



CALL FOR PAPERS

***The Philosophy and Theology of Immortality***

**21-23 May 2015**

International and Interdisciplinary Conference

&

**Pre-Conference Workshop: 20 May 2015**

The School of Politics, Philosophy, and International Studies & The School of Social Sciences

University of Hull

<http://www.hull.ac.uk/immortality>

**The Conference**

Human beings, like other biological organisms, die and their bodies decay. But is death the end of existence or a gateway to an afterlife? The postponement of death or the hope for some form of post-mortem existence remain preoccupations of humanity, despite an overtly materialistic or secular stance in many Western societies. Whether this is understood as merely the temporary, though extreme, elongation of life or as life everlasting, these notions raise profound philosophical and theological questions relating to personal identity, the nature of the human person, the nature of consciousness and its contingency (or otherwise) on the body, the desirability and meaningfulness of indefinite existence, the badness of death and the goodness of life, the relationship between death and meaning, and so forth. Historically, religious traditions have claimed the prerogative of speculation and interpretation in all matters of eternal life and immortality. More recently, however, some people have turned to science and technology (e.g., cryogenics, nanotechnology, regenerative medicine, cybernetics, and mind uploading) for the realisation of what William Godwin once called 'earthly immortality'.

Funded by a generous research grant from the Immortality Project at the University of California, Riverside (supported by the John Templeton Foundation), this event will focus on philosophical and theological issues pertaining both to traditional conceptions of immortality and contemporary 'trans-humanist' notions of radical life extension.

**Paper Proposals**

We welcome paper proposals on a broad range of philosophical and theological issues concerning immortality and radical life extension. In particular, we are interested in papers that explore one or more of the following themes:

**1. Identity and Immortality**

Conceptions of personal identity (psychological continuity, memory-based, dualism, animalism, etc.) and their implications for the possibility of personal survival. What is the human being or human person? How could there be personal identity after the body ceases to exist?

## **2. Mind and Immortality**

Metaphysical models of the mind and personal immortality. The immateriality of the soul and its immortality. Does the soul (construed as an immortal, spiritual substance) exist? Is every soul immortal? The relation of the mind to the body. Is this relation merely contingent? Is materialism compatible with the belief in immortality?

## **3. The Psychology and Science of Immortality**

Empirical arguments for and against the possibility of an afterlife. Do parapsychology or near-death experiences provide empirical support for an afterlife, and if so, how compelling is this evidence? The psychological antecedents of belief in immortality. Does belief in immortality come from wishful thinking (Hume)? Is the denial of death psychologically necessary for human well-being (Sartre)? Or does clear-sighted acceptance of the finitude of life facilitate a more vital mode of being (Heidegger)?

## **4. Ethics of Immortality**

The desirability, or otherwise, of immortality. Meaning and immortality. Are we cognitively capable of grasping the nature of infinity in a way that is adequate to evaluating infinite life spans? The relation between the badness of death and the desirability of immortality. Is mortality necessary for meaning in life (Heidegger)? Or, conversely, is mortality prohibitive of meaning (Tolstoy)? What is the moral significance, if any, of belief in immortality? The implications of mortality and immortality for the value of human existence. What is the relationship between justice and immortality? What effect, if any, does belief in an afterlife have on human ethical behaviour? Could we still have virtues like courage if we knew we couldn't die?

## **5. Trans-humanism and Immortality**

Digital immortality. Mind uploading and conceptions of mind and personal identity. Longevity and the postponement of bodily death. Radical life extension and the value of life. Would a radically extended life be a desirable life? Radical life extension and population growth. What would be the social and economic consequences produced by radical life extension? The quasi-religious significance of trans-humanist narratives of immortality. Technological eschatology and trans-humanist survival.

## **6. Theology and Immortality**

Death, immortality, and theodicy. Theologies of the afterlife in western, non-western, and neo-pagan religious traditions and their contemporary challenges. What are the theological implications of contemporary popular conceptions of the afterlife? The theological necessity of death. Modes of immortality: bodily resurrection, rebirth, reincarnation. The afterlife as 'technological space': heaven, hell, purgatory. Theology and trans-humanism.

### **Abstract Submission & Deadline:**

Please submit a 300-400 word abstract and a brief bio including your institutional affiliation no later than 1st February 2015. All submissions will be peer reviewed. Please note that the abstracts cannot be revised after submission. Accepted paper presentations should be no longer than 30 minutes. Paper submissions should be directed to [submissions@hull.ac.uk](mailto:submissions@hull.ac.uk). All other enquiries regarding the call for papers or the conference should be directed to [immortality@hull.ac.uk](mailto:immortality@hull.ac.uk).

**About the Conference**

This conference is funded by a generous research grant from the [Immortality Project at the University of California](#), Riverside (supported by the John Templeton Foundation).

**Confirmed Keynote Speakers**

*John Harris*, Sir David Alliance Professor of Bioethics, University of Manchester

*Richard Swinburne*, Emeritus Nolloth Professor of the Christian Religion, University of Oxford

**Pre-Conference Workshop*****Transhumanism and Immortality*****20 May 2014**

We will be holding a pre-conference workshop with invited guest speakers on philosophical and theological issues pertaining to transhumanism and radical life extension/immortality. Attendance at the workshop is free, though we ask participants to register for the workshop. More information about the workshop and the registration link for the workshop can be found online: <http://www.hull.ac.uk/immortality>.

**Invited speakers for the workshop are:**

*Benedikt Göcke*, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

*Michael Hauskeller*, University of Exeter

*Anders Sandberg*, University of Oxford

*Susan Schneider*, University of Connecticut

*Stefan Sorgner*, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

**Conference Venue:**

University of Hull

Cottingham Road

Hull, HU6 7RX

United Kingdom

**Conference Funding / Costs / Registration:**

Due to the generous grant from the Immortality Project, we are pleased to be able to offer bursaries for speakers/delegates. Bursaries will cover the conference fee, refreshments, conference reception and conference dinner, a bus excursion to Beverley Minster (<http://beverleyminster.org.uk/>) and a generous subsidy for accommodation for two nights. In the first instance, bursaries shall be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to speakers whose papers are accepted for presentation. If any bursaries remain, they will then be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to postgraduate student delegates.

Registration details and registration fees for delegates without a bursary will be announced at the conference website: <http://www.hull.ac.uk/immortality>.

### **VISA and UK Border Control**

Unfortunately, we are unable to assist with any VISA related queries. We recommend that you contact your embassy.

### **Conference Website / Contact**

Website: <http://www.hull.ac.uk/immortality>

Paper submissions: [submissions@hull.ac.uk](mailto:submissions@hull.ac.uk)

Enquiries: [immortality@hull.ac.uk](mailto:immortality@hull.ac.uk)

### **Organizing Team**

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