

# Ap phil 1100: meaning of life

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AP PHIL 1100: Meaning of Life June 7th 2012 In this paper, I will talk about the topic of suicide. I will first of all explain the basics of Hume's defense of suicide then Kant's argument against suicide. I will then argue that Kant proposition is not convincing due to the lack of evidence and his arguments are also contradicting. In the following, I will defense Hume's opinion. Nevertheless, there are also a few points that I need to raise objection to. With Philosophy, David Hume (1874-1875) provides a cure for superstition and false religion on the topic of suicide (291). He argues that self-annihilation is morally approvable and it is not a transgression of our duties against God, the society or ourselves. He (1874-1875) notes " human life depends upon the general laws of matter and motion, and that it is no encroachment on the office of providence to disturb or alter these general laws"(294). If cutting trees from their course is allowed for human benefits, then there is no reason why changing my own natural course for my benefit is a crime. Some argues that human life is important and that only God has the right to deal with. If that is true, then dodging the massive branch from the tree that I have just cut from falling on my head should also be a crime because I went against the order of nature by extending my life. Hence, " a hair, a fly, an insect is able to destroy this mighty whose life is of such important"(294). Moreover, if God owns my life and it is my duty to protect it, then there is no one so called hero. He is indeed a criminal for putting an end to a life that does not belong to him. Furthermore, according to Hume (1874-1875), " I owe my birth to a long chain of causes, of which many depended upon voluntary actions of men"(296). If this chain of causes is among God's plan then, my death should be too. It is blasphemous to even

think that I can do anything without God's agreement. In addition, after my death, I have not leave the post where God has placed me; every tissues and muscles of my lifeless body are still performing their wonder duty.

Consequently, Hume (1874-1875) I thank God for the gift of life and the gift of the right to put an end to my misery life (295). Hume also argues that suicide is not a breach of duty to the society. People who suicide are usually in some situation that instead of doing good to society, they have become a hindrance for people who are beneficial for the it. To put an end to their life means they have stop being a hindrance and also stop doing good for the society. If this would consider a crime then it should be the most harmless one. Hume also underlines that if I can retire of his job because of my age or illness, I can also retire from life, from the society altogether because of my miseries. Moreover, " I am not obliged to do a small good to society at the expense of a great harm to myself" (297). Hume also demonstrate that self-annihilation is not a breach of duty towards ourselves. He (1874-1875) states that no one would suicide if there is not a reason for it or if his life is still worth living (297). While age, sickness, or misfortune may make our life worse than death and it's not a crime why freeing ourselves from these is a crime? He (1874-1875) concludes " tis the only way that we can then be useful to society, by setting an example, which, if imitated, would preserve to every one his chance for happiness in life and would effectually free him from all danger or misery" (197). Kant (1930) on the other hand, is strongly against self-annihilation to escape misery. It is actually a self-contradictory act. Free will is employed for suicide but a person has to exist to have free will and the person destroys his free will in the process. The use of life to

terminate life itself is self-contradictory (300). Although, there are cases where suicide is acceptable. Cases when it is the only way to preserve one's dignity, virtue or when there are noble motives because "live is not to be highly regarded for its own sake" (301). Indeed, human moral law is to preserve their dignity and not to preserve their life. Moreover, Kant (1930) argues that it is one's duty to lead a pleasurable life (303). In order to fulfill this duty, one cannot terminate his life. It would be a breach of one's duty and he cannot be respected by others. Since he has abandoned his right to be human, humans don't have to respect him neither. On the religion scene, Kant (1930) claims that "God is our owner; we are his property" (304). Therefore, we cannot go against our owner's will, "but a suicide opposes the purpose of his Creator" (304). Kant (1930) also states "as we remember the truth that it is God's intention to preserve life" (304). Consequently we are created with self-preservation power. Only God can tell us when to leave this world, to proceed with suicide, to be a rebel, according to Kant (1930), "it degrades man's inner worth below that of the animal creation" (304). I find that Kant's argument against suicide is not well founded when it comes to religion field. He affirms about God's will but how does he know? Where is God's will written? There is no book or paper or anything from God written about his will. Kant (1930) also states, "so as long as we can remember the truth that it is God's intention to preserve life" (304) and "His providence works for our good" (304). So why is he giving me an incurable disease that would make my life worse than death? Is God doing me good when making my life miserable? I believe that when I go to a restaurant, for example, the waiter brings me a rotten dish and asks me to eat it. I can simply say no and

leave the restaurant. Accordingly, I have not order some terminal illness for my life, I have the right to deny it and leave. If that waiter forces me to eat the rotten dish, I believe he/she is not doing it for my own good but is being mean. Therefore, if God has forced me to live a life worse than death, it is surely not a good plan. Kant (1930) states “ God is our owner” (304). In my opinion, if I owe something to someone, I shall give it back. For example, when I borrow a book from the library, I have to return it because it is not mine. Self-annihilation, in this case, is to return life before the deadline. Kant (1930), then, presents two paradox arguments by contrasting his idea of human dignity and human is God’s property. If “ we are His property” (304), am I not “ regarded as things, like all other animals” (303), no more, no less? Where is my dignity in this case? Indeed, it makes me one of the Roman slaves where my master has forbid me to commit suicide. However, this is the case where Kant accepts the notion of honorably suicide. I agree with Hume (1874-1875) when he states “ neither does my death, however voluntary, happen without its consent” (296). If God has written my life, how can a character from the book change the way the story goes? Suicide may be the way God want me to leave this world. Resisting it would make me a rebel and an unhappy God. Consequently, curing my disease is an infidel act and doctors are rebel soldiers against the Almighty. However, suicide is in fact not a bad act. I can actually choose how to die. It is up to me to choose a painful or smooth death. I should therefore thank God for giving me this possibility to make a choice. I would prefer to have to have painless death rather than having a rock landing on my head, leaving me in a painful half dead condition for the rest of my life. In this second scenario, I can’t fulfill my

duty of leading a pleasurable life. Living in this condition is then a breach of duty towards myself and I don't even have the choice to commit an honorably suicide. According to Hume (1874-1875), my situation "hinders some person" (297) and my suicide is acceptable. However, I do not fully agree with this argument. I can be a hindrance to some person and the society but I still want to live. In this case, Hume's argument has somehow encouraged me to suicide and makes me guilty for not having it done. I would like to add an argument why suicide is not a breach of duty to the society. Suppose my parents give me a cake, which is a metaphor for life. I'm grateful for the cake. However, if the cake is spoiled, would my parents still want me to devour it? No. They would ask me not to and to throw the cake away. They wanted me to enjoy the cake but there is absolutely no enjoyment with a spoiled cake. Consequently, people who really care for me, also care for my happiness, my enjoyment in life. For the scenario when the rest of my life is guaranteed with miseries, these people would also agree with me that I should throw the spoiled cake or my life away although it is a sad because suicide is the only solution. It is the same for a loving God; he would not want me to eat the spoiled cake neither. Why do I have to eat a spoiled cake while others are having a delicious one? So they would feel good comparing theirs to mine? Hume (1874-1875) agrees "I am not obliged to do a small good to society at the expense of a great harm to myself" (297). In addition, if my illness robbed me of the capacity of self-annihilation, I must then ask someone to do it for me. Then I have become a surely massive hindrance in making that person a murderer. However I do not totally agree with Hume (1874-1875) when he states "a man, who retires

from life, does not harm the society: He only ceases to do good" (296). What if the man leaves behind an enormous debt for his credit card or three small children with no one to take care of them? On the other hand, Kant (1930) strongly affirms, "having himself discarded his humanity, he cannot expect that others should respect humanity in him" (302) and this is a "criminal act of the disgusting" (302). However, if I committed suicide, I have therefore ceased to exist. Why should others disgust a non-existent thing? Hume (1874-1875) confirms "I believe that no man ever threw away life, while it was worth keeping" (297). I would have never throw my cake away if it were still good. In conclusion, in the point of view of religion, the lack of evidence in proving God's existence generates the fragility in Kant (1930) argument against suicide. Human dignity should also be question because "we are His property" (304) which makes human as an object. Hume (1874-1875) comes in the scene with convincing argument claiming if God has a plan for me, then suicide is also among his plan (296). Self-annihilation is also not a transgression to the society. If the society does care for me, it would wish for my happiness instead of miseries for the rest of my life. By saying all this, I should specify that life is worth living and no one should throw his/her life away while it is still worth living. Suicide is only morally justified when it is well thought about with good reasons. In case of facing a terminal illness, you are facing a choice between staying in your country and to be permanently torture till death or move to another country and the people there would immediately put you to sleep forever. Common sense, without being a masochist, would eventually choose to move to another country. In this rare case, self-annihilation is morally approved. References

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