

"The Man in the Study"
or
The Virtue in Annihilation

By *Andreyev*

It has been said by men of lesser faith that "suicide," that modal creature of fickle taboo, is an act of wanted morals. Various appellations appear in common rhetoric, such as "Cowardess," "Immaturity," or most vulgar of all, some delineation of "Ethical Failure." This is ideology forged in grave error, and ironically spawned from the very thing them "suicidal" seek to escape. I will explain what I mean by this soon.

It should be observed foremost the motivations for the act, for it is in these motivations (the human "heart") where evil is found. Can one call a man wicked when all their life they sought only for virtue? To label a sinner, it matters not the ends, but the heart of the means by which that end was put forth. And so, the question must be answered not by the accused, but by them who seek accusations as to why the act of suicide might be labeled "evil," or more aptly put, "wrong."

And the possible motivation is clear, though bipartite. In the human condition are two active agents: the flesh and the soul. There is the thing that thinks, and the body which the thing thinks for. And thus, it may be for these two agents alone that the subject ends their life. The author of this essay will acquiesce to the hungered label of "wrong" to one who hangs for the former. A succumbing to the flesh is a defeat. It is not the body which thinks but the soul. One's being, the telos of what we call "man," is found in the conscious, and not the coil to which it is contained. And thus, though dispute may be raised as to the moral standing of one killing the flesh for a suffering of other obvious profundity, the average child of Adam has no firm standing upon which to end their life in response to the sufferings of this flesh. It is the mind succumbing to the body. A soul enchained, and brought under. Although not morally culpable due to illness of the very neuro-chemistry which dictates their lives, it is still here a succumbing to the flesh, and could not be considered "right," let alone virtuous.

But for the latter? For the soul? This is where the black and the white coalesce into a wretched and writhing, fathomless grey. For reason to bring a man to suicide is a radical thing, and should be explored.

There is an oft-quoted parable, long archaic and mostly lost to time, but virile still, which goes:

In the life of a man, there comes a point at which they enter the study. There they read, and write, and ponder, until madness itself seems to pool from the walls, and the carpet, and the lacquer of the wood. There is nothing of easy understanding for the man. Each philosophy is contradicted by another. Each scrap of truth they might guide their feet to land upon is so quickly undermined by another. Or, further still, they are appalled at the truths that they do find. Truth that shows malice bare. Metaphysics deemed unacceptable by the man. Life turned vile. They see The Devil's red-laugh throughout the whole of the human experience. And this man, pensive and pained, is whirled about in this maelstrom of ideology until they can not tell up from down, nor black from white, nor good from evil, nor mad from sane. There they rave. Satan's marionette.

And then the man leaves the study.

And the ground is still beneath him, and the sky above, and his woman is frying onions on the stove, and the hearth glows with an eager life, and the madness shrinks back to the abyss from whence it came. Life is there to be lived again.

One must always leave the study.

But what if one cannot?

If ideology consumed, as it is prone to doing, and the ideology tells one that existence is of negative value, and that abyss is sweet and easy, and that man is vile from birth, then what is to come of this? Suicidal ideation for the man in the study cannot be slain with palliative or good tidings. What is to be done for him?

He is to be left to rot. And rot he shall. If suicide is to come, then it is to come. What is evil in that? Bittersweet it may be, but truth is truth, and action must be taken on its account.

But the author of this essay seeks not to prove neutrality in the ethic of "The Man in the Study," but virtue. "The Man in the Study" is not a victim, but a martyr to things beyond him. And the proof of this lies in what was discussed before.

Awareness of the flesh is what drives "The Man in the Study" to tie the knot from the ceiling fan, for it is in the flesh where the ideology of suicide is made most apparent. As Schopenhauer so aptly claims, our being is one of continual desire. A perversion of hedonic treadmill. It is not the soul which urges us onward into the unknown, but the malice of the flesh upon which it is carried. From the womb to the mausoleum, a man is chained to a flesh haunted by the terror of its own great desire. We crave, and crave plenty. For sex and for shelter, and for food and fine drink, and for love and life tranquil, or for toys of stoic vapidness by which we may be distracted from it all, if only for a short while. But the malice in this is that the desires are never satisfied, but instead only grow. There is no escape, not for Adam and his kin, and most certainly not for "The Man in the Study," for in his walls, and his carpet, and the lacquer of his wood, this is all he can see

Our neurochemistry is the greatest mockery from God. Our teleology is a two-sided coin composed of both suffering and boredom. Suffering in our desire, and boredom once this desire has been qualmed. "Joy" is but the thrill of the toss. Our neurochemical receptors dance in the bounty of these little victories. They feast on dopamine and oxytocin, released from our glands in the sardonic heat of pleasure. But there is no chemical for pain, nor receptor for boredom. These are natural states. "And what is boredom but the feeling of the emptiness of life?" What good can come of it?

If this is obvious in our being, then why is it that man has not dwindled its numbers to nothing? Why is it that we have not grown infertile by will alone, and spared our unborn from their becoming the wretch? The flesh and its desire unchecked. It is weakness of mind, and moral failing by which we haul our infant spawn kicking and screaming from the prenatal chamber and subject them to the tyrant flesh with which Adam is enchained. This is all too apparent to "The Man in the Study." And it may lead to his undoing.

There are those who ignore our condition, and shuffle meekly from the study toward the scent of onion now rotten to the nose, and the fever of the hearth which glows now not with eager life, but with all the fire of hell itself. But there are those who do not.

And what can we call those men but martyrs? Foeman of the sin itself? Rebels of the tyrant "flesh." That must be, if anything is at all, virtue.