



The Art of the Skilled Mechanic, by Robert Pirsig

Not moving, not really thinking about anything, not really caring about anything either, seems to draw out the inner tensions and frustrations that have prevented you from solving problems you couldn't solve before and introduced ugliness and clumsiness into your actions and thoughts. [â€¦] A cup of coffee, a walk around the block, sometimes just putting off the job for five minutes of silence is enough. When you do you can almost feel yourself grow toward that inner peace of mind that reveals it all. That which turns its back on this inner calm and the Quality it reveals is bad maintenance. That which turns toward it is good. The forms of turning away and toward are infinite but the goal is always the same. I think that when this concept of peace of mind is introduced and made central to the act of technical work, a fusion of classic and romantic quality can take place at a basic level within a practical working context. I've said you can actually see this fusion in skilled mechanics and machinists of a certain sort, and you can see it in the work they do. To say that they are not artists is to misunderstand the nature of art. They have patience, care and attentiveness to what they're doing, but more than this ... there's a kind of inner peace of mind that isn't contrived but results from a kind of harmony with the work in which there's no leader and no follower. The material and the craftsman's thoughts change together in a progression of smooth, even changes until his mind is at rest at the exact instant the material is right. We've all had moments of that sort when we're doing something we really want to do. It's just that somehow we've gotten into an unfortunate separation of those moments from work. The mechanic I'm talking about doesn't make this separation. 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. [â€¦] 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. --Robert Pirsig