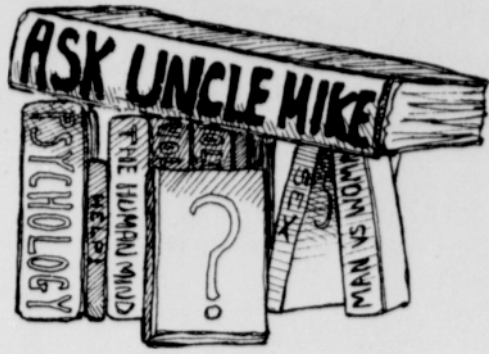


Dear Uncle Mike,

You've talked about death before, how it doesn't exist according to quantum physics, whatever the hell that is. Would you mind running it by me again: Someone in my circle died recently and I could use some perspective. Thanks.



Grieving in Cannon Beach

Dear Grieving,

You're welcome. Uncle Mike is always happy to talk about death. It's one of those subjects that, the more you think about it, the better you feel. Uncle Mike doesn't believe in death for two reasons. First, because he sees no evidence of it in the physical world. Second, because in its popular form, there's no room for it in the equations.

Keeping matters simple, the 'I' we see in the mirror is a complex wave form. Like a chord strummed on the electric guitar of the universe, our bodies are the surface features of an energy field. We are, in this way, brothers and sisters of everything from sea shells to scotch terriers, tennis shoes to philodendras, sunsets to stars. The observable 'we' is what Buckminster Fuller called a 'pattern integrity': a slip knot that slides through space/time, a one of a kind ripple on the pond of current events.

Owing to biochemical processes too disgusting to go into, our body ripples eventually fade and disappear. The disappearance is, of course, an illusion. The conservation laws governing mass/energy and momentum are very firm about life everlasting in a closed four-dimensional ripple tank. Things change; they don't go away. There's nowhere for them to go. Uncle Mike can hear you saying, yeah, but in terms of being able to have lunch with friends, dead is still dead. Au contraire. Your spirit is a pattern integrity, an organizing principle dropped, constantly and forever, into the formless potential of being. A slip knot sliding through life. A minor chord in the unfinished symphony of the universe.

Imagine a glass sphere. Every point inside the sphere is a perspective. The sum of all the point perspectives, an infinite number of them, is the internal reality of sphere. If any of the perspectives disappeared, the geometry of the sphere would collapse. In terms of the geometry of space/time, you and Uncle Mike are point conscious perspectives that generate biological fields. We are, quite literally, born to do this. Because all perspectives existed, at least as potential, in the first nanosecond of the big bang, our perspectives have always been here and always will be. Subtract even one and the geometry of the continuum is violated and the universe ceases to be. This may be what Shakespeare had in mind with the question, "Death, where is thy sting?"

Uncle Mike is sorry you've lost a friend. Honor their memory by loving those who remain. Instead of mourning, celebrate the gift of life which, once given, is never taken away.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My boyfriend and I are having this ongoing discussion involving the stupidity of buying lottery tickets. Every week, he trots off the 7-Eleven like a kid to a candy store. It's not like it's a burden on our budget, but I say his chance of winning is less than if he stood on a street corner and asked strangers for a million bucks. Anyway, we both read your column and wonder if you buy lottery tickets. I've got five dollars that says you don't.

The Gambler and His Lady, Portland

Dear Friends,

Uncle Mike must call you friends because he refuses to address anything to those who refer to themselves as the Gambler and His Lady. It's hard even to type it.

Does Uncle Mike buy lottery tickets? Uncle Mike has. Two of them, as nearly as he can remember. He keeps telling himself he'll buy one every time the pot hits \$100 million, just to see how the winds are blowing. He keeps forgetting. But then, Uncle Mike's no gambler. That's why he plays poker.

Is it stupid to buy lottery tickets? Uncle Mike hesitates to go that far. He sees it as an act of statistically misguided hope. The odds were better when the mob ran the numbers racket. Still, hope is hope, and we should never discourage it, not even in your boyfriend who allows himself to be referred to as The Gambler by His Lady. Count yourself lucky he doesn't play the poker machines. The odds on those puppies make the lottery look like a horn of plenty.

The time to relax is when you don't have time for it.

Sydney J. Harris

THE THERAPY PAGE

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