

# How College Students Suicide Exists: Three Standpoints of Death

FANG Yajun

Shanghai University of Finance and Economics Zhejiang College, Jinhua, China

At present, suicide behaviors of college students frequently occur in colleges, but the problem of why college students suicide has always plagued many college educators. From the perspective of Levinas' view of existence, suicide is the last control that people can have over existence. Suicide includes a person's three mental states: exhaustion, laziness, and boredom, and it can orderly induce three standpoints of death: "I have to die", "I want to die", and "I am going to die". Knowing the problems of suicide is helpful to help college educators better understand the suicidal behavior of college students and help them better carry out the life education of college students.

*Keywords:* college students, suicide, existence, death

At present, suicide behaviors of college students frequently occur in colleges, but the question of how college students commit suicide has always plagued many college educators. As a philosopher who represents the theory of radical thoughts in the West, how does Levinas' view of existence answer how college students suicide exists? What standpoint of death does its existence view contain?

## Suicide Overview

The occurrence of suicide by college students tacitly agrees that suicide is a man-made, not material control. So what is suicide, suicide is called the separation of the immortal soul in Socrates. According to Socrates, suicide is the separation of human body and soul, and "the soul is immortal, it can endure all evil and good" (Plato, 2019, p. 430). Suicide is the end of Dasein for Heidegger, the absence of being to death. Levinas (2020) believed that "suicide is the last control that people can have over existence" (p. 430). Obviously, in Levinas' view, suicide is the end of control over existence. Levinas believes that suicide includes three mental states of being faced with existence: exhaustion, laziness, and boredom. The realization of the state of exhaustion, laziness, and boredom is itself a standpoint taken on existence, that is, suicide is a standpoint taken on existence. Levinas used the term "control" to describe the relationship between suicide and existence, that is, people try to control existence through suicide, but people cannot control existence through suicide, so people's behavior of suicide is seen as absurd in Levinas' eyes. In fact, people want to get their own salvation through suicide in a certain sense. Therefore, Levinas believes that suicide is a kind of self salvation in absurdity.

## How Suicide Among College Students Exists: Three Standpoints on Death

For Levinas, suicide is one of the attitudes contained in people's meditation on the meaning of life, that is,

suicide and abandonment. Suicide includes a person's mental state of exhaustion, laziness, and boredom. Every mental state induces people's standpoints in the face of death.

### **“I Have to Die”**

Exhaustion means “tired and exhausted” (The Dictionary Editing Office of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2012, p. 987). First of all, exhaustion is pointed to physical exhaustion. Levinas' (2006) point of view is “physical exhaustion-first manifested as stiffness, numbness, a state of being curled up” (p. 21). However, Levinas has no limitations. Because of this explanation, we continue to extend the concept of exhaustion, “the numbness of exhaustion is very representative. It means the inability to continue, and it means that the distance between the being and the things that he is still attached to is increasing” (Levinas, 2006, p. 22). In Levinas' view, exhaustion means inability to continue, means letting go, but not really giving up. In other words, people want to continue, but because they are exhausted; they accept a fact that they cannot continue. Therefore, people have to make a choice when they are exhausted. The choice contains the perseverance to let go but the idea of not giving up. In other words, people cannot survive in exhaustion and choose to let go of survival, to embrace death. In short, exhaustion induces people to give up the idea of survival and accept death. When faced with death, I showed a standpoint of “I have to die”. When we asked contemporary college students the reason why they chose to end their lives by committing suicide at the lightest time and approaching death, the answer is often “I am tired”. The tiredness here means both physical fatigue and includes the sound of heart fatigue. In other words, when I say tired, it is actually meaningless, because fatigue is a kind of consciousness. This consciousness shows that there is a certain distance between existence and itself. In Levinas' eyes, this distance is precisely the most important feature of fatigue. But we understand in life that when people say that they are tired before committing suicide, it is often easy to understand it as the sound of heart fatigue. We tend to think without thinking that people will give up some kind of resistance and choose to pass away in compromise. The suicide incidents of college students are complicated and confusing, which will cause us to be unconsciously curious. We will be curious about the relationship between the psychological endurance of college students and the body, so that our curiosity brings us into the suicide of college students because of their lack of psychological endurance. At least, Levinas told us that death is not necessarily a distance from existence. It can be a scenic spot open to existence, but people are in the scenic spot and lack oxygen. People just shut up, but they do not stop breathing.

### **“I Want to Die”**

Laziness has the meaning of “do not love labor and work, not diligent” (The Dictionary Editing Office of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2012, p. 773), which means not to move or to do. In Levinas' (2006) eyes, “laziness is a kind of powerless and boring dislike of being itself as a burden” (p. 19). Levinas regarded this disgust as a kind of rejection, that is, refusing to take action, refusing to own, and refusing to be held accountable. Levinas believes that laziness represents the fear of life and the escape of existence. When people have a state of laziness, it means that the beginning is impossible, and they refuse to accept the future. In Levinas' words, it means abstaining from the future. Life is endless, and when faced with life itself, lazy people begin to hesitate, become indecisive, and even fear, ready to escape. Therefore, people who are living, in the face of death, begin to resist and show the courage of “I want to die”. The opposite is that “I want to live” means the desire for survival and the pursuit of existence. When a person makes the “I want to die” sound, it means “I do not want to give birth”. To me, life is a kind of disgust, and even more unacceptable.

In my subconscious, I want to avoid it and escape it as soon as possible. Levinas felt that this kind of escape from life is also a life, just as fear of life is also a life. Death is both familiar and unfamiliar to life groups. It is not unfamiliar because one group always experiences the death of another group. The unfamiliarity is because each group is still unaware of the arrival of its own death. Nowadays, when we focus on the group of college students, they are experiencing the death of others, and we are experiencing their death. It is very curious that here is where one group experiences the death of another group. How can a group not experience its own death? Levinas believes that a person can only experience the death of others, not one's own death, and that one's own death means their own absence. "Death indicates an event in which the subject is no longer the master, and an event related to which the subject is no longer the subject" (Levinas, 2020, p. 55).

### **"I Am Going to Die"**

Boredom, with the meaning of sick and tiredness, in modern Chinese dictionaries means "a certain activity loses interest and is unwilling to continue" (The Dictionary Editing Office of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2012, p. 1502). It can be seen that there is a big difference between boredom and exhaustion. Boredom is unwilling to continue, while exhaustion is the inability to continue. Boredom is full of the subject's powerful and unintentional willingness, and exhaustion reflects the subject's feeling of powerlessness. Levinas (2006) believed that boredom is a rejection of existence, "being in boredom is like someone reminding you of the obligation of existence, reaffirming the solemnity and severity of this irrevocable contract" (p. 13). In other words, when one is bored, one cannot remain indifferent, one must act, and this act is to refuse to survive. "Boredom is the way to refuse to survive this phenomenon" (Levinas, 2006, p. 13). In other words, to Levinas, boredom is full of rejection, and the occurrence of rejection means boredom. For the individual, my boredom induces a refusal to survive, that is, embrace death. And the reason why I embrace death is because I do not want to continue to live, I want to die. The standpoints I took before death was expressed as "I am going to die". "I want to die" and "I have to die" are two different standpoints in the face of death. "I want to die" is more subjective. In death full of boredom, death is a kind of right, and even more a kind of persistence. In Levinas' eyes, "I want to die" is more of an obligation in boredom. It has nothing to do with my environment and the people around me. It is a response to the ultimate command "you must die". In contrast to the current suicide incidents of college students, the suicide of them is either due to their own environment or the surrounding people. In other words, "I want to die" is the rejection of the existence of others relative by college students, and it is an exclusive rejection. In other words, in boredom, no matter whether the other exists or not, I will die, and my relationship with the other is mutually exclusive.

### **Relevance of Death Standpoints**

The beginning of an action already means a kind of belonging and a kind of care. It is concerned about both its owner and the things it owns. Suicide means that an individual is concerned about his own life. In the hearts of idealists, suicide is full of affirmation of their own life. In the eyes of caringists, suicide means the denial of one's own life. In Levinas' opinion, suicide produces something absolutely unrecognizable that is different from light. It breaks all possibilities. In this impossibility, the subject itself is caught. In other words, Levinas feels that although suicide is absurd to the subject, it is not all a denial of life. It can also positively affirm the meaning of people's contemplation of their own lives. However, what is the connection between the three mental states that Levinas mentioned in suicide involves people facing existence? How will the three death standpoints induced by it be related?

Levinas believes that exhaustion, if it points to the body, is an overdraft of physical strength and exhaustion of physical energy. Exhaustion is a consumption. Levinas also believes that if you point to an action, it is the enlargement of the distance between the being and the thing to which it is attached, just as the being gradually leaves the existence in his hand. From this perspective, exhaustion is a kind of parting. Regardless of the physical level or the action level, exhaustion is a quantification. Levinas pointed out that laziness is a refusal to act, it is not going forward. From the perspective of animal nature, laziness is the state of animal laziness. From the perspective of human nature, laziness is human inertia, that is, it is impossible for behavior to begin. From this perspective, laziness is precisely a kind of stillness. However, Levinas pointed out that laziness is not equal to rest. Like exhaustion, it contains attitudes toward behavior. Reflected in the standpoint of death, “I have to die” shows that I have no choice, but I must make a choice. Exhaustion helps people to go to the emptiness of the soul through the tiredness of the body, and their behavior attitude is to complete the search from tired to empty. “I want to die” shows that I am afraid, I dare not move forward, I want to escape. Laziness gives people a motivational exit, and their behavior is that I want to do my best to leave here and escape from existence. In the face of existence, Levinas felt that exhaustion and laziness were not enough. There should be a positive force, that is, boredom. In Levinas’ eyes, boredom is a kind of refusal to exist. If we say that exhaustion and laziness are the acceptance of existing facts, then boredom is the unacceptance of existing facts. Boredom is a struggle from my heart. The death standpoint of “I am going to die” conveys a firm attitude towards death, including an obligation that I must die. All in all, the transition from a person’s exhaustion, laziness to boredom is a process of continuous strengthening of people’s behavior and attitude. The transition from “I have to die”, “I want to die”, to “I am going to die” is a process from unacceptable to gradual acceptance in the face of death.

Levinas’ discourse on suicide is an important part of his view of existence. Levinas’ philosophical questioning on the relationship between suicide and existence has opened a new window for us to reconsider the suicidal behavior of college students. The standpoints on death has deepened our understanding of death and thinking about the meaning of human existence. Knowing the problems of college students’ suicide is helpful to help college educators better understand the suicidal behavior of college students and help them better carry out the life education of college students.

### References

- Levinas, E. (2006). *From existence to existant*. (H. Y. Wu, Trans.). Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Press.
- Levinas, I. (2020). *Time and the other*. (J. J. Wang, Trans.). Wuhan: Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing.
- Plato. (2019). *The Utopia*. (Z. M. Zhang and B. H. Guo, Trans.). Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- The Dictionary Editing Office of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. (2012). *Modern Chinese dictionary* (6th ed.). Beijing: The Commercial Press.