

In Massilia and on the island of Ceos a hemlock-potion was offered in public by the magistrate to those who could give valid reasons for quitting this life. And how many heroes and wise men of ancient times have not ended their lives by a voluntary death! To be sure, Aristotle says "Suicide is a wrong against the State, although not against the person;" Stobæus, however, in his treatise on the Peripatetic ethics uses this sentence: *ἡ βίη καὶ ἡ πόλις ἀλλήλων ὁμιλοῦνται, καὶ ἡ πόλις ὡς μέρος ἐστὶν τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης.* (Vitam autem relinquendam esse bonis in nimis quidem miseriis pravis vero in nimium quoque secundis\_) And similarly: *καὶ ἡ πόλις ὡς μέρος ἐστὶν τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης.* etc.; *καὶ ἡ πόλις ὡς μέρος ἐστὶν τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης, οὕτως ὡς ἡ πόλις τῆς βίης.* etc. (Ideoque et uxorem ducturum, et liberos procreaturum, et ad civitatem accessurum, etc.; \_atque omnino virtutem colendo tum vitam servaturum, tum iterum, cogente necessitate, relicturum, etc.) And we find that suicide was actually praised by the Stoics as a noble and heroic act, this is corroborated by hundreds of passages, and especially in the works of Seneca. Further, it is well known that the Hindoos often look upon suicide as a religious act, as, for instance, the self-sacrifice of widows, throwing oneself under the wheels of the chariot of the god at Juggernaut, or giving oneself to the crocodiles in the Ganges or casting oneself in the holy tanks in the temples, and so on. It is the same on the stage--that mirror of life. For instance, in the famous Chinese play, *l'Orphelin de la Chine*, [19] almost all the noble characters end by suicide, without indicating anywhere or it striking the spectator that they were committing a crime.

At bottom it is the same on our own stage; for instance, Palmira in \_Mahomet\_, Mortimer in \_Maria Stuart\_, Othello, Countess Terzky. Is Hamlet's monologue the meditation of a criminal? He merely states that considering the nature of the world, death would be certainly preferable, if we were sure that by it we should be annihilated. But \_there lies the rub\_! But the reasons brought to bear against suicide by the priests of monotheistic, that is of Jewish religions, and by those philosophers who adapt themselves to it, are weak sophisms easily contradicted.[20] Hume has furnished the most thorough refutation of them in his \_Essay on Suicide\_, which did not appear until after his death, and was immediately suppressed by the shameful bigotry and gross ecclesiastical tyranny existing in England. Hence, only a very few copies of it were sold secretly, and those at a dear price; and for this and another treatise of that great man we are indebted to a reprint published at Basle. That a purely philosophical treatise originating from one of the greatest thinkers and writers of England, which refuted with cold reason the current arguments against suicide, must steal about in that country as if it were a fraudulent piece of work until it found protection in a foreign country, is a great disgrace to the English nation. At the same time it shows what a good conscience the Church has on a question of this kind. The only valid moral reason against suicide has been explained in my chief work. It is this: that suicide prevents the attainment of the highest moral aim, since it substitutes a real release from this world of misery for one that is merely apparent. But there is a very great difference between a mistake and a crime, and it is as a crime that the Christian clergy wish to stamp it. Christianity's

inmost truth is that suffering (the Cross) is the real purpose of life;  
hence it condemns suicide as thwarting this end, while the ancients,  
from a lower point of view, approved of it, nay, honoured it. This  
argument against suicide is nevertheless ascetic, and only holds good  
from a much higher ethical standpoint than has ever been taken by moral  
philosophers in Europe. But if we come down from that very high  
standpoint, there is no longer a valid moral reason for condemning  
suicide. The extraordinarily active zeal with which the clergy of  
monotheistic religions attack suicide is not supported either by the  
Bible or by any valid reasons; so it looks as if their zeal must be  
instigated by some secret motive. May it not be that the voluntary  
sacrificing of one's life is a poor compliment to him who said, ?????  
???? ?????[21]