

A Philosophical Reflection on the Relevance of Death in the Medical and Technological Frame

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Abstract: My argument in this article is that death as a basic human fact is a condition for life's meaningfulness, but this very fact is today managed by medical technologies, particularly the technologies used to prolong or end life at whichever stage of its development, leading to the loss of its ontological significance. Through medical technologies, we are busy chasing these two realities (life and death), separating one from the other, thereby undermining the role death plays in man's existential structure. In the mind-set of modern subjects, death is no longer recognised as an internal process that provides intelligibility and unity to all other aspects and modes of our human existence, but it is conceived of as something external to oneself. In our everyday unreflective attempts to run away from death into the arms of aesthetic and longevity technologies to give us what they regard life to be, we not only lose an internal awareness of what death really is, but also we completely lose the aptitude to experience life as a whole.

Keywords: medical technologies, death, human existence

Introduction

From an instrumental account, technology is designed to answer various questions of our human condition for a better human existence; it is meant to complement and complete human abilities and inabilities as we experience in human enhancement technologies. However, this naive realism to technology does not tell us much about its true picture. Technology works at a more fundamental and phenomenological level: it reveals and reconstitutes the world and ourselves, so that the question is changed along with the answer, the need is changed along with its gratification, and direction is changed along with the employed mechanism. This assertion is very much evident today in the field of bio-ethics, where basic issues about human nature are put to contestable debates. To give an example to elucidate the claim, *in vitro* fertilization for instance is not simply a means of meeting a desire to have children; it also changes the cultural and emotional frame that situates paternity, maternity, and family. Therefore, my argument in this article is that death as a fundamental human fact is a condition for life's meaningfulness, but this very fact is today undermined by modern technology, particularly the technologies used to prolong and end life at whichever stage of its development, leading to the loss of its ontological relevance. Such technologies, which manifest themselves in man's calculative thinking, are based on the wilful desire to objectify death by representing it as an external object of thought only at the *ontic* level of

being. This kind of thinking reduces all facts about death to bivalent, programmable 'information' and digitized data; as something we have nothing to learn from. Disgracefully, calculative thinking is today becoming the sole way of determining our life in the contemporary-modern world, obscuring other fundamental values or forms of life assessment, particularly death to the extent that there can be no serious reflection is undertaken on its value. I do not intend to engage the debate around ethical issues on death, but simply to give a philosophical reflection on this important issue that raises a lot of reactions and accumulation of fear and absurdity from the public.

Death as a Basic Human Fact

Humans, because of their openness to themselves, make of their whole life a self-philosophical project. By this I mean that modern subjects are concerned with their life and death to a greater extent than are their animal counterparts. For Heidegger, non-humans (irrational animals) do not have this kind of concern, for they do not exist, nor do they die. They cannot be pulled out of their place in the world to realize they are the very temporality by which the world worlds itself. According to Heidegger, irrational animals do not die, they suffer biological succession or perish [1]; in them, there is only a loss of biological vitality. Heidegger understands death as something reserved only for human beings [2]; it is only

humans who die and it is only humans whose being is *toward-death*. Heidegger claims this directly:

Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*. Thus death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one's own-most, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped*. As such, death is something *distinctively impending*. [3]

What Heidegger means here, is that, in the same way *being-in-the-world* and *being-with* are constitutive of man's ontological structure, so also is *death* constitutive of man's being, in that man's finitude is constitutive of his very existence [4]. Another basic difference humans have is their attitude towards death. It is not just that humans are concerned about avoiding dying—all animals seem to have instincts towards self-preservation. However, this concern is more particular of us humans: Our religions are founded upon death and what we believe happens to us when this event finally unfolds. Our politicians pass laws that subtly promise to protect us from the possibility of death. Our businesses manufacture and sell us products and lifestyles that guarantee to suspend the inevitable experience of death. We draw up our life goals according to 'what we would like to accomplish before we die'. Almost every aspect of our life experience is marked by the fact of death, so much so, that it is hard to imagine what a life experience would be like without an attempt or desire to eschew death. The challenge comes with the attempt to embrace it as an intimate part of life. We constantly perceive death as a challenge to a meaningful life and as something that one needs to come into terms with if he hopes to live fully. However, to think about our life as a whole requires us to think about our death. We can only say that our life as a whole is a meaningful life if we can recognize that at some point our physical life will come to its halt. With this awareness, from the moment of my birth, death is an impending possibility of my being that I will inevitably experience. I am already 'thrown' towards this end as a fact; however, what matters is how I relate to it in terms of its significance for my existential structure. When Heidegger says that death cannot be outstripped, he means it is impossible to evade, because it is our impending possibility that cannot be surpassed [5]; we have to look at death as a necessary fact about us. It stands before us as something that is not yet; it is to acknowledge it as among our various possibilities of existence [6].

Even when we come close to its actualization in the process of moving closer to the possibility of it as a concrete human fact, death is always a possibility. Heidegger succinctly explains this point, when he says: "the closeness which one may have in *being-towards-death* as a possibility is as far as possible from anything actual" [7]. The mistake of medical technologies is to conceive of death not as a possibility, but as an

externalised and objectified actual event. In a Heideggerian sense, death cannot be actualised; once it is actualised, then it ceases to be the possibility that we carry along with us. Furthermore, it is not just that humans die, and that they are concerned with avoiding dying; all animals seem to have instincts towards self-preservation. Humans also have this possibility as an internal challenge to a meaningful life, as something that they need to come into terms with, if they hope to continue to live as humans. This is precisely, because any attempt to think about our life as a whole, for Heidegger, requires us to have a positive attitude towards our death. I shall develop this point in the subsequent sections.

Death in the Scientific and Technological Frame

In my article entitled *A Critical Reflection on the Human Condition in Technological Development*, I extensively argued that *modern science and technology are the highest stages of misrepresentation of the essence of being human* [8]. *Martin Heidegger raises the same concern when he* remarks: "In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., in his essence" [9]. Based on these claims, death, which is a fact of human nature, in the mindset of modern subjects is not recognised as an internal process that provides intelligibility and unity to all other aspects and modes of human existence, but it is conceived of as something external and meaningless to them. But the intriguing issue is that in our everyday unreflective attempts to run away from death into the arms of aesthetic and longevity technologies to give us what they regard life to be, we not only lose an internal awareness of what death really is, but also we completely lose the aptitude to experience life itself. This is because death is an essential structure of the human subject, which provides intelligibility and unity to all other aspects and modes of our human existence. As an internal human relationship, death is a condition for life's meaningfulness, where at the face of it we see our whole life as a unit. Unfortunately, the medical technologies we employ tend to undermine this role that death plays in man's existential structure; they tend to manipulate and obscure this fundamental aspect of our subjectivity.

For authentic human existence, life and death should be taken as two constitutive elements of our being, challenging the various anxious attempts of science and technology to out-run death in favour of a perceived kind of life as if the other has no role to play in the development of the whole individual. This claim is based on the fact that in our modernized world, through science and medical technologies, there is a constant tendency to try to control not only the birth of our children, the diseases by which we will be affected, the form of our bodies, and so on, but even the fact of death. By increasingly substituting and controlling our subjectivity for rational and scientific means, we make

it less intelligible. Medical enhancement technologies make human nature less intelligible to each individual because these foreign agents of improvement operate prior to and independently of the nature being improved. The practise also presents to us another serious problem. If our human nature is to be explained with reference to agents enhancing it, does that not cause us to lose our capacity to understand ourselves and the world around us including our ultimate realities like death? With medical enhancement technologies, we presuppose a different account of the human subject that would be more complicated to understand (for example, the way we perceive the meaning of the human body) than just the perceived enhancements of body parts. The serious issue is that in reconstituting human aspects, particularly the management of death through medical technologies, humans fail to address the question as to what actually makes up their nature. Therefore, when Heidegger, in the above quoted text claims that *nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, that is, in his essence*, we can understand that he is foreseeing a situation in which the modern subject will be faced with a deep problem of her subjectivity.

Today, with the aid of modern technology, we address an important question with regard to our subjectivity, whereby the fundamental facts of our existence including death are being reconstituted for the better or worse. Conventionally, we moderns uncritically choose technology and give importance to our technological well-being without giving way to our individual subjective capacity to shape our individual experiences. We routinely opt for the technological model of existence that sometimes leaves us stuck and unable to have recourse to what actually matters in our own existence. In the framework of this reflection, with medical technologies, death as a basic human fact has become a scientific and technological matter as is constantly experienced in the practise of euthanasia and longevity technologies; death has been quantified as an external phenomenon or relationship, and its meaning and destiny are now placed, not so much into the hands of the person experiencing it, but under the management of the medical profession, thereby undermining its fundamental and ontological value.

To comprehend what I mean by 'death management', it is enough to look at linguistic concepts commonly used today: *premature death, desired death and death by choice, a right to die*, and so on. These concepts carry in themselves modern man's attitude toward death, and they have gained special meanings and attention that lead to their frequent application in both the public and individual contexts of relating to death. Their meanings can only be understood by referring to this context of *managing death*. Behind them, other critical measures to control death are entailed, especially concerning the kind of care to be

given at the end stages of physical life, where we apparently view death as a failure and defeat. But technological attempts to manage death create a problem for us humans, where death has been *objectified* and separated from humans, creating a kind of existential incomprehension of its ontological significance. It has been made an object of scientific research, the forefront of which has become a desperate struggle, an *internal pacification*, or an attitude of consolation toward life and death. This is all done under the pretext of a happy life, whereby happiness is being conceived of as a state of *doing* in which we manipulate our outer circumstances into some arrangement that we perceive will enable us to feel comfortable indefinitely. To remain in this intended state of happiness requires maintaining these outer circumstances as a constant in our lives so that we may be constantly happy, while relentlessly managing all threats to life. Such conception of happiness is an illusionary state that is designed to fool us into believing that there is a possibility of living in this world without the presence of death, without change. When we seek "happiness" from its material form, we are seeking a hiding place from death, from change, and so from our very being [10]. This is deeply erroneous because death is perceived to be an external impending aggression of a perceived happiness for a better life, which should be overcome by scientific and technological means. From a Heideggerian perspective, death in the mindset of modern man is hidden in the folds of everyday practical and technological consciousness, isolated, privatised, bureaucratised, medicalised, hospitalised, *dehumanised* and consequently, an undesired reality [11]. The whole practice of modern medicine is to enhance life by separating it from death, and not to regard the two as a single unit of one being called man.

Where the two (life and death) are thought of to be together, then, the role of modern medicine is seen to promote both (a good life and what is referred to as a *peaceful death [euthanasia]*) by technologically managing the condition and circumstances of death: its time and the manner of its occurrence [12]. When we are transfixed by the physical conception of life we gaze upon *the effects* of its transformation and regard them to be unnecessary to life. Subsequently, we attempt to remain comfortable by sedating and controlling our outer physical experience of life by use of any available technology. This initiates an increasing outer conflict and chaos, such that all appears as if the content of our lives is being undermined. What we see in medical technology, today, is modern man's flight from death, leading to the denial of a fundamental aspect of human reality from which we have much to learn. When we are mentally transfixed by the physical regard to life, when we attempt to maintain a state of comfort by scientifically and technologically managing death under the pretext of a better life, we experience increasing confusion, anxiety, and a deep sense of inner

disquiet. No story we tell about ourselves can encompass the magnificence of this unfolding moment of death; it can only limit it, cause us to feel discomfort within it, and prevent us from embracing the full story of human meaning. However, the question is: What is the proper attitude toward one's death? It is not enough to have a scientific and epistemological understanding of death, but also we need to acknowledge death as an ontological or essential component of life. But the question is: How can we understand that life and death are two aspects of the same entity called man? In the subsequent sections I discuss how death relates to life, and how in the mind-set of modern subject, science and technology separate the two, giving a consolation to those encountered by death.

Modern Man's Attitude towards Death

The conventional attitude toward death entailed in the practice of medical technologies is to think of it in an abstract, universal and syllogistic way. The attitude follows the following pattern of thinking:

P1. All mortals die at some point of their physical existence

P2. I am mortal struggling with the facts of my existence

C. Therefore, am going to die at some point of my physical existence.

This simplistic and deductive way of regarding death, leads us to its objectification, to treat it as an external phenomenon that views our life as a part of nature that is merely finite: that is limited and has boundaries. In the case of this article, as I have already claimed, modern science and medical technologies, in their *ontic* regard to death, are seen to separate life and death; two realities that are inseparable are separated. Medical technologies foster the thinking that there is one thing called death and another called life, attempting to protect life, while denying death, to secure moments, where we can feel organised and in control of our lives. This whole process makes us see death as an external phenomenon that reveals itself to us, pushing us away from ourselves, from the world of everyday concerns, and from our future plans [13]. It further makes us live death not as a constitutive element of our existential structure, but as an external threat to our existence, lacking any significance to life. Conceived as a threat, many people think that death is evil, leading to lots of scientific research being done on life-enhancement and immortality technologies for its management [14]. This management of death is all purported that these two realities (life and death) are opposed to each other, instead of being complementary to each other. The fundamental reason why all this is done is basically because people desire to live forever. But, then, this creates a massive ongoing accumulation of the fear of death, such that we end up generating an order within our mind and in our existential structure

that builds more disorder of anxiety *in* and *around* us in regard to death, which does not allow us to reflect on its ontological significance. Consequently, we are made to think that the only way to comport ourselves towards death is to deny, evade, conceal and objectify it, sometimes not so much my own death, but also the death of another person. Heidegger makes a direct observation on this claim:

The 'they' concerns itself with transforming this anxiety into fear in the face of an oncoming event. In addition, the anxiety which has been made ambiguous as fear is passed off as a weakness with which no self-assured *Dasein* may have any acquaintance. [15]

What Heidegger implies is that a greater deal of scientific and technological means of managing death seems to testify to our attempt to escape death [16]. The technologies we employ to manage death do not permit us to embrace death as a basic human fact. In mind I have the anti-ageing technologies believed to prolong the span of human life and preserve the appearance of youth. These technologies by separating death from life create a false picture of ourselves, that our life cycle can be considerably extended, as if we are the only beings meant to populate the natural world [17]. Such technologies create the self that is influenced by the crowd or the "they," rather than by its own unique potentialities and authentic mode of existence. Scientific attempts to outwit death incapacitate us in the whole process of acknowledging death as a necessary fact about us; as if it is an external phenomenon that we have to eradicate ostensibly. Julian Young, in his commentary on Heidegger, argues that humans in the modern scientific world evade death by treating it as an accident, rather than as an essential feature of the human condition [18]. Where it is accepted, then, it is supposed to be instantaneous and unobtrusive [19]. In opposition to all objectifying regards to death, Heidegger thinks death is not something *present-at-hand* or *ready-to-hand* that presents itself to us, demanding an attitude of aggressive response. Rather, death is a "possibility of our *being*." Unfortunately, science regards it as a *present-at-hand* or *ready-to-hand* entity that brings about our demise, which in turn deprives us of the very ground of our existence [20]. Heidegger critically explains this manner, in which we modernstacitly regulate our comportment towards death, as follows:

... It is already a matter of public acceptance that 'thinking about death' is a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of *Dasein*, and a sombre way of fleeing from the world. [21]

To think of death as event has led us to have recourse to all sorts of possible scientific and technological ways to evade it, or totally to annihilate it,

with all its possibilities, as is the case today with genetic technology, which tends to deny our mortality by struggling to prolong it. I am not suggesting here that a radically mortal life is a superior one, but that our mortality is central to our understanding of who we are as humans. The practices of modern science and technology, instead of enabling our access to the meaning of death, have made it a repulsive existential obstacle, a phenomenon from which nothing can be learnt. This limits the potential for a positive attitude towards death as a basic fact of life that helps one to understand the meaning of one's temporality. These practices limit what we can think, feel, and care about, and the manner in which we can comport ourselves towards death. Prolongation of a vegetative kind of life through immortality, longevity and human enhancement technologies, and many other scientific and technological means, are expressive ways of hiding the ontological significance of death. This would be inauthentic and it would alienate us from the reality of death as a constitutive element of our existential structure [22].

The Ontological Significance of Death

In thinking of death as a constitutive possibility of life, we attempt to correct the conventional, negative scientific and technological connotations associated with it. Heidegger's attempts to explain death as basic fact about us, in the quoted texts, is a reminder that it is fundamental to be aware of our death and always to read the entire meaning of our whole existence from that standpoint, and not to evade it. Humans relate to themselves as subjects to death; death constitutes an ineliminable aspect of their self-definition, which cannot be reduced to a mere medical event. It makes them understand themselves as relating with their own future completion. Death is the endpoint at which one's span of existence completes itself as one story and it is also the point of one's own nonexistence, one's *no-longer-being-there*; one's death. In the preceding section, I discussed the various attempts by medical technologies to separate life and death as if the two are opposed to each other, instead of seeing them as a unit. In this section, I argue that death is a condition for life's meaningfulness. There is no life without death, and vice versa.

In his dramatic expression, Heidegger introduces the concept of *being-towards-death* [23] or what I term *death-acceptance* as an ontological way to relate life and death. It is an expression that helps us to see life and death as a unity of one subject called man. Graham Harman claims that it is not death itself that interests Heidegger, but *being-towards-death* [24]. Death acceptance, for Heidegger, is a positive ontological attitude that we should carry along with us, even when death is concealed by medical technologies that tend to deny its ontological significance. It is fundamentally important to understand that death

acceptance should not be conceived of in a scientific and technological way, as actualizing death as a *possibility*, as indicated in the previous sections; otherwise, suicide would be the most positive authentic human decision to be made in the face of death. Nor is it reasonable to think that I can anticipate my own death as a *possibility* for me. This would be an inauthentic understanding of death experience. Death acceptance, for Heidegger, is not an event to be celebrated, as we see in some traditional cultures, nor is it to be avoided. Rather, death is to be recognised as a human phenomenon that un-conceals in a unique way the significance of my existence [25]. I shall explain this claim more closely in what follows.

When Heidegger says that our being is *towards-death*, he does not mean we should advocate that people be happy about awareness of their own death. He does not mean, by 'death', death on a deathbed; he is not even suggesting that after we have lived our lives, finally, when we get to the deathbed, there will be disclosure and awareness of the meaningfulness of life. Nor does he mean that life becomes meaningful, as if it is rendered intelligible, upon the deathbed, bringing to completion the story of life. What Heidegger means is that awareness of death that comes with the fact of biological succession is part of the condition by which life gains its meaningfulness, makes one relate with one's life as a process towards one's finite end. Baillie observes this claim when he says: "It is death that forces us to face the issue of an appropriate development of content in our lives" [26]. Heidegger, in his claim of death acceptance, considers death to be an ontological way of grasping our human existence as a whole, rather than as packages of different *possibilities* or projects to be realized within a strategized programme or decision at the point of its presentation. He considers death to be the most necessary *possibility*, of which we have to be aware and to accept. Emphasizing death as a possibility, Baillie further remarks:

Death is a break in the iteration of our days; it may or may not happen now, so the recognition of our death, our finitude, becomes an issue for us [27]

As a necessary fact about us, and lived in recognition as a *possibility*, we cannot think of it, therefore, in a universal, scientific and abstract way. When we face factual death (either through the death of a friend, a relative or even one's own death, in a moment of a misfortune, like an accident, or in sickness), ontologically, we reflect on it, and our whole lives pass before us in an unanticipated manner. Heidegger says that death makes us *run-ahead-of-ourselves*, which does not mean that we simply or solely relate with ourselves as standing out into the future. Rather, it means that when we face up to our

death, we see our whole life as a finite project that can and will be accomplished only by ourselves. Most of the time we are caught up in particular tasks and obligations, and we do not think of our lives as a whole, nor do we question it. But when we face death, we *run-ahead-of-ourselves* by asking ourselves some basic existential questions; we see our whole lives individually. In other words, death, as a principle of individuation shakes us out of all our tasks; it pulls us out of the “they self”, away from the conventional and scientific public frame of *das man*, and it frees us from our own comfort zones and fears [28]. Death releases us from the “they-self” and we come to realize that there are things that others cannot do for us; and that we are not substitutable, at least to a deeper degree. Emphasising the claim, Charles Guignon remarks that this awareness of human finitude brings with it the realisation that it is up to us to determine the overall shape our lives will have [29]

If death as a *possibility* makes us *run-ahead-of-ourselves* [30], it means that a certain conception of wholeness or completion is inextricably involved in our conception of our existence. Death makes us live our lives as a coherent story [31]. It brings an intensity of the individual art of self-expression. Factual death allows us to *run-ahead-of-ourselves*, to experience our world and our lives as coming to an ultimate end. We cannot share this experience with anyone else, since it is non-relational; nobody can die for us; death as an internal relationship is our *own-most*, which individuates us [32]. In that regard, we should not see death as a kind of failure in our existential structure; something to be avoided technologically through mastery. Instead, it should be seen as a possible reality that makes a contribution to our whole existence.

I had a very close friend, an indigenous medical doctor, who worked in various places in Kenya. Sometimes, he volunteered during his vacations to go and help in the poor refugee camps in the northern and north-eastern arid areas of the country. In all his lived-experiences as a medical doctor, he was all along surrounded by death. Unfortunately, one day he was in a serious road accident and was admitted to Nairobi hospital. For a number of weeks, he was in a serious condition, in intensive care. Later, when he recovered consciousness, I went to visit him. In the short conversation I had with him, he told me something very interesting about death. “You know what, Anthony”, he said to me, “in my life I have seen people die in thousands and many have died in my hands, but I never thought it would ever happen to me. Now, for the first time, I find myself facing my possible death. In a sad way, I have now a different way of looking at myself.”

Since we have not experienced our own deaths [33], I think what the medical doctor was telling me relates to the kind of transformation that Heidegger has

in mind, when he claims that we learn about our own death through the death of others [34] as it occasions itself [35]. When you face death, it shakes you up, makes you see your life as a whole in a way that nothing else would do, it takes you into the possibility of your own being [36] and the meaning of your existence. Our intended conscious relationship with life also requires an on-going conscious relationship with death, one in which each moment is a new-found energetic experience. Overcoming our false concept of death or our indifference to it is only possible when we allow ourselves to begin experiencing authentic death experiences. Once we learn to die consciously in each moment, to surrender willingly to the changes taking place within each moment, then we are able to perceive the true nature of death and let go of the illusions we have about what life is. Then we are not required to, at some point, have a traumatic cataclysmic experience of dying to those illusions. In other words, by learning how to die *right now*, we are able to live fully and authentically, and to discover that “what life really is has no end”. So, *being-unto-death* or “death acceptance” acts like a spur, a kind of prod that throws us out of our fallen condition, out of our inauthentic existence as *das-man* and it forces us to see ourselves and our lives as a single and unique unity; we learn to evaluate and to take hold of ourselves as a whole from the pool of possible experiences and having seen ourselves in terms of our mortality, we become what Heidegger calls *resolute*, which means making a commitment to our own existence, since we always live our death as a *possibility*.

I see in medical technology, especially in immortality oriented technologies, the desire to live forever, the desire to escape death, to prolong life indefinitely, and even the desire for life eternal, as expressed in engineering technologies like euthanasia, aesthetic and longevity technologies. First, all these technologies, in the first place, are technological attempts to master death. Second, they prevent us from facing the ontological meaning of death. Such technologies, instead of helping us to approach life and death as a unity, with humility, alienate us from ourselves by separating the two. Living each day with intent to die to that which prevents us from being fully present in our life enables us to develop an on-going relationship with what death really is. The everyday pain and discomfort we go through when prompted unexpectedly is death coming and offering us an opportunity to a deeper relationship with life. We modern subjects seek scientific treatment of death, based on the assumption that the more we control death as an event, the better for us, while we undermine its ontological meaning [37]. Calculative scientific and technological thinking manifested in medical and aesthetic technologies, has infiltrated the reality of man’s whole life, including death, undermining the whole of the human subject’s existential structure as

disclosure of the significance of reality, including her own existence.

It is necessary to have an authentic attitude towards death, to understand it as a *possibility* and as a necessary fact about us, which we have to accept and integrate in our lives as an internal relationship, from which we have something to learn. As I have claimed, death as a fact of our existential structure relates to our whole life and transforms it [38], since it is our *ownmost* potentiality-for-being, which is constantly an issue for us [39] whose meaning should not be left to the scientists and technologists alone to determine, let alone anonymous technological systems of *life-enhancement*. Any time we allow that *possibility* of our being to be actualized by science and medical technologies, we are no-longer authentic humans, in Heidegger's conception. In other words, we cannot live death as actualization of an event. We have to comport ourselves toward it as a *possibility* for the un-concealment of the relevance of our existence. Death has its ontological significance [40], which medical technologies, despite all their marvels, are incapable of giving. Medical technologies have influenced us to regard death as an *ontic* event, instead of a significant ontological (existential) structure of our being from which we have something to learn [41].

The Transcendental Nature of Modern Medical Technology

It is fundamental to take into account that modern technologies used to manage life are producing a remarkable metaphysics of its own in their attempt to reconstitute the meaning and ontological significance of death. The attempts create an extraordinary accumulation of fear beckoning us from within the increasing and shifting attitudes we are now all experiencing in the area of death. I have argued that this modern ontology of medical technologies, particularly longevity technologies undermine the ontological significance of death that the traditional metaphysics used to offer. Within this metaphysical shift and regard to death, all facts, all processes of death are objectified as resource for research purposes [42] and economic pool for those behind the implied technology, ruling out any subsistent substratum through which we can interpret the traditional metaphysics on death, as a horizon through which the entire meaning of life is interpreted. The modern technological metaphysics is no longer about entities as entities, but is all about responding to technological, manipulative intent to serve the technological maxim for mass production of artefacts for the free market economy. To justify the claim, it is enough to see the large amounts of money and time spent in the area of medical and aesthetic technologies [43]. It is all about denying death, trying to overcome it as if it does not have any relevance for human nature. Technological metaphysics alters the traditional ontology, particularly, the way we perceive

facts of our human meaning, since the meaning of those facts is now reduced to a technological calculative frame.

Furthermore, by considering technology as a new metaphysics with new metaphysical values, in the course of this exploration, appropriating Heidegger, the loss of the ontological nature of death brought by the new technological metaphysics implies that technology as the new form of *revealing* the human condition has the danger of alienating man from himself, from the other and from the world [44]. Gabriel Marcel reviews the various ontological losses as restraining the full realization of the human person in his transcendental nature as the disclosure of those values. In his work, *Man against Mass Society*, Marcel argues that technological achievements are a manifestation of the power of human rationality and ingenuity [45]. However, these achievements conceal another reality: they undermine authenticity and interiority, rendering the human subject estranged from herself, lacking the ability of 'ingatheredness' or recollection, unable to attend to and attune herself to her ultimate truth for self-realization [46]. This self-realization should not be understood as an awaited end of man, but as the continuous unfolding of man's nature in relation to other beings that form his world for self-realization. Marcel further argues that seeking only the benefits of technology makes man a slave of the power of technology, identifying himself with it and failing to seek higher values through it [47]. Employing Heidegger's language, technology in the modern world has pictured itself eschatologically: it regards itself as the *telos* or *destiny* for human striving for meaning. As destiny, technological determination leads inevitably to the loss of the ability of the individual subject to determine her own destiny [48].

Since medical and enhancement technologies now impact us in a way we can no longer ignore or subdue through sedation and control, they enable us to perceive and work with our conventional thinking regarding the meaning of life in a mere calculative and not existential way. But as a matter of fact, the nature of such technologies should set us on a *vigilant* position in relationship with them, particularly given the fact that the technological developments we experience in our world today do not necessarily mean our lives are improved and made easier either. This is basically because, the idea of progress in regard to human meaning carries with it an inbuilt disputability due to technology's elusive and inherently problematic character, where the dream of a wonderful and technologically determined future is progressively becoming a defining factor for modern man's existence, whether we wish it or not. Furthermore, in its general sense, our uncritical engagement with various technologies which we conceive to be progress and the anxiety created by the obsession to own and employ

them have today brought into play many assumptions regarding the nature of modern human subjectivity.

We have to be conscious of the fact that medical and enhancement technologies in their transcendental operations are also an elusive phenomenon with serious ontological implications for humans. We cannot absolutize them, in fact, if anything, we are challenged to educate ourselves to avoid believing things that are not true about such technologies, since on their own, they cannot answer all our human concerns. That is, despite their benefits, medical technologies have the potential of complicating our perception and meaning of human nature. Without a personal framework to control such technologies and understand their limits, we will go down a path of losing control of medical technologies' direction, which is to serve our purposes in our search for the integral meaning of our existence in the natural world.

Conclusion

I am aware that the matter of death is not a pleasurable issue and many people may want to live without being bothered by it, except at the time of calamities like sickness, the death of a close relative or a friend. Moderns live with accumulated fear of this fundamental human phenomenon. However, my philosophical reflection on death provided in this article should not be conceived of as an obsession with morbidity or gloomy kind of life. Nor do I offer a theological and religious optimism of life after death, but rather, a positive attitude towards death, which today, has become a contested issue in the field of bio-ethics. It is a philosophical response to misleading efforts of medical, aesthetic and longevity technologies to objectify and evade death. I have attempted to provide an awareness and acceptance of death as a basic human fact with ontological relevance. As a basic human fact, it is not to be regarded as an occurrence and a misfortune but rather, in its ontological significance, death makes us see our whole life as a unity or as one complete story. Death as an *ontological condition*, calls for the transformation of our exclusive and minimalistic regard to life as enhanced by medical technologies for a meaningful existence.

My assertive critique of medical technologies in this article does not suggest that we abandon any of the incredible inventions in the area of medicine in the modern age, but rather, to concede their limits and limitations in their direct attempts to remedy death as a fundamental fact of our existence. Technological limitations, particularly the externalization of death analysed in the article conscientize us of the paradoxical nature of modern medical and human enhancement technologies; the mishaps of these technologies invite us to be critical to our instrumental regard to them.

It has been my intent to accentuate that we cannot think our way into the reality of human existence through mere application of enhancement and medical technologies in their instrumental account to manage death, but more importantly, we have to engage ourselves into thinking that the separation of death from life is a minimalistic and dangerous way of presenting the existential structure of human beings. Dividing the two does not allow us to attend to the fact that there is no life without death and *vice versa*. Furthermore, separating life from death is indicative of the denial of the same whole human subject as a unit of both life and death as fundamental elements of her being, instead of resisting one at the expense of the other.

We ought to make a conscious shift or adjustment into accepting death as a fundamental human fact, and not subsist in denial of it as we today experience an escalating physical, mental, and emotional discomfort, which increasingly lead us into a fight or flight mentality regarding these two essential realities (life and death). We all know that the hardest thing in human existence in the midst of death experience is to embrace the truth about it, but embracing its truth signifies admitting that our modern technological perception and regard to death as an event is not profound, but faulty, inaccurate, and even our subsequent attitude to it is unwarranted, and therefore, needing a continuous philosophical reflection.

Therefore, amidst the benefits and enticements of longevity and immortality technologies, it is also paramount to take into account that in our everyday unreflective attempts to run away from death into such technologies to give us what they regard life to be, we not only lose the consciousness of what death really is, but also we utterly lose the propensity to experience life as a whole.

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