

The Path of Least Resistance and the Trick

Editor's note: Following is an excerpt from a book in progress titled Measuring the Sky.

By Tal Streeter

In the sky. Among the clouds. A kite at rest, still. A child's kite.

On it's back, a child.

A kite at rest, still. Something even our fine-feathered friends are incapable of achieving, this child's kite in the sky with its passenger, unmoving. A point of stillness in the vast heavens.

Only a slight breath-like ripple on its skin-----the wind's breathing holding the kite aloft. This kite, any kite.....This kite with a child's hand holding its long line of string stretching back down to earth. The child perched there riding on the kite's back wide-eyed with the fabulously new perspective of earth, the earth embraced in a child's mind. Astride a kite, kite and child, a still point in the sky.

Then moving, the kite leaning to the left, dipping, next to speed across the sky, its passenger holding on tight, before coming to rest once again, creating another still point in the ocean sky. The wind once again breathing lightly, rippling the kite's skin, holding it aloft ever so gently.

Its passenger looks down on the small body whose hand shakes the string, sending message from the earth up and out into the distant sky.

A child's imagination notwithstanding, the kite follows the path chosen by nature, pulling from an arc into a straight line, tracing the path of least resistance across the sky. The frugality of nature, spare, the conservation of energy even in the flight of a child's kite, as in science, as in philosophy, the evidence of "Ockham's razor," the "law of parsimony," the "path of least resistance."

The evidence of stillness government by the "law of inertia."

As a child----in the sky on the back of a kite; running across a meadow; hopping, one foot on the curb, the other in the gutter of a city street; sitting at the breakfast table eating a piece of toast-----seeing everything as if by magic. Not by the laws of man's physics, not by laws at all, but the way of nature and kites and a child's mind. Kite. Sky. Hopping. Skipping and breakfast toast. All magic. Enchantment.

That's the trick.