A brief memoir on life, living, resonsibility, and suicide

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There is something that felt fundamentally wrong when I learned about social contract theory. How can it be, that an individual must maintain their responsibility in the so-called social contract, if such a contract is not even consensual? In fact, the social contract falls short of any of the three pillars of contracts: It is not informed, for it is impossible to predict the experience of living without first coming to life; it is not voluntary, for there is no choice but to exist and live; and it is not consensual, for the same reason. Some may then proceed to ask: "then what is it, that mandates living, if it could not be adequately modelled as a contract?" But this question presumes that the reason to be found must imply that there is a mandate to live. I shall not assume this.

What naturally results from this line of thought, is the hypothesis that people have the right to an option of voluntary death, for if we are unable to make the choice before birth, we ought to, as an imperfect remedy, be able to defer this choice to when we are conscious and somewhat informed. (For the sake of brevity, let us not consider those who are unable to make such a choice.) I shall explore objections by establishing a thought experiment: imagine a world where there are "suicide booths" every here and there, and let us assume that it is impossible to be involuntarily subject to one, that there is no afterlife, that the experience of suicide is akin to permanently falling asleep, that the experience is painless, and that the remains of any body simply disappears.

A few concerns thereby arise. What if a person is temporarily overwelmed? There are a plethora of conditions which may lead an individual to consider death. Perhaps someone lost all of their savings due to a bankruptcy. Perhaps a student failed an exam. Perhaps someone just broke up with their romantic partner. We seem to be concerned, that people are prone to impulses that they would regret; so what if, hypothetically, we also implement a system that requires the person to have the consistent thought of suicide for a set duration, or another criteria of a similar nature. But then, aside from the infeasibility of agreeing on such a standard, this is a step in the way of people's exercise of their supposedly fundamental right. And it may perhaps seem arrogant that we assume that temporary pains are insufficient justifications to suicide; there are many decisions that people could *actually* regret that are often made out of an impulse, and suicide isn't even one of them as it is impossible to regret it after it has been completed. In any case, it seems wrong to impose these conditions.

It may be helpful then to analyze why I otherwise fear the hypothetical suicide booths. I believe that it boils down to (1) the fear that I myself would lose potential freedom of choice in the future that could lead me to a desirable life by taking the option of suicide, and (2) the fear that I could lose people I care about because of decisions on suicide taken by themselves on their own behalf.

The latter is, by my standard, unsound, at least as a moral argument against the act of suicide. I have had no agreement with anyone, formal or otherwise, that obligated their continued living; the expectation otherwise arises from the social context of suicide being considered taboo, and mere societal distaste is not remotely sufficient as a reason towards this issue of its kind. Then there is grevience; but while the minimization of others' grevience and misery is certainlly an admirable goal, it is still an insufficient reason in theory, as one's first and foremost responsibility is to themself. While the grevience of others may be the strongest argument against suicide on emotional terms, the socially-established nature of the assumptions it depends on voids it any possibility of becoming a responsibility per se.

The former is more complicated. A related argument quite commonly seen as one against suicide is that such an exercise of body autonomy denies the very liberty that made the act possible in the first place; it negates the presupposed condition. But this is not at all unique to the question of suicide, and is applicable to all agreements that trade some liberty for another where that liberty is scarcely available. However it is also to be recognized that there is a critical difference between those and suicide, as the latter leads to a complete abscence of choice in the future, to regret suicide or otherwise. It deprives the subject of all liberty and of all choice whatsoever. Could the succession of life itself void the necessity of liberty altogether? While I find it tempting to say yes, doing so would provide justification for many types of non-consensual and artificial deprivation of life too. I believe that it boils down to entrusting that the subject has evaluated their choices and concluded that the cecession of life is the more ideal than continuing to endure what they have been enduring. And for the fact that only the subject themself have any possibility of obtaining sufficient information to make this judgement, it is only appropriate that we leave this to themself.

[I don't really want to end this on such a note. I would probably come back and re-edit this.]