

The Question Is - Who Am I ?

Class: No.: Name:

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Extracted from a personal profile.

Who am I? Perhaps this is the only question life really throws at us.

I was sitting in a pizza restaurant in Bristol one day with a good friend and teacher when he scribbled on a paper napkin "What drives you?" Not another unclear koan! I was somewhat offended. Am I so obviously "driven"? Yes, I often rush from one thing to the next, seldom rest, almost never watch TV or even sit and listen to music. Living is working and playing with my children, weeding the garden and cleaning the house. Something drives me. It is all part of the same question. So I was delighted when Rhea asked me to write this profile of myself.

I was born in London to well-off parents who wanted me to have the best and expected a great deal of me. Although I was very happy as a young Tom-boy, I was desperately miserable to be sent away at 13 to an oppressive and expensive boarding school. I was frightened (of doing the wrong thing, of not succeeding, of not having any friends) and bored - a terrible combination. Oxford, when I went there in 1970 to study physiology and psychology, was a real challenge. I was far from the cleverest there, which was a shock and an inspiration. It was there I learned about psychical research and conceived an enduring passion for the subject. I soon found myself running the student Psychical Research Society and wondering why my tutors wouldn't take the subject seriously.

After that, accepting that I would never get a grant to study parapsychology, I found a part-time job and funded myself through a PhD. In 1980, I gained the degree and worked for a few months at the parapsychology lab at Utrecht, in the Netherlands, and after that was awarded the Perrott-Warrick Studentship in Psychical Research to work on OBEs. Although most people assume that I have long had an academic post at the University of Bristol, it is not so. For many years I brought up my two children, Emily now 10 and Jolyon now 8, and worked freelance as a writer, on TV and radio, and as a part-time lecturer at both Bath and Bristol Universities. Just this year, after my marriage ended, I took up my first real job as a psychology lecturer at the University of the West of England. Although it is hard working the way I did, with very little money and doing much academic

work unpaid, with uncertain status and insecure future, it gave me great freedom. I could always follow the results of my own. The uncertainty of my position gave me the chance to do that.

So who am I? I am tempted to give my favorite answer "I don't know". But even that would be inappropriate. I - as a body, a public person and the subject of these sentences can only answer by means like writing this essay. "I" as a mental model can never know except by embedding models within models. Really "I" can do nothing but go on living moment by moment until "I" die. Whether that will be at the same time as this body dies or before I cannot predict. I am as sure as I can be that it won't be afterwards.



Time to Think:

1. Find a key word in the reading to express the life of the writer. (5)

2. List the jobs / work the writer has done. (5)

3. How do you think about the writer's life? (5)

4. What will you plan for your life? (5)