



I Am Interested In My Mind, by Paul Fleischman

I am interested in my mind, and in my body. Previous to my having cultivated the habit of sitting, I had thought about myself and had used my body as a tool in the world, to grip a pen or to chop firewood, but I had never systematically, rigorously, observed my body -- what it feels like; not just with a shy, fleeting glance, but moment after moment for hours and days at a time; nor had I committed myself to observe the reciprocal influence of mind and body in states of exhaustion and rest, hunger, pain, relaxation, arousal, lethargy, or concentration. My quest for knowing is not merely objective and scientific. This mind-and-body is the vessel of my life. I want to know it with the same organic immersion that sets a snow goose flying ten thousand miles every winter and spring.

Because the harmony in me is at once so awesome and sweet and overwhelming that I love its taste yet can barely compel myself to glimpse it, I want to sit with the great determination that I need to brush aside the fuzz or distraction, the lint of petty concerns. To sit is to know myself as an unfolding manifestation of the universals of life -- a gripping, unending project. Hopefully one I can use even when I look into death's funnel. For me, this knowing is a great force, and a great pleasure.

I sit because of, for, and with an appreciation of daily life. The great poets sing of the omnipresent ordinary, pregnant with revelation -- but I know how easily and recurrently my own life yields to distraction, irritation, tunnel vision. I do not want to miss my life the way I once missed a plane at a New York airport. It may be ironic that simply to wriggle free of daydreams and worries I need a technique, a practice, a discipline, but I do; and I bow to that irony by doing what I must do to pry my mind off ephemeral worries, to wake to more dawns, to see my child unravel through his eddying transformations.

I sit to open my pores, skin and mind both, to the life that surrounds me, inside and outside, at least more often if not all the time, as it arrives at my doorstep. I sit to exercise the appreciative, receptive, peaceful mode of being filled up by the ordinary and inevitable.

--Paul Fleischman, in "Why I Sit
[http://www.bps.lk/wheels_library/wheels_pdf/wh_329.pdf]"

