

Original Article

Examining the Radical Nature of Philosophical Suicide

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Abstract

Suicide is specifically selected as the subject because both Foucault and Baudrillard suggest that death exists at the boundaries of modern power structures and control systems that penetrate every aspect of subjects' bodies, thus representing one of the pathologies generated by modern societies. Suicide—voluntary death—provides an analysis that offers a more critical examination of all truths constructed by modern thinking. Put differently, extending beyond the analyses of both Foucault and Baudrillard, we argue that the abnormality offering the greatest potential for developing critical perspectives on modern rational truths is not just any abnormality or any form of death, but specifically suicide. Suicide has this potential because it stands as the most unusual and unacceptable type of death in the way modern, rational society today views death, where power mechanisms primarily aim to train human bodies for self-subjugation and governance to prioritize living while maintaining docility and productivity. Furthermore, philosophical suicide, in its redefined sense, can be considered a more radical form of resistance compared to other suicide forms due to its emergence as potential.

Keyword's- Philosophical Suicide, Pathology, Medicalization, Pathologized, Suicide.

Introduction

Suicide cannot be approached as a simple, unified concept in social science research. Each individual case of suicide presents unique characteristics that demand careful consideration. This study focuses specifically on the distinctive concept of philosophical suicide. A particular and reconceptualized understanding of philosophical suicide will be examined in its connection to modernity. Therefore, the central focus of this research concerns the position of philosophical Examining Philosophical Suicide

Philosophical suicide will be analyzed regarding its radical opposition to modernity's entire mentality and its comprehensive control mechanisms that deeply penetrate the modern subject's body. This subject matter requires critical attention because it addresses abnormality while also speaking to issues of the body and silence. As modern society's most pathological death form, it can be characterized as a resistance mode against modern power's control mechanisms. Thus, suicide's ungovernable nature is examined, with the term ungovernability referenced through Foucault's conception of governmentality.

Suicide as Abnormality or Pathology

During the late seventeenth century, within the context of the emerging Enlightenment, suicide began to be perceived as physiological dysfunction or madness by most intellectual circles of the period. Consequently, they increasingly believed that suicide belonged more to medical fields than moral domains. Through this shift, suicide became decriminalized and largely freed from moral condemnation through these changing intellectual perspectives and rapidly advancing scientific research of the era. However, this transformation did not result in suicide becoming socially acceptable within the emerging modern context. Instead, modernity subjected suicide to increasingly severe exclusion forms through its medicalization process. Since no rational person would voluntarily inflict pain upon themselves or end their life—which must be acknowledged as evils while humans retain their senses it follows that anyone committing suicide is undoubtedly non compos mentis, unable to reason properly, but operates under false mental images, and therefore, suicide should always be regarded as insanity.

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and therefore, suicide should always be regarded as insanity. According to Minois, these words by Rowley represent the critical appeal to end eighteenth-century debates on suicide and provide clear evidence of an evolutionary process in suicide perception that would be completed by century's end. This represents a crucial turning point as suicide perception radically changed during this evolution, beginning to be viewed as madness. This freed suicide from moral and criminal condemnation and accompanying severe punishment practices.

Nevertheless, for suicide's medicalization process, initially accepting the phenomenon as madness was merely a beginning—this process would accelerate within the changing social norms climate of the nineteenth century. Before analyzing this process further, we must first explain how and why suicide became identified with madness and why this proves critical for our analysis. The newly emerging Enlightenment established its foundation on profound trust in human rational faculties during the eighteenth century, making anything associated with irrationality appear as societal threats and thus defined as anti-social forms. Additionally, irrationality's primary category became identified with madness within this new reason age, making madness appear as a serious threat to this new era's social and political structures. Therefore, the most urgent strategy for continuing the new power form that defined itself through rationality became confining madmen in isolated asylums.

Meanwhile, with rapidly developed confinement practices applied to madmen, the madness notion underwent another critical transformation process, and madmen began being defined as mental patients at this transformation's conclusion. The patient status attached to madmen since they began being viewed as reformable, reversible beings that could be reintegrated into society. This attachment proves critical because it constructs mental illness as reasons opposite.

Indeed, modernity's entire mentality, whose seeds were planted during the Enlightenment, is actually built upon producing binary oppositions. Within this framework, rationality—this mentality's most essential principle—could only define itself in opposition to irrationality. To keep and build this way of thinking it, was necessary to say that anything considered irrational could always become rational through certain treatments.

In reality, these treatments are just parts of this new way of thinking. So, it wasn't enough to create irrational ideas; it was also important to show that they could be fixed which helped to maintain social

order as modernity came along. For this reason, defining mental illness as irrationality's major category and demonstrating its curability also became essential for rationality to maintain its dominance. During this transformation process, psychology emerged as a discipline determining newly rising mental illness categories, and with this authority "psychological autopsy studies have sought to correlate acts of self-destruction with categories of mental illness." Meanwhile, developing confinement construction in lunatic asylums enabled epidemiology to impose scientific/medical information as truth regarding all defined mental illness forms including suicide, thus beginning to "establish the truth of suicide in terms of quantifiable factors such as age, sex, and means."

Creating and developing asylums holds critical importance for constructing medical truths about suicide because asylums became places where madmen transformed into mental illness subjects. Within asylum spaces, it became possible to observe, classify and control large groups, subjecting individuals were subjected to disciplinary actions meant to control those seen as unruly, while also attempting to reform those considered disconnected from their genuine, rational, and calm states. These measures weren't purely oppressive; instead, they were parts of a broader system of power and knowledge that had productive outcomes. Using hierarchical methods of observation, judgment, and detailed assessments, authorities gathered a lot of information about people who were suicidal. This information, through interconnected process, supported the use of disciplinary methods. By the early nineteenth century, medical finding on suicide within mental institutions started to be treated as truth, leading to significant changes in how madness and suicide were understood. As Foucault points out, "since the mid-nineteenth century, the threshold of sensitivity to madness has considerably lowered in our society; the existence of psychoanalysis is evidence of this lowering in that it is an effect as well as a cause of it." This lowered sensitivity threshold intensified exclusion practices imposed on madness that began being conceptualized as mental illness, and thus suicide—also beginning to be seen as resulting from mental illness—became subject to those intensified exclusion practices. Later in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, "studies into the biology and genetics of suicide risk have looked to find evidence of neuro-chemical, neuro-anatomical or genetic abnormalities that could explain why people kill themselves.

This convergence of science and medicine dominates suicide studies." This way, the suicide phenomenon—upon which philosophy's essential

questions manifest—attempts to be completely stripped of its philosophical foundations and reduced to numbers in Statistical data analyses. Through the meeting of scientific study and medical and psychiatric practice, the truths about suicide have been formed and continue to be formed. These ways of thinking and acting come together to create and maintain forms of suicide that is seen as individual, pathological, and medical. Suicide is understood as something that comes about from mental illness consequences—a pathology or abnormality form situated within individuals—and thus a medical/psychiatric concern matter. It has now become difficult to discuss suicide without referencing mental illness notions, usually depression, or referring to involved persons' 'mental states.'

Suicide's medicalization and scientification perfectly indicates the radical power form change whose evolutionary process began in the seventeenth century and continues today. As mentioned in previous chapter sections, "sovereign power was essentially a 'right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself. The punishment of suicides deemed *felo de se* by means of the confiscation of goods and the denial of a Christian burial thus could be read as an expression of such a form of power" However, bio-power—which began replacing sovereign power in the seventeenth century—completely changed suicide perception because politics became life politics through this radical power form shift, making suicide a "governmentality" problem. This change made governing suicide extremely difficult because the challenge at the phenomenon's core opposes bio-political society's most essential imposition: life is better than death on any grounds. Within this setting, suicide becomes a singular occurrence. That must be seen as illness. Absolute suicide pathologization arises due to such circumstances. ungovernable challenge executed by suicide, which simultaneously gives the phenomenon Before reaching enormous resistance potential, let's explain how suicide emerges as an ungovernable phenomenon within modern society and the bio-power that governs all modern subject parts in various ways (O. Burcu Middle East Technical University; suicide and modernity: philosophical suicide as a potential form of resistance to the primacy of life in modern times' January. 2013).

Challenges to Govern Suicide

Modern mindset construction that leads to death being disregarded has made suicide entirely unreasonable and irrational. As a result, suicide has been pathologized through medicine that emerges as ideology in modern society, attempting to

address this irrationality extreme point by producing as much countable data as possible from the phenomenon. However, any effort attempting to address suicide by producing data from it proves futile, since the challenge inherent in the phenomenon opposes the reason age's basic principles that condemn modern subjects to their reason and prioritize life over death. Kay Redfield Jamison's *Night Falls Fast* (1999), a New York Times bestseller attempting to address suicide through statistical data produced on the subject through various well-known and developing medical fields, perfectly illustrates such futile endeavors.

In this regard, "Foucault enlists us to see what happens when we re-consider and destabilize the avowedly incontrovertible employment of demographic statistics in the study of suicide" Foucault argues that demography science is merely a means for body control according to panopticism principles, asserting that suicide's emergence as an intolerable problem within modern society contexts is primarily processed through developing this new bio-power technology that is demography. He explains this inevitable intolerance against suicide within capitalist modern society contexts through all economic, political and social modern society structures' great need for tamed and rationalized human bodies. He accurately identifies this explanation since human body preservation is inevitably modern society's most initial aim, where human beings are considered capitalist economy workforce and analysis subjects for producing political-sociological knowledge. Hence, it can be argued that human body preservation is important only within its involvement in capitalist economy production processes and constituting the very being of analysis subjects for sociological analyses. However, this suffices for the State to take measures preserving every human body's life—ironically including marginalized groups' lives who have been situated on society's margins through normalization practices imposed upon those groups by the State's very bio-political tactics. This is actually bio-power's only way to address voluntary death should be delayed as much as possible since death marks its boundaries, rendering every act of suicide inappropriate and unacceptable within the framework of bio-power. In Jamison's book *"Night Falls Fast,"* suicide is depicted as a profound challenge for contemporary thought, questioning the prioritization of life over death and challenging the fundamental principles of modern society. As a result, it can be posited that the uncontrollable nature of suicide is both a consequence and a cause of modern society's bewilderment when confronted with the phenomenon.

Suicide cannot be controlled through demographical technology, since it surpasses the political and sociological truths of the modern age—all that is built upon the fundamental task of human rationality, where the principal objective is the all-powerful potency, and that aimed at administering life through the exercise of bio-political methods. This suicide, transcendence derived from its impossibility to be governed with governmentality techniques and tactics – all enacted upon the basis of social and political phenomenon demalogical analyses meant to give perfect bio-power exercise. This bio-power impotence to regulate suicide leads to a crazed phenomenon pathologization since dealing with überwachen Müssen that which cannot be regulated is exposing them to complex exclusion forms within modern power contexts that can only create and maintain existence by negating its other. Besides, within modern society contexts and tactics operating in every single part, modern subjects' bodies have become fetishized and confined within regulations accompanying extreme glorification. The suicide phenomenon rebels against this body fetishization since it ends all surrounding regulations. However, because body's end means everything's end in modern society, suicide has become more pathologized than ever before.

Here, the key idea is that this lack of control has made suicide highly resistant within modern societies, where every aspect of life is connected to power dynamics. That is, modern society's entire mentality and bio-power are grounded on life affirmation in opposition to death, making suicide modern society's most ungovernable phenomenon and thus condemning suicide to extreme social exclusion forms. It is possible to argue that suicide is where bio-power uses its strongest strategies, making it the most extreme abnormality in today's control society. This is not surprising, as a mindset based on managing life sees suicide as the most irrational act because it represents the part of modern individual life that is hardest to control. People who are shaped by this mindset are encouraged to control themselves through their own reasoning. However, resistance often arises where power exists, and the most unique form of resistance vappears when voluntary death challenges the foundation of bio-power-specifically, the idea that life should always take priority over death. When individuals choose not to choose life, they challenge the core of this system. As Marsh notes, "within a bio-political economy of power, suicide represents something of a challenge to those techniques and strategies that aim to foster the betterment of life."**Conclusion**

Theories and discussions about suicide have always held a significant place in various fields of social sciences because of its almost universally defined pathological nature. However, even though there is considerable interest in this topic across different branches of social sciences, it doesn't necessarily allow for a variety of perspectives, as most of these theories tend to these theories tend define, stereotype, and attempt to control this unpredictable phenomenon in different ways. The lack of a truly insightful approach in most studies on suicide is one of the main reasons this topic is addressed in this study. Our thoughts are largely influenced by existentialist arguments on suicide; however, our main arguments in this study cannot be considered purely existential. Within this framework, the important ideas of Sartre, Camus, and Cioran on the subject can be examined, as they help us reach the conclusion that philosophical suicide holds meaning in an otherwise meaningless universe only when it is viewed as a potential. Considering all these arguments, a more specific discussion will be held on the potential of philosophical suicide to act as a form of resistance in the sense that Foucault describes.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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