
UNIT 4 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH PAPER

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4.1 BASIC COMPONENTS OF A PAPER

The title page

The first page of the report is the title page. It should carry a concise and adequately descriptive title of the research study. It should be precise and reflect the core of the problem under study. Even though the format of title page differ from one to another, they usually include- (1) the title of the study (2) the name of the degree for which it is submitted (3) name of the author (4) the name of the institution where the report is to be submitted and (5) the date of presentation of the report. The entire title should be typed in all capital letters, single spaced and centred between the right and left margins of the page. Where more than one line is required, it should be broken and arranged to make a pleasing appearance on the page. The statement with respect to the University, Course and the Academic degree for which the thesis is submitted should be typed in lower case with capitalised initial letters below the title line. The name of the researcher should be typed in capital letters leaving 6-2 cm from the previous statement. The name of the institution where the report is to be submitted and the date of presentation of the report are typed in double space leaving 7-5 cm distance from the name of the researcher and 2.5 cm from the bottom of the title page.

Researcher's declaration

In case the research is undertaken by a student in fulfilment of the requirement of a degree, he may be required to make a declaration.

Researcher's supervisor's certificate

Again, in case of a student's research work, his research supervisor has to certify that it was a record of independent research work done by the student.

Preface including acknowledgements

A preface may include reasons, why, in the first place, the topic was selected by the researcher. The relevance of a study may also be mentioned here. If the researcher has opted to discuss the significance and nature of his research in 'introductory chapter' then he may not write preface. But he can use the page to make acknowledgements. Here the researcher acknowledges the assistance and support received from individuals and organisations in conducting the research. Here thank all those who have helped him for a variety of reasons including guidance, during the period of study. It is thus

intended to show his gratitude. The comments, given in acknowledgements should be brief, simple, temperate and modest and given only for substantial assistance and cooperation of a non-routine character which warrants public recognition.

Table of contents

The table of contents appear after the preface and it gives an outline of the contents of the thesis. It contains a list of the chapters and their sub-titles with page numbers. Subtitles, however, should be indented under each chapter title and be followed by the specific page or section references. If reference to specific pages for subtitles is not desired, the subtitles may run together and separated by semi-colons or dashes. When so many subheadings exist it may give an overcrowded look if all these are included in the table of contents. Hence, these may be placed at the beginning of that particular chapter below the title. It thus facilitates ready location of topics in the report.

The table of content also include the preface/ acknowledgement, list of tables and figures etc. The heading "Table of Contents" should be the centre at the top of the page and in capital letters. The chapter headings may be typed in capital letters and subtitles in small letters. Small letters should be used for the subheadings except for the initial letter and of all nouns, pronouns, verbs etc. On the right hand side should be typed the heading "Page" at the right margin below which page numbers will appear. On the left hand side will appear the headings in the sequence in which they actually appear in the thesis.

List of Tables and figures

If table and figures are included in the report, separate pages for them should follow the table of contents. Figures refer to map, drawings, graphs, charts, diagrams etc. The full titles of tables and figures, worded exactly as they appear in text, are presented with corresponding /consecutive numbers and page locations. Arabic numerals are usually used for identifying tables, figures etc. In the list of table and figures, the titles should be typed with initial capitals, rather than all capital letters.

Abstract or synopsis

An abstract is a summary of the findings of the research work. It should be as brief as possible and run about only one or two pages. It is placed at the prefatory part of the report so that a reader can get a quick overview of the report. Along with the summary of the findings or result of the investigation, it states in brief the purpose and scope of the study and also the method used for the research work. Here care should be taken that there is no over emphasis of the minor points and also that important points has to be treated adequately.

Abbreviations

Only such names are to be abbreviated which are likely to appear too often in the report. Name of persons are never abbreviated. Most of the forms of abbreviations are universally accepted because of the international readership of the scholarly dissertations and thesis. The list of abbreviations should appear before the beginning of the main text.

After the prefatory items, the body of the report is presented. It is the major part of the report. In a comprehensive report, the body of the report will consist of several chapters. The division of the report into chapter or sections should reflect the organisation of the parts with one another and with the whole; i.e.; the division should be logical to make the contents meaningful. This is the first chapter in the body of a research report. It is devoted for introducing the theoretical background of the portion, its definition and formulation. It should be presented in such a way that it interests the reader in the subject matter of research. It must not be dull and lack in precession. It may consist of the following sections. **Theoretical background of the topic:** Here the researcher introduces the background and the nature of the problem so as to place it into a larger context to enable the reader to know its significance in a proper perspective. This section summarises the theory or a conceptual frame work within which the problem has been investigated. **Statement of the problem:** In this section the researcher has to point out why and how the problem under research was selected. There is a need of clear statement of the nature of the problem with specific questions to be answered or hypothesis to be tested. A consideration of significance of the problem and its historical background is also a need. Hence in this section the problem is clearly defined and its facets and significance are pointed out. For this the problem may be broken down into constituent elements or major subdivisions. **Review literature:** This is an important part of the introductory chapter. Here a brief review of previous studies on the problem and significant writings on the topic under study is stated. Thus it is summarising the current status of research work already done in the research area sought. Previous research studies are abstracted and significant writings of authorities in the area under study are review. Such a review provides a background for the development of the present study and makes the reader up to date. Brief summary indicating areas of agreement or disagreement in findings or gaps in existing knowledge should be included. How the research work is an attempt to fill that gap is highlighted in this part of the introduction. **Significance of the study:** The significance of the problem, the contribution that the study is expected to make, its practical importance and the national relevance is specifically indicated in this section. **The scope of the study:** The dimensions of the study in terms of the geographical area covered, the designation of the population being studied or the exact coverage of the study is mentioned here. **The objectives of the study:** The objectives of the study and investigative questions relating to each of the objectives are presented. **Hypotheses:** The specific hypotheses to be tested are stated. The sources of their formulation may be indicated. **Definition of concepts:**

The operational definitions of the key concepts of the study are presented here. i.e., various concepts or domains proposed to be used in a research requires to be stated. Definitions or special meanings of all important terms so as to enable the reader to understand the concepts underlying the investigation is to be indicated. How those concepts are defined by early writers and how the definition of the researcher were an improvement over earlier definition may be explained.

This part of the thesis is devoted for the presentation of all the aspects of the methodology and their implementation, i.e., methods of data collection

instruments, methods of data processing and plan of analysis. Most of this material is taken from the research proposal plan. The revisions, if any made therefore should be clearly stated. The details of the study's design should be fully stated so as to enable another researcher to reproduce the study and test its conclusions.

Methodology: In this section, the overall typology of research used and the data collection methods employed are described. It also describes how the field work was carried out, the reliability of instruments selected and the statistical tools and procedures used in the analysis.

1. Sources of data:- The sources from which the primary and secondary data were gathered are stated. The limitations of secondary data also should be indicated.

2. Sampling plan:- The size of the universe from which the sample was drawn, the sampling methods adopted and the sample size and process of sampling are described in this section. The estimate of sampling error and what were originally planned and what were achieved are also to be given. These details are essential for determining the limitations of the funding.

3. Data collection instruments:- The types of instruments used for data collection and their contents, scales and other devices used for measuring variables and the procedure of establishing their validity and reliability are described in this section.

Chapterisation: Chapterisation or the scheme of chapters in the main body of the thesis and their interrelationship is briefly described in this section in order to give an overview of the presentation of the results of the study.

Limits of the study: All research designs have limitations and so do all research implementations. Such limitations may vitiate the conclusions and their generalisations. The sincere investigator faces these problems and he reports them carefully and honestly in the introduction itself. This will help the reader to judge the validity of the conclusions and the general worth of the study in the proper perspective.

Main Chapters

This is the heart of the research report and probably the largest section of the report. It should be an organised presentation of the results and each major division of the problem should be presented in a separate chapter. The chapters should be well- balanced, mutually related and arranged in logical sequence. Each chapter should be given an appropriate heading. The chapter should include a discussion of the issue or part of the problem investigated and evidence used in its solution. If this becomes lengthy a summary of the evidence may be made at the end of the chapter. Through textual situation and tabular and graphic devices, the data are critically analysed and interpreted. Every table or chart should be self-contained and self-explanatory unit within the body of the report, and the presentation should be so clear that the reader be able to grasp the finding either by reading the text or looking at the table or chart.

The results should be reported as accurately and completely as possible. The data themselves should be described fully, they should be analysed in detail and all the evidence resulting from the analysis should be presented. These

chapters are primarily for the use of the reader who wishes to make a detailed study of the problem. So every bit of relevant evidence should be supported by logical reasoning and empirical facts. Materials should be organised systematically and presented under appropriate headings and subheadings. Each chapter should end with a summary and lead into the next section or chapter with a smooth transition sentence.

Conclusion

This is the last part of the text of the thesis. This chapter is more extensive than the abstract given in the beginning of the report. This chapter should be a self-contained summary of the whole report, containing a summary of essential background, information, findings and conclusions and recommendations. It consists of the summary, conclusions or generalisation, suggestions and recommendations. The summary may be more or less a restatement of the topical sentences of the various findings. Summaries of findings may be subordinated under the conclusion statements. All these statements may be numbered or coded in some way so that they refer to pages or tables in the findings sections, upon which they are based. After a brief statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the methodology used in the investigation, the findings and conclusions are presented. Findings are statements of factual information based upon the data analysis. Conclusions are inferences or generalisations drawn from the findings and relate to hypotheses. They are answers to the questions of the hypothesis proposed. The formulation of conclusion is the most difficult aspect of report writings. A research may sometimes be tempted to over generalise . Hence it is necessary to be modest.

Besides summary and conclusion, recommendations are also required from the investigator . Recommendations are typically brief statements of a limited number of suggestions for further consideration. These should flow from the findings and conclusions. They should be specific and should not be mere vague statements. Suggestions must be practicable and based on logical reasoning and are to be given at the end of the report. The research report should aim to give leads to future research scholars. The researcher should be able to give directions to the future researchers from the insights he has gained during the investigations. Hence, it may be appropriate in concluding this part of the report to indicate topics which need further research, i.e., the reporter should explain in the beginning the relationship of his research to previous work on the subject (review literature) and at last suggest what part of the field would more benefit, perhaps on a bigger scale or from a different angle.

Bibliography

The core part of the thesis is followed by the end part containing the appendices and the bibliography. Thus the end part of the report is made up of : Bibliography (2) Appendices (3) Index. A bibliography means a list of written sources consulted in preparation of the report during the course of research. It lists all published and unpublished references used by the writer in preparing the report. It may refer to all documents like books, periodicals , articles, government documents, pamphlets, lectures, interviews etc, which have bearing on the thesis irrespective of their being actually referred to or not, in the text. The aim is to permit the reader to find the exact items the writer consulted.

There are different kinds of bibliography like, References or literature cited comprises a list of documents which is confined only to those works actually cited in text or the footnotes of the report. Sources consulted consist of a comprehensive listing of books and papers consulted including those which are not strictly relevant to the subject of the thesis. Selected bibliography contains those sources cited, together with the more relevant of the works which have been consulted. Bibliographical notes is a brief annotated bibliography where the references are combined with the bibliography list.

Bibliography may be arranged according to the alphabetical order, chronological order, divisions of the subject etc. Generally the simplest and best arrangement for a short bibliography is the alphabetical order. Here the last name of the author (surname) is listed first, separated from the full name and arrange it alphabetically by surname. Some list of books is most convenient if arranged in the chronological order of the publication. This is suited for works in history. Writers sometimes desire to make separate divisions for primary and secondary sources. But usual practice favours one comprehensive listing of both the sources together. Alternatively, the bibliography may be classified into three or four sections- (1) Books (2) Articles (3) Reports and (4) Other documents and in each section relevant references may be arranged in alphabetical order. The purpose of bibliography is different from that of footnotes. While bibliography is a list of all materials related to the topic of research, the footnotes specifically paraphrased materials are found. Care should be taken by the researcher while bibliography listing and it should be done in the proper format.

Appendix

An appendix is used for additional materials which has not found place in the main text. It includes (a) copies if data collection instruments like questionnaire used for the study or interview schedules, (b) technical details on sampling plan (c) complex and long primary tables (d) statistical computation (e) supporting documents or any other material evidence of considerable reference value. By relegating such supporting evidence to an appendix, the text of the report remains uncluttered yet the argument is not weakened because the interested reader can be directed to consult particular pages of an appendix for further detail. Thus those materials given in appendices are not directly essential for a understanding of the text, but useful as a supporting evidence. Appendices may be placed between the final chapter and the bibliography or immediately after the bibliography. All appendices should be separated and listed accordingly in the Table of contents together with page numbers. Here pages are numbered usually having Arabic numerals. Each appendix should be referred to in the body of the thesis.

Index

The index, if prepared should give an alphabetically arranged references to all important matters discussed in the report. It may be either subject index or another index. To conclude, we can say that a thesis or a research report is an authoritative document based on research work. It presents highly specific information. The written reports will be useful only when they are well prepared and while preparing the report due attention has to be paid to represent the above mentioned components. Then only the report will be properly organised and can be communicated to others.

4.2 PRACTICAL HINTS: STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH PAPER

A major goal of research is to prepare research papers based upon the studies undertaken.

These general guidelines are to be kept in mind while preparing the paper.

To make a paper readable

- Print or type using a 12 point standard font, such as Times, Geneva, Bookman, Helvetica, etc.
- Text should be double spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper with 1 inch margins, single sided
- Number pages consecutively
- Start each new section on a new page
- Adhere to recommended page limits (**50 pages**)
- Stay focused on the research topic of the paper
- Use paragraphs to separate each important point (except for the abstract)
- Indent the first line of each paragraph
- Present your points in logical order
- Use present tense to report well accepted facts - for example, 'the sky is blue.'
- Use past tense to describe specific results - for example, "In 1783 Kant wrote the Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics to summarise his main views."

In any written report or paper the following divisions are to be made scrupulously.

Title Page: Select an informative title as illustrated in the examples in your writing portfolio example package. Include the Full name(s) and address(es) of all authors, the name(s) of guide(s) and date submitted.

Researcher's declaration

In case the research is undertaken by a student in fulfilment of the requirement of a degree, he may be required to make a declaration.

Researcher's supervisor's certificate

Again, in case of a student's research work, his research supervisor has to certify that it was a record of independent research work done by the student.

Preface: The summary should be two hundred words or less. And normally it should be limited to one paragraph. The purpose of abstract is to introduce the main findings of the report very briefly to an interested reader.

Acknowledgement: State briefly the necessity of the research in the topic chosen and the due acknowledgement of those who helped the student in completing this dissertation.

Table of Contents: Follow either the model of a scheme -1 or scheme -2.

Introduction: The purpose of an introduction is to acquaint the reader with the rationale behind the work, with the intention of defending it. It places the work in a theoretical context, and enables the reader to understand and appreciate your objectives.

Main Chapters: These contain the main body of the research paper.

Conclusion: Taking the main line of thought or argument throughout the chapters and summarizing them into concluding statements as a result of the research. It might be a place also for proposing few avenues of research and further studies.

End Notes (if Footnotes are not used)

Appendix (if any)

Index (if any)

Bibliography: List all literature cited in the paper, in alphabetical order, by first author. In a proper research paper, only primary literature is used (original research articles authored by the original investigators). Be cautious about using web sites as references - anyone can put just about anything on a web site, and we have no sure way of knowing if it is truth or fiction. If we are citing an on line journal, use the journal citation (name, volume, year, page numbers). Sometimes some of the papers may not require references, and if that is the case simply state that “no references were consulted.”

STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER: A Quick Look

- COVER PAGE
- PLAIN PAPER
- INNER TITLE PAGE
- PREFACE, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- CERTIFICATE OF SUPERVISOR
- TABLE OF CONTENTS
- INTRODUCTION
- CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3, ETC.
- CONCLUSION
- END NOTES, APPENDIX, INDEX (IF THERE IS)
- BIBLIOGRAPHY
- PLAIN PAPER
- BACK COVER

4.3 MODEL OF A RESEARCH PAPER

PHYSICAL IMMORTALITY:

Human Longing, Scientific Basis and Religious Response

¹ Bhagavan Osho, *Beyond Enlightenment*, ch 3, “No other path but life.” (From CD rom) 1998. For a general introduction to physical eschatology from scientific and religious

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India

“The ancient seers were not egoistic. They called the whole humanity – past, present future – Amrutya putra. You are all sons of immortality. Equal and eternal.” Bhagawan Rajneesh¹ (Osho 1998: ch3)

“Mankind will postpone human ageing substantially in the future, doubling the human lifespan at least, when we have accomplished this we will be ashamed that we did not work on it much sooner.” Michael Rose, Evolutionary Biogerontologist²

0. Introduction

According to the creation myth of Konos tribes of Guinea, Sa or death existed before anything. Death is regarded as the primary creator in this tradition. Once, long time ago, there was only darkness and Sa lived there with his wife and daughter. Since he wanted something more durable he created a slushy kind of mud sea as a place to live. From nowhere appeared the god Alatangana and he decided to improve on the work of Sa. Alatangana made the slush solid and added animals and plants to it. Sa was pleased and they became friends. But when the god asked for Sa's daughter the friendship fell apart. However, Alatangana met the girl secretly and eloped to a distant place and they produced 14 children: four white boys, four white girls, three black boys and three black girls. The children spoke different languages and the parents could not understand them.

This made them so upset that they decided to return to Sa and ask for his advice. Sa was ready to reconcile and demanded that the black and white children do not intermarry. So the different race originated. Sa demanded further: “You have stolen my only child. Now you must give me one of yours whenever I wish it. When I wish to call one of your children I must never be denied. You will know I am called by the sound of the calabash rattle in your dream.”³ (Lemming & Lemming 1994: 164) So it was that death for us humans is the bride-price for Alatangana's marriage with Sa's daughter. So death is intrinsically linked to human's origin.

This simple myth explains aetiologically both darkness and life, death and birth, sex and procreation and gives justification to the races. The main focus of my article is that this intimate link between death and life may be soon broken – at least in our collective consciousness. It will have shattering consequences for our human – philosophical and religious – longing and hope.

In this article I first study the quest for human physical immortality as a religious search. I see the emerging religious and collective movements which try to overcome death. In the next section we see the scientific basis for

perspectives see the award winning Kuruville Pandikattu, “Eschatology: Arena for Creative Encounter between Science and Religion.” *Jeevadhara* 29 (April 1999) 154-164.

¹ From the *Future Fantastic* episode titled Immortals. For a succinct account of the different technologies for achieving physical immortality see the award winning article, Kuruville Pandikattu “Significance of God if humans were to become immortal,” *The Month* 33 (July 2000): 264-268.

² David Leeming and Margareth Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths*, OUP, New York/Oxford: 1994. 164. The story is summarised from the same book, pp. 163-164.

³ Herb Bowie [http://www.powersurgepub.com/books/immort/Bowie why die.htm](http://www.powersurgepub.com/books/immort/Bowie%20why%20die.htm), 1999.

physical immortality. Though there is no hard “scientific” evidence for physical immortality, there are so many scientific disciplines at their cutting-edge or frontier research which indicate at least the theoretical possibility for physical immortality. In the final part we see the social or religious response to such a scenario. We shall show that such a possibility does not negate but radically alters our very understanding and scope for longing and fulfilment. We conclude by affirming that such a guiding of our total destiny requires a healthy dialogue between science and society or technology and religion.

1. Physical Immortality: A Primordial Human Longing

Though the longing for an everlasting life has been a perennial quest, we are somehow used to our physical death. Since we all take our mortality for granted, the gerontologist author Herb Bowie holds that we tend to ignore the most potent anti-ageing organ in your body – the mind! If so, then the subconscious messages we are constantly sending ourselves may be sabotaging human longevity. “Can you imagine yourself living for 100 years, 120, or even longer? If not, then you may be undermining your nutritional program by feeding yourself ‘mental junk food’ — negative programming predicting your own deterioration and demise.”⁴ (Bowie 1999)

The author exhorts that we should start feeding your mind a new food. His book, *Why Die?* speaks clearly and intelligently about the possibility of living virtually forever. By stretching the mind to accept this exciting new human possibility, we shall be conditioning ourselves to live a longer, healthier and happier life.⁵

Most of us make the unconscious decision that we have to die. They assume that their fate is ordained by the laws of nature, or by destiny. This choice is made so early in life, and at such an unconscious level, that few people ever even challenge it. So ask the question on human immortality will shake people up. Because even to ask this question is to imply something unthinkable for many people — that death is a choice, and not a foregone conclusion. Further, most of us feel disoriented and threatened by the consideration of physical immortality as a real possibility. It is within these chilling prospects that the author introduces the concept of physical immortality.

To understand the idea of living forever, according to Bowie, we must look at two very different aspects of physical immortality. On the one hand, it is about eternity, about surviving to some unthinkably distant point in the future. On the other hand, though, it is all about choosing how to live our lives today. It is only when we connect these two extremes, and find a way to live our lives as an unbroken continuum between these two points, that we fully achieve physical immortality. There is an element of paradox here.⁶

⁴ It is interesting to note the reasons given by the author as to why we should read his book and occupy ourselves with thoughts on human immortality. “If you’ve always believed that physical immortality is possible, but have been confused because there seemed to be no one else who felt that way – then this book is for you.”

If you’ve already discovered others who feel that they too were born to live, and you now wish to deepen your feelings of living forever – then this book is also for you.

If you can’t think of a good reason to go on living another year, or even another day — much less for all of eternity — then this book is for you as well. Living forever is all about transforming the quality of your life today, and these pages can help inspire that transformation. And yes, even if you think that physical immortality is the craziest thing you’ve ever heard of – then this book is for you too. Because by the time we’re done, you may just see why living forever is the most sensible thing you’ve ever started.” From URL: <http://www.sff.net.people.benbova>.

This paradox is also expressed in these haunting lines from William Blake.

To see a world in a grain of sand And a heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity
in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour.⁷ (Capra 1977: 288)

I believe that Blake was not speaking metaphorically though. In the book the author wants to talk about transforming the quality of our lives today, by focusing our attention on our own eternity. At the same time, I will be talking about actually living for hundreds and thousands of years, by focusing our attention on the quality of our lives today. The author asserts that if such a view seems like a paradox, then this is only because we view our today's and our tomorrow's as separate and unconnected.

Physical immortality is difficult, in a way, to talk about at length because it can be approached from so many different angles. Since all of these perspectives are equally valid, it is impossible to do the subject justice by discussing it in a strictly linear fashion. We can start with forever and work backwards. We can start with today and go forwards. We can talk about the fate of humanity, or we can discuss the personal feelings of one individual. No matter how we approach the subject, though, we always seem to arrive at the same conclusion: that living forever is a practical and meaningful goal.

Reaching the same conclusion from so many different starting points is reassuring in the long run, but can be a bit disconcerting at first, as we repeatedly shift perspectives. We may feel more comfortable with some approaches than with others, and so may be tempted to skip around.

Following similar lines of thought, another scholar claims that the first immortal human beings are living among us today.⁸ (Bova 2000) It is asserted by its proponents that there are men and women alive today who may well be able to live for centuries, perhaps even extend their life-spans indefinitely. For them, death will not be inevitable. Death will have to die for them! Such immortal humans will not age. They will not become feeble and sickly.

Ageing will be stopped, even reversed. One may be young and vigorous forever. Accidents and violence will not disappear, of course. People will still be vulnerable to poor judgement, bad luck and evildoers. But death from old age, death as the inescapable end of life, will become a thing of the past, a dark memory of primitive days. As the American immunologist William R. Clark put it, "Death is not inextricably intertwined with the definition of life." Just because human beings have always died does not mean that they always will die.

This same idea is reflected in the leading article of the German weekly: *Der Spiegel*.⁹ (Hanshalter 2000) It asserts that immortality belongs to the originary human desire (*Ursehnsucht*). It will not just redeem humanity from death but raise it almost to the level of gods. Michael Fossel, professor of Clinical Medicine in the State University of Michigan asserts: "the most significant

⁵ This may seem like a paradox — to ask you to focus on forever and your life today at the same time. This is the way it first sounds when people show you what are called "Magic Eye" pictures, and tell you to focus beyond the page, on infinity. But if one relaxes and follows along, then after a while something new and different really does appear. (Now a days it has become out of date and is not available on the market. There are even now computer programs to produce such Magic pictures or three-dimensional pictures.)

⁶ Quoted in F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, A Bantam Book, 1977, p. 288.

⁷ Ben Bova, *Immortality*, Avon Books, 2000 (forthcoming)

turn in the human history has begun. In twenty years we can stop the process of ageing and reverse biological clock.” He certainly is a super-optimist. Philipp Lee Miller of the Longevity Institute in Los Gatos, prophesies: “in a few years time 80 year olds will feel like 20 year olds and will play like teens.” This sentiment is accentuated by the New Yorker Professor Michio Kaku, who expects a tripling of life expectancy and a cessation of ageing process in a few years time.

The above longings and claims make it abundantly clear that immortality is slowly distilling into the collective unconsciousness of humanity. We shall study further the claims of immortality and see if there is any psychological and scientific basis for it.

[Pages omitted]

5. Conclusion

Such a possibility of human immortality has deep rooted religious consequence. Religions can ignore the challenges posed by immortality only at the danger of instant self mortality. The obvious danger of such a possibility is that each one becomes so preoccupied with his own individual immortality and forgets the human community and life in general. There is a danger that the larger issues of providing justice for the impoverished, fostering of life in general and love as the most significant human value may be forgotten.

At the same time it must be reiterated that physical immortality does not render God superfluous, religion redundant and human longing unnecessary. Even in the situation of immortal humans there is scope for meaningful hope, for relevant religion and for a liberating God. At the same time Immortality necessitates a human hope that may be detached from physical death. In our ordinary understanding of human longing, death is seen as the starting point of eschatology or human hope. That view has to be given up and we need to delve deep into the “inaugurated eschatology” which theologians have taken seriously since few decades.

We still need to take death seriously. But death may not be given the supreme importance and inevitability that was it due once. So the human hope and fulfilment has to begin with this present world, with the here and now. There are of course social and existential problems like poverty and injustice which are to be tackled seriously.

It must be noted that overcoming physical death and attaining physical immortality does not solve the problem of human contingency. The issue of human finitude has to be addressed in a much wider sense. The tendency of those seeking physical immortality – passive acceptance - is to reduce human life to a physicalistic or mechanistic view point. They would stress that attainment of physical immortality – temporal unlimitedness – necessarily leads to human fulfillment. We need to focus also on the existential and ontological contingency of human condition, not merely that of the temporal conditioning.

¹ Hanshalter, “Der (fast) unsterbliche Mensch - lässt sich das Altern hinausschieben?” *Der Spiegel* 17/2000. The quotations in this paragraph are translated from this article.

So even in a world of immortal human beings, human longing and hope is imperative. Hope still remains intrinsic to humans. But it is a hope based on the day-to-day experience of humans and rooted in the present day, not one aimed primarily at a later world “a pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die” type. So life, today’s precious, fragile life, has to be taken seriously. It has to be affirmed, respected and fostered in its entirety. We can hope to pay back the bride-price for Alatangana’s marriage with Sa’s daughter and life lives “full and abundant” and not necessarily temporally limited.

Bibliography

Bowie, Herb, [http://www.powersurgepub.com/books/immort/Bowie why die.htm](http://www.powersurgepub.com/books/immort/Bowie%20why%20die.htm), 1999. See also URL: [http://www.sff.net.people.benbova](http://www.sff.net/people/benbova).

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