

Knowledge in Action

An inspiring and provoking list of questions from Calvino... felt very timely (or it could be that these questions are always timely).

Part 1: This weekend, I took a drive up to see my mom -- wanted to surprise her for dinner. But because of a very bad accident further up the freeway, I ended up spending 4 or 5 hours in the car instead of the usual 1+, all of us trapped between exits, in traffic that was moving slower than a crawl (ie, it would have been faster to get out of the car and crawl on hands and knees). After the third or fourth hour, I had finished distracting myself with sound files and phone calls, my back was aching, my legs were aching, and I really needed to pee. The agony was emotional and unbearable. So I decided to do it -- pulled off to the shoulder, put on my blinkers, hopped the rail and ran out into the open field. True freedom! It was so wonderful to be running through the grass; I called Mits back to tell him about it. The rest of the "drive" was OK too.

Part 2: Arrived at my mom's place at around 9pm and found her already asleep. Normally, I don't like to spend the night at her place, long history of unhappiness, demands and defensiveness. But one of the staff suggested I take some sheets and make myself comfortable in her old apartment (she recently moved from an independent apartment to assisted) and it was strangely wonderful to be among her things again. Felt some of the sweetness I hadn't recalled since early childhood -- the arrangement of furniture, her sense of space. I remembered how much of my childhood was spent playing in an environment she had created. It was quite sad to think about all the time I spent holding aloof from her and that sensation; recalling it was a bit of making peace, reclamation of the past. The next morning, we had our usual tiffs, but also a nice time visiting the local places in the cool fall weather.

This question of how to integrate life and practice has been tricky at some points, more straightforward these days. Lately, I am holding in mind one of Joseph Campbell's quotes: "I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive." You could call it an experience, or you could call it a way.

Although it's hard to see the way I frame things (they don't look like framings or assumptions, they just look like "the way things are"), it's relatively easy to see the way I would *like* to frame things -- the notions I'm taking on as an experiment, or as advice to myself. Recently, they include ideas like:

- *) Thoughts aren't as necessary or as trustworthy as I think they are
- *) A sense of connectedness (rather than separateness) is a better guideline