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the happy dream of a beggar. The sufferings that in the vehemence and passion of his pressing will he inflicts on others are the measure of the sufferings, the experience of which in his own person cannot break his will and lead to final denial. On the other hand, all true and pure affection, and even all free justice, result from seeing through the *principium individuationis*; when this penetration occurs in all its force, it produces perfect sanctification and salvation, the phenomenon of which are the state of resignation previously described, the unshakable peace accompanying this, and the highest joy and delight in death.<sup>69</sup>

## § 69.

Suicide

*Suicide*, the arbitrary doing away with the individual phenomenon, differs most widely from the denial of the will-to-live, which is the only act of its freedom to appear in the phenomenon, and hence, as Asmus calls it, the transcendental change. The denial of the will has now been adequately discussed within the limits of our method of consideration. Far from being denial of the will, suicide is a phenomenon of the will's strong affirmation. For denial has its essential nature in the fact that the pleasures of life, not its sorrows, are shunned. The suicide wills life, and is dissatisfied merely with the conditions on which it has come to him. Therefore he gives up by no means the will-to-live, but merely life, since he destroys the individual phenomenon. He wills life, wills the unchecked existence and affirmation of the body; but the combination of circumstances does not allow of these, and the result for him is great suffering. The will-to-live finds itself so hampered in this particular phenomenon, that it cannot develop and display its efforts. It therefore decides in accordance with its own inner nature, which lies outside the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and to which every individual phenomenon is therefore indifferent, in that it remains itself untouched by all arising and passing away, and is the inner core of the life of all things. For that same firm, inner assurance, which enables all of us to live without the constant dread of death, the assurance that the will can never

<sup>69</sup> Cf. chap. 48 of volume 2.

lack its phenomenon, supports the deed even in the case of suicide. Thus the will-to-live appears just as much in this suicide (Shiva) as in the ease and comfort of self-preservation (Vishnu), and the sensual pleasure of procreation (Brahma). This is the inner meaning of the *unity of the Trimurti* which every human being entirely is, although in time it raises now one, now another of its three heads. As the individual thing is related to the Idea, so is suicide to the denial of the will. The suicide denies merely the individual, not the species. We have already found that, since life is always certain to the will-to-live, and suffering is essential to life, suicide, or the arbitrary destruction of an individual phenomenon, is a quite futile and foolish act, for the thing-in-itself remains unaffected by it, just as the rainbow remains unmoved, however rapidly the drops may change which sustain it for the moment. But in addition to this, it is also the masterpiece of Maya as the most blatant expression of the contradiction of the will-to-live with itself. Just as we have recognized this contradiction in the lowest phenomena of the will in the constant struggle of all the manifestations of natural forces and of all organic individuals for matter, time, and space, and as we saw that conflict stand out more and more with terrible distinctness on the ascending grades of the will's objectification; so at last at the highest stage, the Idea of man, it reaches that degree where not only the individuals exhibiting the same Idea exterminate one another, but even the one individual declares war on itself. The vehemence with which it wills life and revolts against what hinders it, namely suffering, brings it to the point of destroying itself, so that the individual will by an act of will eliminates the body that is merely the will's own becoming visible, rather than that suffering should break the will. Just because the suicide cannot cease willing, he ceases to live; and the will affirms itself here even through the cessation of its own phenomenon, because it can no longer affirm itself otherwise. But as it was just the suffering it thus shunned which, as mortification of the will, could have led it to the denial of itself and to salvation, so in this respect the suicide is like a sick man who, after the beginning of a painful operation that could completely cure him, will not allow it to be completed, but prefers to retain his illness. Suffering approaches and, as such, offers the possibility of a denial of the will; but he rejects it by destroying the will's phenomenon, the body, so that the will may remain unbroken. This is the reason why almost all ethical systems, philosophical as well as religious, condemn suicide, though they themselves cannot state anything but strange and sophistical arguments for so doing. But if ever a man was kept from suicide by purely moral incentive, the

innermost meaning of this self-conquest (whatever the concepts in which his faculty of reason may have clothed it) was as follows: "I do not want to avoid suffering, because it can help to put an end to the will-to-live, whose phenomenon is so full of misery, by so strengthening the knowledge of the real nature of the world now already dawning on me, that such knowledge may become the final quieter of the will, and release me for ever."

It is well known that, from time to time, cases repeatedly occur where suicide extends to the children; the father kills the children of whom he is very fond, and then himself. If we bear in mind that conscience, religion, and all traditional ideas teach him to recognize murder as the gravest crime, but yet in the hour of his own death he commits this, and indeed without his having any possible egoistical motive for it, then the deed can be explained only in the following way. The will of the individual again recognizes itself immediately in the children, although it is involved in the delusion of regarding the phenomenon as the being-in-itself. At the same time, he is deeply moved by the knowledge of the misery of all life; he imagines that with the phenomenon he abolishes the inner nature itself, and therefore wants to deliver from existence and its misery both himself and his children in whom he directly sees himself living again. It would be an error wholly analogous to this to suppose that one can reach the same end as is attained by voluntary chastity by frustrating the aims of nature in fecundation, or even by men, in consideration of the inevitable suffering of life, countenancing the death of the new-born child, instead of rather doing everything to ensure life to every being that is pressing into it. For if the will-to-live exists, it cannot, as that which alone is metaphysical or the thing-in-itself, be broken by any force, but that force can destroy only its phenomenon in such a place and at such a time. The will itself cannot be abolished by anything except *knowledge*. Therefore the only path to salvation is that the will should appear freely and without hindrance, in order that it can *recognize or know* its own inner nature in this phenomenon. Only in consequence of this knowledge can the will abolish itself, and thus end the suffering that is inseparable from its phenomenon. This, however, is not possible through physical force, such as the destruction of the seed or germ, the killing of the new-born child, or suicide. Nature leads the will to the light, just because only in the light can it find its salvation. Therefore the purposes of nature are to be promoted in every way, as soon as the will-to-live, that is her inner being, has determined itself.

There appears to be a special kind of suicide, quite different from the ordinary, which has perhaps not yet been adequately verified.

This is voluntarily chosen death by starvation at the highest degree of asceticism. Its manifestation, however, has always been accompanied, and thus rendered vague and obscure, by much religious fanaticism and even superstition. Yet it seems that the complete denial of the will can reach that degree where even the necessary will to maintain the vegetative life of the body, by the assimilation of nourishment, ceases to exist. This kind of suicide is so far from being the result of the will-to-live, that such a completely resigned ascetic ceases to live merely because he has completely ceased to will. No other death than that by starvation is here conceivable (unless it resulted from a special superstition), since the intention to cut short the agony would actually be a degree of affirmation of the will. The dogmas that satisfy the faculty of reason of such a penitent delude him with the idea that a being of a higher nature has ordered for him the fasting to which his inner tendency urges him. Old instances of this can be found in the *Breslauer Sammlung von Natur- und Medicin-Geschichten*, September 1719, p. 363 seq.; in Bayle's *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, February 1685, p. 189 seq.; in Zimmermann, *Ueber die Einsamkeit*, Vol. I, p. 182; in the *Histoire de l'Académie des Sciences* of 1764, an account by Houttuyn; the same account is repeated in the *Sammlung für praktische Aerzte*, Vol. I, p. 69. Later reports are to be found in Hufeland's *Journal für praktische Heilkunde*, Vol. X, p. 181, and Vol. XLVIII, p. 95; also in Nasse's *Zeitschrift für psychische Aerzte*, 1819, Part III, p. 460; in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, 1809, Vol. V, p. 319. In the year 1833, all the papers reported that the English historian, Dr. Lingard, had died of voluntary starvation at Dover in January; according to later accounts it was not Lingard himself but a kinsman of his who died. But in these accounts the individuals are for the most part described as mad, and it is no longer possible to ascertain how far this may have been the case. But I will here give a more recent account of this kind, if only to ensure the preservation of one of the rare instances of the striking and extraordinary phenomenon of human nature just mentioned, which, at any rate, apparently belongs to where I should like to assign it, and could hardly be explained in any other way. This recent account is to be found in the *Nürnberger Korrespondent* of 29 July 1813, in the following words:

"It is reported from Bern that in a dense forest near Thurnen a small hut was discovered in which was lying the decomposed corpse of a man who had been dead for about a month. His clothes gave little information about his social position. Two very fine shirts lay beside him. The most important thing was a Bible, interleaved

with blank pages, which had been partly written on by the deceased. In it he announced the day of his departure from home (but it did not mention where his home was). He then said that he was driven into the wilderness by the spirit of God to pray and fast. On his journey to that spot, he had already fasted for seven days, and had then eaten again. After settling down here, he began to fast again, and indeed fasted for as many days. Every day was now indicated by a stroke, of which there were five, after which the pilgrim had presumably died. There was also found a letter to a clergyman about a sermon that the deceased had heard him preach; but the address was missing." Between this voluntary death springing from the extreme of asceticism and that resulting from despair there may be many different intermediate stages and combinations, which are indeed hard to explain; but human nature has depths, obscurities, and intricacies, whose elucidation and unfolding are of the very greatest difficulty.

§ 70.

*The freedom of the will  
is compatible with  
its demand: elimination  
of the causes  
phenomenon.*

We might perhaps regard the whole of our discussion (now concluded) of what I call the denial of the will as inconsistent with the previous explanation of necessity, that appertains just as much to motivation as to every other form of the principle of sufficient reason. As a result of that necessity, motives, like all causes, are only occasional causes on which the character unfolds its nature, and reveals it with the necessity of a natural law. For this reason we positively denied freedom as *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*. Yet far from suppressing this here, I call it to mind. In truth, real freedom, in other words, independence of the principle of sufficient reason, belongs to the will as thing-in-itself, not to its phenomenon, whose essential form is everywhere this principle of sufficient reason, the element of necessity. But the only case where that freedom can become immediately visible in the phenomenon is the one where it makes an end of what appears, and because the mere phenomenon, in so far as it is a link in the chain of causes, namely the living body, still continues to exist in time that contains only phenomena, the will, manifesting itself through this phenomenon, is then in contradiction with it, since it denies what the phe-

nomenon expresses. In such a case the genitals, for example, as the visibility of the sexual impulse, are there and in health; but yet in the innermost consciousness no sexual satisfaction is desired. The whole body is the visible expression of the will-to-live, yet the motives corresponding to this will no longer act; indeed the dissolution of the body, the end of the individual, and thus the greatest suppression of the natural will, is welcome and desired. Now the contradiction between our assertions, on the one hand, of the necessity of the will's determinations through motives according to the character, and our assertions, on the other, of the possibility of the whole suppression of the will, whereby motives become powerless, is only the repetition in the reflection of philosophy of this *real* contradiction that arises from the direct encroachment of the freedom of the will-in-itself, knowing no necessity, on the necessity of its phenomenon. But the key to the reconciliation of these contradictions lies in the fact that the state in which the character is withdrawn from the power of motives does not proceed directly from the will, but from a changed form of knowledge. Thus, so long as the knowledge is only that which is involved in the *principium individuationis*, and which positively follows the principle of sufficient reason, the power of the motives is irresistible. But when the *principium individuationis* is seen through, when the Ideas, and indeed the inner nature of the thing-in-itself, are immediately recognized as the same will in all, and the result of this knowledge is a universal quieter of willing, then the individual motives become ineffective, because the kind of knowledge that corresponds to them is obscured and pushed into the background by knowledge of quite a different kind. Therefore the character can never partially change, but must, with the consistency of a law of nature, realize in the particular individual the will whose phenomenon it is in general and as a whole. But this whole, the character itself, can be entirely eliminated by the above-mentioned change of knowledge. It is this elimination or suppression at which Asmus marvels, as said above, and which he describes as the "catholic, transcendental change." It is also that which in the Christian Church is very appropriately called *new birth* or *regeneration*, and the knowledge from which it springs, the *effect of divine grace*. Therefore, it is not a question of a change, but of an entire suppression of the character, and so it happens that, however different the characters that arrived at that suppression were before it, they nevertheless show after it a great similarity in their mode of conduct, although each *speaks* very differently according to his concepts and dogmas.

Therefore, in this sense, the old philosophical argument about the

*Contradiction  
between  
phenomenon  
+  
necessity*

*Marx's  
view  
Marx's*

*Contradiction  
between  
phenomenon  
+  
necessity*

*END*