**Paradox of Suicide**

**Suicide; A Product of Free Will or Matter of Public Affair**

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# **Introduction**

The paper will try to reason how the moral and ethical arguments against suicide are ambiguous for their negligence in not incorporating ‘Freedom of Self’ into their arguments because of their negation of freedom itself, there is a notion of authority in all of them whether in the form of God or state that qualifies the ultimate power of action with them. It is a freedom that was never delivered to the human beings since the creation of morals, society, religions, and laws; even as a fundamental principle, it has been oppressed by societies and constitutions across the globe due to the fear of actions, like suicide. The major question that the paper will try to answer is whether suicide is an individual matter, or does it qualify to be a societal problem?

The first section of the paper will deal with the anti-suicide thesis, in which we will be discussing approaches from different time periods; starting from Kant; whose philosophy was a direct outcome of his religious belief in Christianity. He believed that all those actions which cannot be universalized are immoral and must be negated, which means that if all human races cannot perform that action, then it is against the moral code. An alternate theory of his was of self-love and suicide, his discourse was that self-annihilation is an act that originates from self-love and as the two things are contrary because self-love according to Kant, denotes the will to live whereas, the action of suicide is an opposite of living. Moving on with the time, the religions lost their influence both on state and philosophy due to the political chaos of renaissance period such as the French Revolution or The Great Plague. In the midst of all this, contractarian philosophers jumped into the matter. We will be discussing the theory of social contract by Jean Jacques Rousseau, who believed every individual is obliged of state and citizens in it. He believed that an individual must act by looking at the social chains – such as parents, friends, family, law. Suicide in his view is a negation of society and its citizens and therefore, must not be permitted by the law. In the 20th Century, Albert Camus tried to portray the daily life of human being with the myth of Sisyphus; incorporating both absurdism and existential meanings (small meanings that we create in our life on daily basis). He emphasized on the fact that suicide is similar to religions, traditions and ideals; where one tries to find an escape from the absurdity of life, but it is not the right thing to do because it takes away the freedom that the life has condemned us with. On the other hand, Emil Cioran believed that suicide is a foolish act in two ways; one, because it is as meaningless as life so why bother dying and secondly, it is too late to kill oneself, because it would have been better not to be born but dying after getting a chance to live is rather vague.

In the second section we will be looking at the pro-suicide thesis, in which the main focus will remain on the Freedom of self. Starting with the pioneer of ultimate freedom – Arthur Schopenhauer. We will see how he believed that everyone has a right to kill themselves because they have an ultimate authority of their body and soul, his arguments revolve around two variables; fear of death and fear of life and he believed that self-destruction appears as an option when fear to life is bigger than fear to death. He even served as an influence for other philosophers to come, one of which was Phillip Mainlander, who used Schopenhauer’s idea of will, and sub-categorized it into two; will to live and will to die as he believed that both are necessary to exist. Mainlander was not just inspired by Schopenhauer but Jeremy Bentham as well and came up with an idea of utilitarian suicide. He believed that life is for those who want to live and those individuals who do not want to live must commit suicide in order to leave the resources of life for those who are willing to live. He himself implemented this idea and committed suicide. At the same period of history, another thinker Max Stirner came up with an idea of egoism (although inspired by Schopenhauer, he believed it to be novel). He described selfishness as the driving force of every action and therefore all acts according to him are right if they are satisfying the subjective ego.

The last part of the paper is a synthesis of both arguments. It will not only be in favor of freedom of self, but it will also answer the primary question of the paper. It will identify the ambiguities in the pro-suicide arguments – showing how individual self has always been overlooked by pro-suicide theorists to satisfy one objective or another. The paper will conclude that the whole idea of condemning suicide arises from the negation of freedom of self and nothing else but once you take it into consideration then suicide is not only an individual matter but logical as well.

1. **Society Must Defend, Man, as a Social Animal**

Aristotle used the term ‘social animals’ to describe human being. He believed society to play an integral role in the construction of self. The cynics according to Aristotle belong to the wilderness and must not be referred to as humans just on the bases of their anatomy alone. In his book ‘*Politics*’ he wrote,

“Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.” [[[1]](#footnote-1)]

He regarded society as one of the vital elements of human existence, and thus he argued that whatever is done against the state is unlawful, therefore, punishable. Aristotle like his teacher Plato, regarded suicide as an act of cowardice. Throughout the medieval and renaissance period, their arguments were used in assistance with theology to prove suicide as a wrong act like when Augustine placed it in the realms of sin or Dante portrayed the suicides in the darkest pit of the hell in his famous book Inferno. It was in the early 19th Century that human beings started realizing the inner workings of human mind and it was not so long, after that they started portraying suicide as a result of an erroneous mind.

In 1897, Emile Durkheim composed a book ‘Le Suicide’ in which he was able to figure out an overall impact of social institutions on suicide. Formerly, suicide was believed to be an act of those who go astray from the path of God, or the ones suffering from psychological and emotional disorders. Whilst concluding his book, he advised on increasing social integration in order to decrease the rate of suicide. [[[2]](#footnote-2)] In the contemporary world, it would not be wrong to say that we have learned from Durkheim and thus we are continuously trying to promote his idea of social integration to help people with suicidal tendencies. The formation of helplines and welfare organizations are one of the many ways in which the authorities are currently responding to suicide. However, the suicide rates are on the rise and according to the census conducted in 2017; almost eight hundred thousand people commit suicide every year globally and the reasons behind these suicides include simple psychological disorders, increase of societal decadence, self-insecurities, anomie, and melancholia. [[3]](#footnote-3)

Throughout the existence, philosophers have tried to make arguments against the act of suicide, and influenced the human beings to live, strive and flourish in all times.

* 1. **Sin Against Universalization**

One of the major arguments against suicide comes from Immanuel Kant’s external cause argument in which he advocates that suicide as an act gets motivated by self-love, but as the act and aim are contradictory in nature, therefore, self-destruction is wrong. In extension of this argument, he believes that if the act and aim are in contradiction, then the act itself is a product of irrationality. Kant believes that self-love is a force that drives us for the survival and to live. It is the same self-love that according to him, gets corrupted by the ideals that it pictures a contrary as true. Self-love in a corrupted mind allows the emergence of self-annihilation, as an escape from that corruption but this state according to Kant is something that a person must deal with, without getting intimidate by the escape.

Later in his *‘Lectures on Ethics’* he establishes that the natural law is to preserve oneself and because suicide is against that preservation, therefore, it is unethical.

“Suicide evokes revulsion, because everything in nature seeks to preserve itself…” [[4]](#footnote-4)

The other argument that Kant puts forward, is his famous Categorical Imperative of the universal principle. Kant’s primary argument for every act is simple,

“Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time, will, that it should become a universal law” [[5]](#footnote-5)

Therefore, if there is a person who is suicidal and wants to kill himself, he must think that can he universalize the concept and what will be the outcome of that universalization? The implementation of suicide on universal level will only result in the eradication of human beings instead of serving the real purpose of universality and that is to maximize the ethical quotient in order to achieve an ideal state; a failure to adapt to this schema categorizes suicide as an immoral and irrational act altogether.

* 1. **Against Authority & Contract**

What qualifies an act as a crime or sin? presence of an authority. Since antiquity, suicide has been dealt as a sin or a crime against authority. Throughout the history, religions and mythologies put a negative eye on suicide like in Hinduism; they believed the committing a suicide is an act of disturbance (In general, the disturbance of the cycle of life) and is punished in the next life by being born as a reptile or an inferior being, the Buddhist believed that a person who commits suicide can never achieve Nirvana. However, the most authoritarian view about suicide comes from, Christians and Muslims who believed it to be a blasphemous act as it denies the authority of God on life and death. All Abrahamic religions significantly assert on the fact that body and soul belong to God, and you are just the keeper of this body with the soul that God has provided for this lifetime, to live in accordance with the will of God, and committing suicide is therefore literally going against the will of God which is equivalent to committing heresy.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) [[6]](#footnote-6)

“And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right. And whoever is killed unjustly - We have given his heir authority but let him not exceed limits in taking life. Indeed, he has been supported” (Al-Issra, 17: 33) [[7]](#footnote-7)

Similarly, after the enlightenment period, religions lost their control over the western civilization and the identity of God started becoming rather vague and bizarre, something existent only in the speech but the belief in Him was fading over time. So, after the escape from the former authority, a new authority was to take birth and with its birth it acquired all the sovereignty that was once held by God. The state emerged as a new God in the post-enlightenment period, now every crime was a crime against the state, but this new period also amplified the concept of freedom which was once overshadowed by the concepts of karma, fate, and predestination. So, in order to deal with the freedom; the legal laws were formulated.

Thinkers of that era tried to understand the workings of this emerging God and came up with almost similar concepts as Jean Jacques Rousseau who said that ‘*Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains*’, this phrase is often interpreted literally.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, an alternate interpretation of it can be, that man is free in itself, he makes his own choices and decisions but because of the constraints he often amends those choices to satisfy the limitations of the so-called chains – like family, peers, culture, religion etcetera. Rousseau in his book ‘*Of the Social Contract*’, sketches an imaginary history of human life, how we have evolved from a savage man - ones who used to dwell in the wilderness, to the citizens - who live in accordance with their self-made laws and the habitat where they are applied is known as society. He regards the construction of society which came into existence as an agreement between a master and a slave but later in his book, he termed it as a ‘*social contract*’ - one between a man and the whole state.

This idea of social contract allows the provision of morality, ethical systems, and laws, therefore, at the time of our birth, we enter the imaginary and metaphysical contract with the state and the people around our existence. These bindings become part of our life, that one cannot leave and must learn to live by. One can argue against the systems, can amend them, and might reject them at an individual level but this disillusionment of individualism is the main subject of Rousseau’s discourse; that we do feel that we are free because cognitively and rationally we might be, but in reality, this idea of freedom is constrained in itself.

Therefore, every act committed against the laws are also against the human life in that state. If we interpret suicide in accordance with Rousseau’s theory, we might be able to understand that suicide can be perceived as an individual act and it might be, but because we have social constraints therefore, the provision of suicide is against the state, society, family and all humanity as it hinders the functionalistic process of society by depressing its members and influencing others; creating chaos and oppressing social utility.

Thus, social contractarian philosophers like Rousseau, assert more on the effects of suicide rather than the act itself but formulation of their arguments is rather an indirect critique of the act. Just like the act of stealing; as an act you are just taking material object that belongs to someone else, but its effect is the one that labels it as immoral and unlawful, as the person whose object has been stolen, is the one to face the depravity. Similarly, suicide itself can be seen as a simple act of dying, and can be justified equivalent to natural or accidental death but it is the effect of suicide which first effects the person committing suicide of further choice (as in life) as explained in earlier section but here contractarians believe that it hinders the Pareto equilibrium of the society (a point where the utility of every single actor in a society is optimal) by causing sorrow to the relations (parents, children and spouses etcetera), deprivation (every human being living in a society is an asset to the society) to the society and overall negative influence to the ones around.

* 1. **Suicide as Rejection of Freedom**

The primary question in the contemporary world since 19th Century is, what is the meaning of life or is life meaningless? Most philosophers during the 19th Century like Nietzsche, Feuerbach, and Marx among others, regarded life as meaningless. The problem of nihilistic life received an immense acceptance during the first half of 20th Century where people were dealing with plagues, pandemics, famines, and especially bloody and catastrophic wars. Realizing this public hysteria that was leading to many issues including sudden increase in suicide cases, many philosophers tried to solve the problem of meaninglessness.

Albert Camus is one of the first philosophers of 20th Century to address the issue of suicide in the light of nihilism. In his book *‘Myth of Sisyphus’*, in which he discovers a connection between an individual and suicidal thought. He regards a person who commits a suicide to be a confessor and a sufferer, he writes,

“In a sense, and in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you don’t understand it... Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized... the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering.” [[9]](#footnote-9)

In his book, he later constructs on the above proposition that how the absence of meaning for a certain period of time (that we now regard as existential crisis), leads to self-destruction. Camus, unlike philosophers of earlier times recognizes the individual freedom and base his whole argument around that. The life is absurd to him like the life of Sisyphus, an ancient mythology, portrays Sisyphus as a prisoner of the curse of gods. He was asked to roll the stone above the cliff, for eternity. In all this story, Camus recognizes the very moment where Sisyphus walks down after placing the stone at the cliff top, he believes that in that moment Sisyphus is strong and conscious of his suffering and as he stands at the ground to watch the ball rolling back down, just to be pushed back up again. He uses this example very gracefully to explain his take on life, he writes,

“Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm — this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the ‘why’ arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.” [[10]](#footnote-10)

Camus therefore believes that the point where ‘why’ arises, is similar to the point where Sisyphus is standing at the end and watching the stone coming back to him. At the initial point where he refutes the idea of suicide lies in his take on fictional characters like Don Juan and Kirilov; where he tries to demonstrate that religion, illusions (pleasures) and death are similar factors where one tries to escape the absurd reality of this world because of their individual belief in self. In other terms, he asserts on the fact that life may be meaningless, but one needs to be like Sisyphus and not Don Juan or Kirilov; in short, someone who creates pleasure of that absurdity.

Camus has portrayed this will to live and absurdism in many of his characters such as Meursault from ‘The Stranger’. Jean Paul Sartre used this character and while critiquing he says,

“The absurd man will not commit suicide; he wants to live, without relinquishing any of his certainty, without hope, without illusions and without resignation either. He stares at death with passion and this fascination liberates him. He experiences the "divine irresponsibility" of the condemned man” [[11]](#footnote-11)

Again, Sartre assert on the fact that how it is important to be aware of death and the mortal life but at the same time, one must walk through life without optimistic contingencies in mind because the realization of them being an illusion leads to existential crisis that usually works as gallows leading its victim to be a potential suicide. Glorifying on that, Romanian philosopher, Emil Cioran believed that only optimistic people commit suicide,

“Only optimists commit suicide, optimists who no longer succeed at being optimists. The others, having no reason to live, why would they have any to die?” [[12]](#footnote-12)

Cioran’s idea arises from the fact that a pessimist will already negate hopes and ideals, for he is aware of the suffering therefore, there is no reason that they should kill themselves. In his book ‘*On the Heights of Despair*’ he says that ‘we always kill ourselves too late’ which arise from his idea that it was better to not have been born.

Cioran unlike many other philosophers and thinkers, believed suicide as an ignition and an option by which one can thrive in this world but he also refuses the idea of suicide on the fact that it is as meaningless as living therefore, why die a miserable death.

“Why don’t I commit suicide? Because I am as sick of death as I am of life” [[13]](#footnote-13)

“I live only because it is in my power to die when I choose to: without the idea of suicide, I’d have killed myself right away” [[14]](#footnote-14)

Therefore, unlike Sartre and Camus, Cioran believed suicidal thoughts to be advantageous to realize that life is seconds away from death. He believed it to be a vital force if it exists as an idea, but as an act, he believes it to be vague and meaningless for he believes that acting on suicide is not a resolution to the suffering because death is as miserable as life.

1. **Freedom of Self; Suicide as an act of Freewill**

We see throughout history that suicide was permitted by philosophers and religions for one reason or another for example, Confucius believed that if one cannot live a righteous life, one in accordance with the basic morals. [[15]](#footnote-15) On the other hand, ancient Sumerian culture also calls for suicide to restore honor, to save oneself from being killed and for a recently deceased guru or husband. This concept is known as Seppuku. Ancient Indians also practiced two types of suicides at societal level; Jauhar (mass suicide by women when their men have been defeated in a battle) and Sati (women burn themselves on the demise of their husbands).

Even in the ancient western civilizations like Roman empire and Greek city states, suicide was permissible in certain conditions. One of the major references comes for Seneca, who himself committed suicide along with his other stoic philosophers Zeno and Critias. He wrote in a letter to Lucilius,

“We should wait, say they, for the end decreed by nature. But one who says this does not see that he is shutting off the path to freedom. The best thing which eternal law ever ordained was that it allowed to us one entrance into life, but many exits” [[16]](#footnote-16)

Stoics were the first or probably the seconds after Cynics like Diogenes of Sinope and Anacharsis, to believe in total human freedom but this ancient tradition only reincarnate during the 19th century onwards, because of the cloud of nihilism and after the death of state religion. This loss of meaning of life resulted in the development of many modern schools of thoughts such as, Nihilism, Existentialism, Egoistic Pessimism, Marxism and Absurdism. All of these schools emphasized on the freedom and freewill. Nietzsche however believed that it is a decadence which we are living in, following the death of God and only an Ubermensch or Zarathustra will change the moral standing of this world.

Many of these modern philosophers challenged the authorities and allowed the consumption of will and recognized suicide as one of the ultimate means of rebellion, freedom, and individualism.

* 1. **Right to One’s Own Life**

“... Though it is obvious that there is nothing in the world a man has a more incontestable right to than his own life and person” [[17]](#footnote-17)

Arthur Schopenhauer was the first to realize the absolute freedom of self. He believed man to be free of all duties, illusions, and responsibilities, for him a man is just an individual. Although we do see the mention of human freedom in the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diogenes but Schopenhauer heightened its realm by allowing the right to die. He believed that only monotheistic religions prevent suicide and all philosophers who have ever presented an argument against suicide, were influenced by them in one way or another.

Schopenhauer believes in suffering and terror of world but in order to address suicide, he also looks into terror of death. According to his discourse, a person can only live a life until he can bear the fear of life, which he believes to be higher in concentration due to the presence of will - will to live. Therefore, fear of death becomes lesser than fear of life when psychological or as he writes ‘spiritual pain’ becomes unbearable and thus, in order to heal that pain one free himself from the tension of life (commits suicide).

“It will generally be found that where the terrors of life come to outweigh the terrors of death a man puts an end to his life... great spiritual suffering makes us insensible to physical pain... It is which makes suicide easier: for the physical pain associated with it loses all its significance in the eyes of the one afflicted by excessive suffering” [[18]](#footnote-18)

This idea of freedom of self is what makes Schopenhauer’s theory of ‘suicide’ unique, in a sense that it realizes the individuality and how the morality arises from an individual and only assumed to be universalized to satisfy the ego of the society. His ideas influenced three of the major thinkers of nihilism; Phillip Mainlander, Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche, who glorified on Schopenhauer’s theory of ‘will’ and synthesized their own arguments in favor of suicide.

* 1. **Utilitarian Suicide**

In biological sciences we learn about an incredibly unique and rather strange fact – cellular suicide or apoptosis. It is a mechanism that occur regularly in our bodies by which the infected cells kill themselves in order to save other cells around them; it can result from the invasion of other pathogens (viruses, bacteria, and so on) in the cellular body or in case of any sort of mutation in their genes. [[19]](#footnote-19)

This natural phenomenon is quite similar to the utilitarian point of view of *‘Greater Good’*. Jeremy Bentham’s Utilitarian views also give provision for the conduct of suicide on the condition that it elevates the overall utility of the society. Therefore, any man suffering from psychological, emotional, and physiological problems is a negative variable for the utility and therefore, if he wishes to end his own life, he must oblige to protect others. One thing worth mentioning is that Bentham himself never approved or disapproved of suicide, however, a German philosopher Phillip Mainlander used the concept of Greater Good to back his pro-suicide stance. He believed that a person who wants to die, must commit suicide in order to leave the sources of this world for those who want to live. He categories sublime human character into – the heroes, the wise and the wise heroes; the last one is an ultimate form of existence because only a wise hero will do the necessary act of suicide. In his book, ‘*Philosophy of Redemption*’, he writes,

“The most sublime character is the wise hero. He stands on the position of the wise, but does not wait, like him, in resignation for death, but tries to use his life as a useful weapon, to fight for the good of humanity. He dies with the sword in his hand (figuratively or literally), and is every minute of his existence ready, to surrender good and blood for it... He is in possession of the sweetest individuality and lives the real, blissful life.” [[20]](#footnote-20)

Therefore, Mainlander declares suicide as the highest level of a utilitarian act but what we are missing here is his idea that life is only for those who want to live a life and not for those who want to suffer death. He refers earlier in his book to the idea of ‘Will,’ which, as discussed in the earlier section, he borrowed from Arthur Schopenhauer, but he believed the idea to be incomplete and divided it into two parts, ‘will to live’ and ‘will to die’. Now these notions seem synonymous to ‘fear of death’ and ‘fear of life’, but with certainty they are antonymous in their nature as one is, need (in case of will; one always chooses what one desires for), and another represents submission (in case of fear; one always lives the one with minimal fear factor).

He believed that one only lives or dies, but an integral part for both, is will. The will represents the highest point of conscience where one tries to construct his own existence, morals, and other stuff. Unlike Schopenhauer’s theory of will which was placed in metaphysical realms, Mainlander believed it to be more of semi-metaphysical in a way that it is kind of like energy. He discoursed that ‘will’ is a part that makes human beings’ cognitive animals; it is a driving force for the creation of ideas and meanings. He advised on the dangers of this will as well, like if this will become collective then it works as laws, religions, political movements and etc., and this ‘collective will’ tries to sabotage the individual will. This, according to Mainlander takes away the essence of being human.

Building upon the above proposition, we can see that suicide also becomes a problem only when there is oppression against an individual’s will and collective will, takes precedence over. According to Mainlander this collective will is inherited because of its pro-life stance and as he uses the word for layman ‘disinherited ones’, he figures out that they have rejected/suppressed their own personal will and it is only because the collective will create an image of optimistic life, contrary to the personal beliefs and understanding; which eventually nullifies in the Garden of Eden and blindfolds us.

* 1. **Psychological Egoism**

As defined by Stanford Encyclopedia for Philosophy,

“Psychological egoism claims that each person has but one ultimate aim: his own welfare. This allows for action that fails to maximize perceived self-interest.” [[21]](#footnote-21)

One of the famous philosophers who believed in this concept was, Max Stirner. He believed everything to be a product of will. He believed that the pragmatic and altruistic motives of the society construct an absurd image of self-benefit that allows the person to denounce his own will. In his famous book *‘Ego and Its Own’* he describes,

“You are to benefit yourself, and yet you are not to seek your benefit.” [[22]](#footnote-22)

He believed that every human act is something that fulfills our self-interest, and they are also the scariest of all, like suicide. Stirner argues that selfishness is the motive force behind will, without selfishness human beings can neither survive, nor can they die but he also critiques the authorities, who are the proponent of ‘unselfishness’. He further concludes that they only preach this to maintain their own selfishness.

“The state calls its own violence, law, but that of the individual, crime.” [[23]](#footnote-23)

Here the question arises that what really is a selfish behavior? Well, it is the utmost point where one becomes free, in a sense that he takes responsibility of an action. Stirner argues that everyone has a right to only himself and whatever he can have. He writes,

“My power is my property. My power gives me property. My power am I myself, and through it am I my property” [[24]](#footnote-24)

Therefore, Stirner’s argument for psychological egoism allows us to construct suicide as an act that is driven by selfishness (which is true, because in that moment a person does not think of the impact his death will cause, but only his own self-interest). This establishes that every person who commits a suicide is unable to contain himself and instead of making further decisions, he kills himself and with it, he kills his ego. In other words, the person also nullifies his conscience with his body.

Stirner himself regarded all immoral acts to be only immoral because of the authority that has declared it as ‘immoral’. He gives the similar discourse that is present in the philosophy of Nietzsche and Sartre; that morality arises from an individual’s self and remains subjective unless or until, it is implemented or rather imposed by the authority.

Another philosopher who conceived of suicide as an individual act of will, was David Hume. In his Essay *‘Of Suicide and the Immortality of Soul’*, he argues that man only kills himself when he believes it to be useless and Hume further questions the anti-suicide theorists, that what can be the harm of suicide on the society? None, and as for any objections? There remain none because with man; his obligations die as well. [[25]](#footnote-25) Therefore, whatever follows is an obligation of the associates and not others. He defends the act of suicide by calling it equivalent to accidental death but better. He believes that in accidental death we die of someone else’s will and conscious (like being hit by a bus) but in suicide it is our own will and cognition that drives us to the end. Hume emphasizes on the fact, that suicide must not be looked upon as an act of destruction but as a normal act where a person who was not able to live, killed himself and according to Hume, therefore, we must respect the individual choice.

1. **Synthesis; In Favor of Human Liberty**

After looking at both arguments in the previous section, I will try to prove the problem that I highlighted at the start of the paper, that the anti-suicide arguments do not take ‘freedom of self’ into consideration and how there are many loopholes in their arguments that backfire them in return. In the following section I will try to provide rebuttals for all three arguments (contractarian, moralistic and existentialist) that we discussed in the first section of the paper using pro-suicide arguments and my own theoretical understanding of the matter.

* 1. **Hoax of the Social Contract**

According to the contractarians, there is a metaphysical relationship that I and every single person in this world share with society and its citizens. It seems that Socrates was right to drink poison from hemlock, after all he was a danger to the society as he breached the contract by corrupting the minds of the youth. However, if we reincarnate him in 21st Century, I believe he will not be persecuted by the state but radicals, conservatives, and terrorists, who are mentally still living in medieval period. There might have been charges of blasphemy against him but not of corrupting the youth because at least in this modern era we consider freedom of opinion and choice but one thing we have not recognized since that time is the ‘Freedom of Self’. There are more than two hundred nations across the globe and none of them have any clause or proposition in their constitution that talks about the freedom of self.

Rousseau tried his best to understand the relationship of an individual and society but at the same time he overlooked the individualism that was in existence since his savage man roamed the world. He was able to identify that our freedom is constrained but maybe there was a way to escape those chains as well. Let us suppose it is 19th century and there is a rich white man who owns a Black slave. One day, that slave misbehaves and in response his master chain him in his attic. That Black slave symbolizes the human condition in the society where he face restrictions to practice his freedom by his will, but is he out of options? Well, the answer is no. After few days, that slave is going to destroy himself by banging his head against the wall. He was in a situation but instead of living with the chains he freed himself by achieving annihilation. One can argue here that this act of self-destruction was influenced by something else but even then, the act holds its purity because it was according to the will of self which was not hindered by any social chain.

On the other hand, what about the self-destructive acts one commit for the contract itself, why they do not qualify as suicidal acts? Like a terrorist exploding himself in a marketplace or a soldier killing himself with grenades. In both cases, a person knows he will cease to exist, but he wants to do it. How surprising it is that the same contract prohibits and allows the similar act in different circumstances. So, we can say that contract does not really prohibit self-annihilation unless it is done by a person’s own will? It seems to be the case, because if some soldier kills himself, he is remembered as a martyr and his act is recognized as brave, whereas, if a citizen commits suicide, he is regarded as depressed, ill and coward at times.

Apparently, it seems that the social contract is not against self-destruction but disobedience and banishment. The treatment of human life as a state asset is ambiguous and inhumane. It is debatable that what is the right suicide and wrong suicide but holding someone alive just because they do not want to live is like wasting money on the ventilator for a relative who is brain dead.

Over the period, we have witnessed a change in the views of states as assisted suicide has been legalized in few countries but once again, we see an intervention of state in the matters of self-destruction. A normal procedure of assisted suicide takes around a year or two, in which many stakeholders take an active role – lawyers, doctors, psychologists and obviously the contract. It seems like a proper joke. Why is there a need of assistance to destroy one’s life? When one can always cut his wrist by a kitchen knife or take overdose of drugs or hang himself. The former is a fabricated freedom that is constrained, whereas the latter is the real freedom of self because the person who wants to destroy himself, does not require anyone. The right suicide is the one which is logical to the individual, which becomes a necessity and is executed without constraints. An appeal of death that is not corrupted by the sharing of thoughts and is conducted without an alarm for help (like committing an act to achieve someone’s attention, like a boy jumping from a building just because a girl rejected him).

We now understand that the social contract is afraid of ‘freedom of self’ because it causes a breachment, loss and rejection. It allows the person to think as an individual, and not some asset owned by the laws and citizens of a certain land. The contract’s integrity is also threatened of abolishment, destruction, and replacement because once every human being achieves the ultimate freedom – anarchic ideas will start prevailing which as well will cause an end of society.

* 1. **Thou shalt be Free**

In order to make sense of the argument ahead, I need to elaborate on the term ‘Freedom of Self’ first,

Well, ‘Freedom of Self’ is simply an individual’s right to his own body and the liberty that comes with existence; like right to live and die, with no influence or restrictions from other members of social system. As I mentioned earlier that in the contemporary period, we are becoming increasingly aware of it. In the past century, we have seen acceptance of homosexuality, transgenderism, nudism, pornography, tattoos, assisted suicide and amputation of limbs among many other things but one thing that remains controversial and unacceptable to this day is, self-annihilation.

If we look at the historical events in descending order, we will see that this acceptance of ‘freedom of self’ emerged with the coming of decadence. Now, life is lived without meaning, objective or fear because there is no God left for human beings to be judged by. As Nietzsche said, ‘God is dead... and we have killed him’[[26]](#footnote-26). It is true that human beings have revolted against the religions to attain their ego which leads us to freedom. But the fact is that we might have acquired the free will, however, we have just learned to exercise it in the realms of life because the shadows (religious dogmas and beliefs) from the past have not yet left our intuitive understanding of the world.

Here, the question arises, that how do we know that morality has died as well? It is quite simple, morality cannot be universalized, as Kant believed and just because of this very reason; morality loses its essence. Understanding of right and wrong varies from religion to religion and individual to individual; Like eating meat is right in other religions but prohibited by Hinduism or, Homosexuality is prohibited and frowned upon by religions, but at the same time, seems to be the right choice to the individual who wishes to opt for it. Now, if I talk about suicide, we see that majority of human beings believe it to be a wrong act but even if one person (tho I believe the number to be larger than that) is in favor of it. That one person will automatically nullify Kant’s Categorical Imperative of Universal Morality.

Now that religions, gods, and morality are all gone and useless, human beings exist in the absurdity of life and they are trying their best to maximize the threshold of their freedom, but the meaninglessness of existence is also inacceptable to human beings and will be the case for decades to come.

* 1. **The Freedom of Sisyphus**

I mentioned Durkheim’s book ‘Le Suicide’ at the starting of the paper and how he developed a relationship between social institutions and suicide. Although these acts are fueled by other social players in the society, the will remains with the individual. This individual’s freedom of self is often threatened by these externalities and this constraining of the realms leave him with lesser choices, for example, a man imprisoned at Bastille will only have two choices; To live in his suffering and wait for a miracle like French Revolution to occur so he can be free or to kill himself and free himself from it. At this point, Schopenhauer will say that his fear of life will be bigger than the fear of death and therefore, the person will automatically incline towards the second thought. On the other hand, Sartre and Camus will argue that the man will live his life without hope and embrace the suffering. Let us say that the man is imprisoned for life and the social order outside the dungeon is also stable, therefore, the life becomes way more bizarre and the one thing that he will do is to end it like Franz Bohme and John McAfee unless he has something to lean onto such as religion, family and even an ounce of optimism towards life.

Now, let us take Sisyphus into account and examine his punishment. First, he was punished for cheating deathwhich shows his ‘will to live’ and secondly, he was punished for eternity. Both propositions cannot be applied to a mortal individual because neither can he escape death and nor he can live for eternity. It can be said that Camus used his action of rolling stone above the hill as a metaphor by not taking into account, the other details of the story, which might be able to depict the absurdity of life, but it clearly has no connection with the topic of suicide. Primarily, Sisyphus was condemned in Tartarus and not Earth, which means he was immortal and had no option of self-annihilation, otherwise he would have escaped his suffering like our man in the previous example. In both cases, the duration of punishment is similar in one way or another, but there is a difference of options. That man has an option to kill himself and end the suffering but Sisyphus on the other hand is constrained by his immortality, which leaves him with only one option and that is to roll that stone for eternity. I believe, if he had an option to end this punishment by killing himself, he would not have rolled that stone once.

# **Conclusion**

After analyzing the loops within the anti-suicide arguments, we can clearly understand that their theories were emerging either from their personal beliefs or irrelevant inferences. As mentioned before, they overlooked the fact that human beings have ultimate freedom over their death and that is one thing serves their ego. We see a mere categorical problem on behalf of Camus and his Sisyphus; that how he failed to realize the difference of circumstance and choices. How Kant’s Categorical Imperative is like Plato’s Ideal World that can never exist and how Rousseau failed to recognize individuals as humans.

It can be said that philosophically and logically, suicide should be permissible and has its link with the ‘Freedom of self.’ Although there is a need to distinguish several types of suicide into subcategories like ‘Right Suicide’ and ‘Wrong Suicide’, because we witness that sometimes a man does not really intend to kill himself but perform such an act to receive attention, help and at times to threaten the other individuals. Therefore, I can conclude that every individual must have all the rights on their body, life, and death but not all suicides arise from personal logic and understanding but social problems as well; that can be solved and treated.

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