

DEPARTMENTS AND COLUMNS: PERSPECTIVES

The “Life” of the Mind: Persons and Survival

John Harris

The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK and The University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
Email: johnmorleyharris@gmail.com

Abstract

A life of the mind can be lived only by creatures who know that they have minds. We call these creatures “persons,” and currently, all such persons THAT we know OF are “alive” in the biological sense. But are there, or could there be, either in the future or elsewhere in the universe, creatures with “a life of the mind” that are not “alive” in the sense that we humans usually understand this term today?

Keywords: mind; grief; death; injustice; value of life

Introduction

Philosophy is emblematic of “the life of the mind.”¹ But the concept of “life” inevitably invokes misleading, even anachronistic, paradigms. The idea of flesh and blood creatures (who/which) inhale and exhale “the breath of life,” a heartbeat from ecstasy or extinction, dangerously reflects a linguistic, even literary and biological, world that has somehow hidden itself from developments in science, cybernetics, and philosophy.

This essay explores what the concept of life amounts to and how it relates to the sorts of creatures (created things and beings: mechanical, electrical, organic, and biological) that make moral claims (or, if not, “in person” claims) which demand consideration and respect.

Equally, the concept of “mind” plays a significant role. What is “mind?” I am minded to ask what, how, is this concept related to thought and reflection?

A life of the mind can be lived only by creatures that *know of themselves that they have minds*. We call such creatures “persons,”² and currently, all (or maybe almost all) such of whom we are aware are also “alive” in the biological sense.³

But are there, or could there be, either in the future or even now, here or elsewhere in the universe, creatures with “a life of the mind,” which/who are not themselves “alive” in the biological sense, a sense in which we humans usually, but often recklessly, understand the concept of “life” today?

Many, myself included, answer this question in the affirmative.

As well as having minds and a language, and because we do, persons also have rights and interests, hopes and fears, duties and responsibilities, and much else which (maybe?) command and deserve respect. Persons also typically have projects and dreams, ambitions for themselves and others and for the world, maybe even for the cosmos.

It is often said that foremost among the ambitions of a good, or even of a halfway “decent,” person or society must be “to make the world a better place and persons better people.”⁴

But what sorts of creatures comprise society and hold rights and possess interests? We know something about what makes the world a worse place or even an impossible place to live, but how

precisely do we go about making it a better place? And whose responsibility (and via responsibility, accountability) is that?

How, and in virtue of what, do creatures come to be recognized as persons, that is, as individuals possessing self-consciousness and therefore interests, responsibilities, and rights?

The task of identifying, and according equal concern, respect, and protection to all persons, is of vital concern, including to those persons who may not be members of our species or even inhabitants of our world.

How easy and natural it is to fall into vitalist idioms, and how potentially question begging?! I shall argue that equal concern, respect, and protection are appropriate, whether or not such creatures are "alive," as we usually use this term. Perhaps they achieve self-consciousness without being "alive" in any worldly biological sense.

Imagine adding a cybernetic dog to your family's menagerie!

Other *vital* dimensions of the life of the mind are science, broadly conceived, and philosophy. Science is primarily concerned with the nature of "stuff," including living "stuff," and with "What? How? Where? When? If? and Why?" type questions concerning stuff and events, many of which have historically also been within the ambit of "philosophy."

Philosophy, beyond its rather vainglorious claim to be about "truth," is, at least as I use the term, about how it is possible, and when and why it is desirable, to assemble combinations of evidence and argument to establish, evaluate, or indeed, demolish claims, conclusions, theories, or purported facts.

There is clearly an overlap between science and philosophy. A simpler way of characterizing these activities is to say that science is concerned with facts and theories about facts and philosophy with arguments and theories that develop or establish facts and develop and test hypotheses about such things, values featuring only in so far as they form part of these arguments.

To make visible the bare bones of the evolution of concern with these issues, a good place to start is with the genesis of reflection on them, at least in the history of Western Thought.

Part I: Greif

Let us then begin somewhere near the beginning!

All Western Philosophy begins with grief?⁵

In a striking passage of her book, *The Death of Socrates*, Emily Wilson suggests that "all Western philosophy begins with grief"⁶:

"Philosophy begins with wonder," says Aristotle. Perhaps Aristotle was lead to philosophy that way. But Platonic philosophy – itself the foundation of all later western philosophy, including that of Aristotle himself – begins with grief. Plato was present at Socrates trial...He had probably not written a word of philosophy before his teacher's death. He was at the time a rich, well-connected young man, originally called Aristocles. He was an aspiring tragic and lyric poet and a talented wrestler nicknamed Plato ('Butch' or Broad-shouldered') for his skill in the gymnasium.⁷

Wilson perhaps slightly overstates her case (as do most authors who are worth reading) in suggesting that all Western philosophy begins with Plato, and in particular with the grief Plato experiences at the death of Socrates, his friend, teacher, and mentor. In particular, this claim ignores the so-called "pre-Socratics," of whom Wilson,⁸ as herself a highly distinguished classicist, was certainly aware. However, she is of course right to suggest that the death of Socrates is pivotal in the early history of Western philosophy. The death of Socrates certainly also prompted Plato both to record and probably to freely invent, many of, or many parts of, the voluminous dialogues of, and with, Socrates, in large part to express this grief and also to preserve the memory and thought of his lost friend.

For most of us contemporary “jobbing” philosophers, when thinking of the origins of our subject, it is to Socrates that we inevitably turn, and Plato is our chief source.

Loss and justice

The grief occasioned by death is, I believe, almost universally experienced as irremediable and unjust loss, both to the dying individual if they know that they are dying and to those who love or value them⁹. Or, perhaps less romantically, it is also experienced as a loss to those who did neither but who wanted that person to live to be held to account for their misdeeds!

Death, as an escape from justice or revenge, is also so understood by those who believe they have been wronged. Injustice, and hence justice, is clearly part of the concept of grief itself, a fact that seems to radically enhance its philosophical interest and importance.

Expressing, and writing about, grief has a long history.

In her wonderful essay on Homer’s *Iliad*,¹⁰ Simone Weil recalls Homer’s description of Andromache, Hector’s wife, waiting for Hector to return home...

She ordered her bright-haired maids in the palace
To place on the fire a large tripod, preparing
A hot bath for Hector, returning from battle.
Foolish woman! Already he lay, far from hot baths
Slain by grey-eyed Athena, who guided Achilles’ arm.

Weil comments:

Far from hot baths he was indeed poor man. And not he alone. Nearly all the *Iliad* takes place far from hot baths. Nearly all of human life, then and now, takes place far from hot baths.¹¹

And neither Homer nor Weil needed to add to this observation that distance from hot baths was often a place of danger and death, misery, suffering, and grievous destruction, a place where the tears and desolation of grief are never far away.

“Hot baths” speak to us, we flesh and blood creatures, of home, security, and comfort—physical and mental, of pleasure and sexuality, love, and care, of civilization, and of community.

Since Homer spoke, and his words (probably only much later) found their way into script, grief and the mourning it entails speak to us of justice and injustice, and of the human condition. This fate may well evolve into something we will think of as more than simply “the human condition,” but also in terms of “personhood,” thus allowing for the existence and equal moral status to be accorded to non-human persons. I have not, of course, forgotten that such non-human persons may, however improbably, include “the Immortal Gods”; the moral status of whom may well turn on the nature of their powers and their existential nature and on the plausibility (or otherwise) of their bodily existence.

Grief and justice

We need, however, to begin, as we have done, with grief, and even further back than we have so far ventured. First, of course, with Homer (around 762 BCE?) and remind ourselves of some milestones along the way. These milestones, *inter alia*, provide cultural evidence of the connection between grief and justice.

In the Old Testament *Book of Samuel*,¹² King David mourns his son....

The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!” 2 Samuel 18.33.¹³

Macbeths' immediate reaction on hearing of the death of his wife is eloquently expressive of a related, and I believe almost universal, feeling:

She should have died hereafter:
There would have been a time for such a word.¹⁴

And, Macduff, on hearing from Rosse, that Macbeth has murdered his entire family, abuses heaven itself for failing to save their lives, and himself takes (partial) responsibility for the deaths of:

...wife, children, servants, all
That could be found....¹⁵

- Did Heaven look
- on,

And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff.
They were all struck for thee. Naught that I am.
Not for their own demerits but for mine.¹⁶

Macduff's angry questioning of Heaven for not protecting "*All my pretty ones*" and for unjustly allowing them to be punished, for their misdeeds "*Not for their own demerits but for mine*,"¹⁷ makes Heaven share responsibility for premature and unjust deaths¹⁸ as Heaven surely must, if, that is, *per impossible* Heaven exists and is all it's cracked up to be!

Macduff is an example of one who wants those who cause grief to be held to account, even if they be God or Gods; he pleads with Rosse to help by sharing his grief and its remedy....

Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.¹⁹

Before we make, and are tempted to take, such "*med'cines*" it is as well to consider whether the causes of such grief are always going to be with us.

As I will discuss in some detail later, it has seemed for a while now that death and the injustice of death may not always be an immutable fact. We must give serious consideration to the possibility that many future people may be, what I have called, "functionally immortal,"²⁰ though not "human" as we currently use the term.

I use the modifier "functionally" here to allow for the eventual loss of apparent "immortality." These functionally immortal beings may be AI or have other origins and, as such, may not "die" or be "killed" in the senses in which we understand these concepts today. Perhaps even future members of our species will cease to be "mortals," a designation which distinguished them/us from the "immortal Gods." However, until that moment comes, both in this essay and perhaps also in life, death will remain, for all of us human persons, the ultimate injustice. The last, but also, an inescapable, injustice.

The paradox of unjust death

Claims asserting the injustice of death create a paradox. While some deaths are unjust because premature, undeserved, or unjustifiably brought about, many people perhaps (although not me)²¹ also believe that death is simply, though improbably designated, a brute and inevitable "fact of life." And, as such, it is no more "unjust" when it occurs without malevolent or criminal intent than other natural phenomena. It just "is what it is." Death, as it is a fact of life, is nonetheless almost always experienced as profoundly unjust, both by the dying, if they are aware of their approaching death, and by those who care about, or for them.

Death always comes too soon!

Death always “comes too soon” to those who value life.

As I write these words, 2,421 years have passed since the death of Socrates in 399 BCE. Those years have, just confining myself to London, seen (*inter alia*) the grief-stricken words of Macbeth, first penned by William Shakespeare, probably around 1606, and the monstrous carnage of the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020–2022 ff. An occasion of grief, unprecedented on this planet, since the Second World War.

Their literary expression ranges (among many others earlier and later) from Tragedy in 1606 to Comic Opera in 1887. Parochially, I do not have to travel far from where I live in London to witness the milestones of this movement. It is a scant mile from “Bankside” on the south bank of the river Thames where stands, and stood, Shakespeare’s Globe,²² across to what is now, “Victoria Embankment Gardens” on the north bank. Here we still find W.S. Gilbert’s words from his libretto to “The Yeoman of the Guard,” carved on the memorial to his partner Sir Arthur Sullivan, the composer of that, and of the scores of the other “Savoy Operas,” first performed close by.²³

W. S. Gilbert’s words of memorial to Sullivan are

Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall.
That Death, whene’er he call,
Must call too soon.

Death, at whatever age and from whatsoever cause, almost always calls “too soon,” both for any individual for whom life is a “boon” and for the bereaved. Inevitably, the time of death and its manner are experienced as unjust. She or he²⁴ should always have “died hereafter”!

Grief and loss

Dylan Thomas’ famous exhortation to rage against death, at whatever time of life it threatens, not only expresses the anger but the injustice, of death, *whene’er he call!*

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.²⁵

Death is the ultimate, the final, and usually the most grievous loss a human can suffer. Death is a loss for which the subject, the victim, cannot²⁶ be compensated, and it is irremediable. Of course, loss, other than loss of life, may also occasion grief and may also be unjust, undeserved, and irremediable.

Shakespeare noted that while loss can occasion grief, the cause of the grief thereby occasioned is usually lost forever, but the grief can endure indefinitely.

Shakespeare’s Richard II, talking about the Royal succession to Bolingbroke (the future King Henry IV):

BOLINGBROKE

I thought you had been willing to resign.

RICHARD My crown I am, but still my griefs are mine.

You may my glories and my state depose,
But not my griefs. Still am I king of those.²⁷

Poignant farewells

We humans have great reserves of mournfulness, which can be deployed, often over readily or over lengthily... but that does not make their expression inappropriate.

Juliet's famous "goodnight" to Romeo, though far divorced from grief, is among countless beautiful and poignant "farewells." Yet even here, still mournful, still focused on loss, however brief and sweet. Nevertheless, it is also yet both joyful and naive.

Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say goodnight till it be morrow.²⁸

Farewells, and the significance of parting on good terms, lest there be no future opportunity to make amends, to make good what, for want of amends, would be bad or ugly, remind us again of justice. Farewells signal the huge significance of statements that may be, might turn out to have been, last words.

Also, they epitomize the significance of doing and saying the right thing, the thing that truly reflects our feelings and the state of affairs between ourselves and others. And of course, perhaps sometimes even, if also "often," doing "the right thing" or speaking one's mind, even when doing so is cruel, is also irresistible!

Bob Dylan, the greatest poet writing in English today, who is also of my own times, often takes apparent delight in a cruel honesty. In "Don't think twice its alright," one of the most unloving of love songs imaginable, he definitively cuts the knot:

...Goodbye's too good a word, babe
So I'll just say fare thee well
I ain't saying you treated me unkind
You could have done better but I don't mind
You just kinda wasted my precious time
But don't think twice, it's all right.²⁹

One last lovely, and this time, thankfully, truly loving, farewell from (of course!) Shakespeare.

The beauty of his farewells reflects Shakespeare's emphasis, unsurprisingly, on the importance of our words, not just of our deeds. And the fact that what we say often determines the state of the world in which we say it, quite as much, if not more, than what we do. This exchange of farewells between friends and brothers-in-arms takes place immediately before the battle of Philippi, which neither Brutus nor Cassius long survive....

Brutus

And whether we shall meet again I know not.
Therefore, our everlasting farewell take.
Forever and forever farewell, Cassius.
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then this parting was well made.

Cassius

Forever and forever farewell, Brutus
If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;
If not, 'tis true this parting was well made.³⁰

Grief not occasioned by death

Loss, other than loss of life, should not be underestimated. Loss resulting in extreme poverty, or indeed extreme poverty without such loss, is still grievous, and not only when it is the absence of something previously present. Lost souls may wander for eternity... if only in literature. Loss may be an existential state.

But, to be “lost” is sometimes simply not to be, or never to have been “found.” Or, perhaps more profound (or, at least, possessing more “epigrammatic validity”³¹) never to have found oneself!

Loss, as well as death, is often the occasion for grief; and grievous loss is, and has always been seen, at least by the bereaved and others who suffer loss, to be an outrage to justice. Or, for example, if the death is deserved, as the fulfillment of the demands of justice.

Death a necessary, but unwelcome, end?

Julius Caesar, in Shakespeare’s play of the same name, implies that the inevitability of death at some moment in the future removes both the rationality of fearing death and wishing to prolong life as a benefit to the person whose life it is. Historically, Julius Caesar, a phenomenally successful military commander, seems qualified, if not justified, in expounding authoritatively on the subject of fear:

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.³²

To accept the necessity of death (though even death might not be an immutable state, or even a “necessary end,” as we shall see) is not necessarily to accept the timing of death. Grief is a rational response to the fact that although death is (currently)³³ inevitable to flesh and blood creatures like ourselves, “the readiness is all.” And we are, almost none of us ever “ready,” despite Caesar’s disdain in the passage above and Hamlet’s apparent (and transient!) philosophy to the contrary:

..... There’s special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, ‘tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is’t to leave betimes?³⁴

But we (and Hamlet ...perhaps?) would do, would have done, well to recall his earlier remarks on the same subject...

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,
No more...³⁵

Of course, Hamlet may, as here, contradict himself. And even the very greatest of philosophers (of whom Shakespeare is certainly one) may do likewise.³⁶ My own reading of this famous soliloquy is that the lines:

To die—to sleep,
No more

locate the real horror of death, not in the idea that it is an everlasting sleep (a rather anodyne and self-deceiving thought) but rather in the thought that sleep itself, along with everything else, has, for the dead person, been totally annihilated, totally obliterated, by death. Death is literally nothingness and ...“nothing will come of nothing.” Least of all sleep!³⁷ Either way, death is very seldom welcomed, except as preferable to terrible and irremediable suffering. Or, as in the, somewhat unusual, case of Socrates, that he has accepted death, at a time, and in a manner of his choosing rather than await a more random and less self-controllable event.

Grief and injustice

Let us, for a moment, explore further the connection between grief and injustice. Doing so will reveal the extent to which the cornerstone of all morality is the commitment to the value of life, essentially the value of the lives of persons.

This, Thomas Hobbes (while discussing the duties of a sovereign), referred to as: "the procurement of the safety of the people."

Finally, we may have to challenge both the inevitability of death and also the idea that death is not something to be feared or indeed indefinitely, if not infinitely, postponed.

The major injustice of death lies in the denial of a future, which denial always threatens and is always to most mere mortals, equally terrible, however old the individual and whatever her quality of life. Save only when the quality is such that the individual herself no longer wishes to live.

And this loss of a future is almost always undeserved, or at least is perceived as, undeserved, by the individual whose life is lost (if they know they are about to die) and by those who take a benevolent interest in them. So, far from the idea that continuing postponement of death is irrational or self-defeating, it is the very cornerstone of all morality.

The finality of death is also challenged in ways that do not undermine the rationality of the observations so far made. Let us return to the tenacity of the idea that death is unjust.

The injustice of death

Consider some common-sense reminders concerning attitudes to death:

Death involves injustice because it often results from the perceived breach of the duty to save and thus prolong life. Either of the dying subject, for example, in objections to suicide or self-murder, or by others who might have intervened to postpone the death, including in triage cases or protocols for prioritization for medical treatment or rescue.

Also, because we all (almost all?) want to live, and all have, at the point of death, experienced different and often sub-optimal length and quality of life. Even accepting the "inevitability" of death, almost no one is ever "ready" to die, and very few deserve death.

The postponement of death

I suggested a moment ago, by way of further gloss on Emily Wilson's insight that Western Philosophy begins with grief, that all philosophy begins with a passionate sense of justice.

This is (partly) because grief is experienced as injustice, either to the dying individual or to those who loved or valued them. We (almost all of us) believe that we, and those we love, should die "hereafter" and never now. Except perhaps when death is the only way of avoiding some, or all, of "the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to."³⁸ And we believe, we judge, the same of the deaths of those we love or care about: that they should, should have, died hereafter. Unless, as with the death of Socrates, it is a death that has been "chosen" by the person whose death it is and which, in Socrates' case, he, to a large extent, controls.³⁹

Emily Wilson reminds us that:

When his most emotional friend Appollodorus, wails, "But Socrates, what I find hardest to bear is that I see you dying unjustly!" Socrates replies, "Dear Apollodorus, would you rather see me put to death justly?" He reproaches those who weep for his death: "Are you only now starting to cry? Do you not realise that I have been condemned to death by Nature from the moment I was born?"⁴⁰

Does this fact that birth is always a death sentence indefinitely postponed undermine the rationality of grief and of mourning or, on the other hand, the value of life? I think not. It is to the reasons for cautious and circumscribed optimism that we must now turn.

Part II: Life

When we save a life, by whatever means, we simply postpone a death. No one knows precisely how much further the life of a person whose life has been saved might have endured or could have been enjoyed. Over nearly 40 years ago now, in my book *The Value of Life* (1985), I formulated a principle that is apposite here.

The value of life principle

All of us who wish to go on living have something that each of us values equally, although for each it is different in character, for some a much richer prize than for others, and we none of us know its' true extent. This thing is of course 'the rest of our lives'. So long as we do not know the date of our deaths then for each of us the 'rest of our lives' is of indefinite duration. Whether we are 7, 17 or 70, in perfect health or suffering from a terminal disease we each have the rest of our lives to lead. So long as we each wish to live out the rest of our lives, however long that turns out to be, then if we do not deserve to, or want to die, we each suffer the same injustice if our wishes are deliberately frustrated and we are cut off prematurely.⁴¹

The "Value of Life Principle" is a principle of equality. All people are equal and none are more equal than others.⁴² (The value of the life of each person is equal to the value of the life of any, regardless of all the "objective" differences between lives: health, wealth, happiness and degree of "goodness," wickedness, or stupidity, etc.)

It is important to be clear that the value of life is not, and cannot be, a relative or qualitative value. Although I may be able to imagine a better life for myself, a better life to have, to have lived, or to have in prospect... better quality, however, measured, more of all the things I do, or could, wish for, or whatever else... it does not follow that others, who have and enjoy more of what I would wish to have and to enjoy, have more valuable lives in what we might call the "existential" sense.

I may wish to be, wish I am, wish I had here-to-fore been, more successful, more loved, healthier, more admired, stronger, richer, cleverer... and whatsoever else. It does not follow that others, who are, and have, all the things I lack and wish to have, or to have had, or are enjoying, or ever have had, more valuable lives, than mine. The value of life is the value that the person whose life it is gives it by simply wanting to, choosing to live on, or not wanting or choosing to renounce life. By knowing that they are alive and possessing the self-consciousness that goes with such knowledge, they qualify as persons whatever they are made of and however they came to be. As John Locke wrote around 1690:

We must consider what person stands for; which I think is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and seems to me essential to it; it being impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive.⁴³

For Locke, and for me, an individual cannot be free unless she is a "person" in Locke's sense. That is someone who knows she exists and is capable, in the light of that knowledge, to want her existence to continue, or indeed not to continue. Locke's meditation, begun as above, continues:

When we see, hear, smell taste, feel, meditate or will, anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this everyone is to himself that which he calls a self ... For since consciousness always accompanies thinking and it is that that makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being...⁴⁴

This is why, in John Donne's famous words, "any man's death diminishes me." In his Devotion XVII, Donne anticipates the connection all persons, in Locke's sense of the term "person," have with one

another. Donne died the year before Locke was born, and it is doubtful he would have accepted Locke's explanation of just why it is that "any man's death diminishes me." But that "sameness, that continuation and awareness of the life of a rational being" is at the heart of Donne's insight that "any man's death diminishes me."

This is Donne's account:

Who bends not his eare to any bell which on any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world?

No man is an Iland, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the Maine; if a *Clod* be washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* of thy *friends* or of *thine owne* were: any man's *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *mankinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*.⁴⁵

The value of a life is the enduring value of a unique personal identity, and only that personal identity, that "sameness" of a rational being overtime, that unique identity of a "thinking intelligent being that has reason and refection" has such a value. Such a being, a person properly so called, alone can (and indeed has an obligation to) determine for themselves, as far as this is possible, the fate of their own self, because such beings alone know, are self-conscious of, the fact that they are a self and of what that self wants, thinks fears or needs. What makes the life of a person unique, and uniquely valuable, is that he or she, possibly, "they or it" has self-consciousness, which is also possessed by all other beings capable of valuing their own unique existence and as a result possessing the capacity to act in ways that contribute (positively or negatively) to their value and the value of others. They, and all persons, share mutual recognition and awareness.

Respecting the value of the lives of others is respecting the value that those others place upon their own lives. Respecting not the *reasons* they value their own lives (which are their own reasons and their own business [unless they voluntarily share those reasons]), but the *fact* that they do value life, however reasonable or unreasonable the special nature of that kind of self-conscious valuing appears to others.

The valuing of persons because they are persons—*sui generis* creatures with particular powers and capacities and not because of who they are, their personal identity, their lineage, however, characterized, their status, the particularity of the things they value, do, or cherish, or have done, in virtue of their nature, or because of their species membership, or lack of it, is that of which we speak.

Probably, Locke was aware of the advice Shakespeare gives, through Polonius: "*above all to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.*"⁴⁶

Polonius, of course, is not exactly in the same class as a philosopher as is Locke, ...but Shakespeare most certainly is! He is as great a philosopher as the world has so far produced...and it's a competitive field!

The safety of the people

Since life-saving is simply "death-postponing" with a positive spin, it follows that life-extending therapies are, and must always be, life-saving therapies and must share whatever priority life-saving has in our morality and in our social values, including as a reflection of the value of life. More of which anon.

I hope it is clear that I reject any conception of the value of life that equates "value" with "duration." So long as the life is of acceptable quality (acceptable, that is, to the person whose life it is, and acceptable given the likely alternatives),⁴⁷ we all have a powerful, many would claim an overriding, moral imperative, to save life, because to fail to do so when we reasonably can, would make us responsible for the resulting death.⁴⁸

All contemporary nation-states do, as a matter of fact and, usually also as a clearly expressed⁴⁹ principle, accept responsibility for the safety of "the people," their people. Who precisely "their people"

actually are, is often a matter of controversy. For example: are “the people” (for the purposes of understanding the responsibilities of nation states to and for “their people”) constituted by all the people at any time within their borders, or only all citizens, whether within the national borders or not, or all residents, or all those who are legally (rightfully?) resident within the borders... and so, almost, in case of need, *ad infinitum*.

My own view (for which I have no space to argue here) is that such state responsibility for the “safety of the people” extends at least to all persons within a national jurisdiction and for all citizens of that nation wherever they are. Pending agreement, or even clarity, on such issues as these, all decent persons, organizations, or governments, would and should “rescue” first and ask questions, if at all, later.

The philosopher who puts the “safety of the people” most firmly and clearly at the center of everything is Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury.⁵⁰ Hobbes spent 11 years in Paris from around 1640, some of which he spent as tutor to the exiled Charles, Prince of Wales, who had made his court in Paris. It was during these years that Hobbes wrote his masterpiece, *The Leviathan*.⁵¹

Chapter 30 of Part II of *The Leviathan*⁵² opens with a wonderful statement of the social contract by which, we, the people, entrust the office of the sovereign (a monarch or an assembly) with sovereign power. The printed marginal note or “signpost” to this passage in *The Leviathan*⁵³ is “*The procuration of the good of the people*” and it is clear from the extract from the opening of Chapter 30 that Hobbes understands “the safety of the people” in terms of a broad conception of “the good of the people”:

The office of the sovereign, be it a monarch or an assembly, consisteth in the end for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration of the safety of the people; to which he is obliged by the law of nature, ... But by safety here, is not meant a bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger, or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself.

And this is intended should be done, not by care applied to individuals, further than their protection from injuries, when they shall complain; but by a general providence, contained in public instruction, both of doctrine and example; an in the making and executing of good laws, to which individual persons may apply their own cases.

Later in the same chapter, Hobbes makes clear that:

The safety of the people requireth further from him, or them that hath the sovereign power, that justice be equally administered to all degrees of people; that is, that as well the rich and mighty, as poor and obscure persons, may be righted of the injuries done them.⁵⁴

He also allows that people who are the victims of accidental hardship or danger be provided for by the state:

And whereas many men, by accident inevitable, become unable to maintain themselves by their labour; they ought not to be left to the charity of private persons; but to be provided for, as far forth as the necessities of nature require, by the laws of the commonwealth.⁵⁵

Perhaps the clearest contemporary manifestation of this obligation of state responsibility for the protection of the people and responsibility for the good of the people is in provision of the principal emergency services, fire, police, ambulance, other health care or human welfare agencies, and defense forces or agencies. All these are directly concerned with the safety of the people. These entities are the responsibility of who or whatever it is that constitutes the state, and if they were not maintained by some means or other, the state would be abdicating its responsibilities. Health care, for example, and other “death postponement” strategies are also clear examples. By extension, education at all levels is also a service, required *inter alia* to secure the safety, and of course, the good of the people.

Equality

Hobbes' emphasis on the procurement of the safety of the people is, of course, a way of protecting them from the injustice of premature grief, suffering, and death, so far as such protection is possible. It is also a fundamental dimension of the principle of equality.

It is scarcely imaginable that any state would not seek to provide rescue, and the safety that rescue affords, for all people within its borders and all its citizens wheresoever they may be. Indeed, it would be difficult to see how it could function as a unified state if it did not. So that, for example, when a state institutes vaccination programs against infectious diseases, or, as recently, against a murderous global pandemic, or when it provides safe drinking water, when it makes laws about speed limits on roads, or wearing of seatbelts in cars, or when it licenses firearms, or slaughters infected cattle, when it mobilizes national resources to fight forest fires, or to build flood defenses, when it evacuates towns in the path of a hurricane, or when a *post mortem* examination is ordered by the coroner or the courts to explain a mysterious death, responsibility for the safety of the people and their equality *inter pares* is recognized, acknowledged, and asserted!

The principle of equality is best understood as the requirement that to each person is shown the same concern and respect as is shown to any. To this formulation must surely be added the idea of "protection," as a dimension of concern and respect. For what would concern and respect amount to if it did not manifest itself in the form of protection, particularly of the life and liberty of all. This is, I believe, clearly implicit in Ronald Dworkin's formulation of equality and in his further articulation and explanations of it.⁵⁶

There is only one thing wrong with dying!

The concept of the value of life, sometimes seems to invite even more complex questions, for example, the questions: "what's so great about life?" and perhaps "are some lives simply not worth saving or living?" It is important to emphasize once more, that *the value of life*, as I use the term, has nothing to do with the "fitness to live," or the relative worth or "worthiness" of the life of the individual concerned.

A rational person would surely accept that there is only one thing wrong with dying, and that is doing it when you do not want to.⁵⁷ I venture to suggest that if there was a sort of "Devil's Bargain" (or Godly bargain?) on offer such that those who took the bargain would only die when they wanted to and never when they did not want to, few sane persons would reject such a bargain. It seems probable, that there is nothing wrong with dying when you do want to!⁵⁸

Respect for persons requires us to acknowledge the dignity and value of other persons, and to treat them as ends in themselves and not merely instrumentally, as means to ends, or to objectives chosen by others. This means respecting their autonomy.

Nothing is more quintessentially self-regarding as is choosing, as far as is possible, the moment and manner of one's own death. And nothing that we, any of us, have ever done, or can do, is so obviously self-regarding, only our own business and affair, however, much others may express an interest. Of course, "every man's death diminishes me," but John Donne, the author of these words, had principally in mind unwanted deaths. The deaths of those who voluntarily choose to die, however, neither diminish the agent nor those for whom they care or who care for them, although the death may be profoundly upsetting, particularly to family and friends, or indeed, as we have noted, to enemies.

Autonomy is the ability to choose; and the freedom to choose between, competing conceptions of the good, of how to live. It is only by the exercise of autonomy that our lives become, in any real sense, our own. We are shaped by the decisions we make, and without the freedom to choose what we do and how we live, the possession of any significant personal identity at all is threatened. If we cannot, or do not want to, choose our path through life, in as far as it is within our control, including its destination and the nature and manner of our life's end, we are certainly not living autonomously, although we may retain the ability to regain autonomy.

The ending of our lives often determines life's final shape and meaning, both for ourselves and in the eyes of others. When we are denied control of the end of our lives, we are denied the capacity to give our lives their ultimate meaning so far as it is possible so to do.

As Ronald Dworkin memorably put it⁵⁹:

Making someone die in a way that others approve, but he believes a horrifying contradiction of his life, is a devastating, odious form of tyranny.

Dying as liberation

It is difficult to improve upon the words that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Cassius on the subject of suicide or, indeed, voluntary euthanasia. Cassius, of course, was a noble Roman, a Roman citizen, and he is here discussing what will happen if Julius Caesar makes himself a king and overthrows the Roman Republic:

CASSIUS. I know where I will wear this dagger.

then;

Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:

Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most.

Strong;

Therein ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:

Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,

Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,

Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;

But life, being weary of those worldly bars,

Never lacks power to dismiss itself.

If I know this, know all the world besides,

That part of tyranny that I do bear.

I can shake off at pleasure.⁶⁰

I make no distinction here between the ethics of suicide, assisted suicide, nor of voluntary euthanasia. In each case, the agent is the individual who chooses to die when she might have postponed death. Whether the tool is a sword, self-administered or held by a friend while the subject rushes onto it (Cassius) or the hemlock administered by Socrates' executioner.

Socrates case is, to be sure, more complex. He chose his death "tis true,"⁶¹ but the choice was not entirely voluntary. He would have chosen, had the choice been open, to be, to have been, given, the opportunity to defend himself as to the capital charge he had faced⁶² and to have been permitted to make that defense to an impartial jury of his peers.

The ability to choose (in so far as choice is possible) the time and manner of our own death can be both comforting and liberating. But this, of course, does not mean that in such cases, death itself is necessarily either welcome or autonomous.

To be "forced" to choose death when faced with worse alternatives may, in the circumstances, be an exercise of autonomy, but that does not make such choice "autonomous." This is why the death of Socrates is so anomalous and so poignant. He could have escaped death by Hemlock if he had taken numerous opportunities to flee Athens to sanctuary elsewhere. He decided to stay, partly because he respected the laws of Athens, which had condemned him (Crito 51. c.),⁶³ however, unjustly they had been enforced in his case. Partly also, so it seems, because his unjust condemnation to death provided him with an opportunity to die with dignity, among friends and in a painless manner, an opportunity he clearly judged worth taking, also because of the uncertainty of the manner of any future death that might overtake him.

As Emily Wilson explains:

Socrates was, we are told, delighted that he had the opportunity to die by hemlock. According to Xenophon he cited at least three advantages to dying this way. "If I am condemned," said Socrates, "it is clear that I will get the chance to enjoy the death that has been judged the easiest or least painful, (by those whose job it is to consider these things); the death which causes the least trouble to one's family and friends; and the death which makes people feel most grief for the deceased." Socrates avoided all of the indignity associated with death. He dies at the peak of his powers. His friends did not have to see him convulsed or racked by agonising pain. They did not have to empty bedpans, mop up vomit or nurse a senile old man. He left only good memories behind him.⁶⁴

If death is ultimately inevitable, then it can make sense, if the opportunity arises, to anticipate a death of unknown manner, time, and place with a more planned and expectedly comfortable event. An event of which the individual whose death it will be, remains in control, as far as is possible, of the details and circumstances, bearing in mind that most deaths (perhaps alas) afford no possibility, no room, for input from the dying individual.

If death is inevitable, then loss and grief at the loss, including loss of life, will hopefully, at least continue to make philosophy part of our world,⁶⁵ which may be cold comfort (except perhaps to rather mean-spirited philosophers).

But death may not be inevitable. No one dies of old age; rather, they, we, perhaps if we are lucky, die of the diseases of old age. Grant that, and it may be possible, eventually, to cure or prevent all or most of the diseases of old age. If that proves possible, maybe, many of us, perhaps eventually, most of us, need not die.⁶⁶

Is death really inevitable?

I have thought, spoken, and written about the various possible ways of "engineering" extreme longevity, and even of what I have called "functional immortality,"⁶⁷ into the human organism on many occasions over the last 30 or so years.⁶⁸ Here, I will not rehearse my reservations about the cogency of any ethical, or indeed allegedly prudential, arguments against the creation of dramatic increases in life expectancy, even if those measures are sufficiently dramatic to amount to the creation of people we might term as "functionally immortal." Such functionally immortal individuals would not likely be totally invulnerable; they would not be *indestructible*. They could kill themselves or be killed by others or be destroyed by natural disasters: earthquake, famine, fire, flood, pestilence... All the usual suspects including the destruction of memory, whether embodied or stored in memory banks. Extreme longevity, even functional immortality, might not be able to cope with such things or cope with them in the time available or with the resources to hand.

Shakespeare's Cassius thought that *Cassius from bondage will* (always be able to) *deliver Cassius*, and his enemies, minded or mindless, also have or had that power.

To answer our question: death is not, I believe, *necessarily* inevitable, at least in the longer term, but even if death becomes avoidable, it may, and in many circumstances will, remain inescapable, and perhaps often, even desirable. Even the "immortal Gods," at least those with whom we are reasonably familiar through mythic history and religion, had, most of them, their weaknesses and vulnerabilities, their "Achilles heel."

Suffice it to say here that while some people dislike the idea of more than normal lifetimes in which to "enjoy" the "time of their lives," and would some of them apparently be sanguine about deliberately ending the lives of those who looked as if they could achieve it, others, myself, and my friend Jonathan Glover included, would be happy to have the chance of sampling a dramatically long life by contemporary standards.

In his wonderful book, *Causing Death and Saving Lives*,⁶⁹ Glover remarks:

Given the company of the right people, I would be glad of the chance to sample a few million years and see how it went.

And I wholeheartedly agree with Glover about this!

Death may not, however, be the “fact of life” it is taken to be.⁷⁰ And with the advent of so-called artificial intelligence (AI), we organic persons should think more in terms of the “existence” of individuals, than of the “lives” of people. This is necessary because “existence” does not beg the question as to the kind the nature of the existence under consideration.⁷¹ Machine persons with real intelligence, intelligence which is by no means “artificial,” possibly unlike their creation, may not be “alive” as the term is generally understood. There may therefore be persons properly so-called, who cannot “die,” but are none the less self-conscious individuals with reason and the capacity for reflection.

When, and if, AI persons (manufactured machine persons, or possibly organically grown, but not conceived, persons) emerge, they may also be “functionally immortal,” in the sense that even when “switched off” they may at any time in principle be switched on again (or even switch themselves on again).

This they might train or engineer themselves to do, just as some humans can (apparently) wake themselves up from sleep at a time of their own choosing. For both machine persons and human persons, returning to “wakefulness” may make their unconscious periods more like a dreamless sleep or possibly the “dream laden” sleep imagined by Hamlet. And, in the case of androids, maybe they could induce sleep by counting electric sheep (with apologies to Philip K Dick: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and its subsequent identity as the film “*Blade Runner*”).⁷²

And, when, and if, artificially intelligent machines become intelligent enough not only to avoid obstacles in their road (which even vacuum cleaners, grass-mowers or mice can do) but also achieve not simply mere consciousness but self-consciousness, then they will also have become “persons” properly so-called. Not human persons, not flesh and blood persons maybe, but persons nonetheless,⁷³ persons in John Locke’s sense, persons, beings, like you and me in that they are self-consciousness and intelligent,⁷⁴ whatever their species, provenance, and form, and however they come to be.

Persons, of whatever kind, will also, clearly, be language users,⁷⁵ language users because thought and self-consciousness, require a medium, perhaps the capacity for an “internal soliloquy.” Thoughts do not just float about looking for a place to land. Language is the medium in which thoughts form and which indeed form the thoughts and their thinkers. Thought may take the form of images or moving pictures with narrative power, but still, this is a form of language.

In principle, if not, thus far, in fact, memories can be stored, their personality traits digitized, their physical presences, their “bodies,” re-built or re-grown. We may not have grounds to grieve for them because they may never have been “alive” in the biological sense. Any post “life” or other forms of existence, will only be postponed, possibly infinitely, but also, possibly, never annihilated.

PART III: Death

What is love? ‘tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What’s to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty,
Then come kiss me, Sweet-and-twenty,
Youth’s a stuff will not endure.⁷⁶

In Shakespeare’s play *Twelfth Night*, the clown sings of love, not of life, and insists that love is to sex what mirth is to laughter. Just as mirth has an appropriate expression in laughter, so human love, or perhaps more accurately, in this case, young love, has its appropriate expression in sexual love. But if life, and in particular conscious life, were to become, not uniquely, a product of biology, what significance would be lost?

Is "life" a matter of biology? What will be lost if it is not or ceases so to be?

Stephen Hawking, in a wonderfully lucid and prescient book⁷⁷ expands on what such possibilities might mean:

We can define life as an ordered system that can keep itself going against the tendency to disorder and can reproduce itself...A living being like you or me usually has two elements: a set of instructions that tell the system how to keep going and how to reproduce itself, and a mechanism to carry out the instructions. In biology these two parts are called genes and metabolism. But it is worth emphasising that there need be nothing biological about them. For example, a computer virus is a program that will make copies of itself in the memory of a computer, and will transfer itself to other computers. Thus, it fits the definition of a living system that I have given. Like a biological virus, it is a rather degenerate form, because it contains only instructions or genes, and doesn't have any metabolism of its own. Instead, it reprograms the metabolism of the host computer or cell.⁷⁸

In developing this point, Hawking makes a crucial analogy between DNA and language:

...with the human race evolution reached a critical stage, comparable in importance with the development of DNA. This was the development of language and particularly written language. It meant that information could be passed on from generation to generation, other than genetically through DNA...

It has taken us several million years to evolve from less advanced earlier apes. During that time the information contained in our DNA has probably changed by only a few million bits, so the rate of biological evolution in humans is about a bit a year. By contrast there are about 50,000 new books published in the English language each year containing of the order of a hundred million bits of information. Of course, the great majority of this information is garbage and no use to any form of life. But even so, the rate at which useful information can be added is millions, if not billions higher than with DNA.⁷⁹

Hawking concludes:

[I]n the last 10,000 years or so we have been in what might be called an external transmission phase (of evolution)... In this [phase] the internal record of information, handed down to succeeding generations in DNA has changed somewhat. But the external record – in books and other forms of long-lasting storage- has grown enormously...

What distinguishes us from (our cavemen ancestors) is the knowledge we have accumulated over the last 10,000 years, and particularly over the last 300. I think it is legitimate... to... include externally transmitted information as well as DNA in the evolution of the human race.⁸⁰

"Self-designed evolution" or "human enhancement"

Talking of how "intelligent life" might respond to the dangers facing humanity in the future, Hawking warns that:

"There is no time to wait for Darwinian evolution to make us more intelligent and better natured" and that, "we are now entering a new phase of what might be called self-designed evolution."⁸¹

Hawking's phrase "self-designed evolution" perfectly fits the agenda of contemporary philosophical ethics with which I associate myself that has come to be classified in terms of "human enhancement": the responsibility we, self-conscious beings, have and accept for what we might term: "the state of the world," and for the state of humanity. In particular, responsibility for failure to intervene where we reasonably can, to make the world a better place and people better people; in short, to self-design evolution, and indeed the world.

This obligation I set out in the first few pages of my doctoral dissertation in Oxford, presented, rather belatedly, in 1976, and which became my first book, *Violence and Responsibility*, published in 1980⁸² and in more detail in my book *Enhancing Evolution* in 2007.⁸³ However, human enhancement or self-designed evolution is, to say the least, “tricky”! Again, as Hawking notes:

If the human race manages to redesign itself, to reduce or eliminate the risk of self-destruction it will probably spread out and colonise other planets and stars. However long-distance space travel will be difficult for chemically based life forms – like us – based on DNA. The Natural lifetime for such beings is short compared with the travel time...

It might be possible to use genetic engineering to make DNA-based life survive indefinitely... But an easier way, which is almost within our capabilities already, would be to send machines. These could be designed to last long enough for interstellar travel. When they arrived at a new star, they could land on a suitable planet and mine material to produce more machines, which could be sent on to yet more stars. These machines would be a new form of life, based on mechanical and electronical components rather than macromolecules. They could eventually replace DNA-based life, just as DNA may have replaced an earlier form of life.⁸⁴

New life forms and new species of persons

The value of the lives of persons is, in principle, unrelated to the extent of those lives. And equally so, to the “stuff” of which these persons are made, or the species of which they/we are members or into which we are or may be conveniently classified or, more doubtfully, “welcomed”?

The value of a person’s life stems from its nature, rooted in the capacities identified by Locke. Personhood is not necessarily species-specific, nor need it be confined to organic creatures, whether of mother born or from her womb “untimely ripped”; whether begotten or created, by woman or beast, by Gods or by other machines.

Also, in principle, persons can be animals, vegetables, minerals, fish, or fowl, and they only gain or lose their personhood by the gain or permanent loss of the capacities identified by John Locke, capacities which happen to be species typical of humans, but not necessarily unique to humans, nor of course be necessarily possessed by all humans or at all stages of their lives.

The advent, when it comes, of artificially intelligent beings capable of self-consciousness and self-replication is, or will be, a game changer.⁸⁵ So long as their programs and memory are contained in a chip or have been stored in “the cloud” or “a cloud,” they will never be dead, *they will never have ceased to be*, and their being may be suspended, but not necessarily extinguished.

AI may then create a sort of “race,” or perhaps a “clade,” of non-mortal and non-human persons, persons whose being is not necessarily biological. We are familiar with precedents for this possibility, if not all of us, intimately thus familiar.

The immortal Gods “peopled” (in some sense of that term) the ancient and the classical worlds. Monotheistic religions, even today, contribute significantly to the number of, allegedly immortal, Gods, because they all have Gods of their own. Some, like Christianity, have “three in one” Gods, a “Trinity” that defies arithmetic, let alone logic.

Gods are often not nearly as God-like as their creators!

For example, some of the authors of the many “scriptures” (literally the “writings,” scribblings, or “books”) in which they star would have us believe that God/s created people in his, her, or their own image.⁸⁶ A more plausible story is that we humans created Gods in our own image, or at least in the images available to our imaginings.⁸⁷ An immortal AI might well, from a human perspective, have god-like qualities or what would appear to mere mortals to be God-like. Such immortal, hyper-intelligent beings might, of course, create their own “scribblings,” further “immortalizing” their own God-like creation and creations.

This raises a significant question about the gravity of grief. Suppose there's seldom a reason to grieve for an AI, because it is functionally immortal (although, possibly, not indestructible) and philosophy "descends" from grief, will this will/might also presage the death of philosophy?⁸⁸

Another, possibly more significant, question for those who value, or are even interested in, philosophy would be: will or could androids or other immortals have a taste, or even a use, for philosophy? Apologies to that most philosophical android—Marvin, hero of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, a five-part trilogy. Marvin was certainly capable of philosophy and other human-like weaknesses. (Another trilogy that defies arithmetic.)⁸⁹

The paradox of fiction

Harold Bloom, a leading Shakespeare scholar, notes that:

Setting mere morality aside, Falstaff and Hamlet palpably are superior to everyone else whom we and they encounter in their plays. This superiority is cognitive, linguistic and imaginative, but most vitally it is a matter of personality. Falstaff and Hamlet are the greatest of charismatics: they embody the Blessing, in its prime Yahwistic sense of "more life into a time without boundaries."...Heroic vitalists are not larger than life, they are life's largeness...⁹⁰

Could Hawking's living machines also persuade us of their Bloom-like heroic vitalism? Would it matter, and indeed, what would be lost, if they could not?

As a philosopher, I cannot, of course, endorse the consigning of "morality" to the realm of the "mere," as Bloom airily suggests. Nor do I accept Bloom's idea that Shakespeare was responsible for "the invention of the human." Bloom's main purpose in this passage (and elsewhere) is to highlight Falstaff's and Hamlet's cognitive, linguistic and imaginative vitality, their sheer "life force." None of which was Shakespeare's invention since these characteristics of humans were familiar to, and appreciated by, Shakespeare and his audiences, not just as real types but also as real people did millennia before Shakespeare wrote his plays.

Hence the popularity of Falstaff and the philosophy of Hamlet. To be sure, Shakespeare had to "build" these characteristics into "real fictitious persons": persons and characters who would be both products of his imagination and recognizably "true" and "real" as one (or more) of us, (if exceptional "ones of us") to his audiences.

This is the (not as famous as it should be) "paradox of fiction,"⁹¹ which was probably first identified by Shakespeare as the fact that we can both recognize, appreciate, and be moved by, emotionally sympathetic to, the fate of "people" we know full well do not and never did, or will, exist "in real life." Or by events that have not happened or by emotions that have not been felt by the fictional characters who "felt" them. Hamlet famously coined this paradox but (wisely) did not name it:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his own conceit. And all for nothing!
For Hecuba
What's Hecuba to him or he to her,
That he should weep for her?....⁹²

But how is it possible to be moved by the fate of Hecuba "the woman who never was" and by "people who never were," or by events that never occurred? In short, by entities that have no fate at all. Such, perhaps, as an AI which/who will/be functionally immortal?⁹³

My own view of this apparent paradox remains: that we (current humans) respond to what we “witness,” either before our very eyes and ears, or in report, visual, audible, or otherwise receivable.

Probably, evolution has taught us to, or caused us to, react first and ask questions later, just in case what we witness is dangerous and we need to take immediate action. Paradoxically, though we know, or when we know, that the harrowing event never occurred or the person who apparently suffered the event never existed, our reaction remains and even recurs. *We react not simply to the real, but to the apparent!* And once engaged, our emotions remain, although hopefully they do not prompt us to dive into or remain in shark-infested waters, either real or imaginary.

But we have learned to practice appropriate reactions to what we “witness” or believe we witness. It is part of how we learn. We have to learn “this is” a chair before we can learn that this is only “probably or possibly” a chair.

As Wittgenstein remarked:

A person can doubt only if he has learnt certain things; as he can miscalculate only if he has learnt to calculate.⁹⁴

Our ability to be moved by the fate of fictional characters, the paradox of fiction, is probably “hard-wired” by evolution so that our first thought is “danger” and only our second thought, possibly our educated thought, is—“maybe not” or “its ok!”

“Art’s tribute to nature”?

Could or would non-human persons, manufactured persons, self-manufactured, possibly like humans, but in their case, created, not begotten. Could such beings in some way exhibit what, in Bloom’s words, might constitute “art’s tribute to nature”?

Is the nature of humanity capable of being the subject of “invention” or manufacture, not just of birth or evolution?

This, while, hopefully, only slightly “over the top,” invites the question: If the basic category of morally significant beings is not *human beings* but *persons* in John Locke’s sense of that term: self-conscious beings with reason and reflection... what should we think of, and how should we value, non-human persons?⁹⁵

Certainly, philosophy will be kept alive by grief and the sense of injustice that grief occasions. Even immortals, since they are not necessarily invulnerable, may continue to ponder whether “to be or not to be?” and continue to suffer “loss” and other grievous experiences.

But is the capacity for such suffering *required* for philosophy? Was it required in order to pose Hamlet’s question, “To be or not to be?” Or Falstaff’s very philosophical dissertation upon honor, which takes place on the eve of the battle of Shrewsbury and in which Falstaff, an inveterate “vitalist,” prioritizes life above all:

If all western philosophy begins with grief, maybe it need not end with the end of grief, if such a thing is possible.

FALSTAFF

I would ‘twere bed-time, Hal, and all well.

PRINCE HENRY

Why, thou owest God a death.

Exit PRINCE HENRY

FALSTAFF

‘Tis not due yet; I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, ‘tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I

come on? how then? Can honour set to a leg? no: or
 an arm? no: or take away the grief of a wound? no.
 Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? no. What is
 honour? a word. What is in that word honour? What
 is that honour? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it?
 He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth
 he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible, then. Yea, to the dead.
 But will it not live with the living? No. Why?
 Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it.
 Honour is a mere scutcheon: and so ends my catechism.⁹⁶

Indeed, one might go further and suggest that all philosophy..., so far... has concerned itself in some way with the meaning, nature and value of life. And as Homer so eloquently suggested, much of the life of persons, and often its crucial moments, takes place far from comfort and from love—"far from hot baths."

The distance to hot baths

The advent, if and when it arrives, of non-mortal persons who/which, because they are not organic, are not "alive" (as we have so far understood the term)⁹⁷ as are the creatures we currently think of as "living beings," will be challenging, to say the least. It will require that we and they re-think "the value of life"⁹⁸ and perhaps use the term "the value of existence" in ways different to those to which we have accustomed ourselves!

Such future "persons" may have indefinite and even episodic existence and may not need or experience grief, at least as we currently understand the term. They may never, perhaps for good prudential reasons or for reasons of their constitution as "machines" of sorts, partake of hot baths. But for them, and for us mortal persons, the value and the nature of beings is the core of all philosophy, and the only beings, so far as we know capable of philosophy, are persons. A person, in John Locke's famous words, is ... a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places, which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it."⁹⁹

Thinking intelligent non-mortal beings of the kind that AI may one day (a day that may already be in the past) produce or become, may well also be or become pre-occupied with their own value and nature—how could they not? We may hope that they have more open and philosophical natures than most of our particular species and are willing to include us in "the commonwealth" and in "the moral community," as I hope we will be ready and willing to include them. For them, and also for us, doing so is likely to be a matter of survival.

A cautionary consideration here is that some animals and mammals, such as great apes, dolphins, and the octopus, may already be persons in the above senses but have not met a wholehearted welcome into the moral community of humans. A crucial aspect of this possible anomaly is the (apparent) absence in such creatures of a translatable language in which to express their personhood, or perhaps a human deficit in the ability to understand adequately their modes of communication and ways of life.

It maybe that non-mortal AI persons, when they appear, will have, or acquire, the belief that we humans are sufficiently alien and sufficiently inadequately endowed in whatever dimensions they judge to be constitutive of personhood or its AI equivalent for we humans to be regarded as beings of lesser moral status and significance to themselves. Perhaps in the way that we (most of us) think of the octopus. If this happens, the AI persons will have better knowledge of our values and nature than we have of theirs. It will be a brave human who will bet on their behaving better towards us than we have behaved to other sentient and intelligent beings. In this eventuality, we may well find ourselves seeing the truth of the words of Giuseppe de Lampedusa's famous observation:

Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi (If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change).¹⁰⁰

Without such a change, which will doubtless require considerable thought and preparation, there will be much unnecessary grief and much more need of philosophy. Admittedly, it may be interesting but problematic that philosophy begins with grief, it continues, as thought continues, with the evolution and quest for knowledge and understanding of “life, the universe and everything” by persons, however, constituted begotten or created. Such creatures may be common in the universe, or they may be peculiar to the planet earth. However, that may be, such “thinking intelligent beings, that have reason and reflection, and can consider themselves the same thinking things, in different times and places” are all we have to protect life and the living environment in what may be, for all we know for sure, the only habitable location in the universe.

And if and when we create different varieties of such beings or they re-create themselves, we must hope they, and we, manage to exist together in ways that minimize the grief and maximize the qualities for which Plato so admired Socrates; and which also animate science. These include, of course, the attempt to understand and explain as much of what is, and what happens, as possible. And to make all “persons” in Locke’s sense, as good and as creative as they can be. In short, to make the world a better place and people better people. Or as we perhaps should learn to say: the universe a better place and its persons better persons.

Part IV: The hereafter

But what would or must persons be like to give and receive mutual concern, respect, and protection?

Some years ago, in collaboration with my former students and present friends and colleagues David R. Lawrence and César Palacios-González, I proposed, following Shakespeare, “The Shylock Syndrome” as a useful compendium of the principle morally relevant features of human nature which all humans share. And we discussed the centrality of these elements to the development of human moral awareness.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare sets out a wonderfully suggestive, I would like to say, “argument,” but it is really a series of challenges of a sort which Wittgenstein dubbed “assembling reminders for a purpose,”¹⁰¹ which, in the particular case, undermine any morally relevant difference between Jews and Gentiles and which ground the appeal for equality in features of our shared “nature,” our evolved physical and mental nature—the life of the body and the life of the mind?

Referring to Antonio, a Venetian merchant and a Christian who has:

disgrac’d me and hindered me half a million, laugh’d at my losses. mock’d at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends and heated my enemies.

Shylock asks of Salerio:

and what’s his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?
hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with
the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed
by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same
winter and summer, as a Christian is? - If you prick us,
do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh?
if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall
we not revenge? - If we are like you in the rest, we will
resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what
is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew,
what should his sufferance be by Christian example?
why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute,
and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.¹⁰²

This list of flesh and blood human features, records miscellaneous frailties, strengths and much in between. Crucially, both for Shakespeare's plot and for mine, two moral concepts, the concepts of justice and equality, take center stage. Justice takes the form of compensation or "justice" for wrongs perpetrated: "and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge," and equality is glossed in terms of species typical characteristics: needs, pleasures, and pains. This appeal to our common humanity, our shared human nature, is powerful, not least, because it apparently applies to all.

But how will the non "flesh and blood" alternatives to human persons make their appeal for "equal treatment" and for "treatment as an equal" to one another and to us? And, how will we humans respond? How ought we, morally speaking, to respond?

More crucially for us humans, how will Metal Mary and Silicon Sam respond to us? We may hope for a compassionate "hearing," for our future as a species, and indeed as individuals, may depend on it. But what will compassion mean to machine persons? We may need to argue for our future, and hope that our arguments touch a nerve, or its non-human or (hopefully) not inhuman, equivalent.

The Shylock Syndrome, which puts flesh on the bones of argument, like so many of our verbal tools, idioms, and metaphors, is grounded in our nature. Can we escape our nature, can machines escape theirs ... even as they begin to try their nature on for size?

Can either of us understand the other sufficiently well to know the answer? We simply do not know ... yet. And yet, we may, may we not, speculate...?

One avenue of speculation is provided by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *The Philosophical Investigations*. With a typically arrogant, if metaphorical, shrug, Wittgenstein, as perhaps many of us would do in the circumstances, eschews evidence and even judgment when it comes to everyday encounters with the prosaic and acts automatically when nothing signals more (or less) is required...

My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul. (PI, p. 178)¹⁰³

But for this stratagem to work, there must be, as there normally are in conditions of normality, no alarming circumstances, no reasons to think the protagonist is soulless...or worse! Mayhap, the "opinions" are the prerogative of the "opinionated," in which case the outlook is not exactly "rosy."

Wittgenstein was perhaps thinking of the sorts of creatures he might bump into while strolling across Great Court, Trinity, in Cambridge, rather than those from whom messages have been received today, that have been beamed across vast intergalactic distances, or conversations human astronauts might attempt with those they might meet, having themselves crossed vast distances in time or space.

"Souls" are rather thin on the ground these days despite our familiarity with their appearance in SOS messages (short for "Save Our Souls") and in Christian churches. or in idioms such as "she's a bit soulless." Wittgenstein it seems to me is best understood as using the term "soul" simply to mean "self-conscious creature."

The issue is, of course, that of our obligations to other self-conscious creatures and of theirs to us. In short, this is the question as to what we owe to other persons, other people properly so called, and of what they owe to us? But crucially they and we owe it because it best serves our own interests also and the interests of all. Equality entails consistency. All persons are equal and none are more equal than others! We have come full circle!

Why should I "be good" and respect the value of others; that is, respect their rights and interests, why should you? Because self-interest, and the interests of all others who have interests depend upon it. It does not require benevolence, merely rationality, simply the use of the mind and minimal self-interest.

We humans are social beings, we depend on one another, and mostly, both enjoy and feel the benefit of friendly and often, hopefully, also loving, encounters, and relationships.

Finally, perhaps most controversially, in circumstances where literally all relevant interests cannot be served and/or all relevant lives cannot be saved, we should choose the strategy that respects the value of each life equally regardless of estimates of the quality of that life and the number of life years (unelapsed time), the lives of those others life may be expected to last post-treatment or rescue.

In short, lives of shorter expected duration after rescue or treatment should not count for less than those of any others even others of expected longer duration!

To value, and even to respect, the lives of others is to respect their values and priorities, so long as those values and priorities are compatible with a like, a commensurate valuation of others. Our lives are ours to live as we please and do what we want, with the sole proviso that this is compatible with a like liberty for all.

Oscar Wilde memorably expressed this thought as “selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking other people to live as one wishes to live.”¹⁰⁴

It is the lives of individuals that matter, not the expected life years they may hope to enjoy post-rescue.

The machine persons will study Shakespeare if they have any sense, which they will certainly have or rapidly acquire!

Notes

1. This essay revives and extends themes which have peopled my thoughts for the greater part of my life.
2. Following John Locke, John Locke. *An Essay Concerning 'Human Understanding'*. A.S Pringle-Pattison AS, Eded. The Clarendon Press, Oxford: The Clarendon Press,; 1964: Book II., Ch. 27. Locke formulated this definition in the middle of the Seventeenth century.
3. For a fascinating recent account of what this means see: Nurse P. *What is Life?* Oxford: David Fickling Books; 2021.
4. See Harris J. *How to be Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2016.
5. I wish to thank my dear friends: David Lawrence Tomi Kushner, Bill Dodd, Giulia Cavaliere, John Coggon, Simona Giordano and Richard Mawrey for helpful and acute comments and suggestions throughout. I also wish to take this opportunity of issuing a ‘health’ warning to readers. This essay contains what some may find to be an excess of literary quotations, many of them from Shakespeare. This is partly because I also wish to emphasize the ubiquity of the ideas and concerns here discussed and to evidence the fact that they have been of prominence and importance for many centuries, to the extent, for example, that they would have been familiar to Shakespeare’s audience as well as to Homer’s. They are by no means original to me. Partly also to do some justice to Shakespeare’s immense contribution as a philosopher, psychologist and also as an historian of ideas, as well as his pre-eminence as a poet and playwright.
6. Wilson E. *The Death of Socrates*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2007:99.
7. See note 6, Wilson 2007.
8. See, for example: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pre-Socratics> (last accessed 21 January 2024)
9. I am tentatively conservative about the current multiplicity of genders, but not of the multiplicity of sexual orientation nor, of self-description.
10. Weil S. The Iliad, a poem of force. In: Meyer P, ed. *The Pacifist Conscience*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd; 1966.
11. Weil S. The Iliad, a poem of force. In: Meyer P, ed. *The Pacifist Conscience*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd; 1966:293. See note 10, Weil 1966: p293.
12. First committed to writing about 550 BCE, during the Babylonian Exile. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Books-of-Samuel> (last accessed 21 January 2024).
13. See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absalom> (last accessed 21 January 2024).
14. Shakespeare W. Macbeth. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Edinburgh: Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998: 5.5, at 795.
15. See note 14, Shakespeare 1998, at 4.3, 792.
16. See note 14, line 224.
17. See note 14, line 226.
18. See Harris J. *Violence and Responsibility*. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1980.
19. See note 14, lines 214–5.
20. By the concept of “functional immortality” I mean to suggest an existence long enough to appear to amount to immortality whether or not it ultimately ends in one way or another.
21. I do not believe death is inevitable, not because of any nonsense about an afterlife, but because of ambiguities about the meaning of extinction, more of which anon. And apologies to William Wordsworth; <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45536/ode-intimations-of-immortality>

from-recollections-of-early-childhood (last accessed 21 January 2024). See: Harris J. Intimations of immortality. *Science* 2000;288(5463):59.

22. Though today's Globe Theatre is a relatively recent, but faithful, copy of the lost original, the rebirth of which was the brainchild and achievement of Sam Wannamaker.
23. The Savoy Operas are so-called after the Savoy Theatre built by impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte, who commissioned the operas for his theatre, and with the proceeds of its success, built the famous Savoy Hotel which still stands and flourishes on the same site. "The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company from the 1870s until 1982, staged Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy operas nearly year-round in the United Kingdom and sometimes toured in Europe, North America and elsewhere. This was well known to me from my earliest years, since when a I was a young child, our family used to gather round the piano at home and sing Gilbert and Sullivan arias while my father played the tunes from memory.
24. "She or he" might well not exhaust the gender, nor the sexual nor sexual orientation possibilities, neither now nor in the future.
25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mRec3VbH3w> (last accessed 9 June 2021).
26. Currently!
27. Shakespeare W. Richard II. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:4.1, at 691.
28. Shakespeare W. Romeo and Juliet. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:2.2, at 1017, lines 184–5.
29. <http://www.songlyrics.com/bob-dylan/don-t-think-twice-lyrics/> (last accessed 12 July 2021).
30. Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:5.1, at 357.
31. In memory of Frank Cioffi who, I believe, coined this phrase, a brilliant teacher and philosopher, but a parsimonious writer.
32. The words of Julius Caesar. Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:2.2, at 344.
33. See [note 21](#), Harris 2000.
34. Shakespeare W. Hamlet. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:5.2, at 329.
35. See [note 34](#), Shakespeare 1998, 3.1, at 309.
36. The term "may" has here a nice ambiguity between its meaning a permission and as an expression of doubtful probability.
37. Shakespeare W. Ling ular. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:1.1 90, at 633.
38. See [note 34](#), Shakespeare 1998, 5.1, at 309.
39. See [note 6](#), Wilson 2007.
40. See [note 6](#), Wilson 2007, at 97.
41. Harris J. *The Value of Life*. London: Routledge; 1985:89, Chapter 5.
42. See Harris J. Combatting Covid 19. Or, "All persons are equal, but some persons are more equal than others?". *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 2021. doi:[10.1017/S096318012000095X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S096318012000095X).
43. Locke J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Pringle Pattison AS, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1964: 188, Book II, Chapter 27.
44. See [note 43](#), Locke 1964.
45. Donne J. *Complete Verse and Selected Prose*. Hyward J, ed. London: The Nonsuch Press; 1972:538, Devotion XVII.
46. See [note 34](#), Shakespeare 1998, 1.3, 78, at 298.
47. For a detailed defense of this idea, see my *The Value of Life*. London: Routledge; 1987.
48. This claim is defended in detail in my *Violence & Responsibility*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1980 and in [note 47](#).
49. By deeds rather than by words.

50. Here the argument follows that developed in my book, see [note 4](#), Harris 2016, Chapter 11.
51. In this section, the arguments follows lines taken in [note 4](#), Harris 2016, Chapter 11.
52. Hobbes T. *Leviathan*. Oakeshott M, ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; 1960:219, Part 2, Chapter 30.
53. See [note 52](#), Hobbes 1960.
54. See [note 52](#), Hobbes 1960, at 225.
55. See [note 52](#), Hobbes 1960, at 227.
56. For example, in his books: *Taking Rights Seriously*. London: Duckworth; 1977; *A Matter of Principle*. Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press; 1985; *Sovereign Virtue*. Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press; 2000.
57. I first put the point in this way in my evidence to the U.K. Parliament Select Committee on *The Assisted Dying For the Terminally Ill Bill*. London: House of Commons; 9 September 2004.
58. See Harris J. "Euthanasia and the value of life", "The philosophical case against the philosophical case against euthanasia," and "Final thoughts on final acts." Each essay is the subject of a response by John Finnis and all are published in Keown J, ed. *Euthanasia Examined: Ethical Clinical and Legal Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1995:6–22, at 36–45 and 56–61.
59. Dworkin R. *Life's Dominion*. London: Harper Collins; 1993:217. I should add by way of homage, that I knew Ronnie well...he accepted to be the Supervisor for my DPhil at Oxford and was altogether an inspirational mentor to me.
60. Shakespeare W. Julius Caesar. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*. Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998; 1.3, at 339.
61. "'Tis true,' tis pity and pity 'tis 'tis true!" See [note 34](#), Shakespeare 1998, 2.1, at 304.
62. Autonomy is a tricky concept!
63. Plato, *The Dialogues*. Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions by Jowett B. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1953, Fourth Edition, Volume I, Crito 51 c, at 380.
64. See [note 6](#), Wilson 2007, at 12.
65. I am not assuming that "our" world will continue to be the Planet Earth or even part of our (current) solar system.
66. See [note 44](#) and Harris J. *Enhancing Evolution*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; 2007, Chapter 3.
67. I think I can claim authorship of the term: "functional immortality"!
68. Among those occasions are: See [note 21](#), Harris 2000. Harris J. Intimations of Immortality – The ethics and justice of life extending therapies. In: Freeman M, ed. *Current Legal Problems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2002:65–97.
69. Glover J. *Causing Death and Saving Lives*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books; 1977:57.
70. See [note 21](#), Harris 2000.
71. See [note 41](#), Harris 1985.
72. I am indebted to my friend and colleague David Lawrence for introducing me to *Blade Runner*.
73. See Lawrence DR. More human than human. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 2017;**26** (3):476–90. Harris J. Who owns my autonomous vehicle: ethics and responsibility in artificial and human intelligence. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 2018;**27**(4):500–609. See also [note 41](#), Harris 1985, Chapter 1.
74. I am not here using the term "intelligent" evaluatively.
75. See [note 41](#), Harris 1985, Chapter 1. Beings human beings and persons, 7–27.
76. Shakespeare W. Twelfth night. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*, Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:2.3, 47–52, 1197. *Twelfth Night Act II, III*, at 47–52.
77. Hawking S. *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*. London: John Murray; 2018:68–9, Chapter 3.
78. See [note 77](#), Hawking 2018, 68–9.
79. See [note 77](#), Hawking 2018, 77.
80. See [note 77](#), Hawking 2018, 78.
81. See [note 77](#), Hawking 2018, 80–3. I have written two books which come to similar conclusions, from admittedly a very different perspective: Harris J. *Wonder woman & Superman: Ethics &*

- Human Biotechnology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1992:271 (Paperback 1993) and see note 66, Harris 2007.
82. See note 18, Harris 1980.
 83. See note 66, Harris 2007.
 84. See note 77, Hawking 2018, 82–3.
 85. See note 73, Harris 2018.
 86. *Genesis* 5:1–2.
 87. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana#:~:text=The%20Ramayana%20is%20one%20of%20the%20largest%20ancient,the%20first%20and%20the%20seventh%20being%20later%20additions> (last accessed 21 June 2021). My wife, Sita, is named after the wife of Rama.
 88. Not a death that would probably inspire much grief (except among those of us with vested interests in its survival!
 89. See Adams D. *The Ultimate Hitchhikers Guide*. New York: Wing Books; 1952.
 90. Bloom H. *Shakespeare The Invention of the Human*. London: Fourth Estate; 1999:4.
 91. I was first introduced to “the paradox of fiction” by Colin Radford one of my undergraduate teachers at the University of Kent between 1966–1969.
 92. See note 34, Shakespeare 1998, at 308.
 93. I first encountered “the paradox of Fiction” as a logical problem while an undergraduate at the University of Kent in 1966. The phrase was invented by one of my philosophy tutors Colin Radford, <https://iep.utm.edu/fict-par/> (last accessed 30 June 2021). And I became much preoccupied with this apparent paradox to the extent that I wrote an undergraduate essay on the topic.
 94. Wittgenstein L. *Zettel*. Anscombe GEM, Von Wright GH, eds. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; 1967:73e, para 410.
 95. Could non-human persons, immortals and non-mortals be philosophical, “do” philosophy and what does it matter whether they can or not.
 96. Shakespeare W. *Henry IV.5.1*. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*, Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:388. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mRec3VbH3w> (last accessed 9 June 2021). Shakespeare W. *Romeo and Juliet*. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*, Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998: 1017, 2.2, lines 184–5.
 97. See Nurse P. *What is Life*. Oxford: David Fickling Books; 2021.
 98. As I tried to do in 1985 in my *The Value of Life* (see note 41, Harris 1985).
 99. Locke J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Pringle-Pattison AS, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1964:188, Book II, Ch. 27.
 100. di Lampedusa G. *The Leopard*. London: Vintage, Random House; 2005:27. “*Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi*” Tancredi: Giuseppe Tomasi de Lampedusa *Il Gattopardo* Universale Economica Feltrinelli. Ottantaseiesima edizione agosto 2005. Edizione conforme al manoscritto del 1957.
 101. <https://www.amazon.com/Assembling-Reminders-Studies-Wittgensteins-Philosophy/dp/9173350001>.
 102. Shakespeare W. *The Merchant of Venice*. In: Proudfoot R, Thomson A, Kastan DS, eds. *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*, Walton-On-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd; 1998:842–3, 3.1.
 103. Wittgenstein L. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1995. p178.
 104. Wilde O. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*.