

**A REVIEW OF ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTOR-
CYCLE MAINTENANCE WITH SOME
REMARKS ON THE TEACHING OF LAW**

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A REVIEW OF *ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE
MAINTENANCE** WITH SOME REMARKS ON
THE TEACHING OF LAW

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Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values is a far better book than its title would suggest. The main character, a nameless narrator hereinafter called "the author," tells us early on what he is about.

What is in mind is a sort of Chautauqua—that's the only name I can think of for it—like the traveling tent-show Chautauquas that used to move across America, *this* America, the one that we are now in, an old-time series of popular talks intended to edify and entertain, improve the mind and bring culture and enlightenment to the ears and thoughts of the hearer. The Chautauquas were pushed aside by faster-paced radio, movies and TV, and it seems to me the change was not entirely an improvement. Perhaps because of these changes the stream of national consciousness moves faster now, and is broader, but it seems to run less deep. The old channels cannot contain it and in its search for new ones there seems to be growing havoc and destruction along its banks. In this Chautauqua I would like not to cut any new channels of consciousness but simply dig deeper into old ones that have become silted in with the debris of thoughts grown stale and platitudes too often repeated. "What's new?" is an interesting and broadening eternal question, but one which, if pursued exclusively, results only in an endless parade of trivia and fashion, the silt of tomorrow. I would like, instead, to be concerned with the question "What is best?," a question which cuts deeply rather than broadly, a question whose answers tend to move the silt downstream. There are eras of human history in which the channels of thought have been too deeply cut and no change was possible, and nothing new ever happened, and "best" was a matter of dogma, but that is not the situation now. Now the stream of our common consciousness seems to be obliterating its own banks, losing its central direction and purpose, flooding the lowlands, disconnecting and isolating the highlands and to no particular purpose other than the wasteful fulfillment of its own internal momentum. Some channel deepening seems called for.¹

* *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*, by Robert M. Pirsig. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1974. Pp. 412. \$7.95. *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*, by Robert M. Pirsig. New York: Bantam Books, 1974. Pp. 406. \$2.25.

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1. R. PIRSIG, *ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE: AN INQUIRY INTO VALUES* 15-16 (7-8) (1974). All parenthetical references are to the paperback edition.

His Chautauqua is delivered in pieces, a series of short talks woven into an account of a motorcycle trip which the author-narrator is taking with his son from Minnesota to the West Coast. Several years before the trip, the author had been cured of serious mental illness, one symptom of which was preoccupation with the question of quality or "What is best?" The author draws the basic ideas for the Chautauqua from his writings before his cure. His earlier insane self, whom the author names Phaedrus, constantly threatens to emerge during the journey. The author fears for his son.

The trip takes them to Bozeman, Montana, where Phaedrus taught English composition in a state college, and on a hike in the high country where Phaedrus used to roam. There are a series of flashbacks to the time when Phaedrus was a graduate student in the Committee on Analysis of Ideas and Study of Methods at the University of Chicago. There is a good deal of explicit discussion of Kant, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Pre-Socratics, Zen Buddhism, Poincaré, Lobachevski, Euclid, Riemann, Newton, Lao Tzu, Harry Truman, and many others. But nothing is assumed by the author. Everything is clearly explained as he goes along.

In spite of the magnitude of the questions explored, there is no posing or self-consciousness. Pirsig has no wish or need to impress the reader. This lack of ego is remarkable because the book is totally personal. It is listed by the Library of Congress as autobiography, not as fiction. No character other than the author, not even the author's son, is developed. The author is trying to recover himself by examining his mental history; yet the book is a public lecture, not a personal diary. Pirsig is, from beginning to end, teaching the reader. Like all teachers, he hopes to improve his audience. The book actually is a Chautauqua, a popular lecture, an exercise in the art of teaching.

Much of the Chautauqua itself is on the art of teaching. Much of the book's action takes place in classrooms. Phaedrus initially poses the question, "What is best?" in the context of problems he is having as a teacher of English composition. The exploration of the question, redefined as "What is Quality?," is undertaken as a necessary precondition to the question, "How to teach people to do quality work?". The book is a personal autobiography, a work of popular philosophy, and a teacher's manual.

We all teach. We teach our children, our spouses, our friends, and our colleagues. The outspoken cynic cannot be a convinced cynic; he hasn't given up teaching. The true statesman is primarily a teacher. Any organization, be it a club, a law firm, a business, or a political party, which does not spend a good deal of its available energy teaching is either designedly static, or in decline. But some organizations, law schools for example, claim teaching as their primary function. They are

staffed with *professional* teachers, people who are *paid* to teach. Teaching is such a natural function that being paid to do it is like being paid to breathe. No wonder people believe that anyone can do it. But people who teach a lot, and care about it, know that teaching is the most difficult thing they do. Any genuine assistance is always welcome, and Pirsig's book may be of genuine assistance. To see how, an exposition of his main line of philosophical argument is necessary.

I.

The Chautauqua, through Parts I and II of the book, is an explanation of why the question, "What is best?", is such a difficult one for us. The root of the problem, according to the author, is that our understanding of things tends to be exclusively one of two sorts: classic or romantic. A classic understanding sees the world as rational, lawful, in terms of its underlying forms or categories. The romantic understanding seizes upon immediate appearances, relying heavily on intuition and inspiration. Pointing out the dichotomy between the two types of understanding is itself an operation within the classic mode.

. . . The classic style is straightforward, unadorned, unemotional, economical and carefully proportioned. Its purpose is not to inspire emotionally, but to bring order out of chaos and make the unknown known. It is not an esthetically free and natural style. It is esthetically restrained. Everything is under control. Its value is measured in terms of the skill with which this control is maintained.

To a romantic this classic mode often appears dull, awkward and ugly, like mechanical maintenance itself. Everything is in terms of pieces and parts and components and relationships. Nothing is figured out until it's run through the computer a dozen times. Everything's got to be measured and proved. Oppressive. Heavy. Endlessly grey. The death force.

Within the classic mode, however, the romantic has some appearances of his own. Frivolous, irrational, erratic, untrustworthy, interested primarily in pleasure-seeking. Shallow. Of no substance. Often a parasite who cannot or will not carry his own weight. A real drag on society. By now these battle lines should sound a little familiar.²

According to the author, the classic mode is now running wild, churning out truths with no accompanying sense of their relative importance, or their meaning for us. The scientific method, the epitome of rational order, has produced a chaotic disorder. The romantic anti-technocratic reaction is ill-informed, weak, spiteful, and dangerously alienated from its technologically produced environment.

The author is basically a classic type, like most of his readers, and the readers of this Law Review. Phaedrus, his former insane self, a

2. *Id.* at 74 (67).

biologist and a philosopher who wrote philosophy, was an extremely classic type. Philosophers of the romantic mode write poems perhaps, or more typically, they write nothing at all.

Throughout the first part of the motorcycle trip, the author and his son are travelling with a young couple, the Sutherlands, who are romantics and completely out of sympathy with their motorcycle as a machine. They are at the mercy of mechanical failure and unscrupulous mechanics. Their refusal to learn the art of motorcycle maintenance is a concrete example of the onesidedness with which they answer the question, "What is best?". Yet the author is sympathetic with their rejection of the purely classical mode which he sees as too prevalent in America.

In Part III, the author-narrator begins to seek a solution to the basic problem caused by the classic-romantic split. When Phaedrus taught English composition at the state college in Bozeman, he was faced with the problem of how to teach people to write well. He and his students recognized good writing when they saw it. Part of what he taught his students was that they could and did make qualitative judgments of writing, and that they agreed with Phaedrus and one another in those judgments. But what was it that made good the writing they all recognized to be good? To know the answer to this question seemed a necessary condition of learning to write well themselves. Yet while rules might provide some basis for criticism after one had written something, there was no set of rules which, if followed precisely, produced quality writing. Words like unity, vividness, authority, economy, sensitivity, clarity, emphasis, flow, precision, while useful to characterize good writing, were of no help in learning to write prose which had these qualities.

It became clear that Phaedrus was trying to teach something which could not be defined. It could be known in the sense that one could know how to do it; but it could not be known in the sense that one could give a verbal description of it to someone else. A purely classic analysis somehow missed the point. A classic understanding of quality writing did not enable one to write well. On the other hand, that a piece of writing was good was more than a subjective reaction to it by the reader. Quality was an objective feature of the writing. Why then could it not be defined?

The conclusion that Phaedrus reached was that the problem of whether Quality was subjective or objective was itself a misconception resulting from the classic-romantic split. Instead of seeing the world as made up of what is out there, objective and definable, plus our subjective reactions to it, one needed to realize that the subjective and the objective were simply aspects of reality.

Reality is events. Reality is, quite literally, what is happening. The objective world and the valuing person are simply aspects of an event,

persons acting in the world. Someone confined in the classic mode sees reality as a static thing. In a passage reminiscent of Henri Bergson, the author says:

The past exists only in our memories, the future only in our plans. The present is our only reality. The tree that you are aware of intellectually, because of that small time lag, is always in the past and therefore is always unreal. *Any* intellectually conceived object is *always* in the past and therefore *unreal*. Reality is always the moment of vision *before* the intellectualization takes place. *There is no other reality*. This preintellectual reality is what Phaedrus felt he had properly identified as Quality. Since all intellectually identifiable things must emerge *from* this preintellectual reality, Quality is the *parent*, the *source* of all subjects and objects.³

Thirty-five pages later, this passage is restated in vivid metaphor.

In my mind now is an image of a huge, long railroad train, one of those 120-boxcar jobs that cross the prairies all the time with lumber and vegetables going east and with automobiles and other manufactured goods going west. I want to call this railroad train "knowledge" and subdivide it into two parts: Classic Knowledge and Romantic Knowledge.

In terms of the analogy, Classic Knowledge, the knowledge taught by the Church of Reason, is the engine and all the boxcars. All of them and everything that's in them. If you subdivide the train into parts you will find no Romantic Knowledge anywhere. And unless you're careful it's easy to make the presumption that's all the train there is. This isn't because Romantic Knowledge is nonexistent or even unimportant. It's just that so far the definition of the train is static and purposeless. This was what I was trying to get at back in South Dakota when I talked about two whole dimensions of existence. It's two whole ways of *looking* at the train.

Romantic Quality, in terms of this analogy, isn't any "part" of the train. It's the leading edge of the engine, a two-dimensional surface of no real significance unless you understand that the train isn't a static entity at all. A train really isn't a train if it can't go anywhere. In the process of examining the train and subdividing it into parts we've inadvertently stopped it, so that it really isn't a train we are examining. That's why we get stuck.

The real train of knowledge isn't a static entity that can be stopped and subdivided. It's always going somewhere. On a track called Quality. And that engine and all those 120 boxcars are never going anywhere except where the track of Quality takes them; and romantic Quality, the leading edge of the engine, takes them along that track.

Romantic reality is the cutting edge of experience. It's the leading edge of the train of knowledge that keeps the whole train on the track. Traditional knowledge is only the collective memory of where that leading edge has been. At the leading edge there are no subjects, no ob-

3. *Id.* at 247 (241).

jects, only the track of Quality ahead, and if you have no formal way of evaluating, no way of acknowledging this Quality, then the entire train has no way of knowing where to go. You don't have pure reason—you have pure confusion. . . . Value, the leading edge of reality, is no longer an irrelevant offshoot of structure. Value is the predecessor of structure. It's the preintellectual awareness that gives rise to it. Our structured reality is preselected on the basis of value, and really to understand structured reality requires an understanding of the value source from which it's derived.⁴

Value is not something which people add to a pre-existing valueless world of objects. Reality is not some morally neutral underlying substance to which mental or physical attributes attach. The whole notion of reality as a substratum out there is one which Phaedrus sees as having been foisted on Western Civilization by Plato and Aristotle. It is that notion of an objective world as basic reality which produces the classic-romantic split: it is that notion which must be overcome if the split is to be healed.

The objective world and the subjective valuer are aspects of something more basic—human action. Human action is not composed of matter in motion with a mental component somehow added. Human action is the basic reality. The definable and describable objective world is only an abstraction from that reality, an abstraction whose structure is determined by the underlying reality of human action. We can recognize quality in action and its products, for example, good writing, and we can perform quality actions and produce quality results but we cannot define quality in action because it is the source of the world in which we use definitions and not part of that world.

The purely classic mind has no sense of the dynamic relation between himself as actor and the objective world. He does not realize that he chooses the way in which he describes the world from a large number of possible descriptions. His basic relation to himself is as an observer of something that can be completely defined. The purely romantic mind is living completely in the present, totally in touch with himself as an actor. But without classic knowledge, without static conceptual structures, he plunges blindly about without direction. The purely classic or purely romantic mind is never exemplified by an actual individual we would call sane. The most empirical of scientists, biologists for example, appreciate the artistic skill required to select significant facts out of an infinite number of possible facts in the construction of theories. The most romantic nonverbal artist has requirements of technique, color theories, problems of working with paints or stone, which require classic thinking. But most of us have been forced by the dominance of classic understanding, and its false

4. *Id.* at 282-84 (276-77).

claim to exclusivity, to think either that everything worth knowing can be classically defined, or, in romantic reaction, that nothing worth knowing can be analyzed.

A person bridges the dichotomy between the romantic and the classic modes of understanding in practice when he uses descriptions of the world, but realizes that they are chosen by him from an infinite number of possible descriptions as part of his action in the world. The quality of one's actions, whether it be writing an English paper or fixing a motorcycle, is partly a function of the skill with which one sees the problem situation. *The key is to remember that to some degree one chooses how the world is. It is important not to get stuck in any one description of the world.*

An illustration from motorcycle maintenance: you strip a screw on the engine face plate while trying to reach the engine for repairs. The screw is a small, insignificant object which should not be causing this much trouble. You feel incompetent. You are losing time. You feel that you should have gone to a real mechanic in the first place. You are stuck. One alternative is to stay with a description of the screw as insignificant. But to stay with this description insures that you will never really apply yourself to the problem of the screw because you will regard every effort to solve the problem as time wasted. You will remain in a frustrated and distracted state of mind as you work. You are likely to compound the error, strip another screw, or break something else, and make matters worse.⁵ An overly classic mind remains locked in a world in which the screw is insignificant. It sees the world as objective and set, something which cannot be changed except by physical manipulation.

By contrast, the quality motorcycle mechanic, the true craftsman, is in touch with what really is. He does not stay locked into a description of the world in which the screw is insignificant. He realizes without even fully bringing it into consciousness that the screw is not cheap, small, and unimportant. It is, in fact, worth exactly the selling price of the whole motorcycle because the motorcycle is valueless until the screw comes out. With this reevaluation of the screw comes a willingness to expand his knowledge of it.⁶

Now, in getting that screw out, you aren't interested in what it *is*. What it *is* has ceased to be a category of thought and is a continuing direct experience. It's not in the boxcars anymore, it's out in front and capable of change. You are interested in what it *does* and why it's doing it. You will ask functional questions. Associated with your questions will be a subliminal Quality discrimination identical to the Quality discrimination that led Poincaré to the Fuchsian equations.

5. See *id.* at 279 (272-73).

6. See *id.* at 280 (275).

What your actual solution is is unimportant as long as it has Quality. Thoughts about the screw as combined rigidity and adhesiveness and about its special helical interlock might lead naturally to solutions of impaction and use of solvents. That is one kind of Quality track. Another track may be to go to the library and look through a catalog of mechanic's tools, in which you might come across a screw extractor that would do the job. . . . There's no predicting what's on that Quality track. The solutions all are simple—after you have arrived at them. But they're simple only when you know already what they are.⁷

What enables the craftsman to make adjustments in the way he describes the world is his involvement in his work. The stripped screw is seen as just the next new and interesting problem in the activity of motorcycle maintenance. This involvement, which makes the problems which seem to impede progress just as interesting and rewarding as the work proceeding without "problems," is a necessary condition for quality results. One must "care." The activity of motorcycle maintenance must be an end in itself.

The difference between a good mechanic and a bad one, like the difference between a good mathematician and a bad one, is precisely this ability to *select* the good facts from the bad ones on the basis of quality. He has to *care!* . . .

I think the basic fault that underlies the problem of stuckness is traditional rationality's insistence upon "objectivity," a doctrine that there is a divided reality of subject and object. For true science to take place these must be rigidly separate from each other. "You are the mechanic. There is the motorcycle. You are forever apart from one another. You do this to it. You do that to it. These will be the results."

This eternally dualistic subject-object way of approaching the motorcycle sounds right to us because we're used to it. But it's not right. It's always been an artificial interpretation *superimposed* on reality. It's never been reality itself. When this duality is completely accepted a certain nondivided relationship between the mechanic and motorcycle, a craftsmanlike feeling for the work, is destroyed. When traditional rationality divides the world into subjects and objects it shuts out Quality, and when you're really stuck it's Quality, not any subjects or objects, that tells you where you ought to go.⁸

A person involved in any activity fully appreciates that he is creating the situation in which he works. But there is a certain unselfconsciousness. One's body is at rest except for the job one is doing. One's mind is completely focused on the job. There are no "wandering desires."⁹ There is not even the consciousness of self-satisfaction. We do our best work and our best living when we are involved with reality in this way.

7. *Id.* at 287 (280-81).

8. *Id.* at 281-82 (275-76).

9. *Id.* at 289 (289).

II.

That's all the Quality talk for today, I guess, thank goodness. I don't mind the Quality, it's just that all the classical talk about it *isn't* Quality. Quality is just the focal point around which a lot of intellectual furniture is getting rearranged.¹⁰

What do all the metaphysics and down home advice have to do with teaching? The most obvious point is that quality teaching requires involvement of the sort which makes the problems of teaching, the dumb questions, the unmotivated students, just as interesting as the smooth sailing. But teaching is more mysterious than motorcycle maintenance. With teaching, even if you have been successful, it is often not clear what you did or how you did it.

A starting point is that most teaching is not the communication of true propositions. It is teaching people to do things, to act in quality fashion. Even in fields filled with facts to be learned, chemistry or biology, for example, the great teachers are those who teach their students how to do science. In professional schools, law schools for example, the emphasis on teaching people to do things is even stronger. How to select relevant facts, think precisely, think imaginatively, marshal arguments, present arguments, criticize arguments is said to be the largest part of what is taught. That law professors primarily teach people how to do things rather than communicate true propositions (such as the recent law on a subject) is a commonplace. Otherwise we could be replaced by books or machines, tape recordings kept up to date by library research personnel, or movies of the best lecturers in the United States explaining complicated points of law in a lucid and entertaining manner. So, like all teachers who must interact face to face with their students, we must be teaching skills. But precisely what sort of skills? The phrases, "to select relevant facts," "to think precisely," "to present arguments" are too vague. And when we succeed in teaching whatever we do teach, how is it done?

The short answer to the second question is that whatever it is we teach, we do it by building the student's confidence in his ability to perform. Skill in action can only be acquired by practice. In order for the practice to be effective, students must have sufficient confidence to act, make mistakes, realize they have made mistakes, and then come back and do it again. Building up a student's confidence to the point where he can accept and act on criticism, *where he can begin to train himself*, is the goal of any valid teaching technique. The risk of destroying confidence and teaching nothing is clearly greater with some techniques than others. But perhaps the greater risks are offset by the possibility of greater gains. A student can be put through a skillfully

10. *Id.* at 223 (218).

structured ordeal which, though unpleasant at the time, will drive him to greater efforts and thereby increase his confidence and his capacity for continued self-training. In my experience, the successful practitioners of these risky techniques are, in spite of surface appearances, often those who are most careful of their student's confidence.

A necessary condition for quality teaching, as for any quality action, is that the actor care about the results. A teacher must care about improving his student. Good teachers don't necessarily care about the student as a whole person; a ski instructor doesn't care about developing his student's writing style. But whatever skills an individual law professor teaches, his concern that his student's action be excellent is part of his own excellence as a teacher. And since his method is to develop his students' confidence in their ability to acquire the skills he is teaching, he cannot be afraid of their effective use of those skills. When Phaedrus was a student at the University of Chicago, he made a teacher nervous. What followed was some disastrous antiteaching in which the professor drained away the confidence of everyone in the room.

But the question never got raised. Phaedrus put up his hand to do so, caught a microsecond flash of malice from the teacher's eye, but then another student said, almost as an interruption, "I think there are some very dubious statements here."

That was all he got out.

"Sir, we are not here to *learn* what you think!" hissed the Professor of Philosophy. Like acid. "We are here to learn what *Aristotle* thinks!" Straight in the face. "When we wish to learn what you think we will assign a course in the subject!"

Silence. The student is stunned. So is everyone else.

But the Professor of Philosophy is not done. He points his finger at the student and demands, "According to Aristotle: What are the three kinds of particular rhetoric according to subject matter discussed?"

More silence. The student doesn't know. "Then you haven't *read* it, have you?"

And now, with a gleam that indicates he has intended this all along, the Professor of Philosophy swings his finger around and points it at Phaedrus.

"You, sir, what are the three kinds of particular rhetoric according to subject matter discussed?"

But Phaedrus is prepared. "Forensic, deliberative and epideictic," he answers calmly.

"What are the epideictic techniques?"

"The technique of identifying likenesses, the technique of praise, that of encomium and that of amplification."

"Yaaas . . ." says the Professor of Philosophy slowly. Then all is silent.

The other students looked shocked. They wonder what has hap-

pened. Only Phaedrus knows, and perhaps the Professor of Philosophy. An innocent student has caught blows intended for him.

Now everyone's face becomes carefully composed in defense against more of this sort of questioning. . . .

The innocent student stares down at the table, face red, hands shrouding his eyes. His shame becomes Phaedrus' anger. In all his classes he never once talked to a student like that. . . .

In the next sessions the shamed student is no longer present. No surprise. The class is completely frozen, as is inevitable when an incident like that has taken place. Each session, just one person does all the talking, the Professor of Philosophy, and he talks and talks and talks to faces that have turned into masks of neutrality.¹¹

Another corollary of caring about students and building their confidence is the avoidance of discipleship. This is less of a problem in professional schools than in graduate programs in the arts and sciences because of the lack of prolonged contact with thesis advisors. When a student begins to become a disciple, the commitment to building confidence will always require the good teacher to push that student away, telling him to develop his own skills rather than admire the teacher's. Teaching law school is not unlike entertaining in a night club. Many of the rewards and threats to the ego are the same. It is comforting to have an adoring crowd in your dressing room to bolster your self-esteem and protect against the shock of critical reviews. That the temptation to acquire an entourage is largely resisted by law professors is a sign of their toughness, and their commitment to the best interests of their students.

Up to now we have been discussing the easier of the two questions posed at the beginning of this section: when we succeed in teaching excellence in action, how is it done? The harder question is, what do we teach? It is true of anyone who teaches well that he "has something to teach." But what is that something?

Clearly it is not objective information which can be imparted in balanced propositions, nor is it just ourselves, our subjective reactions to the law, or our experiences with it. To think so is a mistake which eminent judges and practitioners often make when they teach a course in a law school on the side. Successful as occasional lecturers, they fail when making their reactions and experiences the subject of a sixty hour course. Nobody is personally that interesting. Nor is the combination of objective information on the law and subjective reaction to it "something to teach." Quality teaching requires quality action in the classroom, quality exercise in the presence of students of the skills a teacher wants his students to develop. The specific skills that we each teach our students vary from professor to professor. The vague phrases, "to select

11. *Id.* at 361-63 (355-57).

relevant facts," "to think precisely," "to think imaginatively," are only common denominators. Each teacher has a uniquely different way in which he naturally relates to the law. Some relate to it as craftsmen, working with the points of authority provided by the cases and the inferences allowed by the canons of legal reasoning to reach the legally correct result. Some like to cut below the legal forms and lay bare the bones of the basic conceptual relations running through many cases but fully articulated in none. Some like to study the law as a social phenomenon. Some study law as a potential instrument of justice to remedy social wrongs and realize moral ideals. A teacher's relation to law is often much deeper than simply a style of analysis of the sorts listed above. Teachers also exemplify what the law can be to someone: the chance for personal redemption through skill and hard work, or intellectual play for its own sake, or simply one fascinating set of facts after another. The point is that each teacher relates naturally to the law in his own way and it is that relation and the skills necessary to it which is what he has to teach.

. . . One says of him that he is "interested" in what he's doing, that he's "involved" in his work. What produces this involvement is, at the cutting edge of consciousness, an absence of any sense of separateness of subject and object. "Being with it," "being a natural," "taking hold"—there are a lot of idiomatic expressions for what I mean by this absence of subject-object duality, because what I mean is so well understood as folklore, common sense, the everyday understanding of the shop. But in scientific parlance the words for this absence of subject-object duality are scarce because scientific minds have shut themselves off from consciousness of this kind of understanding in the assumption of the formal dualistic scientific outlook.

Zen Buddhists talk about "just sitting," a meditative practice in which the idea of a duality of self and object does not dominate one's consciousness. What I'm talking about here in motorcycle maintenance is "just fixing," in which the idea of a duality of self and object doesn't dominate one's consciousness. When one isn't dominated by feelings of separateness from what he's working on, then one can be said to "care" about what he's doing. That is what caring really is, a feeling of identification with what one's doing. When one has this feeling then he also sees the inverse side of caring, Quality itself.¹²

When a class is bad, the cause may be a lack of classic quality. The propositions asserted by the professor may be false or illogically arranged. But the presence of classic quality does not guarantee quality teaching. Also necessary is involvement by the teacher in the law and in his students right at that moment. He must be in touch with the reality of the classroom and not get stuck in any one description of a student, or of a student's question, or of a point of law, or of a sentence

12. *Id.* at 296-97 (290).

in a case. If the teacher is divorced from these realities, as when he is giving a canned preplanned presentation, he is risking poor quality teaching no matter how high the classic quality of his prepared remarks. The whole point of having the teacher live in the room is lost.

Classic quality is not something different or opposed to Quality in Pirsig's sense. Classic quality is produced by quality action. Even if everyone in the classroom is divorced from the reality of the immediate situation because a lecture of high classic quality is simply being read, there is still interest in the lecture as the product of an earlier situation when the writer of the lecture was creating his lecture and was in touch with reality. Similarly, it is a pleasure to work with good tools or in a well-designed building. They are the products of an earlier involvement with reality, and the quality action manifest in the design of the tool or of the building reaffirms our own potential for quality action.

When the teacher is not involved in the class, and even the classic quality is low, the effect is like being subjected to shoddy consumer goods. Shoddy goods are shoddy because they are made by people who do not care about them. If the producer never cared, how can the consumer be expected to care? Bad classes and shoddy goods do more than waste time or drive quality goods from the marketplace. They depress and discourage our abilities and interest in quality action of any sort. The presence or absence of quality in action is highly contagious. Suitably elaborated, this contagiousness of excellence in action, or its lack, might explain the success or failure of professional football teams, law schools, and civilizations.

A teacher must have excellent rhetorical skills to impart his way of relating to the law. Good teachers, experienced teachers, tend to project a coherent view of how they relate to the subject matter. Younger teachers, who do not know themselves very well and who are not yet practiced in classroom techniques, may not project as coherent a relation to the subject matter as they will in later years. Older professors sometimes have such a complex relation to the law that they cannot project a relation simple enough to be understood within the limitations of the classroom forum.

In sum, quality action as a teacher presupposes considerable personal development. One must have a comfortable relationship with the law which permits losing oneself in it; one must have the rhetorical skills to communicate the relation whole; one must have sufficient character to inspire the necessary confidence in students. Pirsig's book reminds us again how difficult it all is. Teaching law is seen by students and practicing lawyers as instrumental, as a means to an end. But for teachers, teaching is an end in itself, a demanding art form in which they can grow and develop over a lifetime. Students often ask young law professors why they choose to stay at school rather than make their way in the real world.

The answer is, why play checkers when you can play chess?

III.

Even if one is uninterested in all the preaching and philosophizing, *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is enjoyable as literature. The concrete descriptions of landscapes and traveling feelings combine evocative power with economy of expression.

. . . The streets of this town are broad, much broader than they need be, and there is a pallor of dust in the air. Empty lots here and there between the buildings have weeds growing in them. The sheet metal equipment sheds and water tower are like those of previous towns but more spread out. Everything is more run-down and mechanical-looking, and sort of randomly located. Gradually I see what it is. Nobody is concerned anymore about tidily conserving space. The land isn't valuable anymore. We are in a Western town.¹³

Throughout the book incidents from the trip, problems with the people the author meets and travels with, problems with the motorcycle, even landscapes, are used to illustrate the abstract points of the Chautauqua, and give the reader some relief. Images and metaphors are carried through naturally and consistently. The equivalence of altitude and abstraction reappears constantly and is woven into other images, for instance, the image of the lone wolf who prowls the high country of abstraction and preys on the old shepherd and his sheep in the classroom. Plato's dialogue, "Phaedrus," is discussed in class in Chicago and the point is made that "Phaedrus" means "wolf" in Greek. Phaedrus encountered a wolf in the high country when he was living in Bozeman. Phaedrus speaks to the author's son while the author is asleep and both are camped in the high country. Phaedrus is often spoken of as a ghost. At one point, his quest is described as seeking the ghost of rationality. The author tells an Indian ghost story to his son and the Sutherlands early in their trip. And the first excursion into philosophy compares ghosts with the law of gravity, both being human inventions designed to explain events.

This is a very American book. The philosophy which emerges, the final subordination of Truth to Action, is strongly rooted in American Pragmatism. The faith in the ability to change society by changing individuals, the celebration of a past when people were less complicated and better for it, the admiration of self-sufficiency, the excitement of an epic journey, are all very American. The book is a best seller because it starts from American commonplaces and speaks to our common condition. Its philosophizing is only good popular stuff, sound but not original. What makes the book exceptional, perhaps even a classic, is that it is a fine autobiography of a modern American mind.

13. *Id.* at 55-56 (48).