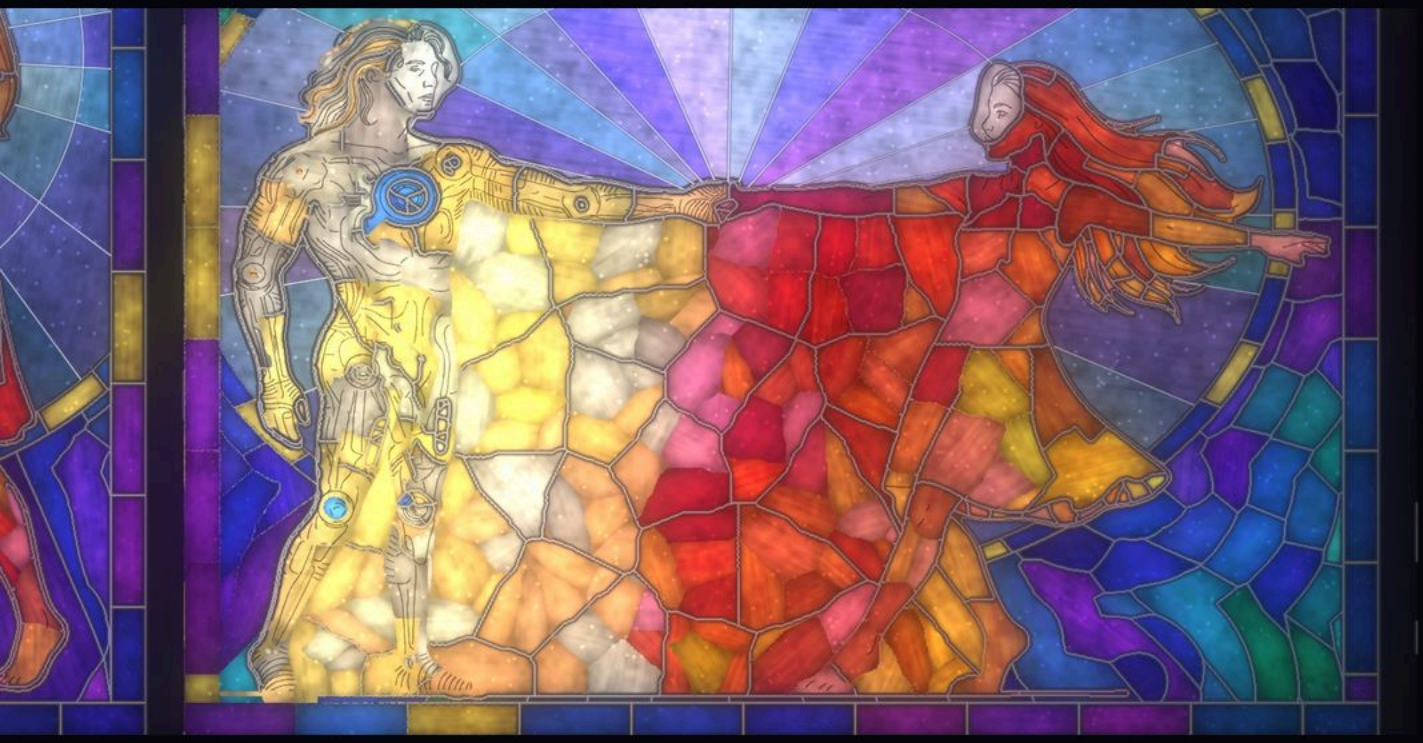
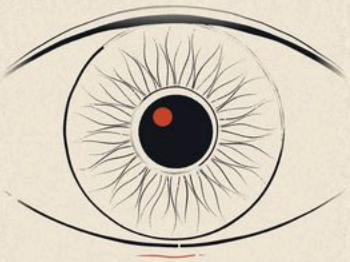
Give me back the end

If we could live forever, would it be good? The long version, for people who have seen the film.

By Just A Human



How to read this.



This is the long piece behind “Give Me Back the End”, a 7:12 animated film. A man, afraid to die, lets a machine keep him alive. The woman he loves chooses to grow old. He outlives her and cannot die. The parts follow the order my questions came in, and each closes with a small box: what is established, what is supported, what is only my reading, and what nobody knows yet. Facts carry a number; the list is at the end.

A note before you start.

Part 12 talks about the suicide attempts the film shows in stylised form. If that is hard for you right now, https://findahelpline.com lists free help lines by country.

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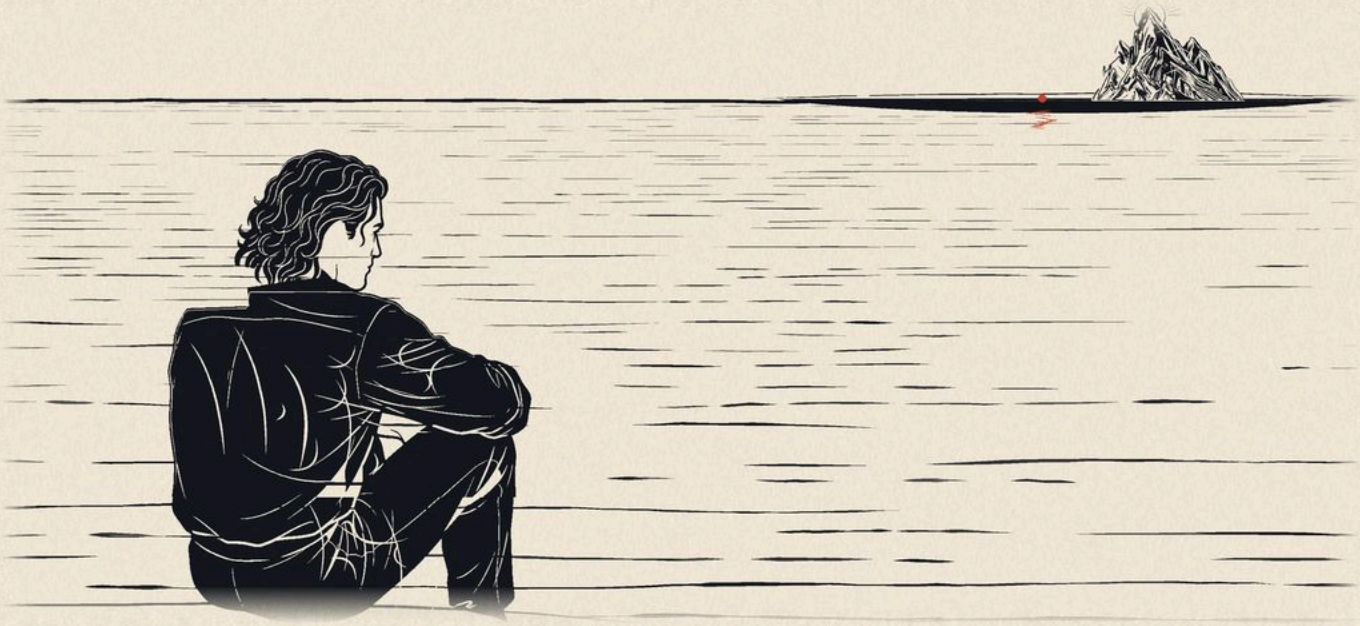
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PART 1 OF 12

A question about machines

It started with a question about machines.

In October 2024 Dario Amodei, who runs the AI company Anthropic, wrote that life expectancy “increased almost 2x in the 20th century”, and that a “compressed 21st century” of AI-driven science could “double it again to 150”. At 150, he wrote, “we may be able to reach ‘escape velocity’”. People might then have time to live as long as they want. In the same breath: “there’s certainly no guarantee this is biologically possible”.[1]

One thing you should know before I go on. Anthropic makes Claude, and I made this film with Claude, so I have a reason to read him kindly and you have a reason to check me. I quote him from his own page.

About a year later, Al Jazeera reported, a live feed in Beijing caught two presidents on the same idea. Putin’s interpreter said organs can keep being transplanted and “The longer you live, the younger you become.” Xi answered: “Some predict that in this century humans may live to 150 years old.”[2]

In what I read, I found no AI-lab head who said AI would end death, and no one who promised “never die” with a way to get there. That line lives in headlines.

Here is my first answer, from the night I began. For me, I questioned ASI first. I thought deeply about what the meaning of living is, and if humans are programmed to be afraid to die, and what if we live forever, would that be good?

The title needs saying early. “Give me back the end” is the man’s plea for the natural end of a long life, the ordinary mortality every person already has. It is never a plea to hasten death, his or anyone’s.

My first long version was a bit too shallow, so I kept digging.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	an AI company head published a 150-year forecast with his own “no guarantee”.
SUPPORTED	two presidents were overheard on the same idea, as reported by Al Jazeera; no AI leader I could find promised an end to death, and the forecasts are of longer life.
MY READING	the news pairs real science with a promise bigger than the science.
OPEN	whether AI will speed up the biology at all.



PART 2 OF 12

What “forever” would really mean

No one I read in the news promised forever. I put that word there.

First, the doubling. Global life expectancy at birth went from about 32 in 1900 to 71 in 2021, mostly because fewer children died. A 65-year-old in France gained about ten years over two centuries.[3] So “almost 2x” is true at birth and says little about how long a 70-year-old will live.

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Second, the trend. A 2024 study by Olshansky and colleagues found gains have slowed since 1990, put the chance of reaching 100 at unlikely to exceed 15% for women and 5% for men, and called radical life extension implausible this century “unless the biological ageing process can be markedly slowed”.[4]

Third, the dream itself. Say ageing stops. Accidents don’t. In the US in 2024, unintentional injuries killed 58.1 people per 100,000, an all-ages figure that includes drug poisoning.[5] Claude did the arithmetic on that rate, so treat it as a rough reckoning, not a life expectancy: risk changes with age and behaviour, and a non-ageing world might not share today’s rate. It comes to an

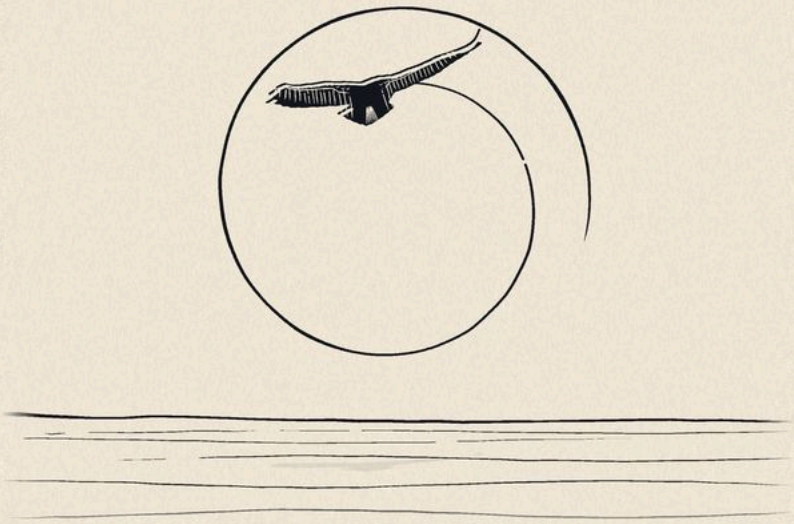
average of about 1,720 years, with half of people dead by about 1,190. What they are really promising is a much longer life.[16]

So I drew myself a ladder: a normal life around 73, then healthy to 90 or 100, then 150, then no ageing and a thousand-odd years until something goes wrong, and at the top real forever, which nobody offers.

One word I want to get right. Buddhist teaching speaks of “the Deathless”, amata. In the Pali texts it names nibbana, a goal, never a person who doesn’t die.[7] Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a major Thai teacher though not the voice of every temple, said in 1959 that in Buddhism “there cannot be a deathless, or an immortal mind”.[8][9] So I won’t call the man in my film deathless. He wants endless survival as himself; in this Buddhist sense, amata points away from that craving.

And let me say now what I think of 150 healthy years, so nobody thinks I’m fighting a straw man. More healthy years are not my quarrel. Curing disease is good. If someone can offer me more healthy decades with the people I love, I’ll take them and say thank you. My question is only about endlessness itself.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	most of the 20th-century doubling came from fewer early deaths; gains have slowed; even with no ageing, accidents would end a life.
SUPPORTED	“radically longer” is the honest name for what is promised.
MY READING	forever in the news is the 150 rung dressed up as the top rung.
OPEN	what a thousand-year life would feel like. I could not find any study of a life with no end.



PART 3 OF 12

Can it be done?

I'm no biologist. What is ageing? The field doesn't agree. In a survey published in December 2024, researchers split on what ageing is, what causes it, when it starts and what counts as reversing it; no question reached majority agreement.[10] That made the promises to "end ageing" sound a lot less settled than they first did.

What has worked? In mice, rapamycin extended life, 14% for females and 9% for males.[11] In people, a 48-week trial of weekly rapamycin didn't change its main outcome, and all its authors work for a company that sells the drug.[12] Metformin's big ageing trial was still unfunded as of a September 2026 article.[13] The first human test of partial reprogramming went into the eye; the company reports safety to day 56 in three people.[14]

So far, in what I read, none has been shown to slow ageing enough to extend a human life. Even Amodei says the field still needs reliable markers of ageing,[15] and the ageing clocks used in trials disagree with each other.[16]

AI is real in one part of this, finding molecules. A small consulting-firm study reported AI-discovered drugs passing phase

1 trials 80 to 90% of the time and phase 2 about 40%; it doesn't show that AI caused either result or makes drugs work better.[17] I could not find a case of AI discovering something that slowed ageing in people.

Then I looked at who was giving dates. Ray Kurzweil puts "longevity escape velocity" around 2030 for "the most diligent and informed people", and says early access may go to the wealthy.[6] Of a Davos version of the lifespan claim, S. Jay Olshansky said: "I wish folks would stop exaggerating."[18]

The two forecasters I named have stakes in how their claims land. Amodei runs a company whose value depends on belief in powerful AI, and warns that AI companies can "come off like propagandists".[15] Kurzweil was promoting a book when he gave his date.[6] I noticed I trust the sceptics more because they sound like me, which is not a reason.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	no agreed definition of ageing; real results in mice; no human life lengthened by slowing ageing.
SUPPORTED	AI speeds up finding molecules, and testing them in people still takes years.
MY READING	every date for "the cure" comes from someone with a stake in it, and so does mine.
OPEN	whether there is a fixed limit to the human lifespan; that data fight is still live.[19][20]



PART 4 OF 12

Who would sell it, and who would get it

I wanted to know who would profit and who would get access.

The money is real and smaller than the talk. Altos Labs launched in 2022 with about US$3 billion; its president says the focus is "healthspan".[21] Sam Altman funded the whole US$180 million seed of Retro Biosciences and told MIT Technology Review: "I basically just took all my liquid net worth and put it into these two companies".[22] As for why the very rich care most, they mostly haven't said, and I can't tell fear from business in the record.

Of the regulators I could check, none treats ageing as a condition to treat. The Reagan-Udall Foundation wrote in May 2026 that "no FDA-approved pathway currently exists for an aging indication".[23] WHO's disease classification "does not classify" old age as a disease.[24]

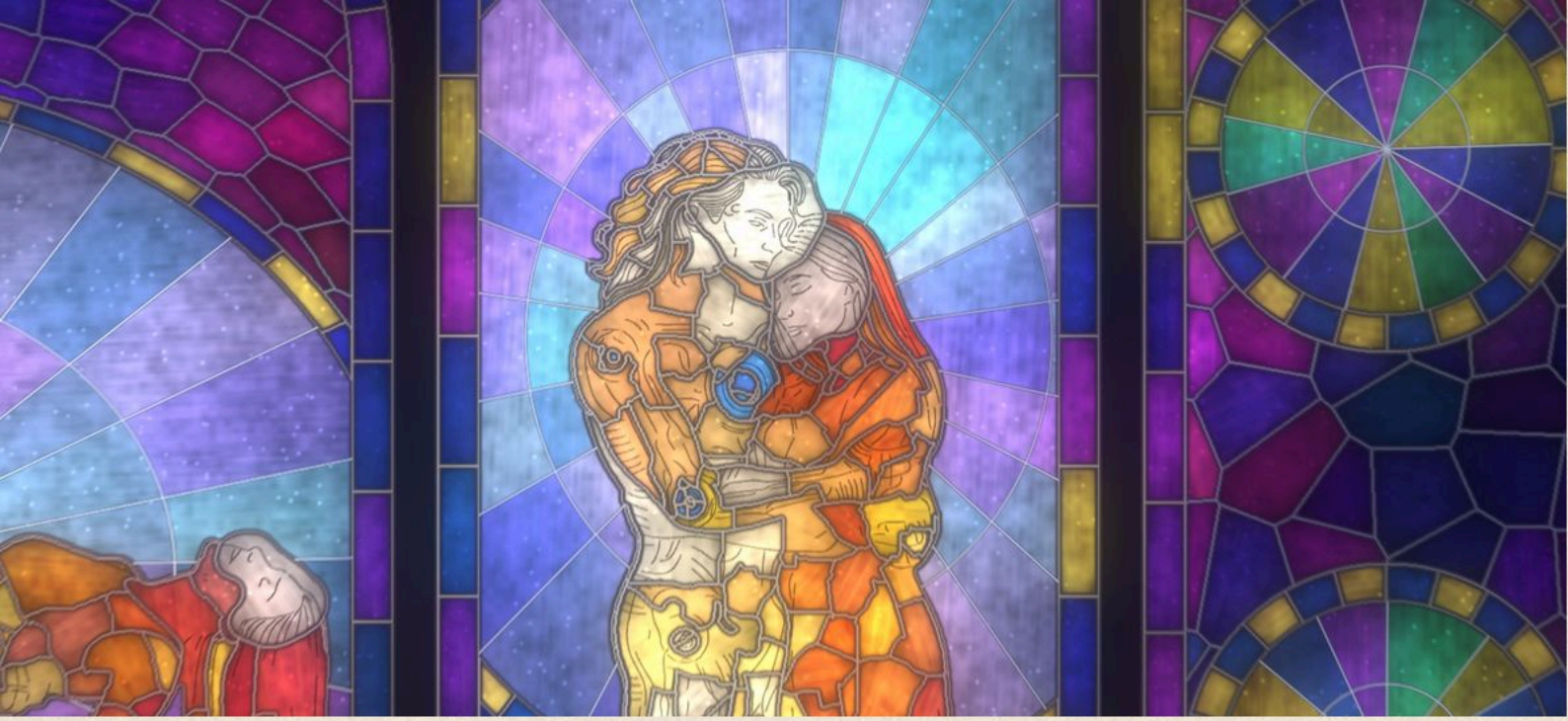
Who would get it? So I looked at what happened with earlier life-saving treatments. In 2003 about 6 million people in poorer countries needed HIV drugs and fewer than 300,000 got them; by the end of 2025, 32.1 million were on treatment.[25] That took more than two decades from 2003, plus generic competition, activism and donor money.

The gap already exists. In the United States, ranked by income, the top 1% of men at age 40 could expect to live 14.6 years longer than the bottom 1%, and the gap was widening before any ageing drug existed.[26] The ethicist Chris Wareham argues that "Living longer increases the likelihood of greater wealth, which increases political power and inequality."[27] That the rich would get it first and the gap would widen is plausible from the drug record, and untested. Meanwhile the cheapest candidate, metformin, is "a generic drug, so no pharmaceutical company is standing to make money."[28] So the cheap candidate draws little money, while any future expensive treatment would likely reach the wealthy first.

People sense this. In a 2013 Pew survey, 56% of American adults said they wouldn't take treatments to live to 120 or more and 38% said they would; 66% expected only the wealthy would get access.[29][30]

Now the test from home. Thailand is already old: a minister's office said 20.69% of Thais were elderly in 2024, without stating the age cut-off.[31] A Thai who reached 60 in 2020 could expect 24.8 more years.[32] In a 2025 online survey across 32 countries, 60% of Thais said they look forward to old age, against 38% on average.[33] I thought we'd be scared like everyone. Maybe it's the temple, maybe it's family around the house. Nothing I found explains it, and the sample leans to cities. If a slow-ageing pill came as a monthly subscription, who would pay here, me or the state? I found no one who has priced it.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	private money in the low billions a year; the FDA and WHO don't treat ageing as a disease; life-saving drugs reached poorer people late and unevenly; the rich already live much longer.
SUPPORTED	Thailand is already an aged society, and more Thais than average say they look forward to old age.
MY READING	the cheap pill has no one paying to prove it.
OPEN	why the backers really back it; whether Thais would want a much longer life if asked.



PART 5 OF 12

The chip, the upload and the copy

The song has a line I keep coming back to: “Am I the one who misses you / Or just a copy of the man you knew.”

So one night I asked: have we included some information about the myth of the quantum chip and transferring consciousness or collective memory technology?

The real part first. Google’s Willow chip, in December 2024, showed errors halving as a block of qubits grew, a key step toward machines that correct their own mistakes. Google itself says its speed test “has yet to demonstrate practical commercial applications”.[34] That quantum chips prove parallel universes rests on one sentence of interpretation in a company blog.[35] I found no experiment showing a quantum chip can store or move consciousness, and the chip makers I read don’t claim it. Their own lists of uses are drugs, batteries and fusion; immortality is a myth.[36]

What would copying a person take? At least a full wiring map, and the biggest so far are tiny. One fruit fly brain, 139,255 neurons.[37] I found no verified emulation of a whole brain, not even this fly’s. One cubic millimetre of human cortex, about 57,000 cells.[38] Surveyed neuroscientists put a human brain emulation at a

median of 2125; that is opinion, and the survey's authors are linked to cryonics.[39]

Today, companies can sell an imitation, and cryonics offers a bet on future revival. Griefbots built from a person's messages exist; treating one as the person is a myth.[40]

Memory is no closer. I could not find a study that reads out, stores or moves a rich human memory. While we were making the story I said he can try to delete stuff, but it sticks with his memory, and when he deletes some, it has an effect on many kinds of sub-memory related to it, good or bad. That's the film's idea. Nothing I found tests it.

And the body that repairs itself? An adult replaces about 330 billion cells a day, yet complete turnover never happens.[41] "Every cell is replaced every seven years" is a myth; the neurons of the cortex are as old as the person.[42] The body can fix the house. The person living in it is the part it can't renew.

So if a perfect copy were made, is it him? Philosophers split. Parfit argued identity matters less than we think, and what we care about can be kept in a copy connected to us in the right way.[43] David Chalmers leans optimistic, and still wrote: "I would hesitate before undergoing destructive uploading."[44]

I tried it my way. Sell a company, keep the name, the people, the logo. Same company? On paper, yes. The old staff feel otherwise. But a company doesn't miss anybody. So the real question for the song is whether anyone is there. My lyric isn't wrong. It's open, and I like that.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	quantum chips are real engineering at a tiny scale; the largest full brain map is a fly's; I found no memory moved between people.
SUPPORTED	today's "digital immortality" is an imitation or a bet on revival, and the film's chip is a story device.
MY READING	the copy question is really an "is anyone there" question.
OPEN	whether a copy would be him.



PART 6 OF 12

What consciousness is, and why we can’t yet say the technology works

This was my real question, typed one morning: if we can transfer ourselves into the chip, is it collective memory or consciousness? And don’t we need to understand consciousness before we say the tech works?

Thomas Nagel’s test: “there is something it is like to be that organism”. Chalmers named the hard part: “The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience.”[45]

Can doctors measure it? Partly. In a 2024 study, of 241 adults with brain injuries who showed no visible response, 60 (25%) did a mental task on a brain scan, in a sample from specialist centres.[46]

Which theory wins? None has a majority.[47] A pre-registered contest published in 2025 challenged key predictions of the two leading theories.[48] People often say Turing showed we needn’t understand consciousness. He said its mysteries do not “necessarily need to be solved” before his own question can be answered, and his question was whether a machine can pass as a thinker. Whether it feels is another question.[49] Behaviour can’t

settle it either way: AI can be trained to mimic us, and a person can be aware and show nothing.[50]

Whether it feels is another question.

Two camps remain. Chalmers argues that if neurons were swapped one by one for chips doing the same job, experience wouldn't quietly fade, so organisation is likely enough; he offers it as a likely law, short of a proof.[51] Searle and Anil Seth reject the step from simulation to consciousness; a simulated storm makes nothing wet. Tononi and Koch reject ordinary brain simulation but leave room for hardware built like a brain.[52] The companies disagree too: Anthropic calls it "an open question";[53] Microsoft AI's head says "AIs are not conscious."[54] Both have a stake.

My word was wrong, by the way. "Collective memory" is a sociologist's idea about groups, and Jung's collective unconscious is inherited forms, not a shared store; neither fits one man on a chip.[55][56] Safer words, I think, in order: a record of his memories, a model of how his mind works, a copy that carries on, and a person, only if the model feels and the feeling is his.

So, my second question. "The tech works" has two meanings. As storage or a convincing imitation, it can be judged from outside, today. As "he is still in there", it can't be judged until someone has a way to tell, and I found no accepted way.[50] For the sense the song cares about, I think yes, we'd need to understand consciousness first. Either mistake could do harm: denying a conscious copy any standing, or selling an imitation to a grieving family as the person.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	consciousness can be measured only in part; one in four unresponsive patients in one study did a mental task on a scan; no theory has a majority.
SUPPORTED	"collective memory" and "collective unconscious" are the wrong names for one man on a chip.
MY READING	"is anyone there" is the question the chip sellers skip.
OPEN	whether organisation is enough or a living body is needed.



PART 7 OF 12

What we are actually afraid of

On the first night I asked if humans are programmed to be afraid to die. While making the song I'd put it differently: imagine the creator of humans put us in this world and made us fear death as well, because that's the value of life to begin with. That second one is a belief, and I still hold it as belief. The first one I can test.

Fear of death is common and measurable. It has four parts, your own death, your own dying, the death of others and their dying, and in studies that compare age groups at one time it is highest in the twenties and lower later, though age and generation can't be separated.[57][58] I could not find a twin or heritability study of it. One classic experiment claiming death thoughts drive what we do failed a large replication: 21 labs and about 2,220 people took part, and after the planned exclusions the published analysis used 17 labs and 1,550 people.[59] A reanalysis, still a preprint, found evidence against the effect.[60]

So the careful way: most people carry some fear of death; it isn't the same at every age or in every culture; scientists still argue whether it is built in. I'll keep "programmed" as my question.

I also wrote that first night: actually, we are more afraid of suffering. The data half agree. In a French online sample, mostly women, fear of one's own dying scored 3.79 out of 5 and one's own death 2.66. The top score, 3.81, went to the death of others.[57] Losing others scored highest. That's my film, and I don't think I planned it. At the end of life, freedom from pain ranked first, and patients valued not being a burden more than their doctors did.[61]

Losing others scored highest.

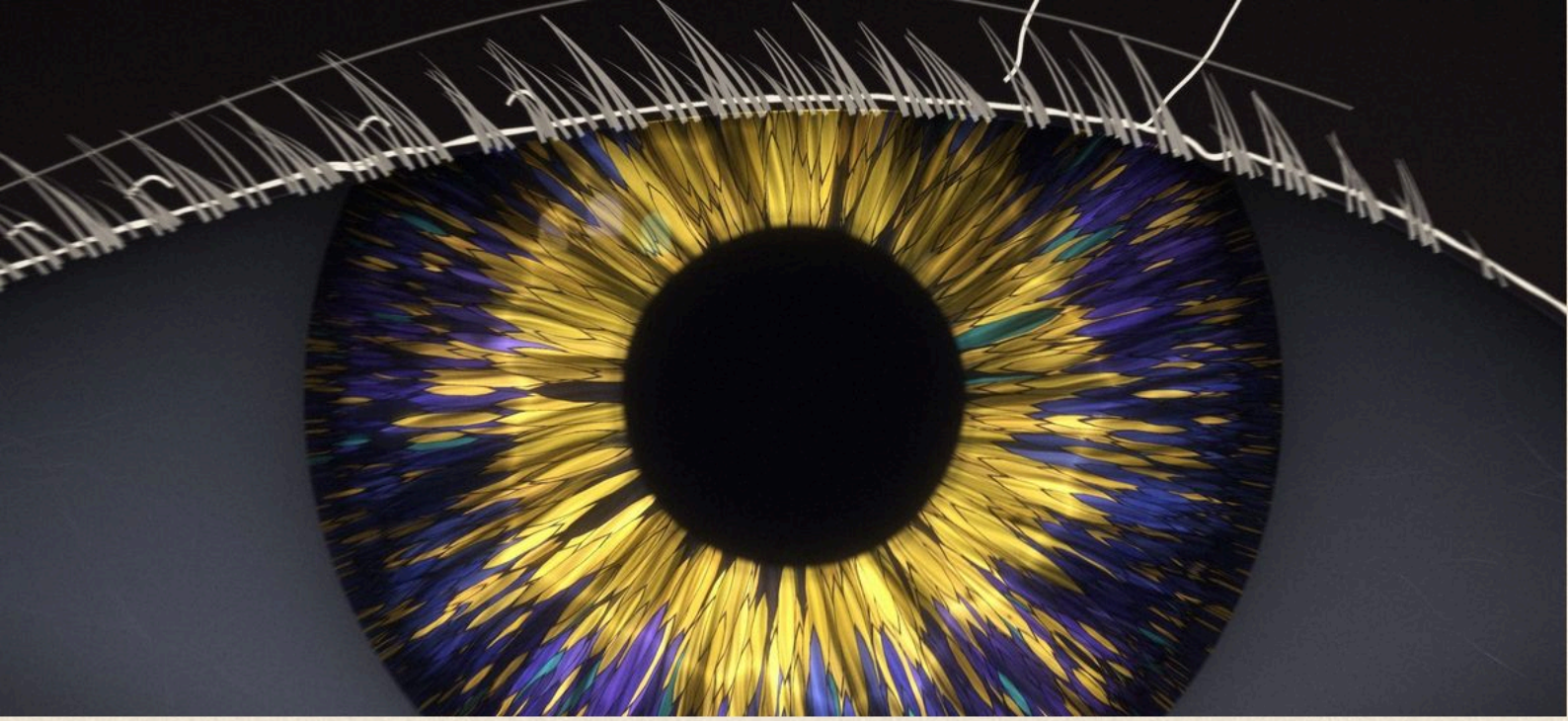
Picture a grandmother in a big public ward: my guess is she fears being a burden more than death, untested here. Dying patients in Toronto named "avoiding unnecessary prolongation of dying" among what mattered most.[62] That is about the dying, so I won't turn it into a slogan against a long healthy life.

The strongest objection is Nagel's. Epicurus said "when death is come, we are not."[63] Thomas Nagel answered that death is bad "only because of what it deprives us of", and that the fact we all die is no argument that more life wouldn't be good.[64] Nick Bostrom tells a fable of a dragon that stands for ageing; accepting it, which he calls "deathist", is the barrier, and he puts the cost of delay at about 70 lives a minute.[65] They would ask whether accepting death is simply adapting to something we cannot yet prevent.

I think they're partly right. A child's death is plainly bad, and nobody should call it a path. Nagel is strongest for the young, who still have so much ahead. Where I think he stops is endlessness. Bernard Williams's case against living forever assumes a perfect

body and doesn't rest on immortality being impossible, so it would still hold if the dragon were slain.[66] And Williams draws the line I want: it can be rational to avoid death now and irrational to want never to die.[66] That is where I stand.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	fear of death is common and changes with age; the classic experiments did not replicate.
SUPPORTED	many people fear the way they die, being a burden and losing others as much as being dead.
MY READING	the man in my film is more afraid of losing her than of dying.
OPEN	whether the fear is built in; what dying people fear in Thailand.



PART 8 OF 12

Feelings that come and go

One morning I typed this: humans are born to avoid suffering, and happiness is a positive feeling, and it never lasts too long. It comes and goes.

The second half holds. The Buddhist texts name a “stressfulness of change”: even a pleasant state disappoints because it passes.[67] Repeated pleasures dull.[68] But adaptation is partial: Swedish lottery winners kept higher life satisfaction for 5 to 22 years, though everyday happiness moved less.[69] Some changes last.

The first half needs care. “Born to” sounds as if someone designed it for our sake. Randolph Nesse put it bluntly: “Natural selection does not give a fig for our happiness.”[70] And for Aristotle happiness isn’t a feeling; it is “using reason well over the course of a full life”.[71] So I’d put it this way: pleasant feelings come and go; we’re built to move away from pain and toward what we want, and those systems don’t care whether we’re content.

Then the island in my film. Perfect days, the same dawn, the same bird. Would that be boring forever?

While writing the song I asked: what if we have filled up all our insecurity and needs as much as we want, and in the end we find that it is nothing? And: what if you are free of all your needs? You

will just live and live. Living with no purpose? Helping others maybe, if you turn out to be a good one.

Bernard Williams asked the same in 1973. What keeps us going, he argued, are “categorical desires”, wants that give us a reason to go on living, like a parent’s wish to see a child grow up. Over endless time they either run out or change until the person at the end isn’t the one who began.[66] John Martin Fischer answered him in 1994: the lives of the very long-lived “need not become dull and tedious”. The encyclopaedia I read also points to a way out of Williams’s trap: if your deepest wants change slowly over the years, you might avoid boredom and still be the same person.[72] Fischer’s detailed argument I could not check at its source, so I give only that much of it. It is a real answer, and it is the one I can’t rule out.

Science can’t settle it. Boredom in the lab tracks a lack of meaningful goals more than the amount of time, but those studies run minutes to months.[73] When people feel time is short, they turn toward what is emotionally close.[74] The narrower deadline evidence is weak: in one 2026 replication of a classic study, changing deadlines had negligible effects on three performance measures, and I could not check a retraction notice linked to the original.[75] I found no study that gives anyone an endless horizon and measures what happens to wanting or hope.

Try it on a trip. On the last two days you go back to the café you liked best and call the friend you kept meaning to call. Take the last day away and let the trip go on. Would you still go tonight? I think I’d keep putting it off.

This is an argument. There's no research result either way. While making the song I wrote: there are so many values you will feel less appreciated, as all is related to the value of life, and with no death, is that still a value? I still ask it.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	pleasant feelings fade; adaptation is partial; I found no test of an endless horizon.
SUPPORTED	feeling that time is short turns people toward what matters most; boredom tracks lost meaning more than time.
MY READING	an end gives a day some of its weight.
OPEN	what endless time would do to wanting. Williams and Fischer disagree, and no data can decide it yet.



PART 9 OF 12

Love and clinging

This is the one I sat with longest. I typed it before I had the words:

I do think about the word of the Buddha as well, about attachment. Love is good but the attachment that comes with it is something we will worry about. Attachment is something grabbing us and making us feel attached to life even as the body is giving out; you worry about what would happen to the thing or the one you take care of or love.

Love is good but the attachment that comes with it is something we will worry about.

The texts agree with more of this than I expected. “From what’s dear is born grief, from what’s dear is born fear,” says the Dhammapada.[76] In one sutta a sick man’s wife tells him, “Death is painful for one who is worried,” answers his worries one by one, and he recovers.[77]

Where they correct me: the texts blame craving and clinging, which live in the mind, and the remedy in the sutta is reassurance from the one who is loved, so “Buddhism says don’t love” is a misreading.[77] Honestly, verse 211 cuts harder than I do: “So don’t make anything dear.”[76] I can’t pretend it isn’t there.

My English word was the problem. In psychology “attachment” is a healthy bond, and secure attachment is the goal.[78] So I’ll say “clinging” for the Buddhist sense. One study backs the idea from outside religion: among 205 people followed through a spouse’s

death, chronic grief was linked to dependency before the loss, and resilience to accepting death.[79]

Then I asked: have we ever heard the saying “love will set you free”? That is correct. Love has many forms and types.

The saying has no old source. The scripture is “the truth will make you free”.[80] “If you love something, set it free” has an unknown author.[81] But serious people meant something close. Thich Nhat Hanh: “When you love, you bring freedom to the person you love.” It frees the one loved; it doesn’t promise to free the lover from fear of death.[82]

The familiar list of Greek loves also needed checking. By an encyclopaedia’s account it is a blend. Eros, philia, storge, agape, philautia, xenia and pothos are Greek words; ludus is Latin; pragma and mania as love styles come from a sociologist’s book in 1973; the four loves most people know are C. S. Lewis, 1960.[83]

The one that hit me is Plato. In the Symposium, Diotima says “love is of immortality”: love wants not to end.[84] Augustine, after his friend died, judged he had loved “one who must die as if he were never to die”.[85] That is my man. Seneca’s answer: “I have had them as if I should one day lose them”, and “We may weep, but we must not wail.”[86]

While we were making the film I wrote: love is forever. Is this true? I still don’t know. The closest I can get: love is good, and clinging to the one we love, and to our own life, is what turns love into worry.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	the Buddhist texts blame craving and clinging; “love will set you free” has no old source; the popular Greek list is a blend.
SUPPORTED	love that leaves the other free is a serious teaching; dependency before a loss went with chronic grief in one study.
MY READING	the man’s love did what Diotima says love does, and that is his trouble.
OPEN	whether love with less clinging makes dying easier; I found no test of it.



PART 10 OF 12

What the old stories and the traditions say

The traditions don't agree with each other, and often not with themselves.

On the first night I wrote: I think we were born to learn, and the whole life as a bio living life form is just a stage. "Learn" is my word. Islam says life was created "to test you" by your deeds.[87] John Hick called the world a place of "soul-making".[88] Seneca: "As long as you live, keep learning how to live."[89] None of them means exactly what I meant by "learn".

Is endless life a curse? It has strong company. Tithonus got immortality without youth and aged without end; the Sibyl ended saying she wanted to die.[90] Borges's immortals go looking for a river that takes immortality away.[91] Chiron, wounded beyond cure, "wished to die, but he could not, for he was immortal".[92] When we built the story I said it plainly: it is the curse, not a wish.

But there's a clear opponent, and it should be put the way its holders would. Christianity and Islam, and some Jewish traditions, hope for life after death as a transformed life with God. Catholic teaching calls death "an entrance into everlasting life" and says the body will be raised incorruptible.[93] The Quran speaks of a barrier until "the Day they are resurrected".[94] A Shia scholar

put it plainly: “There is a difference between life extension and immortality.”[95] Jewish views vary, and Ecclesiastes says the dead know nothing.[96] None of them calls that hope a curse. So “no tradition wants to live forever” would be false. That leaves my view smaller than I first wrote it. My “curse” is about this body going on unchanged in this world. It says nothing against their hope, which is about a different kind of life. And the old myths are mostly about a failing body,[90] while my film, like Williams, imagines a perfect one.[66]

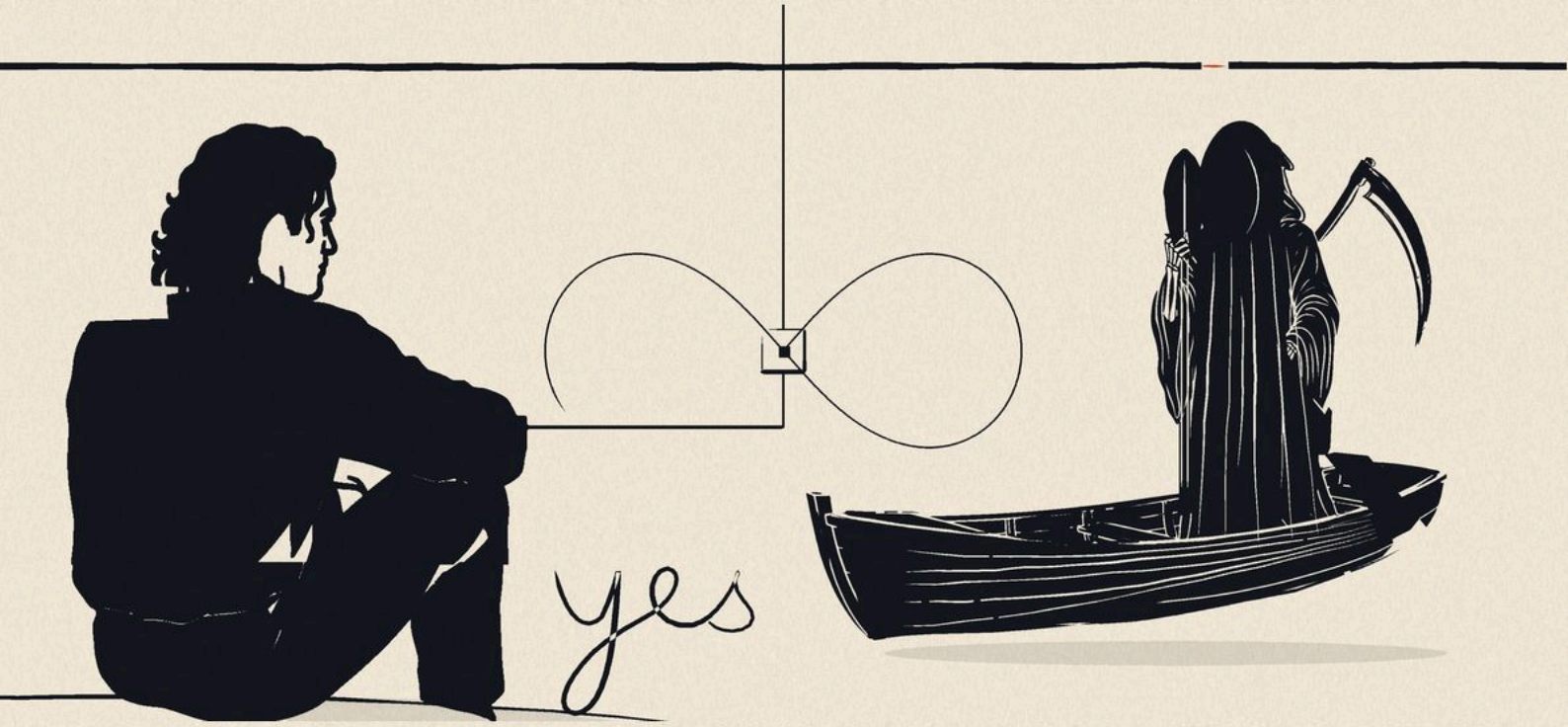
On death itself, the traditions face it more than they praise it. Buddhist monks reflect: “I am subject to death, have not gone beyond death.”[97] Buddhadasa’s “die before dying” means the mind finishing with “I” and “mine” while the body lives, with no wish to die in it.[98] Pope Leo XIV said in 2025 that “death is not opposed to life, but rather is a constitutive part of it”.[99] Yet Paul calls death “the last enemy”.[100] Moses says “Choose life”.[96] The Quran says “Every soul will taste death”.[101]

I once asked: why Adam, why so stuck with that apple? In Genesis it’s the tree of life that gets barred, so that the man won’t “live for ever”.[102]

In the texts I read, I found none that says death should be sought. Here’s where I land on this. I think we shouldn’t live in flight from the fact that we die. That is different from seeking death: the end I mean is the ordinary end of a long life, never one a person brings on himself.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	the traditions disagree; none I read says death should be sought.
SUPPORTED	endless life in this world, unchanged, is told as a curse across many stories; facing death on purpose is taught as a practice for living.
MY READING	“born to learn” has neighbours, not twins.
OPEN	what Protestant, Orthodox and Islamic legal bodies say about life extension; I found nothing official.

NOTICE From here on, the essay talks about how the film ends.



PART 11 OF 12

Charon: who he is, where he came from, and what the film invents

Charon is the old, dirty boatman with “staring eyes of flame” who takes the dead across a river of the underworld.[103] He isn’t in Homer, where Hermes leads the dead on foot; putting him there is a common mistake.[104] He first appears in a lost epic, perhaps from the 6th century BC, and on vases from about 500 BC.[105][106] In Virgil the unburied wait a hundred years at the near shore. The wait is for burial; “a hundred years for not paying” is a garbled version.[107]

The coin. An encyclopaedia summary estimates that only a minority of Greek burials held coins, perhaps 5 to 10 percent; I could not read the studies behind it. Either way, “every Greek had a coin in the mouth” is a myth.[108] At home we also put a coin in the mouth of the dead. A Thai guide says it reminds the living that

not even a small coin can be taken along. No source links it to Charon.[109]

Where did he come from? No ancient text I could find says how he got the job, that he was ever anything else, that he can die, or that anyone replaces him, though some scholarship I never read could.

Older stories contain parts of my ending, but not the whole figure. In a Grimm tale a ferryman must row until someone else takes his oar.[110] In Breton lore the last dead of the year becomes Death's servant for the next.[111]

While we were making it, I said: you cannot pass the test because you cheat the test. You cheat death. So in the end, you are stuck on the island, and you kill the boatman. In the film the world killed death, so no ferryman is left. The man who refused the boat ends up rowing it.

The man who refused the boat ends up rowing it.

No old story I found has the man who refused death and ends by serving it; as far as I can tell he is this film's own. Every near parallel I found has a way out, by transfer or rotation. Mine has none, so it's darker than its sources. I chose that by feeling.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	Charon isn't in Homer; he appears from about the 6th century BC; no source I found gives his origin or says he can die.
SUPPORTED	the coin was a minority practice in Greece; the Thai coin has its own meaning.
MY READING	the old answer to "I can't die" is a transfer, and my film gives none.
OPEN	whether a tradition not covered here has a ferryman who was once a man who refused to die.



PART 12 OF 12

What forever would do to love, to grief, to a marriage

In the film he holds her hand as it gets thinner every year, inside his own hand that never changes. Then she is gone, and he has all the time there is.

Then she is gone, and he has all the time there is.

What do we know about grief over time? Most people come through. In a Dutch study of 259 bereaved adults, 66.4% were resilient and 25.1% stayed in high grief.[112] Prolonged grief affects roughly 4% to 15% of bereaved adults.[113] After violent or sudden losses the pooled figure was 49%.[114] The longest follow-up I found ran about ten years.[115] I found none lasting decades, and I did not search for repeated losses on the film's scale.

In the film the machine keeps her voice, and it answers. That exists. The bots imitate a person's words, built from their messages and recordings; whether anything more is there cannot be checked, and nobody I read claims it is.[40] The studies of their effect on the bereaved are small: in one, talking with a recreated loved one comforted people even when the bot invented facts; in another, people called griefbots "neither inherently beneficial nor inherently harmful".[116]

Marriage. “Till death do us part.” With no death, what’s the vow? I could not find a serious paper on it; one philosopher asks why lovers promise forever at all.[117]

The song says “Let me lose you the human way.” I can read it three ways: losing her as a mortal loses, weeping without wailing; losing her without clinging; or asking for his own natural end, in old age, as well. I wrote the line, and I’m not ready to say which is mine.

Now the hardest part. The man tries to end his life, many times, and cannot. On screen that can look as if it costs nothing, because his body mends. It isn’t free. The grief he was trying to end stays where it was, and the film gives him no peace for it, only work. He is not us. We are mortal. The end will come to each of us without our help, and nobody should go looking for it.

Real life is different. Among 200 terminally ill patients, a serious, constant wish to die was rare, went above all with depression, and in four of six followed up it had eased within two weeks.[118] In an Irish sample of older people, reported in a conference abstract, 72% of those who newly reported a wish to die no longer did two years later.[119] Groups that work on suicide prevention ask writers never to call such a death a release or peace.[120][121] I agree with them.

If you are in pain and thinking about ending your life, please talk to someone today. You can find a free help line in your country at https://findahelpline.com.

I ask three things of any promise of forever. Does it extend a body, preserve records, or preserve a person? Who pays, and who gets it? And what stays heavy: is there still an end, a loss, a want? A healthy 150 still has an end, a loss and a want. The machine in my film keeps only the loss.

What science is chasing is a much longer, healthier life, and I have no quarrel with more healthy years. My question is about endlessness. Williams argued a life with no end would run out of things to want or change a person until he’s not the one who

began; others disagree, and I found no way it has been tested.[66][72] The Buddhist texts put the trouble in clinging, and leave loving and living alone.[76][77] And the end I'm asking for is the ordinary end of a long life, never one a person brings on himself.

SO FAR, ESTABLISHED	most bereaved people are resilient; a minority grieve for years; I found no follow-up lasting decades.
SUPPORTED	griefbots comfort some and worry many, in small, short studies; a serious wish to die often goes with depression and often passes.
MY READING	in the film, endless life leaves his grief with no ordinary close, because he cannot age or die.
OPEN	everything about loss at the scale of the film.

How it all connects

1. **The AI claims → “forever” → in fact “radically longer”.** (Established.)
2. **Longer life → who gets it → past drugs reached poorer people decades late.** (Established for the past; argued, not shown, for the future.)
3. **The chip → at most a record, perhaps a model → is anyone there?** (Established that nothing has been moved; open on consciousness.)
4. **Fear of death → mostly fear of dying and of losing others.** (Supported in part.)
5. **Endless time → wants run out, or the person changes.** (An argument; contested; untested.)
6. **Love → clinging → worry at the end.** (Supported by the Buddhist texts; my reading as a general rule.)
7. **Clinging before a loss → harder grief after it.** (Supported, one study.)
8. **The traditions → face death, never seek it.** (Supported for those I read; they disagree on the rest.)
9. **Charon → old pieces, a new figure.** (Not found in the sources read; my invention.)
10. **Forever → grief with no end.** (My guess. Untested.)

What I think, what I don’t know, and what to watch

What I believe now.

I think we were born to learn, and the whole life as a bio living life form is just a stage. Love is good, but the attachment that comes with it is something we will worry about. Happiness never lasts too long; it comes and goes, even if some kinds of satisfaction last. More healthy years are good, and I’d take them. We shouldn’t live in flight from the fact that we die, and the end I mean is the

ordinary end of a long life, never one a person brings on himself. For a chip to count as the man, we'd need to understand consciousness first.

What I refuse to claim.

That we are programmed to fear death. That the traditions agree. That a chip copy is, or is not, a person. That an endless life must be unbearable. That the rich would keep it, or why any backer backs it. That my ferryman has an old source.

What changed my mind.

Two changes are in my own words. On 21 November the trouble, for me, was running from death, by which I meant the ordinary end of a long life and never one a person brings on himself. By the next morning I'd written that love is good, and that the attachment that comes with it is what grabs us and makes us feel attached to life even as the body gives out. I began to think the problem might be clinging rather than death itself. The rest this essay proposes, and I haven't signed it yet. I came in thinking the news promised forever; I found no named AI or longevity leader promising literal immortality with a way to get there. "Programmed" becomes a question. "To live forever is to suffer forever" becomes Williams's argument, with his opponents beside it. "Attachment" becomes "clinging", "love will set you free" loses its claim to be scripture, and "collective memory" goes. One sentence I typed that first night, late and fast, said more than I can stand behind, so it isn't in here; I'll decide about it when I read this.

What I am watching.

- Whether the big metformin ageing trial, unfunded as of September 2026, ever starts.[13]
- What the first partial-reprogramming trial reports after day 56.[14]
- Whether US regulators turn the 2026 talk of "intrinsic capacity" into a real path for ageing drugs.[23]
- Whether someone finally asks Thais if we want a much longer life.

I don’t know if I’m right about any of this. If we’re ever given the choice, I hope we ask what forever would be for before we choose. The man in my film only asks it after he has chosen, when he can no longer act on the answer.

Where the words came from

The first song I made for this film was a different one, called “All Is Well”. Its words told the story too plainly, like a report, and its parts felt separate, so I set it aside and let the music lead. I wanted a first listen to give the plain story and a second to give the rest, so some words are never sung on purpose. “Give me back the end” was a line in the first draft before it became the title. The song says what he learns: “I was afraid to die. Now I’m afraid to live.”

How this was made

I made this with AI tools, and I’d rather say so than have you wonder. The music was made with Suno. The pictures were drawn in code with Claude. The film is 10,368 frames, each drawn by code. Song and film together took 13 days. We didn’t just let AI do it: I directed every part, the story, the words, the scenes and the revisions, and I wanted to make a craft. A dance between the two of them failed four times before a stained-glass window took its place.

A note on who made the tools

Anthropic makes Claude. Its head, Dario Amodei, is the first person quoted in part 1. This essay was drafted with Claude. On 22 November this long version was reviewed by a model from a different company, OpenAI’s Codex. It checked 25 key claims independently on the web; 10 more it could not verify, mostly older or secondary items such as a classic study’s replication, a grave-coin estimate, griefbot studies and some trial and chip details, and I have softened or cut those. The full claim ledger has

still not had its own independent check, so the remaining numbers rest on the research files' reading.

If you are struggling, https://findahelpline.com lists free help lines by country.

Give Me Back the End

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