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9.68 Affect: Biological, Psychological, and Social Aspects of "Feelings"
Spring 2009

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Class Meeting 5

March 3

Theme: Wrapping up ZAAMM

PREPARATION:

READ: 5-1 ZAAMM Part IV: Chapters 27-32 (pages 329-412)

WRITE: Reaction Paper #5 On the Experience of Reading ZAAMM... in the Context of 9.68

NOTES ABOUT ASSIGNMENTS:

5-1 ZAAMM Part IV: Chapters 27-32

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance is at once the story of a motorcycle journey across the country; a meditation on values and the concept of Quality; and an allegorical tale of a man coming to terms with his past. No doubt it can be described in many other ways as well. What is your definition of it?

Some Further Questions to Think About:

- a) In the penultimate chapter comes the climactic confrontation between father and son. The setting is the Mendocino coast. The episode starts in a crowded restaurant and moves to the roadside on a foggy cliff overlooking the ocean. Voices of the narrator and Chris alternate and then the italicized voice of the narrator's alter ego is heard. The two male adult voices overlap and combine with the son's voice as the three voices negotiate the denouement. Do the conditions of mutual and reciprocal agreement arrived at allow for both reconciliation and differentiation? Are the concluding circumstances – as described – adequate to justify the narrators/authors relatively unguardedly optimistic final paragraph?
- b) Does the book leave you (the reader) pointing in an intellectually defensible, emotionally satisfying, and practically effective/useful direction? Please elaborate. Pay particular attention to the evidently intended convergence, in the conclusion, of the narrator's monologue with its dialogical counterparts (e.g. the father/son relationship, the travelogue ("a journey through the high country"), the chautauqua.
- c) How would you characterize work as a whole? Is it an informal but ambitious and wide-ranging philosophical treatise? a passionate paean to virtue, a plaintive plea for ethical lifeways and faithful scholarship, a call to honest teaching and genuine learning (e.g. "the need for caring"; the "church of reason"), a "how-to" guide, a handbook for those in search of right livelihoods." Point is that ZAAMM plainly is a text of many meanings; a multidimensionally relevant treatise-in-novel-form ...

- d) What significance (if any) do you read into the episode in which Chris and his father remove their helmets for the remainder of the journey?
- e) The last two sentences of the book are: "It's going to get better now. You can sort of tell these things." How does this "resolution" strike you? Hopefully, you will have also read the author's Afterword, and done so after completing your reading of the text. If so, please comment on the cognitive/affective impact of having done so. With respect to the central issue of "conflicting perspectives" (differing points of view?): what are your present thoughts and feelings about the classical /romantic dichotomy with which ZAAMM has been so centrally concerned?
- f) Identify and briefly describe (at least 3) "take-home lessons, key questions or issues needing to be further discussed" with which the book leaves you.

writing assignment #5

- a) Relate form/content of book to form/content of the present learning situation. Which parts/aspects of the book/class have you been finding the most/least interesting? The easiest/hardest to get through/relate to? Which do you find the most challenging? The least/most credible, the least/most encouraging/disturbing, and why? What (if anything) of any immediate personal/social significance and value to you are you finding at this still relatively preliminary point in the process of undertaking this course of inquiry into affect?
- b) Discuss the fact that you've been reading the book at a particular point in your own life (and/or at a particular moment of world history -- if you want to take a broader and more long-term view). Have you learned anything of use to you in dealing with your present personal/social predicament? Quality: what is it? in art? in music? in movies? in words? in gestures? in worldviews, in value systems? in lifestyles?