



PSYCHIATRY

Suicide Is Murder

It is not the desire to die that makes a man commit suicide, psychiatrists tell us; it is the desire to kill turned on the self.

► IN MOST people the desire to hold on to this life is so strong that the daily reports of suicides that come to us with the war news are completely puzzling, and yet there is an explanation.

Reports of Nazi leaders killing themselves in disordered Berlin. Reports of Japanese fanatical warriors riding robot bombs to their own death. Reports of German war criminals cheating justice through suicide. Reports of Japanese officers committing hara-kiri when faced with defeat.

Such news seems fantastic and almost incredible to those who love life.

But psychiatrists have explored through psychoanalysis the minds of attempted suicides—men and women who have been restrained from suicide only by the constant vigilance of friends and nurses. They are able to explain why it is that some men are willing to kill themselves. And why it is that a man can turn the weapon he has used to kill others and use it for his own self-murder.

It is not the desire to die that makes a man commit suicide, psychiatrists tell us; it is the desire to kill. Hate makes a man kill himself just as hate sometimes makes a man want to kill his neighbor. Usually, the suicide actually wants to kill someone else but is somehow cheated of his victim.

In the case of the defeated war lord

or the war criminal facing arrest, it is easy to see how circumstances prevent the accustomed outlet of the will to kill. In the case of the many civilian suicides that are a common occurrence all around us, it is often the individual's own conscience that keeps him from killing the person he hates.

The close link between murder and suicide is revealed by statistics. Murder rates and suicide rates always have an inverse relationship to each other. As one goes up the other goes down. And suicide rates tend to be at their lowest in time of war.

Any man may at some time feel a hatred bitter enough so that he wants to strike another man down, get rid of him. But in most men, such desires are balanced and kept in check by other, more friendly emotions. We don't have to act on such an impulse. It doesn't even worry us. We push it aside even before we are aware of it, and forget it.

But the suicide cannot get rid of his desire to destroy—to kill. If he can't kill someone else, he kills himself. So, suicide is really murder directed toward the self.

But, obviously, the man who kills himself must be willing to submit to murder. This is not quite the same, psychiatrists tell us, as wanting to die. Instead, it is the need for punishment to relieve an overwhelming sense of guilt. And no

matter how hardened a criminal a man may be he can still feel deep in his heart the guilt of his crimes. This is so well known, that it is routine to remove from a criminal's cell all instruments with which he might kill himself.

The suicide is often just as unwilling to die as you or I would be. Men and women in hospitals suffering from the effects of poisons they have taken or wounds they have inflicted on themselves will beg their physicians to save them from death.

This apparent contradiction between the suicide's willingness to be murdered and his unwillingness to die is thought by some psychiatrists to be explained by the fact that it is impossible for all children and many adults to imagine themselves as no longer alive.

The angry child who tells his father, "You'll be sorry when I am dead," may picture the scene of his own funeral with weeping relatives and grieving friends, but always in his imagination he is there still in the midst of them, enjoying the spectacle of their discomfort. It is not possible for him to think of his own death as final and irreversible.

The most brutal war criminal may have the same childish way of thinking and may even kill himself in a spirit of revenge against the leaders that have brought him to disaster or against those who are bringing him to justice.

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ORDNANCE

British Bomb Travels Faster Than Sound

► NEW BRITISH rocket-propelled bombs that travel at a speed of 1,100 feet a second, greater than the speed of sound, have recently been developed, reports the British Information Service. The new bomb, dropped from a B-17 Flying Fortress, will tear through six thick layers of concrete before exploding.

Scientists of the British Admiralty, working in cooperation with the British Ministry of Supply, developed the powerful new bombs which ripped open Nazi E-boat shelters at Ijmuiden, Holland, as if they had been made of paper. The job of testing the rocket-propelled bombs was carried out by the U. S. Eighth Air Force. No further details on the design or construction of the bomb are released.

Under reverse lend-lease, details of the design of the bomb have been made available to the U. S. Army Air Forces for possible use in their operations.

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