

BECOMING A LAWYER: The Transformation of Self During Legal Education

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He that goes to law holds a wolf by the ear.

Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of
Melancholy*, 1621.

WHAT HAPPENS TO a person while he or she is becoming a lawyer? Is there something about the process of becoming a lawyer which fundamentally changes a person's experience of self, others, and the world? These questions are significant because they call attention to the human dimension of professional socialization. We need to reflect on the process in which bright young people give up their commonsense world of truth, fairness, and justice to take on the cool, detached, objective, analytical, argumentative tasks of lawyering.¹ Studying the education of lawyers provides insight into the pathologies of professionalism rooted in the initiation and rites of passage that one undergoes to become a "professional."

To become a lawyer is to change one's story dramatically.² By simply listening to students tell their own stories we get a sense of the transformation that many experience during their legal education. Legal education is a "place" where meaning (and loss of meaning) is at stake, a time when souls are shaped. Seeing and understanding how professional education affects students as

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persons is difficult because educators pay so little attention to the idea of soul,³ to the idea of archetypal and transformative experiences⁴ which change students into professionals.

Law school does not turn liberals into political conservatives or induce a mad rush to adopt authoritarian attitudes. Concern for social justice is not destroyed. Some would contend on the basis of these conclusions that law school doesn't change the person. So what happens? How can a student change and remain the same?

Law school is an initiation experience, a rite of passage, much like an adulthood rite in a primitive culture; both are powerful in changing an individual's life. In a primitive culture the reproductive capacity, knowledge, skill, and moral reasoning of the initiate are unaffected by the participation drama of the initiation, yet everything is different. The person stands in a different place to view the same world. Likewise, something happens to law students which significantly alters their personal identities and their experience of the world, a transformation that social scientists try—but often fail—to measure and explain.⁵

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The exact nature of the change that takes place in legal education—where it is going to carry the student, and what it will ultimately mean to him or her—is unclear to those caught up in the process.

i

Though some [students] already know where they will practice and await a return to the familiar surroundings of their hometowns, others are mystified as to their future. But all have one thing in common, the growing feeling of power.

ii

[Law school] does not aid you at all in telling you where you are headed because of the vast opportunities that it presents. Because of this feeling, I feel like I am simply going through the motions while reading and briefing cases.

iii

My brief encounter with law school has effected my attitudes and reasoning. It's nothing you can see, but I know something is going on internally. Before coming here, a legal education meant work, success, power, and a barrage of concepts, feelings, and desires. All of these words still exist in my reflections, but I have tried to get closer to the roots of my legal experiences. A sort of condensed meaning is

what I'm looking for specifically. Fat chance! Presently, the first word that pops into my head when I think about law school is change. Maybe this should have been evident all along, but I couldn't see or compress it into a single idea. What exactly has set off this change I do not know. I do know that I am headed somewhere downstream on a raft of questions, choices, and ideals. At the mouth of the river is the sea, where rules, issues, and precedents form a whirlpool. I don't want to ride the raft quite that far and run the risk of getting pulled under the waves. There is too much to stop and see along the way.

So now I am at a loss for something to say and the words to express it. That has been my problem from the start. I feel vulnerable searching for the motivation and drive that is embedded so deep within me. It hurts to pick yourself apart. Coping with this pain and nakedness is a part of a life in law. That's the bottom line.

iv

It seems like the more I learn, the less I know. As I learn about a new subject, a whole new world that I never knew existed emerges, and I realize that there is that much more that I don't know.

v

I feel like I'm camping at night in a vast forest, and I have a campfire. I can see the things that are illuminated by the fire . . . I know those things. But there is always an urge to build the fire bigger and see more things. This requires venturing out into the darkness and stumbling over obstacles to gather fuel for the fire. The bigger the fire gets, the more I can know, but each time I increase my circle of light, I must go further out into the darkness in search of fuel. With each trip I realize that the extent of the darkness is greater than I had imagined . . . even though my circle of knowledge is increasing at a much greater rate.

As students experience the change in perception, language, and thinking that is a part of legal education, they undergo a deeply moving psychological experience. (Law school, like other professional schools, is known for producing high levels of anxiety, doubt, and conflict.) The movement is, some students argue, permanent and irreversible.

i

Law school has affected my thinking irreversibly. I'll never be the same again.

ii

[O]nce a person learns to "think like a lawyer," it can never be unlearned.

iii

The scariest thing about law school is that its effects are irreversible. Once you step through those doors and become a pilgrim in search of a legal career, your life is changed. It is really a sad process in a way. I want to go through it because I want to be a lawyer, but my life and its surroundings will never be the same.

In some cases students are oblivious to the changes that are taking place, or, as in the following cases, they accept the changes without knowing how they will affect their lives.

i

I want to sharpen my mind, my tongue, my manners, my logic, the way I hold myself and the like, instead of having a mind full of ancient clutter. Yet I know there are special parts of me I will not give up, will not change. My adolescent fears have not come true so far, I am still me no matter what vocation I chose.

ii

[P]eople often ask me legal questions in spite of my short tenure as a law student. I had a particularly satisfying experience in that regard last night. My father called and during our conversation he asked me a question about removing the snow from the front of our house this winter. Coincidentally we covered this exact subject in tort class yesterday. I was able to give him a lot of information about licensees, invitees, duty requirements and effects of local ordinances.

I felt very much like a lawyer. I was able to be authoritative, reserved (I acted very casually, I wanted to sound as if I could give this much information on any question he might ask), and professional. I was even able to use legal language and probably too much of it. It felt very good to be playing this role of counselor. It also felt very good to impress my dad.

So far I haven't changed much. I still do practically the same things, with the exception of more time spent on classwork and less watching television. I still buy as many punk rock albums as I can afford, see every movie I feel is worthy, and otherwise live a boring life. My attitudes in general are the same and my prejudices remain.

The depth of the experience is poignantly expressed in the statement of a student struggling with the first semester of law school and the death of a grandmother. The breadth of the questioning about the experience is illustrated by the second comment.

i

I am ashamed and confused about how I have been able to set all that aside and continue with the all important study of law. When I tried to sleep last night it was not the loss of my grandmother that worried

me but the practice exam in Criminal Law and the completion of my memorandum problem in Orientation. Where did law school get this aura that makes everyone submit themselves totally to its dictates? . . . It invades your character and mind in a way that supersedes emotions, desires, and even consciousness. And the most confusing thing of all is that I still enjoy it and do not recognize the extent of its control until I actually sit down and think about what it was like before law school.

ii

It was clearly evident the first day of law school that my professors were redirecting my conscious reasoning in new directions. What I have just now come to realize is that these professors are also adjusting my perceptions along a whole new line.

...
 . . . my classmates now converse in "relevant" terms. Unless one is speaking to someone close to him, there seems to be a pressure to say only things that are concretely tied to the topic being discussed. They do this almost as if points were being counted or deducted in casual conversation. At times it seems so absurd, as if someone was going to be awarded a prize for "Most Legalistic Conversationalist."

...
 If a student can *integrate* the new law school values with old perceptions of self the integration will provide a richer basis of reasoning: more meaningful perceptions.

...
 Some law professors would like to produce a new person through legal education; however, in some cases the process ends in becoming a chameleon, with an illusion of change and failure to integrate the old values into new values.

Being a lawyer will be the ultimate categorizing of my person.

What does it mean to be involved in a lifestyle (learning to be a lawyer) so intense and crucial that one doesn't have time for the pain involved in keeping a personal relationship together that might—or might not—be worth keeping? Does it mean that I have committed myself to one purpose, one line of work, and I cannot work at anything else?

...
 Does this mean that something meaningful, Law School, is now my life's work, and there's no room for any other work, no time to work on any other possible goal . . . ?

...
 Will I have a clearer vision of meaning, of value, of importance, in my life, or is it just that my vision has become reduced to a single focus point? Is it good or is it bad?

...
[Law] school is, at present, all encompassing. I feel that it is, essentially, life. For now, it is my life. One must make what one can of it.

The change can be experienced as giving one "something," a sense of purpose, meaning, direction.

I am much more disciplined than I was and I'm less fidgety. I don't feel like the process has had the effect of a major, eye-opening overhaul of my life, but I do feel that it has brought me in touch with a renewed sense of purpose. The purpose right now is shallow at best—that of mastering the material sufficiently to perform well on the final exams. But even the fragments of a purpose instill my life with a meaning that it hasn't had for a long time.

I was an Orthodox Jew for most of my life, and I gave that up. I was ambitious, and I gave that up. I've had a countless number of career ideas, all of which I've given up. I've had no replacement for these facets of my life; I have been dangling.

Now, law school is a fairly flimsy substitute for religion, ambition, or life, but I've at least got the feeling that all the studying isn't an entirely silly thing to do. And that is . . . well, is a very nice feeling.

One aspect of gaining "something" special in being in law school comes from being seen by others as having status. The danger in being seen as special by others is that we come to believe it ourselves. How are students to deal with the fact that others treat them as being different? How can the student react to the notion that being a lawyer moves one ahead of the pack? This phenomenon begins even before a student undergoes the socialization process.

[W]hen I meet new people they seem to be very impressed by the fact that I'm a law student, which I find extraordinary. I first became aware of this when I came to Morgantown to find a place to live. I found most landlords were eager to rent to law and medical students and would actually try to sell us on their apartments because they felt these students would take better care of the premises.

The comments which follow reflect students trying to work through this phenomenon of being "special."

i

My girlfriend repeatedly warns me that many women are attracted to professional men regardless of their other qualities. The important thing to me is that I know I didn't acquire mystical powers or devious motives when I entered Property I. People are reacting to the rumors and myths attached to the profession.

ii

I tell [my friend] that we law students are no different than anyone else. It's an information game. Use your information to beat the other person. You get the prize or you don't. Law students love to argue but love winning even better. We're not any smarter or certainly not any more valuable than anyone else. We are not special, but it is part of our training to think that we are.

iii

The only noticeable effect of law school on me is that I want everyone to know I'm in law school. As I walk through Towers on my way to the PRT [the local monorail transit system], I make sure the titles of my texts are plainly visible to any passer-by. Anytime I see an old friend from my hometown, I never fail to mention I'm in law school. I'm proud of the fact and want to flaunt it in the face of everyone I can.

iv

My ego says I must be special; music allows me to be that. Maybe law will allow me to be special, too. That is why I'm here.

This law school thing carries with it a bit of prestige. Kind of makes me feel good. I guess there really are rewards for busting your ass.

v

Obviously, something has changed, but I have not yet realized the nature or depth of this metamorphosis. I still *feel* like an individual, and I still feel differences between myself and others. I have an increasing sense of worth, and a degree of this derives from the "non-lawyer" world. There is no longer the need to impress others with my wit, intelligence, or accomplishments—I merely have to identify myself as a law student. Now *that* is humorous.

vi

Since I have been in law school, friends and family act different toward me. Even strangers react differently than they use to, when I am introduced as a law student. This change is both good and bad. Many of my old high school friends seem to resent me.

vii

I talked to my father tonight, and I spiced up my conversation with words gleaned from my first few weeks here in school. Before I discuss our conversation, you need to know that he has only a third grade education, but he has been very successful in the home remodeling business. My father allowed me to talk to him about what I was learning and listened to me discuss it in what (I thought) were important legal terms. He said, "that's fine, but I really don't understand exactly what you said."

After he hung up the phone, those eleven words stung me and continue to bother me.

Law students also receive the negative projections of a public that has lost faith in the profession. Some students go so far as to hide from others that they are in law school. One woman notes that she avoids telling people she is in law school because "it evokes hostility." The difficulty comes in trying to work out a sense of self that takes account of how others see us, what we are becoming, and what we have been.⁶

If this process of integration is unsuccessful, the result, as conveyed by the following story, is that your tail and your mind get caught in a crack.

I think law school tends to catch one's tail in a crack (from the Aesop tale of the woodchopper and the inquisitive monkey). If a person is not careful, he may lose some of his freedom of reasoning by relying solely on precedents, restatements, and hornbooks. The harder he struggles to "learn," the narrower his thinking gets. In essence, his mind is caught in a crack.

The mind gets caught in the crack because of our compulsion to "make it," our drive to achieve an idealized self-image, and a failure to raise questions about purpose, goals, meaning, direction.

If we listen to students we learn how law school is a transforming experience. The change is often described by students as one in which they become more precise, objective, analytical, and disciplined—the exact qualities perceived by legal educators as the hallmark of the "good lawyer."

i

After being in law school for only three weeks I can begin to tell a difference in my thought pattern. I find myself more and more hesitant to give judgment decisions based on a bare scintilla of information. I try to analyze situations to the greatest extent possible.

ii

I have become more thorough and thoughtful.

iii

I use words more precisely.

iv

I am more disciplined than I had been

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Discipline is probably the most welcome change that I can see in my character. I have carried this over to certain other areas that I believe are essential to successful living. My schedule is highly organized and routine now, and this discipline has been very comfortable to me.

vi

My mind is becoming more disciplined; I tend to analyze many things now, but yet I have not let this become a constricting force for me.

People's attitudes towards everything are changing. I would say that a great many of us who are striving to conform are becoming more analytical of ourselves and of the world, possibly a constant practice of the thinking process we are striving to master.

vii

One reason I wanted to come to law school was because I always felt that I was too sentimental and just basically too nice; I was always letting people step on me and push me around and I hoped that I could reach a balance between callousness and the other extreme by the discipline required in the law program.

Analytical ability, which we strive to cultivate in legal education (and which is thought to be a necessary tool in the practice of law⁷), involves a loss as well as a gain. Robert Pirsig, in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, suggests that "[s]omething is always killed" when we use the knife of analytical thought.⁸ While the "qualities" acquired in law school—analytical ability, precision, and discipline—are necessary attributes of the competent lawyer, these qualities are often gained at the expense of other desirable human values.

i

I was shocked the first time I realized that I am progressing in that direction. I have become more analytical; yet, at the same time, situations of an emotional or ethical character often lose their sting as logic and rational reasoning replace them.

ii

This dilemma is still eating me. Now I feel that yes, on the one hand, I do see factual situations through the eyes of my experiences and gut feelings, but the facts should not be received in a distorted and narrow manner. I must see beyond that initial (fact) perception; I must force myself to view the factual situation from all facets and analyze my thoughts as coolly, clearly and coldly as humanly possible. I think?!

iii

. . . I notice I have been waging war between heart and head. My heart seems to be way ahead. I feel I must temper myself. I must seek to maintain an objectivity of thought. I notice in tort cases I focus on the plaintiff, in criminal law on the defendant, and in contracts on the plaintiff, even though in many cases parties have had no cause of action or have shown fault equal or greater than their opponents. I find this identification with the underdog or the injured to be disturbing to the development of my skills of analysis and argumentation. Perhaps this is because of societal identification with the underdog or the injured. I feel that my compassion as an individual is very important, but I believe I *must* maintain my analytical objectivity. This has not been as easy for me as I once thought before coming to law school.

There must be a balance between the forces of head and heart. I need to get into it. I do want to do well, and I hope my inclinations are not reflected on exams. I must become a disassociated party to learn fully. If I do not, I will miss something because of my own perceptual filters.

iv

The change is more a way of analyzing situations rather than reacting to them personally and emotionally . . . I, or a part of me, sits back and analyzes them from the perspective of the lawyer.

v

I do like the way I've begun to weigh my words and argument before speaking; I'm trying to use just the right words, in just the right way, to make my point and to use logical reasoning instead of emotions. The cobwebs of many years are finally being swept from my mind, and I like it—I'm having to use my brain for the first time in my life.

The professional qualities that students acquire as a result of legal education are juxtaposed against qualities associated with being a person. This differentiation between head and heart,⁹ professional and personal, is a "splitting" which has profound significance for the way professionals work and experience themselves as professionals. Mark Twain recounts how increasing his knowledge of the Mississippi River by learning to pilot a river boat somehow destroyed the beauty that he had previously seen in the river.¹⁰

Now, when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the

beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river . . . [A] day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them.¹¹

James White asks law students, "Have you lost something in learning to speak and think like a lawyer, are the romance and beauty gone from the river?"¹²

In addition to learning a body of legal knowledge, law students, like the riverboat pilot, begin to reinterpret their way of seeing and experiencing the world. The following two journal entries demonstrate the nature of this change.

i

Today, while I was driving home, I witnessed a near collision at the intersection of University Avenue and Patteson Drive. The first impression that registered was "personal injury." I find that interesting because never before had I thought of two cars (one negligently driven) colliding as anything but a fender bender (i.e., crumpled metal and hurt people). For the first time, my mind screamed negligence—"sue the bastard."

ii

As the semester progressed I could see myself beginning to feel, act, and think like a lawyer . . . I hadn't realized how far that process had gone until recently. I was talking to a non-legal friend and the subject turned to promises. She was quite surprised to learn that a simple promise by one person to another is not legally binding. "You mean to tell me that if I told you I was going to give you one hundred dollars tomorrow and then I didn't that you couldn't do anything about it?" The question seemed absolutely stupid to me. There was obviously no consideration for her promise, so, it was clearly not a contract and thus unenforceable. I told her no, it wasn't binding, and then she asked "even if I was sincere?" This question seemed equally ridiculous. "Why should it matter if the promise is sincere or not?" I thought. It then occurred to me that I had jumped right to the legal issue. Before I could congratulate myself for spotting the issue, I realized that I had not even considered the moral, ethical, or sociological questions involved. I thought the whole matter was a rather simple legal question. The fact that no promise could be binding without consideration or detrimental reliance preempted other issues.

This had a sobering effect on me. I thought how dangerous it could be for one to so confine and narrow his analysis of a situation that he could see only one small aspect of the conflict. I want to be sure to be careful about this in law school. As I train my mind to spot

issues and rules of law, I don't want to exclude from consideration the actual conflict and people involved.

Law is a theory, a means to see or behold the world. The Latin roots of the word "theory" are related to the word "theater," which can be defined as a place for seeing. Thus, law, or a theory of law, is a place for seeing. In the process of learning law and practicing law, law as a place for seeing is forgotten. Students no longer remember the place of their own seeing. They no longer ask how they are standing in a particular place to see. In the process of learning (i.e., becoming knowledgeable about law), their "seeing" forgets itself.¹³ They, as we, lose themselves in what they see and forget that "a way of seeing is always a way of not seeing."¹⁴

Legal thinking can deaden one's perception of the richness of experience. "For, alas, we seem to get to know one thing at the price of losing sight of another; and however wide our interests, the sharp edge of our perception in one sphere is but in contrast to the bluntness of our sensibility in another."¹⁵ The world viewed through a legal prism is a narrowly constructed one of rights and duties, privileges and powers. It is a world which reduces the experience of and with people to judicial opinions which substitute for first-hand experience. The legal world is paradoxical: at the same time that it is an intensely emotional human world, it is often *not* a world of concrete experience, but one in which experience is simply part of the data which go to make up the facts of a case.¹⁶

* * * * *

I am fighting hard to keep myself as I know me to be. I feel as though I'm a rock and there's constant erosion with constant water forces beating at my sides. I can succumb to these subtle, gradual modifications or I can add back the old sediments as quickly as they're worn away. In the early months of law school I fought and resisted this change. Lately, I've decided to go along with some of these alternatives for my own good. I want to keep my identity, but that doesn't mean that all the "baggage" I had was worth keeping and saving.

This account vividly depicts a student working through the tension produced by socialization into professional life and the passage from one world to another. Such a passage involves soul work. Who am I? What part of me that I bring to law school is

"worth keeping and saving"? What do I keep and what do I give up?

The student's comment is extraordinary in the vivid imagery associated with transformation. The self is imaged as a rock which is hard and resistant to the forces of nature (law school). The rock (self) is subjected to the constant "erosion" (learning) which is "beating at my sides." The hard rock-self is fighting, "fighting hard," "to keep myself as I know me to be." The hardness and the fight prevail in the beginning but give way "for my own good." This student is fighting for self and has come to the realization that part of that self is "baggage" which is not "worth keeping and saving." We see in this comment an awareness of submission, an awareness of resistance, and, finally, an awareness of making a choice about the effects that the "erosion," which legal education is, will have.

Something happens when one undertakes to study law. It is perhaps not overly dramatic to suggest that it is a bit like dying. Dying not as an actual physical death, but dying in the sense of giving up "something," of losing a part of one's self (the self that one wants to be). One student described it as the sense that "something is being taken from you which cannot be easily recovered." Stanley Keleman calls this "little dying." "We are always losing and finding things, always breaking with the old and establishing the new. That's little dying."¹⁷ There is a profound sense of "loss" in becoming a lawyer, a loss which makes law a "tragic profession."¹⁸

i

After only a couple of weeks in law school it was as though I had lost something or, rather, that someone had taken something from me, someone who certainly had no right to do so.

ii

I have learned, for whatever that means, something about the law in the three odd weeks I've been here. I can talk intelligently (or should I say intelligibly) about most of what has been covered thus far. But has that information and perspective gained or contributed to anything I treasure in myself? Do I need what I am learning? I miss the soulful discussions characteristic of my favorite and most fruitful undergraduate classes. There, we discussed potentiality, not limitations; we discussed how we know what we know and did not only exercise the prime rationality required in law school courses.

iii

[A]fter only a couple of weeks in law school, I feel that there are probably some fairly radical changes which this experience can work in a person's life. I suspect that this experience can be very destructive of one's self concept, as well as one's perspective of what is happening around one.

iv

I seem to be acquiring a one-track mind

v

I find my conversation predominated with the law and the aspects of lawyering.

vi

My wife tells me Friday I am starting to sound like a law student. I tell her it's just exhaustion, but I get a funny feeling I don't want to be a guy who sounds like a law student. I want to be plain old me who goes to law school on the side.

vii

I am convinced that in the next three years I will be trained to be a sophist. That is a person who practices clever but specious reasoning in advancement of persons or causes he does not necessarily believe in.

viii

Years ago, mental institutions performed frontal lobotomies on people who exhibited deviant behavior. The theory was that by excising that portion of the brain which was thought to control behavior, the deviant behavior would no longer be manifested. To medically conclude this analogy, that part was true, but the person also ended up manifesting no behavior, i.e., became a vegetable. The correlation of this surgical procedure to legal education is that for those few students who are willing to accept it an academic lobotomy will be performed.

After putting the above on the back burner for a few days, I am no longer comfortable with the thought that part of my mind has been removed. (I think the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was still on my mind.) I have changed; I do see things differently. My speech is different; it is becoming more precise, and my vocabulary is being augmented. Is this because something else has been removed?

ix

When the automobile was invented the horse and buggy became obsolete. Carriage manufacturers were suddenly without a market and out of business. Phoenix-like, the automobile industry rose from

the ashes of the carriage business. Laymen refer to this simply as a change for the better. While the horse can still transport a man, carry a pack, and pull a plow, in relative terms, its functional value as a tool has disappeared. But since the horse is flesh and bone, we can see that it did not literally vanish into thin air. Ironically, we view them while speeding past in automobiles. The look, touch, and smell of the horse is not really lost. But what about the era the horse and buggy occupied in time? What about the attitudes and feelings of the period? Nostalgia buffs call it a slow, pastoral age. That time is gone forever.

So, what does the horse and buggy era have to do with my becoming a lawyer? The thought of a part of me being lost forever is the crux of the matter. Will some of me be out in the pasture waiting to be harnessed again like the horse? Or is part of me gone forever, never to be experienced because of the legal profession?¹⁹

We must ask, what is being lost, given up? What does one forfeit to become a lawyer? In what sense is this loss a phenomenon peculiar to "learning law," to law as an institution, and to the life that one leads as a lawyer?²⁰

A clue as to how we may begin to approach these questions can be found, as is so often the case in these sorts of situations, in literature. The principle narrative figure in Walker Percy's novel, *The Second Coming*, is a successful lawyer who is now trying to understand how he lost so much along the way.

Absently he held the barrel of the Luger to his nose, then to his temple, and turned his head to and fro against the cold metal of the gunsight.

Is it too much to wonder what he is doing there, this pleasant prosperous American, sitting in a \$35,000 car and sniffing cordite from a Luger?

How, one might well ask, could Will Barrett have come to such a pass? Is it not a matter for astonishment that such a man, having succeeded in life and living in a lovely home with a lovely view, surrounded by good cheerful folk, family and friends, merry golfers, should now find himself on a beautiful Sunday morning sunk in fragrant German leather speculating about such things as the odd look of his wrist (his wrist was perfectly normal), the return of North Carolina Jews to the Holy Land (there was no such return), and looking for himself in mirrors like Count Dracula?

At any rate, within the space of the next three minutes there occurred two extraordinary events which, better than ten thousand words, will reveal both Barrett's peculiar state of mind and the peculiar times we live in.

First, as he sat in the Mercedes, Luger in hand, gazing at the cat nodding in the sunlight, there came to him with the force of a

revelation the break through he had been waiting for, the sudden inkling of what had gone wrong, not just with himself but, as he saw it, with the whole modern age.

But first his "revelation." As he sat gazing at the cat, he saw all at once what had gone wrong, wrong with people, with him, not with the cat—saw it with the same smiling certitude with which Einstein is said to have hit upon his famous theory in the act of boarding a streetcar in Zurich.

There was the cat. Sitting there in the sun with its needs satisfied, for whom one place was the same as any other place as long as it was sunny—no nonsense about old haunted patches of weeds in Mississippi or a brand-new life in a brand-new place in Carolina—the cat was exactly a hundred percent cat, no more no less. As for Will Barrett, as for people nowadays—they were never a hundred percent themselves. They occupied a place uneasily and more or less successfully. More likely they were forty-seven percent themselves or rarely, as in the case of Einstein on the streetcar, three hundred percent. All too often these days they were two percent themselves, specters who hardly occupied a place at all. How can the great suck of self ever hope to be a fat cat dozing in the sun?

There was his diagnosis, then. A person nowadays is two percent himself. And to arrive at a diagnosis is already to have anticipated the cure: how to restore the ninety-eight percent?²¹

We are only two percent ourselves because we fail to ask ourselves what we are doing and the price we pay to live the way we do.

The quest for meaning is closely tied to the image that we have of ourselves as reflective beings with a need to understand who we are and how we change in order to enter into the professional world. The search for meaning is not a utopian quest. Rather, meaning comes from struggling with questions about what we are doing and how it will affect our lives and the lives of others.

The struggle with meaning for the professional student follows from learning "to think like a lawyer." To think like a lawyer requires a confrontation and transformation of self. The meaning of professional education itself is radically altered when we understand it as a rite of passage, a turning point, a confrontation with the unknown. The mundane prosaic world of legal education begins to reveal its transformational (and thus, mythic) quality when we allow students to speak about their own lives, their hopes and fears, and how they experience socialization into professionalism.

The problem to be overcome by students caught up in the

professionalism of law school is the problem of *recovery*—recovery of their forgotten way(s) of seeing the world. Legal professionals tend to disguise the world from themselves so that they no longer experience the world as it appears to the ordinary person, but only as it is reconstructed in and through a legal vision. The challenge for law students is to learn to experience the world *both* ways—both with and without “seeing” through their legal lens—and to learn to hold the two resulting images in productive tension rather than destructive conflict. To repeat one of the student observations cited earlier:

If a student can *integrate* the new law school values with old perceptions of self the integration will provide a richer basis of reasoning: more meaningful perceptions.

NOTES

1. Watergate and a more active public awareness of the inadequacies and ineptitude within the legal profession have resulted in a substantial body of literature which protests against the narrow conception of lawyering reflected by legal education. See e.g., Elizabeth Dvorkin, Jack Himmelstein, and Howard Lesnick, *Becoming a Lawyer: A Humanistic Perspective on Legal Education and Professionalism* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1981); Jack Himmelstein, “Reassessing Law Schooling: An Inquiry into the Application of Humanistic Educational Psychology to the Teaching of Law,” *New York University Law Review*, 53, 2–3, May–June 1978, 514–60; James Elkins, “The Paradox of a Life in Law,” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review*, 40, 2, Winter 1979, 129–68; Francis Allen, “Humanistic Legal Education: The Quiet Crisis,” *Law Quadrangle Notes*, 25, Spring 1981, 25–31; Peter D’Errico, Stephen Arons, and Janet Rifkin, “Humanistic Legal Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst,” *Journal of Legal Education*, 28, 1, 1976, 18–39. One of the earlier efforts to explore legal education from a humanistic perspective was by Charles Reich, the author of *The Greening of America*; see Charles Reich, “Toward the Humanistic Study of Law,” *Yale Law Journal*, 74, 1965, 1402–08.
2. The idea of story is fundamental throughout this essay. My understanding of what it means to have a story and to listen to one comes from the work of Sam Keen, Michael Novak, and what is now called “narrative theology.” See Sam Keen and Anne Valley Fox, *Telling Your Story: A Guide to Who You Are and Who You Can Be* (New York: New American Library, 1973); Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Michael Novak, *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove: An Invitation to Religious Studies*, revised ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Michael Novak, *The Experience of Nothingness* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1970); James B. Wiggins, ed., *Religion as Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). See also, David L. Miller, *The New Polytheism* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1981).

3. One startling exception to the absence of soul in discussions of education is the work of Maxine Greene. See e.g., *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978). James Hillman brings soul back to the center of psychology, creating a wealth of new possibilities for education. James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975); *Suicide and the Soul* (Switzerland: Spring Publications, 1976); "A Note on Story," *Parabola*, 4, 4, November 1979, 43-45.
4. The experiences described by law students follow closely the idea of archetypal experiences described by Walter Gulick in a recent article in *Soundings*. Gulick argues that an archetypal experience "calls forth a powerful *emotional* response"; "does not fit neatly within the boundaries of what is expected"; "there is always a gap between . . . [the] experience as felt and our ability to rend it into language which adequately communicates the nature of the experience to others"; there is no doubt "about the immediate *authority* of the experience"; and "[f]inally, there is a sense of *intrinsic value* accompanying the experience and intimately related to our memory of what occurred." "Archetypal Experiences," *Soundings*, 64, 3, Fall 1981, pp. 249-50.
5. See James Hedegard, "The Impact of Legal Education: An In-Depth Examination of Career-Relevant Interest, Attitudes, and Personality Traits Among First-Year Law Students," *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*, Volume 1979, 4, 791-868; Gregory Rathjen, "The Impact of Legal Education on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Values of Law Students," *Tennessee Law Review*, 44, 1, 1976, 85-118; Pipkin, "Legal Education: The Consumers' Perspective," *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*, Volume 1976, 4, 1161-92; Leonard Eron and Robert Redmount, "The Effect of Legal Education on Attitudes," *Journal of Legal Education*, 9, 4, 1957, 431-43.
 However, something may be happening in law schools which is undetected by empirical surveys. Law school may set the student upon a course in which established attitudes and beliefs are melded into a different world view. By focusing on what can be measured, the social scientist misses the underlying transformation. Some changes defy objective measurement. Social scientists, in the effort "to measure," miss the meaning of what they set out to study. Law school is a formal rite of passage, an initiation experience which, paradoxically, changes us and leaves us as we are. "The nonsubstantive areas of our lives are those most easily managed and quantified. Substantive values such as faith or love cannot be controlled or measured." Anthony Padovano, *The Human Journey—Thomas Merton: Symbol of a Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), p. 125.
6. The obstacles in forming a professional identity have been recognized as an appropriate concern of legal education. Andrew Watson, a psychoanalyst on the University of Michigan Law School faculty, has been prominent in bringing such concerns to the attention of legal educators. See Andrew Watson, "The Quest for Professional Competence: Psychological Aspects of Legal Education," *Cincinnati Law Review*, 37, 93-166; "Lawyers and Professionalism: A Further Psychiatric Perspective on Legal Education," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, 8, 2, Winter 1975, 248-85. For a critique of Watson's work and the humanistic psychological perspective in legal education, see James Elkins, "'All My Friends are Becoming Strangers': The Psychological Perspective in Legal Education," *West Virginia Law Review*, 84, 1, 1981, 161-222.
7. Frances Zemans and Victor Rosenblum, "Preparation for the Practice of

- Law: The Views of the Practicing Bar," *American Bar Foundation Research Journal*, Volume 1980, 1, 1-30.
8. Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), pp. 83-84.
 9. For an excellent description of the dichotomization of head and heart, see Michael Maccoby, *The Gamesman: The New Corporate Leaders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), pp. 181-224.
 10. Cited in Pirsig, pp. 84-85.
 11. Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* as quoted in James White, *The Legal Imagination* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1973), pp. 10, 11-12.
 12. White, pp. 12-13.
 13. For the concepts of "seeing" and "forgetfulness" as used here, I am indebted to Professor Robert Romanyshyn, a phenomenologist at the University of Dallas. Professor Romanyshyn's theme was presented in a series of lectures June 11-23, 1978, at the First Summer Institute in Archetypal Psychology at Notre Dame University. Romanyshyn's phenomenological psychology is more fully presented in Robert Romanyshyn, *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).
For a similar usage of "forgetfulness," see Paul Ricoeur, "The Language of Faith," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work* (C. Reagan and D. Stewart eds., 1978), pp. 223-38.
 14. Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (New York: New Republic, 1935), p. 70.
 15. Erich Heller, *The Artist's Journey Into the Interior and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 94.
 16. For a somewhat contrary suggestion, see James White, "The Study of Law As an Intellectual Activity," *Journal of Legal Education*, 32, 1, 1982, 1-10.
 17. Stanley Keleman, *Living Your Dying* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 5.
 18. See Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations Into Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 184-202 (where it is suggested that medicine is a "tragic profession").
 19. The image of the horse also appeared in the following student comment:
"Have you ever been around wild and tame animals of the same species? I have, with horses, and the effects on the tame horse are startling when it is confronted with the ghost of its own freedom, the ghost of its own spirit, the ghost of its own nature. But perhaps what is more frightening to the human animal is that it also represents the unknown possibilities of life which freedom represents."
 20. For a poignant expression of the "loss" of one lawyer, see Charles Reich, *The Sorcerer From Bolinas Reef* (New York: Bantam Books, 1977).
 21. Walker Percy, *The Second Coming* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), pp. 15-16.