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Suicide versus Euthanasia in the American Press in the 1890s and 1900s: “A Man Should be Permitted to Go Out of This World Whenever He Sees Fit”

Abstract: Toleration of suicide and the campaign to legalize euthanasia, this article shows, are historically separate developments. From the early 1880s to the 1900s the American press featured moral discussions of suicide alongside gloomy roll calls and expressions of anxiety about an alleged increase in suicide. Focusing on an extensive discussion in the *San Francisco Call* in 1896, the article shows that Robert G. Ingersoll’s liberal individualist toleration of suicide clearly resonated with many Americans at the time. I trace the rise of suicide from private tragedy to public issue in the United States. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no crossover with euthanasia and no call whatever for assistance with suicide, despite the frequent employment of the plight of the terminally ill in the discussion. Finally, the article shows that those who called for euthanasia thought of it as a human utility and not a right.

Keywords: history of suicide, history of assisted dying, history of euthanasia, Progressivism, American press, Robert G. Ingersoll, atheism, classical liberalism, sociology

An extraordinary sight greeted those opening up their Sunday version of the *San Francisco Call* on August 2, 1896. “What are your thoughts on suicide?” the paper asked “thinkers,” which included prominent doctors, academics, scientists, businessmen, religious leaders and, perhaps stretching the term “thinkers,” noted psychics and the tax agent for Southern Pacific Railways. Moreover, this question concerned the morality of suicide. The opinions in the article express diverse views, encompassing socialism, Spiritualism, feminism,

reincarnation, orthodox Christianity, and atheism. The majority thought that suicide was morally acceptable in at least some cases. Out of 24 contributions, only four condemned suicide as never justifiable and cowardly and three condemned the act as misguided or impossible due to reincarnation. Another two generally opposed suicide but called attention to the circumstances that brought about suicide, and four thought that suicide implied insanity. Twelve contributors thought that suicide was sometimes justifiable, and two thought it was either always or almost always justifiable. Dr. Gustave Eisen thought that “suicide should be encouraged.”¹

Ten years later, years after discussion on suicide in the press quieted, a similar debate about euthanasia appeared one Sunday in the *New York Tribune*, entitled “Is it Ever Right to Speed the Departing Sick? Prominent Men in Several Professions Voice Their Sentiments on the Advisability of Shortening the Pains of the Dying.” Though this article scrutinized euthanasia in similarly moral terms, the differences rather than similarities with the *San Francisco Call* article stand out. Unlike the freewheeling discussion and nonexpert panel on suicide, this discussion featured lawyers, doctors, and clerics and was fairly conclusive against euthanasia, with 22 of these prominent men (unlike the discussion on suicide, no women featured) arguing against any loosening of existing law, with three for it. The religious sentiments expressed in the *Tribune* reflected orthodox Christian values of panellists, whereas the *Call* featured Spiritualists, psychics, believers in reincarnation, and freethinkers.²

The *Tribune* article responded to a challenge by a Cincinnati woman named Anna Hall whose mother was dying of a painful disease. On January 23, 1906, responding to Hall, the Ohio legislature introduced a euthanasia bill. Later that year Dr. R. H. Gregory introduced a similar bill to the Iowa state legislature and the two bills have been called the “chloroform bills.” Those in the *Tribune* used arguments including, “God is the giver of life, and he alone has the right to take it” and “No human being has either the moral or legal right to decide for another matters of life and death.” Dr. John D. Quackenbos noted: “It would be tantamount to murder.” Dr. George Ryerson Fowler wondered, “will the deliberate taking of human life by other than a judicial process cease to be murder?” William Hepburn Russell thought physicians should not “substitute their opinions for the power of nature and the will of God.” George Gordon Battle, ex-assistant district attorney stated, “Life is given to men only by the divine power.” Reverend Robert Bagnell of the Metropolitan Temple (Methodist Episcopal) said that “it ought to be a matter of the greatest importance to increase the

estimate of the value of a human life and to deepen the solemnity of death.”³

The *Tribune*'s article was more a restatement of moral precepts by establishment figures than a real discussion of the moral issues involved. These men sought to shut down the debate on euthanasia rather than open it up. But the same is not true of the *Call*'s article on suicide, which is much more interesting and open-ended as its correspondents reconsidered suicide and, in the main, concluded it was morally right at least in some circumstances.

In almost all other dialogues about suicide in modern times—in sociological discussions at the time, in most conversations about suicide before the nineteenth century, and in most dialogues about suicide today, there is a fundamental assumption that the act of suicide is wrong. In the past, a blanket condemnation of the act from a religious perspective quelled inquiry about suicide. In much of the academic considerations of suicide at the time—particularly in sociology—the problem reappeared as one of order. Thus, suicide was pathologized. Today, suicide, even if it is regarded in medicalized terms, continues to be an “undesirable outcome” and a moral taint remains, illustrated by the assisted dying discussion. The present-day campaign for assisted dying, though it characterizes ending life as a rational decision, rejects individual responsibility for it and refuses to use the word “suicide” to describe that which, up until 10 or 15 years ago, was called assisted suicide and, prior to that, voluntary euthanasia.⁴ But in the 1890s, the question was whether suicide itself was right or wrong, and the majority of the correspondents of the *San Francisco Call* refused to condemn suicide, thinking that suicide was right or sometimes right.

This article tackles several questions. First, what were the historical factors that brought suicide and, later, euthanasia briefly within the realm of moral reevaluation for—if we assume a wide readership of the *San Francisco Call*—a much broader swathe of people than the audience for sociological, criminological, religious, and political tracts that examined suicide at the time? Second, what was the relationship of suicide and euthanasia in this early period? Third, what can we learn from these reconsiderations of the moral status of suicide in the 1890s and euthanasia in the 1900s that bears on related discussions today?⁵

A closer look at the article in the *Call* and other discussions about suicide in the American press during the mid-1890s throws into question several important historical narratives and assumptions about assisted dying, about the history of suicide, and about the history of the United States in the 1890s.

Four of the contributors to the *Call* mentioned a situation whereby, as one put it, someone was “stricken with a loathsome disease that meant a lingering death” as a justification for suicide.⁶ That is strikingly similar to modern justifications for legalized assisted dying.⁷ Despite this fact, and despite the fact that the New York law that criminalized suicide in 1881 and that had indirectly provoked the discussion in 1896 also contained a section outlawing “aiding and abetting” suicide, no one campaigned against this part of the law. As far as can be seen, no one sought (or mentioned or conceived a need for) *assisted* suicide. Campaigners for assisted dying⁸ today must at least explain why it did not even occur to previous generations though they possessed the pharmaceutical knowledge and capability (and less ability to manage pain). Why is assisting someone to die necessary today but wasn’t in the 1890s?

The other surprising aspect of both the *Call* and the *Tribune*’s articles is the lack of overlap between discussions about suicide and discussions about euthanasia. That fact challenges the historical narrative that sees euthanasia and assisted dying coming from the same origins: the gradual recession of Christian morality from the public sphere. The most influential historical scholarship on the history of suicide and euthanasia makes little or no distinction between permissive attitudes to *suicide* and the later phenomenon of *euthanasia*, mirroring the lack of distinction made today between euthanasia and assisted death.⁹ Ian Dowbiggin, N. D. A. Kemp, Richard Weikhart, and, to a lesser extent, Ezekiel Emanuel and Jacob Appel argue that secularization in general and Darwinian theory in particular propelled both openness to euthanasia and a liberal attitude toward suicide.¹⁰ Appel, writing about the discussions about euthanasia occurring in the United States in 1906, wrote, “These sources also suggest that the practice of physician-assisted suicide was far more widespread than articles in early twentieth-century medical journals might lead one to believe.”¹¹ He can reach such a conclusion only by conflating an action taken occasionally by doctors to relieve dying patients (few dispute that this has long occurred) and death initiated by the patient and facilitated by the doctor.

The differences between euthanasia and a more tolerant view of suicide can be seen on the pages of the *Call*. Of course, they share an agnostic if not atheistic perspective and a scientific, Social Darwinist or “Darwinian collectivist” outlook.¹² More importantly, those saying that suicide in certain conditions could be right agreed at least on that. But they did not agree on the conditions. Whereas the individualistic outlook expressed by the majority of correspondents to the *Call* viewed suicide as a right—like the fiercely individualistic Mariner E. L. Colson, who declared that “a man should be

permitted to go out of this world whenever he thinks fit"¹³—another correspondent, Gustave Eisen, curator of microscopy of the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, provocatively stated that suicide “should be encouraged.” He noted that “many people would be committing the best and most useful act of their lives.” Eisen, however, disapproved of some suicides which he deemed antisocial: “But there is another side to the question, and that is when a man who is a help to the nation and a head of a family commits suicide to rid himself of his own troubles. Such action is to be despised, as it is selfishness.”¹⁴ Individualism, influenced by Herbert Spencer,¹⁵ and secularism encouraged a tolerant view of suicide, while euthanasia drew from the Progressive emphasis on social utility.

The discussions of suicide in the press in the 1890s also add to the arguments that suicide may sometimes be a rational and autonomous individual decision to end one’s life, outside of medical and sociological interpretations that remove any agency from the act or religious condemnations that refused to take into account individual circumstances. Euthanasia may be based on ostensibly rational considerations, but it does not leave the decision solely to the individual. Rather than seeing suicide as an aberrant act, this brief expression of tolerance reminds us that suicide is a historical phenomenon. As Ian Marsh rightly notes, condemning suicides as insane leads to a situation where “historical differences become more marginal issues, with madness and suicide taken to be universal, fixed, and central elements.”¹⁶ This secular era rejected the religious constrictions against suicide but also the pathological analyses of suicide whereby it is either an indication of something wrong in the individual or the society in which the suicide lived. Even today, despite the emphasis on autonomy by those in favor of legalized assisted dying,¹⁷ the fact that death is regarded as medical treatment ensures that the individual’s choice is subject to review by doctors and state regulations.

In 1896, suicide, in the discussions in the press, belonged to the individual; it did not take place because of “overcivilization” or because of geography or denomination. Individuals made moral decisions, sometimes foolishly, selfishly, and callously, and sometimes to restore their honor or as an act of self-sacrifice or rebellion. The correspondents in the *Call* did not shy from moral judgements of suicides but admitted that some suicides might be justified. In the period that Susan Jacoby has called the “high-water mark of freethought,” suicide became an individual act that we might morally judge.¹⁸

The definitions and methodology used in this article should perhaps be outlined before the main discussion. Though the meaning of the term “suicide” is contested, we will use it to mean an act of self-directed injurious

behavior with intent to die as a result of the act. That is different than passive behavior (such as refusing to eat or drink).¹⁹ Euthanasia is when (generally) a doctor takes action to end someone's life for ostensibly good purposes (by request of the patient or because of physical suffering toward the end of life but also to prevent them being a burden).

Why examine the appearance of suicide and euthanasia in the press? This article concentrates on discussions of suicide and euthanasia in the American popular press as the best available means of understanding popular opinions of them. For those familiar with academic discussions of suicide at the time, the press discussions differ in tone and content. Whereas the former concentrate on suicide as a problem of order, ascribing it to problems of anomie, moral collapse, or, as indicated below, rebellion, the discussion of the issue in the press considers, at least in abstract, suicide in a more neutral light. Though newspapers regaled their readers with tragic tales of lovelorn women hurling themselves from bridges or bankrupt and disgraced men shooting themselves, there is little evidence that readers looked at suicide in the same way as did thought leaders at the time.

Research based on the press can be problematic, as Wasserman, Stack, and Reeves argue. Discussion in the press varied with the agenda of the editor, who acts as “moral entrepreneur,” and not all papers discussed things in the same way.²⁰ However, the popular press remains the best way to understand popular attitudes at the time because newspapers had to reflect interests of their readers, and they remain invaluable in understanding popular conceptions discussions about suicide. David Silkenat notes in his fascinating study of despair in North Carolina, the press in that state represents “the best available source” to assess suicides—even the rate of suicide—perhaps because coroners at the time sought to spare families from the perceived ignominy of suicide.²¹

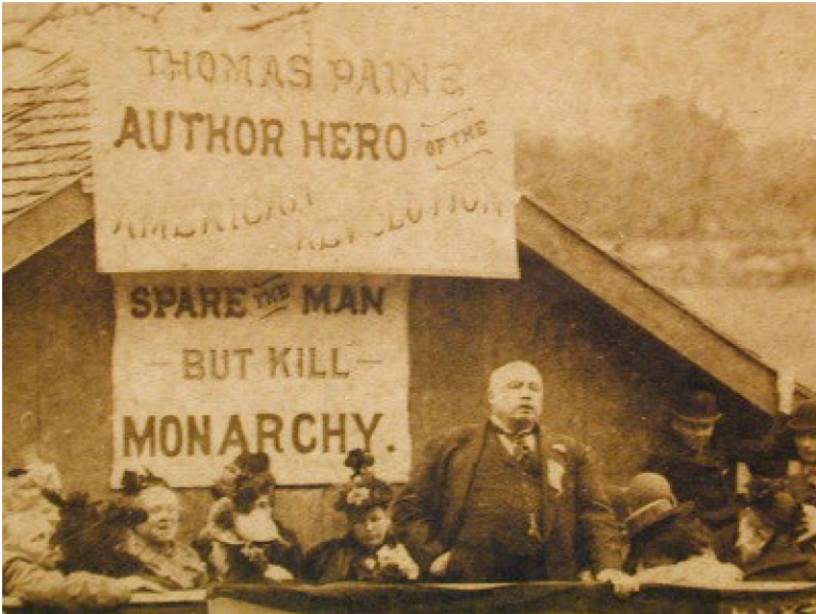
This study concentrated on the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and 115 local papers for mentions of suicide, euthanasia, and eugenics. It also examined periodicals for more extensive discussions of the issues. It used Proquest and Library of Congress searches. Discussion of suicide in the press—like more academic discussions—appear to have little to do with the best available estimates of numbers of actual suicides. As interest in suicide in the press declined, the suicide rate grew throughout the period, peaking in 1907 at 21 per 100,000 (in comparison, the rate was 14 in 2019, the highest since World War II).²² However, whereas euthanasia is a relatively straightforward term, suicide is anything but. Importantly, it was used as a metaphor (“national suicide” or “race suicide”) as well as to report individual suicides. The search algorithms prioritize the most extensive discussion (the

Call's article was in the top line for 115 local papers in 1896). This article concentrates on substantive discussions of suicide and euthanasia—that is, those that touch upon the moral issues surrounding them.

COLONEL ROBERT INGERSOLL

Undoubtedly, the discussion in the *Call* directly responded to the strength of agnosticism and freethinking embodied in the energetic figure of Colonel Robert Ingersoll. Ingersoll's publication in 1894 of a partial defense of suicide *Is Suicide a Sin?* brought the issue to the masses of Americans and influenced discussion throughout the country; indeed, one of the contributions in the *Call* is entitled "Agrees with Ingersoll."²³

Robert Green Ingersoll, born in 1833 and known as the "Great Agnostic," was the second most popular circuit speaker in the age before radio, eclipsed only by Mark Twain (another freethinker). Between 1875 and his death in 1899, Ingersoll spoke in every state except Mississippi and North Carolina. Known



Source: Courtesy of the Council for Secular Humanism.

Note: The only known photograph of Ingersoll addressing an audience. New Rochelle, New York, May 30, 1894.

as “Robert Injuresoul” to his clerical enemies, he raised the issue of what role religion ought to play in public life, adamantly defending the freedom to think, believe, and act freely without artificial constraint.²⁴

Susan Jacoby, one of his most recent biographers, is surely correct to insist that Ingersoll has been unfairly ignored, almost since his death. Armed with a superb gift of rhetoric, the self-educated orator fought against slavery, serving honourably as colonel in the Union Army. He defended the Millsian “harm principle” that human beings should be free to act as they saw fit so long as they did not harm others.²⁵ He revived the legacy of Thomas Paine, consistently defended science and reason, sought equality of the sexes and liberation of women from the “slavery” of marriage, and campaigned for women’s suffrage. He wrote extensively on civil rights; none other than Frederick Douglass wrote an introduction for one of his pieces on civil rights. He also defended the rights of Chinese and opposed the Chinese Exclusion Bill of 1882, reasoning that “(w)hen the rights of even one human being are held in contempt the rights of all are in danger.”²⁶

Ingersoll attacked corporal punishment, the death penalty—“state-sanctioned murder”—vivisection, and the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision that established a legal basis for the racist Jim Crow system²⁷. He championed Shakespeare, Lincoln, Voltaire, Paine, and Robert Burns. But his chief role was as a “freethinker” challenging the strictures of religion, attacking what he saw as the hypocrisy of religious cant. Ingersoll counted Socialist hero Eugene V. Debs and industrial tycoon Andrew Carnegie as friends and kept up a correspondence with British Prime Minister William Gladstone.

Little remarked upon in any of the biographies of Ingersoll, however, is Ingersoll’s discussion of suicide.²⁸ Historians also barely mention it; Ian Dowbiggin is an honorable exception.²⁹ *Is Suicide a Sin?* began as a short letter printed in the *New York World* in 1892. The vituperative attacks on Ingersoll by clergymen and others after the letter’s publication indicated that Ingersoll hit a raw nerve; clerics appeared to view this as a battle they could not lose. In any case their reactions prompted Ingersoll to write a second letter and later a pamphlet and to publish a series of interviews on the issue. The intense interest and excitement occasioned by this controversy, second only to those aroused by his “Christmas Sermon,”³⁰ did not subside for many years.

Ingersoll’s chief target was the 1881 New York law that punished suicides. “Apparently our modern world has not yet out-grown its curious mediaeval prejudice against a man who takes his own life.” He constantly assailed outdated religious mores. He used the dramatic example of the “man devoured by cancer” to justify suicide, bitterly mocking Christian ideals: “The old idea

was that God made us and placed us here for a purpose and that it was our duty to remain until he called us. The world is outgrowing this absurdity. What pleasure can it give God to see a man devoured by a cancer; to see the quivering flesh slowly eaten; to see the nerves throbbing with pain?"³¹

Though Ingersoll wrote with compassion and anger against religious mores that he imagined created misery rather than alleviating it, at times he echoed the Social Darwinist understanding of suicide exemplified by Samuel Strahan in 1893³² when he connected suicide and civilization:

In civilized life there is a great struggle, great competition, and many fall... Under many circumstances a man has the right to kill himself. When life is of no value to him, when he can be of no real assistance to others, why should a man continue? When he is of no benefit, when he is a burden to those he loves, why should he remain?³³

He implied that, in some cases, there was a duty to die. Sometimes, he noted, there were "cases in which to not end life would be a mistake, sometimes almost a crime."³⁴

But there is no doubt that this first foray was borne of individualistic indignation that the state would pronounce upon whether or not an individual could or should take her own life. "As to the necessity of death, each must decide for himself. And if a man honestly decides that death is best—best for him and others—and acts upon the decision, why should he be blamed?"³⁵ He aimed squarely at the law preventing suicide in New York: "This law was born of superstitions passed by thoughtlessness and enforced by ignorance and cruelty."³⁶

THE ENSUING DISCUSSION

That Ingersoll boldly questioned the taboo against suicide can be seen in the ensuing discussion. Indicating, perhaps, the disturbance felt by orthodox religion at any challenges to its precepts, passionate rebuttals followed Ingersoll's letter and his later justifications. An editorial note in the Lincoln Nebraska *Courier* on September 22 1894 stated,

A few weeks ago *The Courier* published the larger portion of an article written by R. G. Ingersoll on suicide, being a defense of

self-murder. The wide publication of this article throughout the country was followed almost immediately by an epidemic of suicides and this still keeps up. Col. Ingersoll's glorification of suicide aroused a storm of comment, and he has been criticised by eminent divines, literary men, scientist, and humorists.³⁷

The *Courier* complained the next week that "Ingersoll's view of life is that of the dreary pessimist.... All of Ingersoll's eloquence has been poured out over the gravestone."³⁸ William Sheran, writing in *The New Ulm Review*, published in Minnesota, compared Ingersoll's beliefs to anarchism, condemning Ingersoll's "cruel and cheerless creed."³⁹

Others were far more vituperous in their criticisms of Ingersoll. A paper in Pennsylvania said of him "he has only to follow the illustrious example of Judas Iscariot [in committing suicide]. We are rather inclined to agree with Mr. Ingersoll in the belief that there may possibly be exceptional cases in which is no sin, while as a rule we think it is."⁴⁰ Others just as vigorously defended him, including the editor of the *Blue-Grass Blade*, a paper devoted to agnostic and atheistic causes: "Ingersoll earnestly and intelligently trying to save Christian people from the natural and baneful results of their own superstitious philosophy, but the preachers do not want him to succeed at it, because it would knock the profits off their business for him to do so."⁴¹ Others took Ingersoll less seriously: The *Philadelphia Call* noted, referring to Ingersoll's attack on the literalist reading of the bible, "Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll has let up on Moses long enough to speak a good word for suicide."⁴²

Big newspapers, with an arguably more erudite readership, were, if anything, more condemning of Ingersoll's words. French journalist Raymond de L'Epee, writing in the *New York Times*, did not hold back: "'Kill yourself,' cries Mr. Ingersoll to the simpering, the harebrained, the fatuous, the poltroon, the sentimentalist, the coward, the love-torn, the romantic, the fool whelmed in his follies, the scoundrel brought to bay by the consequences of his crimes.... 'Kill yourself!' cries Satanic Journalism to Society, dazed, bewildered, vacillating and plunged in an inept despair." Like others at the time, de L'Epee associated Ingersoll's defense of suicide with anarchy.⁴³ Another *New York Times* article, reviewing Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, cited Ingersoll in its general condemnation of degeneracy: "We cannot forget that Ingersoll article on suicide, telling many to take their own lives."⁴⁴ Not one article in the *New York Times* defended Ingersoll. The reportage in the *Washington Post* generally carried denunciations of the "silver-tongued infidel" by clergymen,

though some clergymen defended Ingersoll.⁴⁵ Several politicians attacked Ingersoll. Congressman Elijah Morse of Massachusetts denounced Ingersoll's pamphlet as the "main cause" of the suicide "epidemic" that Morse thought existed at the time.⁴⁶

INGERSOLL'S RESPONSES

Ingersoll published his responses both in printed replies in some of the many publications criticizing him and as interviews. In an interview with the *New York Journal* in 1895, he was asked whether he had modified his views. He made clear that he had not, pointing out seemingly accurately that the rage that greeted his raising of the question reflected the fact that no one could refute him. Again, his strongest suit was his defense of suicide in the face of terminal illness: "Every man of sense knows that a person being devoured by a cancer has the right to take morphine, and pass from agony into dreamless sleep."⁴⁷

Three years after his original article, Ingersoll argued much the same line, saying that suicide was justified to avoid torture and to "avoid being devoured by a cancer." Nowhere, however, despite numerous references to preventing pain and suffering of the terminally ill, did Ingersoll mention a need for *assistance* with suicide.⁴⁸ He responded curtly to a question by an interviewer from the *New York Press* regarding whether he thought that what he had written had caused people to take their lives: "No, I do not. People do not kill themselves because of the ideas of others." He also stressed, in the same interview, the difference between euthanasia and suicide: Asked "is not killing of born idiots and infants hopelessly handicapped at birth" just as justified as suicide? Ingersoll replied, "There is no relation between the questions—between suicides and killing idiots. Suicide may, under certain circumstances, be right and killing idiots may be wrong; killing idiots may be right and suicide may be wrong." He added, sardonically, "When we look about us, when we read interviews with preachers about Jonah, we know that all the idiots have not been killed."⁴⁹

Of course, Ingersoll's was not the only discussion about suicide occurring in the 1890s, but newspapers—and presumably the public who read them—took as their cue his discussion and not more academic forays into the issue. It may be that Ingersoll's article provoked the establishment. In the background, suicide, especially on the pages of books and academic studies, was moving from a moral to a scientific/medical issue and sociological problem. Later, it would appear as a psychological issue, but it is perhaps suicide's appearance as

a social problem that made observers react so strongly to Ingersoll's question. In the 1890s it became a growing problem in the sense that many were more aware of the issue but also in that it appeared to be an issue facing society. Suicide was the product of overcivilization and other societal failures on the pages of texts by Enrico Morselli, William Wyn Westcott, and S. A. K. Strahan.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, many newspaper articles focused on the reported increase of suicide.⁵¹ The influence on later generations of Emile Durkheim's 1897 masterpiece of sociology has perhaps distorted historical understanding of the influences on this period.⁵²

The *Call* was, from 1895 to 1897, owned by Charles M. Shortridge, who later became a Republican senator. Its reporting on individual suicides, like other papers at the time, discussed them as personal stories of tragedy or disgrace. Accordingly, the August 2 *Call* began the piece in a macabre spirit of helpfulness, providing bare details of recent suicides under a column entitled "How and When." In March 1896, Gabriel Bishop killed himself using arsenic, James Mack, opium, whereas William H. Byrnes cut his throat and John H. Peters used a pistol. Cecelia Rice used carbolic acid. Out of 94 listed over the year—presumably they were all residents of San Francisco—13 were women. All but one—"T. Nishmura"—had European names, though several were listed as "unknown man."⁵³

The discussion, which flared up in 1894 and 1895 in newspaper columns and articles that were often syndicated nationally, reemerged on the West Coast in 1896. On June 10, the Los Angeles *Herald* observed: "A remarkable and painful epidemic of suicide seems to have lately attacked the community and it would seem high time that the sin and disgrace of suicide should be pointed out, if not from the pulpit then by the press." The *Herald* provided no proof of its increase but asked for "brief and properly written communications from its leaders" about the "right and the wrong of suicide from either a religious or civil point of view."⁵⁴ Some of its readers responded. Those printed, however, all argued against suicide. Typical of responses at the time was that of Lewis Jones, who concluded, "The hearts of ninety-nine out of one hundred of us decide it to be wrong. There is not one man in a thousand who would not use every endeavour in his power to prevent a commission of the act."⁵⁵

The *Call*, however, waited until August 2 to publish the thoughts of prominent writers and thinkers for its publication on the subject. What differed from the *Herald's* discussion was the decision of the editor to allow pro-suicide thinkers free reign. Some contributors to the *Call* echoed Lewis Jones' allusions to decadence influencing views of suicide. These contributors

were obviously aware of the academic discussions about suicide, particularly the idea that overcivilization caused suicide. One of the contributors, publisher, editor, and ardent supporter of women's suffrage Mollie E. Connors, summed up the moral confusion at the time in a passionate defense of living: "Civilization has complicated matters for us by evolving powerful forces, intellectual and ethical; and now at this close of this nineteenth century, so great is the need for light on the subject, that a great paper must needs ask, 'Is life worth living?' 'Is suicide justifiable?'"⁵⁶

Spiritualist Dr. N. S. Ravlin added, "There must be something radically wrong with civilization that causes people to make away with themselves, regardless of the consequences."⁵⁷ Reformer James S. Reynolds wondered darkly whether "the sooner we all take ourselves off and thus, solve the 'destiny of the race' the better." But he also expressed the hope that suicide might someday be overcome: "Abolish the institution of landownership; swing wide open the gates that shut men off the unused land; proclaim industrial freedom to the famishing, heart-broken slaves and suicide will speedily 'be as a tale that is told.'"⁵⁸ Reverend Joseph Worcester, a Swedenborgian Pastor, took a different view: "I believe in condemning in strongest terms the cowardice, the fatuity, the wickedness of the suicide."⁵⁹

Those who did allow suicide in some instances tended to use arguments similar to those of people who wish to change suicide laws today. Julia A. Stevens, writing under the name of her common-law husband, Dr. Louis Schlesinger, a prominent "spiritual medium," as he is listed in the 1880 census, allowed some suicides: "There are circumstances, though, that to my mind would render suicide justifiable. If one were stricken with a loathsome disease that meant a lingering death—I believe that were the end hastened the person would be justified in so doing."⁶⁰ Chief of Police Captain I. W. Lees agreed: "Suppose a man is sick, and that he knows he must die; doctors whom he trusts have told him so, and he feels it himself. Suppose he is in pain, and to live is only to prolong his sufferings. Hasn't he the right to end it all at once?"⁶¹ Ravlin allowed that "If I were being eaten up by a cancer or any other incurable malady, so that my life's continuation meant only menace to the living, I should take the exit by the shortest route and relieve both my fellows and myself."⁶²

None of the correspondents spoke of euthanasia, and none mentioned any need to help or assist suicides despite the fact that, in comparison with today, the methods of killing oneself were crude and often prolonged and painful. However, among those who declared themselves liberal in relation to suicide, there were deep differences. Chief Justice of California William

H. Beatty agreed with the majority sentiment (and the aforementioned Colson) when he stated, “I think every man ought to be allowed to decide the question for himself whether he should take his own life.” However, Beatty, took on one of the main issues in legalizing suicide—whether, in making suicide legal, society also allows aiding and abetting—now called “assisting”—a suicide: “I think it would be a crime for anyone to advise or encourage another to commit suicide.”⁶³ Eisen was the only one to say that suicide “should be encouraged.” However, he was not alone in condemning some suicides as “selfishness.”⁶⁴

But there appears to be, in the 1890s, no mention whatever of “assisted suicide” and no discussion of voluntary euthanasia in the discussions about suicide. Certainly, in the *San Francisco Call* article, there was no mention of any need for assistance except in Justice Beatty’s matter of fact condemnation of the act. The notion of assisting a suicide was deemed neither necessary, despite the often-painful illnesses leading to death, nor desirable; Beatty had no problem supporting the total freedom to commit suicide and criminal sanctions against those who assist a suicide. Much of the discussion—particularly that from New York resident Robert Ingersoll—was directed against a New York penal code, passed on July 26, 1881, which made attempted suicide a crime punishable by two years in prison, a fine, or both. But, as far as the evidence shows, no one called for legalizing the *assistance* of suicide (the New York code retained a prohibition from earlier penal codes against aiding or abetting a suicide).

The concept of assisting death certainly existed but not in discussion about suicide. It first emerged in Britain with a call for the legalization of euthanasia by Samuel D. Williams in his 1870 essay for the Birmingham Speculative Club. However, the emphasis was not on autonomy or on the assistance that the suicide needed but on an agreement between the patient, the patient’s doctor, and the community, based on social utility. In other words, the social utility of the act was the paramount consideration—not autonomy or freedom of choice. Though Williams referred to recent developments like chloroform, serious consideration of medical euthanasia was not given by the official organs of the medical profession, which almost uniformly rejected the idea of euthanasia until the twentieth century.

The essential idea behind euthanasia, as Williams noted, was in a less reverential and perhaps more materialistic view of the value of human life. As Williams noted, no problem occurs when “a life is taken away that has ceased to be useful to others, and has become an unbearable infliction to its possessor.”⁶⁵ Lionel Tollemache, a prominent and early proponent of

euthanasia, called for “a sort of legalized suicide by proxy” but was very careful to justify the act as a social virtue: “modern science informs us that in an overcrowded population there is a sharp struggle for existence: so that an unhealthy, unhappy, and useless man is in a manner hustling out of being, or at least out of the means of enjoyment, someone who would probably be happier, healthier, and more useful than himself.”⁶⁶ Similarly, a high-profile supporter of euthanasia (and early exponent of birth control), Annie Besant, noted “that there are circumstances under which a human being has a moral right to hasten the inevitable approach of death.” But she spent most of the chapter entitled “Euthanasia” in her 1885 book calling readers’ attentions to the sacrifices that nurses and carers make to the dying, urging euthanasia “to yield a last service to society by relieving it from a useless burden.”⁶⁷

Moreover, those who called for euthanasia in its modern meaning, like Eisen, were careful not to extend their call for tolerance of suicide to all suicides. A paper given to the Maine Medical Association in 1889—one of the few medical journals to call for euthanasia—did not mention suicide.⁶⁸ Williams assured readers, “But of other suicide than this no defence is offered here.” Tollemache called suicide “immoral in most cases,” and Annie Besant warned readers that “we are not discussing the moral lawfulness or unlawfulness of suicide in general; we may protest against suicide, and yet uphold euthanasia.”⁶⁹ Euthanasia, it appears, differed from general tolerance of suicide in that it demanded suicides be socially useful. Keeping euthanasia voluntary was simply the most politically and ethically palatable way to legitimate killing by doctors, to overcome the idea of the “sanctity of life.” No doubt, many liberal individualists like Ingersoll would have looked upon someone leaving the means of departing life by the bedside of someone suffering from a loathsome disease with sympathy, but the idea of voluntary euthanasia had not occurred to those who used the example of someone dying of cancer to urge a change in the suicide laws.

SUICIDE AND THE PROBLEM OF ORDER

In many publications—particularly in academic journals—there was a growing tendency to discuss suicide as a social problem—a problem stemming from the organization of society rather than sited in the individual as an expression of religious, moral, or even medical crises. Suicide became a critique of the society in which it occurred. It often represents an individual drama and a dilemma between the individual and the society or collective grouping in which they find themselves. “Suicide is feared and resented

because it transfers power from society to the individual,” the clinician and sociologist Robert Kastenbaum has written, and it “becomes a more salient threat when society believes it is under serious attack by divisive and rebellious forces.... It is not the death that disturbs. It is the affront, the threat, the act of assertion, the act of defiance, the act of self-empowerment.”⁷⁰ In the latter half of the nineteenth century, culminating in the 1890s, suicide became a focus for widespread social anxieties. Discussions about suicide not only reflected the challenge of Darwin to religious mores; they betrayed worries about the future, about the relationship of the individual to the collective, and about how society was organized.

The beginnings of a sociological approach to suicide arose in France when suicide became, for some who opposed the Revolution, an expression of revolt against authority, excessive individualism against the interests of the collective. Searching for condemnations that did not invoke religion, some, like Joseph Tissot, reposed suicide as a revolt less against God and the church and more against the political status quo. Such logic sent many looking for the causes of suicide. Tissot declared in a book entitled *Suicide Mania and the Spirit of Revolt: Causes and Remedies* and published in 1840, “We have already seen that suicide is, in general, a direct result of education and civilization.”⁷¹

Whereas Tissot associated suicide with revolt, Karl Marx agreed that suicides were produced by the extreme individualism—or alienation—inherent in capitalism. In 1846 Marx published a manuscript on suicide, so inspired was he by the posthumously published memoirs of Jacques Peuchet, archivist with the Paris prefecture of the police, which contained many sympathetic descriptions of suicides. Marx cited Peuchet approvingly: “The yearly toll of suicides, which is to some extent normal and periodic, has to be viewed as a symptom of the deficient organization of our society.”⁷²

There is less evidence of a rising suicide rate than of a rising nervousness of authorities that the masses, unbound by moribund religion, would increasingly reject social rules; the suicide rate seemed to demonstrate such libertinism. The establishment became increasingly sensitive to any changes they perceived in rates of suicide or attitudes to it. In Great Britain in 1859, J. N. Radcliffe detected disturbing portents of change in “the aesthetics of suicide,” and in 1863 he saw signs that “sympathy and even approval might soon be solicited not only for the criminal but for the crime of suicide itself.”⁷³ By 1872, the *New York Times* reported, citing no evidence, that “[w]e are at this moment witnessing in our own community what the reporters call ‘a suicide mania.’”⁷⁴

In the United States, authorities also concerned themselves with how to approach the issue of suicide. The earliest American statute explicitly to outlaw assisting suicide was enacted in New York in 1828. Between 1857 and 1865, a New York commission led by one Dudley Field drafted a criminal code that prohibited “aiding” a suicide and made it a crime, specifically, to “furnish another person with any deadly weapon or poisonous drug, knowing that such person intends to use such weapon or drug in taking his life.”⁷⁵ The Field Commission became the model for legislation in Dakota Territory in 1877 and New York in 1881. California codified its assisted-suicide prohibition in 1874, using language similar to the Field Code’s. However, the New York law also made attempted suicide a felony punishable by up to two years imprisonment, whereas it had been a misdemeanour. The law ran into immediate opposition and a campaign to abolish the punishments against suicide. As S. B. Livingstone wrote in 1895, “public opinion was not consulted in making the law and does not sanction it.”⁷⁶

Academic interest in suicide both responded to the nervousness of authorities about suicide and poured fuel onto the fire. Enrico Morselli’s path-breaking statistical study published in 1881 (the original Italian version was published in 1879), entitled *Suicide: An Essay in Comparative Moral Statistics*, raised the issue of suicide to prominence in the United States.⁷⁷ Following the then-enormously influential Herbert Spencer, Morselli’s fundamental conception, he acknowledged, “is not new, taking and treating, as it does, one side of that moral and intellectual evolution of mankind, whose theory is due to Darwin, Buckle, Herbert Spencer, Wallace, and Bagehot.”⁷⁸ Morselli naturalized suicide, claiming that it was part of the struggle for life, famously calling suicide “this fatal disease of civilized people” and repeating the mistake that what were then called “savage races” did not suffer from it.⁷⁹ But Morselli was certainly not the only academic examining suicide. Emilio Motta’s bibliography on suicide, published in 1890, recorded 647 publications from the sixteenth century to the end of nineteenth, 419 of which appeared after 1850. Sociologist Anthony Giddens described suicide as possibly the most thoroughly discussed social problem in the nineteenth century, judging from the volume of publications.⁸⁰

Theories of suicide often dovetailed with race and eugenic theories. Captivating scientists in the 1890s, one theory held that suicide rates reflected genetic defects passed on from generation to generation. Samuel Strahan argued that “the suicidal impulse, whether the gradually developing or the instantaneous, is but rarely acquired; that in the vast majority of cases it is not the produce of one generation, but is inherited from

ancestors who have been cultivating it for a considerable time in one form or other.”⁸¹

SUICIDE AND CULTURE—THE 1890S

The media often seemed to take its cue from the new sociological accounts of suicide. Writing in the *North American Review* in 1891, William Matthews decried the fashionable nature of suicide: “*Tedium vitae* is not the disease of the canaille; it is the characteristic suffering of privileged races and classes, the pets of fortune, who fly to suicide as a relief from the monotony of existence, when satiety and ennui have made them ‘a-weary of the sun.’” Suicide from satiety, he noted, had crept into the United States since the Civil War as “a sad revolution has taken place in our tastes and habits.” Life, Matthews charged, “must now be spiced with condiments of the most piquant and titillating sort.”⁸²

By the 1890s most observers agreed that only professional moralists condemned suicide. But few, as far as can be seen, actually *defended* suicide, despite declarations like in the *Daily Chronicle*: “the idea of suicide as a sin hardly exists anymore in popular consciousness.” In 1897 Clergyman H. H. Henson lamented the fact that “suicide is now ... spoken of as a ‘misfortune’ rather than a crime.” The change arises from, he stated, “that almost extravagant sympathy with wretchedness, as such, which characterizes [the] age.”⁸³

RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN THE NINETIES

A third historical factor related to the problem of order was the weakening of the hold of traditional organized religions on Americans. “Individualism” in the 1890s was often used to condemn the irreligious “infidels” and, to many, implied not classical liberalism but anarchy and lack of religion.⁸⁴ The association between political and religious rebellion could not be missed. One Christian writer boasted of his “profound conviction that anarchy is but fruit ripened upon the tree of rationalism planted by George Frederick Hegel, in Germany, and watered and cultivated by Robert Ingersoll in America.”⁸⁵ Besides parallels to anarchism, a class element crept into the discussion, presenting suicide as an act of rebellion that should not be tolerated. In article dedicated to the “Dangers to Public Peace,” the editor of the *Chauquataun* declared in 1893 that “Suicides by various means are more frequent of late than ever before ... suicide is a crime against society and when

a man is bent on self-destruction he should be restrained; for the cause of suicide a remedy should be found.”⁸⁶

Religious figures had good cause to be worried about their authority. Orthodox religions—even those that had grown earlier in the nineteenth century—fractured, and a diversity of religious beliefs thrived during the nineteenth century, inhabiting a varied and pluralistic religious landscape. Existing Baptist, Methodist, and other Christian denominations split over questions of belief. Infidel “churches” settled in to what Joseph Locke has referred to as “the freewheeling religious world of the nineteenth century.”⁸⁷

Darwinism “now loomed up in every book, sermon, periodical, and tract to challenge the most fundamental tenets of the old faith” as historian of religion William McLoughlin put it. Several entirely new religions attempted to incorporate the Darwinist emphasis on science and the increasing scientific concentration on health; Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science church arrived during these tumultuous years as did the Nazarene Movement and the Jehova’s Witnesses.⁸⁸ Though perhaps an exaggeration, McLoughlin had a point when he observed that the “crisis that arose in orthodoxy in 1890 was unlike anything Western culture had ever faced.”⁸⁹ Even more directly than by Spiritualism, orthodox Christianity was threatened by freethinkers. Publications such as the *Truth Seeker*, the *Blue-Grass Blade*, and the *Free Thought Magazine* expressed ideas connected with freethought. Some of the earliest calls for suicide to be decriminalized came from freethinkers or agnostics.

THE 1881 LAW ON SUICIDE

The New York law of 1881 outlawing suicide became a focal point for protest: it was a major reason why Robert G. Ingersoll would pen his approval of some suicides. A *Report of a Committee on Repeal of the Existing Statute* in New York expressed the opinions of the November 1893 meeting of the Medico-Legal Society and was approved by vote of the body and ordered to be submitted to the Legislature of the State and the Constitutional Convention. As one 1893 publication noted of the New York law, “although no State insists on submitting the body of a suicide to disgrace in the good old way, the principle has not been given up.”⁹⁰ Society member Dr. E. C. Spitzka perhaps spoke for many when, the *New York Times* reported, he called the law a “relic of barbarism.”⁹¹ “[I]t is impossible to defend the law of the State of New-York upon grounds of public policy or upon any other than religious grounds,” an editorial in the *New York Times* declared.⁹² But no one questioned the sanction against aiding or abetting a suicide. As Clark Bell, a signatory of

the aforementioned committee and influential editor of the *Medico-Legal Journal*, noted, the purpose of a repeal of the legislation was not to condone suicide but to remove pointless and cruel legislation. Certainly, it could not be a right: “We cannot admit the legal right of suicide without at the same time consenting to the destruction of the elementary principles upon which society is based.”⁹³ Other observers, supportive of laws to remove suicide as a crime, still insisted that aiding or abetting a suicide was a criminal act.⁹⁴

THE *CALL* AND THE BEGINNINGS OF WIDESPREAD DISCUSSION OF EUTHANASIA

The discussion on suicide in the *Call* must have been deemed a success. Two weeks later, the paper published a provocative piece by Charles William Wendte, Minister of the Unitarian Church of Oakland. Though dealing similarly with death, the article was not about suicide. Wordily entitled, “Thou Shalt Not Kill: Should Civilization, in the Name of Mercy, Modify That Law of Humankind to Meet Cases Where Incurable Disease Makes Life a Hopeless Agony?” it called for the “humane disposal of those who are suffering needless and cruel tortures, and whose death is inevitable.” He argued for tribunals made up of medical and other representatives that would grant requests made by individuals and their families, to “gently and humanely put them out of suffering.” “God speed the day when men shall rid themselves of theological and personal prejudices and act as justice dictates and mercy requires.”⁹⁵

Responses by “experts” were included after Wendte’s article. Gustave Eisen reappeared and, not surprisingly, gave his approval.⁹⁶ Reverend Dr. Horatio Stebbins, fellow Unitarian and graduate of Harvard Divinity School, who was Minister at the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, asked, pertinently, “Death certainly would seem to be a boon to these [denizens of almshouses] and many other poor sufferers, but will you take upon your soul the responsibility of killing them?”⁹⁷

The *Call* announced, days later, that the “discussion of the subject of suicide and the death of those whose sufferings are incurable [sic], that was brought up by the publication of Rev. Dr. Wendte’s sermon in THE *CALL* two weeks ago, is broadening out and is now the theme of pulpits and lecture rooms all over the country.” Wendte defended his earlier position but distanced himself from suicide, and more prominently called for “euthanasia.” He insisted that “self-murder is a crime against self, against society and against God.” Alongside, the *Call* printed a sermon attacking Wendte’s position by Reverend James Small of the First Christian Church arguing that euthanasia

was not a correct response to the trauma of the dying: “Friends, the deepest wounds are not those that bandages cover. Broken hearts cause deeper sufferings than broken bones.”⁹⁸

In fact, the discussion of euthanasia grew even as the discussion of suicide faded. Ingersoll failed to mention it in his final years; he died in 1899. The cheapening of life at the margins led many euthanasia enthusiasts to forget Wendte’s admonition that euthanasia should be strictly voluntary. In the first few years of the twentieth century, Dr. Ella K. Dearborn cheerfully called for “euthanasia for the incurably ill, insane, criminals, and degenerates.” She, too, used the incurable cancer example, asking the reader whether they would prefer “[e]uthanasia by the chloroform route, that ends all suffering for the individual, or a loathsome burden for weary months or years for those you love?” Dearborn thought that it was entirely reasonable that all persons should pass an examination allowing them to continue living.⁹⁹ In 1906, sociologist Miss L. Graham Crozier went further: “I would personally rather administer chloroform to the poor, starving children of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and other American cities, than to see them living as they must in squalor and misery.”¹⁰⁰

As the *San Francisco Call* commented about Miss Crozier’s suggestion, feeding these children might be a better option.¹⁰¹ However, Crozier simply built upon the logic of euthanasia at the time, as she noted, “There is no ground to believe that any human life is inviolably sacred and to be preserved, no matter with what results to individuals or to others. On the contrary, there are lives to which every reasonable consideration urges that an end should be put.”¹⁰²

In 1903 the Unitarian Reverend Merle C. Wright advocated “the proposition that it would be to the advantage of society as well as of the sufferers themselves if all persons afflicted with diseases or injuries from which there was no hope of recovery were put painlessly to death.” Reverend Wright, who had been praised by Ingersoll as one of the more sane members of the clergy, mentioned the right to suicide in his speech but did not relate it directly to euthanasia. Wright added several provisos, among which was that euthanasia was not only voluntary but requested. But Wright’s example was of the ill person being a financial and emotional drain on his family.¹⁰³

Indicative of the scant concern for the consent of the patient is the reporting in 1906 of one of the chloroform bills introduced in Iowa. The *Bowbells Tribune* reported that the bill stipulated that “slaying the sick” would only occur “when at least three physicians and the county coroner

unanimously agree to and participate in the act, and then only with the consent of the nearest relative, and, *if possible*, of the sufferer as well.”¹⁰⁴

Critics (and even advocates like the leading force behind the Ohio chloroform bill, Anna Hall) used the term “legalized murder” rather than suicide. When suicide was mentioned, it became a duty rather than a right. Critics of euthanasia occasionally associated euthanasia with suicide, often asserting, as the *Spectator* did, that euthanasia is simply a more acceptable word for self-killing: “Opinion for many years past has been softening or rotting on the subject of suicide, and especially of that form of the offence, suicide to avoid incurable physical suffering, which, in our secret sympathy with it, we term euthanasia.”¹⁰⁵

The *New York Tribune* article in 1906 bookends the freewheeling period of the 1890s where new moral possibilities briefly opened up.¹⁰⁶ Notwithstanding the regional differences from San Francisco, it is possible to detect a change in the national mood with respect to such issues. Whereas the *Call*'s correspondents generally assented to suicide, the 1906 discussion came out almost unanimously against legalizing euthanasia. The high-water mark for freethought, as Susan Jacoby noted, had passed. Orthodox religions again took hold. Whereas the 1890 census reported that less than 21 percent of Americans counted themselves as religious communicants or members, by 1906 the number reported was 39.¹⁰⁷

In the *Tribune*, Methodist, Unitarian, and Baptist Ministers were joined by Rabbis, but no Spiritualists or proponents of Eastern religions or even Catholics participated. By this time, even in San Francisco, the influence of Spiritualism waned, becoming associated with confidence tricksters and, thanks in part to the murder of Jane Stanford, patron of Stanford University and prominent Spiritualist, with crime.¹⁰⁸

Except for one of the educational figures, each rejected euthanasia. More than half, including doctors and lawyers, appealed to the authority of God in matters of life and death. Unlike 10 years before, there was little dissent and no one questioned the authority of God, which perhaps explains why those promoting euthanasia met with little success. The discussion turned not on the right of the individual but on the whether the action of a doctor—or of wider society—taking a life was legitimate. As one lawyer Walter S. Logan noted, “The moral effect would be entirely bad. The safety of human life against violence in our day is due very largely to the sacredness with which it is held.” Contrasting the discussion on euthanasia with that of suicide, another of the *Tribune*'s correspondents, William Hepburn Russell, objected to legalized euthanasia because it would “take away life without the consent of the victim.”¹⁰⁹

As Martin Pernick has observed in his study of the death of “defective” babies in the first decades of the twentieth century, eugenics and euthanasia overlapped far more than did suicide and eugenics. Eugenics, which began as a science and became a popular crusade that lasted until World War II, sought to improve human heredity and eradicate hereditary disease. It shared with euthanasia corporate action to streamline the collective. Like euthanasia, eugenics sought to “offset medical and charitable activities that had artificially preserved the unfit, and to streamline the slow, wasteful and cruel” aspects of nature.¹¹⁰ Radical economist Scott Nearing encapsulated the authoritarian implications of eugenics advocacy: “persons with transmissible defects have no right to parenthood and a sane society in its efforts to maintain its race standards would absolutely forbid hereditary defectives to procreate their kind.”¹¹¹

Suicide made a reappearance in the 1900s as a metaphor for American society and the American “race.” Such a discussion imagined the body of the individual as the body of the American people that required medical attention. Sociologist Edward A. Ross, heavily influenced by Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide*, coined the term “race suicide” in 1901 to describe a process where a “higher race quietly and unobtrusively eliminates itself rather than endure individually the bitter competition it has failed to ward off from itself by collective action.”¹¹²

Euthanasia largely disappeared from public discussion in the United States from 1910 to the 1930s. However, in Germany Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche published “Permitting the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life” in 1920. As Brady and Cooper note, Binding and Hoche argue that “the society or the nation is analogous to a patient, and that physicians should treat that patient even at the sacrifice of the well-being of the individual.”¹¹³ In 1938, Unitarian Minister Dr. Charles Potter and several others formed the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of America. Although “voluntary” appeared in the name, Potter made it clear that euthanasia was not driven by the needs of the individual but by the needs of society: “I think mercy killing is justified in certain instances.... One of the conditions should be severe pain. The incurable imbeciles should be mercifully executed by lethal chamber, and in that decision I am partly influenced in the fact that New York State alone spends \$30,000,000 annually to keep the incurable imbecile alive.”¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

The 1890s represented a brief window when, for some, suicide was not a sin and when individuals evaded the control of both religion and medicine. Prior

to then, religious restraints and condemnations made suicide illegitimate. Since then, the sociological and psychological assessments that pathologized suicide have largely replaced religious restraints. The need for assistance to die today may actually be a request for moral permission to end one's life that renders the action something other than suicide; doctors have certainly replaced priests and other clerics at the deathbed scene. Although the individual suicide may not be condemned, moral defenses of the act like on the pages of the *Call* can hardly be heard today.¹¹⁵ Certainly, in the material presented on suicide in the 1890s, not one call for assistance or challenge to the existing laws against aiding and abetting a suicide can be found. It is not that people were more physically able to take their lives in the past; if anything, technological advances make it easier to take one's own life. It may also be that suicide has become so medicalized and restigmatized as "bad" that we dare not countenance the act without the requisite medical/state authority.

Though there are undoubtedly similarities between euthanasia and the suicide advocated by Ingersoll and the correspondents of the *San Francisco Call* in 1896, this article shows that there were significant differences, too. Their historical origins differ, as do their reasons for being. Despite the similarity of justifications for suicide in the 1890s and modern rationalizations for assisted death in the examples of the "man devoured by cancer," the justification of those in the Gilded Age was clearly liberatory, freedom from both religious and state strictures against suicide. The campaign for euthanasia perhaps shared the antipathy to religious invocations against suicide but not state control of decisions of life and death. Like Binding and Hoche, they considered that society was the patient and that some sacrifice of individuals for the good of society was both prudent and morally acceptable.

Historically, the origins of euthanasia—and the modern movement for the legalization of assisted death—lie in what Richard Hofstadter referred to as "Darwinian collectivism" rather than in Social Darwinism. Euthanasia should be seen in the context of the eugenics, racial hygiene, and temperance. The campaign for assisted death did not emerge, as it has been claimed by some conservative pundits, because of an excess of individualism.¹¹⁶ The right to die is only accorded to those whose existences are collectively acknowledged as hopeless. Rather than the individual making their own decision about the value of their life, they must fall into particular categories whose lives are judged to be less valuable than those of others. That is much more similar to the campaign for euthanasia than it is to moral reconsiderations of suicide.

Finally, this article reminds us of the freethinking, freewheeling, fiercely individualistic, rebellious moment when popular beliefs had it that "a man

should be permitted to go out of this world whenever he thinks fit.” Because of the legacy of Richard Hofstadter’s *Social Darwinism*, the individualists are remembered for their ruthlessness and lack of pity, espousing “survival of the fittest.” That can cause us to forget that they rebelled against centralized religious authority and successfully undermined it, allowing a real diversity of religious thought. It is worth emphasizing the many women recruited as thinkers about such important moral questions as well as how differently the correspondents to the *Call* answered the question.

The United States entered the era of Progressivism when concerns, such as “race suicide” and temperance, marshalled Americans toward collectivist solutions to perceived moral problems. Euthanasia better fit the Progressive Era sense that the individual’s will should be bent to serve the interests of society. The “chloroform bills” proposed in Indiana and Iowa in 1906, though defeated, received prominent support. However, long after the rancorous discussions of the nineties, the authorities agreed that suicide should no longer be illegal; the New York law that so enraged Ingersoll was quietly repealed in 1919.

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NOTES

1. “Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.

2. “Is it Ever Right to Speed the Departing Sick? Prominent Men in Several Professions Voice Their Sentiments on the Advisability of Shortening the Pains of the Dying,” *New-York Tribune*, January 21, 1906, 2.

3. “Is it Ever Right to Speed the Departing Sick?” Bizarrely, Jacob Appel uses this article to bolster his claim that the “diversity of national opinion” about euthanasia “was epitomized in a symposium on the subject that appeared in the *New York Tribune*.” He cites three prominent men who advocated euthanasia rather than the 22 *against* any loosening of the law. Appel also asserts that, at the time, “[t]he concern of these notables is entirely about the potential for abuse; they make no mention of natural law, religious teachings, or absolute principles” (632). But, as the passages in the text indicate, this is certainly not the case.

4. The American Association of Suicidology recently published a statement entitled “‘Suicide’ Is Not the Same as ‘Physician Aid in Dying.’” American Association of Suicidology, “Statement of the American Association of Suicidology: ‘Suicide’ Is Not the Same as ‘Physician Aid in Dying,’” 2017, <https://ohiooptions.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AAS-PAD-Statement-Approved-10.30.17-ed-10-30-17.pdf> (accessed November 30, 2020). See Zach Moss, “Assisted Dying, Not Assisted Suicide,” *Campaign for Dignity in Dying* (blog), April 10, 2013, <https://www.dignityindying.org.uk/blog-post/assisted-dying-not-assisted-suicide/> (accessed November 24, 2020). For a useful discussion of the terms, see

Phoebe Friesen, “Medically Assisted Dying and Suicide: How are They Different and How are They Similar?” *The Hastings Center Report* 50, no. 1 (January/February 2020): 32–43.

5. In looking for lessons about the present from discussions in the past, his article echoes the approach of Martin Pernick who, in his fascinating study of the promotion of euthanasia in medical movies in the early twentieth century, compares euthanasia in the first decades of the twentieth century with its appearance more recently. Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of “Defective” Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

6. “Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ...”

7. See the campaigning organization Death with Dignity’s stories, which feature people dying of terrible diseases. (<https://www.deathwithdignity.org/news/2019/08/new-death-with-dignity-stories/>). All jurisdictions in the United States that allow any kind of assisted death restrict it to the terminally ill with a prognosis of six months or less to live. Many proponents of legalized assisted dying do so on the grounds that those with six months to live or less will be suffering unbearably. Martin Gunderson and David J. Mayo, “Restricting Physician-Assisted Death to the Terminally Ill,” *The Hastings Center Report* 30, no. 6 (November–December 2000): 17–23; E. J. Cassell and B. A. Rich, “Intractable End-of-Life Suffering and the Ethics of Palliative Sedation,” *Pain Medicine* 11, (2010): 435–38.

8. The term “assisted dying” is often used interchangeably with medical aid in dying, assisted suicide, physician-assisted suicide (PAS), physician-assisted dying, physician-assisted death, assisted death, and aid in dying. These terms all imply, in the American states where it is legal, a patient self-administering a deadly dose of barbiturates prescribed by a physician.

9. Many scholars see little difference between situations where the patient takes the final action and where the physician administers the deadly dose (see, for example, Ewan C. Goligher, E. Wesley Ely, Daniel P. Sulmasy, Jan Bakker, John Raphael, Angelo E. Volandes, Bhavesh M. Patel, et al., “Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia in the Intensive Care Unit: A Dialogue on Core Ethical Issues,” *Critical Care Medicine* 45, no. 2 (February 2017): 149–55; Margaret Pabst Battin, “Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide,” in *Ending Life: Ethics and the Way We Die* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17–46). Others see substantive moral distinctions between them (Kevin Yuill, *Assisted Suicide: The Liberal, Humanist Case against Legalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

10. Ian Dowbiggin, who has written what is so far the best history of euthanasia, identifies Robert G. Ingersoll, discussed below, as the “first to defend a right to euthanasia.” Though Ingersoll defended the right to suicide of those being “slowly devoured by cancer,” and though Dowbiggin is right to note that this justification “differs little from justifications of euthanasia many years later when changes in technology supposedly made active euthanasia an urgent necessity,” Ingersoll neither mentioned nor called for euthanasia. Ian Dowbiggin, *A Merciful End: The Euthanasia Movement in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 10, 12. Jacob Appel conflates the two in his discussion of the 1906 euthanasia controversy in “A Duty to Kill? A Duty to Die? Rethinking the Euthanasia Controversy of 1906,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 614. See also Stephen Louis Kuepper, “Euthanasia in America, 1890—1960: The Controversy, the Movement, and the Law” (PhD diss., Rutgers, 1981); Neil Gorsuch in *The Future of Assisted*

Suicide and Euthanasia (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Ezekiel Emanuel in "The History of Euthanasia," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 121, no. 10 (November 1994); N. D. A. Kemp, *Merciful Release: The History of the British Euthanasia Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); and Richard Weikhart, "Does Science Sanction Euthanasia or Physician-Assisted Suicide?" *The Human Life Review* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 30–36, who speak of assisted suicide when it did not yet exist, even as a concept. "Kathleen M. Brian, in *Morbid Propensities: Suicide, Sympathy, and the Making of American Eugenics*," identifies changing attitudes to suicide with the development of eugenics, conflating the liberty argument for suicide propounded by Robert G. Ingersoll and the eugenic argument made for euthanasia. (PhD diss., The Faculty of The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences of The George Washington University).

11. Appel, "A Duty to Kill?" 614.

12. The term "social Darwinism" owes its currency and many of its connotations to Richard Hofstadter's influential "Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860–1915." However, Hofstadter, although critical of the laissez faire individualist ethos of the late nineteenth century, also criticized what he termed "Darwinian collectivism" for its connections with racism, eugenics, and imperialism. For a useful discussion of the two dimensions of Hofstadter's thought, see Thomas C. Leonard, "Origins of the Myth of Social Darwinism: The ambiguous Legacy of Richard Hofstadter's Social Darwinism in American Thought," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 71, no. 1 (2009): 37–51.

13. E. H. Colson, "Agrees With Ingersoll," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.

14. Dr Gustave Eisen, "Thinks Suicide Should Be Encouraged," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.

15. See Michael W. Taylor, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (London: Continuum, 2007).

16. Ian Marsh, "The Uses of History in the Unmaking of Modern Suicide," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 3 (2013): 744–56, 747.

17. Sheila McLean, *Assisted Dying: Reflections on the Need for Law Reform* (London: Routledge, 2007).

See Kevin Yuill, "The Unfreedom of Assisted Suicide: How The Right to Die Undermines Autonomy," *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 1, no. 4 (2015), <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2015.10.003>.

18. Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2005), 151.

19. See "Considering Suicide," in Kevin Yuill, *Assisted Suicide: The Liberal, Humanist Case against Legalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83–111.

20. Ira M. Wasserman, Steven Stack, and Jimmie L. Reeves, "Suicide and the Media: The *New York Times*'s Presentation of Front-Page Suicide Stories between 1910 and 1920," *Journal of Communications* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 64–83.

21. David Silkenat, *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce & Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 31.

22. Chelsea Whyte, "US Suicide Rate at Its Highest since the End of the Second World War," *New Scientist* 20, (June 2019), <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2207007-us-suicide-rate-at-its-highest-since-the-end-of-the-second-world-war/>. Historical rates of suicide are notoriously difficult to measure because of the reluctance of many coroners to

record deaths as suicide. However, this correlates with British suicide rates, which appear to have risen during the early years of the 1890s, receded, and then peaked in 1905 (Kyla Thomas and David Gunnel, "Suicide in England and Wales 1861–2007: A Time-Trends Analysis," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 39, no. 6 (December 2010): 1464–1475), suggesting that the discussion of suicide emerged for reasons other than a dramatic increase.

23. "Agrees with Ingersoll," *San Francisco Call*, August 2, 1896, 17.

24. Susan Jacoby, *The Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll and American Freethought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 2. Jacoby mistakenly lists Oklahoma as another state into which Ingersoll did not venture (Oklahoma achieved statehood some eight years after Ingersoll's death).

25. The well-known iteration of the harm principle comes from John Stuart Mills's classic text, *On Liberty* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865): "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others" (8).

26. Robert Ingersoll, *The Works of Robert Ingersoll* 12 vols. (New York: Dresden Publishing Co., 1900), 11: 365.

27. Ingersoll, *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 9: 135–38.

28. Those biographies that fail to mention it at all include Jacoby, *The Great Agnostic*; Orvin Larson, *Robert Ingersoll: A Biography* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1962); C. H. Cramer, *Royal Bob: The Life of Robert G. Ingersoll* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952); Joseph McCabe, *Robert G. Ingersoll: Benevolent Agnostic* (Girard, KA: Haldeman-Julius, 1927); Mark A. Plummer, *Robert G. Ingersoll: Peoria's Pagan Politician* (Macomb, IL: Western Illinois, 1984). Herman E. Kittridge's *Ingersoll: A Biographical Appreciation* (1911; repr., New York: Freethinker Library, 2009) mentions the exchange of views very briefly.

29. Dowbiggin, *A Merciful End*, 35–38.

30. Ingersoll's famous "Christmas Sermon" was printed in the *Evening Telegram* on December 19, 1891, prompting the Rev. Dr. J. M. Buckley, editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the recognized organ of the Methodist Church, to call for the public to boycott the *Evening Telegram* for publishing it. Reverend L. A. Lambert wrote a 216-page book dedicated to the 361-word sermon (L. A. Lambert, *Ingersoll's Christmas Sermon* (New York: D. H. Macbride & Company, 1898). See also Ingersoll's defenses of his sermon against clerical wrath: Robert Ingersoll, *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7: 267–355.

31. Robert Ingersoll, *Is Suicide a Sin? The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7, 375.

32. Samuel Strahan, *Suicide and Insanity: A Psychological and Sociological Study* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893). Barrister and physician Strahan's influential text noted of suicide, "The absence of this fundamental instinct (of self-preservation) is the irrefragable proof of unfitness to live" (30).

33. Robert Ingersoll, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7, 376. See also, "On Suicide," Speeches and Writings File, 1864-1900, Box 29, Reel 20-21, Robert Green Ingersoll Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter Ingersoll Papers).

34. Ingersoll, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7, 378.

35. Ingersoll, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7, 378.

36. Ingersoll, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *The Works of Robert Ingersoll*, 7, 382.

37. "Ingersoll Answers His Critics," *The Courier* (Lincoln, NE), September 2, 1894, 6.

38. No title, *The Courier*, September 29, 1894.
39. William Sheran, "Answering Ingersoll," *New Ulm Review*, August 22, 1894, 1.
40. "Ingersoll on Suicide," *The Columbian* (Bloomsberg, PA), September 21, 1894, 8.
41. "Mr DC Logan A Christian Suicides in Lexington," *Blue-Grass Blade*, January 13, 1895, 3.
42. "Ingersoll on Suicide," *The True Northerner*, November 16, 1894, 3.
43. Raymond de L'Epee, "Its Triumph Is in Death: Satanic Journalism Has Had Its Double ...," *New York Times*, August 26, 1894, 17. On May 4, 1886, near Haymarket Square in Chicago, a bomb was thrown into a company of policemen sent to disperse a meeting protesting police action against striking workmen, killing one policeman on the spot and wounding many more. In the ensuing riot, eight officers and an undetermined number of private citizens were killed and wounded. An elaborate trial of eight "anarchists" followed; all eight were convicted and seven were condemned to death. One killed himself the day before the execution, and the remaining four were hanged on November 11, 1887. See Bernard A. Kogan, *The Chicago Haymarket Riot: Anarchy on Trial* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath and Co., 1959).
44. "Remedy For Degeneracy: Dr. Silverman Takes Issue with Max Nordau..." *New York Times*, Nov 25, 1895, 10.
45. Ingersoll was mentioned, for instance, when suicides occurred. See, for example, "Disciples of Ingersoll: Two Commercial Travelers and a Politician Shuffle Off the Mortal Coil," *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1894, 7. Also, "Took Ingersoll's Advice: Sigmund Schneider Got Rid of Life's Woes by ...," *The Washington Post*, June 13, 1895, 1. There was, in fact, nothing to tie the two suicides to Ingersoll. The Reverend Alexander McKay-Smith defended Ingersoll on the basis of free speech rather than ringing support for his points. Randolph H. McKim, "Clergy and Ingersoll: Rev. Blagden's Protest and Rev. Mackay-Smith's ...," *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1894, 9.
46. "Epidemic of Suicides: Congressman Morse Says that Ingersoll's Book Is the Main Cause," *The Washington Post*, January 26, 1897, 9.
47. Ingersoll, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, 7, 376–84.
48. Ingersoll's final paragraph in his pamphlet notes, "Those who attempt suicide should not be punished. If they are insane should, if possible be restored to reason; if sane, they should be reasoned with, calmed and assisted." But it is fairly clear in the context of pity, "assisted" refers to rendering of assistance for problems of life. ("Is Suicide a Sin?" *Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, 384).
49. "Suicide and Sanity," *Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, 421.
50. See Enrico (published as Henry) Morselli, *Suicide: An Essay on Comparative Moral Statistics* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882); William Wynn Westcott, *Suicide: Its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation and Prevention* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1885); and S. A. K. Strahan, *Suicide and Insanity: A Physiological and Sociological Study* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893). All three were widely reviewed in American journals.
51. See, for example, "Theories of Suicides," *The Washington Post*, April 27, 1889, 4; Samuel Yorke At Lee, "Is Suicide a Sin?" *The North American Review* 150, no. 399 (February 1890): 275–79; "Suicides and Murders: The Terrible Lists Continue to Increase throughout the Country," *Chicago Daily Tribune* December 31, 1893; "Some Curiosities of Suicide: The

Causes That Lead to It and the Laws Made against It," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1892, 16. All noted the "alarming incidence of suicide."

52. Emile Durkheim, *On Suicide*, trans. Robin Buss (NY: Penguin, 2006).
53. "How and When," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
54. "Is Suicide Wrong?" *The Herald*, June 11, 1896, 4.
55. Lewis Jones, "Is it Wrong to Commit Suicide?" *The Herald*, June 23, 1896, 5. See also Allen Griffiths, "Theosophy and Suicide," *The Herald*, June 18, 1896, 3; George W. Carpenter, "Thoughts on Suicide," *The Herald*, June 15, 1896, 4; Theo Hirst, "The Risk of Suicide," *The Herald*, June 29, 1896, 2.
56. Mollie E. Connors, "It is Braver to Live," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
57. Dr. N. S. Ravlin, "From a Spiritualist," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
58. James S. Reynolds, "If a Good Thing," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
59. Reverend Joseph Worcester, "More Prevalent Than We Think," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
60. Mrs. Dr. Louis Schlesinger, "Might Be Justifiable," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
61. Captain I. W. Lees, "It All Depends," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
62. Ravlin, "From a Spiritualist."
63. William H. Beatty, "A Man's Life s His Own," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
64. Dr. Gustave Eisen, "Thinks Suicide Should Be Encouraged," *San Francisco Call*, Sunday, August 2, 1896, 17.
65. Samuel D. Williams, "Euthanasia" in *Essays of the Birmingham Speculative Club* (London: William Morley, 1874), 210–37, 216, 230.
66. Lionel Tollemache, "The Cure for Incurables," in *Stones of Stumbling* (London: William Rice, 1893), 1–31 (originally published in the *Fortnightly Review*, February 1873, 2, 4).
67. Annie Besant, "Euthanasia" in *My Path to Atheism* (London: Freethought Publishing Co., 1885): 143–56, 156.
68. F. E. Hitchcock, "Annual Oration: Euthanasia," *Transactions of the Maine Medical Society* 10, (1889): 30–43.
69. Williams, "Euthanasia," Tollemache, *Stones of Stumbling*, 17, Besant, *My Path to Atheism*, 144.
70. Cited in Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 12.
71. Author's translation of "Nous avons déjà vu que le suicide est, en général, en raison directe de l'instruction et de la civilisation..." 61n.
72. Eric A. Plaut and Kevin Anderson, eds., *Marx on Suicide* (Evanstown, Ohio: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 47.
73. Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 242.
74. "Suicide," *New York Times*, September 15, 1872, 4.
75. Washington v. Glucksberg, 711–12.
76. S. B. Livingston, "Suicide and Reactionary Legislation in New York," *Counsellor* 4, no. 4 (January 1895), 91.

77. An American edition was published in 1882 as Henry Morselli, *Suicide: An Essay in Comparative Moral Statistics* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1882).
78. Morselli, *Suicide*, vi.
79. Morselli, *Suicide*, 13.
80. John Weaver, *Sadly Troubled History: The Meanings of Suicide in the Modern Age* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 19; Anthony Giddens, "The Suicide Problem in French Sociology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (March 1965): 4.
 81. Strahan, *Suicide and Insanity*, 134.
 82. William Mathews, "Civilization and Suicide," *The North American Review* 152, no. 413 (April 1891): 470–84, 476.
 83. Cited in Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 267. See also Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, an extensive survey of the issue in Britain.
 84. "The Religion of Anarchy: A Creed of Individualism," *New York Tribune* 15, no. 6 (June 1894): 518.
 85. "Infidelity and Anarchy," *Herald of Gospel Liberty* 78, no. 38 (September 23, 1886): 8.
 86. Editor's Outlook: "Dangers to the Public Peace," *The Chautauquan: A Weekly Newsmagazine* 18, no. 3 (December 1893): 356.
 87. Joseph Locke, *Making the Bible Belt: Texas Prohibitionists and the Politicization of Southern Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 15.
 88. Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press), 364–66.
 89. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 151.
 90. V. Y., "Suicide and the Law," *Liberty (Not the Daughter but the Mother of Order)* 9, No. 33 (April 15, 1893): 3.
 91. "Suicide and the Law: Efforts That Have Been Made to Prevent Self-Murders," *New York Times*, March 14, 1893, 5.
 92. "The Ethics of Suicide," *New York Times*, August 30, 1894, 4.
 93. Clark Bell, "Suicide and Legislation," *Medico-Legal Journal* 44, no 1 (1888): 6.
 94. Sumner Kenner, "The Criminal Liability of an Inciter or Abettor of Suicide," *Central Law Journal* 61, (November 24, 1905): 406.
 95. "Thou Shalt Not Kill: Should Civilization, in the Name of Mercy, Modify That Law of Humankind to Meet Cases Where Incurable Disease Makes Life a Hopeless Agony?" (A Sermon Given in Oakland by Reverend Dr. Wendt on August 9, 1896), *San Francisco Call*, August 15, 1896, 16.
 96. Gustave Eisen, "Thinks it merciful," *San Francisco Call*, August 15, 1896, 16.
 97. Rev. Dr. Stebbins, "Against it," *San Francisco Call*, August 15, 1896, 16.
 98. "Response by Reverend Small," *San Francisco Call*, August 24, 1896, 9.
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 100. "Would Chloroform Poverty's Babies," *The Minneapolis Journal*, January 6, 1906, 2.
 101. "Prolonging Life," *The San Francisco Call*, January 14, 1906, 26
 102. Prolonging Life, 26.
 103. "Would kill the injured," *The Saint Paul Globe*, December 13, 1903, 24.

104. "Slaying the Sick," *The Bowbells Tribune*, April 13, 1906, 2. Emphasis added.
105. "Euthanasia," *The Spectator: Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature*, May 1902, 138.
106. "Is it Ever Right to Speed the Departing Sick?"
107. Jacoby, *Freethinkers*, 151. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1906* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 21, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/bulletins/demographic/103-religious-bodies.pdf>.
108. "Secretary Said to Be a Medium: People of Albany Insist Bertha Berner, like her Murdered Mistress, is a Convert to Spiritualism," *The San Francisco Call*, March 6, 1905, 2.
109. "Is it Ever Right to Speed the Departing Sick?"
110. Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 22.
111. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*, 116.
112. Edward A. Ross, "The Causes of Race Superiority," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 18, America's Race Problems. Addresses at the Fifth Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, April 12–13, 1901 (July, 1901), 67–89, 88.
113. Howard Brody and M. Wayne Cooper, "Binding and Hoche's 'Life Unworthy of Life': A Historical and Ethical Analysis," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 2014): 500–11, 505.
114. "Dr. Potter Backs 'Mercy Killings': Death Is Justified, He Holds, If ...," *New York Times*, February 3, 1936, 13. See also Dowbiggin, *A Merciful End*.
115. An exception is Thomas Szasz, *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999).
116. See, for instance, George Pitcher, *A Time to Live: The Case against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide* (London: Lion Hudson, 2010).