

# Death

1. Two Views on Death
2. Suicide
  - a. Rights
  - b. Utilitarianism
  - c. Kantian Deontology
3. A Buddhist Perspective on Death

## Issues in Death

Suicide

Euthanasia

Physician Assisted Suicide

War

Capital Punishment

Meditation:

### Fear of Death



Am I Afraid of Death?  
What is it that I fear?

### Is Death Bad?

**Circumstantially**

- Premature
- Painful
  - Self
  - Others
- Bad Afterlife

**Intrinsically  
(In Itself)**

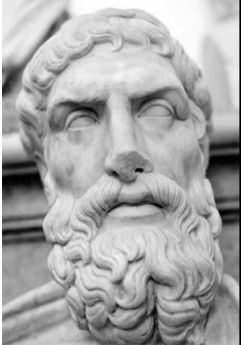
### Is Death Bad In Itself?

2 Common Views

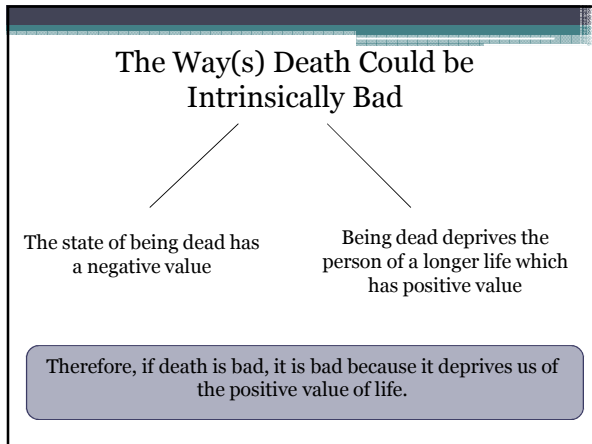
<p><b>Yes!</b></p> <p>Life is all we have!</p>	<p><b>No!</b></p> <p>You don't even exist when you are dead.</p>
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### Why Death Can't be Bad

1. If death is bad, it must be bad for someone.
2. But when death takes over, the person no longer exists.
3. Therefore, death cannot be bad.



Epicurus, 341-270 BC



## What Makes Life Worth Living?

1. Experiencing Pleasure and Happiness
 


Utilitarianism
2. Learning and Growth
 

Kantian Deontology

## Suicide:

3 Views

1. Rights
2. Utilitarianism
3. Kantian Deontology



## Suicide: A Right?

It's our right to do whatever we want with our bodies, whether it is harmful or not.

Obj: BUT 'because I want to' is not a reason to do anything.

WHY do you want to do it?

This is what will either justify or fail to justify it.

### Discussion Question: The Permissibility of Suicide Based on Utilitarianism

Most people desire to commit suicide because they have lost hope – either because of depression or painful terminal illness. They want to end the pain.

Explore both of these reasons from the POV of Utilitarianism. (Utilitarianism is concerned with minimizing pain and maximizing pleasure).

### Discussion Question: The Permissibility of Suicide Based on the Kantian View

Explore the two reasons that people desire to commit suicide from the Kantian POV. (Consider whether the person who wants to commit suicide still learn, grow, and use rationality to help others even during times of severe hardship.)

## A Buddhist Perspective on Death: The Story of Kisagotami

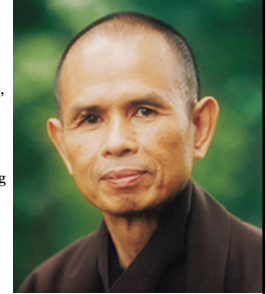


"[The Buddha asked for] 'a handful of mustard seed from a house where no child, husband, parent, or servant has died'"

(See Epstein, *Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart* or Blofeld, *The Zen of Teaching Huang Po*)

## Thich Nhat Hanh

"When I was a young monk I was taught that the greatest sufferings were birth, sickness, old age, unfulfilled dreams, separation from loved ones, and contact with those we despise. But the real suffering of humankind lies in the way we look at reality. Look, and you will see that birth, sickness, old age, unfulfilled hopes, separation from loved ones, and contact with those we despise are also wonders in themselves. They are all precious aspects of existence. Without them, existence would not be possible. Most important is knowing how to ride the waves of impermanence, smiling as one who knows he has never been born and will never die."



(Orig. from *Fragrant Palm Leaves*, as rewritten in *Thich Nhat Hanh: Essential Writings*, p. 48)

## Discussion Question: Your Views on Death



Have your views on death changed over the course of these contemplations? What are your views now and if they have changed, how and why do you think you've changed your view?