

THE IMMORTALITY INSTITUTE



There's been some confusion as to the difference between The Immortalist Society and The Immortality Institute

The Immortalist Society; the publisher of this magazine, (formerly the Cryonics Society of Michigan,) was formed by Robert Ettinger in the 60's, in a Detroit suburb. The Immortalist Society's sister organization, The Cryonics Institute was formed (by Robert Ettinger and others) in the mid seventies.

This information, and interview, was gleaned from the Immortality Institute's web site: www.ImmInst.org

Bruce Klein who lives in Alabama founded the Immortality Institute in 2002. Klein describes himself as a "philosopher, investor and lover of life." With the mission to "conquer the blight of involuntary death, support the pursuit of physical immortality and the quest for infinite lifespans as a feasible and worthwhile goal." "I devote much of my time to helping fellow immortalists toward this goal. I'm married to a wonderful friend, Susan Fonseca-Klein. We are owned by two golden retrievers (Luna & Lacy)"

ImmInst is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. "ImmInst" is a contraction of two words, "Immortality" and "Institute". The primary mission of ImmInst is to conquer the blight of involuntary death. ImmInst is a networking tool, as well as a virtual community. It hosts an online forum and chat room and encourages participation from all sides of the Life Extension movement. ImmInst helps writers and speakers and creates and

distributes educational literature. ImmInst hosts conferences. The organization has 1755 members.

What does the ImmInst logo symbolize?

The two olive branches symbolize peace and cooperation. The figure 8 symbolizes an hourglass. The figure 8 symbolizes the mathematical sign for infinity standing vertical. At the top of the figure 8 is sand stuck in the top of an hourglass. At the bottom of the 8 is the DNA helix symbolic of an immortal molecule.

ImmInst does not take official positions. However, ImmInst members can and do take positions.

What initially interested you in wanting to form the Immortality Institute?

As far back as I can remember, I've felt lucky to be alive. I've always had an optimistic personality with the underlying desire to know how things really work. So, I believe my interest started early and probably progressed out of a natural curiosity. While young, I did all the things most American kids do. I was socially active and participated in sports. There were considerable positive family influences. I had a health conscious father who helped promote good diet and exercise.

Philosophically however, I found myself thinking differently, especially about death. I never bought into the notion of religion, and thus continuously searched for answers. In 1994 I entered college and found the Internet. This opened up a world of new ideas, namely transhumanism. I read Drexler and Ettinger and found a philosophical home for my wandering mind.

From 1994 to 2000, I continued to think and read. I joined newsgroups and participated in chat rooms. I made mistakes in logic, yet quickly learned from helpful people online. Eventually, I saw a way where I could reciprocate the help. By formalizing a few ideas, and using soft-

ware, I made a plan to start an online community whose underlying goal would be to promote the continuance of life.

In 2000, I slowly learned web design and started BJKlein.com - Home to Immortals. I quickly realized to be useful we would need to organize into a non-profit. Thus, with great help from friends, the Immortality Institute was born.



Bruce Klein

What do you hope to accomplish by having and running a web site devoted to the issues of life extension?

ImmInst's mission is to conquer the blight of involuntary death. ImmInst's Constitution dictates that we provide our members with the tools necessary to reach our mission. To leverage limited resources, we use the Internet and the extraordinary talents of our members to reach out, write articles, produce educational literature and host and attend conferences.

Why the word "immortality"?

We debated the term 'immortality' extensively, yet came to the conclusion that 'immortality' was right because it sets the

right tone. There may be initial misunderstandings because of the association with a spiritual and religious immortality, but this is quickly overcome by our evident focus on science.

The reason why we chose 'immortality' as opposed to more conservative terms, such as 'life extension', was that we don't want to limit ourselves by any implied ambiguity. Even though we're unable to live forever at this point in history, we believe this problem can be overcome.

I notice a lot of sites out there dedicated to progress in humanity. The so-called "Transhumanist" sites or "Extropian" sites seem to have similar goals. Does the Immortality Institute share some of the same ideas and beliefs? Or are we talking about completely different things?

Many ImmInst members share the same aspirations expressed by organizations such as the World Transhumanist Association and the Extropy Institute. Some ImmInst members are also members of these organizations. However, ImmInst only has one major objective, which is to conquer the blight of involuntary death. This allows ImmInst the opportunity to work with many different organizations because when it comes down to it, most of us just want to stay alive.

In your site there is a strong interest in the Singularity, what is it and why is it so important? What do you hope it will do for people? Why should such a philosophy interest your average person?

From an immortalist perspective, the Singularity is important because it could help people bootstrap to a semi-immortal state faster than any other approach. The Singularity is the point in time when artificial intelligence advances beyond human intelligence. This point is significant because homo sapiens will no longer be the wisest life forms on Earth.

The key to understanding the Singularity is that unlike biological intelligences, AIs will have access to their own source

code. Thus, AIs will have the ability to improve their own intelligence in this way. To some degree, humans have this ability. We go to school, take mind-enhancing supplements, and continue learning from the time we're born. Yet, this approach is a far cry to what will happen with machine intelligence learning.

Really, AI represents a new kind of intelligence because it will have the ability to improve itself faster than we can comprehend. To understand this, know that AIs will 'think' with electrons. So, AIs are going to be much faster than biological brains in that they will learn at the speed of light. Few people understand, much less, realize the possibility of the Singularity. This needs to change if we hope to make a safe transition to a post-Singularity world. I suggest reading '[Accelerating Progress and the Potential Consequences of Smarter than Human Intelligence](#)' by fellow ImmInst director, Michael Anissimov, for more on this.

Why should people be interested in Nano-technology which many people on this site talk about?

Nanotech will be an important tool for immortalists. We'll use nanotech to finely tune the world around us in order to create a safer and more livable environment.

What are "smart drugs" and how does that tie into life extension?

Also referred to as nootropics, smart drugs are a tool that some immortalists use to enhance mood and improve intelligence. ImmInst advisor, LifeMirage has contributed a nootropics review..

Do you see a great deal of opposition to your progressive ideas of life extension and Transhumanism? And if so does the threat of negative publicity potentially worry you?

Actually, the more opposition the better in my opinion. In part because the criticism legitimizes the prospect of immor-

tality for many people, but mostly because there are so few people brave enough to talk about immortality. It's almost a relief when anyone actually takes the time to talk negatively about it.

I've catalogued some of the more famous negative remarks by such leaders as Leon Kass, who once said, 'immortals can not be noble' here. [In comparison, we have pro-immortality quotes archived here.](#)

Do you believe the world should "wake up" and start taking your ideas more seriously?

I'm not in favor of strong handed coercion nor do I see a mass waking up of society. Human just don't change very quickly about core issue such as death and afterlife. Yet, I'm optimistic about recent biotech advances. I think we will lengthen the maximum lifespan and improve health in older people. Once this happens, people will naturally see immortality as a possible next step.

I'd imagine money being a big factor and many people are probably unaware of why life extension is so important Do you want the public to get more involved so better funding can happen, or is there enough money in the science community to help out?

There's money out there, but it's going disproportionate to fight disease that have little direct effect on the underlying causes of aging. Rarely will governments grant money to ambitious anti-aging projects, so rarely do you see scientists making any such proposals. There's a chicken and egg problem. It's starting to change for the better, but much to slow for my taste.

I'd imagine the religious right would be opposed to some of your intended goals. What do you say to people who think that some of your ideas maybe immoral?

I shy away from ideological wrangling. I would hope that life for life's sake would be enough to justify our effort. But, obviously this is not the case. Humans have

evolved tendencies toward rigid core beliefs. Religious and afterlife issues are a big part of this core belief system. I wouldn't recommend trying to change anyone directly concerning a core belief. It rarely works and can actually be counterproductive. It's better to participate in a debate format so that an audience can see both sides. In this way, the exchange can be more cordial and more people can learn and decide for themselves who's right I never bought into the notion of religion, and thus continuously searched for answers

Are you saying that religion ends questioning? I have found that it is religious questions that begin, continue, and make exciting, the search for answers.

I don't think that you have ever really understood, deep down, what the religious quest means. The feeling tone for such a quest can be heard musically in some of the passages in Ravel's "Daphne and Chloe", which is pagan based, but has the essential feel at times of reaching toward the Light of God, as described in Christianity, etc. There are some beautiful musical passages in the "Nocturnes". also. For me, one of the questions is, "how did God do it." The design questions are fascinating.

Many Science Fiction films of the past mentioned God. The ending of Forbidden Planet, War of the Worlds, Day the Earth Caught Fire, the first Frankenstein film, etc. There was wisdom, back then, which is absent in our Marxist toned present. To understand this, know that AIs will 'think' with electrons.

Think?

Rather they will be fast calculators. If you want to call calculation thinking, and all that we do as humans "thinking", then you are talking about pragmatic, utilitarian, machines with hearts of steel. The AI will be an alien; "as different from us, as one pole is to the other" It will either ignore us, or destroy us. It will always remain a dead machine, but a lightning quick dead machine.

Pull the plug now. Humans have evolved tendencies toward rigid core beliefs. Religious and afterlife issues are a big part of this core belief system.

And, what else is; atheism, Communism, Marxism?

A core belief, or a conviction? As I said elsewhere, a society such as ours which is choosing to jettison core convictions, a foundational center, moral and ethical absolutes is a society that will self-destruct. To accept atheism seriously, you have to deal seriously with what the most brilliant atheist, Nietzsche, had to say.

He was, and still is, the genius of atheistic thinking. Most atheists are either too lazy, too much in denial, or not really serious enough, to actually face, head-on, what Nietzsche had to say about a world without God. What remains is naked power, and the scrambling for who will be the elitists.

The core beliefs in a Nietzschean world are those beliefs promulgated, and enforced, by the strongest, and most persuasive, human beings. Since there is no truth, those who are the most persuasive control the rest. Anything goes, as long as the persuaders can persuade you. That is your atheist world. It is a world of mirrors. It is a flatland world. The blind leading the blind, in a dance macabre.

With no divine guidance from a transcendental source, a source that is trans-human, in the Spiritual sense, a source that gives the human race a foundational center for meaning, purpose, and behavior, human beings become little Nietzscheans. They will only have each other and that is not enough. The Marxists have proven that atheism is the deadliest philosophy of life, the most vacuous, the most heartless, and the most destructive. An atheistic capitalism will destroy us, just as Marxist Communism/Socialism destroyed, and is destroying, all those who tried it.

The slogan, "we will bury you" can now be applied to atheism. It will bury us all.

QUICKIES

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you a mechanic. *Anonymous*

Message from the grave? Or cryostat?

We've previously reported here on the ingenious services funeral homes can come up with. While this one isn't a funeral home service, it's aimed at the same audience. Dallas based Last-Wishes.com allows customers to create a list of people they wish to receive personalized messages, photos, videos upon the subscribers death. It has 12,000 subscribers in it's first year of service, only a few of whom have had cause to use the service. For a lifetime fee of \$99, members can store (among other things) passwords, banking details, or perhaps where that pile of cash is hidden
NEWSWEEK

Grow your own teeth? Scientists at the National Institute of Dental Research have used human adult stem cells from extracted molars to grow new tooth buds that are implanted into animal jaws and develop into new teeth. *AARP BULLETIN*

To Defib or not? After spending \$98,963 for 60 new defibrillators, the City of Boca Raton, Florida, has only been able to give away a dozen. Intended for use in public gathering places, many eligible organizations are wary of liability problems. *Ibid*

Speaking of defibrillators, the FDA has just approved the over-the-counter sale of the Phillips HeartStart, an automated external defibrillator. (AED) Each day in this country, an estimated 165 people suffer an electrical short circuit in the heart, called ventricular fibrillation—the most common cause of sudden cardiac arrest. Consumers can now buy the units for around \$2000 for use in the home, where most sudden cardiac arrests occur. While the FDA said the device could be used by anyone following directions on the unit, training helps reduce panic.
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