



16ª JORNADA DE LECTURA DE ENSAYOS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES, EGRESADOS Y  
DOCENTES DE LA FACULTAD DE PSICOLOGÍA [30/04/08]

## THE POLYSEMIA OF SUICIDE

**Mónica Giraldo**

Psychology student

FUNLAM.

When we speak about suicide in our minds, the possibility of the death is opened, and with it, the motives that possibly can drive us to the imperious thought of ending life in a "voluntary" way. In them there would surely be desperation, distress, isolation, lack of sense of life, hopelessness, misery, frustration and many other meanings related to fatality. However, it would not be appropriate to think about them as the only trigger factors of the decision to commit suicide; thus, it's appropriate to mention that suicide could be incited by other kind of factors like desire and pleasant thoughts. This situation generates lots of questions about the real trigger factors of suicide.

The Symbolic Interactionism, as an approach dedicated to the study of human behaviour and life of groups, offers a perspective based on three fundamental premises, which are useful to expose this phenomenon and its meaning.

First, the human being operates depending on the meaning that things have for him/her (Blumer 1982:2). It can be inferred that suicide has a different meaning for every person; for them who commit it, and also for those that only think about it as distant possibility. Second, this meaning has its origins from relations that every person has with others, that is to say, of his/her interaction with them (Blumer 1982:2). Suicide, is not an individual construction, it's a social construction, meaning that is immersed in a world

that surrounds the subject who commits the action. This world is composed by objects, many of which can only be presented through language, because it is the only way for us to communicate our meanings, and still be able to realize those things that are absent in time and space. It can be said then, that signs and meanings can be produced through language which allows us to transmit to others and ourselves our ideas about something and of course suicide. Third, these meanings can be changed by a process of interpretation that every person can carry out (Blumer 1982:2). In this way, the suicide in each person can have lots of meanings, depending on the situation that they are facing at the moment.

The Symbolic Interactionism highlights the importance of the meaning and uses it as explanation of the human acts; in addition it defines it like a social construction that agrees with the context. This construction can only be known when its origin is analyzed: interaction, which includes the world of objects and symbols that form the activities of human beings.

Thus, we are not talking about only one thing when we make reference to suicide; we are submerged into a deep abyss of meanings and senses of the term. This polysemia indicates that there is no essence; objects, acts and persons, do not have an immortal condition, they are in constant transformation. For example, some people can think that suicide is an act of heroism; other people think that is an act of cowardice, like Darwin (Darwin, Cited by Gafo 2003:300). Also, in some cases suicide is associated with patriotism, heroism, friendship, love, disease; besides, it is defined by history, under this perspective, Rodriguez, affirms that: "suicide is a voluntary action in which a person is deprived of life; it is a universal phenomenon that has been present in all the ages and cultures, but the attitude towards it on behalf of societies has been different, depending on the religious, philosophical influences, on the socio-political and cultural structures, and especially on the ideas on the death and beyond"(Cano 2005).

Undoubtedly, all these reflections ask us about suicide and about death, they bring us to speaking about life; since they are two terms that must not be treated in an isolated way: they are complementary, so we cannot conceive life without death and death without life. Several authors, among them Agustín

Basave Fernandez, think that life is something inherent in the death, and even more that it's a preparation for death. Fernandez says: "The life, any sensible life at least, is a preparation for death ... Though death appears at first sight as a negative aspect; it can also be a positive sense for the life. Thanks to death we can intensify life, stimulate the vital task" (Basave 1983:54). In fact, if we have the vision of mortality, then life becomes intense; we take life in a deep way. From another point of view, many people could think that this vision of life, in a deep relationship with death, could be so hard, because we'd always be thinking about fatality. But it's not about the time of death, we must focus on; it's about the importance of a good life, a life always looking at death in the eyes.

We have returned to our beginning: suicide and its multiple meanings. It is time to clarify that this act or his idea does not omit any person. Thus, every day many people decide and try to die, successfully or not: children, teenagers, adults and elders; fact takes us all to the possibility of a unique causality or sense of suicide. The most appropriate thing would be, simply, to extend our perspective towards the unknown and most ample universe of meanings, where we will think about those who make a trip towards "beyond", that are tired of living but that are in the bottom they are afraid to death, those who really do not want to die but simply want to forget the life.

### **Bibliografía**

- BLUMER, H. (1982). *El Interaccionismo Simbólico: Perspectiva Y Método*. Barcelona: Hora.
- GAFO, J. (2003). El Suicidio. En: *Bioética Teológica*. Madrid: Comillas.
- BASAVE FERNÁNDEZ; A. (1983). Significación Y Sentido De La Muerte. En: *Metafísica De La Muerte*. México: Limusa.
- CANO B, V. H. (2005). *La farmacodependencia y el suicidio*. En: Revista Universidad De San Buenaventura, Vol. 11, Nº 22. Enero - junio.2005. Pp. 43-64
- BERGER, P.; LUCKMANN, T. (1986). El Lenguaje Y El Conocimiento en la Vida Cotidiana. En: *La Construcción Social De La Realidad*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu