

SHORT COMMUNICATION

From Life Expectancy to the Meaning of the Life: A New Conception

Abstract

A criterion for measuring the level of human health in societies is life expectancy. However, this quantitative index seems to be a way to theoretical and practical mysticism. The paradoxical thinking of death and happiness, the hope of living while thinking of a certain death in theology has a long history. The index of life expectancy is empirical, quantitative and logical and gives meaning to life. A person comes from submission, obedience and acceptance and is promoted to the level of passion and happiness.

Key words: Life expectancy, Mysticism, Qur'an, Meaning of life, Death, Happiness

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Amin Derakhshanfar¹

1- Ph.D., Diagnostic Laboratory Sciences and Technology Research Center, School of Paramedical Sciences, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Correspondence:

Amin Derakhshanfar
Ph.D., Diagnostic Laboratory Sciences and Technology Research Center, School of Paramedical Sciences, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

derakhshanfar@sums.ac.ir

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Introduction

Life expectancy is one of the criteria for measuring the level of human health in societies. It is the expectation of a person who hopes to be alive for certain number of years.¹ This concept is measured and calculated by means of certain criteria, such as care for mothers during pregnancy, baby care, management of children's diseases, etc. Increasing or decreasing the numerical value of this index indicates the health status of a target population. For example, in Iran, this index was estimated to be 50 and 73 years in 1979 and 2018, respectively. Typically, the health status of countries around the world is ranked according to this index.² The above definition is a glimpse into the meaning and use of the life expectancy index from a medical perspective.

Life expectancy and meaning of life

It seems that this quantitative index can be a way to theoretical and practical mysticism. What is noteworthy is that a finding in the realm of medicine can lead to the promotion of human self-awareness, self-purification, and certain objective effects in the outside world. This index benefits from the aforementioned issues. Life expectancy is expressed by the number that appears as the possible end of the individual's presence in this world. This warning number is informative and at the same time promising.

First

The life expectancy index eliminates the illusory landscape of eternal-material life, and thus depicts death as a definite phenomenon. The Qur'an points to the imminent death)and worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty [death)].³ René Descartes said "I think, therefore I am",⁴ and now it's possible to say "I die, therefore I am".

Second

The issue of the certainty of death is the point of departure of man not only to the immortal world, but also to his passionate participation in the mortal world. Unlike popular assumptions, man accepts death and as he is sure that he will die, he tries to enjoy himself prior to death! It seems that energy and joy are the result of thinking of death.

Third

Considering the average lifespan in a target population, the current age of the individual minus the life expectancy

1- Cambois, 1999: 7-34.

2- Roknabadi, 2018.

3- The holy Qur'an. Surah Al-Hijr: 99.

4- Descartes, 1992: 39.



is equal to the remainder of the individual's life. The result of this simple calculation is believed to be the end of the worldly life. Termination and ending, in other words, the definite amount of the existence of each phenomenon, which the Qur'an also points out (indeed, all things we created with predestination)⁵, makes targeting and planning possible. Therefore, intelligent people, who think of death, are usually time-dependent to reach their goals within a reasonable and probable time span. Time is such a powerful element that God in the Qur'an swears by time.^{6,7} Timing, goal-orientation, and utilitarianism avoid futility and boredom, which in turn reduces depression.

Fourth

The paradoxical thinking of death and happiness, the hope of living while thinking of the certainty of death in theology has a long history. Imam Moosa Kazem (the seventh Shiite Imam, 128-183 A. H.) says: live as if you will always be alive and worship so much as if you are leaving the world.⁸ Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi (604-672 A. H.), as the most prominent Muslim mystics, believes death is not the "breaking off or end of life" rather it is the beginning of the eternal life. According to Rumi, "death's encounter with man" and "human encounter with death" is proportionate to one's way of life. Rumi's ideas in this regard is categorized as belonging to meta-naturalist camp since he considers the love in God and moving toward him the underlying factor in meaningfulness of life and sees death as the essential part of life and as the main factor of spiritual evolution.⁹ According to Plato (an Athenian philosopher, 424-347 B.C), death thinking is one of the main concerns of the philosopher. He believes in Socrates' (an Athenian philosopher, 470-399 B.C) happiness at death as his belief in life after death.¹⁰

Fifth

The index of life expectancy is empirical, quantitative and logical, which leads to theoretical and practical mysticism in order to give meaning to life. If Victor Frankl (an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, 1905-1997) speaks of logotherapy, in a way, meaning boosting life expectancy,¹¹ one might say that the intuitive understanding of life expectancy enhances the meaning of life in a given time frame (logography!).

5- The holy Qur'an. Surah Al-Qamar: 49.

6- The holy Qur'an. Surah Al-Asr: 1.

7- Makarem Shirazi, Available at: <http://quran.anhar.ir/tafsir-14616.htm>. Accessed in 1398.09.17.

8- Majlesi, 2012: 138-1691.

9- Akbarzadeh, 2014: 1-4.

10- Rahmati, 2006: 79-118.

11- Saffarinia, 2018: 482-93.



Conclusion

The life expectancy index, while being the result of health condition and the health of the body and its longevity, helps the mental health of humans. Thus, middle aged crisis and aging anxiety decrease due to the quality of living. A person comes from submission, obedience and acceptance and is promoted to the level of passion and happiness.

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