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Indefinite Life Extensions

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Are Indefinite Life Extensions Valuable?

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Thesis: Indefinite Life Extensions are Good

The Simple Argument

1. It is good to save someone's life, if and only if it is a life worth living.
2. When we save someone's life we are merely extending their life.
3. If saving a life is good, and saving a life is identical in all relevant characteristics to extending a life, then extending a life must be good.
4. Surely, if extending a life by a limited period is good, then extending a life for an indefinite period would create a vast amount of good.
5. Therefore, extending a life worth living indefinitely is good.



Question for Further Study

The Life Shape Hypothesis claims that the value of a life is at least partially determined by its shape of good events. If someone were to have her life extended indefinitely, then, in most cases, there would not be a discernible shape. Does indefinite life extensions eliminate the value that could have been captured by having a certain shape?

James Dean lived a short life that ended while he was moving from one success to the next. OJ Simpson lived longer than James Dean but his life started with success followed by decades of decline. People tend to judge James Dean's life as more valuable than a longer life with the same amount of success and OJ Simpson's life as less valuable than the same life with no period of decline.

There seems to be something uniquely better about James Dean's life shape than OJ Simpson's. Our intuition is that it is better to have declined at the beginning or middle of our lives and better to end our lives while we are successful. We have an intuition that the shape of a life affects the value of the life, but indefinite life extensions cannot capture that value because there would not be any shape.



Objection from Tedium

"Nothing less will do for eternity than something that makes boredom *unthinkable*. What could that be? Something that could be guaranteed to be at every moment utterly absorbing? But if a man has and retains a character, there is no reason to suppose that there is anything that could be that." – Bernard Williams (Problems of the Self) pg 95



Reply: Nostalgia

The boredom that Williams worries about comes from repetition leaving us cold to the world. On the contrary, our experiences give us more to appreciate and enjoy in the world. People experience nostalgia, a positive feeling that comes from remembering a previous experience. If we enjoy things in the present, then it is possible that we will further enjoy those same things in the future. Many of us have enjoyed something, became bored with it, then came back to enjoy it again. For indefinite life extensions, one only has to expand the number of things and the number of times we come back to them.



John Harris Reply: Imagination

The imagination reply is given by John Harris in his essay *Immortal Ethics*. Harris claims that someone with imagination could find an infinite number of things to occupy her time. He goes so far as to claim that someone who would get bored might be unworthy of an eternal life.



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Objection to Harris

While one cannot experience every individual thing in the universe and grow bored with each. One can conceivably become bored with classes of things which include every individual. Someone who becomes bored with books becomes bored with many a large number of individual things. One can only assume that over an eternity there would be hundreds of millions of books that that individual will be bored with.

