

# Participation



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Descriptive and Normative claims Normative and descriptive claims are often misinterpreted by the people. “ In normative claims, a conclusion is drawn from the observation made above, namely that some action is wrong in one society and is right in another. This is a normative claim because it goes beyond simply observing that this action is treated as wrong in one place and treated as right in another” 1.

Suicide is a controversial topic people often confused with and used as normative and descriptive claims. Proponents of suicide argue a person has the moral authority to decide up on whether to live or not. They believe that the sole authority of one’s life is the person himself and hence he should be allowed to take decisions whether to continue his life or not. The above argument seems to be a convincing one when we analyse it in a glance. But when we analyse it more deeply we will identify the difficulties associated with such claims. A person who is allowed to terminate his life may have lot of social and family commitments. He might be a father, a son, or a brother to somebody and he has some moral responsibilities to all these relatives. Moreover, when we analyse this case on religious terms, again we cannot support one’s decision to commit suicide. Life is a precious thing given to the human by the creator and no human so far succeeded in creating an artificial life. Only the creator has the authority to destroy or modify his creations and hence only God has the authority to take our life back as per the religious beliefs. So in normal case, if he commits suicide, it cannot be accepted as a moral or ethical activity.

At the same time, consider the same person in a pathetic condition, suffering from lot of pain due to chronic diseases. If he is in a no hope condition or the doctors have written off his case, (say in a paralysed condition with lot of

pain and incapable of doing anything without the help of others), he can seek the assistance of a physician to terminate his life (Physician assisted suicide). In such cases, it cannot be considered as a normal suicide. In other words, a suicide can be justified if the person was in a no hope condition with nobody to assist him and the medical science has written off his case.

Moreover, the morality and ethics behind an action depends on a person's belief in some cases. In the above example itself, if the person happens to be a nonbeliever in God or religion, then his decision to seek the help of a physician to terminate his life because of pathetic conditions might be justified.

In short, a claim or argument can be classified as normative or descriptive based on a detailed analysis alone. In other words, surface level analysis will not help a person to classify the claims as normative or descriptive.

#### Bibliography

1. " Ethics: Descriptive, Normative and Analytic" 2009, About. com, [http://atheism. about. com/library/FAQs/phil/blfaq\\_phileth\\_catex. htm](http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/phil/blfaq_phileth_catex.htm), (Accessed October 08, 2009)