

## *From the Kitchen*

6 July 2011



Who do you think you are?

Descartes is often quoted for his famous “I think, therefore I am”. Is it the thinking that creates me? Is the fact that I think, proof of my existence? Interesting questions.

What if we make the statement: “I think, therefore I think I am”? A very different answer to the many questions we can pose about our existence.

The opening question above can be asked in different ways, each leading to possibly different answers. *Who* do you think you are? Who do *you* think you are? Who do you *think* you are? Who do you think *you* are?

Let us explore the first version of the question.

Who or what defines you? Is it your body? Your mind? Your feelings? Your soul? Are you a good or bad copy of your parents? Are you everything except those things you hated about your parents? In trying to avoid being like your parents, do you actually become more like them?

When offering your opinion, do you say “I feel ...” or “I think ...” or, just give your opinion as an obvious fact? This will depend on who you think you are.

To what extent are you defined by your work, or lack of it? Do the schools you went to dictate who you now are? Do you watch certain programs on television because of who you are, or do the things you watch make you who you are?

To what extent does society form you? There is a concept of ‘consensus reality’ – the reality that most of the people around you would agree is so. I say ‘most’, because there are always a few people who refuse or are unable to agree that the world is the way most people perceive it. Some of these are put away in institutions, because their inability or refusal to see things the way others see them has them not be able to operate effectively in the world, or because they are perceived as a threat for the way they perceive.

There are many people, however, whose view of the world does not conform to the majority view, yet they *are* able to operate effectively in that world. These people are often poets, mystics, artists, inventors, innovators, eccentrics. They know what the consensus reality is and can work within it, but they also know that this is but one view of the world; they can happily function outside the consensus reality.

Who you think you are can depend on how you see the world. How you perceive the world around you to be, dictates how you respond to it. It is this agreement amongst the majority in a society that gives it cohesion. And whether you predominantly see or hear the world around you also has to do with who you think you are.

So, is the world really the way it is, or is it the way you think it is? How does your answer to this influence who you are, or who you think you are?

Think for a moment about your relationships to those around you. You are someone’s child, however old you are. You may be a brother or sister to more than one person. You may be a wife, husband, lover, girlfriend, boyfriend. You may be a parent. You probably

have some close friends and a number of acquaintances. You may have a boss or supervisor at work or you may be a boss to others; or maybe both.

If you were to write down all the relationships you have to all the people you know, you may end up with a list of hundreds (even thousands) of individual relationships. Many of these intersect in complex ways. How do these relationships influence your thinking? Are you the same person when you are with your parents as you are when you are with your boss? How do you behave when at work; how when you are with friends? If your behaviour in each situation is different, which behaviour reflects the 'real' you?

In different situations you may behave as a tyrant or as a wimp, as a knowledgeable instructor or as an avid student, as a leader or as a follower. Which of these is truly you? Which of these do you identify with?

Are you someone who consults an astrologer or Tarot reader to find out who you are? Or maybe you have a clear knowledge of who you are and use astrology to identify the best paths open to you. Do you obtain your guidance through religious or spiritual beliefs and practices? How does this define who you are? Maybe you believe that you are borne out of nothing and that you cease to exist when you die.

When you first started contemplating who you are, you would probably have formed an opinion on the matter. At some later point you probably changed your belief about who you are, and now you probably have another, different belief about who you are. Which is the true you? Did you change who you were at each point, or was it only your belief about yourself that changed?

[In the next post: Who do *you* think you are?]