

# Episode One Hundred Forty - The Letter to Menoeceus 07 - Completion of the Letter

Post by “Julia” of October 26, 2024 at 9:18 PM

To partially concur and partially expand on what has been said during this episode regarding the discussion of suicide as a sign that someone might have accepted the notion of fate, providence; in my experience, that is only rarely the case. Rather, suicide is the last line of defence, the ultimate boundary a person — a self, as opposed to a body — can set and enforce. As such, suicide *as seen from the suicidal's perspective* is (somewhat paradoxically) pseudo-healthy, in that they defend themselves and set a boundary against a pain which they predict to be both unbearable and highly likely. Except in extreme circumstances and terminally ill, their assessment of the future is usually riddled with cognitive distortions, such that they fail to see that we grow accustomed to prolonged intense pain, thereby reducing its severity, or that they predict something to be more likely than it actually is — those are, however, mere misconceptions; they are not usually indicative of an actual believe in fate. Furthermore, this last line of defense only happens *after* they have played all cards they can think of, done all they can think of to improve their perspective, their to-be-expected future. As such, suicide is typically quite calculated; almost always erroneous, but nonetheless calculated. This is also why there is an elation and relief once the solid commitment to end one's life has been made: knowing their suffering will end soon gives them a paradoxically positive perspective, and it is often the very energy and strength drawn from this that enables them to ultimately kill themselves. Suicide as seen from the suicidal's perspective, then, is actually the triumph of free will, not it's absence. Furthermore, it is an established fact that antidepressants are associated with a higher risk for suicide during the first weeks and months, and it is generally thought the same mechanism is at work: energy increases faster than pain diminishes. This is not the case with antidepressants of the rapid-acting or psychedelic type, which despite eight decades of clinical research with astoundingly positive results are still uncommon in practise due to inhumane regulation, as those don't work by continuously drugging the patient. Rather than giving suicidal patients traditional antidepressants, my personal theory is that it might be much safer, healthier and more sustainable to challenge them out of depression by taking their comforts away, by forcing them out of their comfort zone, as depression thrives in a constricted, narrow world, whereas physically active people, who exercise or work physically, are strongly protected against it, and depression is mostly a phenomenon of modern societies, not of hunter-gatherers or subsistence farmers who would starve if they didn't get out of the inner world of their minds and move their bodies, in reward for which they get the joy of food as a positive feedback. This general rule even applies to emotionally volatile people, including teenagers, those with a borderline personality pattern, some schizophrenics, and people addicted to certain types of drugs, except that in them, the distortion of reality might be even stronger, their perception of what they can do to improve things might be more limited, and

their capacity to endure pain be smaller — however, they still act in defence, calculated according to their model of the world, which is why the best theoretical cure is the believable offer of another easy but life-affirming way out: If we could all ring a bell, upon which we'd be teleported to a new place, given a million dollars, our dream home, a set of genuinely caring friends, who would still want to kill themselves... That's not possible, of course, but the underlying idea can still guide the way: For example, in teenagers, it might help to tell them they can finish their high-school via distance learning, thereby avoiding the bullies without harming their future prospects.

It also brings to mind the Pirahã people, who were mentioned previously in the podcast by way of Everett's observations about their language: Their culture (allegedly) only allows for speech based on direct first-hand observation, which the exception of 2nd-hand observation in case of a particularly trusted intermediary: "If you didn't see it yourself, or at least I trust you a lot and you say your friend saw it themselves, why should I even listen to you?" This, along with some other aspects, seems to focus them on their surrounding, the present and near future; not the past, not distant places, nor distant future. And as per an anecdote relayed by Everett, they laugh at the idea that Westerners would kill themselves — the idea itself is (allegedly) absurd and thus laughable to them. This squares nicely with what I have observed true about suicidal ideation, in which people seem to lose themselves in their minds, and stop focusing on doing their best with regards to their current and next few tasks. This is sometimes brought about by the current and next few tasks being highly unpleasant, inspiring their mind to start searching for a positive future, which it fails to find, setting off the unfortunate cascade — and once again can guide towards what might help: For example, in a relapsing adult, it might help to offer them to live quite rurally, such that drugs would no longer be readily available.

As much as most people in the ancient world were quite immediately subjected to the forces of nature, and therefore benefitted from understanding them, people in current developed countries are quite immediately subjected to forces of rule — in my two examples: the need to attend school, and the legal constraints on just leaving town to build a simple dwelling in the middle of nowhere. This is to say, as much as the forces of nature shaped lives in the past, the forces of society shape lives in the present. This is why, in my personal opinion, gaining a greater understanding not just of nature but also of nurture, of society and culture, can show us solutions to problems we would otherwise have missed, which is why I personally enjoy complementing my studies of nature with studies of law, public policy and broader social forces, such that my mental model of the world is more functionally complete and thus better equipped for the present day life, which strikes me as being characterised equally, if not more, by government and regulation than by gravity and rain.