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Topic 2. “Perhaps you have had the thought that nothing really matters, because in two hundred years we’ll all be dead.”

Thomas Nagel: *What does it all mean?* (1987) Oxford University Press, p. 95

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Death is a part of life, as paradoxical as it sounds. The concept of death, even though studied throughout the centuries, is still widely unknown to the human kind. We are born, we live and then we die. What happens in-between those periods is subjective for each individual, and what happens after is a mystery. For some, to die means to go either to heaven or to hell. Others firmly believe in reincarnation and that they shall be born as something/someone else in their next life depending on how good they have been in this one. And then there are those who believe that death is nothing more than falling asleep and never waking up. Eternal darkness. Being one of them, I shall try to explain our purpose in life the way I see it.

There is a pattern to death. It happens to all of us and if something occurs regularly and to that extent, then it is wholly natural. Accepting death as natural occurrence is a very important step. In nature, there is a circular concept to each thing. Being born and dying is just one of the many examples. In that sense, one would say that we are born to die. And that is depressing to say the least. Why does it matter what we do when everything is bound to eventually fall into oblivion? It does not - that is a simple answer. But I am not a simple person.

Let’s start with an obvious example. Animals. They are not blessed with *ratio*, as we are. They function solely by instinct. Does, let us say, a bee know its destiny? Certainly not. They are driven to fly, fertilize flowers and make honey. They do not care about their death for they do not know it exists. In order to exist one needs to be the subject of thinking, as said by Parmenides. That does not mean that death would not exist if we suddenly stopped thinking of it. It simply means that we would not *be bothered* by it if we were not aware of its existence. So, the bee, compelled to survive and make honey, is only aware of those instincts and therefore driven by them until the end.

What happens then, when you throw *reason* into the mix? You get humans, with minds that are able to comprehend things. Some people know their purpose, some struggle to find it. No matter which group they belong to, every person has at least once had an identity crisis. *Why am I here on this planet, in this particular time? What is my duty to fulfill and why does it matter if I don’t when we’re all going to die anyway?*

For a moment, let us get back in history. Why did the Egyptians build the pyramids when they were familiar with the concept of death? They could have easily rested on the sand knowing well that they would die anyway. Pharaohs wanted to display their power. To leave a *mark in history*. That is an important point to acknowledge. Being self-centered as we are, it is of great importance for humans to be remembered in some way no matter how insignificant or bad (wars, killings etc.) it may be on the larger scale, if it puts us in the spotlight of history for a while. And Egyptians have been on that spotlight since 2000 B.C. Why would scientists dedicate all of their time into discovering and describing new occurrences in nature if they didn't think that it would last and be somewhat helpful for generations to come. We still read Shakespeare's plays and sonnets (from 15th century) and study the laws of math that had been established ages ago. We also watch movies and listen to music from the past century. And we will continue to do it. Why? Because it gives us inspiration to make something of our own and hope that what we create will last for years to come even after our death. When you look at it from that standpoint, dying is only physical, for human legacy lives beyond them. That is why, give or take, almost everything we do in our lives matter. If not to make an impact on a whole civilization, then at least to make an impact on our offspring and the people surrounding us.

To conclude, I do think that death should not be frowned upon because it needs to exist in order for everything else to flow without turbulence. To keep a natural order of things in the long run (prevent overpopulation etc.) From a standpoint of an eighteen-year-old high school student maybe it's delusional of me to say, if not very predictable, that every human being is a creator of their own destiny and it is up to us as individuals if we want to be remembered and live beyond ourselves because of something we choose or didn't choose to do.