

1. *There is only one serious philosophical problem: suicide. To decide whether life is worth living or not worth living is to answer the most fundamental question of philosophy.*

The act of suicide is to declare that whatever potential lies in the rest of your time can not be better than the mysterious comforts of death. We can not know what comes after life, so to choose death is also to choose everything that might follow death. As we cannot know for certain that there is indeed anything at all after death, but we do know that there is the possibility of being nothing, choosing death is also to choose nothing, to choose not being and not being ever again. It is also to choose everything that is not now, but might be. To decide on death would demand the certainty that life, and the act of being, does not and can not ever hold anything of value. It is an irreversible decision that, to be taken rationally, would seem to need a certainty that few or none can truly possess.

To decide whether or not to commit suicide, is to decide between what is not, and what is. When philosophical questions concern themselves with what is, why it is, how it is and what it is, it is already implied that one has chosen what is and what can be over what is not. Will it not then seem fair to say that deciding between life and death, between what is and what is not, is much more fundamental than to ask ourselves why and how and what what is, is, or even why and how and what what is not, is not? Because every other question must be about what is or what is not, the choice between the two will always be the most fundamental. Deciding between life and death is the final decision between what is and what is not. And if this choice, this question, really is the most fundamental, can we then say that no other philosophical problem matters, until we have, decidedly and irrevocably, come to the decision that life is indeed worth living and concerning ourselves with? Can any other philosophical question be taken seriously before this one is answered?

As a contrast to the finality of death, living can be both choosing life, and refraining from choosing altogether. To live is therefore to be in a state of endless choice. Everyday brings the possibility of life and of death, and it brings the possibility of going on yet another day undecided. Only in life can there be a choice, for, as far as we know, it is not possible in death to choose life. Life then, is not only one of the options this ultimatum of life and death presents to us, it is also the ultimatum itself, the choice and the possibility of choosing. If this question is indeed the most fundamental of all questions, and since one of the alternatives is decidedly permanent and permits no second-guessing, it goes without saying that we can not take the consequences of a decision without absolute certainty that it is the correct one. Until we reach such a certainty, we are doomed to exist in life.

Because this decision is the most important and fundamental of any existence, it is necessary to try to obtain all the information available about both choices. We can assume that the two possibilities can not be completely and fully contemplated in all their aspects before we know everything there is to know about both choices. Before we know all there is to know, we can not rightly say that we have come to an absolute decision, and, as mentioned above, with a question of such importance, and with, in choosing one, such final consequence, a decision can not be rushed. To answer whether to live or to die, we would therefore have to know what life is and what it means to live, and equally what death is and what it means to die. It would demand not only knowledge of what is now, but everything that might ever be, and everything that might someday not be.

And is not this exactly what philosophy strives to answer? Aren't then the "why"s and "what"s and "how"s of what is and what is not exactly what we need to be able to decide whether to live or to die? This most fundamental question is not the one we have to answer first, but rather last, as it can

not truly be answered before we know the answer to every other question. All philosophical question, and really all questions of any kind, then becomes as serious and as important as the question of life or death.

Until this point I have talked about how one would have to go about to decide between life and death. But a question that might be even more important is whether we should try to decide, or rather: should we, because it is the most fundamental of all questions, devote our lives to finding an answer to it? The only thing we can know with certainty is that there will be death, and that we have never known there to be any end to death. While we are contemplating the question of life and death, the only thing we can do, is live. While death can be chosen at any point, and, by all probability, is a choice in which one might exist for all eternity, life would not, even if we were to choose it and not only live in it by lack of choice, last for more than a limited amount of years. What are the seven or twenty or eighty or even hundred years we might get to live, compared to the eternity of death that are assured us? They are nothing; a grain of sand in the desert of eternity.

Because we know that life is limited, and that death is certain, is it not a fair question to ask what difference a suicide will make? If one thinks death is the right choice, what differences will the seven, twenty, eighty or even hundred years one might have lived make, when seven, twenty, eighty or even hundred years are nothing compared to eternity? If a grain of sand is divided in half, will anyone notice? Life is so short that compared to death it is nothing. If death is the answer, it will win regardless of what actions one might take to welcome it. Who can not endure a second of pain or annoyance, when there is an eternity waiting? If death is the answer, it does not need our help.

But what then, if it is life? If the answer is that life is really worth living and that this little, insignificant life of ours is really the most valuable thing we have? If death is certain, why should we not give life every chance and opportunity, to let it be all it can be, while it can? If to decide between life and death would demand all the answers in the world, we first have to live then die to be able to decide. Until we have done so, and while we can't possibly know all we need to know to make the choice, living is really all we can do, until we no longer are alive. Since we can only live while we can, and since we can't possibly know all we need to know to decide for certain between death and life, the question might appear irrelevant: it is fundamental, but as there is in the end really no choice, do we need to know the answer? Death is already chosen for us, and while we live, should we not concern ourselves with life, with the wonders of the world, with all the philosophical questions that strive to understand what is? We can not yet know if life is worth living, but this knowledge would not matter: our life is so short, that to shorten it more can hardly make a difference. Suicide, then, becomes not a choice, but is simply rushing towards a decision already made for us. To commit suicide knowing for certain that life is not worth living, is an impossibility: we can not know it before we know all of life and death, but when we have known all of life, there is no longer a choice.

I think that to decide for certain whether life is worth living or not, will not be possible as long as we don't know anything about what it means to not live, and while there are still so many things about living and life we do not know and understand. Because it has to be answered with certainty, to answer the question of whether it is worth living, we need to know everything else; it is the question we have to answer the very last. We should first explore every aspect of life, and we should take our time doing so. The question of life's worth might be fundamental, but it is not an urgent one: while we remain mortals, we are all condemned to die, and suicide loses its decisive power - it is not a

choice, because there is not choice. Whether life is worth living or not, is not then of momentary importance: life is not eternal, and when we have got an eternity for death, can we not indulge in something that might be worthless, in case it turns out to be worth it after all?