

Philosophy of mortality

Ojelade Joshua Ifeoluwa

Mortality has recently become an important topic of discussion. There have been various religious and moral arguments about death and its significance.

Most religious beliefs hold that death is an essential part of life. It is often regarded as the final stage of existence. In fact, many religions teach that true rewards come after death, such as the promise of paradise. Therefore, within these frameworks, death is not only important but necessary.

Some philosophical traditions share similar perspectives. They view death as a form of motivation or justification for how one should live. A prominent example is Stoicism, which regards death as a natural and inevitable part of life, a transformation rather than a tragedy. Stoics use the awareness of death as motivation to live fully and intentionally, encouraging individuals not to take life for granted. Life is seen as an opportunity to live meaningfully, with death marking its natural conclusion.

Another philosophical approach is Existentialism. Existentialists argue that life has no inherent objective meaning; instead, individuals must create their own meaning within a finite lifespan. In this view, death serves as a “stopwatch,” limiting the time available to achieve one’s goals and define one’s purpose.

Nihilism and cynicism, on the other hand, often portray life as inherently filled with suffering or devoid of meaning. From these perspectives, death can be seen as the end of suffering.

However, all these positions are ideological constructs. There is no universally agreed upon objective meaning of life. If one believes that the purpose of life is simply to continue living, that belief itself is still an ideology. It does not change the fundamental reality that all humans will die. In this sense, every perspective outlined above is, to some extent, a constructed interpretation of reality.

Therefore, I argue that there is a need to create a choice: the choice to live indefinitely (to defeat death) or to die. Such a choice would eliminate the cruelty and inevitability currently associated with death.

What is death?

Death can be defined as the end of consciousness and the cessation of life. Biologically, it represents the termination of the essential functions of living organisms, including respiration, metabolism, growth, responsiveness, reproduction, and excretion.

In essence, death is the complete stoppage of normal biological functioning.

Causes of death

The primary cause of death is aging. Aging results from the accumulation of errors over time within biological systems. These include:

1. Damage to DNA (genomic instability)
2. Mitochondrial dysfunction
3. Cellular degradation
4. Errors in metabolic and regulatory processes

These errors may arise from:

1. Intrinsic factors (normal biological processes)
2. Extrinsic factors (such as accidents or environmental damage, e.g., automobile collisions)

While some believe in the existence of a spiritual realm involving judgment or paradise, such claims remain unproven and fall outside empirical investigation. What is scientifically certain is that death involves loss of consciousness, followed by the gradual decomposition of the body by microorganisms, eventually returning matter to the environment over long periods of time.

Should we accept our fate?

Should humans accept death or attempt to overcome it?

Throughout history, humans have consistently altered the course of their existence. Early humans discovered fire for warmth, developed cooking to reduce the time spent chewing (gorillas, for example, spend several hours daily chewing), and created tools and weapons to survive and dominate their environment.

Innovation continued: from postal systems that took weeks or months to deliver messages, to modern communication technologies that allow instant global interaction.

This demonstrates a key principle: humans continuously overcome limitations that hinder their quality of life.

Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that anything unfavorable to human existence can be changed—provided it does not violate the laws of physics. In other words, any innovation consistent with physical laws is potentially achievable.

Why should we defeat death?

The question often arises: Should we eliminate death?

Historically, every major human advancement has emerged from the desire to overcome limitations and inconveniences. Communication evolved from slow mail delivery to instantaneous digital messaging because humans found a way to manipulate materials and energy to achieve this.

Importantly, such advancements do not eliminate choice, they expand it. For example, even today, individuals can still choose to send letters instead of digital messages.

Similarly, eliminating death would not remove meaning from life; rather, it would provide individuals with greater autonomy. Those who wish to embrace death for philosophical or religious reasons could still do so, while others could choose to continue living.

Choice is power.

Why should we live longer?

I strongly believe that humans should have the opportunity to live longer.

History is filled with brilliant individuals whose lives were cut short despite their immense potential. Thinkers such as Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, and Pablo Picasso made extraordinary contributions but what more could they have achieved with extended lifespans?

It is possible that prolonged human lifespans could accelerate scientific, technological, and artistic progress significantly perhaps even by orders of magnitude. Humanity might achieve advancements that currently seem unimaginable, potentially moving closer to a form of utopia.

Conclusion

Death, as it currently exists, is an unavoidable biological reality driven by the accumulation of errors within living systems. However, history demonstrates that humans are capable of overcoming natural limitations through innovation.

If defeating death is physically possible, then it becomes not just a scientific challenge, but a moral and philosophical choice. The key argument is not that death must be eliminated for everyone, but that individuals should have the option to choose.

Ultimately, expanding human choice expands human potential.