

HOPE AND HUMAN LONGEVITY, AN ACTUAL CHALLENGING TOPIC

GABRIEL HASMAȚUCHI, MARIA SINACI

Abstract. This paper represents an attempt to correlate the concept of hope with the notion of human longevity and reflects the actual debates around the problem of life extension. Our analysis combines ideas from philosophy, sociology, bioethics, and religion to illustrate the problem of longevity in the context of biomedical and technological progress, and – at the same time – to show the (possible) consequences of prolonging life over the human body limits. Extending human life through emerging technologies is much closer to us than we might think and is a particularly challenging topic.

Keywords: existence; life extension; human being; body; limits; attitudes; debates.

INTRODUCTION

People who come to enjoy reaching an advanced age fall into at least two categories: those who fear death passing through extreme disturbances and those who accept human destiny discreetly and with dignity. The years of old age are generally difficult years for many of us. What makes life more beautiful for some, in this gap, is the spiritual freshness, but at this stage the body begins to be weaker. Aging, it is known, is not a condition for getting seriously ill, but it is a natural stage in human life, it is a sign that human being is approaching death.

Children are the most entitled beings to hope that their parents will live to long and, if possible, beautiful old age. We cannot blame children if they have such hopes. But in the world of adults, with poor health and a very weak body, the hope of a very long life, extended through technological medical devices, could turn into an empty, meaningless life. There are many factors (cultural, religious, and scientific) that can cause a human being to force the vital limits of the body or to live in peace with his condition. We wonder, will the human being who hopes to double his old age be more

Gabriel Hasmațuchi ✉

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu; e-mail: gabriel.hasmatuchi@ulbsibiu.ro

Maria Sinaci ✉

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad; e-mail: marysinaci@gmail.com

fulfilled? But can the human being who will accept that all sorts of devices be installed on his bone structure still be called a human being?

Hope, we know, is what is left to every human being, after he has lost everything, but also after he has gained everything. In general, in old age, the human being reaches this double position. The hope that at some point we will be able to postpone our death, that through medical and technological progress we will live longer, can be for some people an impetus to live without the pressure of death. But such hope must be “independent of probability assessments”¹.

HOPE AND LONGEVITY – CORRELATIONS

The desire of some people to live as long as possible is correlated with the hope that they will not be victims of accidents or very serious illnesses that could end their lives. Starting from the idea of J.P. Day who claims that “*A* hopes that *P*” is true if “*A* wishes that *p*, and *A* thinks that *p* has some degree of probability, however small” is true², a status consisting of desire is outlined, faith and probability. The idea of extending the normal lifespan, in one way or another, falls within the scope of probability. At the same time, the hope that you will be able to prolong your life is a reaction springing from the fear of death. Therefore, as suggests A. Meirav, hope can be a „fail to capture what distinguishes between hope and despair”³. It is considered that the desire and attribution of probability „are too weak to explain the nature of hope, or at least to explain what is involved in a hope that has significant impact on one’s life”⁴. By focusing on desire and probability, the standard definition does not provide a clear distinction between hope and the absence of hope, but desire and probability can be present both in hope and in situations where hope is absent. What makes the difference between hope and despair, in A. Meirav’s opinion, remains a mystery.⁵

In relation to longevity, hope generates a force that motivates the moral agent to act in the sense of its fulfillment, as well as its extension, without being considered an external factor. Starting from the approach of hope from the perspective of motivational force, Nancy E. Snow proposes a concept of hope as an intellectual virtue because it can:

- (1) provide motivation for the search for knowledge;
- (2) create in its owner dispositions, qualities such as endurance, perseverance and openness that allows the pursuit of proposed goals;

¹ Claudia Bloeser, Titus Stahl, “Hope”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/hope/>, retrieved: 20.09.2021.

² J.P. Day, “Hope”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 6, nr. 2, 1969, p. 89.

³ Ariel Meirav, “The Nature of Hope”, *Ratio*, vol. 22, nr. 2, 2009, p. 221.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 216–233.

(3) be generative, by sharing its possessor with the mentioned qualities, and to function as a motivating method in the search for knowledge.⁶

Therefore, the motivational factor, as a disposition to action, which we admit in the case of hope, can make the difference between hope and lack of hope⁷. J. A. Day also involves the cognitive aspect of hope, but from the perspective of estimating its possibility. However, it is easy to understand that different approaches can lead to some disagreements concerning the nature of hope.

The hope of prolonging life, no matter by what means, may be, if we associate it with certain conceptions of J. Locke⁸, a pleasure of the mind that one finds in thinking of a (probably) future joy. And D. Hume⁹ refers to hope as a “direct passion”, mixed with pain, produced by the imagination of the mind towards pleasant but future events, with a probability that can be situated between absolute certainty and absolute impossibility. An approach to hope correlated with the extension of the life of a human being beyond its biological limits binds hope to fear, overcoming each other depending on the context.

However, hope generates disposition for the planned action. In this context, P. Pettit¹⁰ refers to the motivating power of hope and distinguishes superficial hope from a more substantial hope which he says acts based on a person’s belief that he does not have what he wants but has great chances to obtain it. Given this idea, we can correlate hope with the notion of longevity or prolonging a person’s life beyond the usual average or limits. According to recent studies, “Given the extensions of longevity seen in laboratory species, optimists argue that we may be only decades away from substantially extending human lifespan beyond the currently observed maximum of approximately 120 years.”¹¹

S. Kierkegaard¹², at his turn, distinguishes between heavenly hope and earthly hope, a distinction that seems to be identified with that between Christian hope and natural, human hope. In the author’s opinion, Christian hope is a general one, which is of particular interest to him, while human hope is specific. With these reflections as a starting point, the hope for a life with increased biomedical or technological longevity

⁶ N. E. Snow, „Hope as an Intellectual Virtue”, in M.W. Austin (ed.), *Virtues in Action*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013, pp.153-170.

⁷ See, also, C. McKinnon, „Cosmopolitan hope”, in G. Brock & H. Brighouse (eds.), *The political philosophy of cosmopolitanism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 243–249; D. Moellendorf, „Hope as a political virtue”, *Philosophical Papers*, 35, 2006, pp. 413–433.

⁸ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. Nidditch (ed.), Clarendon, Oxford, 1975, Bk. II, Ch. XX, p. 231.

⁹ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, D.F. Norton, and M.J. Norton (eds.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹⁰ Philip Pettit, “Hope and Its Place in Mind”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 592, nr. 1, 2004, pp. 158-159.

¹¹ B. Partridge et al., “Ethical Concerns in the Community about Technologies to Extend Human Life Span”, *The American Journal of Bioethics*, vol. 9, nr. 12, 2009, p. 68.

¹² S. Kierkegaard, S., *Opere IV – O recenzii literarã. Discursuri edificatoare în spirit divers*, vol. IV, traducere de Ana-Stanca Tabarasi-Hoffman, Editura Humanitas, București, 2017.

can be classified as earthly hope, because it is claimed from an attitude of exceeding natural limits of the human body, it is therefore a hope of human being in order to make the most of the energy of his own body.

Another distinction that we bring to attention is related to the temporal differences in the case of specific hopes: short-term hopes and lasting hopes. Short-term expectations aim at an immediate or very close temporal horizon, such as successfully passing an exam. Sustainable hopes cover a long period of time and, according to N. Snow¹³, can generate more specific hopes. An example of lasting hope is the parent who hopes for the professional success and happiness of their child throughout life. But a short-lived hope, relating us to eternity, is the extension of life.

From the point of view of the object of human hope we distinguish between hopes that have a spiritual purpose and hopes that have in view a material object. There are also specific individual hopes and specific hopes present in a large mass of people. A specific individual hope may be for a pregnant woman to have an easy birth. A specific hope at the level of a large mass of people is to live, if possible, to benefit from all the facilities to prolong their life, to give it the value it deserves.

ON LIFE EXTENSION. PROS AND CONS

As we see, longevity is a concern of people since ancient times and has been: “a common theme in religion, mythology, and medicine for centuries”¹⁴. But throughout history, the issue of longevity and the aging process have also aroused the interest of philosophers. Going back, to the ancient philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and Galen meditated on the problems mentioned above, the second¹⁵, with his work entitled *On longevity and shortness of life*, is considered to be “the originator of the scientific study of life”¹⁶, and more than that the philosopher did a “theory of aging, or gerontology”¹⁷.

A. Woodcox, analysing Aristotle’s work, argues that “This close examination of old age in Aristotle’s work shows that his attitude toward aging in both the scientific sphere and the social is unfavorable. In the scientific sphere, he regularly compares old age to a disease or chronic illness and calls it a failing of the vital heat responsible for

¹³ N. E. Snow, “Hope as an Intellectual Virtue”, in Austin M.W. (eds), *Virtues in Action*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013, pp. 155-156.

¹⁴ Herbert Anderson, “Forever is Always Finite: Reflections on Radical Life Extension”, *Theology and Science*, vol. 17, nr. 2, 2019, p. 224.

¹⁵ See A. Diamandopoulos, “The Ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and Galen on the Elderly”. *Journal of gerontology and geriatrics*, Vol. 65, nr. 04 Special, Dec. 2017, pp. 325-8, <http://www.jgerontology-geriatrics.com/article/view/129>, retrieved: 15.09.2021.

¹⁶ Adam Woodcox, « Aristotle’s Theory of Aging », *Cahiers des études anciennes* [En ligne], LV | 2018, p. 65-78, mis en ligne le 08 mai 2018, consulté le 24 septembre 2021, <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesanciennes/1040>.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

life, a deterioration of the body. In social sphere, he decries the elderly character for a whole host of vicious traits. But it is important to note that aging is not always harmful. For some it is actually beneficial and it can cure us of certain vices.”¹⁸

Closer to us, Francis Bacon and René Descartes used the notion of longevity in different ways. F. Bacon “believes that, unlike the ancients, he discovered a method ‘to introduce young spirits into an old body’ and, in his important *History of Life and Death*, conjectured scenarios for the physical regeneration of human beings. [...] Bacon opened the door to the modern dream of increasingly numerous and effective techniques for the “improvement” of individuals: Must we extend human life? What are the “costs” of this extension? Since Bacon such questions have been raised, and now they remain more relevant than ever”¹⁹. And of René Descartes one says that he built his philosophical system such as the “practical effects on human health and longevity were among the principal aims of his philosophical career”²⁰. In other words, Descartes believed that philosophy can improve the quality of human life.

However, philosophical reflections on super longevity have intensified in recent decades and cause inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary debates. In general, all the debates on the topic of (super) human longevity are claimed from the progress in the field of research on aging, which is defined as “a process that is genetically determined and environmentally modulated”²¹. More and more advanced research on the process of human aging allows it to slow down, stop or even promise to evade it. In such a context, in which “medical progress, inseparable from technological progress”²², several philosophers, biologists, theologians, sociologists, engineers, anthropologists and bioethicists position themselves for or against the need to prolong life by note, technological means.

Researchers in various fields have sought and still seek solutions through which human being could have a longer life, especially because the development of the technique allows the use of “prosthetic devices (e.g., limb replacement or sensory devices such as hearing aids), neural prosthesis (e.g., implanted brain chips), implants (e.g., pacemakers), genetic manipulation, hormone treatments and telomere-based methods for age retardation. There are three main functions that life-extension technologies can fulfill. Specifically, they may pursue the objective of conserving, repairing or improving the human body”²³. On the other hand, in highly developed countries, more and more funds are being allocated to support social health policies.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Luciana Zaterka, “Francis Bacon e a questão da longevidade humana” [Francis Bacon and the question of human longevity], *Scientiae Studia*, vol. 13, nr. 3, 2015, p. 495.

²⁰ Steven Shapin, “Descartes the doctor, rationalism and its therapy”, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 33, nr. 2, June 2000, p. 149.

²¹ Charle Patrick Davis (ed.), “Medical definition of aging”, <https://www.medicinenet.com/aging/definition.htm>, retrieved at 25.09.2021.

²² Sylvie Fortin, Serge Maynard, « Progrès de la médecine, progrès technologiques et pratiques cliniques : les soignants se racontent », *Anthropologie & Santé* [En ligne], 5 | 2012, mis en ligne le 27 novembre 2012, consulté le 30 septembre 2021, <http://journals.openedition.org/anthropologiesante/1015>.

²³ Ursula Deplazes, “Technological enhancements of the human body. A conceptual framework”, *Acta philosophica*, vol. 20, nr. 1, 2011, p. 62.

In the current context, when “technology plays an integral part in many areas of human life and is a major driver behind the progress of human civilization”²⁴, the debates about the current human condition, about the antidotes that can slow down his aging and can ensure an increase in lifespan show that “there is rapid change to the population that is brought about by the longevity project involving the application of biomedical sciences and technologies of the human body”²⁵. If until a few decades ago the concept of human longevity was not so often the subject of debates of contemporary philosophers²⁶, in recent years, the problem of super longevity requires an inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary approach.

For a longer life, for delaying its entry into an unknown dimension, that is, death, the human being fulfills any promise and clings, with boundless hope, to any opportunity to earn another day. Current research is making clear progress in this direction. Among the doctrines that have emerged in recent decades, post-humanism and trans-humanism have advanced daring projects related to the development of advanced technologies.

These movements of ideas aim to change the destiny of the human being through new technologies introducing artificial elements into its organic nature, the human body transforming into a hybrid organism, technologies “that are designed to enhance human life and possibly to replace it by the creation of hybrids”²⁷. Dumas and Turner state that “The promise of the longevity project is finally to remove the causes of human vulnerability through technological invention, but the unintended, and largely unspoken, consequence is to change humankind, thereby opening up the prospect of the post-human or trans-human world.”²⁸

From a theological perspective, Ted Peters, commenting on the ideas of Dr. Leon Kass, concludes that “Aging and death are natural. To fight aging or death is not only futile the hope for victory is pathetic.”²⁹ Coming from sciences such as genetics and gerontology, the researchers claim that regardless of the species, even the very long-lived ones, cannot avoid aging and, obviously, death. In the case of humans, the situation is similar: “However, the process of aging continues to operate also in long lived species, albeit at slower pace as compared to short lived species. Hence, a limit to life span is something we humans have to live with.”³⁰

We also come across points of view that conciliatory combine pro ideas for superhuman longevity with counter perspectives. We find such an approach in Gregory

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

²⁵ Alex Dumas, Bryan S. Turner, “Introduction: Human Longevity, Utopia, and Solidarity”, *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 56, nr. 1, 2015, p. 1.

²⁶ Greg Bognar, “The value of longevity”, *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, vol. 19, nr. 3, 2020, p. 2.

²⁷ Alex Dumas, Bryan S. Turner, “Introduction: Human Longevity, Utopia, and Solidarity”, p. 1.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²⁹ Ted Peters, “Longevity Research: Theological Implications”, *Theology and Science*, vol. 17, nr. 2, 2019, p. 158.

³⁰ Jan Vijg, Eric Le Bourg, “Aging and the Inevitable Limit to Human Life Span”, *Gerontology*, vol. 63, nr. 5, 2017, pp. 432–434.

E. Pence, who argues that: “Against Seneca and Emanuel, we argue that a functional, not a chronological, view of aging should guide us and that for some seniors, hoping to be centenarians may be neither foolish nor misguided. Using Cicero, we argue that the pleasures of seniors are not necessarily inferior to those of youth and may even surpass them. Finally, we agree with Emanuel that the ‘symptom burden’ of some lives makes living to 100 unpalatable and with Seneca that, given life’s vicissitudes, we should not plan on living to 100, but heeding his wisdom, try to make the most of the time given to us.”³¹

In this context, several biologists, engineers, and philosophers “go beyond the biological nature of the human being and include his technological enhancements. This gave rise to concepts such as cybernetic beings (or cyborgs), post-humans, trans-humans and homo cyber-sapiens”³². At the same time, it is discussed, from an evolutionary perspective, about the emergence of a new human species, which will no longer be so vulnerable, and in terms of intelligence will surpass homo-sapiens, not by its biological nature, but technological extensions: “The possible extensions include artificial sensory devices, electronic memory units, computer processors, and mechanical actuators. [...] This species might possibly be called the *Homo Cyber Sapiens*. Its members could start as extensions of ourselves but gradually become more independent from biological ‘wetware’ in order to continue their existence.”³³

The dynamics of technology thus change the definition of the notion of man, a human being made up of body and soul, created after the image and likeness of God. Thus, “The unity of body and mind in the human being gives rise to a nature that is personal, free, and responsible. [...] These emergent characteristics are qualitatively different from the characteristics of corporeality.”³⁴ Aware of his biological limits, today’s human being is seduced by the illusion of longevity, without realizing that adding days or years to his own life can be not only a source of happiness, but also of unhappiness.

Man, even with a super long life, remains a vulnerable being, and depending on his conception of life and the world he will be or will not be dominated by the fear of death, which is why he would be willing to deny condition. In addition, without coherent policies to improve life, even if people’s lifespan increase, the elderly suffer greatly from poor health and loneliness³⁵.

We complete the range of reflections above with some ideas of the philosopher C. Noica presented at a round table with the theme “The Third Age”, where “Noica

³¹ Gregory E. Pence, “Should I live to 100?”, *Bioethics*, vol. 33, nr. 7, 2019, p. 820.

³² Ursula Deplazes, “Technological enhancements of the human body. A conceptual framework”, p. 54.

³³ Luc Steels, “The Homo Cyber Sapiens, the Robot Homonidus Intelligens, and the ‘artificial life’ approach to artificial intelligence” (paper presented at the Burda Symposium on Brain-Computer Interfaces at Munich, February 1995), p. 2, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?jsessionid=A1565A22C0CD0FC281C270929768B59?doi=10.1.1.56.1952&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, retrieved: 27.09.2021.

³⁴ Ursula Deplazes, “Technological enhancements of the human body. A conceptual framework”, p. 62.

³⁵ See Janina Nemitz, “Increasing longevity and life satisfaction: is there a catch to living longer?”, *Journal of Population Economics*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-021-00836-3>.

now speaks not of books, but of his ‘experience’ as an old man. [...] But he was talking about man with his fragility in the background, but also about the chance to give – or to continue if necessary – not only the meaning of life in old age, but also an end in the beauty of the meaning of life”³⁶. In his work (“Moral-philosophical conceptions of old age”) he pointed out that “Medicine must increase the chances of affirmation of the pre-senescent, but to leave the senescent alone, to let him end in his will and to end beautifully. Our life is falsified, our end is falsified, if we intervene too much.”³⁷ The philosopher’s conclusion is that man must have a dignity of his own end: “In our folklore an admirable thing is said: in the hour of death the soul kisses its body from top to bottom and says: ‘Body, flower, how you carried me around the world and guarded me.’ It is an unparalleled nobility to call your decaying body a ‘flower’. It’s the graceful detachment from him and the survival. But what does survival mean? It just means survival. It means to have lived above the vicissitudes of life and to be now above the necessity of the end”³⁸.

RELIGIOUS ETHICAL DEBATES

Longevity as a reality and the hope of people to live long is a theme present in all major religions of the world. Some ethical issues raised by the new discoveries of science concerning human life and human being have entered in the theological debates of most religions and we think in this regard of medically assisted human reproduction, euthanasia, medically assisted suicide, organ transplantation etc. In the area of life extension, religious communities and leaders have a relatively small contribution. In the case of the three great monotheistic religions that obey the traditions of the Abrahamic faith, the conceptions of life, death, and longevity are strongly anchored in the accounts in the *Book of Genesis* (for Christians and Jews) and the *Qur’an* (for Muslims).

Many Jewish thinkers and rabbis of different traditions seem to like the extension of life, understood as an opportunity to serve God better. But as with other major ethical issues, there is no official position on this issue, the views expressed by various theologians being considered rather personal opinions. Rabbi Elliot Dorff, a bioethicist and philosopher, suggests that the radical expansion of life is tied to Jewish expectations of the messianic age. Although he expresses concern that the radical expansion of life could lead to the dilution of values such as family or connection with God, he says that creative thinking “will lead us to make more and more effort to achieve the ideal world

³⁶ Ion Dur, *Constantin Noica: de la gazetărie la gândirea speculativă*, Bucharest, Editura ProUniversitaria, 2020, pp. 279-280.

³⁷ Constantin Noica, „Conceptii moral-filosofice despre bătrânețe”, in „Vîrsta a treia”, undated brochure, pp. 12-13. which consists of the contributions of five doctors - Ion Baci, Radu Ispas, Nicolae Cristian, Elena Pîrvu – and two scholars - philosopher Constantin Noica and critique Mircea Tomuș. Cf. Diana Câmpan, „Constantin Noica - Restituiri”, *Conferințele Bibliotecii ASTRA*, nr. 76, 2010, p. 13, this events took place in 1984.

³⁸ Constantin Noica, „Conceptii moral-filosofice despre bătrânețe”, p. 13.

and succeed”. In principle, there is in the Jewish religious tradition a support in the search for the extension of life, “even radical life extension, perceiving it as a high manifestation of the valuation of life”³⁹.

The radical expansion of life seems to be viewed more reluctantly by the Head of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI, who took an approach to the issue of longevity, expressed fears that the postponement of death could deprive people of the richest experiences of life, such as the search for the transcendent, and the need to have children, and the world would be much older: “Humanity would become extraordinarily old, there would be no more room for youth Capacity for innovation would die, and endless life would be no paradise, if anything a condemnation. The true cure for death must be different. It cannot lead simply to an indefinite prolongation of this current life.”⁴⁰ Six years earlier, in 2004, a theological commission led by the future Pope, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, referred to the issue, saying that “disposing of death is in reality the most radical way of disposing of life”. Some professors and theologians or bioethicists⁴¹ in the Catholic Church are in favor of extending human life, but from the perspective of prolonging life to cure diseases and alleviate suffering, access to treatment must be guaranteed to all, except as an end.

The US Evangelical Lutheran Church seems to agree with the use of life-extending technologies with some caution, as evidenced by the official “Genetics, Faith and Responsibility”⁴² Declaration, approved in 2011 by the Church leadership. Regarding longevity, we talk about “reasonable life extension without expecting or seeking perfection” and the issue of equity in access to resources for life extension, because it does not lead to unjust and disproportionately biased use of limited human and financial resources. Some Protestant churches seem to be less open about using radical ways to prolong life and have even expressed some concern about the possibility of extending life through human cloning or stem cell research.

Muslims are convinced that Allah knows the duration of each person’s life, from birth to death. From this perspective, life-extending technologies could be understood as being in accordance with Allah’s plan or even part of the divine plan for people.⁴³ Aisha

³⁹ Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff, “Becoming Yet More Like God: A Jewish Perspective on Radical Life Extension,” in *Religion and the Implications of Radical Life Extension*, Edited by Calvin Mercer and Derek F. Maher, Macmillan Palgrave, New York, 2009, pp. 63-74.

⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, Homily of His Holiness *Holy Saturday*, April 3, 2010, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100403_veglia-pasquale.html, retrieved: 17.09.2021.

⁴¹ We mention in this sense the position of Mrs. Marie T. Hilliard, ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center, Philadelphia, who suggested that the extension of life would become a reality, probably in the catholic groups the only concern would be that the new treatments were available to all

⁴² Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *A Social Statement on Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*, <https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/GeneticsSS.pdf>, retrieved: 17.09.2021.

⁴³ Even the Muslims don’t have a central authority that would give a sort of Decision or Law, as in the Roman-Catholic Church, but the Shia Muslims follow the religious leaders named Ayatollah, who give mandatory laws for their followers.

Musa supports the same idea: “Since you can’t really violate God’s plan for you, life extension is alright because it’s part of God’s will.”⁴⁴

In all religions of the world there is expressed an ancestral desire of man to attain immortality, or in any case to live longer if possible. This desire has remained structurally present in the human being and today man is trying to use new biotechnologies to fulfill, even if only partially, the dream of a longer life. Interpreted from a religious point of view, the desire for longevity can be justified by the fact that the human being wants to return to his origins, to regain a state in which he was and which he once lost. In all religions, references are made to the links of conditionality between the state of sinfulness and the violation of the divine will and the duration of life on earth. Thus, longevity is seen primarily as a blessing. But there are also situations in which longevity is allowed as a period of sanction and suffering for the life led by someone outside the communion with the divinity.

Summarizing, the extension of life expectancy does not raise major concerns, in the sense of explicit rejection in the major religions. There are rather concerns about equal access to resources and the avoidance of abuse. As for the acceptance of the extension of human life in relation to the divine will, most interpretations place the practice somewhat within the divine plan with human beings.

CONCLUSIONS

Life extension through emerging technologies is much closer to us than we might think. It is a particularly challenging topic and became a problem which arouses the interest of many categories of researchers, inclusively from the philosophical field. The opinions on lifespan reflect three kinds of attitudes: pros, cons and conciliatory. No matter what conception we adopt, we must not lose from our sight the nature of the human being and his body limits.

Therefore, any excess can bring human being into the situation of becoming his own victim. So, the hope in an extended life, with all costs, beyond the natural limits of man, can, paradoxically, over time, become for him an invocation of death.

⁴⁴ Aisha Musa, “A Thousand Years, Less Fifty: Toward a Quranic View of Extreme Longevity”, in D. Maher, C. Mercer, *Religion and the Implications of Radical Life Extension*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 123-131.