



READING THE RECORD

The meteorograph sends signals that result in this graphic chart. (See page 134.)

PSYCHOLOGY

Explanation of Suicide May Be Found In Lovers' Death Pacts

YOUNG lovers who kill themselves rather than be separated give a clue to better understanding of the whole unsolved problem of suicide. Reasoning along this line, presented by Dr. Gregory Zilboorg of New York City, was discussed at a luncheon meeting limited to members of the American Orthopsychiatric Association.

Dr. Zilboorg, one of a committee that is making a study of suicide, sees self-destruction as a fundamental natural phenomenon similar to war, murder, or revolution. Suicide, he declares, cannot be solved or explained by common sense or even by present psychiatric knowledge.

Suicide is not limited to mankind, he pointed out. Dogs and monkeys, when mistreated, will refuse to eat and thus effectually commit suicide. From study of young persons and primitive peoples, Dr. Zilboorg believes, will come the true solution of the question of why men and women and even children kill themselves.

Saying that a person kills himself because he cannot bear to go on living is the sort of explanation that Dr.

Zilboorg terms superficial. He suggests a more fundamental explanation: The will to live is so strong in some persons that it forces them to kill themselves. Actually, they defeat their own ends. But their subconscious reasoning is that some outside force, parents or civil authorities or circumstances, is threatening their very lives by making living impossible. So, in order to live they must thwart this outside force, and the only possible way to do that seems to be suicide, taking their own lives.

In children, parents or teachers may be the outside force that appears to make living impossible. For the eighteen- or twenty-year-old person, the outside force is frustrating the sexual drive, either because a romance is being thwarted or because the young person cannot find a satisfactory solution for his sex problems. The condemned criminal hangs himself in his cell to prevent the authorities from taking his life.

These explanations of suicide are fairly easy to find. When an older person kills himself the explanation is not so obvious. Failure in business, disappointment in love or any of the other

conventional, common sense explanations do not really explain the suicide, in Dr. Zilboorg's opinion. If psychiatrists could probe deeper into the suicide's mental and emotional make-up, Dr. Zilboorg suggests, he would probably find that the underlying cause is failure to shake off the emotional and sexual ties of childhood.

Strikers Rebellious Children

The employer who is zealously devoted to his business is really being a "stern father" in his relations with his employees and his striking employees are rebellious children resentful of the authoritative parent.

This explanation of labor difficulties was made by Dr. John Levy, New York psychiatrist.

If the employer and his employees could see themselves as playing these roles, they might find successful techniques for settling their difficulties, Dr. Levy suggested.

Modern men and women pride themselves on being 100 per cent efficient in their business and industrial activities, but most of them are only about 25 per cent efficient in handling emotional relations with others and only 35 per cent efficient in enjoying contact with other men and women, Dr. Levy estimates.

"One might think," Dr. Levy said, "that a husband and a father who spends most of his time bossing around his employees, who would rather go to his business on Sundays and holidays than spend his free time with his family, understands, at least intuitively, the tremendous emotional ties that bind him to the office.

"But it is as difficult for him to see his own status as 'stern father' in his strict dealings with his striking employees as it is for the employees to see their protesting behavior as a resentment against an authoritative parent. And without some recognition and understanding of the role one plays in human relationships, the development of techniques for controlling them is impossible."

The first step in developing a method for improving and enriching feelings that human beings have for each other, and for reducing dissension and friction between them, Dr. Levy said, is "to clarify the roles each plays in any special and close contact." He then showed how this is done by discussing the technique of "relationship therapy" used by psychiatrists in the treatment of patients.

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