

Suicide Death and the Action of Psychoactive Substances on the Body

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Abstract. *This report deals with the possible causes of suicidal death, which is often caused by psychoactive substances. It is not about the impact that damages individual human organs, but about the action that causes changes in an individual's psyche. Drugs that are taken for various reasons for a long time can cause dependence on them, and sometimes they also lead to the appearance of suicidal thoughts. The author, concerned about the situation of the increasing number of suicides in our country within the last two years, decided to write an article. Mainly, it is targeted at people who often do not realize the possibility of addiction to drugs, the so-called afterburners, alcohol or other psychological means of self-destruction. The case described in the article is aimed at making people aware that addictions take place in different environments, and that individuals with well-being can take their own lives for reasons only known to them. In order to prevent, or at least significantly reduce the number of cases associated with the intake of psychoactive substances, which may also contribute to taking one's own life, preventive measures are necessary. One should make adults (mainly parents) aware of their unconscious impact on the emergence of addictions to toxic agents on both the physical and mental health of emotionally immature juveniles. The young generation may not see alternatives to a distant future, and it is the duty of those who are responsible for them to show them the sense in continuing their existence.*

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*«A person who receives life often attaches importance to a place, a tool and a way.
An important role is played by the so-called „poetics”»*

Stefan Chwin

Introduction

Even though the author presented issues from several fields to a minimal extent, she decided to do so for a wider audience, and combine them with suicidology² in order to bring the very specific kind of violent death closer. According

¹ Chwin S, Suicide as an experience of the imagination. Gdańsk, 2010, p. 23.

² Edwin Schneidman, who began his deliberations and research on the psychological aspect of suicide in the 1950 s, is considered to be the father of suicidology. One of his colleagues was Norman Farberow, with whom he founded the first suicide prevention center in Los Angeles. Suicidology is an interdisciplinary science dealing with the subject of suicide, and combines a philosophical-theological, clinical, sociological and psychological approach to this phenomenon. For years, researchers have been conducting statistics that clearly indicate that since the nineteenth century, the suicide rate has had, to a greater or lesser extent, a steady upward trend, which is associated with industrialization. It has been proven that it has an impact on breakdown of social ties and current values. In Poland, this field of science has developed relatively recently, with the Polish Suicidological Society established in 2003, See: Holyst B, Suicydologia. Warsaw, 2011, pp. 46–63.

to the title, the aim of the paper is to refer to problems related to suicide (Latin *sui* — from yourself, from yourself, *caedere* — caressing, whipping, chopping, cutting, striking, breaking, starting)³, and to the influence of psychoactive substances on the human body. It is commonly known that there is a lot of information concerning this area, therefore it would be difficult to present it in a paper of relatively small volume. According to the author's concept, the following content is aimed at encouraging the young generation of readers to broaden their knowledge related to suicidal death, especially those who use drugs with an addictive impact on the psyche; The paper is also aimed at making them acquainted with the conditions resulting from the fact of agreeing to suicide for various reasons known only to them (such as: egoism, communication, desire to feel relieved) or dependent on social conditions.

While working with young people and talking to them about their perception of the reality of the "modern world" as well as about their interests, the author of this paper noticed some regularities in terms of their selection of topics for discussions, considerations and diploma theses. The young generation is interested in topics that mainly concern: causes of death, personality deviance, abuse of drugs and other stimulants that affect the perception of the world, and, at the same time, their interests encompass crimes against life, health, sexual freedom and decency. This includes actions taken by organized criminal groups or terrorists. The author deals with a variety of issues, and for this reason the young people can choose topics that are less "grim", yet they choose particularly those from the above content. When asked "why" they did so, the students and their older colleagues from the uniformed services reply that they want to become acquainted with possible threats, explore them as part of completing their life experience, and, thus, make the perception of their individual reception more clear, make people aware of their impact on human life etc. The choice of the aforementioned issues is also related to the desire to learn about and analyze the things that are elusive and go beyond human perception. Such incomprehensible "truth" regarding certain experiences from beyond the area of existence of a regular citizen is often distributed on various websites, social networks, in general mass media and works of art related to suicide. Following the interests of the young generation and the current situation (in the recent years an increase in the number suicides has been observed), the author decided to demonstrate the unique aspect of this topic since learning about the consequences resulting from hastily made decisions seems necessary. Escalation of unpredictable behaviors must definitely be prevented and, therefore, nipped in the bud as those who follow "trends" and follow the example of others lead to negative social phenomena. After struggling with the "to be or not to be" decision, and as a result, making the choice of passing into the oblivion, the person, who is most often inexperienced and has difficulties adapting to reality, must take the consequences of their actions into account. Afterwards, family, relatives and acquaintances will suffer, and matters will remain unresolved, and the act will be judged by people who receive facts from the perspective of the family. Usually, these people are burdened with the hasty decision, and it is actually them that are affected by the negative perception of the event.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Apart from acquiring knowledge from the subject literature, the author decided to include a case from practice, because case studies reflect the sense of what is to be conveyed best. The cited event concerns the behavior of a young man who had been taking drugs for a long time and had given the impression that everything was under control. Adult people struggle with such delusive conviction, let alone young people who are inexperienced in life. With time, irreversible changes within the organism occur and, as a consequence, they may result in such an addiction that is impossible to overcome. That is why these people often decide to commit suicide, take a "golden shot" or cause a tragic accident, in which innocent people die with them.

Stefan Chwin referred to the "poetics" of a definite departure into the unfathomable dimension of space-time in the above-quoted words in the publication titled *Suicide as an experience of the imagination*. In this publication, the author depicted a state of not being able to see the future, accompanied by choosing a method to be used to deprive oneself of life. The considered issue somewhat forces self-annihilation by taking poison or slowly poisoning oneself in order to break away from the reality, and to become ready to make the final decision to leave forever. Suicides are often aware not only of their own suffering, but also of the suffering of the people who surround them; however, they prefer to have influence on ending the struggle with everyday life rather than continuing it and dying in an unpredictable way. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, among others, spoke about this matter stating that "*suicide is an event related to human nature that, although much has been written and said about it, should be considered anew in every age*"³. This comprehensively talented poet further argued that "*every man could become a suicide*", but in reality "*almost every case of leaving has its own face*". In this case, an attempt to generalize the alternative of "*lingering in another space*" may be a difficulty, because self-destructors have many visions of causing their own death. Nowadays, more and more often they reach for various psychoactive substances — to gain courage, or because they are addicted to their influence and are unable to free themselves from the addiction. For this reason, focusing on the issue should attract the interest in the scale of the social problem.

Multidimensionality of the issues related to suicidal death

The perception of the issues related to suicide has changed: the approach, the analysis of the causes (including rapid population growth, economic problems, increase in the number of addicts dependent on alcohol, drugs or other substances), the legal conditions. The discussed phenomenon is as old as humanity, because its origins are seen in man's realization that he can take the life of an animal (for example for food) or the life of other people who are threatening him, but he can also deprive himself of his own life. Because humans are characterized by self-preservation instinct, and, in accordance with the scholastic philosophy, it is

³ Goethe J.W, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Berlin, 2014, p. 149.

expressed by the principle: "every being retains its existence", one would expect that this innate desire to maintain the existence would cause aversion to taking one's own life. For this reason, the suicide must assume the necessity of overcoming the self-preservation instinct, making a conscious, free decision with participation of reason, and overcoming the natural fear of death. The suicide's action is therefore in contradiction with the basic instincts of an individual⁴. For this and many other reasons, the attitude of various nations towards the suicidal act has evolved over the past centuries; primarily, it was philosophers and similar scholars who were dealing with the issue. For example, in the work entitled *Nicomachean ethics*, Aristotle wrote: "at the beginning of philosophy there is astonishment (...) Suicide, if it is an escape from poverty, love or some worry, does not prove bravery, but rather cowardice and weakness, it is an escape from hardship, and death chooses a man not because it is morally beautiful, but to avoid misery"⁵. It can be assumed that for the scholars of the time Aristotle's philosophical reverie was a stimulus for deeper reflection regarding the issues related to the voluntary act leading to death, considered unacceptable by Socrates. With time, he took into account the cases of necessity which Plato believed to be: protecting the man from squalor, disgrace or his inability to deal with adversities in life. However, Plato conditioned the approval for committing suicide upon its full acceptance by the authorities of a given state. According to various reports, this procedure was first banned, and in a certain period of time only the free citizens, the infirm or the severely ill were granted the right to commit suicide, and, "in the majesty of law", those people were given the possibility to choose a convenient way of dying⁶.

For example, ancient Greeks, Romans or Egyptians believed in "honorable" suicide, which men committed with a sword and both men and women — by poisoning. They considered it better than being caught, disgraced, tortured or forced to renounce their beliefs, being forced to slave labor or to degrading behaviors. Mentions of the following people's suicidal deaths have been preserved until the present day: Socrates, who did not change his beliefs and drank hemlock; Demosthenes, who poisoned himself by sucking the hilt of his own dagger with poison inside; Hannibal, who swallowed the poison received from his father in a ring; Cleopatra VII, who allowed for the venom of the king cobra to be introduced into her body.

In order to explain the truth about the incident many reasons prompted philosophers, theologians and other scholars to explore the problem of suicide, although the first reports indicate that they treated it in terms of a taboo subject. While analyzing the literature sources one can come across questions asked with certain "shyness" and mysteriousness, for example: what made a man take his life, since

⁴ See: Hołyst B, *Samobójstwo — przypadek czy konieczność?* Warsaw, 1983; Hołyst B, *Na granicy życia i śmierci. Studium kryminologiczne i wiktymologiczne.* Warsaw, 2002.

⁵ Cekiera Cz, *Etiology and motivation of attempted suicides. Psychological study.* Warsaw, 1975, p. 18.

⁶ Maris R, *Comprehensive textbook of suicidology.* New York, 2000, pp. 97–103; Cholbi M, *Suicide*, [in:] Zalta E.N (Ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Winter 2017 Edition; Bronisch T, *Suicide and Gratton F, Suicide, Sociology of*, [in:] Alto P (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences.* New York, 2001, pp. 15259–15268, pp. 15273–15278; Murray A, *Suicide*, [in:] Gale T, *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas.* Los Angeles, 2005, pp. 2270–2272.

he was created to live, had everything he needed to live, and so nature and logic deny the actions taken by him⁷. Could it be that he, in this way, desires to remain the “master of life and death”, precisely determining the length of his existence on earth? Over the centuries, similar studies on suicide and the approach to it were conducted by scholars from various areas of science, who treated these issues as one of the central motifs of existentialism. Nevertheless, they have not been able to accurately determine the endurance of human mind so far.

It should also be added that in the past perception of suicide in terms of laws of the emerging countries, in which the practice was either banned or tolerated to a greater or lesser extent, was changing. This unclear situation persisted until the end of the 18th century, when humanitarians, on the basis of the concept of an individual’s absolute freedom, stressed the right to make decisions regarding oneself and categorically demanded abolition of punishment for suicide. Despite such important changes, on the basis of an unambiguous approach and creation of legal provisions, the matters concerning the discussed issues have not been standardized so far⁸. At this point, we need to cite at least the Polish legal provisions, which do not view suicides or suicide attempts in terms of prohibited acts, but according to art. 151 of the Penal Code⁹ persuasion or helping a person who wants to take their own life is considered to be a criminal act.

The mystery of involvement in death attracted and continues to attract many people, though probably many suicides would be disappointed if they saw the effects of the senseless decision from beyond the grave. The reasons for pursuing one’s own death lie in the personality of a sensitive individual, who is not resistant to functional disorders, and who cannot cope with life-related problems and with mental or physical suffering, or both at the same time. It may be depression caused by mental stress related to a traumatic event (eg. family breakdown, the feeling of loss after the death of a loved one, poor health and suffering associated with it), often accompanied by low self-esteem, feelings of underappreciation, misunderstanding, loneliness, being manipulated by the environment. Quite often deaths of people who feel negative about their lives are preceded with the abuse of psychoactive substances: alcohol, drugs (including afterburners), barbiturates, psychotropic drugs or and so on¹⁰.

An interesting analysis of suicide was conducted by Albert Camus in an essay entitled *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which he wrote in the very first sentence: “*There is only one truly significant philosophical problem: suicide*”. In the work the author emphasized the significance of a man treating life as the only source of the meaning of the existence, and he stated that taking it was the most radical act of an individual. Camus bluntly demonstrated the lack of meaning in the existence of an individual who committed suicide and the absurdity of life that ended with it. According to him — and to Aristotle and others — suicide is an act of senseless escape. This, according to the author of *Myth of Sisyphus*, is not a good solution, but rather an “*intellectual escape from the absurdity into the illusions of metaphysics*,

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–103; Cholbi M, *op. cit.*; Battin M.P, Suicide, [in:] Encyclopedia of Bioethics. New York, 2004, pp. 2475–2483; Tokarczyk R, The laws of birth, life and death. Kraków, 2006.

⁸ Sójka-Zielińska K, History of law. Warsaw, 2015, p. 22.

⁹ Article 151 k.k. Act of 6 June 1997– Penal Code, Dz.U., No. 88, pos. 553 with later d.

¹⁰ Pospieszyl I, Social pathologies. Warsaw, 2008, p. 61–68, pp. 103–106.

religion or science". The author treats self-destruction, presented in the work, both in the form of deprivation of physical life and in the "philosophical" form of the heroic and fruitless work of Sisyphus which he equates with the metaphorical fate of man who causes his own death¹¹. While analyzing the approach of Albert Camus or other scholars one realizes without a doubt that they perceive suicidal behavior as one affecting humanitarianism, and it is perceived in the form of a collection of various factors; the scholars, therefore, urge to reduce the scale of the practice with the support of an entire range of available disciplines. They propose integration of activity of experts from the following areas: suicidology, religion, ethics, law, psychobiology (genetics), psychosociology (including: psychology, psychiatry), and moral, social and cultural conditions. They believe it is helpful to base the research on the multi-faceted perception of suicide in order to investigate the motives and issues related to it, with which they associate the hypothesis of hereditary nature of the complex etiology of thoughts related to the suicidal act¹². Most of the population studies of self-destructants showed that psychiatric disorders with suicide attempts (the intention of taking one's own life was stopped by help being provided or by the suicide applying ineffective methods) or resulting in suicidal death occurred in the living relatives (family members, twins) and in the previous generations. At the same time it was proven that the following psychiatric diseases are genetic: schizophrenia, mono- and bipolar disorder, delusional disorder, neurosis, self-humiliation and others¹³. For example, Ming T. Tsuang et al. described an almost four-time higher risk of first-degree relatives with schizophrenia committing suicide compared to patients without schizophrenia. They divided the subjects with genetic load into groups with suicidal thoughts, with plans and attempts to implement them. It turned out that suicidal thoughts were usually an inherent manifestation of depressive thinking and an individual's behavior, much like negative assessment of the future and the surroundings, pessimism, guilt and hopelessness¹⁴. Thanks to the conducted experiments, the researchers determined the implementation of the intention to commit suicide in the following ways: 1) by active action, 2) by passive omission, 3) by allowing death to occur, 4) considering death as a possible outcome of preceding proceedings¹⁵. In addition, they

¹¹ Camus A, *Myth of Sisyphus*, [in:] *Essays*. Warsaw, 1971, p. 91.

¹² Hołyst B., *Suicydologia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–135.

¹³ Zwoliński A, *Law on suicide*. Kraków, 2013, pp. 601–623.

¹⁴ Fudalej S, Wojnar M, Matsumoto H, Fudalej M, *Genetics of suicidal behavior*. *Advances in psychiatry and neurology*, 2006, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 83–91.

¹⁵ High sensitivity is determined both genetically and biologically and, therefore, it is a trait that we are born and die with. A person who is highly sensitive possesses an exceptionally sensitive nervous system and, thanks to it, receives much more stimuli in a much more intense way. Such people perceive more details and react more strongly to everything that happens. Because of that they feel more, their feelings are stronger and they are very emotional. They are characterized by exceptional empathy. They can immediately sense emotions, needs and moods of other people, which additionally strains their sensitive nervous system. These are the reasons why they need to spend time alone and calm down because, due to being overwhelmed with stimuli, they lose energy much faster., see: Tsuang M.T, Stone W.S, Faraone S.V, *Toward Reformulating the Diagnosis of Schizophrenia*. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 2000, Vol 157, Issue 7, pp. 497–504; Sand I, *Sensitivity: a gift or a curse? Life guide for exceptionally sensitive people and other beautiful souls*. Warsaw, 2016.

attempted to analyze the suicides' choice of methods of committing suicide, thus identifying the possible variants. On the basis of this, they determined that — from times in the past till the present day — the choice of the way and the place of death has been to a certain extent suggested, imposed, or has resulted from a chance or from an individual approach. Forms of suicide depend on the availability of the necessary means or tools, low level of pain, simplicity, effectiveness of the method of implementation as well as imitation¹⁶. For example, in the case of celebrities, the choice of the method of committing suicide is conditioned by the media, so they must do so in such a way that their family members will not suffer major moral or material losses, and will not be involved in repercussions. Suicides of people from newspapers covers are described, analyzed, and often accompanied by recordings and photos. "Icons", in a sense, create a "trend of death", because others repeatedly follow their patterns.

Currently, a large number of suicides is undoubtedly caused by access to all kinds of methods, which is why, during the act, the desperate person does not care about the "poetics" of action mentioned in the motto drawn from Stefan Chwin. In a situation when death occurs, it is preferred to appoint a forensic doctor in order to determine the cause of it, rather than to analyze the reasons that led to it. Often, even the people who were the closest to the deceased do not want to know the truth about the "shameful" death in the family. As for the topic of the "poetics", the reality has nothing to do with it, because the available or the possessed statistical data show that most suicides choose the hangman's loop¹⁷. The frequency of hanging as the most popular way of committing suicide in almost every region of the globe is influenced by an easy access to a rope, a cable, a belt or a loop made of other materials. The desperate person puts it around the neck without any problem, throws it onto a stable surface ("the base") and makes their body fall down; death occurs within a few seconds, and it is most often caused by hypoxia of the brain. However, cervical spine disruption (from C1 to C7) or cardiac arrest may occur earlier as well.

Many suicides also choose poisoning from fumes (they contain poisonous gases, mainly: dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur oxides) due to the significant increase in the number of cars in the world and relatively quick death¹⁸. However, in the United States, the use of firearms is the immediate and most effective method due to the widespread availability of this lethal tool. In most Asian countries (especially in Turkey, India, Japan, South Korea, China, where the authorities even introduced a ban on committing suicides) and South African countries, where the highest suicide rate is recorded. On both continents, the preferred method is the use of toxic substances, as well as jumping from heights, jumping in front of a speeding train or drowning. Unrestricted access to medicines and many chemical substances also caused suicides, especially from Europe (Hungary, Lithuania, Finland, Poland, Belgium, Switzerland) to choose poisoning with an increased dose of toxins, as one of the lethally-efficient methods. "Trendy" preparations, acclaimed on the Internet

¹⁶ See: Kurdwanowska D, Biblioteka samobójców. Warsaw, 2011.

¹⁷ Suicides, on-line. *Electronic source*: <http://www.pch24.pl/samobojstwa-staja-sie-global-na-plaga-problem-narasta-takze-w-polsce,41158,i.html#ixzz5Na2qj6fG>, accessed: 8.08.2018.

¹⁸ O'Connor R, Sheehy N, Understanding the suicide. Gdańsk, 2002, p. 145.

that creates special opportunities for exchanging information between those seeking self-destruction, are often used. "Cybersuicide", i.e. suicide committed in front of a computer, using skype, in front of millions of followers¹⁹, is an unusual kind of suicide in the electronic era. On the basis of it, many researchers demonstrate the impact of mass media on the distribution of specific techniques of self-inflicting death or causing death of others, through transmission of messages about this type of behavior, describing ways to deprive oneself of life, creating "icons of altruistic suicide"²⁰. Currently, attention is drawn to the susceptibility of the generation of modern "computer users" to the process of imitation, in which autosuggestion may provoke not only actions aimed at suicide, crimes, but above all make them a clever way of causing death. As already mentioned, in every case where felonious death is suspected, an expert court medical practitioner should be appointed to conduct a visual inspection and open the corpse²¹. The need for an appropriate opinion is related to the possibility of homicide having been committed, and the suicide or the accident having been staged, or vice versa. Cases in which suicides staged murders or accidents in order for the family to receive compensation from the insurance policy, or other benefits related to the death of a family member, or in order to protect them from being harassed by the community (especially in the country or in small towns) are commonly known. Sometimes, suicides decide to commit a complex suicide that is difficult to assess, the so-called combined suicide, which consists in an accumulation of two or more methods aimed at taking one's life. For example, the suicide will consume a large amount of toxic substance that will lead to poisoning, and then they will electrocute themselves or jump from height²². Determining the cause of death in such situations is usually difficult; during the autopsy, forensic doctors verify the cause of death, draw up a report and an opinion containing conclusions regarding their findings. Any kind of simulation of a different cause of death, or using a very sophisticated death technique by the deceased must be explained in order for the motive to be properly determined, and for the investigation to end with results corresponding to the actual situation. At least this is what the public expects from the law enforcement and the justice.

The most important psychological theories of suicidal behavior

For obvious reasons, any phenomenon related to the relationship between the individual and the society must be considered from the perspective of the psychological theory of behavior, because it is directly related to the motivational and decisive processes of a human being. Self-destruction in the form of an attempt to self-annihilate should be considered in terms of psychological conditions, because each fully conscious individual reacts to the surrounding reality in the

¹⁹ Chwin S, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Pospieszyl I, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–68, pp. 103–106.

²⁰ Tetaz N, *Worth Live. Suicide his essence and fighting*. Warsaw, 1976, p. 122.

²¹ Article 209 § 1 of the Act of June 6, 1997 — Code of Criminal Procedure, Dz.U. No. 89, item. 555 with later d.

²² Hołyst B, *Samobójstwo...*, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

context of the circumstances that they encounter. Social conditions along with the motivation and the personality of a suicide form the basis for the analysis of their behavior by psychologists and psychiatrists. Experts in this field give opinions about the mental health of an individual based on psychological theories that motivate a suicide to act. Two well-known scholars, who will be quoted due to the fact that their theories reflect the gist of the discussed problem in the best way, can be mentioned. The first one, who started the research in the discussed field, and who proposed a typology of suicides, was French sociologist Émile Durkheim. He described suicide as: *"a case of death that is a direct or an indirect result of an act or an omission aimed at self-destruction"* and an individual committing such an act as one: *"choosing the best solution in a specific life situation"*. Taking occurrence of an unfavourable life situation into account, he assumed that the individual's relationship with the society weakened and, thus, they became motivated to commit suicide. The scholar distinguished several types of suicides:

- 1) anomic — the ties between the individual and the society are torn apart or weakened due to a disruption of the state of reality to which the individual was accustomed, eg. loss of job. In this situation, the individual is poorly controlled by the community due to the changes occurring in it, strong discrepancies and disintegrations. The change in the social status leads to destabilization and disorientation, which may foster crossing the boundaries of the legal and ethical standards that were non-negotiable until that point, and thus pose a risk of committing suicide;
- 2) selfish — the individual has never had a bond with the society, they feel alienated and marginalized, therefore, in the face of experiencing lack of social support, they trust only themselves, living with a constant sense of personal failure, and, as a result, they notice lack of purpose in further life. Such suicidal behaviors are fostered by civilizational development of the contemporary societies that are based on consumerism, communicate preferably via the multimedia and eagerly use electronic devices;
- 3) altruistic — an individual has a strong sense of social bonds, and thanks to that, they excessively integrate with a social group or the society, and thus sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the others. Thus, expectations towards them are growing, and, therefore, under the pressure of exorbitant requirements of the environment the individual is at some point unable to meet them, which, in an act of weakness, leads to the desire to commit suicide;
- 4) fatalistic — individuals constituting a specific community found themselves in a tragic situation, from which they cannot see a way out, and thus lose the meaning of life and feel that they no longer control their own lives, e.g. after various accidents permanent disability or incurable diseases occur in the family. Too much burden causes a mental blockade, which in effect leads to a deep sense of powerlessness that makes it impossible to overcome problems. In such situations collective suicides, committed by, for example, supporters of euthanasia, or members of a religious sect²³, often take place.

²³ O'Connor R, Sheehy N, Understanding the suicider. Gdańsk, 2002, p. 65; Jarosz M, Samobójstwa. Warsaw, 1997, p. 46; Zwoliński A, Law on suicide. Kraków, 2013, pp. 601–618.

The division mentioned above gave rise to further, strictly psychological theories, namely the escape theory by Roy F. Baumeister²⁴. In his theory the author referred to the concept of suicide being, for the individual, an escape from an “internal pain”. The process begins with the expectations of the self-destructant being different than the reality, while the needs related to the implementation of ambitions, feelings or material matters turn out to be completely different than what the person assume, and constitute a kind of a failure leading to frustration. The next stage is the realization of the individual that the failure has been permanently ascribed to them as permanent and irreversible, and every aspect of their life will be constantly associated with it. The consequence of this spiral is an internal crisis, during which the impulse control is weakened, therefore the suicide tries to forget about the dilemma and tries to focus on the implementation of the most important life goals, but the resulting state causes new psychological threats. Risky behaviors that lead to abuse of drugs, alcohol or permanent intake of various addictive substances occur. It results in limitation of logical thinking, difficulties in overcoming problems, and the act of suicide is the result of emotional pain perceived by an individual as unbearable. Baumeister divided suicides on the basis of the degree of awareness of the subjective choice:

1) true — may be a manifestation of self-aggression resulting from the loss of purpose and meaning of life, or aggression targeted at another person, e.g. the individual wants to punish someone else by their own death;

2) ostensible — it usually results from the feelings of guilt and depression; the individual does not express the will to commit suicide directly — it is a kind of reaction to difficulties in life, with which the individual does not want to or cannot cope, and they want to gain attention;

3) demonstrative — an individual’s goal is to gain attention, and therefore they are looking for people who are able to help. The suicide attempt is a form of blackmail or protest because an individual who is helpless, or is unable to establish interpersonal contacts wants to be saved, heard and understood²⁵.

The aspects that reveal the truth about suicide based on a selected case study

The phenomenon of drug addiction or consuming various kinds of intoxicants is a very serious social pathology. The average age of a person consuming different substances has dropped significantly. Hence, according to the mass media and the literature on the subject, children strive to learn about the influence of drugs on the mood, and, simultaneously, on the perception of reality in a better light as early as in primary school. It is assumed that there are many factors that influence reaching for psychoactive substances. The main ones include: initially “the desire to try”, to adapt

²⁴ Baumeister R.F, *Anxiety and deconstruction on escaping the self*, [in:] Olson J.M, Zanne M.P (Eds), *Selfinference processes: The Ontario Symposium 1990*, pp. 259–291.

²⁵ Berk B.B, *Macro-micro relationships in Durkheim’s analysis of egoistic suicide*. *Sociological Theory*, 2006, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 58–80.

to the peer environment and be accepted by it, to experience pleasant, physiological sensations and to forget about problems. Other reasons encompass upbringing in a dysfunctional family, lack of self-esteem or lack of specific goals to be achieved which results in alienation. These are just a few factors, and, certainly, in each case they are much more diverse, nonetheless they are directly related to those above. In addition, it should be assumed that at an early age problems begin in the family environment, which is the first one that a mentally immature person learns. All it takes for a young person to look for other relationships thanks to which they will feel accepted, safe and needed is lack of interest in the family, weak bonds between its members and excessive requirements. It is also alarming that more and more often the basic reason for using drugs by minors is the lack of authorities, values, the feeling that there is no meaning in one's own existence. Young and even mature people forget that drugs do not solve problems and even deepen them. Consumed once and again, a substance, when unfavorable circumstances accumulate, makes it desirable to reach for it and use it again with increasing frequency and diversification. Substances seem to be a good antidote that relieves all frustrations and all the stress, but this effect is only temporary, because sober clash with the reality is sometimes drastic. The person has developed an addiction and is no longer able to struggle with everyday life, and slowly loses the defense mechanisms, and, with time, complete degradation of the mind and the body occurs.

The consequences of the ailments resulting from it are aggression, auto-aggression and even complete self-destruction, therefore people under the influence of a narcotic or a psychotropic substance develop severe depression, and in many cases they decide to make an attempt aimed at taking their own life²⁶. An example of the above is the story of a 16-year-old Stanisław F. who became addicted to drugs and, eventually, decided to commit suicide on Christmas Eve, despite the fact that the environment treated his family as perfect — his mother, Anna, was an achieved, well-known journalist and a writer, and his father, a doctor, worked hard to provide for his family.

Both parents were engaged in providing for the family, providing good conditions of life and life stability, and took care of good relations at home. They organized Christmas meetings in order to strengthen the family bonds. It was exactly then, when the tragedy took place. On 24 December, 2012, Christmas Eve, the guests had already arrived, when Stanisław's sister entered his room to tell him that the party was starting, and saw her brother with a noose around his neck hanging on the wardrobe. Upon her loud scream, the parents came running into the room and attempted to resuscitate their son, however ineffectively. None of the people present could believe the situation, because the teenager was considered to be a sensitive type with a delicate personality, and a few days before his death he was seen in a great mood. His closest family, instead of celebrating, decided to search the room that belonged to Stanisław. They wanted to answer the question, how *"in a normal, ordinary family, with a good relationship with the boy, such tragedy could have happened"*. They also wanted to see why a valuable young man decided to take such a drastic action, and did not even presume that the truth about

²⁶ The data and history of Stanisław F. was published by his mother — Anna F. *Electronic source*: <http://annafryczkowska.blox.pl/html>, accessed: 7.04.2017.

him would be much different than what they believed. Everyone was shocked that the boy had been using drugs for a long time, practically every day. The only thing in his behavior that raised his parents' doubts was recurring anxiety and sadness. Concerned, they sent Stanisław into a psychiatric and psychotherapeutic therapy, which gave positive results after a certain amount of time. Anna and her husband noticed improvement in their son's mental condition, although the symptoms of anxiety had a recurring tendency. The parents believed that they were taking good care of their children — they sent them to private schools, in which young people can develop their abilities, and, therefore, did not suspect that their talented son had any contact with psychoactive substances. The teenager read ambitious literature, was interested in art and was even delighted with synesthesia²⁷, he wrote stories and poems, painted pictures, played the saxophone and the piano in a music center, he attended a renowned Warsaw high school, where a drug prevention program was implemented. Tests for the presence of drugs in the organism were organized as part of the program; if the presence of drugs was detected it resulted in student's expulsion from the school. Later, despite such an approach of the school authorities, the people attending the institution admitted that it was possible to buy a dose of an intoxicating substance on its premises.

In an interview for the television program *"Uwaga"* Anna F. said that shortly before his death, her son was telling his family about a new girl, his good results at school, and it seemed that he was looking into the future with optimism. Therefore, while she was packing his things, she could not believe how little she knew about a person who was so close to her heart. After all, they wrote stories together, talked to each other, and deliberated about the negative influence of intoxicating substances on a young body. Anna F.'s son always assured her that all his friends were using drugs, but he had never done it. Only after his death, while she and her husband were browsing through her son's work, she realized that Stanisław showed strange interests. The series of paintings and associations created by Stanisław were full of trauma and anxiety, which — had they noticed it earlier — could have given them a lot to think about. After hearing the reconstructed messages from the mobile phone both of them could not have any doubts as they heard the following: *"Today it's 35. — We'll talk on break, I've got a gram on me. — And on Monday, how much do you want, 3? — Yes. — Let's make a "chamber" in this gas chamber — We've done methyl and we're high. — You smoked? — Yes. — Friday, smoking, but only with a friend during the night shift. — I don't have time tomorrow, 'cause I'm smoking with my buddies, and then I'm going to the Christmas party at school"*.

In the interview, Stanisław's mother also admitted that the greatest surprise for her was the fact that such a large part of her son's life revolved around an issue that she had no idea about at all: *"why, with so much contact that they had, they did not know about their son's problems"*. Not even for a moment did they think that Stanisław was addicted to drugs. After a while, they remembered a minor incident when their son came back from a friend's party and the mother smelled beer on him. A long talk about the harmful influence of alcohol on the young body that

²⁷ Synesthesia (gr: simultaneous perception, cognition through the senses) — a state or ability in which experiences of one sense evoke experiences characteristic of other senses, see: Kopalinski W, Dictionary of foreign words and foreign-language phrases. Kraków, 1983.

they had with the boy gave positive effects, because he listened and apologized, and they felt glad their son was so sensitive.

Now, Anna F. feels guilty about many of her sons' "faults". She did not even think that her son could be taking drugs, she did not ponder over the causes and the symptoms related to them, which, in a young person, made the depression combined with anxiety more severe and, as a result, became a real basis for suicide. The woman, concluding her appearance in the program, stated that people often downplay the causes and the symptoms of the disease, and they can directly lead to the act of self-destruction, which is why she decided to focus on the battle against drugs. According to her, setting up a foundation for parents who will gain knowledge about the harmful effects of drugs, will persuade others to carry out tests for the presence of drugs in minors. "*Faults against Stanisław redeemed in such a way will not be wasted*", because even "*one child that will be saved will give at least a little meaning to Stanisław's death*"²⁸.

Conclusions

- According to the cited contents suicidal thoughts cause emotional problems affecting the human mind. Depression and anxiety that is related to it can be cured, and it is enough to learn in detail about the mechanisms determining the underlying disease. According to Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis depression affects a person "*in a way similar to mourning*" — plunging one in sadness, regret and the feeling of emptiness and despair²⁹. The actions that lead to removing these elements from the mind can help cure a person. Traumas and inadequate upbringing can penetrate the consciousness to such an extent that they become a source of conflict within the mental life, thus causing the state of self-immolation. People who embrace their parents or parent with unconditional love and do not receive feelings as deep as they expect in return experience disenchantment. Thanks to the experiences and emotions, disease symptoms, which in time get worse, occur; it results in low self-esteem, self-aggression, various addictions, and sometimes leads to suicide.

- The cited case is not only a reflection of the states described in the Freudian psychoanalysis, but, according to the psychological theory of behavior of Émile

²⁸ The following blog entry can be found on the blog written by Anna F.: "*(...) if you think that a well-behaved, loved child with whom you talk and have a good relationship is safe it is not true (...) Parents, test your teens, that's it. Perhaps it will be possible to avoid further tragedies, it may be possible to avoid destruction of other young people's minds (...)*". Electronic source: http://uwaga.tvn.pl/63276,wideo,407820,samobojstwo_16-latka_winne_narkotyki,samobojstwo_16-latka_winne_narkotyki,reportaz.html; <http://annafryczkowska.blox.pl/html>, accessed: 7.04.2018.

²⁹ „(...) *but in the case of mourning, a person does not feel guilty, does not accuse oneself, one's self-esteem does not decrease.*” In the message of this scientist — "*depression does not cause anger and aggression. All the anger is targeted at the inside of an individual. It is formed on the basis of childhood experiences*", see: Z. Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Tsd. Biogr. Nachw. Von Peter Gay Fischer, Frankfurt, 1994; Fromm E, *Anatomy of human destructiveness*. Poznań, 1998.

Durkheim, the behavior of the suicide fits the anomic action. The ties between Stanisław F. and his parents weakened increasingly, both due to the lack of expected love and Stanisław's addiction to drugs. The parents, and especially the mother, believed that they had a good relationship with their son. Anna F. recalled, among others, that her son sometimes joked about committing suicide, but she considered it to be an attempt to gain attention. She did not consider the signals she received, she lost control over her son's behavior, and, therefore, she now blames herself and she blames her son for taking his life in an act of extreme desperation. Insufficient expression of her feelings and excessive focus on her career led to the reaction of her emotionally immature son, and caused an unexpected result. The changes related to puberty and adolescence led to an intense internal quandary and fear of not being able to meet the expectations. The young man, more and more desperate to feel love, (this need and the need of closeness were signaled by him by means of making up an imaginary girl) overwhelmed by anxiety and fears, decided not to sit at the Christmas table with the burden of lies and addiction; he preferred to take his life even without Stephan Chwin's "poetics". On the Christmas Eve, majority of people feel reflective, and reveal things that they meticulously hide throughout the rest of the year. They feel the need to be closer to one another, embrace someone with love, feel that they are loved in return. Most people, not only the sensitive ones, react like Stanisław F. In the absence of closeness, a well-laid table is not enough, one is left with emptiness and loneliness accompanied by emerging suicidal thoughts.

- Although in the presented case suicide was committed by hanging the cause that directly influenced the decision-making was addiction to drugs. Drugs led to losing control over life, and were a substitute that provided well-being. The family members didn't care about the need of love, which was all the sensitive, burdened, lonely teenager wanted, everyone was busy with their own affairs. The boy knew that during Christmas he would not have access to the "antidote" for the frustrations and stress he experienced, so he knew that he would not be able to escape even for a moment. This most probably worsened his mental state, deepened the emotions he was experiencing and influenced his decision.

- According to the division developed by Roy F. Baumeister — related to the degree of awareness of his own choice — Stanisław F.'s suicide met the criteria of alleged escape, because particular stages indicated the version of direct reason for the departure. The highly-sensitive teenager experienced "emotional pain" due to the constant sense of guilt towards his parents and the environment, which caused a spiral of helplessness. He was no longer able to meet the growing expectations, because he could not break free of addiction, therefore, in an act of desperation, he preferred to commit suicide. His departure drew attention to the phenomenon of drug addiction and the consequences associated with it; therefore, he indirectly contributed to his mother's involvement in helping parents whose children experience similar problems. Hopefully, Anna F.'s active involvement in keeping young people from "departing" will have a positive effect.

- It is undeniable that family has the greatest influence on the decision-making and the personality of an individual as it constitutes a certain barrier protecting an individual from developing mental disorders. Pathologies occurring within it are sometimes the cause of reaching for narcotics. Not only dysfunctional families are

a source of drug addiction, this phenomenon, as we can see, concerns also the “children from good homes”. In this case interest in the problems of the young people, emotional security, appropriate educational methods and, as a consequence, limits of acceptable freedom, are lacking. Young people often reach for drugs to gain attention of the adults, who only take specific actions when it is too late.

The school and the environment related to it have large impact on the educational process of the young people; responsible approach of the teachers can compensate for some problems faced by an individual at home. A teacher who is an authority for the students, thanks to his or her attitude, can influence various behaviors of young people, and, therefore, prevent emerging pathologies and, consequently, make his or her students give up drugs³⁰.

The above shows that the environment has a great influence on the behavior of young people. Not only does physically healthy society matter, but also mental well-being of a young individual. Preventive actions aimed at preventing, or at least significantly reducing the intake of psychoactive substances, and providing the addicts with any form of help are important in this case. Projects, implemented both actively and via mass media (information spots), talks, teaching at various levels of schools and even in preliminary schools bring good educational effects in the longer perspective. Thanks to that the young people will be well prepared for the role of responsible parents. As a consequence, each individual with sensitive personality will be properly cared for, will not seek support neither in others nor in substances substituting real feelings and being understood by others, and will be provided support by the closest people and, along with it, they will gain strength to overcome problems and their own weaknesses.

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³⁰ See: Pilecka B, *Wybrane zagadnienia samobójstw młodzieży*. Lublin, 1995; Radziwiłowicz W, Sumiła A, *Psychopatologia okresu dorastania. Wybrane zagadnienia*. Kraków, 2006.

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Streszczenie. W artykule przedstawiono możliwe przyczyny śmierci samobójczej, do czego niejednokrotnie dochodzi pod wpływem substancji psychoaktywnych. Nie chodzi tutaj o oddziaływanie uszkadzające poszczególne organy człowieka, ale o działanie powodujące zmiany w psychice jednostki. Przyjmowane z różnych przyczyn przez dłuższy czas środki odurzające mogą spowodować uzależnienie od nich, a nieraz też doprowadzają do pojawienia się myśli samobójczych. Autorka zaniepokojona sytuacją zwiększenia się w przeciągu ostatnich dwóch lat liczby samobójstw w naszym kraju kieruje artykuł do osób, które często nie zdają sobie sprawy z możliwości uzależnienia od narkotyków, tzw. dopalaczy, alkoholu czy innych, obciążających psychikę skłonnością do autodestrukcji. Opisany w artykule przypadek ma uświadomić, że do uzależnień dochodzi w różnych środowiskach, a jednostka mająca zapewniony dobrobyt może targnąć się na własne życie tylko z wiadomych dla siebie powodów. W celu zapobieżenia lub przynajmniej znacznego ograniczenia przypadków związanych z przyjmowaniem substancji psychoaktywnych, mogących przyczynić się do odbierania sobie życia, niezbędne są działania prewencyjne. Należy uświadomić dorosłym (głównie rodzicom) ich nieświadome przyczynianie się do pojawienia uzależnień od środków o działaniu toksycznym wpływającym na stan zdrowia fizycznego i psychicznego niedojrzałych emocjonalnie nieletnich. Młode pokolenie może nie dostrzegać przed sobą alternatywy dalszej przyszłości, a obowiązkiem odpowiedzialnych za nich jest dbałość o wykazanie sensu dalszego istnienia.

Резюме. В статье представлены возможные причины самоубийств, которые часто совершаются под воздействием психоактивных веществ. Речь идет не о воздействии на отдельные органы человека, а таком воздействии, которое вызывает изменения в психике человека. Наркотики, принимаемые по различным причинам в течение длительного периода времени, могут вызывать зависимость, а иногда и привести к развитию суицидальных мыслей. Автор обеспокоена ростом числа самоубийств в Польше за последние два года, и поэтому статья адресована лицам, которые нередко не осознают возможности развития зависимости от наркотиков, например т.н. «дизайнерских», алкоголя или других веществ, которые могут повлиять на психику и вести к возникновению склонности к самоуничтожению. Пример из практики, описанный в статье показывает, что зависимость возникает в разных социальных средах и даже материально обеспеченный человек может покусаться на собственную жизнь только по известным ему самому причинам. Профилактические меры необходимы с целью предупредить или, по крайней мере, значительно снизить количество случаев употребления психоактивных веществ, которые могут привести к совершению самоубийства. Взрослые (в основном родители) должны понимать собственный бессознательный вклад в возникновение наркозависимости и токсического влияния на физическое и психическое здоровье эмоционально незрелых несовершеннолетних. Молодое поколение нередко не умеет найти альтернативных вариантов будущего, и ответственность взрослых заключается в том, чтобы показать смысл дальнейшего существования.

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