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Living Indefinitely and Living Fully: *Laudato Si'* and the Value of the Present in Christian, Stoic, and Transhumanist Temporalities

Paul Scherz
Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, USA

Abstract

Transhumanism promises to overcome human finitude by indefinitely extending human life, enabling a vast increase in valuable experiences. Yet transhumanism depends on social processes of what Pope Francis calls rapidification and sociologists call social acceleration, which are causing people to experience a lack of time, driven by increasing speed of work and fears of missing out on opportunities for enjoyment. In contrast, Francis and the Stoics encourage people to confront finitude by flourishing through a qualitative transformation of character marked by a temporality focused on God's providential presence and on serving the present needs of others.

Keywords

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Providence, rapidification, social acceleration, Stoicism, time, transhumanism

While many commentators criticize transhumanism for ignoring human bodily or created finitude, especially in its project of life extension, a less-commented upon aspect of *Laudato Si'* suggests that the transhumanist quest for technological fulfillment may be ultimately self-defeating because it draws

Corresponding author:
Paul Scherz, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064, USA.
Email: scherz@cua.edu

on and encourages social processes that block people from finding fulfillment in the present.[1] In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis identifies a widespread problem in the contemporary experience of time as it relates to technology. He notes that we are engaged in a "more intensified pace of life and work which might be called 'rapidification'" that is harming the world and our quality of life.[2] Most people experience temporality under the form of time poverty—we have no time since every second is claimed by a responsibility. Even vacation or rest at the end of the day ceases to be leisure and becomes a time to "recharge"—to rest for the sake of being able to work more later. Individuals turn to technologies to help them deal with tasks faster, but these can in turn intensify time poverty, with communications technology making the worker more available outside of the office or social media generating fears of missing out as users see the events their friends attend.[3] Transhumanism offers one solution to these problems in what is perhaps its most attractive promise, life extension. If our trouble is that we lack time, transhumanists offer near infinite time through technologies that promise indefinite life extension, meaning that lifespans will not be limited by natural aging processes, but will end either through choice or some unexpected accident.[4] Given practically limitless time, surely people would be able to achieve all of the valuable experiences that they desire from work and leisure. How could one lack time if one had vastly more time?

This article will suggest somewhat paradoxically that having indefinite time available will not make any more of that time ours and that it will not solve the

1. There are of course many other arguments against transhumanism, such as its rejection of embodiment or its failures in terms of social justice. The critical literature is vast, but for a good review and discussion of these issues, see Andrea Vicini and Agnes M. Brazal, "Longing for Transcendence: Cyborgs and Trans- and Posthumans," *Theological Studies* 76 (2015): 148–65, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563914565308. This article only deals with these issues in part. In terms of embodiment, indefinite life extension can take the form of repairing the body. While this article will address problems of social justice as they relate to processes of social acceleration, there is more to be discussed in terms of research priorities and the just distribution of health-care resources.
2. Francis, *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (hereafter cited as *LS*).
3. Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic, 2011).
4. Christianity promises the seemingly similar eternal life, but, as the discussion of Augustine on time below will suggest, there is a vast qualitative difference between indefinitely lengthening life and participating in the eternal life of the Trinity through the Beatific Vision. Some commentators argue that projects for life extension, if successful, would block us from our true flourishing in the afterlife, such as Gilbert Meilaender, *Should We Live Forever? The Ethical Ambiguities of Aging* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 113. While recognizing the importance of these arguments, this article sets aside these concerns and the consideration of eschatology more generally to argue that transhumanist life extension in its current form would block us from experiencing even the imperfect flourishing available in this life.

problem of rapidification. The argument will proceed in four steps. First, I suggest that the common distinction between Christian finitude and transhumanist transcendence is misplaced because of the Christian focus on seeking the likeness of God. As I will explain in the next section, instead of finitude versus transcendence, a better distinction is that between infinity or indefiniteness and completeness. The next stage of the argument suggests that contemporary individuals fail to find this completeness because they are unable to grasp the present due to a dispersal of the self. Alienated from every moment, contemporary temporality reflects a consumerist outlook (*LS* 222). This dispersal of the self is not a new idea; classical philosophy and Augustinian theology already criticized the individual's dispersal in time through one's desires. Yet the sociologist Hartmut Rosa argues that this general problem and its associated time poverty have intensified in late modernity through a process he calls social acceleration, which was driven by technological change, social change, and a secularization that eschews a focus on eternal life. While promising freedom, this acceleration became linked to competition and exploitation, so that their imbalanced lives drive people "to frenetic activity and make them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them" (*LS* 226). Transhumanist thought is linked to this social acceleration, so that even if transhumanists were to deliver on their promises of near infinite time through life extension, we would still be time poor.

After this diagnosis of problems in contemporary and transhumanist temporality, the article will turn to philosophical and theological resources for a constructive response. Francis confronts these processes of social acceleration in part by encouraging a temporality that enables people to achieve a more flourishing existence in the present moment (*LS* 222–27). This model of temporality is rooted in Christian spirituality, but also finds precursors in Hellenistic philosophy that can aid its development. Against transhumanists who see happiness emerging from the quantitative increase in valuable life experiences, Hellenistic ethics saw happiness as a quality of character whose exceptional value did not depend upon the amount of time during which one had that quality. More importantly, a person can attain or at least seek after happiness or completion in each moment. In a Christian interpretation, happiness occurs in a present that reflects the eternal present of God and can be grasped now by living in Christ. It is attained through an attitude of "serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full" (*LS* 226). In the final step in the argument I will examine how one can develop this posture through both spiritual exercises that train one to see God's will in the moment and concrete actions to help others, especially the poor. Thus, in contrast to some arguments against transhumanism that condemn this project as an expression of human pride seeking immortality through its own power, I argue that transhumanist plans are ultimately self-defeating and would distract us from the work and attitude that make true flourishing possible by finding God in the present "realities and experiences of this world" (*LS* 234).

Infinity, Finitude, and Completion

The difference between transhumanist and Christian ideas of flourishing lies partly in the distinction between a quantitative and qualitative idea of happiness. Those favoring indefinite life extension argue that, aside from some extreme conditions, it would always be better to have more rather than less life. There are other arguments to be made for life extension, such as that medicine can better solve diseases of old age by fighting aging in general,[5] but much of the case for life extension relies on the utilitarian calculus that a greater quantity of valuable experiences is superior to a lesser quantity. Though this argument is used by many, it was made perhaps most simply and persuasively by Bernard Williams in his classic essay on the Makropoulos case.[6]

Williams begins this essay by addressing Lucretius's two arguments on the indifference of death to happiness, the second of which is directly related to my argument.[7] Epicureans, like the Stoics, saw happiness, *eudaimonia*, as a certain structure of character, for them one lacking pain or fear which is experienced as peaceful pleasure, *ataraxia*.[8] Once a person has this quality, it does not matter what happens to him or how long he lives. *Ataraxia* colors every experience, so any other experience becomes merely a variation on pleasure. Epicurus says that "pleasure in the flesh admits no increase when once the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation."[9] For Greek philosophers, unlike contemporary society, novelty had little intrinsic value. Variety or length do not change the basic form of character that structures experience. It is the quality of an experience that matters, so that "unlimited time and limited time afford an equal amount of pleasure."[10] Williams shows a fundamentally different, quantitative rather than qualitative, understanding of flourishing when he argues against Lucretius that "if the *praemia vitae* and consciousness of them are good things, then longer consciousness of more *praemia* is better than shorter consciousness of fewer *praemia*."[11] More is better for Williams, up to a point anyway.

5. For these arguments, see Aubrey De Grey and Michael Rae, *Ending Aging* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008).
6. Bernard Williams, "The Makropoulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 82–100.
7. Williams, "The Makropoulos Case," 83–84. For text of these arguments in Lucretius, see A. A Long and D. N Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 151–53.
8. For primary sources of Epicurean ethics, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 102–57; Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, bk. 1; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, bk. 10. For contemporary overviews of Epicurean and other schools of Hellenistic ethics, see A. A Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy; Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (New York: Scribner, 1974); Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
9. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.144 trans. R.D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library 185 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 669.
10. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.145 trans. R.D. Hicks, 669.
11. Williams, "The Makropoulos Case," 85.

Transhumanists differ from Williams only in saying that perhaps there is no point at which an immortal would get bored.

Humanistic naturalist scholars like Michael Sandel, Martha Nussbaum, and Leon Kass draw on Greek philosophy, religious thought, and an undercurrent of Romantic influence to argue against enhancements like indefinite life extension.[12] Though some of their arguments address utilitarian concerns regarding population and natality, many of their arguments rely on the premise that a certain finitude is necessary for the qualitative shape of human life. Mortality is part of the nature humans have received as a gift.[13] Limits make people what they are by shaping character. In some ways, it is exactly the evanescence of human accomplishments and strivings that give them dignity.[14] These scholars emphasize the importance of the constraints and limits that separate us from the divine for a rich human life.

Though these arguments are valuable, there are at least two problems with them from the perspective of classical philosophy and Christian theology. First, they tend to emphasize the distinction between the human and divine out of the understandable fear that transhumanism represents a Promethean pride through which humans try to idolatrously assume the place of God, or, in a slightly more secular vein, a rejection of giftedness. Yet, a fundamental drive of Greek philosophy was the assimilation to God, becoming like God.[15] One does this differently in different schools: contemplation for Platonists and Aristotelians; *ataraxia* for Epicureans; becoming a sage for Stoics. Yet each school sought to transcend the most basic aspects of human existence to align oneself with the most divine element within each person.

This same drive continued in Christianity in ideas of deification and related concepts. The First Letter of John says that "We are God's children now … When he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" (1 John 3:2, NRSV, used throughout). Paul argues that even in this life "all of us … seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). This process of assuming the likeness of God occurs in daily life and ultimately in the resurrection. This transcendence differs from both transhumanist and classical philosophical ideals because it relies on cooperation with God's grace in the Christian's daily life and the ultimate transcendence comes

12. President's Council on Bioethics, *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Washington, DC: President's Council on Bioethics, 2003); Leon Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2002); Michael J. Sandel, *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009). I draw the term humanistic naturalism from Gerald McKenny, "Transcendence, Technological Enhancement, and Christian Theology," in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*, ed. Ronald Cole-Turner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 177–92.
13. President's Council on Bioethics, *Beyond Therapy*, 287–90.
14. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 192–238.
15. Geurt Hendrik van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

exclusively from God.[16] Still, a pure embrace of finitude is possible for neither Christianity nor Greek philosophy.

Second, though humanistic naturalist critics are correct that there is something ethically problematic about the idea of infinity, they tend to contrast infinity and finitude by emphasizing the negative aspect of the limits and constraints of finitude. In this view, transhumanism transgresses a boundary. The problem with this framing is better seen if one recognizes that the opposite of infinity is not necessarily a constraint, since Greek philosophy instead contrasted infinity with plenitude, completion, perfection, or wholeness. As Aristotle defines it, "A thing is infinite, then, if, for any quantity already taken, one can always take some further part. Anything which has no part beyond itself, however, is complete and whole … Nothing is complete unless it has an end, and an end is a limit."[17] An embrace of infinity prevents completion or perfection. To take the example of Zeno's paradoxes of motion, sophistical though they are, the problem with the infinite is not that one will go too far. It is rather that one will not get anywhere at all.[18]

An example more related to my argument here concerns desires. Both Aristotle and the Epicureans distinguish what the Epicureans call natural versus artificial desires.[19] Natural desires like food are easily satisfied. They arise from the urging of the body and cease once fulfilled. On the other hand, artificial desires like luxuries, since they arise from the imagination rather than the needs of the body, are infinite and potentially cannot be satisfied. Aristotle gives the example of money and the art of acquisition of the goods necessary for life. By managing a household, one can easily acquire the necessary goods to fulfill natural desires and live well, since "sufficiency in possessions of this sort with a view to a good life is not limitless."[20] Yet, there is a different art of acquiring goods that sets itself not towards the end of the good life but that puts its end in money itself, which should be an intermediary but becomes an end through the faculty of imagination. Once one desires money as a source of security, one can never be sated because there is no natural term to this desire for money, since there is always more to have. "They proceed on the supposition that they should either preserve or increase without limit their holdings of money. The cause of this condition is that they are serious about living, but not about living well."[21] Once one desires something that can be infinite, such as money or consumer goods, one will never be satisfied. This deviation from the proper end of life makes one use one's faculties in a way that is against nature.

16. See McKenny, "Transcendence, Technological Enhancement, and Christian Theology." There are exceptions to this general theological approach to transcendence and technology, such as Philip J. Hefner, *Technology and Human Becoming* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).
17. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.6, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73.
18. Aristotle, *Physics* 6.9.
19. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.127–32.
20. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.8, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 46.
21. Aristotle, *Politics* 1.9, trans. Carnes Lord, 49.

Gilbert Meilaender provides one way to use this Aristotelian notion of completeness by opposing the never finished transhumanist life to a vision of the complete lifecourse.[22] Drawing on allusions to the biblical patriarchs who died old and full of years, he sees human life as a series of stages encompassing birth, childhood, adulthood, child-rearing, and old age. By completing this cycle, one lives a full life and joins in the ongoing cycle of the generations, an image evoked by Hannah Arendt in her discussion of labor.[23] As potentially appealing as this idea is, it raises a number of problems, since Meilaender himself admits the attraction of more time to spend with loved ones in valuable experiences, although he argues that this desire ultimately only can be fulfilled in God in the eschaton.[24] More importantly, this idea of a complete life bears little relation to the temporal structure of contemporary subjectivity or society.

Social Acceleration

Max Weber provides the clearest explanation for why this ideal of a complete life no longer satisfies us. The patriarchs lived in a time when they could be sure that there was nothing new under the sun. With the introduction of the idea of the infinite progress of history, everyone knows that tomorrow will be different from today.

> For civilized man death has no meaning. It has none because the individual life of civilized man, placed into an infinite "progress," according to its own imminent meaning should never come to an end; for there is always a further step ahead of one who stands in the march of progress. And no man who comes to die stands upon the peak which lies in infinity.[25]

The inevitability of an infinite process of change ensures that a dying person will be missing out on something. As will be discussed below, it is this phenomenon of missing out that

22. Gilbert Meilaender, *Should We Live Forever?*, 15.
23. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 106–8.
24. Meilaender, *Should We Live Forever?*, 51.
25. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 129–57 at 139–40. This modern emphasis on progress arose from many sources. Transhumanists draw from the tradition of Francis Bacon and utilitarianism that drives contemporary medical progress as it has been refracted by the San Francisco Bay Area counterculture and the computer industry. For this history, see Gerald McKenny, *To Relieve the Human Condition: Bioethics, Technology, and the Body* (Albany: SUNY, 1997), 7–24; John Markoff, *What the Dormouse Said: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry* (New York: Penguin, 2006). Hartmut Rosa reacts to a German tradition including G.W.F. Hegel as developed through Karl Marx and the traditions of sociology and critical theory. For a discussion, see Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, "Translator's Introduction: Modernity and Time," in *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), xi–xxxi. For a theological account of these developments, see Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* (November 30, 2007), 16–23, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html.

is perhaps most important to the embrace of life-extension technology, pushing contemporary individuals to seek flourishing not under the form of completeness discussed above, but in terms of infinite or at least indefinite life. This search is ultimately fruitless.

Hartmut Rosa has described this changing relation to the life cycle more concretely. In early modern Germany, a family would farm the same land for centuries.[26] In such a situation, one could see oneself taking one's place in a cycle of generations living complete lives. By the nineteenth century, social conditions were no longer so stable. A person chose a profession that gave lifetime security but knew that his children would live a different kind of life in a different profession. Even here, one could envisage a complete lifecourse. Today, such stability is much more difficult to achieve. There are many advantages to these shifts, since prior social structures constrained the freedom of many to build fulfilling lives, such as women, minorities, and the poor. Yet, these changes have also brought new problems that are now becoming apparent. Economic changes lead many people to work in several different fields over the course of a lifetime, with all the periods of retraining these shifts demand. The contemporary worker must be mobile, following the changing availability of jobs, never setting roots too deeply.[27] Familial relations become less stable as people engage in marriages for only a single stage of life, with serial monogamy widespread.[28] Under such conditions, living a complete life in Meilaender's sense becomes extremely difficult.

Rosa attributes this instability to the phenomenon of social acceleration, which he sees as the fundamental characteristic of modernity. As many social commentators have noted, the pace of change is ever increasing, and "all that is solid melts into air."[29] Rosa outlines three aspects of this acceleration: technology, the rate of social change, and the pace of life.[30] Each person adopts new technologies that could save time. For example, email takes less time than writing and sending a letter, and driving a car is faster than walking or riding a horse. Yet, these technologies ultimately do not lead to a greater amount of free time due to the other two aspects of acceleration. Email makes the worker constantly available to employers and friends, while increasing the sheer amount of correspondence possible. Cars change living patterns, forcing people to commute long distances in traffic. Changing technologies change the structures of society, forcing people out of their current jobs and into programs for retraining. There is also a need to increase the pace of life, to reduce periods of rest or wasted time between activities so that one can maximize time in order to engage all of the new responsibilities of work and family.

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26. Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 110–11.
27. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2005), 103–63.
28. For the difficulties of stable family life in contemporary society, see Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (London: Sage, 1992), 116–24.
29. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Communist Manifesto," in *The Marx–Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1972), 331–62 at 338.
30. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 23.

Rosa sees this acceleration stemming from structural and cultural factors. First, there is the economic urge to derive the most profit from labor time. More interestingly for theological understandings of temporality, he describes acceleration as a secular substitute for eternity. Secularization leads to a loss of an emphasis on salvation and a corresponding focus on earthly time, in that "in modernity the idea that slowly loses it cultural potency is that of a 'higher' or sacral time that will first provide a true fullness to time in its entirety as well as life after death or after the end of the world."[31] Without a focus on the afterlife or a classical acceptance of death, each person faces death by trying to increase her experiences of life—have more wonderful vacations, try out the latest restaurant, engage with the trending sport. The good life is a life full of valuable experiences rather than a certain quality of character. "The resulting modern ideal regarding life and time is that the good life is *the full life*, and it consists in savoring as much of what the world has to offer as possible and in making use of as many of its possibilities and offerings as one can."[32] One consumes experiences, not just material goods. This ideal allows that "an *accelerated enjoyment of worldly options*, a 'faster life,' will once again allow the chasm between the time of life and the time of the world to be reduced."[33]

This full life is the social embodiment of the utilitarian ideal of the absolute value of the quantitative increase of valuable life experiences described earlier, the search for flourishing in the infinite rather than in completeness. It becomes the substitute for *eudaimonia* or salvation. Transhumanist life extension promises a fuller life—an indefinite amount of time to achieve a greater number of experiences. Currently, the only way to increase experience is to accelerate the pace of one's life. With indefinitely more time provided by new technologies, perhaps one would not need the acceleration that leads to a lack of time.

And yet, this transhumanist plan may not be as secure as it seems because technology will continue to accelerate. As the transhumanists trumpet, these technologies will create new kinds of experiences. Yet, as occurs even now, increasing speed increases possible experiences faster than an individual can experience them, so one will always be missing out on some possible experiences.[34] The knowledge that one is missing out on something is the first unsettling problem with the lived time of acceleration.[35] People end up "dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have" (*LS* 223). The fear of missing out forces people to accelerate their activities so that they can cram in more experiences.[36]

Even greater problems appear when social acceleration is considered from the standpoint of social justice. As technologies progress, some will inevitably miss out,

31. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 180.
32. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 181–82.
33. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 181.
34. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 311.
35. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 134.
36. Fear of missing out (FOMO) is an important regulator of young people's behavior as they make decisions to participate in activities based on concerns for future disappointments upon seeing pictures on social media of their friends at other activities.

left behind with a useless set of skills, joining the growing number of people forced to drop out of the labor force.[37] With the knowledge that the world will be changing, there is no stability, leading "to an existential feeling of standing on slipping slopes … [I]n a dynamic society almost all one's stock of knowledge and property is constantly threatened with obsolescence."[38] This instability changes the ethical life. The consistent life plans celebrated by liberal thinkers become impossible under conditions in which change makes long-range planning irrational. A person can only plan when he can predict future circumstances, but social change ensures radically different future circumstances. The most rational approach is to remain flexible and not commit oneself too deeply to any project, person, or place.[39] Part of this flexibility entails doing away with classical models of deliberative decision-making. Instead of investing in long-range projects to achieve what one sees as the priorities in one's life, one takes advantage of opportunities that appear and responds to short-term deadlines.[40] These altered modes of subjectivity increase the instability of life.

Where do we find ourselves after Rosa's analysis? The individual attempts to find fulfilment by increasing the number of her valuable experiences. Yet, possible valuable experiences increase at an even greater rate, so the person is always missing out. Cast out of the present activity by a glance at other possibilities, she ceases to enjoy even the present she has. The threat of social change casts her into the future in anxiety. In response to uncertainty, she shapes a flexible self open to the opportunities and demands made by others. The problems of the present mode of life in which experience has become the object of an infinite desire justify the classical critique of the infinite. Desire is never satisfied, and the person is never complete. These experiences are not even fully the individual's own for two reasons. First the person does not act for her own plans, but is flexibly responsive to the market. Second, the person is not really present in any of these times or experiences, since her attention is dispersed into future possibilities and missed alternatives. As Heidegger notes about the person focused on the closest events thrusting themselves upon him, "Busily losing *himself* in the object of his concern, he *loses his time* in it too. Hence his characteristic way of talking—'I have no time.'"[41]

Life extension promises to solve these problems, but it cannot, because it participates in this same model of social acceleration. It encourages the person to sacrifice his present for future life extension. It urges the individual to seek her happiness in the constant flux of change which uproots and unsettles her from her self and her attachments. It seeks the satisfaction of an infinite desire for experience, a desire that by definition will never be satisfied and that will always be haunted by the fear of missing

37. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 117.
38. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 134.
39. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 231–32. See also Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).
40. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 136.
41. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 463.

out and falling behind. The problem with this form of indefinite future is that none of these times will be the individual's, in none will he be complete, in none will he flourish. Ironically, seeking an indefinitely extended future life under this consumerist model may leave a person with less time, instead contributing to a continual dispossession of time and the self.

Dispersal and the Present

So how should one respond to current problems of acceleration and flourishing if not merely by adding more time? Rosa is fairly hopeless, seeing the most likely possibility as "the unbridled onward rush into an abyss," with the imminent collapse of our political and social institutions.[42] Rather than succumb to such fatalistic social determinism, others have recommended complex sets of political and structural changes, as well as changes in the forms of our technology.[43] Yet, as Francis notes, laws, regulations, and altered devices, though essential, are not enough, since "the majority of the members of society must be adequately motivated to accept them and personally transformed to respond" (*LS* 211).[44] In the rest of this article I will suggest what experience of time corresponds to the ecological conversion to which Francis calls us, leading to "a more passionate concern for the protection of the world" (*LS* 216), expressed through individual, social, relational, political, and technological change (*LS* 216–21). I will suggest how the church and Christians should form themselves to experience time to enable them to participate in the necessary structural changes.

It is helpful to begin by recognizing that this problem of distraction from the present is not new, though Rosa is correct that it has intensified and become more apparent due to aspects of technological modernity. Unformed desires have always distracted people. Augustine, providing the classic Christian and phenomenological account of the experience of time in his *Confessions*, laments his lack of wholeness in his dispersal in time in a way similar to modern concerns. "I am divided up in time, whose order I do not know, and my thoughts and the deepest places of my soul are torn with every

42. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 322. To him, those who try to avoid acceleration do so merely as a brief respite, allowing increased focus on later work, like an executive's weekend yoga retreat, or, if they turn to a decelerated lifestyle in a more serious manner, are destined to be left behind along with other marginalized members of society (85–87).
43. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Marion Boyars, 2001); Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014); Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016); Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2016).
44. This focus does not imply that Christians should not work for structural changes, but simply recognizes that structural sins are frequently linked to problematic models of individual subjectivity, such as the technocratic paradigm and consumerism that Francis describes. Thus, it is necessary to address character (including the relation to time) alongside social structure.

kind of tumult."[45] Instead of seeking God through his image in the self, Augustine dispersed himself in the things that God has made following the promptings of curiosity.[46] He experiences himself distended and distracted in time, stretched in anxiety or curious desire toward the future, rather than waiting in patient hope and trust in Providence. It is impossible to taste happiness when one lacks wholeness. It is only where time is gathered together in the eternal present of God that one finds completion.

Augustine attempts to gain a brief respite from the dispersal of this life in time through contemplative exercises of examining memory, seeking both himself and God by turning to the treasure house of memory. Yet, such a Neoplatonic ascent is ultimately unsuccessful.[47] Augustine is dragged back by the weight of habit to dispersal in this life. He must live in history in the hope for the peace of the next life when God will gather Augustine together in Him.[48]

While Augustine's focus on the next life is a salutary rejoinder to the secularized view of the full life adopted even by many Christians, Francis argues that there must be a way of fighting this dispersal in the active life today. Any discussion of Augustine may suggest that the answer is to transform desire, which is surely correct in a way, but desire is so closely tied to temporality that one cannot transform desire without also addressing one's dispersal in time for at least three reasons. First, the exact same technologies and social forms that elicit consumer desire also distract individuals from the present—social media, ambient advertising, ever-present email, and so forth.[49] Second, even valid desires become problematic when they drive us from the present in anxiety. In the parables of the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields, Jesus addresses the very legitimate desires to ensure an adequate supply of food and clothing by urging Christians to focus on the present day (Matt 6:25–34; Luke 12:22–32; *LS* 226). For

45. Augustine, *Confessions* 11.29, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1947), 285. The literature on time and Augustine is vast. My discussion draws on Roland J. Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, The Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996); John Cavadini, "Time and Ascent in Confessions XI," in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph Lienhard, Earl Muller, and Roland J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 152–61; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1:5–30; John Callahan, *Augustine and the Greek Philosophers*, The Saint Augustine Lecture (Villanova, PN: Villanova University Press, 1967), 74–93; Robert Jordan, "Time and Contingency in St. Augustine," *Review of Metaphysics* 8 (1955): 394–417; John Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 149–87. For a discussion of Augustine and time in relationship to transhumanism that differs in significant ways from this article, see Andrea Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
46. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.27.
47. Cavadini, "Time and Ascent in Confessions XI."
48. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.40.
49. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*.

Aquinas, any care can lead to the vice of solicitude if it is excessive or outside of the due time.[50] Third, a proper experience of time through a focus on the present can be a strategy to fight against improper desire. Jesus "was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive, and compulsive consumers" (*LS* 226).

Instead of anxiety over the future, Christians should trust in God's providential care for the future and devote themselves to seeking the kingdom of God, which is already among them (Luke 17:21).[51] This suggests that a cure for anxious dispersal in time can be found in present right action and attention to the current moment. The New Testament is full of calls for vigilant attention to the present. Ambrose also suggests that Christians can look for the ways that God is present to us in every moment. In his Stoic-inspired description of the Christian sage standing above the anxieties of life, he says, "For nothing can happen to him, since the grace of God's presence always breathes with favor upon him and he is always present to himself as one filled with the utmost tranquility of spirit."[52] Present to the Christian through grace and the Holy Spirit, God can gather the Christian together in this life.

This Christian spirituality of time builds on older philosophical sources that may offer resources for achieving these goals as well as for making such a model attractive to non-Christians. There are hints of such an approach to the present in Augustine's attempts to understand the idea of the eternal present by contrasting it with the present of time. Like many classical philosophers, he questioned how time could exist, since the past and future were either gone or not yet, and the present never stays.[53] Time tends toward non-being, flowing out of the true being of God's eternal present. Augustine solves his dilemma by placing all time in the mind in the present. The past is present in memory, the actual present exists in vision, and the future is present in signs and expectation. It is only the present that exists, suggesting that one should gather oneself together in this present.

In these discussions, Augustine reflects Stoic concerns about the reality of time and the nature of the present, concerns that for the Stoics centered on the problem of the infinite nature of time.[54] Despite disputes about the existence of the present,

50. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2–2, q. 55, a. 6–7. This vice resembles the appropriate solicitude that is proper to prudence described in Aquinas, *ST* 2–2, q. 47, a. 9.
51. The focus in this article on the "already" pole of Christian eschatology does not deny that the fulfilment of Christian hope in the kingdom awaits the end of time. There is a profound tension in the New Testament and patristic literature in calls for Christians to both hope in the future and feel joy and peace in the present, a tension that there is not space to resolve here.
52. Ambrose, "Jacob and the Happy Life," in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. Michael McHugh, The Fathers of the Church 65 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1972), 117–86 at 145.
53. Augustine, *Confessions* 11.14.
54. For similarities between Augustine's view of time and that of the Stoics, see O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 153. For the Stoic model of time, see Émile Bréhier, *La Théorie des Incorporels dans l'Ancien Stoïcisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1928), 44–45; Victor Goldschmidt, *Le Système Stoïcien et l'Idée de Temps*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1969).

the lived present is essential to Stoic ethical thought, as it is to Christian ethical thought, as the time where happiness is achieved.[55] Instead of abandoning completion by embracing the infinite time of the future like transhumanists, seeking completion in a whole life like Aristotle, or even Augustine's attempt to seek completion by transcending time, the Stoics call us to seek completion right now, in this very moment. "It is in your power to secure at once all the objects which you dream of reaching … if you will leave all the past behind, commit the future to Providence, and direct the present, and that alone, to Holiness and Justice."[56] It is only the present that is under our control, up to us. This control is not meant to signal a self who has total power over events, but merely states that a person can only act in the present. Because of this limitation, one can only be happy if one seeks happiness in the present moment. If a person does not come to herself and flourish now, or in some present moment, then she will never do so. She will continually defer happiness until some later moment.

The Stoics excoriated the consumerist desire for new experiences. It is folly to seek happiness by chasing after pleasures and novelty, looking to different times or places. The fool, and everyone, with the exception of a few sages, is a fool for the Stoics, seeks happiness by traveling to new places to see new things and gain new experiences, not realizing that the unhappiness of his misformed self will follow wherever he goes.[57] To look to the future is to embrace anxiety or the curious desire for new experiences, to disperse oneself in folly.[58] On the other hand, memory can be incorporated into the self as contributing to the present, but only if it is properly interpreted.[59] Otherwise it either becomes painful or is forgotten.[60]

Even more importantly, for the Stoics as for Lucretius, the duration of happiness does not matter. They defend this claim with two main arguments. The first relies on the belief in the non-existence of the past and future. "For the present is equal for all, and what is passing is therefore equal: thus what is being lost is proved to be barely a moment. For a man could lose neither past nor future; how can one rob him of what he has not got?"[61] The second argument emphasizes the importance of quality over quantity. It is achieving the quality of virtue and flourishing that counts, not how long one flourishes. "Though the day of your death should be postponed, your happiness is in no whit enhanced, since life becomes, not more blissful, but merely longer, by

55. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Arnold I. Davidson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 217–37; Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France, 1981–82*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 463–73. My discussion of Stoic temporality is deeply indebted to Hadot's analysis.
56. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 12.1, trans. A. S. L. Farquharson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 111.
57. Seneca, *Of Peace of Mind* 2.13–15.
58. Seneca, *Letters on Ethics to Lucilius* 99.5, 101.10.
59. Seneca, *Consolation to Polybius* 10.3–4.
60. Seneca, *Consolation to Marcia* 3.2.
61. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 2.14, trans. Farquharson, 14.

the delay."[62] Seneca compares the virtuous life to a circle: "Whether you draw a large circle or a small one concerns the size, not the shape … Take an honorable life of a hundred years' duration and contract it to any length you wish, even to a single day: it is still equally honorable."[63] This metaphor is apt for the argument that virtue exists in the present, since he also compares life to a series of nested circles, ranging from the entirety of life down to a single day. "Every day, then, should be treated as though it were bringing up the rear, as though it were the consummation and fulfillment of one's life."[64] By achieving the perfect form, completion, in any one of these nested circles, the sage transforms the whole series.

If one truly flourishes in the present, then Chrysippus says one has the same happiness as one who exercises virtue for eternity.[65] This ideal may signal something like a Nietzschean eternal recurrence: given cyclical time, each moment will occur an infinite number of times, so if one actually possesses that moment as the virtuous self, then one possesses infinite time. Yet, this ideal can also be interpreted in a way more consistent with Christian ethics, since Stoic history unfolds through a providential plan of interlocking events. Each moment represents the culmination of the preceding providentially guided history and holds the seeds of the future.[66] Echoing Augustine's emphasis that all time is present, one possesses the past and future by assenting to the present. This acceptance of the present is essential to happiness. Since the Stoics saw each rational individual as possessing a spark of the divine reason, by assent to the present, one identifies oneself with the divine reason one truly is. This concept parallels the Augustinian ideal of identifying oneself with the image of God which is one's true self. Through this identification, one grasps all history which is merely the unfolding of the providential plan of that same reason. By coming to virtue in the present, one gains all times.

These arguments do not mean that one should not choose a longer life. The Stoics considered life and health to be in accord with human nature, so that, all things being equal, one should choose them. Generally, all things are not equal, though. People see continued life as an absolute good rather than a contingent good or a preferred indifferent as the Stoics would say, and thus seek happiness through experiences in the world or feel anxiety over the future. In contemporary society, an emphasis on the duration of life, while not harmful in the abstract, can reinforce the quest for happiness through amassing experiences and an accelerated pace of life. It is in this situation that a redirection of attention to the present becomes essential.

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62. Seneca, *On Benefits* (*De Beneficiis*) 5.17.6, in *Moral Essays*, vol. 3, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library 310 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 341.
63. Seneca, *Letters on Ethics to Lucilius* 74.27, trans. Margaret Graver and A. A. Long (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 233.
64. Seneca, *Letters on Ethics to Lucilius* 12.8, trans. Graver and Long, 50.
65. Plutarch, *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions* 1062a. There are many other ways that theologians have envisioned the relationship of eternity to time. For example, see the discussion of Karl Rahner's model in Peter C. Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 55–57.
66. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 6.37; Bréhier, *La Théorie des Incorporels*, 49.

Attending to the Present

The Stoics develop at least three strategies for moving this understanding of time from theory into practice by attending to oneself and others, strategies that can inform Christian ethics. First, one must prevent oneself from being carried away by desires. In a way that prefigures Augustine, the Stoics suggest attaining a focus on present action through sets of exercises that transform attention. The Stoics play with the perception of time at two scales by either isolating the present moment or collapsing all of time into a single tableau. These exercises emphasize the unreality of time and prevent one from losing oneself through dispersal in anxiety or desire, although the Stoics go about this task in a way different from Augustine. If meditation on time centers on duration for Augustine, Marcus Aurelius's meditation helps one decompose time into isolated instants. This contrast is seen best in their approaches to music. In his meditation on time, Augustine attempts to determine how Ambrose's hymn *Deus Creator Omnium* holds together as a single whole over time.[67] In contrast, Marcus Aurelius decomposes a piece of music into single tones.[68] Music is seductive, and this decomposition prevents one from allowing one's passions and thus one's judgments to run away. Isolating the single instant of time prevents one from being heedlessly carried away by the flow of time.

Such a decomposition into instants might seem to destroy history's coherence, something alien to the Stoic emphasis on Providence. A second meditation more favorable to Providence collapses the instant along with the near future of human plans and desires into the grand designs of all of history by looking at the world from the perspective of the heavens.[69] By seeing the scope of history, one's desires and fears become insignificant. Yet one's actions are still an aspect of this beautiful world, allowing one to engage in the action of the present moment with appreciation for beauty but with no anxiety for the future. These exercises give value to the moment while also devaluing the desires and passions that tempt one to disperse oneself in time. By focusing on Providence, it also centers experience on God's presence.

A second set of techniques attend to the possibility of death to emphasize achieving happiness in the present. This *memento mori* is not meant to devalue existence. Instead, it aims to make us more attentive to the present. Seneca's meditations on death lead him to exhort us to "snatch the pleasures your children bring, let your children in turn find delight in you, and drain joy to the dregs without delay."[70] Such thoughts encourage one to examine what one is presently doing. Are these the kinds of things you would do if you knew it was the last day of your life? If not, change your existence, so that you are using each of the moments of life in ways that are valuable, in activities that you would be proud to engage in at the moment of death. "By putting the final touch on one's life every day, you don't lack time. It is this lack that generates fear and

67. Augustine, *Confessions* 11.27–28.
68. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 11.2. For analysis, see Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 301–4.
69. Seneca, *Natural Questions*, 1.Praef.
70. Seneca, *Consolation to Marcia* 10.4, in *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, trans. John D. Basore, Loeb Classical Library 254 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1032), 31.

gnawing desire for the future."[71] While there are certainly many instances of a focus on death devaluing life, here it actually impresses on one the importance of life, affirming it. It is the transhumanist grasping for life in the form of the future Singularity that denies the value of present life and drives thought toward a utopian future.[72]

This focus on the present could give rise to a mode disconcertedly close to contemporary consumerism's encouragement to seize the day or to engage in consumption of new experiences because "you only live once," or #YOLO as people tweet. Such an emphasis on present desires would not be in line with Christian ethics, which always place the present within a greater ethical call. Jesus fights our anxious dispersal in time to encourage us to seek the kingdom. For Paul, life is meant for service to the church for Christ (Phil 1:22–25). Similarly, the Stoics sought to use the present to serve others. As mentioned above, Marcus Aurelius encouraged one "to direct the present … to Holiness and Justice." Unfortunately, Stoicism is linked in the popular imagination with a cold insistence on duty, whereas the Stoics believed in care for others not as a cold imposition on the self but because of their expanded sense of who the self is.[73] Because every other person contains a spark of the divine, every person is related. Thus, one needs to care for family, fellow citizens, and even foreigners as one needs to care for oneself. This call to care also reminds one of God's providential presence in the moment and the ways that one can serve as a tool of that Providence. The Stoic Posidonius even defined happiness as "living as a student of the truth and order of the whole, and helping to promote this as far as possible," making service to the providential order part of human happiness.[74] Further, attending to the needs of others prevents one from becoming lost in the flow of time and desire. This emphasis is the exact opposite of a desire to heap up valuable experiences for the self.

Moreover, this emphasis on service prevents the focus on the present from endangering working toward future social change. The Stoics encouraged public service as a duty: Cato defended the Republic against Julius Caesar; Seneca advised Nero; Stoics were active in the Senate; and Marcus Aurelius was himself Caesar. These political engagements required care and planning for the future even as the individual sought to live in the present. It is a difficult tension to maintain, but not impossible.[75]

71. Seneca, *Letters on Ethics to Lucilius* 101.7, trans. Graver and Long, 402.
72. Ray Kurzweil describes the Singularity as the time when human intelligence melds with artificial intelligence and that artificial intelligence becomes sophisticated enough to redesign its own programming, leading to almost unimaginable technological developments. See Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near* (New York: Viking, 2005), 21–30.
73. For the relation between self and others in Stoicism, see Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Mary Whitlock Blundell, "Parental Nature and Stoic Oikeiosis," *Ancient Philosophy* 10 (1990): 221–42; Gisella Striker, "The Role of Oikeiosis in Stoic Ethics," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 145–67.
74. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 397.
75. For more on this relationship of care, indifference, temporality, and death in Stoicism, see Paul Scherz, "Grief, Death, and Longing in Stoic and Christian Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 45 (2017): 7–28, https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12166.

These Stoic approaches can fit into Christian spirituality. Augustine also plays with his understanding of time in meditation all while trusting in the providential guidance of history by the Logos. Christian thought classically has emphasized the inevitability of death and the need to prepare for the moment of death.[76] Finally, Christian action also centers on caring for the needs of others. If there is a Christian objection to this Stoic strategy of attending to the present, it is demonstrated in Augustine's description of his own failure to grasp the present. Given our fallen condition and the incomplete nature of the human approach to virtue in this life, human completion and perfection await the eschaton, when God will gather our scattered selves together. Most people have little hope of achieving the holiness and virtue required to be present to the self in the correct way. In fact, the Stoics would be the last to deny that few can achieve wisdom, since they too recognized that the sage is rarer than the phoenix. However, they thought that it is better to try for happiness even if one fails to achieve it than to continue in folly. Yet, as Ambrose notes, God is present to Christians in the Holy Spirit even within this life in a way that can lead the person to attend to the present and herself. Christians can affirm efforts toward virtue and sanctity, even while realizing that human efforts advance only through God's grace and will never fully succeed in this life. Thus, Christian ethics can attempt to gain the present in God even if it is a present pointing beyond itself to God's eternal present.

In contrast, the tendencies of transhumanist life extension run counter to these methods. In embracing transhumanism, one does not play with one's conceptions of time but rather casts oneself into the frenetic standstill of social acceleration. One directs all one's actions to avoiding death rather than being free in the face of death. Transhumanists like Ray Kurzweil urge people to shape their lives so that they can live for another two, three, or five decades, when transhumanists promise these technologies will arrive. People are to take hundreds of pills, change their behavior, adopt exercise routines, all to avoid death. Fear of death should govern contemporary life. Inherently valuable present activities are sacrificed for the hoped-for future. Transhumanists do nothing to examine present desires, and they do not encourage attention to present duties to others, since investments in these technologies would displace investment in the basic health needs of today's poor. Moreover, the transhumans for whom these technologies are developed may bear little relation to those surrounding us to whom we owe duties.[77] John Harris says, "It is difficult … to see any powerful principled reasons to remain human if we can create creatures, or evolve into creatures, fundamentally 'better' than ourselves."[78] Yet, even these transcendent beings would not possess themselves or the present. They would still

76. For this *ars moriendi* in end-of-life ethics, see Christopher P. Vogt, *Patience, Compassion, Hope, and the Christian Art of Dying Well* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
77. McKenny, "Transcendence, Technological Enhancement, and Christian Theology," 186.
78. John Harris, *Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 40.

be desiring different experiences. In Kurzweil's picture, they would be preoccupied with trying to develop faster-than-light travel or the ability to generate alternate universes.[79] If one does not flourish in the present, one never will, no matter how much technological power one has. Even transhumans will remain subject to their desires for more.

Conclusion

This argument does not mean that we should reject any technologies that extend life. Part of one's obligations to others and some of the ways by which one can overcome the technocratic paradigm consist in eliminating concrete causes of suffering (*LS* 112), and many of these are diseases or other conditions that shorten life. Society already provides life extension in a demographic sense by caring for people's needs through public health measures, although far too little for the poorest in the world and in our society. Similarly, confronting concrete causes of suffering like Alzheimer's might have the indirect consequence of extending life. Such technologies are not problems. The problem arises in the direct quest for indefinite life extension as it articulates with current social forms that drive social acceleration. With these structures in place, living indefinitely would not lead to happiness. Instead, it would continue to drive individuals from themselves in the search for novelty, it would lead to continued anxiety over the changing future, it would continue to destabilize contemporary selves and relationships, it would continue to drive individuals from a concern with the eternal to a grasping for ephemeral life experiences, and people would continue to be disappointed as they see all that they still miss. Precisely because continued life is a matter of indifference to them, the Stoic sage or Christian saint might be able to use such technologies well, but, as persons currently exist, the project of life extension exhibits and encourages all the problems of social acceleration.

The essential concern about life extension technology should not be that it may offend against divine limits given in nature by overcoming the constraints of human lifespans through Promethean efforts. Instead the concern should be that we will miss the peace and joy that could be attained in the present moment and ultimately in the next life if we could just get ourselves into right relationship with God, others, and the self. The problem is not that we idolatrously seek to become like God, but that we fail to take the actions that might help to shape ourselves into the likeness of God. The danger is that by focusing on adding one more experience or year to our lives we will fail to attend to the ways we can become virtuous and find completion now. One must seek a qualitatively different sort of life rather than just a quantitative increase in the distracted existence society currently encourages. There is little point in seeking an infinite series of moments if one is not truly present in any of them.[80]

79. Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*, 366.
80. I would like to thank Gerald McKenny, China Scherz, George Khushf, and Devan Stahl for comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Author Biography

Paul Scherz (PhD, genetics, Harvard; PhD, moral theology, Notre Dame) is assistant professor of moral theology and ethics at the Catholic University of America and faculty fellow at the Institute for Human Ecology there. He is also a visiting faculty fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. He studies the relationship between science and religion, bioethics, virtue ethics, and Stoicism. Current projects include the moral formation of scientists, and risk in Christian ethics.