

Is Suicide Criminal?

I know this can be seen as insensitive, but this is solely an intellectual exercise. I'm totally just spit-balling here. I saw something while browsing Facebook on suicide and the thought came to me that sometimes, for the libertarian / voluntaryist, suicide is criminal behavior. Now I may be completely wrong on this, but here's my logic.

Crime in libertarian philosophy is [mostly] simple to define. A crime is an act of aggression, aggression being defined as an uninvited property border crossing, property being defined as that which one legitimately owns on the basis of spontaneously-evolved property norms. Wow, obviously that could really be explored, but let's just go with this: crime is aggression against another person or their property.

Now, in most cases, suicide is not criminal because the person committing suicide is not engaging in aggression against anybody. The damage to their own body is invited by themselves. Therefore, suicide at this level is not a crime.

However, what if that person has traded their condition of life, ie. that they are living and breathing, for something? If they kill themselves, they are no longer holding up their end of the bargain, and if what they traded for has already been consumed, their killing themselves constitutes an act of theft, ie. a crime in the above libertarian sense. (The permission they had to what they traded for and consumed is conditional to their agreeing to stay alive. Since they reneged, their consumption becomes uninvited, an act of aggression.)

That example seems a little far-fetched. I mean who promises to stay alive in exchange for something? Doesn't seem very common. But what about a promise to perform some service? Think of a musician who's contracted to perform a concert. He's received and spent the deposit on intangibles, and just before the concert he's both broke and depressed enough to give up on life and end it. His suicide prevents him from keeping the deal he made, and he's already spent the deposit. He now owes what can never be paid back now that he no longer exists. He has committed a crime by depriving his victim of restitution, it would seem.

What do you think?