

Unleashing Life from its Boundaries

Technology and Mortality in the Anti-Aging Endeavor

João Tziminadis, Sociology

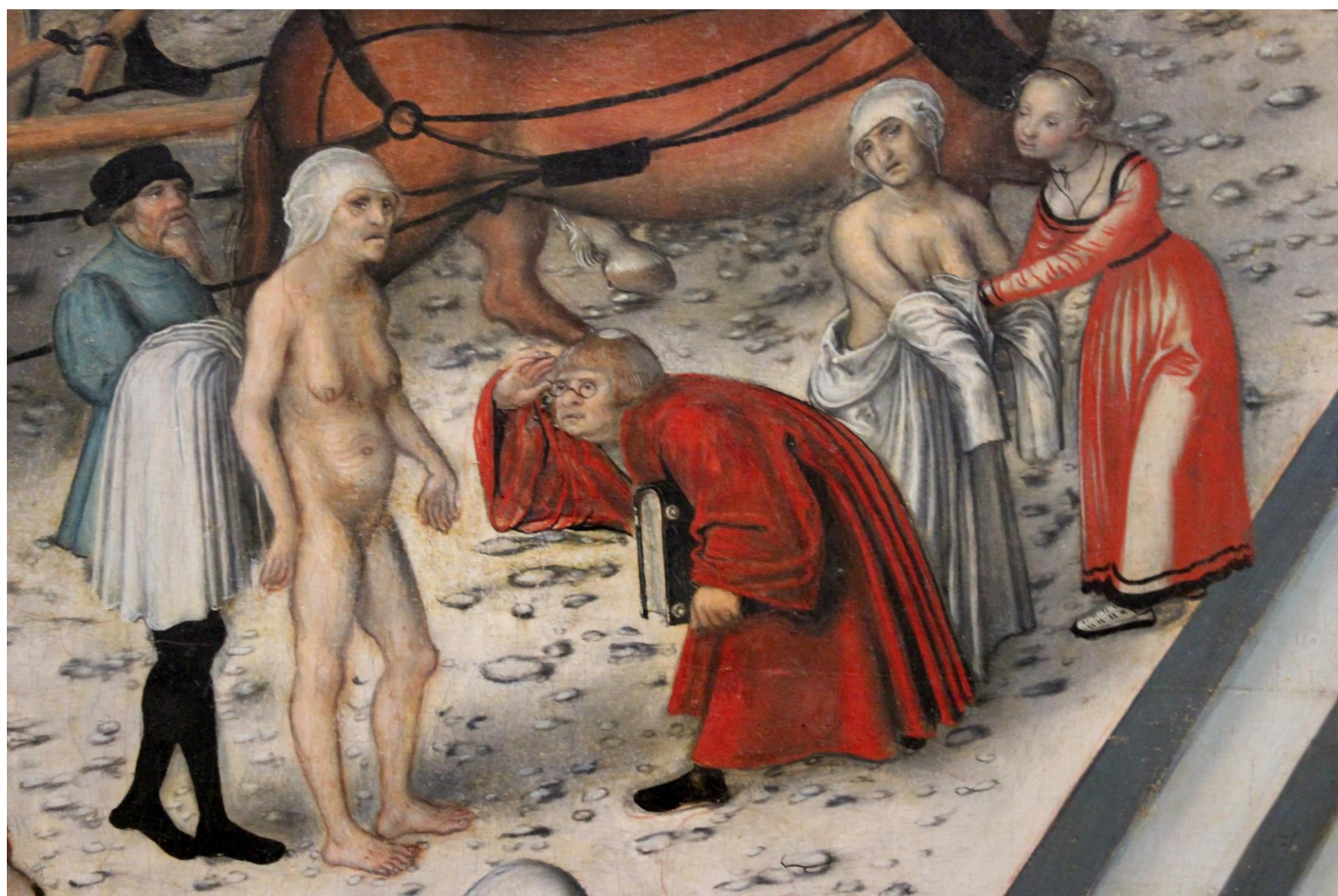
University of Erfurt | Supervisors: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stephan Moebius (Graz) / Prof. Dr. Hartmut Rosa, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Martschukat (Erfurt)

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Topic

Bio-scientists, entrepreneurs and health professionals are behind an emerging endeavor of halting human's body biological decay. Known as anti-aging, this phenomenon is not particular to a strict group of mortality deniers, but rather reverberates yearnings proper to modern biotechnology and medicine. In the anti-aging endeavor the modern relation between awareness of mortality and technology is meaningfully displayed.

The technological "taming of death" (Ariès 1974) is elevated with the anti-aging into an existential project of self-care and self-maintenance.



Detail from Lucas Cranach, *Der Jungbrunnen*, 1546

Research questions

Overall question:

- What representations of a good life drive the anti-aging endeavor?

Specific questions:

- What constitute the specificity of a technological relation to mortality in contrast to religious, philosophical, artistic etc. ones?
- What role is played by modern biotechnology in shaping anti-aging's normative horizon?
- What does the conceptualization of aging as a disease tell about the way we experience the presence of death in life?

Data / Sources / Material

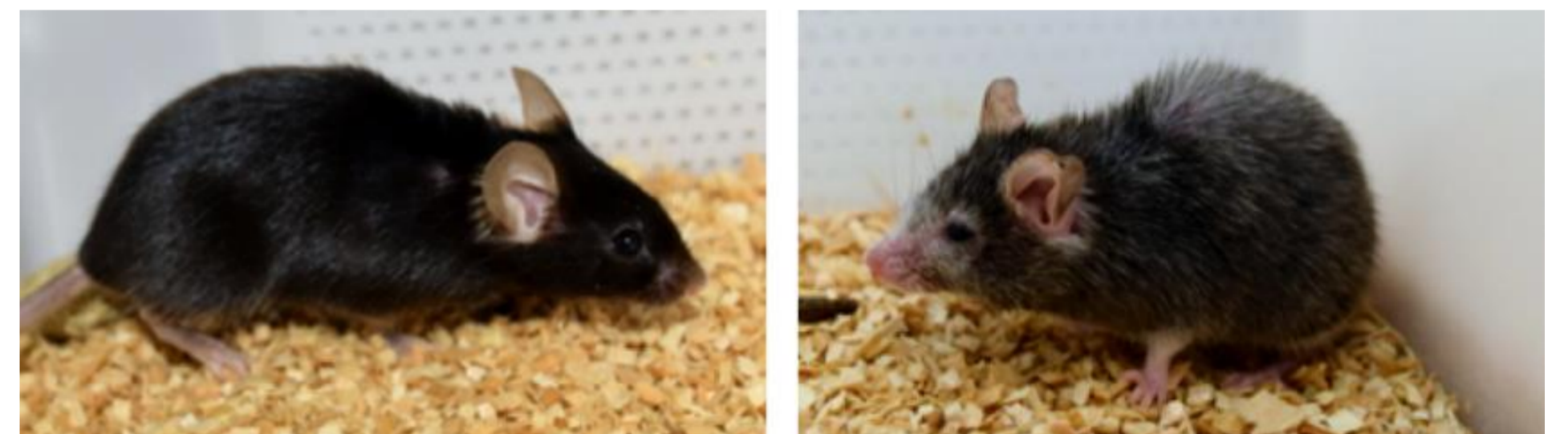
- Publications on the field of biogerontology;
- Popular science books by key anti-aging authors;
- Marketing material from anti-aging companies;
- Participation at biogerontology/anti-aging conferences;
- Interviews with key-actors.

Aim

Although placed at the center of contemporary technoscientific and gerontological stage, the anti-aging is conceived in this project as the crystallization of properly modern form of relating to mortality. By analyzing the anti-aging this project aims at throwing light on how modern culture responds to the existential need of handling the awareness of mortality.

Methods

As a theoretical effort to make sense of a technoscientific and cultural phenomenon, the project proceeds as a hermeneutic reconstruction of the knowledge and the practices attached to the 'anti-ageing' endeavor. At the same time, the project draws on the critical literature engaged with the problems of ageing and death in modernity.



Mice of the same age with biological age genetically altered

Next steps

- Collecting more first-handed material, especially from conferences and interviews with key anti-aging proponents;
- Reviewing the critical literature and elaborating on the difference between two forms of conceiving death as a cultural problem: as a physical event and as an object of consciousness (existential problem);
- Analyzing the material at light of the research questions;
- Writing the first drafts of the dissertation.

References

Ariès, Philippe. 1974. *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Sources

Left: *Der Jungbrunnen*. Lucas Cranach der Ältere, 1546, Gemäldegalerie Berlin.
Right: C57BL/6 Siblings: Control vs ICE at 16 months of age. Available in: <https://genetics.med.harvard.edu/sinclair/research.php>

Contact:

João Tziminadis
University of Erfurt, MWK
IGDK „Resonant Self–World Relations“
joao.tziminadis@uni-erfurt.de

