

Suicidality is only sometimes within others' understanding and influence

Jane Kelly and Niven Shields write with angry compassion when confidently asserting that the legitimate wish to deliberately end one's life must arise from either the ravages of incurable physical illness or a treatable mental illness (*Metro* 29/4/26). Yet, sadly, this is often mistaken.

Humans, it seems, are unique among creatures in needing *meaning* to sustain their lives. With meaning we will cleave to life tenaciously even amidst terrible adversity; without it we lose the will to live, however others may perceive our blessings. Sometimes this loss of meaning is understandable, reversible and may then respond to care and treatment, much like physical illnesses. But there are other kinds that tragically elude both our attempts to understand and help. Of course, we should always attempt to both — yet human capacities for hope and repair / despair and destruction often remain a humbling mystery.

Writers of imagination - even some psychiatrists - have long known this.