

Living Longer, Living Better

[1] Three targets of medical and geroscience: extending human lifespan; increasing life expectancy at birth; and a compression of morbidity
Should we welcome this extension (if old age is largely freed of chronic debilitating conditions)?

[2] (a) Life extension is not (yet) *immortality*. The immortality in question is bodily contingent.

An immortal existence in this sense is argued by Bernard Williams to be intolerably boring. The conditions that must be satisfied for my life to continue to count as *mine* (constancy) militate against the conditions that must be satisfied for it to continue to be a life worth living (variety).

(b) Why not value in being endlessly me by engaging in self-defining projects that are not time limited or in reinventing myself ceaselessly by taking on new me-defining projects (Chappell)?

(c) Why think of life as a project (or set of projects) understood as finite tasks? Many activities and engagements that give life meaning and purpose are not projects in that closed sense: friendship; aesthetic enjoyment

(d) The awfulness of an eternity of repeated simple pleasures and perfecting skills [Julian Barnes' short story 'The Dream' *A History of the World in 10^{1/2} Chapters*]

Does the threat of tedium derive from a teleological understanding of life?

(e) Is it really possible to imagine an immortal life? E.g.: how old are we when we stop ageing?

[3] *Personal* and *external* reasons for extending life: *External Reasons*

(a) The increased costs of an older population: those of deliberately extending life (the project of geroscience) and those that are the indirect consequence of life being extended as a result of social, environmental, health and other policies.

(b) Is there a problem if morbidity is compressed?

(c) Longer lives increases the temporal discounting of costs.

(d) Longer lives means extra productive years

[4] *Unfairness?* Do the young unfairly subsidize the old?

Yet we should adopt a *whole life perspective* and think in terms of turn-taking: 'So what from a slice-of-life perspective seems unfair appears egalitarian in an over-a-lifetime view.' (Larry Churchill)

[5] Do longer lives mean *more* lives and thus raise population ethics issues?

(a) Evidence is unclear; the extensions envisaged by geroscience need not be dramatic; and the problem of the pressure on global resources from a growing population is a broader one than that of prolonging human lives.

(b) Is it ethically problematic to control reproduction and thereby balance a right to a longer life against a right to procreate? This latter right is far from straightforward both in its scope (how many children?) and normative justification (why have children?)

[6] If we can extend human lives does everyone have a right to a longer life?

(a) Not issue of discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, ethnicity, geographical location. Yet, given women live longer than men, should we correct this discrepancy? Reasons for shorter male lives (choices?) and compensation owed to women for gendered burdens.

(b) 'Fair innings': everyone is entitled to a certain length of life (but no more); others can claim life-prolonging resources from those who have already had their entitled span of life to ensure that *they* have their fair innings.

This argument is entirely independent of what might be fixed as the quantified measure of a 'fair innings'. Nothing tells against the value of extending lives. It is an argument about the distribution of years up to and beyond whatever may be taken as the limit of a fair innings.

(c) Arguably some individuals do not deserve, or at least have a lesser moral claim to life extension than others.

(d) The 'evil' of premature death. Is this morally wrong or simply a tragedy?

[7] *Personal Reasons*

(a) To want more life is to want more of what life offers to those who are alive, namely opportunities to do and to have those things that we value. It is not mistaken to fear death or our mortality.

(b) Personal reasons for longer life should be clearly distinguished from impersonal reasons for longer life. But: that any human life is of intrinsic value gives us reason not to end a life and possibly a reason to create a life. It does not give us a reason to extend a life. It is not that a longer life has more of what makes any life intrinsically valuable.

(c) Threat of diminishing marginal utility?

(d) And an analogue of Derek Parfit's 'repugnant conclusion'. Extra lives (years) add to the total good, but do so adding lives (years) 'that are barely worth living.'

[8] Two final claims about life extension and meaning of life:

(a) Glannon: human memory has a finite capacity such that a longer life would be at the expense of a loss of memories of earlier stages of one's life, and thereby a prudential interest in my life over time. Yet: (i) not clear memory runs out for an extended life; (ii) why no biomedical enhancement of memory? (iii) the conditions of identity – and thus prudential concern for oneself – can be met by some version of overlapping memory.

(b) Williams' challenge: a longer life ceases to be mine or meaningful.

[9] Is a human life a narrative or project? Or simply a succession of events?

Do we have a natural life span whose artificial extension brings with it an unnecessary addition of years? Or do we define our project in the terms of what we can think of as our likely – and lengthening - time span?

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