearance of probability. An unmarried person has in fact an easier life than a married one. Does not marriage entail all sorts of burdens and responsibilities? To assure the present and future of a family, are not more privations and sufferings required than to meet the needs of a single person?<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, clear as it seems, this a priori reasoning is quite false and the facts only seem to support it because of being poorly analyzed. The elder Bertillon

<sup>1</sup> Durkheim's figure of 132 appears to be a misprint. The figure works out to 139.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> See Wagner. *Die Gesetzmässigkeit*, etc., p. 177.



first established this by an ingenious calculation which we shall reproduce.<sup>3</sup>

Really to appreciate the figures given above, we must remember that a very large number of unmarried persons are less than 16 years old, while all married persons are older. Up to 16 years the tendency to suicide is very slight, due to age, without considering other factors. In France only one or two suicides per million inhabitants are found at this time of life; at the following period there are twenty times as many. The inclusion of many children below 16 among unmarried persons thus unduly reduces the average aptitude of the latter, since the reduction is due to age, not celibacy. If they seem to contribute fewer suicides, it is not because they are unmarried but because many of them are yet immature. So, if one tries to compare the two populations to determine the influence of marital status and that alone, one must rid oneself of this disturbing element and compare with married persons only the unmarried above 16. When this subtraction is made, it appears that between 1863-68 there were on the average 173 suicides in a million unmarried persons above 16 years and 154.5 for a million married persons. The ratio of the first to the second number is that of 112 to 100.

There is thus a certain accretion due to celibacy. But it is much greater than the preceding figures show. Actually, we have assumed that all unmarried persons above 16 years and all married persons were of the same average age. This is not true. The majority of unmarried men in France, exactly 58 per cent, are between 15 and 20 years; the majority of unmarried women, exactly 57 per cent are less than 25 years. The average age of all unmarried men is 26.8, of all unmarried women 28.4. The average age of married persons, on the contrary, is between 40 and 45 years. For both sexes combined, suicide develops according to age as follows:

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| From 16 to 21 years | 45.9 suicides per million inhabitants  |
| From 21 to 30 years | 97.9 suicides per million inhabitants  |
| From 31 to 40 years | 114.5 suicides per million inhabitants |
| From 41 to 50 years | 164.4 suicides per million inhabitants |

<sup>3</sup> See article, *Marriage*, in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales*, 2nd series. See p. 50 ff.—On this question cf. J. Bertillon, Jr., *Les célibataires, les veufs et les divorcés au point de vue du mariage in Revue scientifique*, February, 1879.—Also an article in the *Bulletin de la société d'anthropologie*, 1880, p. 280 ff.—Durkheim, *Suicide et mortalité*, in *Revue philologique*, November 1888.

These figures refer to the years 1848-57. If age were the only influence, the aptitude of unmarried persons for suicide could not be above 97.9 and that of married persons would be between 114.5 and 164.4, or about 140 suicides per million inhabitants. Suicides of married persons would be to those of unmarried as 100 to 69. The latter would be only two-thirds of the former whereas we know that they are actually more numerous. The effect of family life is thus to reverse the relation. Whereas without the effect of family life married persons should kill themselves half again as often as unmarried by virtue of their age, they do so perceptibly less. Thus marriage may be said to reduce the danger of suicide by about half or, more exactly, non-marriage produces an increase expressed by the proportion 112/69, or 1.6. Thus, if we represent the suicidal tendency of married persons by unity, that of unmarried persons of the same average age must be estimated as 1.6.

The relationships are practically the same in Italy. Due to their age, married persons (years 1873-77) should show 102 suicides per million and the unmarried above 16 years only 77; the first number is to the second as 100 to 75.<sup>4</sup> Actually, married persons commit fewer suicides; they show only 71 cases to 86 of unmarried persons or 100 to 121. The aptitude of the unmarried is thus in the proportion of 121 to 75 for that of married persons, or 1.6, as in France. Similar figures might be obtained in other countries. The rate of married persons is everywhere to some degree below that of unmarried persons,<sup>5</sup> whereas it ought, by virtue of age, to be higher. In Wurttemberg, from 1846 to 1860, these two figures were to one another as 100 to 143, in Prussia from 1873 to 1875 as 100 to 111.

But if, with the data available, this method of calculation is the only one applicable in almost all cases, and if consequently it must be used to establish the general situation, its results can be only roughly approximate. Of course, it suffices to show that non-marriage increases the tendency to suicide; but it gives only a very inexact idea of the extent of this increase. Indeed, to distinguish the influence of age and that of marital status, we have taken as our starting point

<sup>4</sup> We assume that the average age of these groups is the same as in France. The error which may result from this assumption is very slight.

<sup>5</sup> If the two sexes are considered combined. The importance of this remark will appear below (Bk. II, Ch. 5, Par. 3).

the relation between the suicide-rate at 30 years and that at 45. Unfortunately, the influence of marital status has already left its own mark on this relation; for the contingent of each of the two ages was calculated for unmarried and married persons taken together. Of course, if the proportion of married and unmarried men were the same at the two periods, as well as that of unmarried and married women, they would compensate each other and the effect of age alone would be apparent. But this is not so. While at 30 unmarried men are slightly more numerous than married men (746,111 for the former, 714,278 for the latter according to the census for 1891), at 45 years, on the contrary, the former are only a slight minority (333,033 to 1,864,401 married men); it is the same with the other sex. Because of this unequal distribution, their great aptitude for suicide does not produce the same effects in both cases. It increases the former rate much more than the latter. The latter is consequently relatively too slight and the numerical superiority which it would show over the former if age alone were involved is artificially reduced. In other words, the difference as regards suicide, *due merely to the fact of age*, between the population of from 25 to 30 years and that of from 40 to 45 is certainly greater than appears from this way of figuring. Now the extent of this difference forms almost all the relative immunity of married people. This immunity thus appears less than it is in reality.

This method has caused even greater errors. Thus, to determine the influence of widowhood on suicide, the rate of widowed persons has sometimes merely been compared with that of persons of every marital status of the same average age, or about 65 years. Now a million widowers in 1863-68 showed 628 suicides; a million men aged 65 (of every marital status combined) about 461. From these figures one might judge that at the same age widowed persons kill themselves considerably more often than any other class of the population. In this way the assumption has arisen that widowhood is the most unlucky of all states from the point of view of suicide.<sup>6</sup> Actually, if the population of 65 years does not show more suicides, it is because it is almost entirely composed of married persons (997,198 to 134,238 unmarried). So if this comparison suffices to prove that

<sup>6</sup> See Bertillon, art., *Marriage*, in *Dict. Encycl.*, 2d series, see p. 52. Morselli, p. 348.—Corre, *Crime et suicide*, p. 472.

widowed persons kill themselves more than married persons of the same age, it shows nothing as to their tendency to suicide compared with that of unmarried persons.

In short, when only averages are compared, the facts and their relations to one another appear only approximately. Thus it may very well be true that married persons kill themselves in general less often than unmarried persons, and that nevertheless this proportion may be exceptionally reversed at certain ages; in fact we shall see that this is so. Now these exceptions, possibly instructive for the explanation of the phenomenon, could not be shown by the preceding method. There may also be changes from age to age, which without achieving complete inversion, have nevertheless an importance of their own and which should therefore be shown.

The only way to avoid these difficulties is to determine the rate of each group separately, at each age. Under such conditions one may, for example, compare unmarried persons of from 25 to 30 years with married and widowed persons of the same age and similarly for other periods; the influence of marital status will thus be isolated from all the other influences and all its possible variations will appear. Besides, this is the method which Bertillon first applied to mortality and the marriage rate. Unfortunately, official publications do not contain the necessary data for this comparison.<sup>7</sup> Actually, they show the age of suicides independently of their marital status. The only publication which to our knowledge has followed a different practice is that of the grand-duchy of Oldenburg (including the principalities of Lübeck and Birkenfeld).<sup>8</sup> For the years 1871-85 this publication gives us the distribution of suicides by age for each category of marital status considered separately. But this little State had only 1,369 suicides during these fifteen years. As nothing certain can be concluded from so few cases, we undertook to do the work ourselves for France with the aid of unpublished documents in the possession of the Ministry of Justice. We studied the years 1889, 1890 and 1891. We classified about 25,000 suicides in this way.

<sup>7</sup> Yet the labor of assembling these data, considerable if undertaken by an individual, might easily be accomplished by the official bureaus of statistics. All sorts of valueless information is given and only that omitted which, as will be seen below, might show the state of family life in the different European societies.

<sup>8</sup> There are, to be sure, Swedish statistics reproduced in the *Bulletin de démographie internationale*, 1878, p. 195, giving these data. But they are useless. In the

Not only is such a figure sufficiently important in itself to serve as a basis for induction, but we assured ourselves that there was no need

first place, widowed persons are there combined with unmarried persons, making the comparison relatively insignificant, for such different conditions must be distinguished. Moreover, we believe these statistics to be inexact. Here for example are some of their figures:

**SUICIDES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS OF EACH SEX, OF LIKE MARITAL STATUS AND AGE**

|                                | Years of Age |       |       |       |        |          |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------|
|                                | 16-25        | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65  | Above 75 |
| <b>Men</b>                     |              |       |       |       |        |          |
| Married                        | 10.51        | 10.58 | 18.77 | 24.08 | 26.29  | 20.76    |
| Non-married (widowed included) | 5.69         | 25.73 | 66.95 | 90.72 | 150.08 | 229.27   |
| <b>Women</b>                   |              |       |       |       |        |          |
| Married                        | 2.63         | 2.76  | 4.15  | 5.55  | 7.09   | 4.67     |
| Non-married                    | 2.99         | 6.14  | 13.23 | 17.05 | 25.98  | 51.93    |

**HOW MUCH MORE FREQUENT ARE SUICIDES OF UNMARRIED THAN OF MARRIED PERSONS OF SAME SEX AND AGE**

|              |      |      |      |      |      |       |     |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-----|
| <b>Men</b>   | 0.5  | 2.4  | 3.5  | 3.7  | 5.7  | 11    | 37  |
| <b>Women</b> | 1.13 | 2.22 | 3.18 | 3.04 | 3.66 | 11.12 | 4.5 |

|                    | 16-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | 66-75 | Above 75 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|
| <b>Married</b>     | 16    | 270   | 567   | 640   | 383   | 140   | 15       |
| <b>Non-married</b> | 283   | 519   | 410   | 269   | 217   | 156   | 55       |

Comparing these figures with the proportional numbers given above, the error committed becomes obvious. Actually, from 66 to 75 years, married and non-married persons show almost the same absolute number of suicides, whereas per 100,000 the former are supposed to kill themselves eleven times less often than the latter. For this to be true there would have to be at this age about ten times (exactly, 9.2 times) more married than non-married persons, that is, than widowed and unmarried combined. For the same reason, the married population above 75 should be exactly 10 times more numerous than the other. But that is impossible. At these advanced ages widowed persons are very numerous and, combined with unmarried persons, they are equal or even greater in number than married persons. This suggests what error has probably been committed. The suicides of unmarried and widowed persons must have been added together and the resulting total divided only by the figure for the unmarried population alone, while the suicides of married persons were divided by one for the widowed and married populations combined. What makes this probable is that the degree of immunity of married persons is extraordinary only at the advanced ages, or when the number of widowed persons becomes great enough seriously to falsify the resulting calculation. And the improbability is greatest after 75 years, or when widowed persons are very numerous.

to extend our observations over a longer period. From one year to another the contingent of each age remains approximately the same in each group. There is therefore no need to fix the averages for a greater number of years.

Tables XX and XXI contain these different figures. To make their meaning clearer we have placed for each age, beside the figure expressing the rate for widowed persons and that for married persons, what we call the *coefficient of preservation*, either of the latter by comparison with the former or of both by comparison with unmarried persons. By this phrase we mean the number shown

**TABLE XX—Grand-duchy of Oldenburg: Suicides Committed, by Each Sex, per 10,000 Inhabitants of Each Age and Marital Status Group Throughout the Period 1871-85\***

| Age          | Coefficients of Preservation of |         |         |                               | Men   | Women |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
|              | Unmarried                       | Married | Widowed | With Refer- ence to Unmarried |       |       |
| From 0 to 20 | 7.2                             | 769.2   | 0.09    | 0.09                          | 285.7 | 0.24  |
| 20 to 30     | 70.6                            | 49.0    | 1.40    | 1.40                          | 76.9  | 1.69  |
| 30 to 40     | 130.4                           | 73.6    | 1.77    | 1.77                          | 285.7 | 0.66  |
| 40 to 50     | 188.8                           | 95.0    | 1.97    | 1.97                          | 271.4 | 0.97  |
| 50 to 60     | 263.6                           | 137.8   | 1.63    | 1.63                          | 304.7 | 0.79  |
| 60 to 70     | 242.8                           | 148.3   | 1.63    | 1.63                          | 259.0 | 1.02  |
| Above 70     | 266.6                           | 114.2   | 2.30    | 2.30                          |       |       |
| From 0 to 20 | 3.9                             | 95.2    | 0.04    | 0.04                          | 30.0  | 0.77  |
| 20 to 30     | 39.0                            | 17.4    | 1.24    | 1.24                          | 58.0  | 1.33  |
| 30 to 40     | 52.3                            | 16.8    | 2.85    | 2.85                          | 55.8  | 1.50  |
| 40 to 50     | 62.7                            | 31.6    | 2.14    | 2.14                          | 91.4  | 1.31  |
| 50 to 60     | 62.5                            | 37.2    | 1.68    | 1.68                          |       |       |
| Above 70     | .....                           | 120     | .....   | .....                         |       |       |

\* These figures therefore refer not to the average year but to the total of suicides committed during these fifteen years.

ing how many times less frequent suicide is in one group than in another at the same age. Thus, when we say that the coefficient of preservation of husbands of the age of 25 in relation to unmarried men is 3, we mean that if the tendency to suicide of married persons at this time of life is represented by 1, that of unmarried persons the same period must be represented by 3. Of course, when the coefficient of preservation sinks below unity, it really becomes a coefficient of aggravation.

The laws derived from these tables may be formulated thus:

1. *Too early marriages have an aggravating influence on suicide, especially as regards men.* This result, to be sure, being calculated from a very small number of cases, should be confirmed; in France, from 15 to 20 years, in the average year barely one suicide is committed among married persons, exactly 1.33. However, as the fact is

**TABLE XXI—France (1889-1891) : Suicides Committed per 1,000,000 Inhabitants of Each Age and Marital Status Group, Average Year**

| Ages         | Married   |         |         | Widowed                             |                                   |                                     | Coefficients of Preservation of   |           |         |
|--------------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
|              | Unmarried | Married | Widowed | With Refer-<br>ence to<br>Unmarried | With Refer-<br>ence to<br>Widowed | With Refer-<br>ence to<br>Unmarried | With Refer-<br>ence to<br>Widowed | Unmarried | Widowed |
| 15 to 20     | 113       | 509     | 112     | 0.22                                | 1.45                              | 1.66                                |                                   |           |         |
| 20 to 25     | 237       | 197     | 412     | 2.40                                | 3.37                              | 0.95                                |                                   |           |         |
| 25 to 30     | 394       | 122     | 226     | 3.20                                | 2.47                              | 1.12                                |                                   |           |         |
| 30 to 40     | 627       | 79      | 591     | 2.77                                | 2.12                              | 1.35                                |                                   |           |         |
| 40 to 50     | 975       | 340     | 736     | 2.86                                | 1.88                              | 1.46                                |                                   |           |         |
| 50 to 60     | 1,434     | 520     | 1,168   | 2.75                                | 1.83                              | 1.51                                |                                   |           |         |
| 60 to 70     | 1,768     | 635     | 1,288   | 2.78                                | 1.82                              | 1.54                                |                                   |           |         |
| 70 to 80     | 1,983     | 704     | 1,288   | 2.81                                | 1.82                              | 1.54                                |                                   |           |         |
| Above 80     | 1,571     | 770     | 1,154   | 2.04                                | 1.49                              | 1.36                                |                                   |           |         |
| <b>Men</b>   |           |         |         |                                     |                                   |                                     |                                   |           |         |
| 15 to 20     | 79.4      | 33      | 333     | 2.39                                | 10.05                             | 0.23                                |                                   |           |         |
| 20 to 25     | 106       | 53      | 66      | 2.00                                | 2.01                              | 1.60                                |                                   |           |         |
| 25 to 30     | 151       | 68      | 178     | 2.22                                | 2.50                              | 0.84                                |                                   |           |         |
| 30 to 40     | 126       | 82      | 205     | 1.53                                | 1.38                              | 0.61                                |                                   |           |         |
| 40 to 50     | 171       | 106     | 168     | 1.61                                | 1.38                              | 1.01                                |                                   |           |         |
| 50 to 60     | 204       | 151     | 199     | 1.35                                | 1.62                              | 0.72                                |                                   |           |         |
| 60 to 70     | 189       | 158     | 257     | 1.19                                | 1.62                              | 0.72                                |                                   |           |         |
| 70 to 80     | 206       | 209     | 248     | 0.98                                | 1.16                              | 0.83                                |                                   |           |         |
| Above 80     | 176       | 110     | 246     | 1.60                                | 2.18                              | 0.79                                |                                   |           |         |
| <b>Women</b> |           |         |         |                                     |                                   |                                     |                                   |           |         |

likewise observed in the grand-duchy of Oldenburg, and even for women, it is probably not accidental. Even the Swedish statistics quoted above,<sup>9</sup> show the same aggravation, at least for the male sex. If, now, for the reasons mentioned, we believe these statistics inexact for the advanced ages, we have no reason to doubt them for the first periods of life, when there are as yet no widowed persons. Besides, the mortality of very young husbands and wives is known to considerably exceed that of unmarried men and women of the same age. A thousand unmarried men between 15 and 20 give 8.9 deaths each

<sup>9</sup> See above p. 176.—To be sure, one might think that this unfavorable situation of married persons from 15 to 20 years is due to their average age being above that of unmarried persons in the same age-group. But what proves that there is a real aggravation is that the ratio of married persons of the following age-group (20 to 25 years) is five times less.

year, a thousand married men of the same age, 51 deaths or 473 per cent more. The difference is less for the other sex, 9.9 deaths for wives, 8.3 for unmarried women; the former number is to the second only as 119 to 100.<sup>10</sup> This greater mortality of young married persons is evidently due to social reasons, for if its principal cause were the immaturity of the organism this would be more marked in the female sex, due to the dangers involved in parturition. Thus everything tends to prove that premature marriages bring about a harmful moral state, especially to men.

2. *From 20 years, married persons of both sexes enjoy a coefficient of preservation in comparison with unmarried persons.* It is above that calculated by Bertillon. The figure 1.6 indicated by that observer is a minimum rather than an average.<sup>11</sup>

This coefficient changes with age. It soon reaches a maximum between 25 and 30 years in France, between 30 and 40 in Oldenburg; from then on it decreases till the final period of life when a slight rise sometimes occurs.

3. *The coefficient of preservation of married persons by comparison with unmarried persons varies with the sexes.* In France it is men who are in the favorable position and the difference between the sexes is considerable; for married men the average is 2.73 while for married women it is only 1.56, or 43 per cent less. But in Oldenburg the opposite is true; the average for women is 2.16 and for men only 1.83. It is to be noted that at the same time the disproportion is less; the second number is only 16 per cent lower than the first. We shall say therefore that *the sex enjoying the higher coefficient of preservation in the state of marriage varies from society to society and that the extent of the difference between the rates of the sexes itself varies to the extent that the coefficient of preservation favors the favored sex.* In the course of our work we shall encounter facts confirming this law.

4. *Widowhood diminishes the coefficient of married persons of each sex, but it rarely eliminates it entirely.* Widowed persons kill

<sup>10</sup> See Bertillon, art. *Marriage*, p. 43 ff.

<sup>11</sup> There is a single exception; women of from 70 to 80 years, whose coefficient descends slightly below unity. The cause of this variation is the influence of the department of the Seine. In other departments (see Table XXII, p. 196), the coefficient of women of this age is above unity; but it must be noted that even in the provinces it is less than that of other ages.

themselves more often than married persons but generally less than unmarried persons. Their coefficient in certain cases even rises to 1.60 and 1.66. Like that of married persons it changes with age, but following an irregular evolution the law of which cannot be determined.

Just as for married persons, *the coefficient of preservation of widowed persons compared with unmarried persons varies with the sex.* In France men are in the favored position; their average coefficient is 1.32 while for widows it falls below unity, 0.84, or 37 per cent less. But in Oldenburg women are favored, as in marriage; they have an average coefficient of 1.07, while that of widowers is below unity, 0.89, or 17 per cent less. As in the state of marriage, when it is women who are most favored, the difference between the sexes is less than where men have the advantage. So we may say in the same terms that *the sex enjoying the higher coefficient of preservation in the state of widowhood varies from society to society, and that the extent of the difference between the rates of the sexes, itself varies to the extent that the coefficient of preservation favors the favored sex.* Facts being thus determined, let us seek explanations.

## II

The immunity enjoyed by married persons can be attributed only to one of the two following causes:

It may be due to the influence of the domestic environment. It would then be the influence of the family which neutralized the suicidal tendency or prevented its outburst.

Or this immunity is due to what may be called matrimonial selection. Marriage in fact does make for some sort of selection among the population at large. Not everyone who wants to, gets married; one has little chance of founding a family successfully without certain qualities of health, fortune and morality. People without them, unless through a conjunction of exceptionally favorable circumstances, are thus involuntarily relegated to the unmarried class which consequently includes the human dregs of the country. The sick, the incurable, the people of too little means or known weakness are found here. Hence, if this part of the population is so far inferior to the other, it naturally proves this inferiority by a higher mortality, a greater criminality, and finally by a stronger suicidal tendency. Ac-

cording to this hypothesis, it would not be the family which was a protection against suicide, crime or sickness; the privileged position of married persons would be theirs simply because only those are admitted to family life who already provide considerable guarantees of physical and moral health.

Bertillon seems to have vacillated between the two explanations and to have admitted both at once. Since then, M. Letourneau, in his *Evolution du mariage et de la famille*,<sup>12</sup> has categorically chosen the second. He refuses to acknowledge that the undeniable superiority of the married population is a result and proof of the superiority of marital life. He would have judged less precipitously had he observed the facts less hastily.

Of course, it is quite probable that married people generally have a physical and moral constitution somewhat better than that of unmarried persons. Matrimonial selection, however, does not bar all but the elite of the population from wedlock. It is especially doubtful that persons without means and position marry much less than others. As has been noted,<sup>13</sup> they usually have more children than the people with assured incomes. If, then, no forethought limits the imprudent increase of their family, why should it prevent their founding one? Besides, repeated proof will be given below that poverty is not one of the factors on which the social suicide-rate depends. As for the infirm, not merely are infirmities overlooked for many reasons, but it is not at all certain that suicides are most numerous among the infirm. The organic-psychic temperament most predisposing man to kill himself is neurasthenia in all its forms. Now today neurasthenia is rather considered a mark of distinction than a weakness. In our refined societies, enamoured of things intellectual, nervous members constitute almost a nobility. Only the clearly insane are apt to be refused admittance to marriage. This limited exclusion is not enough to account for the extensive immunity of married persons.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Paris, 1888, p. 436.

<sup>13</sup> J. Bertillon, Jr., article cited in the *Revue scientifique*.

<sup>14</sup> To reject the hypothesis that the privileged position of married persons is due to matrimonial selection, the aggravation, which is supposed to result from widowhood, is sometimes mentioned. But we have just seen that no such aggravation exists by comparison with unmarried persons. Widowed persons kill themselves much less than non-married persons. Thus the argument does not carry.

Besides these somewhat *a priori* considerations, numerous facts show that the respective immunity of married and unmarried persons is due to quite other causes.

If it were a result of matrimonial selection, it should grow from the start of this selection, or the age when young men and women begin to marry. At this point, a first difference should be noted which should increase with the progress of selection, or as marriageable persons marry and thus lose contact with the rabble naturally destined to be the class of the permanently unmarried. In short, the maximum should be reached when the good grain is completely separated from the tares, when the whole population admissible to marriage has actually been admitted, when only those are unmarried who are hopelessly committed to this condition by physical or moral inferiority. This maximum should occur between 30 and 40 years of age; few marriages are made later.

Now, the coefficient of preservation actually evolves according to quite another law. At first it is often replaced by a coefficient of aggravation. Very young married persons are more inclined to commit suicide than unmarried ones; this would not be so if their immunity were inherent and inherited. Secondly, the maximum is achieved almost at once. At the earliest age when the privileged position of married persons becomes perceptible (between 20 and 25 years), the coefficient reaches a figure which it is unlikely later to surpass. Now at this period there are only <sup>15</sup> 1,48,000 married to 1,430,000 unmarried men, and 626,000 married to 1,049,000 unmarried women (in round numbers). The ranks of the unmarried, therefore, at this time include the largest part of the elite which has been thought destined by its hereditary qualities to form later the aristocracy of the married; the difference from the point of view of suicide between the two classes should then be slight, whereas it is already considerable. Likewise, at the next age (between 25 and 30), more than a million of the two million married persons to appear between the ages of 30 and 40 are still unmarried; and yet far from the immunity of the unmarried profiting by this fact, this group cuts the poorest figure then. Never are the two parts of the population so far from one another as regards suicide. On the contrary, between the ages of 30 and 40, when the separation is complete and the married class has

<sup>15</sup> These figures refer to France and the census of 1891.

about reached its full complement, instead of reaching its height and thus showing that conjugal selection itself has come to a stop, the coefficient of preservation undergoes an abrupt and considerable decline. For men it falls from 3.20 to 2.77; for women the regression is still more pronounced, 1.53 instead of 2.22 or a reduction of 32 per cent.

On the other hand, however this selection is effected, it must occur equally for unmarried women as for unmarried men; for wives are recruited in the same manner as husbands. Thus, if the moral superiority of married persons is merely a result of selection, it should be the same for both sexes, and consequently the immunity from suicide should be the same. Actually, husbands are definitely more protected in France than wives. For the former, the coefficient of preservation rises as high as 3.20, falls only once below 2.04, and usually oscillates about 2.80, while for the latter the maximum does not exceed 2.22 (or at most 2.39)<sup>16</sup> and the minimum is below unity (0.98). Moreover, women in France are closest to men with respect to suicide, in the married state. The share of each sex in suicides, for each category of marital status, for the years 1887-91, follows below:

|                     | Share of Each Sex                            |  |
|---------------------|--|--|
|                     | Per 100 Unmarried Suicides at Different Ages | Per 100 Married Suicides at Different Ages |
|                     | Men  | Women                                      |
| From 20 to 25 years | 70   | 30   |
| From 25 to 30 years | 73   | 27   |
| From 30 to 40 years | 84   | 16   |
| From 40 to 50 years | 86   | 14   |
| From 50 to 60 years | 88   | 12   |
| From 60 to 70 years | 91   | 9  |
| From 70 to 80 years | 91   | 9  |
| Above 80 years      | 90   | 10   |
|                     | Men  | Women                                      |
|                     | 65   | 35   |
|                     | 65   | 35   |
|                     | 74   | 26   |
|                     | 77   | 23   |
|                     | 78   | 22   |
|                     | 81   | 19   |
|                     | 78   | 22   |
|                     | 88   | 12   |

Thus at each age <sup>17</sup> the share of wives in the suicides of married persons is far higher than that of unmarried women in suicides of

<sup>16</sup> We make this reservation, because this coefficient of 2.39 relates to the period from 15 to 20 years and because, since the suicides of wives are very rare at this age, the small number of cases which form the basis of these figures makes their exactness somewhat uncertain.

<sup>17</sup> Usually, when the respective situation of the sexes in the two different sorts of marital status is thus compared, the effect of age is not carefully eliminated; but this produces inexact results. Following the usual method, one would find in 1887-91, 21 suicides of married women to 79 of married men and 19 suicides of unmarried women to 100 of unmarried persons of all ages. These figures would give a false impression of the situation. The above table shows that the difference be-

unmarried persons. Certainly this is not because a wife is less protected than an unmarried woman; Tables XX and XXI show the contrary. But if women do not lose by marriage, they gain less than men. But if immunity is here so unequal, family life must affect the moral constitution of the two sexes differently. What proves with real finality that the inequality has this origin is that its birth and growth may be observed under the influence of the domestic environment. Indeed, Table XXI shows that in the beginning the coefficient of preservation for the two sexes is hardly different (for women, 2.39 in the 15-20 age-group or 2.00 in the 20-25 age-group; for men, 2.40 in the 20-25 age-group.<sup>18</sup> Then, gradually, the difference increases, at first because the coefficient of married women grows less than that of married men up to the age of the maximum, and then because its decrease is swifter and greater.<sup>19, 20</sup> Thus, the coefficient of preservation evolves in accordance with the prolongation of family-life because it depends on this prolongation.

Still better proof is that the relative situation of the sexes as to the degree of preservation enjoyed by married persons is not the same in all countries. In the grand-duchy of Oldenburg women are the favored sex and we shall find later another case of the same inversion. But on the whole, conjugal selection occurs everywhere in the same way. So it cannot be the essential factor in matrimonial im-

tween the share of the married woman as against the unmarried woman is much greater at every age. Thus, for both the unmarried and married, the size of the difference between the sexes varies with the age-group, until in the age-group, 70 to 80, the size of the difference is about twice what it was at 20. Now, the unmarried population is almost wholly made up of persons below 30 years old. If, however, no account is taken of age, the difference resulting is actually that between unmarried men and women of about 30. But then, comparing this with the difference between married persons without respect to age, since the latter are on the average 50 years old, the comparison is really made with reference to married persons of this age. Thus the comparison is falsified and the error further aggravated by the fact that the difference between the sexes does not vary in the same way in both groups under the influence of age. Among the unmarried it increases more than among the married.

<sup>18</sup> Durkheim fails to mention that in the 15-20 age-group for men the coefficient of preservation in Table XXI is 0.22.—Ed.

<sup>19</sup> Thus one can also see from the preceding Table that the proportional share of wives in the suicides of married persons increasingly surpasses, with age, the share of unmarried women in the suicides of unmarried persons.

<sup>20</sup> This statement by Durkheim must be carefully appraised in the light of Table XXI.—Ed.

munity; for how then would opposite results occur in different countries? On the contrary, the family may very well be constituted in two different societies so as to affect the sexes differently. In the constitution of the family group, accordingly, we must find the principal cause of the phenomenon of our study.

But interesting as this result is, it must be further defined; for the family environment consists of different elements. For husband and wife alike the family includes: 1. the wife or husband; 2. the children. Is the salutary effect of the family on the suicidal tendency due to the former or the latter? In other words, the family consists of two different associations: the conjugal group and the family group proper. These two societies have not the same origin, nor the same nature, nor consequently, in all probability, the same effects. One springs from a contract and elective affinity, the other from a natural phenomenon, consanguinity; the former unites two members of the same generation, the latter unites one generation to the next; the latter is as old as humanity, the former was organized at a relatively late date. Since they are here so different it is not *a priori* certain that both combine equally to produce the fact we are studying. Anyway, if both contribute to it this cannot be in the same manner, nor probably in the same measure. Thus, we must investigate whether both take part and, if so, the share of each.

A proof of the slight effect of marriage is the fact that the marriage rate has changed very little since the first of the century, while suicide has tripled. From 1821 to 1830 there were 7.8 marriages annually per 1,000 inhabitants, 8 from 1831 to 1850, 7.9 in 1851-60, 7.8 from 1861 to 1870, 8 from 1871 to 1880. During this time the suicide-rate per million inhabitants rose from 54 to 180. From 1880 to 1888 the marriage rate declined slightly (7.4 instead of 8), but this decrease is unrelated to the enormous increase of suicides, which rose more than 16 per cent<sup>21</sup> from 1880 to 1887.

<sup>21</sup> Legoyt (*op. cit.*, p. 175) and Corre (*Crime et suicide*, p. 475) nevertheless thought they could establish a relation between the variations of suicide and the marriage rate. Their error proceeds first from having considered too short a period, secondly from having compared the most recent years with an abnormal year, 1872, when the French marriage rate reached an unusual figure, unknown since 1813, because the gaps in the ranks of the married population caused by the war of 1870 had to be filled. No such reference can be a measure for the changes of the marriage

Besides, during the period 1865-88, the average marriage rate of France (7.7) is almost the same as that of Denmark (7.8) and Italy (7.6); yet these countries are as different as possible from the point of view of suicide.<sup>22</sup>

But we have a much more certain way of measuring exactly the real influence of conjugal association upon suicide; that of observing it when reduced to its own isolated strength, or in families without children.

During the years 1887-91, a million husbands without children accounted annually for 644 suicides.<sup>23</sup> To know how much the marriage status, alone and without reference to the family, insures against suicide, one has only to compare this figure with that of the unmarried men of the same average age. This comparison Table XXI permits us to make, as not the least important of its information. The average age of married men was then as now 46 years, 8 and 1/3 months. A million unmarried men of this age have about 975 suicides. Now 644 is to 975 as 100 is to 150, that is, sterile husbands have a coefficient of preservation of only 1.5; they commit suicide only a third less often than unmarried of the same age. Quite otherwise when there are children. A million husbands with children annually show during this period only 336 suicides. This number is to 975 as 100 is to 290; that is, when the marriage produces children the coefficient of preservation is almost doubled (2.90 instead of 1.5).

Conjugal society therefore plays only a slight role in the immunity of married men. We have in the preceding calculation even made this role somewhat larger than it really is. We have assumed that childless husbands have the same average age as husbands in general, whereas they are certainly younger. For among their ranks are all the youngest husbands, who are without children not because they are hopelessly sterile, but because they have married too recently to have rate. The same observation applies to Germany and to almost all the European countries. Something like an electric shock seems to have affected the marriage rate at the time. A great and abrupt rise is seen, prolonged occasionally as late as 1873, in Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, England, Holland. All Europe might be said to have been contributing to repair the losses of the two war-stricken countries. A tremendous fall naturally succeeded after some time which has not the significance ascribed to it (See Oettingen, *Moralstatistik*, supplement, Tables 1, 2 and 3).

<sup>22</sup> See Levasseur, *Population française*, vol. II, p. 208.

<sup>23</sup> According to the census of 1886, p. 123 of the *Dénombrement*.

any. On the average, a man has his first child not before 34 years of age,<sup>24</sup> and yet he marries at about 28 or 29 years of age. The part of the married population from 28 to 34 years of age is thus almost entirely in the category of the childless, which lowers the average age of these latter; therefore we must certainly have exaggerated in estimating it at 46. But in that case the unmarried men with whom they should have been compared are not those of 46 but younger, who consequently commit suicide less often than the others. So the coefficient of 1.5 must be a little too high; if we knew exactly the average age of childless husbands, their aptitude for suicide would surely approach that of unmarried men still more than the above figures indicate.

The limited influence of marriage is well shown, moreover, in that widowers with children are in a better situation than husbands without them. The former indeed, show 937 suicides per million. Now they are 61 years, 8 and 1/3 months on the average. The rate of unmarried men of the same age (see Table XXI) is between 1,434 and 1,768, or about 1,504. This number is to 937 as 160 is to 100. Widowers, when they have children, thus have a coefficient of preservation of at least 1.6, superior to that of childless husbands. Moreover, we have under rather than overestimated this figure. For widowers with children are certainly older than widowers in general. The latter, indeed, include all whose marriage was without issue only because of premature end by death, that is, the youngest. Widowers with children should therefore really be compared with unmarried men above 62 years (who, because of their age, have a stronger tendency to suicide). This comparison would clearly only emphasize their immunity.<sup>25</sup>

To be sure, this coefficient of 1.6 is definitely below that of husbands with children, 2.9; the difference is not quite 45 per cent. Thus, matrimonial society by itself might be thought to have more effect than we have granted it, since at its conclusion the immunity of the husband surviving is so far reduced. But this loss is only in slight degree to be ascribed to the dissolution of marriage. Proof of

<sup>24</sup> See *Annuaire statistique de la France*, 15th vol., p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> For the same reason, the age of husbands with children is above that of husbands in general and, consequently, the coefficient of preservation 2.9 should be considered somewhat below reality.



this is that where there are no children widowhood produces far lesser effects. A million childless widowers show 1,258 suicides, a number related to 1,504, the contingent of sixty-two-year-old unmarried men, as 100 is to 119. Thus the coefficient of preservation is still about 1.2 which is little below that of husbands also childless, 1.5. The former of these figures is only 20 per cent less than the second. Accordingly, when a wife's death has no other effect than to break the conjugal bond, it has no strong repercussion on the suicidal tendency of the widower. Marriage during its existence must therefore only slightly aid in restraining this tendency, since the latter shows no greater increase with the end of marriage.

The reason why widowhood is relatively more disastrous when the union has been fruitful must be sought in the existence of the children.<sup>26</sup> Of course in a way the children attach the widower to life, but at the same time they make the crisis through which he is passing more intense. For not only is the conjugal relation destroyed; but precisely because a domestic society here exists, there is an impairment of its functioning too. An essential element is lacking and the whole machine is thrown out of gear. To reestablish the lost equilibrium the husband has to shoulder a double burden and perform functions for which he is unprepared. Thus he loses advantages which were his throughout the duration of the marriage. It is not because his marriage is ended but because the family which he heads is disorganized. The departure, not of the wife but of the mother, causes the disaster.

But the slight effect of marriage appears with special clarity in the woman's case when it does not find its natural fulfillment in children. A million childless wives show 221 suicides; a million unmarried women of the same age (between 42 and 43 years) only 150. The first of these numbers is to the second as 100 is to 67; the coefficient of preservation thus falls below unity and equals .67, that is, it has really become a coefficient of aggravation. *In France, then, married but childless women commit suicide half again as often as unmarried women of the same age.* We have already noticed that in general the wife profits less from family life than the husband. Now we see

<sup>26</sup> What Durkheim seems to mean here is that widowers with children compared to husbands with children are relatively worse off than widowers without children compared to husbands without children.—Ed.

the cause of this; in itself conjugal society is harmful to the woman and aggravates her tendency to suicide.

If most wives have, nevertheless, seemed to enjoy a coefficient of preservation, this is because childless households are the exception and consequently the presence of children in most cases corrects and reduces the evil effects of marriage. Even so these effects are only reduced. A million women having children show 79 suicides; comparing this figure with the one giving the suicide-rate of unmarried woman of 42 years of age as 150, the wife is found to benefit, even when she is also a mother, only by a coefficient of preservation 1.80, 35 per cent lower,<sup>27</sup> therefore, than that of fathers. With respect to suicide, we must therefore disagree with the following proposition of Bertillon: "When woman enters the conjugal state she gains from the association more than man; but she necessarily suffers more than man when she leaves it."<sup>28</sup>

### III

The immunity of married persons in general is thus due, wholly for one sex and largely for the other, to the influence not of conjugal society but of the family society. However, we have seen that even if there are no children, men at least are protected in the proportion of 1 to 1.5. A reduction of 50 suicides from 150, or 33 per cent, though considerably below that achieved when the family is complete, nevertheless is not a negligible quantity and its cause should be understood. Is it due to the special benefits bestowed by marriage on the male sex, or is it not rather a result of matrimonial selection? For although it has been shown that the latter does not play the dominant role attributed to it, it has not been proven to be wholly without influence.

One fact at first sight even seems to prove this hypothesis. We know that the coefficient of preservation of childless husbands partially survives marriage; it falls merely from 1.5 to 1.2. Now, this

<sup>27</sup> A similar difference exists between the coefficient of childless husbands and childless wives; it is much greater. The second (0.67) is 66 per cent lower than the first (1.5). The existence of children thus causes the wife to regain half the ground she loses by marriage. That is, if she benefits from marriage less than the man, she profits more than he from the family, that is, the children. She is more sensitive than he to their happy influence.

<sup>28</sup> Article *Marriage*, *Dict. Encycl.*, 2d series, vol. V, p. 36.

immunity of childless widowers evidently cannot be attributed to widowhood, which in itself does not tend to reduce the proclivity to suicide but on the contrary to confirm it. It thus results from an anterior cause, though this seems unlikely to be marriage, since it continues to act even when marriage is dissolved by the wife's death. May it not then consist in some inherent quality of the husband which conjugal selection makes prominent but does not create? As it existed before marriage and is independent of it, it might well outlast the latter. If the population of husbands is an elite, the same must be true of widowers. To be sure, this congenital superiority has less effect upon the latter, since they are less protected against suicide. But the shock of widowhood may be considered as partially neutralizing this preventive influence and blocking its full results.

But for this explanation to be acceptable, it must be applicable to both sexes. Some trace at least of this natural predisposition should accordingly be found among married women, which, other things being equal, would preserve them from suicide more than the unmarried. Now the very fact that they commit suicide, if childless, more than unmarried women of the same age, is opposed to the hypothesis that they are endowed from birth with a personal coefficient of preservation. One might, however, grant that this coefficient exists for women as well as for men, but that it is wholly annulled during marriage by the unfortunate effect of marriage on the wife's moral constitution. But if its effects were only restrained and concealed by the sort of moral decline of women on entering into conjugal society, they should reappear on the dissolution of this society, or in widowhood. Freed from the depressing influence of the matrimonial yoke, women should then recover all their advantages and finally assert their inherent superiority to those of their sisters who have not achieved marriage. In comparison with unmarried women, in other words, the childless widow should have a coefficient of preservation at least approaching that of the childless widower. This is not so. A million childless widows show annually 322 suicides; a million unmarried women of 60 (the average age of widows) show only between 189 and 204, or about 196. The first is to the second number as 100 to 60. Widows without children thus have a coefficient below unity, or a coefficient of aggravation; it is 0.60, slightly lower even than that of childless wives (0.67). It is therefore not

marriage which prevents childless wives from showing the natural indisposition to suicide attributed to them.

Perhaps it will be objected that the obstacle to the complete re-establishment of the fortunate qualities whose expression is interrupted by marriage, is that widowhood is, for women, an even worse status. Indeed the idea is widespread that a widow is in a more critical position than a widower. The moral and economic difficulties are stressed which face her when she is compelled to provide all by herself, for her own existence as well as for the needs of an entire family. This opinion has even been considered proved by facts. According to Morselli,<sup>29</sup> statistics prove that woman, during widowhood, is closer to man in her aptitude for suicide than she is during marriage; and since, when married, she is already nearer the male sex in this respect than when unmarried, therefore widowhood results in placing woman in the most disadvantageous position. Supporting this thesis, Morselli cites the following figures relating only to France, but to be found among all European peoples with slight variations:

| Years | Share of Each Sex in 100 Suicides of Married Persons |                  | Share of Each Sex in 100 Suicides of Widowed Persons |                  |
|-------|--|------------------|--|------------------|
|       | Percentage Men                                       | Percentage Women | Percentage Men                                       | Percentage Women |
| 1871  | 79   | 21               | 71   | 29               |
| 1872  | 78   | 22               | 68   | 32               |
| 1873  | 79   | 21               | 69   | 31               |
| 1874  | 74   | 26               | 57   | 43               |
| 1875  | 81   | 19               | 77   | 23               |
| 1876  | 82   | 18               | 78   | 22               |

Woman's share in the suicides committed by both sexes in the state of widowhood seems in fact much greater than in the suicides of married persons. Does not this prove that widowhood is much more difficult for women than marriage? If so, it is not astonishing that, once a widow, the good effects of her qualities are even more prevented from appearing than before.

Unfortunately, this supposed law is based on an error of fact. Morselli has forgotten that there are everywhere twice as many widows as widowers. In France, there are in round numbers two million of the former to only one million of the latter. In Prussia, according to the census of 1890, 450,000 widowers are found and

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 342.

1,319,000 widows; in Italy, 571,000 and 1,322,000 respectively. Under these conditions the share of widows is naturally higher than that of wives who are obviously of the same number as husbands. To obtain information from the comparison the two populations should be set up as equal. But if this precaution is taken, results contrary to those of Morselli are obtained. At the average age of the widowed or 60 years, a million wives show 154 suicides and a million husbands 577. Woman's share is therefore 21 per cent. It diminishes perceptibly in widowhood. Indeed, a million widows show 210 suicides, a million widowers 1,017; whence it follows that of 100 suicides of widowed persons of both sexes women contribute only 17. The share of men on the contrary rises from 79 to 83 per cent. Man thus loses more than woman in passing from marriage to widowhood, since he does not preserve certain of the advantages which he owed to the conjugal state. There is thus no reason to assume that this change of situation is less trying or disturbing for him than for her; the opposite is the case. Besides, we know that the mortality of widowers far exceeds that of widows; and the same is true of their marriage rates. That of widowers is at every age three or four times as great as the rate of unmarried men, while that of widows is only slightly above that of unmarried women. Women are therefore as reluctant to face second marriage as men are eager.<sup>30</sup> It would not be so if the state of widowhood sat lightly upon men and if women, on the contrary, had in that state to face as many difficulties as has been said to be the case.<sup>31</sup>

But if nothing in widowhood particularly paralyzes woman's natural advantages that pertain to her solely as matrimonially elect, and if these advantages do not manifest themselves by any definite sign, there is no reason for assuming their existence. The hypothesis of matrimonial selection is therefore wholly inapplicable to the female sex. Nothing justifies the supposition that a woman entering marriage has a constitutional advantage which preserves her to a certain degree

<sup>30</sup> See Bertillon, *Les célibataires, les veufs, etc.*, *Rev. scient.*, 1879.

<sup>31</sup> Morselli also mentions in support of his thesis that on the morrow of war the suicides of widows show a much greater rise than those of unmarried women or wives. But it is merely that then the population of widows increases disproportionately; thus it naturally produces more suicides and this rise naturally persists until the restoration of equilibrium and the return to their normal level of the different sorts of marital status.

from suicide. Consequently the same supposition is just as unfounded for men. The coefficient of 1.5 of childless husbands does not result from their belonging to the healthiest portion of the population; it can only be an effect of marriage. Conjugal society, so disadvantageous for women, must, even in the absence of children, be admitted to be advantageous for men. Those who enter it are not an aristocracy of birth; they do not bring to marriage, as an existing quality, a temperament disinclining them to suicide, but acquire it by living the conjugal life. At least, if they have some natural advantages these can be only very vague and indeterminate; for they are without influence until the advent of certain other conditions. So true is it that suicide does not principally depend upon the congenital qualities of individuals but upon causes exterior to and dominating them!

There is, however, a final difficulty to be solved. If this coefficient of 1.5, independent of the family, is due to marriage, how does it survive marriage and reappear at least in attenuated form (1.2) in the childless widower? If the theory of matrimonial selection which accounted for this survival is rejected, with what shall it be replaced?

It is sufficient to assume that the habits, tastes, and tendencies formed during marriage do not disappear on its dissolution; and nothing is more plausible than this hypothesis. If the married man, then, even if childless, feels a relative security from suicide, he must inevitably preserve some of this feeling when a widower. Only, as widowhood does involve a certain moral shock and since, as we shall see later, any loss of equilibrium inclines to suicide, this disposition, though remaining, is weakened. Inversely, but for the same reason, since a childless wife more often commits suicide than if she had remained unmarried, once become a widow she retains this stronger propensity for suicide, even slightly reinforced by the distress and loss of equilibrium always accompanying widowhood. But, since the ill effects that marriage had upon her make this change of status more acceptable, the aggravation is very slight. The coefficient is lowered by only a few per cent (0.60 instead of 0.67).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> When there are children, the lowering of coefficient incident to both sexes due to widowhood is almost the same. The coefficient of husbands with children is 2.9; it becomes 1.6. That of women in the same circumstances from 1.89 becomes 1.06. The diminution is 45 per cent for the former, 44 per cent for the latter. That is, as

This explanation is confirmed by the fact that it is only a particular instance of a more general proposition which may be formulated thus: *In an identical society, the tendency to suicide in the state of widowhood is for each sex a function of the suicidal tendency of the same sex in the state of marriage.* If the husband is highly protected, the widower is too, although of course to a lesser degree; if the former is only slightly protected from suicide, the latter is not thus protected at all or only very little. To assure ourselves of the accuracy of this proposition we need only refer to Tables XX and XXI and the conclusions drawn from them. We there found that one sex is always more favored than the other in both marriage and widowhood. Now, the one more privileged in the first of these conditions preserves its privilege in the second. In France, husbands have a higher coefficient of preservation than wives; that of widowers is similarly higher than that of widows. In Oldenburg the opposite is true among married couples: the wife has a higher immunity than the husband. The same inversion occurs between widowers and widows.

But as these two single cases might with some justice be considered an insufficient proof and as, on the other hand, statistical publications do not give us the necessary data to verify our proposition in other countries, we have resorted to the following procedure to extend the scope of our comparisons: we have calculated separately the suicide-rate for each age-group and marital status in the department of the Seine on the one hand, and on the other in all the rest of the departments combined. The two social groups, thus isolated from each other, are sufficiently different for us to expect their comparison to be instructive. And family life actually does have very different effects upon suicide in them (see Table XXII). In the departments the husband has much more immunity than the wife. In only four

we have said, widowhood produces two different effects; it disturbs 1. the conjugal society, 2. the family society. The former disturbance is much less felt by the woman than by the man, just because she profits less from marriage. But the second is felt far more by her; for she often finds it harder to take the husband's place in the direction of the family than he does to replace her in her domestic functions. When there are children, therefore, a sort of compensation occurs which makes the suicidal tendency of the two sexes vary, as a result of widowhood, in the same proportions. Thus it is especially when there are no children that a widowed woman partially recovers the ground lost in the state of marriage.

age-groups does the former's coefficient descend below 3,<sup>33</sup> while the wife's never reaches 2; the average is in one case 2.88, in the other 1.49. In the Seine the reverse is true; for husbands the coefficient averages only 1.56 while it is 1.79<sup>34</sup> for wives. The very same inversion is found between widowers and widows. In the provinces the average coefficient of widowers is high (1.45), that of widows much lower (0.78). In the Seine, on the contrary, the second is higher, rising to 0.93, close to unity, while the other falls to 0.75. Thus, *whichever the favored sex, widowhood regularly corresponds to marriage.*

More than this, if the key is sought to the variation of the coefficient of husbands from one social group to another and if the same study is then made for widowers, the following surprising results are obtained:

$$\frac{\text{Husbands' coefficient in provinces}}{\text{Husbands' coefficient in the Seine}} = \frac{2.88}{1.56} = 1.84$$

$$\frac{\text{Widowers' coefficient in provinces}}{\text{Widowers' coefficient in the Seine}} = \frac{1.45}{0.75} = 1.93$$

and for women:

$$\frac{\text{Wives' coefficient in the Seine}}{\text{Wives' coefficient in provinces}} = \frac{1.79}{1.49} = 1.20$$

$$\frac{\text{Widows' coefficient in the Seine}}{\text{Widows' coefficient in provinces}} = \frac{0.93}{0.78} = 1.19$$

The numerical proportions are for each sex pretty nearly equal; for women, the equality, in fact, is almost absolute. Thus, not only does the coefficient of widowers follow suit when that of husbands rises or sinks, but it even increases or decreases in exactly the same measure. These relations may be expressed in a form still more clearly confirmative of the law we have stated. They imply, in fact, that

<sup>33</sup> From Table XXII it appears that in Paris, as in the provinces, the coefficient of husbands below 20 years is below unity; that is, for them there is aggravation. This confirms the law formulated above.

<sup>34</sup> Evidently, when the female sex is the one more favored by marriage, the disproportion between the sexes is much less than when the husband has the advantage; a new confirmation of a remark made above.



## INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY ON SUICIDE BY SEX—Continued

| Women                        |     | Suicide-rate | Coefficient of Preservation in Relation to Unmarried Women |
|------------------------------|-----|--------------|--|
| Unmarried women 42 years old | 150 |              |  |
| Wives with children          | 79  | 1.39         |  |
| Unmarried women 60 years old | 221 | 0.57         |  |
| Widows with children         | 196 | 1.06         |  |
| Widows without children      | 322 | 0.60         |  |

From this table and the preceding remarks it appears that marriage has indeed a preservative effect of its own against suicide. But it is very limited and also benefits one sex only. Useful as it has been to attest its existence—and this usefulness will be better understood in a later chapter<sup>36</sup>—the fact remains that the family is the essential factor in the immunity of married persons, that is, the family as the whole group of parents and children. Of course, since husband and wife are members, they too share in producing this result, however not as husband or wife but as father or mother, as functionaries of the family association. If the disappearance of one increases the chances that the other may commit suicide, it is not because the bonds uniting them personally are broken, but because a family disaster occurs, the shock of which the survivor undergoes. Reserving the special effect of marriage for later study, we shall say that domestic society, like religious society is a powerful counteragent against suicide.

This immunity even increases with the density of the family, that is with the increase in the number of its elements.

This proposition we have already stated and proved in an article appearing in the *Revue philosophique* of November 1888. But the insufficiency of statistical data then at our disposal did not permit as strict a proof as was desirable. We did not know the average number in family establishments either throughout France or in each department. Thus we had to assume that family density depended solely

no comparison of husbands and widowers with unmarried persons of the same age, no precise conclusion could be drawn as to the coefficients of preservation. We are also in doubt as to whether they refer to the entire country. Actually the French Bureau of Statistics assures us that the distinction between childless couples and those with children was never made in the census before 1886, except in 1855 for the departments exclusive of the Seine.

<sup>36</sup> See Book II, Chap. V, 3.

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on the number of children and—this number itself not being indicated in the census—we had to estimate it indirectly by employing what demography terms the physiological increase, or the annual excess of births over a thousand deaths. To be sure, this substitution was not unreasonable, for where the increase is high, families in general can hardly be other than dense. However, this consequence is not inescapable and often does not occur. Where children habitually leave their parents early, either to emigrate, or to settle elsewhere, or for other reasons, the family density has no reference to their number. In fact, the home may be deserted no matter how fruitful the marriage has been. This happens both in cultured surroundings where the child is early sent away from home to commence or complete his education, and in impoverished neighborhoods where premature dispersion is necessitated by the hardships of existence. On the other hand, the family may include a moderate or even a large number of elements in spite of a merely average birth rate if the unmarried adults or even the married children continue to live with their parents and form a single domestic society. For all these reasons no exact measure is possible of the relative density of family groups without knowledge of their actual composition.

The census of 1886, the results of which were not published until the end of 1888, gave us this knowledge. If we study from its data the relation in the different French departments between suicide and the actual average of family members, the following are the results:

|                            | Suicides per Million Inhabitants (1878-1887) | Average Membership of Family Households per 100 Households (1886) |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| 1st group (11 departments) | From 430 to 380                              | 347   |
| 2nd group (16 departments) | From 300 to 240                              | 360   |
| 3rd group (15 departments) | From 230 to 180                              | 376   |
| 4th group (13 departments) | From 170 to 130                              | 393   |
| 5th group (26 departments) | From 120 to 80                               | 418   |
| 6th group (10 departments) | From 70 to 50                                | 434   |

As suicides diminish, family density regularly increases.

Instead of comparing averages, if we analyze the content of each group we shall find only confirmation of this conclusion. In fact, for all France, the average membership is 39 persons per 10 families. If then we ask how many departments there are above or below the average in each of these 6 classes, we shall find them to be composed as follows:

could be  
-27  
in one  
branch

What Per Cent of Each Group of Departments\*  
Below Average No. Above Average No.

|           |     |     |
|-----------|-----|-----|
| 1st group | 100 | 0   |
| 2nd group | 84  | 16  |
| 3rd group | 50  | 50  |
| 4th group | 33  | 67  |
| 5th group | 17  | 83  |
| 6th group | 0   | 100 |

\* Figures reproduced as in original text, since errors could not be corrected.—Ed.

The group with most suicides includes only departments with family numbers below the average. Gradually and most regularly, the relation is reversed until the inversion is complete. In the last class, where suicides are few, all the departments have a family density above average.

The two maps (Appendices) also have the same general configuration. The region where families have least density definitely has the same limits as that of most frequent suicides. It also occupies the North and East and extends, on one side, to Brittany, on the other to the Loire. In the West and South, on the contrary, where there are few suicides, the family generally has large numbers. This relation even recurs in certain details. In the northern region, two departments are notable for their low aptitude for suicide, the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, a fact so much the more surprising as the Nord is highly industrial and intense industrialization favors suicide. The same peculiarity appears on the other map. In these two departments family density is high, though very low in all neighboring departments. In the South, we find on both maps the same dark area formed by the Bouches-du-Rhône, the Var, Alpes-Maritimes, and, to the West, the same light area formed by Brittany. The irregularities are exceptional and never prominent; considering the great number of factors which can affect so complex a phenomenon, such a general agreement is significant.

The same inverse relation reappears in the way both phenomena have evolved in time. Suicide has constantly increased since 1826 and the birth-rate has decreased. From 1821 to 1830 the latter was still 308 births for 10,000 inhabitants; during the period 1881-88 it was only 240, and the decrease was uninterrupted in the interval. At the same time, there appears a tendency for the family to break up and disperse more and more. From 1856 to 1886, the number of households increased by 2 millions in round figures; regularly and

steadily it rose from 8,796,276 to 10,662,423. Yet, during the same time-interval, the population increased only by two million persons. Each family therefore includes a smaller membership.<sup>87</sup>

Facts thus are far from confirming the current idea that suicide is due especially to life's burdens, since, on the contrary, it diminishes as these burdens increase. This is a consequence of Malthusianism not foreseen by its author. When he urged control of the numbers in families, he felt that this restriction was at least in some cases necessary to general well-being. Actually, it is so much a source of the reverse condition that it diminishes the human desire to live. Far from dense families being a sort of unnecessary luxury appropriate only to the rich, they are actually an indispensable staff of daily life. However poor one is, and even solely from the point of view of personal interest, it is the worst of investments to substitute wealth for a portion of one's offspring.

This result agrees with the one we had reached before. Why does family density have this effect upon suicide? In reply one could not refer to the organic factor; for though absolute sterility has primarily physiological causes, insufficient fecundity has not, being usually voluntary and depending on a certain state of mind. Family density, moreover, measured as we have measured it, does not depend exclusively on the birth-rate; we have seen that where there are few children other elements may take their place and, vice versa, that their number may be of no significance if they do not actually and consistently share in the group life. Nor should this preservative virtue be ascribed to the special feelings of parents for their immediate descendants. Indeed, to be effective these very feelings presuppose a certain state of domestic society. They cannot be powerful if the family has broken up. It is therefore because the functioning of the family varies with its greater or less density, that the number of its component elements affects the suicidal tendency.

That is, the density of a group cannot sink without its vitality diminishing. Where collective sentiments are strong, it is because the force with which they affect each individual conscience is echoed in all the others, and reciprocally. The intensity they attain therefore depends on the number of consciences which react to them in com-

<sup>87</sup> *Sec. Dénombrement de 1886*, p. 106.

mon. For the same reason, the larger a crowd, the more capable of violence the passions vented by it. Consequently, in a family of small numbers, common sentiments and memories cannot be very intense; for there are not enough consciences in which they can be represented and reinforced by sharing them. No such powerful traditions can be formed there as unite the members of a single group, even surviving it and attaching successive generations to one another. Small families are also inevitably short-lived; and without duration no society can be stable. Not only are collective states weak in such a group, but they cannot be numerous; for their number depends on the active interchange of views and impressions, on the circulation of these views and impressions from one person to another; and, on the other hand, this very exchange is the more rapid the more persons there are participating in it. In a sufficiently dense society, this circulation is uninterrupted; for some social units are always in contact, whereas if there are few their relations can only be intermittent and there will be moments when the common life is suspended. Likewise, when the family is small, few relatives are ever together; so that domestic life languishes and the home is occasionally deserted.

But for a group to be said to have less common life than another means that it is less powerfully integrated; for the state of integration of a social aggregate can only reflect the intensity of the collective life circulating in it. It is more unified and powerful the more active and constant is the intercourse among its members. Our previous conclusion may thus be completed to read: just as the family is a powerful safeguard against suicide, so the more strongly it is constituted the greater its protection.<sup>38</sup>

## V

If statistics had not developed so late, it would be easy to show by the same method that this law applies to political societies. His-

<sup>38</sup> The word "density" has just been used in a somewhat different sense from that usually given it in sociology. Generally, the density of a group is defined not as a function of the absolute number of associated individuals (which is rather called "volume"), but of the number of individuals actually in reciprocal relationship in one and the same social volume. (See Durkheim, E., *Regler de la Meth. sociol.*, p. 139). But in the case of the family the distinction between volume and density has no interest, since, due to the smallness of the group, all associated persons are in actual relationship.

tory indeed teaches us that suicide, generally rare in young <sup>39</sup> societies in process of evolution and concentration, increases as they disintegrate. In Greece and Rome it makes its appearance with the overthrow of the old city-state organization and its progress marks successive stages of decadence. The same is observed in the Ottoman Empire. In France, on the eve of the Revolution, the turmoil which shook society with the disintegration of the older social system took shape in a sudden rush of suicides mentioned by contemporary authors.<sup>40</sup>

But beside these historical data, suicide statistics, though hardly existing for longer than the past seventy years, supply us with some proofs of this proposition which are more precise than those given above.

Great political upheavals are sometimes said to increase the number of suicides. But Morselli has conclusively shown that facts contradict this view. All the revolutions which have occurred in France during this century reduced the number of suicides at the moment of their occurrence. In 1830, the total fell to 1,756 from 1,904 in 1829, amounting to a sudden drop of nearly 10 per cent. In 1848 the drop is no less; the annual figure changes from 3,647 to 3,301. Then, during the years 1848-49, the crisis which has just shaken France spreads through Europe; everywhere suicides decrease, and this decrease is more and more perceptible the more serious and prolonged the crisis. This appears in the following table:

|      | Denmark | Prussia | Bavaria | Kingdom of Saxony | Austria       |
|------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1847 | 345     | 1,852   | 217     | 398               | 611 (in 1846) |
| 1848 | 305     | 1,649   | 215     | 328               |               |
| 1849 | 337     | 1,527   | 189     |                   | 452           |

In Germany public feeling ran much higher than in Denmark and the struggle lasted longer even than in France, where a new government was immediately formed; accordingly, the decrease is

<sup>39</sup> Let us not confuse young societies capable of development with lower societies; in the latter, on the contrary, suicides are very frequent, as will appear in the following chapter.

<sup>40</sup> Helvetius wrote in 1781: "Financial disorder and the change in the constitution of the state spread general fear. Numerous suicides in the capital give sad proof of this." Quoted from Legoyt, p. 30. Mercier in his *Tableau de Paris* (1782) says that within 25 years the number of suicides tripled in Paris.



prolonged in the German states up to 1849. For that year, the decrease is 13 per cent in Bavaria, 18 per cent in Prussia; in Saxony, in a single year from 1848 to 1849, it is likewise 18 per cent.

In 1851, the same phenomenon does not occur in France, nor does it occur in 1852. Suicides remain stationary. But in France the *comp d'état* of Louis Bonaparte has the usual effect; although it took place in December, the number of suicides fell from 483 in 1851 to 446 in 1852 (8 per cent), and even in 1853 they were 463.<sup>41</sup> This fact would seem to prove that this governmental revolution disturbed Paris much more than the provinces, where it seems to have had little effect. Besides, generally speaking, the influence of such crises is always more noticeable in the capital than in the departments. In 1830, the decrease in Paris was 13 per cent (269 cases instead of 307 the year before and 359 the year after); in 1848, 32 per cent (481 cases instead of 698).<sup>42</sup>

Mild as they are, mere election crises sometimes have the same result. Thus, in France the suicide record clearly shows the mark of the parliamentary crisis of May 16, 1877 and the resulting popular agitation, as well as of the 1889 elections which ended the Boulanger agitation. In proof, we need only compare the monthly distribution of suicides in these two years with that of the years immediately before and after.

|           | 1876 | 1877 | 1878 | 1888 | 1889 | 1890 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| May       | 604  | 649  | 717  | 924  | 919  | 819  |
| June      | 662  | 692  | 682  | 851  | 829  | 822  |
| July      | 625  | 540  | 695  | 825  | 818  | 888  |
| August    | 482  | 496  | 547  | 786  | 694  | 734  |
| September | 394  | 378  | 512  | 673  | 597  | 720  |
| October   | 464  | 423  | 468  | 603  | 648  | 675  |
| November  | 400  | 413  | 415  | 589  | 618  | 571  |
| December  | 389  | 386  | 335  | 574  | 482  | 475  |

During the first months of 1877 suicides were more numerous than in 1876 (1,945 cases from January to April instead of 1,784) and the rise continues in May and June. Only at the end of the last-named month are the Chambers dissolved, the electoral period actually if not legally begun; this is probably the moment when political passions were most excited, for they were bound subsequently to subside somewhat due to time and weariness. Accordingly, in July,

<sup>41</sup> According to Legoyt, p. 252.

<sup>42</sup> According to Masaryck, *Der Selbstmord*, p. 137.

instead of continuing to surpass those of the preceding year, suicides are 14 per cent below them. Except for a slight pause in August, the drop continues to October, though less strongly. The crisis is ending. Immediately upon its conclusion, the rise, momentarily interrupted, is resumed. In 1889 the phenomenon is yet more pronounced. The Chamber is dissolved at the beginning of August; the excitement of the election period begins at once and lasts to the end of September, the time of the elections. An abrupt decrease of 12 per cent, compared with the corresponding month of 1888, occurs in August and lasts into September but stops abruptly in October when the struggle is ended.

Great national wars have the same effect as political disturbances. In 1866 war breaks out between Austria and Italy, and suicides drop 14 per cent in both countries.

|         | 1865  | 1866  | 1867  |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Italy   | 678   | 588   | 657   |
| Austria | 1,464 | 1,265 | 1,407 |

In 1864 it was the turn of Denmark and Saxony. In the latter state suicides, which numbered 643 in 1863, fell to 545 in 1864 (16 per cent), only to return to 619 in 1865. As to Denmark, since we do not know the number of suicides for 1863, we cannot compare that of 1864 with it; but we do know that the figure for the second year (411) is the lowest since 1852. And as there is a rise to 451 in 1865, this figure of 411 very probably betokens a considerable drop.

The war of 1870-1871 had the same results in France and Germany:

|         | 1869  | 1870  | 1871  | 1872  |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Prussia | 3,186 | 2,963 | 2,723 | 2,950 |
| Saxony  | 710   | 657   | 653   | 687   |
| France  | 5,114 | 4,157 | 4,490 | 5,275 |

This decrease might perhaps be considered due to the drafting of a part of the civilian population in war-time and the fact that it is very hard to keep track of suicides in an army in the field. But women as well as men contribute to this decrease. In Italy, suicides of women drop from 130 in 1864 to 117 in 1866; in Saxony, from 133 in 1863 to 120 in 1864 and 114 in 1865 (15 per cent). In

the same country there is a no less considerable drop in 1870; from 130 in 1869 suicides fall to 114 in 1870 and remain at the same level in 1871; the decrease is 13 per cent, more than that of contemporary suicides of men. While 616 women had killed themselves in Prussia in 1869, there were only 540 such suicides in 1871 (13 per cent). It is common knowledge, besides, that young men capable of bearing arms furnish only a small contingent of suicides. Only six months of 1870 were occupied by the war; at this period, in time of peace, a million Frenchmen of from 25 to 30 years of age would have showed at most about 100 suicides,<sup>43</sup> whereas the reduction between 1870 and 1869 is 1,057 cases.<sup>44</sup>

The question has also been raised whether the cause of this momentary drop at a time of crisis might not be that the record of suicides was less exactly kept because of the paralysis of administrative authority. Numerous facts, however, show that this accidental cause does not adequately explain the matter. First, the widespread occurrence of the phenomenon. It appears among conquerors as well as vanquished, invaders and invaded alike. Furthermore, when the shock was very violent, its effects persisted for a considerable time after the event. Suicides increase slowly; some years pass before their return to their point of departure; this is true even in countries where in normal times they increase with annual regularity. Though partial omissions are of course possible and even likely at such times of trouble, the drop revealed by the statistics is too steady to be attributed to a brief inadvertence of administration as its principal cause.

But the best proof that we confront a phenomenon of social psychology and not a mistake in accounting, is that not all political or national crises have this influence. Only those do which excite the passions. We have already noted that revolutions in France have always had more effect on suicide in Paris than in the departments; yet the administrative upheaval was the same in the provinces and in the capital. But this sort of event always has much less interest for the provincial than for the Parisian, its author and participant from a closer vantage point. Likewise, while great national wars

<sup>43</sup> Actually, the annual rate at this age in 1889-91 was only 396, the semi-annual rate about 200. From 1870 to 1890 the number of suicides at every age doubled.

<sup>44</sup> Durkheim's figures show a reduction from 5,114 in 1869 to 4,157 in 1870, which amounts to 957, not 1,057.—Ed.

such as that of 1870-71 have had a strong influence on the current of suicide in both France and Germany, purely dynastic wars such as the Crimean or Italian, which have not violently moved the masses, have had no appreciable effect. There even occurred a considerable rise in 1854 (3,700 cases against 3,415 in 1853). The same fact is observed in Prussia at the time of the wars of 1864 and 1866. The figures are stationary in 1864 and rise slightly in 1866. These wars were due wholly to the initiative of politicians and had not aroused public feeling like that of 1870.

From this point of view it is interesting to note that in Bavaria the year 1870 did not have the same effects as in the other countries of Germany, especially North Germany. More suicides were recorded in 1870 in Bavaria than in 1869 (452 against 425). Only in 1871 is there a slight decrease; it continues somewhat in 1872 when there are only 412 cases, which, however, entails a lowering of only 9 per cent by comparison with 1869 and 4 per cent with 1870. Yet Bavaria took the same important part as Prussia in military events; it, too, mobilized its whole army and the administrative disturbance must have been no less. It simply did not take the same moral share in events. Actually it is well known that Catholic Bavaria is, of all Germany, the country which has always lived a life most its own and been most jealous of its autonomy. It shared in the war through the will of its king but without enthusiasm. Therefore it resisted the great social movement then agitating Germany much more than the other allies; and so the reaction was felt there only later and less strongly. Enthusiasm was delayed and inconsiderable. It required the breath of glory wafted over Germany on the morrow of the victory of 1870 to warm somewhat the hitherto cold and unresponsive land of Bavaria.<sup>45</sup>

This fact may be compared with the following, of similar signif-

<sup>45</sup> Nor is it certain that this diminution of 1872 was caused by the events of 1870. The reduction of suicides scarcely made itself felt outside of Prussia beyond the actual period of hostilities. In Saxony the reduction of 1870, only 8 per cent, is not continued in 1871, and almost completely comes to an end in 1872. In the duchy of Baden it was confined to 1870; 1871, with its 244 cases, exceeds 1869 by 10 per cent. It thus seems that Prussia alone was seized with a sort of collective euphoria on the morrow of victory. The other states had less feeling for the increased glory and power resulting from the war, and social passions subsided with the end of the great national crisis.

cance. In France during the years 1870-71, suicide diminished only in the cities:

|         |     | Suicides per Million Inhabitants |                  |
|---------|-----|----------------------------------|------------------|
|         |     | Urban Population                 | Rural Population |
| 1866-69 | 202 | 104                              | 110              |
| 1870-72 | 151 |                                  |                  |

Recordings of suicides must, however, have been more difficult in the country than in the city. The true reason for this difference accordingly lies elsewhere. The war produced its full moral effect only on the urban population, more sensitive, impressionable and also better informed on current events than the rural population.

These facts are therefore susceptible of only one interpretation; namely, that great social disturbances and great popular wars rouse collective sentiments, stimulate partisan spirit and patriotism, political and national faith, alike, and concentrating activity toward a single end, at least temporarily cause a stronger integration of society. The salutary influence which we have just shown to exist is due not to the crisis but to the struggles it occasions. As they force men to close ranks and confront the common danger, the individual thinks less of himself and more of the common cause. Besides, it is comprehensible that this integration may not be purely momentary but may sometimes outlive its immediate causes, especially when it is intense.

## VI

We have thus successively set up the three following propositions:

*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious society.*

*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of domestic society.*

*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of political society.*

This grouping shows that whereas these different societies have a moderating influence upon suicide, this is due not to special characteristics of each but to a characteristic common to all. Religion does not owe its efficacy to the special nature of religious sentiments, since domestic and political societies both produce the same effects when

strongly integrated. This, moreover, we have already proved when studying directly the manner of action of different religions upon suicide.<sup>46</sup> Inversely, it is not the specific nature of the domestic or political tie which can explain the immunity they confer, since religious society has the same advantage. The cause can only be found in a single quality possessed by all these social groups, though perhaps to varying degrees. The only quality satisfying this condition is that they are all strongly integrated social groups. So we reach the general conclusion: suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part.

But society cannot disintegrate without the individual simultaneously detaching himself from social life, without his own goals becoming preponderant over those of the community, in a word without his personality tending to surmount the collective personality. The more weakened the groups to which he belongs, the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself and recognizes no other rules of conduct than what are founded on his private interests. If we agree to call this state egoism, in which the individual ego asserts itself to excess in the face of the social ego and at its expense, we may call egoistic the special type of suicide springing from excessive individualism.

But how can suicide have such an origin?

First of all, it can be said that, as collective force is one of the obstacles best calculated to restrain suicide, its weakening involves a development of suicide. When society is strongly integrated, it holds individuals under its control, considers them at its service and thus forbids them to dispose wilfully of themselves. Accordingly it opposes their evading their duties to it through death. But how could society impose its supremacy upon them when they refuse to accept this subordination as legitimate? It no longer then possesses the requisite authority to retain them in their duty if they wish to desert; and conscious of its own weakness, it even recognizes their right to do freely what it can no longer prevent. So far as they are admitted masters of their destinies, it is their privilege to end their lives. They, on their part, have no reason to endure life's sufferings patiently. For they cling to life more resolutely when belonging to a group they love, so as not to betray interests they put before their

See above, Book II, Ch. 2.

what about Japan, E. Traylor?  
=> diff. type of suicide.

own. The bond that unites them with the common cause attaches them to life and the lofty goal they envisage prevents their feeling personal troubles so deeply. There is, in short, in a cohesive and animated society a constant interchange of ideas and feelings from all to each and each to all, something like a mutual moral support, which instead of throwing the individual on his own resources, leads him to share in the collective energy and supports his own when exhausted.

But these reasons are purely secondary. Excessive individualism not only results in favoring the action of suicidogenic causes, but it is itself such a cause. It not only frees man's inclination to do away with himself from a protective obstacle, but creates this inclination out of whole cloth and thus gives birth to a special suicide which bears its mark. This must be clearly understood for this is what constitutes the special character of the type of suicide just distinguished and justifies the name we have given it. What is there then in individualism that explains this result?

It has been sometimes said that because of his psychological constitution, man cannot live without attachment to some object which transcends and survives him, and that the reason for this necessity is a need we must have not to perish entirely. Life is said to be intolerable unless some reason for existing is involved, some purpose justifying life's trials. The individual alone is not a sufficient end for his activity. He is too little. He is not only hemmed in spatially; he is also strictly limited temporally. When, therefore, we have no other object than ourselves we cannot avoid the thought that our efforts will finally end in nothingness, since we ourselves disappear. But annihilation terrifies us. Under these conditions one would lose courage to live, that is, to act and struggle, since nothing will remain of our exertions. The state of egoism, in other words, is supposed to be contradictory to human nature and, consequently, too uncertain to have chances of permanence.

In this absolute formulation the proposition is vulnerable. If the thought of the end of our personality were really so hateful, we could consent to live only by blinding ourselves voluntarily as to life's value. For if we may in a measure avoid the prospect of annihilation we cannot extirpate it; it is inevitable, whatever we do. We may push back the frontier for some generations, force our name to

endure for some years or centuries longer than our body; a moment, too soon for most men, always comes when it will be nothing. For the groups we join in order to prolong our existence by their means are themselves mortal; they too must dissolve, carrying with them all our deposit of ourselves. Those are few whose memories are closely enough bound to the very history of humanity to be assured of living until its death. So, if we really thus thirsted after immortality, no such brief perspectives could ever appease us. Besides, what of us is it that lives? A word, a sound, an imperceptible trace, most often anonymous,<sup>47</sup> therefore nothing comparable to the violence of our efforts or able to justify them to us. In actuality, though a child is naturally an egoist who feels not the slightest craving to survive himself, and the old man is very often a child in this and so many other respects, neither ceases to cling to life as much or more than the adult; indeed we have seen that suicide is very rare for the first fifteen years and tends to decrease at the other extreme of life. Such too is the case with animals, whose psychological constitution differs from that of men only in degree. It is therefore untrue that life is only possible by its possessing its rationale outside of itself.

Indeed, a whole range of functions concern only the individual; these are the ones indispensable for physical life. Since they are made for this purpose only, they are perfected by its attainment. In everything concerning them, therefore, man can act reasonably without thought of transcendental purposes. These functions serve by merely serving him. In so far as he has no other needs, he is therefore self-sufficient and can live happily with no other objective than living. This is not the case, however, with the civilized adult. He has many ideas, feelings and practices unrelated to organic needs. The roles of art, morality, religion, political faith, science itself are not to repair organic exhaustion nor to provide sound functioning of the organs. All this supra-physical life is built and expanded not because of the demands of the cosmic environment but because of the demands of the social environment. The influence of society is what has aroused in us the sentiments of sympathy and solidarity drawing us toward

<sup>47</sup> We say nothing of the ideal protraction of life involved in the belief in immortality of the soul, for (1) this cannot explain why the family or attachment to political society preserves us from suicide; and (2) it is not even this belief which forms religion's prophylactic influence, as we have shown above.



others; it is society which, fashioning us in its image, fills us with religious, political and moral beliefs that control our actions. To play our social role we have striven to extend our intelligence and it is still society that has supplied us with tools for this development by transmitting to us its trust fund of knowledge.

Through the very fact that these superior forms of human activity have a collective origin, they have a collective purpose. As they derive from society they have reference to it; rather they are society itself incarnated and individualized in each one of us. But for them to have a *raison d'être* in our eyes, the purpose they envisage must be one not indifferent to us. We can cling to these forms of human activity only to the degree that we cling to society itself. Contrariwise, in the same measure as we feel detached from society we become detached from that life whose source and aim is society. For what purpose do these rules of morality, these precepts of law binding us to all sorts of sacrifices, these restrictive dogmas exist, if there is no being outside us whom they serve and in whom we participate? What is the purpose of science itself? If its only use is to increase our chances for survival, it does not deserve the trouble it entails. Instinct acquits itself better of this role; animals prove this. Why substitute for it a more hesitant and uncertain reflection? What is the end of suffering, above all? If the value of things can only be estimated by their relation to this positive evil for the individual, it is without reward and incomprehensible. This problem does not exist for the believer firm in his faith or the man strongly bound by ties of domestic or political society. Instinctively and unreflectively they ascribe all that they are and do, the one to his Church or his God, the living symbol of the Church, the other to his family, the third to his country or party. Even in their sufferings they see only a means of glorifying the group to which they belong and thus do homage to it. So, the Christian ultimately desires and seeks suffering to testify more fully to his contempt for the flesh and more fully resemble his divine model. But the more the believer doubts, that is, the less he feels himself a real participant in the religious faith to which he belongs, and from which he is freeing himself; the more the family and community become foreign to the individual, so much the more does he become a mystery to himself, unable to escape the exasperating and agonizing question: to what purpose?

If, in other words, as has often been said, man is double, that is because social man superimposes himself upon physical man. Social man necessarily presupposes a society which he expresses and serves. If this dissolves, if we no longer feel it in existence and action about and above us, whatever is social in us is deprived of all objective foundation. All that remains is an artificial combination of illusory images, a phantasmagoria vanishing at the least reflection; that is, nothing which can be a goal for our action. Yet this social man is the essence of civilized man; he is the masterpiece of existence. Thus we are bereft of reasons for existence; for the only life to which we could cling no longer corresponds to anything actual; the only existence still based upon reality no longer meets our needs. Because we have been initiated into a higher existence, the one which satisfies an animal or a child can satisfy us no more and the other itself fades and leaves us helpless. So there is nothing more for our efforts to lay hold of, and we feel them lose themselves in emptiness. In this sense it is true to say that our activity needs an object transcending it. We do not need it to maintain ourselves in the illusion of an impossible immortality; it is implicit in our moral constitution and cannot be even partially lost without this losing its *raison d'être* in the same degree. No proof is needed that in such a state of confusion the least cause of discouragement may easily give birth to desperate resolutions. If life is not worth the trouble of being lived, everything becomes a pretext to rid ourselves of it.

But this is not all. This detachment occurs not only in single individuals. One of the constitutive elements of every national temperament consists of a certain way of estimating the value of existence. There is a collective as well as an individual humor inclining peoples to sadness or cheerfulness, making them see things in bright or sombre lights. In fact, only society can pass a collective opinion on the value of human life; for this the individual is incompetent. The latter knows nothing but himself and his own little horizon; thus his experience is too limited to serve as a basis for a general appraisal. He may indeed consider his own life to be aimless; he can say nothing applicable to others. On the contrary, without sophistry, society may generalize its own feeling as to itself, its state of health or lack of health. For individuals share too deeply in the life of society for it to be diseased without their suffering infection. What

it suffers they necessarily suffer. Because it is the whole, its ills are communicated to its parts. Hence it cannot disintegrate without awareness that the regular conditions of general existence are equally disturbed. Because society is the end on which our better selves depend, it cannot feel us escaping it without a simultaneous realization that our activity is purposeless. Since we are its handiwork, society cannot be conscious of its own decadence without the feeling that henceforth this work is of no value. Thence are formed currents of depression and disillusionment emanating from no particular individual but expressing society's state of disintegration. They reflect the relaxation of social bonds, a sort of collective asthenia, or social malaise, just as individual sadness, when chronic, in its way reflects the poor organic state of the individual. Then metaphysical and religious systems spring up which, by reducing these obscure sentiments to formulae, attempt to prove to men the senselessness of life and that it is self-deception to believe that it has purpose. Then new moralities originate which, by elevating facts to ethics, commend suicide or at least tend in that direction by suggesting a minimal existence. On their appearance they seem to have been created out of whole cloth by their makers who are sometimes blamed for the pessimism of their doctrines. In reality they are an effect rather than a cause; they merely symbolize in abstract language and systematic form the physiological distress of the body social.<sup>48</sup> As these currents are collective, they have, by virtue of their origin, an authority which they impose upon the individual and they drive him more vigorously on the way to which he is already inclined by the state of moral distress directly aroused in him by the disintegration of society. Thus, at the very moment that, with excessive zeal, he frees himself from the social environment, he still submits to its influence. However individualized a man may be, there is always something collective remaining—the very depression and melancholy resulting from this same exaggerated individualism. He effects communion through sadness when he no longer has anything else with which to achieve it.

Hence this type of suicide well deserves the name we have given it. Egoism is not merely a contributing factor in it; it is its generating cause. In this case the bond attaching man to life relaxes because

<sup>48</sup> This is why it is unjust to accuse these theorists of sadness of generalizing personal impressions. They are the echo of a general condition.

that attaching him to society is itself slack. The incidents of private life which seem the direct inspiration of suicide and are considered its determining causes are in reality only incidental causes. The individual yields to the slightest shock of circumstance because the state of society has made him a ready prey to suicide.

Several facts confirm this explanation. Suicide is known to be rare among children and to diminish among the aged at the last confines of life; physical man, in both, tends to become the whole of man. Society is still lacking in the former, for it has not had the time to form him in its image; it begins to retreat from the latter or, what amounts to the same thing, he retreats from it. Thus both are more self-sufficient. Feeling a lesser need for self-completion through something not themselves, they are also less exposed to feel the lack of what is necessary for living. The immunity of an animal has the same causes. We shall likewise see in the next chapter that, though lower societies practice a form of suicide of their own, the one we have just discussed is almost unknown to them. Since their social life is very simple, the social inclinations of individuals are simple also and thus they need little for satisfaction. They readily find external objectives to which they become attached. If he can carry with him his gods and his family, primitive man, everywhere that he goes, has all that his social nature demands.

This is also why woman can endure life in isolation more easily than man. When a widow is seen to endure her condition much better than a widower and desires marriage less passionately, one is led to consider this ease in dispensing with the family a mark of superiority; it is said that woman's affective faculties, being very intense, are easily employed outside the domestic circle, while her devotion is indispensable to man to help him endure life. Actually, if this is her privilege it is because her sensibility is rudimentary rather than highly developed. As she lives outside of community existence more than man, she is less penetrated by it; society is less necessary to her because she is less impregnated with sociability. She has few needs in this direction and satisfies them easily. With a few devotional practices and some animals to care for, the old unmarried woman's life is full. If she remains faithfully attached to religious traditions and thus finds ready protection against suicide, it is because these very simple social forms satisfy all her needs. Man,

on the contrary, is hard beset in this respect. As his thought and activity develop, they increasingly overflow these antiquated forms. But then he needs others. Because he is a more complex social being, he can maintain his equilibrium only by finding more points of support outside himself, and it is because his moral balance depends on a larger number of conditions that it is more easily disturbed.

## CHAPTER 4 ALTRUISTIC SUICIDE <sup>1</sup>

**I**N THE order of existence, no good is measureless. A biological quality can only fulfill the purposes it is meant to serve on condition that it does not transgress certain limits. So with social phenomena. If, as we have just seen, excessive individuation leads to suicide, insufficient individuation has the same effects. When man has become detached from society, he encounters less resistance to suicide in himself, and he does so likewise when social integration is too strong.

### I

It has sometimes <sup>2</sup> been said that suicide was unknown among lower societies. Thus expressed, the assertion is inexact. To be sure, egoistic suicide, constituted as has just been shown, seems not to be frequent there. But another form exists among them in an endemic state.

Bartholin, in his book, *De Causis contemptae mortis a Danis*, reports that Danish warriors considered it a disgrace to die in bed

<sup>1</sup> Bibliography.—Steinmetz, *Suicide Among Primitive Peoples*, in *American Anthropologist*, January 1894.—Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, passim.—*Suicides dans les Armées*, in *Journal de la société de statistique*, 1874, p. 250.—Millar, *Statistic of military suicide*, in *Journal of the Statistical Society*, London, June 1874.—Mesnier, *Du suicide dans l'Armée*, Paris 1881.—Bournet, *Criminalité en France et en Italie*, p. 83 ff.—Roth, *Die Selbstmorde in der K. u. K. Armee, in den Jahren 1873-80*, in *Statistische Monatschrift*, 1892.—Rosenthal, *Die Selbstmorde in der Preussischen Armee*, in *Militärwochenblatt*, 1894, 3. supplement.—By the same, *Der Selbstmord in der K. u. K. oesterreichischen Heere*, in *Deutsche Worte*, 1893.—Anthony, *Suicide dans l'armée allemande*, in *Arch. de med. et de pharm. militaire*, Paris, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Ottingen, *Moralstatistik*, p. 762.