



# “Who Am I?”

## *Resource or Liability?*

By Walter M. Bortz, II, MD

**At age 85, I’m bathing in a tub of intellectual nectar. I feel immensely gratified that I have turned out to be a gerontologist, a scientist interested in the details of Aging. It’s richness spills over.**

I’m blessed by brilliant science colleagues both here at Stanford and actually around the world. We have a spreading network. The domain invites us to write articles such as this, give talks and generally indulge in deep thought. I ask “just what is aging anyway?” I have concluded that aging is the result of an energy flow on matter over time.

Such a terse definition demands expansion. This expansion reaches everywhere: physics, medical health, psychology, politics, economics, daily life, philosophy. I’m having great fun exploring many of these in depth.

Just this noon, I’m having lunch with Lloyd Demetrius, Professor of Mathematics and Evolution at Harvard. He wrote a fabulous paper on Alzheimer’s which I treat as a gem.

He is one of my main thought leaders and I would even hope to be able to contribute to his domain. We will explore deeply over sandwiches.

But the take-home message of this column is to reframe my question: as we age, “are we to be a resource or a liability?”

Will we be sucking energy from our home, our loved ones, our nation? Who will we be? An energy consuming cohort or an energy creating resource, bringing order and gentleness and understanding to our ever aging world?

These are the big questions that I, all of us, face. Let us not shirk our responsibilities.

Only we are in charge of Destiny.

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