

# On Youth Suicide - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

Source: <https://medium.com/@postliterate/on-youth-suicide-7c3798e78617>

Postindustrialism is absolutely drunken with authority, even more than industrialism was. Worst of all, it is the kind, smiling authority of the social worker, the teacher, the psychiatrist, or as Foucault put it:

“Small-scale legal systems and parallel judges have multiplied around the principal judgement: psychiatric or psychological experts, magistrates concerned with the implementation of sentences, educationalists, members of the prison service, all fragment the legal power to punish... [S]ubsidiary judges they may be, but they are judges all the same.” [1]

This is embodied best in the University, where a cheery and well-mannered bureaucracy works overtime to organize, slice up, and dictate the spontaneity of social relations on campus. The beauty of the social relation rests precisely on this spontaneity — the time-regulation of it by the college bureaucracy simply results in the death of social activity altogether. The student is forced into an extreme of either total submission to his educational dealings, or complete remission into the soft narcissism of technocapital. You can imagine which extreme most students fall into.

“Many of the teenage students I encountered seemed to be in a state of what I would call depressive hedonia. Depression is usually characterized as a state of anhedonia, but the condition I’m referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as it by an inability to

do anything else *except* pursue pleasure. There is a sense that ‘something is missing’ — but no appreciation that this mysterious, missing enjoyment can only be accessed *beyond* the pleasure principle.” [2]

This occurs equally in the private and public sectors of the college market.

Possibly the worst piece of this is that whereas that which should be free and spontaneous is now cold and calculated, that which should best be calculated is not, on the pretense of “freedom.” So-called “freedom of enterprise,” so-called “free labor,” and so-called “free choice” exist today as exactly that which guarantees unfreedom for so many.

“Capitalist freedom is, in effect, the kind of freedom that one can buy and sell on the market, hence it is this freedom that represents the very form of unfreedom for those who have nothing but their labour force to sell.” [3]

Capital is simultaneously more bureaucratic and more precarious than it may have ever been. The life of the youth — still legally bound to the family — is planned out, moment by moment, from the products she consumes to the social life she wishes to lead. Her interests are “precorporated” into capital (to use Fisher’s term), and if she is “counter-culture,” she is the very counter-culture which is the dominant culture (“alternative” media is, in fact, the mainstream.) At the same time, universities boast about the achievement of new levels of control over their students — it is all framed as helping on their behalf. It is the very authority which tells you “*you are in control!*” which is most in control of you of all.

The youth experiences capital in its most acute, in its newest stage of development; moreover, she experiences it in a half-prelapsarian state which is yet to fully embrace it. Thus, as she is edged to either acceptance or rejection of it, the crash will be most brutal.

In short, the youth no longer holds a life of her own, is no longer herself, is no longer in control. Suicide is the final attempt to find any control over one's life, but it is precisely the most selfish way to do so. To hold one's own life at stake as if they were the only one to whom it mattered is an act unable to make itself a real protest against capital — it is instead its odious product. Stuck between the inhuman world of the commodity-form and the human instinct which cries out in horror at the other world, youth suicide is simultaneously a selfish act of solipsism and the final demonstration of control over one's autonomy.

Youth suicide, staggeringly high as it is, is not merely the scream of the oppressed creature. It is the last-ditch attempt at holding one's life in one's hands in a world gone mad.

---

[1] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 21

[2] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, pg. 21–22

[3] Slavoj Žižek, *The Relevance of the Communist Manifesto*, pg. 40