In Emile Durkheim’s essay on Anomic Suicide, the readers are given an insightful comparison between the inherent nature of man and animal. This comparison appears even more compelling with Durkheim’s connection of suicide with his newly coined term: ‘Anomy’. Interestingly, this complicated relationship of man versus animal, and anomy with suicide serves to be a strange one. Indeed, for Durkheim and the individual reader, this relationship might have even seemed pointless if not for the saving grace of ‘Society’: the powerful tool capable of “attracting sentiments of individuals” and “controlling them”(Durkheim,Pg.241).With this importance of society in mind, the reader may even digress to being partial to the view that ‘anomy’ is arguably more prevalent in unregulated or liberal societies rather than the ‘rigid, intractable’ ones.

To measure the extent of this claim, however, the readers must first consider the nature of the individual in society. For the reader’s understanding, Durkheim has initially only introduced the unanimously agreed notion of an economic crisis being a key factor of increased suicide rates since “life more readily renounced as it becomes more difficult” (Durkheim, Pg.242). This notion seems to hold correct from the statistics of the financial crisis of Vienna in 1873 and the Paris Bourse Crash of 1882 (Pg.241). However, Durkheim immediately destabilizes this opinion by directing the reader’s attention to an underlying question that : “if voluntary deaths increased because life became more difficult, they should diminish perceptibly as comfort increases(Pg.242).Certainly, his argument seems to strongly condone the view of these comforts or even “fortunate crisis”(Pg.243) being a catalyst for suicide compared to there being “very little suicide in Ireland ,where the peasantry leads so wretched a life”(Pg.245).

This verdict leads the readers to the primary concern of the essay which is the connection of poverty being a “protection” (Pg.245) and this protection serving as a limitation for the virtually limitless human being. Durkheim’s perspective of the need for there to be a limitation for man’s comforts seems not to be logically unfounded. His argument, therefore seems to ground itself strongly in the juxtaposition of man and animal. For the human, his “needs are sufficiently proportioned by his means” (Pg.246) through both physical and emotional outlets. In doing so, the human being has essentially no legitimate limit since he will continue to create new needs by exercising “the free combinations of the will”. This limitlessness is owed almost entirely to the moral outlet which commands the body as a “replacement of existence” (Pg.246). Contrarily, the animal sustains on material conditions and “satisfied, asks nothing further” (Durkheim. Pg.246).

With this apparent difference in check, the readers are encouraged to reflect that this desire to “pursue a goal which is unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness” (Pg.248).In order to place a limit to man’s desires, one must make use of the moral “authority which he accepts”(Durkheim,Pg.248).This brings the readers back to the saving grace of “society” which as argued by Durkheim is the only moral authority capable of redistributing needs and placing constraints on desire. However, according to Durkheim, the problem arises when a society in transition fails to limit the individual since the unit for analysis of limitations have not been formed and preconceived ideals of these limits have been discarded by them. As a result, the individual is not morally guided by these limitations circumscribed by society and a state of deregulation or more specifically “anomy” occurs. This transitional phase causes agitation eventually leading to suicide. Durkheim exemplifies this in the structure of marriage and divorce with the former being a “regulation of sexual relations” (Pg.270) and the latter being although legal: a ‘deregulation’. It is noted by Durkheim that perhaps this deregulation in the form of the “institution of divorce must itself cause suicide” (Pg.263). Certainly, if we consider these two oppositions of regulation and deregulation in parallel to rigid, intractable societies and liberal ones: one may be able to make an interesting conclusion. Let us consider the country of Saudia Arabia as a hypothetical rigid, intractable society in opposition to South Korea as a hypothetically anomic one for Gay rights. Saudia Arabia is known for imposing the death penalty for same sex relationships whereas South Korea seems to neither recognize same-sex marriages nor explicitly forbid it. In a sense, the power of decision in South Korea is left to the human being and no clear limitations have been provided while the government of Saudia Arabia although less flexible, has provided a limit to the human desire. Thus, the individuals are protected from committing anomic suicide; a fact quite distinctly supported by statistics where according to the World Health Organization Survey of 2012, Saudia Arabia ranks 0.4% in suicide rate whereas South Korea ranks in at 28.9%. Undeniably, other factors are at play which in no way are related to suppression or allowance of gay rights or any other rights. However, the purpose of this analogy was to logically or at least empirically support the notion that the demarcation of a limit might eventually leads to the protection of human life.

On an individual level, we can hypothetically consider an Indian named Ahmed working under the strict regime of the British Raj as a lawyer. After partition, Ahmed resolves to migrate to Pakistan where the constitution is yet to be drawn and the constitution formulated by the British Raj is not accepted by the government for Pakistan. While fighting for cases, Ahmed has virtually no moral guide, so he often wrongly represents his clients leading him to feel guilty and eventually abandon the profession. Ahmed begins to wallow in agitation from lack of proper reason of existence and may either turn to crime or taking his own life. In context, the hypothetical example of Ahmed only serves to highlight the role of rigid societies in contrast to liberal societies in the new age for protection from anomic suicides. The readers even if they disagree with this analogy must only keep one unanimous decision for Durkheim: Anomy and suicide are a direct consequence of the powerful nature of society.