



## **SIXTY YEARS OLD - IS MY FUTURE SHORT AND MESSY, OR LONG AND GLORIOUS?**

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Hank Pellissier, with a Masters in Humanities and Religious Studies and a passion for performance art and poetry, shares his insights on where our best hopes lie in life-extending technologies, immortality and weaving all into every day family life.

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Has my memory been eaten by prions<sup>1</sup>? It seems like just yesterday I was a very young man, a pup, a cub, or a sprouting twig. How did the years fly by? Why am I almost... sixty?!

"When atheists turn sixty, they suddenly become transhumanists interested in immortality," says my new acquaintance, John Shook of the Center for Inquiry ([www.CenterforInquiry.net](http://www.CenterforInquiry.net)). Gulp! He's nailed me...

If forty is the "new thirty" and fifty is the "new thirty-five", will sixty-five (I'm hoping), be the new... thirty-seven?

My yellow thumbnail fell off this morning, rotted by fungus. Two root canals and I'm "long in the tooth." Neck wrinkled like an iguana, polyps inside and a hemorrhoid you don't want to hear about.

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<sup>1</sup> **Prion** – *n.* (infectious agent) an abnormal form of a normally harmless protein found in the brain that is responsible for a variety of fatal neurodegenerative diseases of both animals and humans called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.  
Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Retrieved June 21, 2012 <http://www.britannica.com/search?query=prion>

But... I'm still semi-slender-and-fit... brag pathetically around young men, announcing I did 3,000 jumping jacks in an hour and 1,100 pushups in a day.

Should I quit eating wheat? Should I join Cross-Fit®? Abandon sugar? Will my four hours of sleep every night give me Alzheimer's? Have you seen this video below? The dude is exceptionally strong, but will he be amazing at seventy?



Credit: [http://www.youtube.com/embed/BzIJ\\_xDzmdg](http://www.youtube.com/embed/BzIJ_xDzmdg)

What are my chances of living forever? Becoming immortal? Las Vegas bookies would bet 1,000-1 odds against my eternity, and my own young rude children assume I'm a total goner, with their persistent questions like, "do you think your death will be painful?" and, "how scared are you?"

Obviously, I could croak any day, I could jaywalk hurriedly and get crushed by a taxi, I could be slain by a psychopath shooter in a public square, I could get concussed into dark oblivion after a clumsy trip jogging down the Filbert Steps. Medically, one of my thus-far benign polyps could morph into maliciousness, or my heart - slightly arrhythmic - could burst asunder, like my Uncle François's did recently in a Hollywood crosswalk.

I'm optimistic though. I believe I have an excellent chance of 'never' kicking the proverbial bucket. Here's a trio of scenarios in which my personhood extends infinitely deep into the future:

### **The Singularity Saves Me**

The approximate date of "the end of history as we know it" - according to numerous futurists - is 2045. Attaining that year is well within my grasp. Sure, I'll be ninety-three by then, but my grandmother lived to be 102 and I eat a big salad everyday, just like she did. Her husband (my grandfather), survived to the ripe age of ninety-two. Both of my parents are frightfully fit at eighty-four; happy, alert, jocular, they carry huge

bags of presents up my steep apartment steps, still Ho-Ho-Ho-ing as Santa Clauses. My uncle drives to work everyday for a full shift, at ninety-one. My six siblings you ask? Most are annoyingly fit, like the fifty-year-old marathon sister, and the dirt-bike brother, racing past fifty-eight.

My 23andme.com<sup>2</sup> (Personal Genome Service) analysis was also encouraging. Aside from an elevated risk of Celiac's Disease<sup>3</sup>, I'm scot-free from imminent danger. I was terrified, of course, to tap into my DNA data, afraid I'd find the Grim Reaper gesturing me forward. Exuberantly, I discovered I'm at low-risk of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and nearly a dozen cancers. I do have to watch out for colon cancer, but my recent stool samples have been clear of blood - thanks for asking!

Best of all, I have a fanatically-healthy younger wife, a tri-athlete who scolds me if I don't aerobically sweat every day, plus she forces me to accompany her on long, primitive, brutalizing runs. Additionally, she feeds me enormous quantities of vegetables I'd prefer to avoid - i.e., kale and collard greens - she ladles coconut oil into my mouth (good for the brain), and she buys refreshing beverages that contain Stevia®, not sugar. If it weren't for her, I'd probably be subsisting on instant macaroni and cheese packages, like I did before we met. I'm a very lucky guy.



Anyway, when super-Smart and super-Friendly AI emerges in 2045<sup>4</sup> I'll be ninety-three. I believe I have at least a 50/50 chance of reaching that age. What happens then? I'm convinced that Age Reversal will be the #1 challenge the Singularity AI will aim it's huge benevolent brain at, to solve. New cures and astounding medical innovations will be whizzing into the marketplace daily, after the Singularity. Death will end, Aging will be halted, and then it will be reversed. By 2050, I'm hoping billions of us once-oldsters will be able to say, "I'm only twenty-nine" - without any arched doubting eyebrows examining us. We'll all be returned to our fittest condition.

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<sup>2</sup> 23andme – A paid subscription service allowing to “[e]xplore your DNA with our Personal Genome Service® and receive regular updates on your health and ancestry.” Retrieved April 30, 2012 [https://www.23andme.com/?gclid=CN-ru56R3a8CFZNV7AodxCCK\\_Q](https://www.23andme.com/?gclid=CN-ru56R3a8CFZNV7AodxCCK_Q)

<sup>3</sup> Celiac Disease - *n.* A gastrointestinal disease that is characterized by sensitivity to gluten with malabsorption and mucosal atrophy, resulting in diarrhea, steatorrhea, and nutritional and vitamin deficiencies.

*The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). [2004] Boston, MS, New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>4</sup> Kurzweil's 2045 'Singularity' prediction – I set the date for the Singularity – representing a profound and disruptive transformation in human capability – as 2045. The nonbiological intelligence created in that year will be one billion times more powerful than all human intelligence today.”

Kurzweil, Raymond. [2005] *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. London, England: Viking Penguin.



Credit: <http://www.sens.org/users/aubrey-de-grey>

## SENS<sup>5</sup> Succeeds

Gerontologist Aubrey de Grey is chipping away at the inconvenient problem of Human Expiration by attacking it on multiple fronts. His SENS Foundation opened up a battlefield in 2009 in Mountain View, California, only thirty-eight miles from my doorstep. Progress will accelerate quickly when Silicon Valley CEO's start donating a few trillion \$\$\$\$\$. Other international researchers aiding in SENS' goals: German nanotechnologists, Chinese genetic engineers, Israeli stem cell biochemists, etc. Soon, I believe the general public will also realize that Death is the common enemy. Instead of spending the bulk of national budgets on weaponry to kill each other, these funds will be allocated to attain infinite life. Currently, only a meager percentage of civic funds are spent on longevity studies; this will change. Foundations will increasingly highlight Immortality as a priority; contests - like the Methuselah<sup>6</sup> - will proliferate; upcoming generations (rebellious against the death meme) will demand that their taxes be spent on longevity research. The current whispering for eternal life is growing louder; by 2020 it will be a clamoring roar. Political candidates will make speeches announcing their intention to extinguish our extermination. Like the War on Poverty in the 1960's, there will be a War on Death, aided by immense international cooperation. SENS and similar organizations might even accomplish their long-life goal, without The Singularity's assistance.

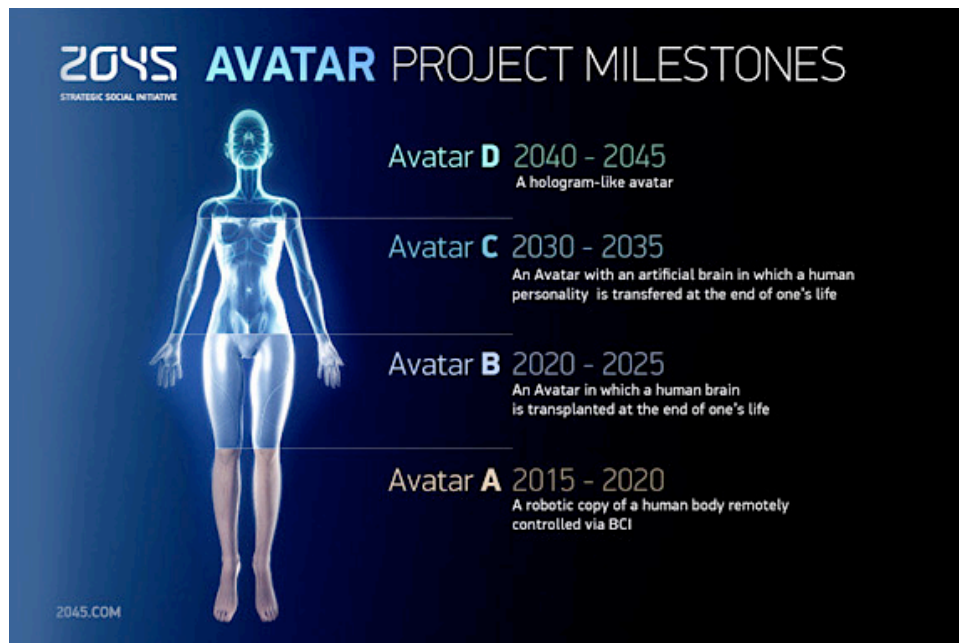
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<sup>5</sup> SENS Foundation (*Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence*) – “ [An] independent organization, with a mission to develop, promote and ensure widespread access to regenerative medicine solutions to the disabilities and diseases of aging.”

SENS Foundation. Retrieved May 3, 2012 <http://www.sens.org/sens-foundation/brief-history>

<sup>6</sup> Methuselah - The Mprize, introduced in 2003, is designed to directly accelerate the development of revolutionary new life extension therapies. The prize pot continues to grow through donations; awards are made whenever a research team extends the life of mice.

Methusala Foundation. Retrieved May 1, 2012 <http://www.mprize.org/>



Credit: <http://2045.com/>

## Russia 2045<sup>7</sup>

At the February 2012 conference in Moscow, thirty-one-year-old media mogul billionaire, Dmitry Itskov, launched a mission to annihilate Death, like an exterminating savior. Numerous Slavic oligarchs support his crusade, generously donating their oil and natural gas revenues. How do they intend to mothball the Grim Reaper? Vladimir Konyshov, President of Neyrobotiks, says, "Our Weak Body Must be Replaced". Russia 2045's plan is to re-create human brains as computers and harbor them in cyborgs.

I want to be all-metal-all-the-time, so Dmitry, put my name on the "guinea pig" list! The Russians have over a century of "Cosmist philosophy" in their national culture, and the Chinese have ancient Taoist goals of immortality. The death meme - the notion that "humans have to, and should, die" is weaker in those powerful counties, and they will contribute mightily.

<sup>7</sup> **Russia 2045** – A “strategic, social initiative involving immortality, the artificial body and the creation of a super-human of the future.” Russia 2045 [2012]. Retrieved May 1, 2012 <http://2045.com/>



Credit: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/9wEZsSIpypg>

Tell me, dear readers; do you think I'm a loon to be so hopeful? Am I deluding myself?

If so, I am in good company. I have a near-namesake who is even sunnier than I am. Dick Pelletier, an Arizona columnist and blogger at The Positive Futurist ([www.positivefuturist.com](http://www.positivefuturist.com)) is considerably my senior, but unwilling to put a single tootsie of his in the grave. His essays like "'Fountain of Youth' could become reality in twenty years" and "Powerful immortal bodies on the horizon" outline his optimism. In an email to me, he said:

"My personal view: eat as healthy as you can and work your body as much as you think it can stand. Most important is... believe with all your heart that your personal healthcare routine is correct for you and that you will survive until future technologies become available to boost you into tomorrow.... the best we can hope for is a successful bridge into a nanotechnology era (circa 2030s, 2040s)...

My current chronological age is eighty-one; biologically, some doctors say I'm in my late '50s, early '60s. I have no doubts that I will survive to enjoy an indefinite lifespan..."

Mr. Pelletier, bonjour. Mr. Pellissier salutes you. Our similarity extends beyond the French furrier (pelt craftsman) origin of our names. We both want to live forever, and we envision multiple pathways to that goal.

Maybe you and I will become "BFFs" in a future where the last "F" is accurate.

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