

# «LIFE» AND «DEATH».

## AN INQUIRY INTO ESSENTIAL MEANING OF THESE PHENOMENA

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**Abstract.** In this paper, I am dealing with the phenomena of «life» and «death». The questions that I attempt to answer are «What is life, and what is death?», «Is it bad to die?» and «Is there life after death?». The method that I am using in this paper is that of *phenomenology*. The latter I understand as an inquiry into *meaning*, that is, what makes this or that phenomenon *as such*. Thus, I am approaching the phenomena in question from the point of view of their *meaning* in the first place. I claim that ordinarily we constitute phenomena of «life» and «death» in a twofold way. When it comes to «life», one can specify «life-as-biological», and «life-as-a-possibility» senses. The former I understand as a cluster of biological processes that unfold in physical time. By «life-as-a-possibility», I understand a cluster of projects, potentials that depend on our subjectivity. I claim that we essentially perceive life-as-biological through life-as-a-possibility. When it comes to «death», I argue that we essentially constitute this phenomenon in a similar manner. On the one hand, we perceive «death» in the «death-as-biological/physical» sense which signifies the end of the organism's biological processes. On the other hand, we constitute «death» as the «existential/practical death»/«death-of-possibility». By that I mean an annihilation of all possibilities, and projects. In short, it is a situation when one's life suddenly loses all its meaning and value: *death of meaning*. I argue that what constitutes the significance of «death-as-biological» for *us* is what I call the «existential/practical death» or «death-of-possibility». I use the phenomena of mourning and suicide to illustrate my point better.

Reflecting on whether it is bad to die, I claim that if we accept the hypotheses I am defending in the paper, it appears that death is bad because it entails the loss of all possibilities. I also want to show that people's desire for immortality is in fact reasonable, because the more one lives, the more possibilities one is able to realize. In other words, people's desire for immortality is grounded in the essential understanding of the phenomenon of «life» as a *possibility*.

Reflecting on whether there is life *after* death, my answer is twofold. Since there is no scientific evidence of life after *physical/biological* death, I think there is no reason to believe in such as well. But when it comes to the question whether there is life after the *existential/practical* death, my answer

is positive: «Yes, there is!» I try to show that it is always possible to find the meaning of life even in the light of the most terrible events. In this sense, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

**Keywords:** meaning, life, death, possibility, phenomenology, logotherapy, Nagel, Williams, Frankl.

**Анотація.** У цій статті я маю справу з феноменами «життя» та «смерті». Питання, на які я намагаюсь відповісти, є такими: «Що таке життя та що таке смерть?», «Чи погано помирати?» та «Чи є життя після смерті?». У цій статті я використовую метод *феноменології*, який розумію як дослідження у сфері *сенсів*, тобто, що саме робить той чи інший феномен *як такий*. Отже, я підходжу до обговорюваних феноменів з погляду їхніх *сенсів*. На мою думку, повсякденно ми конституюємо феномени «життя» та «смерті» двовимірно. Коли йдеться про «життя», цими смисловими вимірами є «життя-як-біологічне» та «життя-як-можливість». Перший смисловий вимір я розумію як зв'язку біологічних процесів, що протікають у фізичному часі. «Життя-як-можливість» я усвідомлюю як зв'язку проєктів, потенціалів, що залежать від нашої суб'єктивності. Я стверджую, що сутнісно ми сприймаємо «життя-як-біологічне» крізь призму «життя-як-можливість». Я також намагаюсь показати, що так само істотно ми конституюємо «смерть». З одного боку, ми сприймаємо феномен «смерті» як «смерть-як-біологічне/фізичне», що означає кінець біологічних процесів організму. З іншого боку, ми конституюємо «смерть» як «екзистенційну/практичну смерть», чи як «смерть *можливостей*». Під останніми я розумію знищення всіх можливостей і проєктів. Якщо коротко, це ситуація, коли життя раптово втрачає весь сенс і цінність: *смерть сенсів*. Я також стверджую, що для нас тим, що конститутує значимість сенсу «смерті-як-біологічне» є саме те, що я називаю «екзистенційною/практичною смертю», чи «смертю *можливостей*». Я використовую феномени скорботи та суїциду як приклади для кращої ілюстрації цієї тези.

Розмірковуючи над тим, чи погано помирати. Якщо взяти до уваги гіпотези, які я захищаю у статті, стає зрозумілим, що помирати — це дійсно погано, оскільки з цього випливає втрата всіх можливостей. Я також хочу показати, що людське прагнення до безсмертя є доволі обґрунтованим, оскільки чим більше людина живе, тим більше можливостей вона спроможна здійснити. Інакше кажучи, прагнення людей до безсмертя є обґрунтованим у сутнісному розумінні феномену життя як *можливості*.

Розмірковуючи над тим, чи є життя *після смерті*, моя відповідь є наступною. Оскільки ми не маємо наукових доказів життя після *фізичної/біологічної смерті*, то у нас немає підстав, щоб вірити в нього. Але, коли йдеться про питання, чи є життя після *екзистенційної/практичної смерті*, моя відповідь є позитивною: «Так, е!». Я намагаюсь показати, що завжди існує можливість знайти сенс життя, навіть з огляду на найтрагічніші події. У цьому сенсі завжди є світло в кінці тунелю.

**Ключові слова:** сенс, життя, смерть, можливість, феноменологія, лого-терапія, Нейгел, Вільямс, Франкл.

«You have to die a few times before you can really live».  
Charles Bukowski

## Introduction

«What is life, and what is death?» «Is it bad to die?» «Is there life after death?» These are the questions that inhabit peoples' minds through the course of our history. No doubt that, for religion and philosophy, these questions are central. While at first glance trivial, they need to be asked and asked very thoroughly.

Let's take the last question, for example. *Prima facie*, the answers can also be pretty much trivial. If one is a religious person, one believes that the death we encounter here on earth is not the «final say» to our lives, and we do have a second life after we die.

If a person is areligious, such person believes that we have only one life, and only because of that it should be cherished and lived to the fullest here and now. If we think about the «second chance» to come, we run the risk of not fully realizing our potential here and now, and simply waste our lives waiting for something which will not happen anyway.

The areligious person's credo would be something like this: «We are finite beings: we live and die. Period. Every one of us is born, somehow lives (happily or unhappily), and then after the cycle of life is gone, dies».

But the problem still exists: most if not, all, religions are preoccupied with the question of whether life is possible after death. Why? What makes such a desire so persistent? So again, some could say that life after death gives a person another chance to live. Another would suggest that *this* life is not as important as *that* life, i. e., the one we acquire after we die. And *that* life is immortal. Immortality (eternal life) is a desire of billions of people on this earth. But why? What makes it so desirable? In general, what does it *mean* to die? Of course, these questions are «eternal» in themselves. And thus, it would be simply impossible to cover them in such a small essay. Nevertheless, the main topic of this essay is that of *death*. Therefore, I'll try digging into that phenomenon at least approximately. And the main angle from which I will analyze the concept is from the point of view of its *meaning*. In order to clarify the meaning of death, one has to show the meaning of life. Therefore, among the main questions to answer (at least partially) here would be «What is the *meaning* of life?» and «What is the *meaning* of death?»

The nucleus of this paper is the debate between Thomas Nagel [6] and

Bernard Williams [9]. My paper is divided into three parts. In Part 1, I lay out Nagel's own perspective. In Part 2, I show my own understanding of the phenomena in question, inspired by Nagel's approach, where I emphasize what was already there, but rather implicitly. Thus, in Part 2, I try to show that Nagel's approach can be phenomenologically «empowered», and what follows from such empowerment. In Part 3, I analyze a response to Thomas Nagel's approach to death by Bernard Williams and attempt to defend Nagel's approach (as based on the phenomenological clarification which I made in Parts 1 and 2).

This part, though it is still continuous with, and draws on Parts 1 and 2, has a bit different style of exposition. When the latter in the previous parts is more akin to the phenomenological style of inquiry, in Part 3, I use the method of science-fiction *a la* Parfit. Nevertheless, since the Part 3 style is grounded in the phenomenological style of Parts 1 and 2, I see the whole paper as driven and inspired by the phenomenological method regardless.

That being said, it is the right time to say something about the general method employed in this paper. As it is obvious from the previous discussion, the latter is a *phenomenological* one. Here, by «phenomenological» I mean primarily the philosophical method initiated by Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations*. The phenomenological inquiry is an inquiry into *meaning*. It aims at clarifying and describing the essential structures of the phenomena, i. e., what makes this or that phenomenon *as such*.

On the other hand, I will also use the words «phenomenology» and «phenomenological» in the contemporary analytic philosophy of mind sense, i. e., which points to the phenomenal character of our subjective experience — namely, its «what-it-is-likeness» (the label which is coming from the work of Thomas Nagel).<sup>1</sup> Thus, in this paper, the meaning of notions of «phenomenology» and «phenomenological» should be understood within the *context* of their usage.

The thesis of this paper is threefold (T1, T2, and T3).

**(T1)** Reflecting on the issue of the *meaning* of life and death, I attempt to analyze the phenomena in question in terms of *possibility* and to defend the view that this is how we essentially constitute the meaning of these phenomena in our ordinary life.

**(T2)** Reflecting on whether it is bad to die, I answer positively (Yes, it is!), and aim to defend the view that it is reasonable to desire immortality.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see [7].

(T3) Reflecting on whether there is life after death, I also attempt to answer positively (in a way) which follows from my justification of (T1).

## Part I. Thomas Nagel's perspective on death

The main question in Nagel's paper is «whether it is a bad thing to die» [6, p. 73]. Nagel writes:

Since I want to leave aside the question whether we are, or might be, immortal in some form, I shall simply use the word «death» and its cognates in this discussion to mean *permanent* death, unsupplemented by any form of conscious survival. I wish to consider whether death is in itself an evil; and how great an evil, and of what kind, it might be [6, p. 74].

Nagel suggests that this question would be interesting even to those who believe in the afterlife, because, one's «attitude towards immortality must depend on in part on one's attitude towards death» [Ibid.].

According to Nagel, «if death is an evil at all, it cannot be because of its positive features, but only because of what it *deprives us of*» [*my emphasis*. — A.L.] [Ibid.].

As regards *life*, Nagel presents two observations:

- (1) «The value of life and its contents does not attach to mere organic survival». (There's no difference between immediate death and immediate coma (continued by 20 years) and followed by death without becoming conscious).
- (2) «More is better than less» [Ibid.].

Overall, «what we find desirable in life are certain states, conditions, or types of activity. It is *being* alive, *doing* certain things, having certain experiences, that we consider good. But if death is an evil, it is the *loss of life*, rather than the state of being dead, or non-existent, or unconscious, that is objectionable» [6, p. 74-75].

According to Nagel, death is not a state which can be actually experienced: «It is often said that those who object to death have made the mistake of trying to imagine what it is like to *be* dead» [Ibid, p. 75]. But it is logically impossible to imagine what it is like to be (physically) dead because there is nothing to imagine in the first place [Ibid.].<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nagel seems to agree with Epicurus in that «So long as a person exists, he has not yet died, and once he has died, he no longer exists; if it is a misfortune, can be ascribed to its unfortunate subject» [6, p. 76].

Therefore, the badness of death is not predicated on what the latter brings (i. e., its «positive features»), but what it *deprives us of*:

If we are to make sense of the view that to die is bad, it must be on the ground that life is a good and death is the corresponding deprivation or loss, bad not because of any positive features but because of the desirability of what it removes [6, p. 76].

I think that Nagel seems to identify human life with that of *possibility*. That is, essentially, life is a *possibility* and should be considered as such:

A man is the subject of good and evil as much because he has hopes which may or may not be fulfilled, or *possibilities* [*my emphasis*. — A.L.] which may or may not be realized, as because of his capacity to suffer and enjoy. If death is an evil, it must be accounted for in these terms, and the impossibility of locating it within life should not trouble us [6, p. 78].

### 1.1. Dementia thought experiment

In order to support his *life-as-a-possibility* idea, Nagel offers the following thought experiment. Imagine that a very intelligent person got a serious brain injury, which caused severe dementia. That man lost all of his cognitive abilities, intellectual achievements, and memory. All of it was reduced to the state when he was a 3-months-old baby.

On the one hand, this man is still alive. His body (except for his brain) functions normally. He eats, sleeps, and has a roof over his head. But is it a good life? From the point of view of what he has become (a three-year-old baby), he has a good and happy life, because, in this sense, happiness consists in «a full stomach and a dry diaper» [6, p. 77]. Since he lost all of his memory, when he was an intelligent adult, he seems not to suffer from the loss as well (because he simply does not know about that loss).

But from the view of *life-as-a-possibility* perspective, does that person actually live? From this perspective, that «oversized baby» is most likely dead:

If, instead of concentrating exclusively on the oversized baby before us, we consider the person he was, and the person he *could* be now, then his reduction to this state and the cancellation of his natural adult development constitute a perfectly intelligible catastrophe [6, p. 77].

And the phrase «the person he *could* be now» appears to me as the one which constitutes the real meaning of life as a *possibility*, as well as the meaning of death as the *loss* of it.

## 1.2. Nagel on immortality

From the previous discussion, it became obvious that for Nagel to imagine the state of death would be impossible, simply because there is nothing to imagine: there is nothing it is like to *be* dead.

Although Nagel brackets the question about whether immortality is *actually* possible, he still provides a perspective on a situation if it *were* possible. And from this, one can see how Nagel approaches immortality and evaluates death itself (i. e., whether it is bad to die or not).

Thus, Nagel seems to be pretty much positive about the very conceivability of unending life:

Given an identifiable individual, countless possibilities for his continued existence are imaginable, and we can clearly conceive of what it would be for him to go on existing indefinitely. However inevitable it is that this will not come about, its possibility is still that of the continuation of a good for him, if life is the good we take it to be [6, p. 79].

Death, on the other hand, «is an abrupt cancellation of indefinitely extensive possible goods. Normality seems to have nothing to do with it, for the fact that we will all inevitably die in a few score years cannot by itself imply that it would not be good to live longer. If there is no limit to the amount of life that it would be good to have, then it may be that a bad end is in store for us all» [6, p. 80].

From this, I can conclude that for Nagel, it is indeed a bad thing to die, and the human's desire for immortality is a reasonable one, because an unending life as that of possibilities is clearly conceivable, despite the natural lifespan limitations human beings actually have. Because it is always good to have more of life than less. It is always good to have more possibilities to fulfill than less.

## Part 2. Phenomenological clarification of «Life» and «Death»

### 2.1. What constitutes life?

From the analysis above, one can see that Nagel implicitly operates with a meaning of life in a twofold way:

- (1) Life-as-*biological*: as a cluster of biological processes which unfold in physical time. On this account, to be «alive» basically means to be capable to realize and sustain the «vital processes» like

«chemosynthesis, photosynthesis, cellular respiration, cell generation, and maintenance of homeostasis» [5].

- (2) *Life-as-a-possibility*: i. e., a cluster of projects, potentials, which are dependent on our subjectivity.

This understanding comes from the phenomenological dimension of our experience — we are intentional creatures: consciousness is a consciousness *of* something *as* something. The «of» part signifies our directedness towards an intentional object and the «as» part shows that this directedness is given through *meaning*. So, in this sense, «life» is an intentional object, the meaning of which is a *possibility*. What I want to say is that we perceive (1) via (2). We perceive the life-as-*biological* through life-as-a-*possibility*.

### 2.1.1. Life and temporality

Life (in both (1) and (2)) and time are essentially interrelated. Both (1) and (2) unfold in time. It seems it is impossible to imagine a life without its being in time.

The temporality of (1) (life-as-a-biological-process) is not hard to see: an organism is born, grows, either reproduces or not, and then perishes, which stops its biological cycle: the cycle of life.

The temporality of life in the case of (2) (life as a possibility, a project) also unfolds in time. But that time is not only physical but also subjective. By the latter, I mean that one's life's temporality depends on a person's practical identity. Thus, if a person is a historian, his temporality is directed towards the past. And the success of his life's project depends on how successfully he uncovers the past and interprets it.

If a person is a futurist writer, his subjective time is always directed towards the future. Even though he lives in the «now», that now is the future, the intentionality (or aboutness) of his «now» is that of «now-towards-the-future». When the historian's intentionality is that of «now-towards-the-past».

Therefore, the temporality of life can be seen in a twofold way: the subjective and the objective way. And though, there is a dependence of the subjective time on the objective time, one cannot reduce the former to the latter.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nagel addresses this difference when he speaks about the difference between the quantity of life and its quality in terms of different understanding of *temporality*: «It



### 2.1.1.2. Objection

A possible objection could be twofold. On the one hand, there is an issue of whether the above-mentioned professions (i. e., a «historian» and a «futurist») determine persons' temporality. On the other hand, the problem is that these professions are unique and therefore, it is hard to see how this applies to everyone. That is, the quest then, is to explain how those practical identities help us even to distinguish and account for the difference between the «objective» and «subjective» time overall.<sup>4</sup>

My answer to this objection is the following. I think that the order is actually reverse. It is not a person's practical identity that determines a person's temporality, but vice versa: the person's temporality determines the person's practical identity. For example, why does a historian become a historian in the first place? Of course, it would be hard to answer this question right away, because every case is unique. But I still think that there is something that unites all the cases, and it is a person's *directedness towards the past*, and an intention to explain the present and the future events as based on the past events. Basically, it is a person's «living-in-the-past» which accounts for his/her choice to become a historian rather than taking a history course that determines a person's intentional act of «living-in-the-past». And the same would explain the «futurist case» as well.

The thing is that all of us, to some extent, are directed towards the past as well as towards the future. But that some persons' intentionality of being «directed-towards-the-past» or being «directed-towards-the-future» is amplified and therefore, is motivated more than it is in the case for the others. And that motivation allows them to choose these professions in the first place.

## 2.2. What constitutes death?

Since we depicted two different (but essentially interconnected) meanings of life, it is now possible to clarify the concept of «death» in a similar

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should be remarked that the added quantities need not be temporally continuous» [6, p. 74]. What did he mean by «temporal» here? I think, by this he meant subjective time-consciousness as opposed to the objective time (time-as-physical). So, it means that even if people who were frozen for 300 hundred years would consider that their life was *continued* up to the time of their reawakening, in fact, *subjectively* it would feel like an abrupt *discontinuity* between their previous experiences (before freezing) and after becoming conscious.

<sup>4</sup> I am thankful to Nahum Shemi for making this objection.

way.

Thus, I can recognize two essential meanings:

- (1) Death as a biological/physical death. On this account [5], the property «dead» means the state of «loss of life», where by «life» we understand the state of realizing and sustaining the «vital processes», as described above.
- (2) Death as an «existential»/«practical» death. By the latter, I understand it as a «full stop» or «annihilation» of all possibilities which is not entailed by organic death. Phenomenologically, it can be looked at as a situation when life loses all its meaning and value: death of meaning.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.2.1. The significance of death

What meaning of «death» from the above-presented is more important and significant for *us*? What is the main drive in our fear of death and mourning when someone, who was close (or even distant) to us dies (whether it's a relative, close friend, or even some person, who is not close to us, but whom we admire and cherish (e. g., death of a famous musician, author, actor, etc.?)).

Here, I want to develop an idea that it is (2) (i. e., death as «death-of-possibility») rather than (1) («death-as-biological») is more important for us, and moreover: that it is that constitutes the significance of (1).

In order to clarify that claim better, I would like to test some hypotheses as candidates for the possible answers to the questions «Why do we mourn when someone dies?», «What constitutes that intentional act in the first place?».

### 2.3. The case of mourning

According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, mourning is primarily the «act of sorrowing»,<sup>6</sup> when *Oxford Dictionary* defines it as «the feeling of being sad that you have and show because somebody has died».<sup>7</sup> But the question is «*Why* do we mourn in the first place?».

<sup>5</sup> Nagel hints on this dimension of death when he describes the «Dementia case»: even though the person is alive, he basically lost all of his life's possibilities, because of his brain injury.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mourning>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/mourning?q=mourning>

**Hypothesis 1.** We mourn over the dead body. Namely the fact that the body which a while ago was alive, suddenly became dead and non-living. From the body-as-lived, it became purely «physical» and non-living. Thus, we mourn because the body once alive became dead.

**Hypothesis 2.** We mourn because we lost someone whom we loved and admired. We mourn because we lost a person, who meant something to us in our lives, and who also brought some significance to it.

**Hypothesis 3.** We mourn because the person-who-is-mourned lost his/her life's possibilities to realize. That person could be the one who had a lot of potential, plans, dreams, but suddenly all of them lost their bearer. The *possibility* for their being fulfilled became null. In this case, it is not necessary that the intentional feeling of mourning is to be directed to the person we knew personally (it can be a music or a movie star as well). And it is not even necessary that the one who is an intentional object of mourning to be a person. It can be an animal too. (E. g., why do people get so angry when they see pictures of the so-called «trophy hunters» posing with their «trophies»? Were those animals (like tigers, elephants, monkeys, etc.) *close* to the person who became very sad and angry, after showing those pictures? Usually, it is not the case. The reason is, as it appears to me that a person understands that those animals lost a possibility of their being themselves *as* animals (i. e., fulfilling their lives in terms of their (rather restricted) possibilities).<sup>8</sup>

I think that Hypothesis 3 constitutes the phenomenology of mourning for cases 1 and 2. Indeed, Hypothesis 1 does not seem to me as the only

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The above-mentioned dictionaries seem to underlie the fact that mourning is an «act». I agree with such an emphasis, because I myself am looking at mourning as an «intentional act» in the first place.

And an interesting question can be asked about the differences between «mourning» and «grief». Here, I use them rather as synonyms. Thus, «grief» can be understood as a «state», while «grieving» is an «act». The same can be said about «mourning»: it can be seen in both modalities as well. But to simplify these matters, I use «mourning» and «grief» interchangeably, where the main emphasis is made more on the «act» rather than the «state» nature of these phenomena.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, one could argue that animals have no feelings and definitely have no life's meaning. Someone could go so far that could adopt the «Cartesian» way of thinking about animals, — i. e., that they are pure «automata». I discard this view entirely. Or how can one explain the well-known case that animals also mourn their dead «comrades»? Of course, at this point it will be only a speculation on actually to what extent animals perceive life in a meaningful way (like that of possibility), and whether I'm not simply caught in an act of anthropomorphization of animals, but still the fact that at least some animals do have phenomenology and intentionality seems undeniable.

reason we mourn. The fact that a body was once alive and now is dead is not a very significant reason to be mourned about.

As Nagel writes:

When a man dies we are left with his corpse, and while a corpse can suffer the kind of mishap that may occur to an article of furniture, it is not a suitable object for pity. The man, however, is. He has lost his life, and if he had not died, he would have continued to live it, and to possess whatever good there is in living [6, p. 78].

Hypothesis 2 seems to be closer to the truth, but what constitutes loving and admiration in the first place? This question is hard to answer very quickly and it needs a lot of clarificatory work to be done, but it seems to me that loving and admiration are at least partly constituted by the *coincidence* of one's project with that of the Other. Being-a-son, being-a-father, being-a-teacher, etc. are projects. The *quality* of them depends on the *commitment* of the person engaged in a project (or projects).

### 2.3.1 Example 1: parents and children

In other words, how can we explain the fact that adopted children are more inclined to consider their foster parents *as* parents, and love and admire them more than their biological parents? What constitutes parenthood overall? I think if there is a *coincidence* (in terms of *possibilities*) of the projects of the ones who consider themselves *as* parents and the ones who consider themselves *as* children. In this, the coincidence should be mutual.

For example, when a parent loses a child, the feeling of a parent's sorrow is mainly constituted by understanding that for him/her what is lost in the first place is the possibility of being a parent, whereas for the child it is the possibility of being a child (as well as the possibilities in terms of the projects which come up when the child grows up). What is lost (essentially) is their mutual engagement in the same project or projects.

#### 2.3.1.2. Objection

A possible objection to what I described as constitutive of parents' sorrow as regards their child's death seems to be founded on the understanding that what actually motivates the parents mourning would be a self-centered feeling of the loss of a mere possibility of their being *parents* in the first place, but not sorrowing the person who has died (i. e.,

a child).<sup>9</sup>

This is a good remark which should be clarified more thoroughly. Maybe, a better way to describe what constitutes the parents' mourning over their child's death would be to say that the intentional act in question is rather threefold. Thus, on the one hand, what is mourned is the *person's* death. That is, the loss of a possibility for a person to realize their potential (in terms of their practical identities) and thus, to *be* someone. On the other hand, there is a *parents'* sorrow about their loss of a possibility to *be* parents. And the last but not least, it is sorrow about the child-who-has-died, that is, what is mourned is a *child's* loss of a possibility of *being* a child.

Therefore, the parents' intentional act of mourning appears to be threefold:

- (1) It is a loss of a *person's* possibilities;
- (2) It is a loss of parents' possibility to *be* parents;
- (3) It is a loss of a child to *be* a child.

(1), (2), and (3) I see as parts of the intentional act that constitute the parents' mourning over their child's death.

### 2.3.2. Example 2: Death of the young vs death of the old

Or we can look at another example, which could support Hypothesis 3 as *constitutive* for especially Hypothesis 1. Why do we mourn the death of a child more than the death of the old person? Why does the death of a 10-year-old seem to be more phenomenologically destructive and devastating than the death of, say, a 95-year-old man? I think this is because a 95-year-old man had literally more time to realize his biological life's possibilities when a 10-year-old child just didn't. But the devastation comes around when the understanding of the *loss* of that child's *life's possibilities* comes in.

#### 2.3.2.1. Objection

A possible objection to this could be the following. Suppose, that a 10-year-old child and a 95-year-old-man would live the same amount of time (say, 10 more years) and would have the same possibilities. So, the

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<sup>9</sup> I am thankful to Patricia Thornton for pointing that out.

question is this: when both of them are about to die will it still be just the loss of possibilities that would constitute the badness of their death or something else?<sup>10</sup>

My answer to this would be that I cannot imagine the *same* possibilities in this scenario. Let's imagine that now a 10-year-old is a 20-year-old-man and a 95-year-old is a 105-year-old-man. Will they have the *same* possibilities? I think that a 20-year-old-person and a 105-year-old-person would *not* have the same possibilities a priori due to some natural conditions of their age. For example, if both of them are bachelors, it is obvious that a 20-year-old-person will be naturally much more attractive and in a better physical shape and therefore, will be able to attract more younger females (and women in general) than his competitor.

If both of them have no children, it is also obvious that a 20-year-old-person will have many more chances to reproduce than a 105-year-old person. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the future lives of a 10-year-old and a 95-year-old would be the same in terms of possibilities.

#### 2.4. «Existential death» as a cause of suicide

Another way to show that the «existential death» is something that constitutes the meaning and therefore is the driving force for our perception of the «biological death» is through the phenomenon of *suicide*. What is suicide? The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines it as «the act or an instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally».<sup>11</sup>

Why do people take their lives «voluntarily and intentionally»? The outcome of the suicide is what we termed as «biological/physical death», i. e., the end of a person's biological/physical existence. But the main question is about the *cause* of it. Suicide is committed by the person willingly. Why would a person end his/her life willingly?

I think that the main reason for it would be the «existential death». When suddenly a person's (biological) life lost its meaning and significance. When it suddenly feels like there is no light at the end of the tunnel. From this perspective, there is definitely something it is like to *be* dead.

A good support for my hypothesis that «existential death» is at least one of the main reasons for people to commit suicide, is coming from the founder of the logotherapy method in existential psychology, Viktor Frankl. In his *Man's Search for Meaning* [2], Frankl is talking about «existential vacuum» which (as based on his patients' complaints) is characterized

<sup>10</sup> I am thankful to George Sher for this critical comment.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/suicide>

by «the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives» [2, p. 110]. People who are experiencing this state «are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves» [2, p. 111]. And more importantly, «not a few cases of suicide can be traced back to this existential vacuum» [2, p. 112].<sup>12</sup>

## 2.5. General objection

It can be objected that what constitutes the badness of death is not just the loss of possibilities but also the loss of the *goods* a person obtains once the possibilities are actualized. And a possible way to show this is to imagine a scenario where two persons had the same life's possibilities, but only one of them would have a chance to realize them. The actualization of those possibilities provided the goods, which the second person did not have because he failed (due to different reasons) to fulfill his own possibilities. Thus, when those persons were to die, it seems it was not possibilities that were lost but something else, namely the *goods*. Therefore, possibilities are not something which exhaust the badness of death in the first place.<sup>13</sup>

My answer to this is the following. Of course, the goods once realized are not to be reducible to the possibilities. But the goods are essentially dependent on the possibilities. The latter are *essential conditions* for the former to arrive. Thus, I am not sure we can easily separate possibilities and goods, because what was lost in the case of the person who did not realize his life's possibilities? The answer would be the *possible* goods! Therefore, in a sense, the goods are also possibilities, because the realization of a possibility is dependent upon many factors (like that of a *situation*), and the same possibilities could be realized in different ways which seems to transform the very goods into *possibilities* as well.

To show this, we can reimagine our first scenario. Now, we have a situation where two persons have the same possibility (say, a perfect «musical ear» and talent), but who chose different ways of its realization. As a result, it leads to two different outcomes. For example, in one case, the person chose to realize his musical talent via classical music. The second person chose to become a rock star. Thus, we have the same possibility, but two totally different ways of its realization. The latter would imply the difference in goods too. In the first scenario, a person would win classical

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<sup>12</sup> I will talk more about Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and «existential vacuum» in Part 3 of the paper.

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to George Sher for this objection.

music awards that are unknown in the world of pop-music and earn less money. In the second case, the person could record the best-selling album, would have won a Grammy that would let him earn millions of dollars. Thus, we have the same possibility but different outcomes in terms of goods which allows us to look at the goods themselves *as possibilities*.

### Conclusion to Parts 1 and 2: Is there life after death?

Let me conclude this part of the essay with the third question that I posed in the Introduction, namely «Is there life after death?» Thus, whether there is life after physical death is hard to verify (or even close to impossible). But whether there is a life after the «existential death» is more likely to verify and say positively that «Yes, there is». People who experienced «existential death» can still be saved and find meaning in life. They can be literally «reborn».

This brings me to another important question, «Why do people tend to desire immortality/eternal life?». It seems that, if the meaning of life as a driving force for our biological existence is a *possibility*, then «eternal life» would mean «eternal possibility». And more possibility is better than less possibility, and definitely better than no possibility at all. That being said, to desire more possibility is more reasonable than to desire less possibility. Therefore, people's desire for immortality appears as reasonable.<sup>14</sup>

One can say that my account is different from Heidegger's. According to him, one of Dasein's fundamental modes of existence is «being-towards-death».<sup>15</sup> But if what I said before is correct, it seems rather the opposite is true: the actual fundamental mode of human existence is «being-*away-from*-death». The «away-from» part (which I understand as the intentional act) constitutes the human's desire for immortality, without which such desire would be hard to explain.

### Part 3. Bernard Williams' take on death and immortality

When Nagel's answer to questions like «Is it bad to die?», and «Is it reasonable to desire immortality?», would be «Yes», Bernard Williams [9], would rather answer «No». Let's look at why he thinks so.

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<sup>14</sup> I continue defending this approach to immortality in Part 3 of the paper.

<sup>15</sup> See [4].



In his «The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality», Williams is not reflecting whether we are actually immortal or not, he seems to take it for granted that we are not. But for him, it is actually «a good thing». He argues that

Immortality, or a state without death, would be *meaningless* [*my emphasis. — A.L.*] [...] so, in a sense, death gives the meaning to life [9, p. 82].

This I take for his main thesis. How does Williams prove that thesis to be true?

The main way to defend his thesis, Williams makes through the thought experiment which is reflected in the very title of the chapter where it is presented, «The Makropulos case». Thus, though Williams takes our mortality for granted, the unreasonableness of people's desire to be immortal he is trying to prove via what I take to be a *reductio ad absurdum* argument: if immortality were actually the case, then it would have transformed our existence into the mere absurdity.

Overall, he does not explicitly claim that immortality is «absurd», but the way he actually justifies an idea of immortality as unreasonable (i. e., that an immortal life would be meaningless, because of its being *boring*) suggests that «immortal life as absurd» is what Williams is really trying to say in that chapter and the way he chooses to defend his thesis. Since immortality is «absurd» (or «boring») our being mortal is actually a «good thing».

### 3.1. The Makropulos case

What constitutes the potential absurdity of the immortal life? Williams describes a woman, Elina Makropulos<sup>16</sup> whose father invented the elixir of life, and she was the one to be experimented upon. When this happened, she was 42. But «at the time of the action», she was already 342. As Williams puts it,

Her unending life has come to a state of boredom, indifference, and coldness. Everything is joyless: «in the end, it is the same», she says, «singing and silence». She refuses to take the elixir again; she dies; and the formula is deliberately destroyed by a young woman among the protests of some older men [9, p. 82].

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<sup>16</sup> Though, in light of different names' variations like «Elina Makropulos», «Emilia Marty» etc., Williams chose to reduce her name to a simple abbreviation «EM», because of esthetic preferences, I choose to call her «Elina».

From that Williams is anxious to conclude that maybe «it can be a good thing not to live too long», and that it is not peculiar just to Elina that «an endless life was meaningless» [9, p. 83]. Whether Williams is right in saying that, we have to find out.

So far, the main question is «*Why* did for Elina everything become joyless, indifferent, boring, and cold when she became immortal? What caused her basically to commit suicide and stop taking the elixir of life? And was it *necessary* in her case?»

But before answering that, let us clarify what Elina's experience of «boredom» is exactly. To do that, let's recall our previous distinction between two meanings of «death» we made in Part 2 of the paper: death-as-*biological* and death-as-*existential*. The former we described as «loss of life», where by «life» we meant the «vital processes». Death-as-existential, on the other hand, we defined as an experience of «death of meaning», i. e., when suddenly everything in a subject's life becomes insignificant and meaningless. Nothing matters anymore. Though, a subject is still *biologically* «alive» (a person does maintain his «vital processes»), *existentially* he is «dead».

That being said, it appears clear that Elina is not dead in the biological sense, but it seems that her state of being joyless, indifferent and cold (or as Williams sums it up as «boredom») corresponds to what we have called as «existential death». (It is important to note that another way Williams describes Elina's state of boredom is «inner death» [9, p. 90] which is also very similar to my label of «existential death»).

After such clarification, we can reformulate the former question into the following two:

- (1) Why has Elina's «endless life» become «existentially dead»? What are the reasons for that? Are they justified?
- (2) Is the state of «existential death» enough to refute the idea of immortality altogether? Isn't there any chance of an «afterlife» in this case? Again, was it *necessary* for Elina to stop taking the life's elixir? Isn't there a life after «existential death»?

### 3.1.1. Problem 1. Elina's age

One of the causes of Elina's boredom was her age. By «age», Williams does not mean Elina's physical age. As he puts it, she had no problem with it. The main problem was with her *psychological* age which seems to be one of the main causes of her boredom: it was «connected with the fact

that everything that could happen and make sense to one particular human being of 42 had already happened to her. Simply because she «seems always to have been much the same sort of person» [9, p. 90].

Thus, Williams seems to presuppose that Elina's psychological age (42) does not correspond to her physical age (342) and would cause her boredom and withdrawal from reality. He seems also to presuppose that despite the variety of experiences throughout her extended life, she still remained basically the same person as she was before taking the life's elixir.

### 3.1.1.2. Objection

On the one hand, I do not think that the difference between a person's physical age and his psychological age would be a very big problem overall. The main reason is, it happens all the time. A person could be a sixteen-year-old, but feeling himself «as if» he is thirty. Or vice versa.

On the other hand, I do not see why Elina's psychological age should remain at the 42 scale necessarily. What is the main basis for such an intuition? Doesn't our psychological age heavily depend on our environment? We can imagine a situation in which Elina has mainly young people (say, twenty-thirty years span) as her friends, and despite her physical age (342), psychologically she would feel even *younger* than she was when she took that elixir (i. e., 42)!

Also, I do not see why we should take for granted that Elina's psychological age when she took that elixir was necessarily correspondent to her physical age at the time (i. e., 42). Psychologically, she could feel younger or even older than 42 years in the first place. Thus, even if her psychological age «froze up» once she took that elixir, it is not necessary that it was 42 years. That being said, I do not see any reasons why her psychological age should necessarily «freeze up» in the first place.

## 3.2. Problem 2. Elina's environment

Williams thinks that it would be horrible to be immortal around the people who are not. Since Elina is in the world of people who are not sharing her condition, it is hard for her to have normal personal relationships. Her inability normally to be engaged with her environment leads to her isolation from it. This is another cause for Elina's «existential death». If her condition of being immortal became universal, it would seem to eliminate her state of «boredom and inner death», but she lives in the world of mortals.

### 3.2.1 Objection

Of course, a situation where a person constantly outlives all of his family, friends, colleagues, appears as a horrible one. Once one establishes a good relationship, it ceases to exist. But one of its actors does not. Being in such a situation can definitely lead one to a state of depression, isolation, and a world's withdrawal. Such a person could definitely become «dead» in the existential sense.

But if we approach this situation from the perspective of life-as-a-possibility, we can see it from a different light as well. For example, it is an empirical fact that people do outlive their families and friends, but it is also an empirical fact that though there is a huge temptation to give up and perceive life as meaningless, it is not always the case. The older person becomes, the more of death he encounters. But there is a chance to find a new meaning in one's existence as well.

Empirically, people who live a very long life and outlive their families and friends do create new families and do find new friends (though, it can sound somehow «selfish», but again it is an empirical fact). So, why is it not possible in Elina's case as well?

Since life is essentially a possibility, we can see that it can be the case with Elina too. Her situation can be definitely seen as critical, but as someone said (presumably Einstein), «In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity». Even if Einstein did not say it, there is great wisdom in these words nevertheless. So what opportunity can one find in Elina's «crisis»? Since, she is immortal and has already lived for 342 years, she can definitely possess a greater experience if to compare to the ordinary (mortal) people's one. The actual Elina's identity is never revealed, and since our case is purely hypothetical, we can also ascribe to Elina different identities.

Thus, let's assume that Elina is a politician. What opportunity does she have in this case? We can imagine that she became one of the representatives of the United Nations (or whatever name the organization with a similar function holds at the time) and since she has such a great political experience, she could become an influential advisor in many political debates and issues. We can also imagine that given her unique situation, a new position has been created for her, say, a «humanity ambassador». Her historical experience would be definitely the richest among the living, and maybe this time, humanity would learn something from history! This would be a great opportunity for Elina to find a goal in her immortal life and to be «reborn» again. It will also be a good evidence

that it is not necessary for her to stop taking the «elixir of life», because her immortal existence will be full of meaning.

Contrary to Williams, I think that Elina is in a better position in terms of her life's meaning when she's in the environment of mortals and not in the environment of immortals. Thus, I do not think that her suffering would cease to exist if it were generalized. I think that the opposite is true: despite the fact that it is also possible to find the life's meaning in the environment of immortals, it seems to me a bit «easier» to do that with mortals, because one can see power in his hands much better. This can be the power of knowledge, experience, etc.

Now, let's imagine another case. Let's assume that Elina is a philosopher. What can happen in this case? I can imagine that Elina is a philosopher of mind who is working on the mind-body problem. Historically, the latter begins with Plato, but in the «contemporary» sense, it starts with Descartes. (Both cases are, of course, historical in the general sense). Thus, given her lifespan, I can imagine that she would have much more opportunity actually to solve that problem than any «mortal» philosopher. She would have a chance to be in contact with any living philosopher who got a chance to be her contemporary. She would be able constantly to study and improve her philosophical and scientific knowledge. I think that this could really help her find a solution to the mind-body problem as well as to the hard problem of consciousness. After she found the solution to these problems, she could start digging and researching into other philosophical areas too. Maybe, being immortal is a philosophical paradise? Elina's case can suggest that «yes, it *could* be the case».

(The same can be imagined with Elina being a «scientist», «mathematician» etc.).

### 3.3. Problem 3. Elina's identity

According to Williams, in order for a person's eternal life to be successful, it should satisfy two important conditions. (1) It should be *him* who lives forever. (2) That the aims he currently has must be adequately correlated with his future aims and goals. In other words, it should be a coherence of his projects throughout his eternal life.

Let's go back to our Elina. It seems that Williams does allow Elina to be herself. She'll be the same person as when she drank that elixir. Therefore, condition (1) seems to be satisfied. But Williams thinks that condition (2) seems to have failed because there will be a discontinuity of her desires and projects she had when she was 42 and when she would become 342.

And the main reason is that of «eternal boredom». She ceased to have the desires and goals she used to have because she lost any motivation to fulfill them.

In a previous discussion, I tried to defend the idea that there is no need to think this kind of discontinuity is necessary. It is not necessary that Elina would become «existentially dead». And even if it happens, it is not necessary for her to be «reborn» without keeping the same psychological identity. That is, Elina would be still *Elina*. Though here, the question would arise. Given the variety of her experiences, how would it be possible actually to keep her identity still overall? Won't she be lost in those multiple experiences? How can we know that Elina will be the same *Elina* she was *before* she took that elixir for the first time? This brings us to the question of *identity*. How is it possible that Elina would have kept her identity for such a long time?

### 3.3.1. Some empirical cases

First, we can turn to the real cases from our lives of the people who lived their lives pretty long but still kept their identities intact. Bertrand Russell, for example, lived up to 97 years old and was philosophically and politically active up to the time of his death in 1970. His contemporary, philosopher John Dewey (died at the age of 92), was also philosophically and scientifically active up to the time of his death in 1952. Hans-Georg Gadamer was philosophically active up to the time of death in 2002 (aged 102). Jeanne Calment, «the oldest person whose age had been verified by official documents» [10], died when she was 122 years and 164 days old. And what is more important, «she had been in good health, though almost blind and deaf» [Ibid.]. I interpret a report on Calment's being in «good health» as evidence that though she had serious physical health problems (i.e., blindness and deafness), she had still maintained her psychological identity intact. It was still Jeanne Calment as *herself*. 122-year-old Jeanne Calment was the same *Jeanne Calment* when she was a 40-year-old woman.

Or let's take the example of Japan. This country «consistently has among the highest life expectancy in the world» [3], and «among Japanese babies born in 2019, 27.2% of boys and 51.1% of girls are expected to live to 90».<sup>17</sup> More importantly, one of the Japanese islands, Okinawa, has «the greatest concentration of centenarians (people who live to at

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00788/#:~:text=The%20average%20life%20expectancy%20in,men%20and%20seven%20for%20women.>

least 100)» [3]. According to Wilcox et al. (2007) study, «In all, 82% of individuals were still functioning independently at a mean age of 92 years and almost two-thirds were still functioning independently at a mean age of 97 years» [9]. And these people still have an active and meaningful life [1].

These are empirical cases which are showing that it is indeed possible to keep one's own identity despite very old age.

For a moment, let's imagine that Jeanne Calment took the life's elixir when she was 122-year-old. As in the case of Elina, 300 years passed by. Now Jeanne is a 422 years-old-woman. Will she be able to satisfy the conditions (1) and (2)? That is, will she be able to keep her identity the same as well as to keep up with her projects, desires, and goals as when she was a 122-year-old? In this case, the answer to the question about the satisfaction of condition (1) could be rather «Yes», when it will be rather «No», as regards the question of a possible satisfaction of condition (2). Simply because when she took that elixir, her body was pretty dysfunctional already (she was blind and deaf at a time), and given that, there's less probability for her realizing many opportunities in that case. Although she could be able to keep her identity still, her life would be more of suffering than joy.

But our situation with Elina is different. When she took the elixir, she was 42. When she became 342, her body capacities were still at the age of 42 and stayed at the same level. This implies that she could be able to do many things with her life if to compare to the immortality case of Jeanne Calment as described above. Elina would have much more possibilities to fulfill than Calment.

### 3.4. Problem 4. Was Elina's suicide necessary?

That being said, another question arises: «Was Elina's decision to end her life, when she decided not to take the elixir anymore, necessary and justified?». As contrary to Williams, who thinks that she had a firm reason to stop taking elixir, because of what he termed as «eternal boredom», and what I would call the «existential death», I think she did wrong. When Elina decided to end up her life by not taking the life's elixir, I treat that decision as an act of *suicide*. Because, in *her* situation, not taking the elixir is equal to voluntarily ending her life which is equal to suicide as we defined it in Part 2 of the paper.

I agree with Williams that there is no life after biological death. But it seems that Williams took for granted that there is no life after «existential death» either. And that is where I tend to disagree with him entirely.

Now, I want to support my understanding of the essential meaning of life as a *possibility* through an appeal to the experience of the famous psychotherapist, and the Holocaust survivor (Auschwitz), Viktor Frankl.

Frankl's psychotherapy is a form of existential analysis that he termed «logotherapy». In his magnum opus, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1984), Frankl confesses that in that book he wanted simply to show that «life holds a potential meaning under any conditions, even the most miserable ones». Even «in a situation as extreme as that in a concentration camp» [2, p. 12].

Elina, though being in despair, occasionally finds Frankl's book where he defines his psychotherapeutic method, logotherapy, as follows,

Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future. (Logotherapy, indeed, is a meaning-centered psychotherapy), [...] in logotherapy the patient is actually confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life. And to make him aware of this meaning can contribute much to his ability to overcome his neurosis [2, p. 104].

After having read that, Elina decides to meet Frankl in person (let's imagine that they are contemporaries).

### 3.4.1. Elina's situation from the logotherapeutic point of view

But before seeing what their meeting could be like, let us look at Elina's existential situation from the logotherapy point of view. Frankl distinguishes between two kinds of neuroses, psychogenic and noogenic ones. The former is the outcome of the psychological problems that Freudian psychoanalysis is dealing with, whereas the noogenic neuroses are grounded rather in a person's *existential situation* which Frankl calls «existential frustration» or «existential despair».

Logotherapy as a practice is called for dealing with such *existential frustration* which «in itself is neither pathological nor pathogenic. A man's concern, even his despair, over the worthwhileness of life is an *existential distress* but by no means a *mental disease*» [2, p. 108].

Elina's case of «existential despair» results in what Frankl would call as «existential vacuum» which is the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of one's life [2, p. 110]. It is interesting to note that it is the state of *boredom* in which existential vacuum manifests itself [2, p. 111].

Thus, what Frankl calls «existential vacuum», I prefer to call «existential death». The point is that even such an extreme version of existential frustration is neither a pathology nor a mental disease, but something



that can be treatable with a right psychotherapeutic attitude. The latter is logotherapy which's assignment is «that of assisting the patient to find *meaning* in his life» [*my emphasis*. – A.L.] [2, p. 108]. And that is exactly what Elina needs.

### 3.4.2. Logotherapy support. Elina as a Frankl's patient

Thus, experiencing her «existential vacuum» situation which she also thinks of as an eternal one, she decides to come to Frankl's clinic in Vienna to find some help. Let's imagine the following dialogue.

**Frankl:** Good afternoon, my dear. What brought you here?

**Elina:** Good afternoon Dr. Frankl. My name is Elina and here's my story. When I was 42 years old, I drank the eternal life's elixir and since then, I can live forever. Now, I am a 342 year-old-woman, and am thinking to stop taking that elixir again. Simply because I do not see any point in that. My life is constant suffering. I basically outlive anyone I come close to. My life is simply unlivable, because it has become *meaningless*.

**Frankl:** I see. What I'll say now, you won't like at all, but you should hear it nevertheless. Thus, what if I say that our life in itself is *suffering*? We live through suffering, because to live is essentially to suffer. But the key point here is to find a *meaning* in that suffering regardless. In order to survive and find happiness even in the most dreadful times of our lives we are obliged to find the *meaning in our suffering*. Your eternal suffering entails a search for eternal meaning. Every life is unique, therefore, the meaning you can find in all of your life's situations is also unique. You should only try and never give up in your eternal search. Find a goal and a cause that is greater than yourself. Only then you will find a relief and happiness to follow. Say «yes» to your life, and never think of a «no». It is only *you* who is in a position to find that very meaning. There's a purpose in your suffering, and you have only to disclose it. As Nietzsche put it, «He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*».

**Elina:** Yes, I think I understand, but I also think I'm going crazy!

**Frankl:** A search for meaning is an essential condition for one's good mental health. The latter is based on what you have already become and what you should become. In a sense, even for mortals, it is an «eternal» tension. But such a search is inescapable. It is a prerequisite for one's mental well-being and happiness.

**Elina:** But my life is eternal! It seems that an eternal search for meaning is absurd!

**Frankl:** No, Elina, it is not. You should not be hesitant to challenge yourself in a search for meaning. Simply because the latter makes a human as *human*. Be it an eternal man, or a mortal one, there is no way to escape this search overall. The key point is that it is always possible to find that meaning, despite the horrific situation a person is in. And my experience of being in the Nazi concentration camp did show it. I was constantly losing friends. I also lost all of my family there. I was ready to die myself, but despite all of that horror and suffering, I was still able to find the meaning in it. That meaning let me live *through* that horror and suffering, and create a therapy which now helps millions of people around the world. And I'm sure it will cure you as well. If *I* could make it, I do not see why *you* cannot make it either. And you have a chance to do that as well. Imagine how many people you can help with a kind of experience you possess!

It is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task, is something that a person needs. It is a disruption of equilibrium to be filled with a *potential meaning* is what you need, and again, not some «tensionless state». You have a unique chance to find a unique meaning of your life. A life that is full of adventures, possibilities and hope!

**Elina:** Thank you, doctor.<sup>18</sup>

It was only the beginning of Elina's logotherapy which was also the start of her eternal search for meaning which made her (among the

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<sup>18</sup> This dialogue is my free interpretation of Frankl's method which is based on his *Man's Search for Meaning* (1984), and especially part two of the book, «Logotherapy in a Nutshell».

other possibilities) a «humanity ambassador», as it was suggested in my Objection to Problem 2. This seems to say clearly that Elina's suicide was definitely unnecessary even if «she had too much of herself».

### Conclusion to Part 3

After all, the state of «boredom» is one of the general conditions of our (mortal) existence. It comes and goes. The mere fact of its presence does not entail that our (mortal) life is not worth of living. *Mutatis mutandis*, this can be said about our life as *immortal* (even if a person is the only one with such a property). Even if to understand the state of boredom in its extreme sense (i. e., as «existential death/vacuum»), there is always a chance to overcome it. Therefore, the «suicide» that Elina committed towards herself was not necessary. Simply because, life is essentially a possibility and immortal life would *not* mean «immortal boredom», but rather «immortal possibility». I think that no suicide is justified (maybe, except cases like that of Hitler), and contrary to Williams, I think that Elina's suicide was not justified as well, because she lost a chance to realize the possibilities *her* life had contained. To «find the way» is always possible. One should only try.

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