Group Immortality and Transgenerational Meaning

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Abstract: Most people would not choose to live forever. A variety of objections have been cited to explain this preference. I examine two of the most common. The first objection states that an immortal life would be excessively boring. The second, that an immortal life would be guaranteed to experience an event so bad that one would choose not to live forever. If either of these objections succeed, then an immortal life is undesirable. This may be so. The purpose of this presentation, however, is to argue that group lives are different. It isn’t clear that paradigmatic group lives -- like the lives of unions, reading groups, and philosophy departments -- are susceptible to the preceding objections. I argue that this intuition is correct: neither of the objections to an immortal individual life apply to the life of an immortal group. In the end, we may not be able to wish immortality for ourselves, but we can and often should desire that good group lives go on forever.

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If you have any questions, please contact m.dean@uci.edu.