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## Death in Dualism

In this paper, I plan to address the “Cessation Thesis,” presented by Cody Gilmore in his paper, “The Metaphysics of Mortals: Death, Immortality, and Personal Time.” By building upon Gilmore’s view, I will be able to successfully argue why Dualism is important in relation to the Cessation Thesis. In the first part of my paper, I will define relevant terms and provide an in-depth look at Gilmore’s and my arguments. In the second part of the paper, I will address counterarguments to my Dualism argument. To start, I will provide an overview of the issue and precise definitions of Gilmore’s Cessation Thesis and Dualism.

We must first understand the difference between the two times, external and personal, which Gilmore discusses in his paper. When discussing death in the modern era, people tend to speak about it in regard to “external time” or real time. External time is time measured for the whole universe, which applies to every entity. But, Cody Gilmore believes that another type of time exists, “personal time.” Personal time is time that affects one’s life specifically and does not need to follow the same line as external time (Gilmore 3271). Through this distinction, Gilmore considers how death is viewed if one’s personal and external time differ.

Gilmore’s central claim in his paper is what he calls “The Cessation Thesis.” His claim is as follows: “Necessarily, for any  $x$  and any  $y$ ,  $x$  dies at  $y$  if and only if  $y$  is an endpoint of some life-period of  $x$ ” (Gilmore 3276). This claim leaves the possibility of someone existing infinitely

or being “immortal” if they experience an infinite amount of personal time even if it is only in a short amount of external time. For example, he writes, “If I were going to cease to exist 1 h from now in external time but I somehow managed to pack infinitely many years of personal time into that hour. . . in such a way that there is no final year of my personal time, I ought to regard this as being almost as good as ‘normal immortality’” (Gilmore 3272). Gilmore is aware of the various holes in his Cessation Thesis and his goal of the paper is to try to fill these gaps by addressing rebuttals and using in-depth examples to achieve this. I will not be addressing the gaps or rebuttals in the argument. However, the goal of my paper is to provide another way of viewing and supporting Gilmore’s Cessation Thesis.

My addition to Gilmore’s Cessation Thesis is that to understand immortality in regard to personal time one must also consider what death is in regard to Dualism. The term Dualism refers to the belief that in a certain domain, there are two groups or categories of things. In particular, Dualism in the philosophy of mind refers to the theory that there is a difference between the physical and mental aspects of humans -- their mind and their body. These two entities are completely separate parts. There exists a distinction between Dualism in the philosophy of mind versus Materialism in the philosophy of mind. As explained earlier, Dualists believe that two parts make up a human, their physical body and a non-physical mind. On the other hand, Materialists believe that everything in our world exists as a material entity. Therefore in regards to philosophy of mind, everything about humans is physical; there is no non-physical mind guiding our actions. In order to make my argument, I will focus specifically on Dualist’s beliefs and ignore the beliefs of Materialists. I will also focus on Dualists that specifically believe that the mind can outlive the body.

By focusing on the idea that the mind can outlive the body, I open the discussion on Gilmore's Cessation Thesis. This addition of Dualism requires determining what death exactly is regarding the mind and the body. I call the idea of considering death in regard to Dualism the Death in Dualism argument. I believe that this distinction is important because there is the possibility of one's mind existing after the body dies. The two main ways of the mind living on that I will discuss in this paper is existing in the "Afterlife" or existing inside of a computer. These two possibilities open up the idea that one's mind can live forever. We must consider the existence of one's mind in the after-life or in a computer as an additional argument to support Gilmore's claim that humans can live forever in personal time.

In the remainder of this paper, I will present the distinction between personal and external time and the Cessation Thesis to fully explain Gilmore's claim. Next, I will provide my own Death in Dualism thesis, explaining how it furthers Gilmore's argument by adding to the discussion. Then, I will provide an in-depth explanation of how one's mind can survive after death to strengthen my argument. Next, I will explain the two possible counter-arguments to my thesis, and I will provide rebuttals to these counterclaims. Lastly, I will provide a conclusion that explains the process I use to respond to Gilmore's argument, support my own claims, and address the limitations of my argument.

To fully explain Gilmore's claim, I must first go more in-depth on the difference between personal and external time. Personal time, which Gilmore derived from Lewis (1976) and Sorensen (2005), is the subjective experience of time relative to one person that differs from external time (Gilmore 3271). Each person can experience time differently, so they each have their own personal time. For example, Billy goes into a machine that slows down time for

everything in that machine. Billy experiences a one month time passage in that machine while time in the rest of the universe and for everyone else has actually elapsed five years. The time that actually occurs in the rest of the universe and for everyone else, in this case five years, is called external time.

Gilmore uses the idea of the difference between personal and external time to argue his Cessation Thesis. In his Cessation Thesis, his main goal is to argue that the death and immortality of a person should be determined by their personal time. By experiencing life for an infinite amount of time, even if actual or external time is only a few seconds, someone could be, in effect, immortal. He comes to the conclusion that “Personal time has a certain role to play in the correct account of what death and immortality are” (Gilmore 3272). I believe that the correct account of death is not the death of the body, but instead the death of the mind. Although Gilmore expresses neutrality on this issue, my view is that one’s existence after the death of the body through the mind can be used as another way of supporting his immortality in personal time argument. The belief that the death of the mind is the correct account of death has led me to develop my Death in Dualism argument.

My Death in Dualism argument is as follows:

- P1. It is believed that a person dies or ceases to exist when their body dies
- P2. A person’s mind may continue to exist after their body dies
- P3. If a person’s body dies, but their mind continues to exist, then they should still be considered as alive

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Conclusion: A person should still be considered as alive if their mind exists after their body dies

To comprehend my argument, we must first understand how someone may actually go on to exist after their body dies. One way of this, linking one's mind to a computer, is seen in Science Fiction but also will likely be a reality soon. For example, the company Neuralink is currently building brain-machine interfaces in order to link one's mind to an operating machine such as a computer. If they are successful in placing one's mind into a computer, then I believe that is a way of making humans immortal through personal time. Even if one's body dies, as long as their mind still exists and *they* are experiencing consciousness, then they must still be considered as alive. Although some may perceive that putting one's mind in a computer is just putting a copy of their mental states, I believe that it is actually a transferral of the mind. For the sake of my argument, I will assume that they cannot continue to exist separately from their mind in the computer. Later on in this paper I will address the counterargument that the person in the computer may not be the same person as the person whose body died by using John Locke's conception of self.

The other kind of existence after the death of one's body is through the after-life. After a person dies, many people believe that they live on in an after-life. Although there are many beliefs and ideas on what the after-life exactly is, one common thought is that based on one's personal morality, a person gets sent to Heaven or Hell. If a person's body dies and they get sent to Heaven for example, they will still be conscious and exist. Although their body is dead, their mind will live on and be immortalized in that Afterlife.

Personal time is the subjective experience of time by someone, regardless of external time. So, if someone's physical body dies, but their mind gets transferred to a computer or they get sent to the Afterlife, then this person is still experiencing life and time -- just in that computer

or in the Afterlife. So, one's existence after the body ceases to, should still count as personal time because they are conscious and will have the same or similar experience as they did when their body was alive. Therefore, the death of the body should not count as the endpoint of their life. And if the death of the body is not the endpoint of one's life, they can in effect become immortal. This immortality works in personal time, which directly supports Gilmore's argument.

One rebuttal to my addition of the Death in Dualism argument is that Gilmore has already stated that he is focusing on cases where the death of the body counts as the death of the person. Although Gilmore does express this, I believe that my addition of the Death in Dualism argument reinforces another way that one can be immortal through personal time. Gilmore addresses the issue of the death of one's body in regard to his Cessation Thesis: "First, it is neutral with regard to whether things continue to exist—as corpses or dead bodies, say—after they die. When a thing makes the transition from being alive to being dead, it is alive for a while, then not—regardless of whether the thing continues to exist" (Gilmore 3276). Although Gilmore is neutral on the topic of whether one counts as alive if their mind continues to exist after their body dies, he fails to mention the distinction between mind and body anywhere in his paper. I believe that he should not be neutral on this distinction by mentioning it in his paper and using it to his advantage. By bringing up the idea that a person can be considered as alive if their mind exists after their body dies, he can expand the number of cases that support his argument. For example, earlier in this paper, I mentioned two possible ways, the computer and the Afterlife scenarios where one's mind can exist forever in personal time. These two cases directly support his immortality in personal time argument, and it would be beneficial for Gilmore to examine these cases and the distinction between death of mind and body.

Here is an example that accentuates how Gilmore's inclusion of the distinction between mind and body will be beneficial to his argument. Let's say a man named Max gets into a car crash and his body physically dies, but his brain is still slightly active. Eight minutes after the crash, scientists take his brain and connect his still active neurons to a computer. Max stops experiencing life for eight minutes due to the fact that his body is considered dead, but once he is transferred into the computer, his personal experience of time starts again. Max is now experiencing life again. And in the computer, thousands of years for him is actually only one millisecond of time on Earth. Therefore, Max experiences millions of years of personal time within a single day of external time, thus allowing Max to be immortal in regard to personal time. So, this example proves both my point and Gilmore's Cessation Thesis that one can be immortal in regard to personal time even once their body has physically died.

Gilmore's neutrality on whether one is alive if their mind exists after the body dies allows for cases where one's infinite amount of personal time takes place in the ten minutes before their body dies. However, I believe that he can mention the distinction between mind and body while still having his ten minute cases ring true. If Gilmore accepted the distinction between the mind and body, his case where someone fits in an infinite amount of personal time in the last ten minutes could be altered to still be valid. If he stated that an infinite amount of personal time was fit in the last ten minutes before the person's body *and* mind died, it would have the same meaning. Also, he would still achieve the same argument no matter what point during one's life they experience the infinite amount of personal time. It does not change the meaning of immortality in personal time whether this is ten minutes before their body dies or ten minutes after they were born.

Another counterargument to my Death in Dualism argument is that the person in Afterlife or the computer is not the same person as whose body died, so technically they are not immortal. For example, we can refer to the earlier case where Max dies from a car crash and gets placed into a computer and consider a new case where Jane dies after being struck by lightning and is sent to Heaven. One might argue that the Max in the computer is not the same person as the Max who was in the car crash and Jane in Heaven is not the same person as the Jane who was struck by lightning. However, John Locke would argue that Max and Jane are the same people in the computer and Afterlife as they were before they died. Locke's conception of self is that personal identity is based on having a continued consciousness. He writes, "in this alone consists personal Identity . . . And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that Person; it is the same self now it was then; and 'tis by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that Action was done." (Gordon-Roth 86). So, since Max is conscious in the computer, and Jane is conscious in Heaven, remembering their whole lives on Earth, and being able to think about their futures in a computer or in Heaven, they are the same people as they were before and after the deaths of their bodies, and therefore are immortal in their personal time.

In this paper, I have given an account of Gilmore's Cessation Thesis and his belief that it is possible for someone to be immortal with regard to personal time. I have supported his argument by providing an additional factor, the idea that one's mind can exist after the death of the body, thus defending immortality in personal time. Through my examples of Max in a computer and Jane in Heaven and the rest of my rebuttals to counter-arguments, I maintain my claim that one can be immortal with regard to personal time as long as their mind continues to



exist after their body. I also addressed how Gilmore may not want to be neutral on this issue because he could use my ideas to his advantage, furthering his own argument. Since this is a relatively short paper, I did not address this subject completely. There still are issues with the idea of Dualism as a whole. I did not address whether Dualism actually exists; I just assumed it in order to make my argument. I also chose to ignore the beliefs of Materialists in order to make my argument. I also assumed that transferring one's mind to a computer is possible and that an Afterlife is possible. However, the ideas that these assumptions brought up should still be considered as valid.

Works Cited

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