



# Suicide and Paternalism

## Should Suicide be Paternalistically Intervened?

**Hazarika L\***

Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

**\*Corresponding author:** Lizashree Hazarika, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 122, Sabarmati hostel, India, Tel: +919717285619; Email: lizarolove@gmail.com

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### Abstract

Without any doubt suicidal deaths or despair deaths are one of the most famous deaths in this world. And this has been existing throughout the tough times in the current COVID-19 situation world-wide. The prime concern of this paper would be to basically dwell upon suicides committed by the competent persons. There are many reasons behind suicides and suicidal attempts, this paper attempts to understand the reasons and discuss the moral conditions under which suicidal interventions could be justifiable, if any. It is mainly devoted to understanding whether paternalistic intervention is justified in case of suicide? Paternalistic suicidal interventions may include, compulsory hospitalization of the target, compelling the target to change his value of life, forcible treatment etc. Since, paternalistic interventions are not widely accepted and people do not like paternalistic care so, it becomes interesting to look at the moral disparities between suicide and paternalism.

This paper shall be divided into three sections. The first section introduces both the concepts of paternalism and suicide. The second section shall include discussions regarding the conceptual exposure of the term "suicide" and further explores the reasons behind opting for suicide. In the third section, this paper shall discuss about the paternalistic intervention in suicidal cases. It will involve discussions about, whether paternalistic intervention in another person's life about ending their life against their will is at all justifiable?

**Keywords:** Competent persons; Morality; Paternalism; Rationality; Suicide

### Introduction

Suicide and paternalism are two distinct concepts but they are inseparable because the question of interference for good of the agent always arise in respect to suicidal acts. Put simply, these concepts are inseparable because whenever we think about suicide, we always think of interfering to protect the agent for his/her own good. Paternalism is a theory that is built upon the justifications and reasons provided while interfering with the target for his/her own good. It is considered as an act of interference where the paternalizer

substitutes the judgment of the target for his/her own good.<sup>1</sup> The one who supports this theory argues that paternalistic acts are justified to interfere in the lives for the other on the ground that his/her interests will be served. Some of the reasons that pro-paternalists emphasize on are- promoting the good of the target, the target is irrational to decide on his own about where his/her good lies in, the target has prior consented to the interference and that the paternalizer

<sup>1</sup> Shiffrin, S.V. "Paternalism, Unconscionability and Accommodation." In *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol 29, 2000; pp: 205-250.

is only acting in accordance with his/her desire.<sup>2</sup> Like every theory, paternalism also has its opponents called as anti-paternalists. According to anti-paternalists, it is not justifiable to intervene in personal lives where, one's actions has to do with one's own self.<sup>3</sup>

John Stuart Mill was considered as the first anti-paternalist who formulated the theory into a principle known as harm-principle.<sup>4</sup> He believes that we have a right to be left alone unless our behaviour harm other people. Society shall intervene with the actions of an individual which concerns others and not with actions that concerns oneself. And the validity of the principle is managed by the distinction that is created - self-regarding actions and other-regarding actions.<sup>5</sup> The most important goal of the harm principle was to establish that there are such acts that the freedom of those actors should not be subject to external concern. This is believed to be one of the most important tenets of liberalism and it promotes values such as privacy and freedom. However, the moral problem in case of suicide is about positioning of the suicidal act, it suggests that it is impossible to find an accurate box or group to place the suicidal act. One might wonder, whether we can place suicidal acts within self-regarding acts and propose not to intervene? If this is the case then we have to consider paternalistic interference in suicide as morally wrong. Or should we club suicidal acts with the other-regarding acts and consider paternalistic intervention for such is justifiable?

The problem lies in placing suicidal acts in exact demarcation between self-regarding and other regarding acts. Suicidal attempts or acts are not exclusively self-regarding. The scope of suicide or the suicidal acts cannot be subsumed under either of the acts because suicides are personal killings of oneself but have large impact on others. However, the impact on others does not justify paternalistic intervention rather than impact on others, it is much

interested in impact on self. Paternalistic intervention in suicidal acts can be justified only if the impact or the harm it has on himself/herself outweighs the benefit it is likely to promote. Though suicides are personal and intentional/unintentional acts and it concern others equally but this paper restricts itself from dwelling upon the concerns it has upon others. This paper will stress upon the impact suicide has on oneself and whether the reasons for choosing such a path outweighs what other thinks as good for him/her.

The morality of suicide is very controversial and it is often debated that suicide is morally wrong. Suicidal acts are fairly accommodated under both self-regarding and other-regarding acts. It is an intentional killing of oneself with no advent of harming others but in some way leaves impact on others. And that is why suicide can be also called as an other-regarding act. For the execution of this paper, it is important to understand the nature of harm in order to analyse the extent of impact suicide leaves on public or the suicidal agent. If protection of harm is to be secured by interference, then the paternalizer has to provide arguments to show that suicide causes harm or inflicts harm to the individual. Suicide will be considered as a harmful act if and only if that act damages the interests of the agent or of the social ethos that person belongs to. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the fact that suicides are also greatly used as expression of art to be vocal about one's discomfort. In this kind of suicide or gestured or expressive suicide an agent attempts to convey a message through his/her death. The attempted suicides are basically an effort to plea for the help for his own self or for the coming generation who is about to face the cruelties of life at hand. And sometimes both are inclusive like the case narrated by Childress.<sup>6</sup> The suicidal agent made her suicide a quasi-public event by having camera man videotape conversations with family and friends on this subject. Also, there is an evidence of attempted suicide in a web series named "*Working Moms*".<sup>7</sup> This series involves a character named Frankie, she has a psychological disorder where she is seen as attempting suicide several times. When asked her reasons behind her suicidal attempts, she replies that she does not do it intentionally. And claims that she wants to experience how it feels like to be in that experience. She compares her experience of suicide is like as if she is sitting on an airplane and imagines that it crashes while flying to the mountain top.

2 Ronald, Dworkin. "Liberal Community" In California Law Review, Vol.177(3), 1989; pp.36-43, Feinberg, Joel. "Legal Paternalism" In Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Vol 1(1), 1971; pp: 105-124, Van De Veer, Donald. Paternalistic Intervention: The Moral Bounds on Benevolence, Princeton University Press, N.J: 1986, Gert, Bernard and Culver, Charles. M. 1976, "Paternalistic Behavior" In Philosophy & Public Affairs, Vol.6 (1), pp.45-57.

3 Mill, John Stuart., 2006, On Liberty, edited by Alan Ryan, Penguin Group, Soccia, Danny. "Paternalism and Respect for Autonomy." In Ethics, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 100 (2), 1990, pp.318-34, Solbe, Alan. "Paternalism, Liberal Theory and Suicide." In Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 12(2), 1982, pp: 332-52.

4 Mill, John Stuart., 2006, On Liberty, edited by Alan Ryan, Penguin Group.

5 Mill, John Stuart., 2006, On Liberty, edited by Alan Ryan, Penguin Group.

6 Childress, James, F. Who Should Decide? Paternalism in Health Care, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 159.

JO Roman committed suicide because she had cancer and felt that death was better than suffering from her disease and from chemotherapy, because she wanted to create "on my own terms the final stroke of my life's canvas."

7 "Working Moms" by Catherine Reitman, 2020.

The morally problematic nature of paternalism makes suicidal intervention more crucial to be taken into account for this study. The two main moral issues that entangles regarding the case of suicide are- Is suicide morally acceptable and if so, under what circumstances? And whether another person is justified in stopping or intervening the person who attempts or contemplates suicide?

### Suicide: Self-regarding or Other Regarding act

There are more than 30000 reported suicides every year in every country. But since suicides appears to be voluntarily taken in most of the cases, so promotion of good may appear to conflict with respect for choice of person. The question of who should control- when and how we should die and live is one of the most troubling issues we face today. Before dwelling upon the morality of suicide, it is important for us to understand, what suicide is? Or what counts as suicide? What does suicide consist of? These questions will provide a basis to differentiate suicidal acts from other self-destructive acts. Beauchamp and Childress argue that one should opt for a stipulative definition of suicide, which is conceptual, descriptive and non-evaluative.<sup>8</sup> They said that, an act is suicide if and only if one terminates one's life intentionally, no matter what the conditions and precise nature of intention or causal route to death. Suicide has always been defined as murder and defining it as self-murder prejudices one's understanding of suicide as a wrongful act. Suicide should rather be understood as self-killing, where there are no prejudices concerning its moral evaluation. It is considered as a morally inappropriate act because of the irreversible nature of the suicidal act.

Historically, the origin of the term "suicide" form Latin word "sui" of oneself and "caedere", to kill. This dates to Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici (The Religion of a Doctor)* which spurred debate of suicide to the morality of suicide.<sup>9</sup> Emile Durkheim, a French Sociologists is further credited with the first influential study of suicide. In his classical sociological work, *Le Suicide* Durkheim suggests that suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act by victim himself, which he knows will produce the result.<sup>10</sup> Operational Criteria for Determination of Suicide (OCDS) defines suicide as an act inflicted upon oneself with an intent of killing oneself.<sup>11</sup>

8 Beauchamp, Tom. L. & Childress, James, F. Principles of Biomedical Ethics, Oxford University Press, 1989.

9 Browne, Thomas. *Religio Medici: The Religion of a Doctor*, 1643.

10 Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, The Free Press, 1951.

11 Centers For Disease Control & Prevention, "Operational

Suicide, here is considered as self-inflicted harm that was intended by the decedent himself/herself. Oxford English Dictionary says that, Suicide is where one who dies by his own hand; one who commits self-murder; the act or an act of taking one's own life, self-murder. According to Thomas Szaz, suicide refers to taking one's own life voluntarily and deliberately, either by killing oneself directly or by abstaining from a directly life-saving act.<sup>12</sup> Donald Dan Veer says that suicide is an act deliberately chosen by a person who foresaw that the outcome, almost certainly, would be his own death.<sup>13</sup> Suicide has always been considered as a wrong and we can find this evidently in Ludwig Wittgenstein's articulation that suicide is one of the clearest examples of morally wrong act, he said that if suicide is allowed then everything in the world and suicide is the elementary sin.<sup>14</sup>

It is observed that the way one understands suicide already incorporates moral values and judgments and beliefs about the world and values of life in general. Suicide has become one of the leading of the cause of injury and it has become one of the options that is available at hand in life. It is generally assumed that no one or a reasonable person will ever choose death upon life but only in worsening situations. Worst situations could include, loss of dearest and nearest ones, loss of sense, loss of control of life etc. Now a days suicides are considered as mental illness that are believed to be controlled by preventive measures. Suicide prevention is a policy that has been enacted by the states to control the death by choice.

Suicides are chosen acts and are not to be considered as something that is committed when one is not in one's right mind. It is not always the case and the aim of this paper is to focus on the suicides that are decisional or suicides that are committed by competent minds. It has been very disheartening to see and witness deaths that are chosen on one's own and people are blamed for committing and attempting to suicide. But we also need to understand the reasons behind acting in such a manner. In simple words, it is important to understand the reasons behind the common narrative that intentional death is bad. "Intentional death is bad" is conclusion that has to be drawn from two moral premise like every logical statement would have. For this, let's consider the 1<sup>st</sup> premise as "Death is unintentional" and

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Criteria for Determining Suicide," In *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol. 37(50), 1988, pp. 779-780.

12 Szaz, Thomas. *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide*, Westport Connecticut London, 1999.

13 Van De Veer, Donald. *Paternalistic Intervention: The Moral Bounds on Benevolence*, Princeton University Press, N.J: 1986, p. 261.

14 Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Notebooks, 1914-1916*, ed. G. H. Von Wright, Chicago University Press, 1979.

the 2<sup>nd</sup> premise should be “Death is unfortunate”. It is widely believed that death is unintentional because we will die only when God takes our life or when God wants us to leave the world. Death is something which is thrown at us and we constantly striving to face death on our own. Or we can say, death is the end of life and we are constantly striving to move away from that stage of life. Take for instance, the case of COVID, where a person strives to live but is unable to carry on with the life due to this infectious virus. In COVID, we are constantly striving to move away from the death that we know will fall onto us. Here, both the premises and conclusion suggest that intentional death is morally problematic. It is based upon the presumption that death cannot be willed by a rational person since the rationality of the suicide cannot be proved by the attempted action. This means that to prove the rationality of suicide, the person will not be alive from whose life we will be able to draw that this life (life after death) is better than that which he was living (prior to death).

Suicide is always considered as an intentional killing of one’s own self. Thinkers have defined the term “suicide” in relation to the intention/reason that one upholds for such an act. A suicide is believed to be suicide if and only if a person intentionally/directly causes his/her own death as an ultimate end in itself or as means to another end like, pain relief, through directly acting or refraining from acting. This act is different from other self-destructive acts because the act is not coerced onto the suiciding agent and is not done sacrificially for the lives of the other persons or in obedience to God, like that of Jehovah’s Witness. Also, such acts should be differentiated from those acts that are done intentionally but the end which the agent aims does not correspond with the will of the agent. For example, a stuntman performing a risky stunt for fame does not intend death but it is a self-destructive act where he could end in death due to certain stunts. Such self-destructive acts can be morally unjustified for several reasons: their actions harm others (his death impacts the life of the family), invokes a kind of disrespect for gift of life, and so on. Gavin Fairbairn also made a clear-cut distinction between attempted suicide and gestured suicide.<sup>15</sup> He says that people sometimes intentionally chose to die but they might not aim to die. Some of them just want to seek concern that they are living a hard life but their ultimate purpose is not death per se. For example, cutting of wrists, drinking poison to grab attention of people, jumping off the cliff and so on. And such articulations can be compared to that of which considers suicide to be mental illness. It has been argued that people are not thinking clearly when they choose to do. They intend suicide in order to bring certain willing

end. It is not fashionable death but a very courageous attempt because it seems very difficult to end one’s life. People want to live and they wish to leave a peaceful and happy life but the concept of peaceful and happy is uncertain. This is mostly because of the trauma or mental illness that seems to cloud the rational understanding of the individual. Ending one’s life is very difficult and people think about ending their life when they think that they cannot be without it. They feel that that this will be the only solution for me and family. A suicide basically consists, the intention or motivation because of his/her human condition and the knowledge of the outcome i.e., inescapable death. Without these two conditions, suicide is not a suicide and it will be indistinguishable from homicide or accident. For Kant, we as human beings always act for reasons and our capacity to do so is a capacity for rational self-governance or self-direction.<sup>16</sup> The rationality of an agent’s reasons should be taken into consideration before imposing certain value of good or life upon the target.

### Paternalism

The question of paternalistic regulations in practice is a complex issue, especially in terms of suicide. Here, this section shall only attempt to understand the moral conditions if any, in which paternalism licenses intervention with the suicidal plans of a competent agent. Firstly, to say that an agent is competent, he/she has to act out of reasons and accept responsibility of the consequences that are likely to befall from his/her actions. It is widely accepted in the literature of paternalism that competent persons should not be intervened even if some other option would be much beneficial to that person irrespective of his/her own choices. Obligation and duty to not harm others derived from the principle of beneficence and the value of life for the agent. There is a common duty to provide good services to others. And paternalism is problematic because it involves the use of coercion to achieve a good which is not recognized as such by those persons for whom the good is intended and it amounts to substituting other’s judgment concerning what a person’s good is for that person’s own judgment concerning her own good, thereby failing to respect the individual as the core of agency. Cholbi believes that paternalism is justified when it advances the good of the individuals as they conceive of that good.<sup>17</sup> But the good that the individual considers is different from that of the paternalizer’s concept of good. Paternalism attempts to ensure not that individuals make the best choice but to assist them in pursuing their best choice. And the

15 Fairbairn, Gavin. “Suicide and Justified Paternalism” eds. Margaret Brazier and Mary Lobjoit, In *Protecting the Vulnerable: Autonomy and Consent in Health Care*, London and New York, 1991.

16 Loudon, Robert B (2006) *Immanuel Kant’s Anthropology from Pragmatic Point of View*, Cambridge University Press.

17 Cholbi, Michael J “Kantian Paternalism and Suicide Intervention” eds. Christian Coons and Michael Weber. *Paternalism: Theory and Practice*, pp.115-133, Cambridge University Press, 2013.



problem here is that thought the concept of good differs so the providence of assistance to choose the best course of action is dubious.

Does suicidal agent rationally determine that “suicide” will fulfil her chosen end? Or in other case, is the suicidal agent rational to not intervene in his/her case? Rationality of suicide is very different from the rationality of the person because both are weighted on different grounds. And paternalistic intervention hinges mostly on the rationality of the suicidal person rather than rationality of the suicidal act. And the justification of suicidal intervention will heavily rest on the reasonability of the suicidal act performed. Rationality is the quality of being based in accordance with reason. It is basically the conformity of one’s ideas or beliefs with one’s reasons for those beliefs and ideas. Many are sceptical to offer rational grounds on suicide.<sup>18</sup> They think that it is impossible to connect suicide to rationality.

The judgments about rationality of suicide hinges on different criteria, such as adequacy, reasonableness, authenticity, and appropriateness. As no one or no rational person would think of attempting suicide in the first place. Philip Divine argues that in order for suicide to be rational, we must at first be able to know what death is like, but since this is not possible because death is irreversible in nature and since death is unknowable at the time when suicide is chosen, so the conditions to figure out rationality is not met.<sup>19</sup> This almost shows that rationality of suicide is absolute oxymoron because rationality of ending one’s life is mostly measured in terms of comparing the life one would have if he/she would have been able to live if alive. Derek Parfit says that rationality of suicide should not be measured in this way but rather between two lives or two courses of lives.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes saving a life could be beneficial for the agent as the longer life that is imposed leads to better living moments in future. Likewise, if a person can be benefited by making her life extended by saving her from the jump she was about to perform, a person can be equally benefitted from shortening her life. There could be certain circumstances, whether she would have if better off if her

life was shortened. For example, terminally ill persons who are under ventilation for years and whose pain is unbearable but they are made to live forcefully. On this account, suicidal acts can be rational, if there is no other alternative available which could make their lives easier once and for all. One of the common problems that we may face here is, can we ever consider death as much beneficial than any other values?

We hold many prejudices regarding death and that is why we think that this should not be made an option for us at all. However, it can be considered as a rational choice if it prevents a person from suffering various harms that one would otherwise have endured. Cholbi notes that we cannot reject the possibility of rational suicide on *a priori* grounds.<sup>21</sup> Many have suggested different characterizations on rational suicide and that suicide is rational if it meets two conditions – (1) cognitive, that the attitudes of the suicidal agent are informed and the decisions to end her life are shaped and (2) the ultimate interest, that dying would meet her purpose of life. Cholbi believes that societal consensus and or approval is irrelevant to whether or not intervention to prevent suicide is morally permissible. It is not necessary for suicidal acts to be motivationally intelligible to the society or the community one belongs.

Now one could ask, whether those who decides to commit suicide are irrational? Or are their decisions to commit suicide are based upon the distortions of rationality? Many argue that decisions are basically driven from distorted rationality and are instrumentally irrational because they choose such steps when their visions are clouded with mental illness.<sup>22</sup> And paternalistic intervention in certain cases is justifiable on the ground that her decision does not shape her ends of life. It might not be the end that wants by her calculation of her life but is no position to complete her life she wants to live. Like H.L.A Hart says that paternalism a reasonable principle and justifiable in those case in which,

Choices [are] made or consent [is] given without adequate reflection or appreciation of consequences; or in pursuit of merely transitory desires; or in various predicament when the judgment is likely to clouded; or under inner psychological compulsions.<sup>23</sup>

Paternalistic intervention is justifiable when a person’s

18 Battin MP “Can Suicide Be Rational? Yes Sometimes.” In J.L. Worth; ed. *Contemporary Perspectives on Rational Suicide*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1999, pp.13-21. Cowley, C. “Suicide is neither rational nor irrational” In *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 9, 2006, pp.495-504. Graber, G. “The Rationality of Suicide.” In S. Wallace and A. Eser, eds., *Suicide and Euthanasia: The Rights of Personhood*. University of Tennessee Press, 1981, p.51-65.

19 Devin P. “On Choosing Death” In M.P. Battin and D.J. Mayo, ed., *Suicide; The Philosophical Issues*. New York: St. Martin’s Press 1980; pp 138-143.

20 Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

21 Cholbi, Michael, J. “Kantian Paternalism and Suicide Intervention” eds. Christian Coons and Michael Weber. *Paternalism: Theory and Practice*, pp.115-133, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

22 Szaz, Thomas. *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide*, Westport Connecticut London, 1999. Hart, H. L.A. *Law, Liberty and Morality*, Stanford, University Press, p.33, 1963.

23 Hart, H. L.A. *Law, Liberty and Morality*, Stanford, University Press, p.33, 1963.

mind is such that she does not understand what she is doing or agreeing to. It is important to understand the value of life upon which the agent is acting upon and same applies also to the paternalizer. In paternalism there is a conflict between what the agent wants for herself and what the paternalizer thinks is good for the agent. There is a conflict between two important principles of human life- principle of respect for autonomy of the person and the principle of beneficence. In case of suicide, the principle of respect for person suggests that we are required to respect the decisions and values that the agent have about one's own self. However, this principle does not imply that respecting the person means we cannot override the wishes of the agent. The principle of beneficence, on the other hand, puts a constraint on the autonomy of the agent by taking care of the person in respect to the his/her own choices. To respect a person's wish to die is also maintained by interfering in a limited manner.

However, there are others who believes that decisions to commit suicide are rational and does not rest on any distorted means of rationality but from her calculated means to her ends. For example, a person might choose to die and believes that she has right to die with dignity. And the means to realize her dignity is not well met in her life that she is living in terms of others. She rationally chooses death over life. So, in certain cases interfering to save her life on the ground that it is good for the agent or will serve the interests of the agent is unintelligible. It has been clearly observed in the literature of paternalism that paternalism is justifiable in soft sense, which is called soft paternalism. Soft paternalism is a kind of temporary intervention when the agent is believed to be acting substantially in an involuntary manner.<sup>24</sup> And taking the case of suicide, an agent can be interfered or restricted to the extent of informing of the consequences of the suicidal agent's action. He/she can be compelled to move from his/her position but in a softer manner or in other ways he/she can be educated about the suicidal occurrences and how each life is worthy of living. But even if a person chooses to commit suicide and her wishes is rationally driven from her rational calculations, this paper submits that she should not be intervened on the ground that "living" will be good for her. Life that is forcefully made to live on the ground that the other person thinks that this life will surely be good in future is unintelligible claim. Also, it does not submit that paternalistic intervention in suicide is morally unjustifiable. We cannot infer from the presence of disorders that those who choose to die are always irrationally driven and, in a way, accords justifiable suicidal intervention.

Cholbi argues that in case of suicidal nihilist, suicidal intervention is not justifiable because for them life has no

value as they have no conception of good life.<sup>25</sup> They do not endorse any rational any comprehensive rational plan of life. He says that we cannot interfere in their case because their nothing on behalf of which we need to interfere. They are not rationally choosing their course of life and nor are they choosing irrationally. To show respect to the other person sometimes require non-intervention or limited intervention in suicide attempts. And this in a way does not imply that autonomy is the basis of moral life. Also, in questioning whether the suicide agent is rational or justifiable in committing suicide does not deny the fact that the agent has a right to act.

Beauchamp and Childress say that it is justifiable to kill oneself which is entailed by the principle of authority, if a person act's autonomously and do not affect interests of others, then we ought not to intervene.<sup>26</sup> And Gavin Fairbairn attempts to argue against the notion that suicide is an autonomous activity affecting only his own self. He believes that paternalistic intervention in suicidal cases is justified because of the affect it will have on others. This account somewhere does not cope up with the nature of harm that has on oneself because he forgets to take into account the cases where if people do not have anyone around. However, this does not mean that a suicidal act which wrongs no one is not wrong at all. It simply means that even if the suicide committed by S causes pain and distress to his family or friends but that is not a sufficient reason to conclude that S has wronged those others. How can one discourage him who does not have anyone around him or who does not have intimate family members? Should he be interfered in that case? His arguments seem that he is concerned about the impact a suicidal act about relatives, friends but what about others who do not have anyone around. The claim that life is a gift from god does not authorize anyone to intervene in attempted suicide. Killing oneself is wrong because it sends a wrong message and ultimately one is turned into a corpse. Similarly, to say that we must sometimes respect a person's self-determination even when he/she attempts suicide is not to hold that only autonomy is the ultimate basis or ideal of moral life.<sup>27</sup>

Respect for person's decisions does not imply that intervention is morally unjustified but it simply sets a limit on those interventions. It is necessary for the society to make

25 Cholbi, Michael, J. "Kantian Paternalism and Suicide Intervention" eds. Christian Coons and Michael Weber. *Paternalism: Theory and Practice*, pp.115-133, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

26 Beauchamp, Tom. L. & Childress, James, F. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

27 Childress, James, F. *Who Should Decide? Paternalism in Health Care*, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 159.

24 Feinberg, Joel. "Legal Paternalism' In *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 1(1), 1971; pp.105-124.

people aware of suicidal consequences and also to allocate resources to reduce the incidence of suicide by showing symbolic care. Childress rightly says that, suicidal intervention must not only rest on the principle of beneficence but also upon the principle of respect for persons.<sup>28</sup> If we consider the effect of death it has on others it will justify paternalistic intervention on suicide even when the agent is competent and clearly chooses death. However, determination of the suicidal agent's competence is as difficult as any patient's as both display signs of incompetence greatly.

## Conclusion

Mandating the wearing of seatbelts, restricting tobacco, advertising, requiring minimum levels of health insurance etc. All of these policies are justified on the ground that they result in improvements of individual's well-being. Individual well-being largely involves being alive irrespective of senses. Being alive is always considered as a good that requires promotion and prevention of anything that leads to shortening of life. Sometimes, living is given more priority than the manner in which it is lived. Also, many advanced

technologies have been used to make us live and even against their will to indefinite period of time. That is why many moral intricacies arise in respect to such cases like, euthanasia, removal of life-saving treatment etc. Certain coercive acts to mould our behaviour should be justifiable on the grounds that they result in improvements in individual's well-being. Being alive, being taken care of, living a healthy life, is good for us. And that is why we have many laws requiring us to mandatorily wear seat belts, helmets, laws refraining from smoking, having maximum access to good health care is justifiable because they are considered as ultimate or primary goods for us. These goods are believed to provide us good life. Suicide is believed to be a harm that is inflicted upon one's own self jeopardizing the natural death. Some of the thinkers say that the rationality of suicide is not possible however, there are others who consider that rationality of suicide is unintelligible. This paper submits that suicide is intentional even though its impact on others does not justify paternalistic justifications. Paternalistic intervention in case of suicide is a morally complex issue and justification depends entirely on its impact on oneself. Respect for person is an important justificatory claim for suicidal intervention. Every life is important and exercising one's decision regarding one's own life is crucial but this needs to be restricted in cases of self-harm which leads to extreme situation causing death.

28 Childress, James, F. Who Should Decide? Paternalism in Health Care, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 159.

