

on. The sole difference between the two hands will be that each follows its natural slope; the right will slope from right to left, and the left from left to right.

Mlle. Kipiani also makes certain statements with regard to the orientation of children's drawings and of the figures in the pictures of ancient and modern artists. I have examined the correctness of these statements in an article on "The Orientation of Human and Animal Figures in Art," which appears in the present number of the Journal.

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2. Clinical Neurology and Psychiatry.

On the Mentality of those who Commit Suicide [*Sulla Mentalità dei Suicidi*]. (*Il Manicomio*, April, 1916.) Prof. Francesco Del Greco.

Sadness, or rather melancholy in the common acceptation of the word (I hardly think the word depression quite conveys the writer's idea), *tedium vitæ*, and impulse, appear to Prof. Del Greco to be the most important elements in the mentality of an individual about to commit suicide.

Impulse alone explains some unusual cases of suicide, especially those in which prisoners who have failed to prove themselves innocent kill themselves, or those in which people destroy themselves in anger, pain, or anguish.

After excluding other causes, such as imitation, suggestion, intense love, etc., the author returns to the consideration of sadness and *tedium vitæ*, which, linked together and overlapping, become a sentiment of profound weariness, loneliness, and desolation. The sufferers say themselves that life is not worth living, that life has no value. To this mental condition the author applies the term *vuoto dell'animo*, which may be translated as emptiness or loneliness of the mind. The idea, as developed in the paper, appears to be that of an intelligent being who is, or becomes, conscious of being absolutely alone in infinite space. There is something of the sublime in the idea, particularly if one accepts Ribot's theory that fear is an essential element in the notion of the sublime.

The writer points out that the part played in the causation of self-destruction by this loneliness of mind is illustrated by the rise and fall of the suicide rate as revealed in history, and as found among the various states and conditions of mankind.

Suicide, he says, is less frequent among barbarians than among the civilised, less frequent among those living in rural districts than among those dwelling in cities, less frequent among Catholics than among Protestants. Suicide is a black shadow which follows the culminating moments of civilisation.

The barbarian is altogether ruled by customs, superstitions, and moral ideas coming from without himself. With him collectiveness is at the maximum; individualism at the minimum. There is not enough autonomy in the barbarian or primitive man for him to torment himself about the value of his own being in the world. The collective aspect of the mind dominates him. It is not possible for him to experience

that agonising, terrible feeling "of solitude in the midst of his own family and in the midst of his own fellow citizens," which is seen among the insane melancholics and many other civilised men who are disposed to commit suicide.

Reflection may reintegrate or dissolve the collective aspect of the mind. The two actions are illustrated in the philosophy of Plato and in Stoicism.

The objective idealism of Plato was in many respects the elevation (and development?) of hereditary and traditional convictions by a master of thought. It continued through the times of civil decadence the "ancient interior compact," the rules which uncultivated man had drawn from customs and religion. And it is to be noted that Platonico-Aristotelian teaching formed a constructive and substantial part of mediæval thought, and of Christian and Catholic philosophy.

In Stoicism, which was the philosophy almost official of the Roman Empire, there was a diffused sense of human brotherhood, but there was also a formidable and solitary pride. The *ego*, the individual, stood alone on emptiness and nothing. The god of the Stoic was the mind of the world. It was an impersonal god. And the Stoic, with all his thorny virtues, believed himself to be greater than his god. The Stoic was a tower, superb and solitary. What wonder then that in the end, weary of his strength and wrestling, he believed himself justified in committing suicide and ending it all.

To the East we owe many cults, superstitions, and beliefs. To the East we owe the neoplatonism of Plotinus, and finally Christianity, which again linked man by an ideal thread, by a thread of love and of communion with another Individuality, divine and all powerful. The Christian idea of a God of love and goodness, ready to comfort the agonised mind, became a firm and unshakeable point in the midst of a suffering world.

With all this ancient history we find many analogues in modern times. From the free examination of Protestantism to the criticism of modern philosophy there has been a constant work of "interior dissolution," a restless, implacable search for supreme moral certitude. This certitude is never attained, but always wished for.

The author sees subjectivism triumphant in all the fields of modern science, art, and poetry. This subjectivism culminated in romantic philosophy, as developed in the writings of J. J. Rousseau, De Vigny, and Châteaubriand, in the *Werther* of Goethe, in some of the works of Victor Hugo, and those of many other authors, where man, the *ego*, raised himself above the world and everything else. It was a solitude imperial, but sad, as every solitude is. In this literature human passions are exalted to absurdity, and every bond of dependence with the past is broken.

The author appears to consider subjectivism (in which is included the idea of egoism) must in the end lead to loneliness and misery; objectivism (which includes the idea of altruism) to happiness and contentedness. "In the work of philosophy, of art, and of science, the artist and the thinker find peace. The man of the world finds it in the universality of work, in the objectivity of work, whatever the work may be, if it be only worthy and directed to the good of all men."

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