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THE OTTERBEIN MISCELLANY

CREATIVITY AND THE QUEST FOR QUALITY:
A SYMPOSIUM ON ROBERT M. PIRSIG'S *ZEN AND THE ART
OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE: AN INQUIRY INTO VALUES*

ROBERT FROST VISITS OTTERBEIN

Robert Price

CONTEMPORARY COMMUNAL SOCIETIES

Albert E. Lovejoy

FREE-RIDING WITH PUBLIC GOODS:
A MARKETING DILEMMA

Gail L. Miller

THE THINKING MAN'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Tom Bromeley

FOREWORD

The *Otterbein Miscellany* is published once or twice a year as an outlet for faculty writing on a wide variety of topics. The college underwrites this publication in the belief that it will help maintain a genuine community of scholars. Papers are accepted, therefore, on the basis of their interest to the whole academic community rather than to members of a particular discipline. Editorial responsibility rests with a committee of the faculty.

Contributions are considered from the Otterbein College faculty and administration, active and emeritus — others on invitation only.

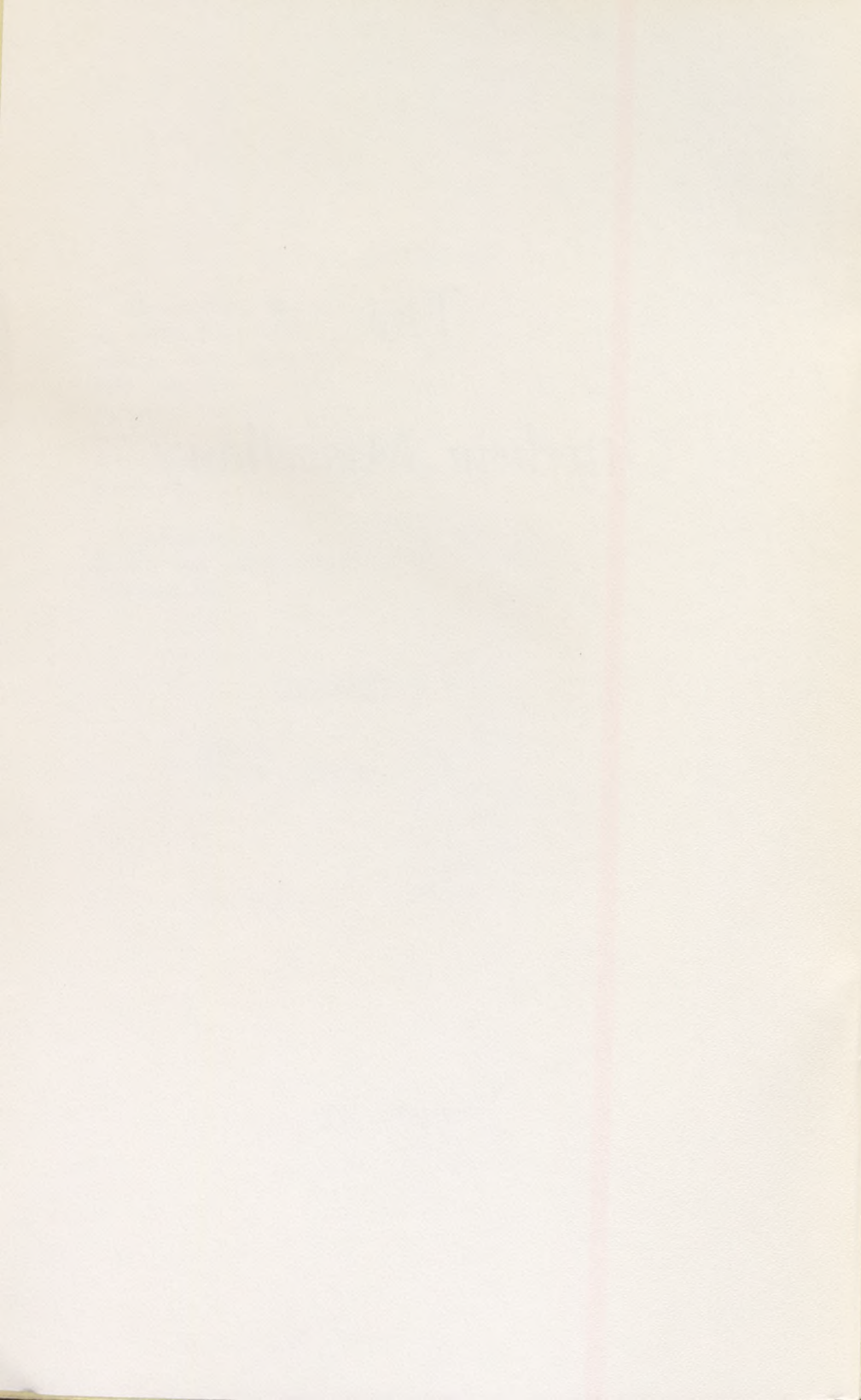
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PREFACE

At the inception of *The Otterbein Miscellany* in 1965, its board of advisors proposed to offer the publication once or twice a year, depending on the volume of manuscripts submitted and accepted. The publication was offered annually until 1978, when in that year submissions were not sufficient to warrant publication. Because of the number of manuscripts available this year, however, we are offering a double issue of the *Miscellany*. At least two of the essays presented in this issue were submitted in 1978. We are therefore numbering this issue as Vols. XIV-XV, 1978-1979.

A main theme of this issue, as Professor Paul Redditt suggests in his introduction to the featured symposium on Robert M. Pirsig, is the illusive question of "creativity." What is creativity, not only in education, but in all aspects of life? Pirsig's book has the virtue of pulling this question down off the pedestal on which theoretical treatment has placed it and handling it more intimately, autobiographically.

Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is something of a surprising cultural phenomenon in the sense that it is essentially a philosophical work which has had wide popular appeal. Once we have suggested that readers seem to like the book, however, it is important to have some indication of what we wish to do with it in terms of establishing an active relationship with the philosophy it expresses. The essays on Pirsig by members of the symposium are varying attempts to address this question.

One of the great scholars of our time, Paul Tillich, had a good deal to say about the nature of creativity. But he continually underscored the notion that creativity goes hand in hand with the patience of work. Tillich offered a telling anecdote which illustrates this idea:

A Chinese emperor asked a famous painter to paint a picture of a rooster for him. The painter assented, but said that it would take a long time. After a year the emperor reminded him of his promise. The painter replied that after a year of studying the rooster he had just begun to perceive the surface of its nature. After another year the artist asserted that he had just begun to penetrate the essence of this kind of life. And so on, year after year. Finally after ten years of concentration on the nature of the rooster, he painted the

picture — a work described as an inexhaustible revelation of the divine ground of the universe in one small part of it, a rooster.

Not all scholarly writing attains to the creative excellence of the Chinese painter's rooster. We should remember, however, that every catalogue of a library is crowded with the names of journals in which persons, patiently pursuing their work, have contributed to the store of human learning. Our main wish for *The Otterbein Miscellany*, now as always, is that it may be regarded as a vehicle for the expression of creative thought.

The editor owes a special debt of gratitude not only to the writers whose contributions are contained herein, but also to members of the skilled staff of the Otterbein Printing Department, Mr. Forest Moreland, and Margie Shaw.

The Editor

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Paul L. Redditt

CREATIVITY AND THE QUEST FOR QUALITY:

A Symposium on Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*

The seminar for which the following papers were originally prepared was conceived from the desire of Otterbein's team directing the Project for Institutional Renewal through the Improvement of Teaching (PIRIT) to address the subject of creativity. Creativity, in the sense of a holistic and appropriate response to the ambiguities of social and intellectual interaction in a complex environment, is one of the goals of liberal education. In our discussions of creativity, members of the PIRIT team have found it useful to conceive of creativity as a tension between *structure* and *vitality*. For teacher and student, *structure* includes such factors as belief systems, specific goals in presenting and acquiring information and skills, and a sense of security which sets limits to the intellectual and social risks an individual is willing to take. *Vitality*, on the other hand, includes such factors as a sense of play, an eagerness for new experience and insight, and a willingness to risk a degree of security in exchange for intellectual and social stimulation.

We believe that any attempt to foster creativity in ourselves as faculty members and in our students must take both of these factors into account and exploit the developmental potential which lies in the tension between them. An artist is profoundly aware of this tension: a painting or a poem must have a strong sense of structure, derived from the traditions in which it lies and in the nature of the materials from which it is made. It must also possess vitality: evidence of the artist's new insights, his willingness to take risks. The successful painting or poem manifests the tension between and the resolution of these two forces which, until the work appears, seem at odds with each other.

Similarly, both teachers and students need to take this tension into account in the learning process. Both need to work from a sense of structure: their concrete skill and information goals and their sense of security derived from past experience, their social relationships, their beliefs and values. On the other hand, the environment is constantly changing for both of them, and they need to learn to respond in terms of such creative attributes as sensitivity to problems, fluency, novelty of ideas, mental flexibility, the ability to synthesize and analyze, to evaluate, to

redefine and reorganize organized wholes, and so on. Thus openness to change is set within a structure, and the successful learner can accept change and ambiguity without feeling himself unduly threatened.

In thinking about vitality straining at the restrictions of structure, the PIRIT team determined to look for someone who had in fact done or said something provocative, something fresh, something holistic, something appropo of the college context and the American scene in general. Robert M. Pirsig seemed to offer us what we were seeking. He wanted to take a fresh holistic approach to a society fractured into romantic versus technological forces. This led him to examine the very foundation of Western thought and to offer what he thought was the solution to a millenia-long dichotomy in Western thinking. He wanted to take a fresh, holistic approach to teaching, an approach which he himself had hammered out during his tenure as a teacher of rhetoric. He offered a fresh look at insanity — both in terms of going insane, and in terms of coping with it. He even offered a fresh way of conceiving the assembling of a barbecue rotisserie; i.e., approach the task with a deep composure as a sculptor approaches his work. None of us individually knew how successful Pirsig really had been in even putting the questions, but we suspected that in the collective expertise of our colleagues lay some perspective that might help us evaluate also the correctness of Pirsig's answers. But more importantly we suspected that the process of reading and reflecting on Pirsig would open us all up, bringing fresh insights, and indeed vitality, to our structured thought patterns. Pirsig may be right or wrong, but he does cause us to think.

Norman Chaney

A PIETY FOR THE AGE OF AQUARIUS:

Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

A main theme of modern philosophical thought, especially in its existentialist mode, is that we live in an age of anxiety. Modern man, so runs the familiar analysis, is an outsider: he suffers from the evil of "alienation." We may characterize this evil by saying that man who was once totally integrated (as in a primordial or mythical time) has become radically split in three main aspects. He is divided within himself, he is divided from other men, and he is divided from his environment. His only hope for recovery (for those thinkers who hold out hope) is to find the way to a reintegration which will restore his unity with himself, his community with his fellow men, and his companionability with an alien and hostile outer world.

But what is the way to this reintegration? Does the way lie, for instance, through psychoanalysis, or through traditional religious faith? For Robert Pirsig, the author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, neither of these proposed ways would suffice. For Pirsig, the way lies through the discovery of "zen," a term he spends much of his book trying to explain. A main purpose of this essay is to grasp Pirsig's explanation, and to "place" the book in an intellectual context. By means of such analysis, I wish to suggest an alternative for reckoning with the evil of alienation than the one Pirsig himself advocates.

Robert Pirsig was born in 1929. He holds a B.A. degree in philosophy and an M.A. degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota. In recent years he has earned his living primarily as a technical writer.

In the summer of 1968, Pirsig and his eleven-year-old son, Chris, mounted a 305 cc red Honda Superhawk and left their home town of St. Paul, Minnesota, for a two month motorcycle ride. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is largely an autobiographical account of the trip. But the book is also a "chautauqua," or a long intellectual monologue. A main purpose of the

*Major portions of this essay appeared in the 1976 edition of *The Otterbein Miscellany* under a different title. The essay appears here, in modified and expanded form, at the request of the PIRIT team.

trip is to return to Bozeman, Montana, where in the late '50's and early '60's, while teaching English at Montana State, Pirsig suffered a mental collapse that eventually hospitalized him for a series of shock treatments. Throughout the book Pirsig alludes to "Phaedrus" (a name appropriated from a Platonic dialogue). The reader does well to understand early in the book that Phaedrus is the name Pirsig attributes to the person he was before he underwent the shock therapy that blotted out his memory of the past. In returning to Bozeman, Pirsig is also attempting to recall his past and relate it to his present.

Pirsig is a thinker who stands in the mainstream of American Transcendentalism. Like Emerson before him, who is generally regarded as the chief spokesman of the American Transcendentalist movement, Pirsig is a philosopher of the self conceived both as representative and as defined by its capacity for growth. He is a thinker dedicated to a new or "high" kind of "seeing," ultimately to illumination or mystic vision ("zen"), a realization in experience, not in theory, of what Emerson referred to as the seer "becoming" what he sees.

But we must make a basic distinction between Emerson and Pirsig as philosophical thinkers. While Emerson was primarily concerned with the cultivation of innocent vision (a vision uninhibited by inquiry and analysis) as a means of regaining a childlike appreciation of the *oneness* of the world with us and around us, Pirsig recognizes that inquiry and analysis are crucial to our existence, especially in an age in which we are compelled to think our way through the technomania of society. Pirsig, in other words, is an Emersonian of strongly rationalistic bent. Though he longs for the intellectual naiveté of the child, he recognizes the necessity for the intellectual maturity of the man. How to bring naiveté and maturity, intuition and judgment into confluence, how to have a childlike appreciation of the world and yet have a rationalistic understanding of the world — these are dichotomies with which Pirsig is concerned.

I propose not to rehearse the plot of the book so much as concentrate on its central philosophical ideas. (Much of the pleasure of the book lies in the reader's tracing its plot-line.) And I perceive these to be at least threefold: (1) the idea of classical and romantic understanding; (2) the idea of Quality; and (3) the idea of zen. We will discuss each of these in turn.

Classical and romantic understanding. Pirsig assumes that there are at least two basic modes of human understanding:

classical and romantic. He describes these two modes in the following manner:

A classical understanding sees the world primarily as underlying form itself. A romantic understanding sees it primarily in terms of immediate appearance. If you were to show an engine or a mechanical drawing or electronic schematic to a romantic it is unlikely he would see much of interest in it. It has no appeal because the reality he sees is its surface. Dull, complex lists of names, lines and numbers. Nothing interesting. But if you were to show the same description to a classical person he might look at it and then become fascinated by it because he sees that within the lines and shapes and symbols is a tremendous richness of underlying form.

The romantic mode is primarily inspirational, imaginative, creative, intuitive. Feelings rather than facts predominate. "Art" when it is opposed to "Science" is often romantic. It does not proceed by reason or by laws. It proceeds by feeling, intuition and esthetic conscience. In the northern European cultures the romantic mode is usually associated with femininity, but this is certainly not a necessary association.

The classic mode, by contrast, proceeds by reason and by laws — which are themselves underlying forms of thought and behavior. In the European cultures it is primarily a masculine mode and the fields of science, law and medicine are unattractive to women largely for this reason. Although motorcycle riding is romantic, motorcycle maintenance is purely classic. The dirt, the grease, the mastery of underlying form required all give it such a negative romantic appeal that women never go near it.¹

Throughout the book Pirsig depicts certain characters as manifesting either a classical or romantic understanding of life. Pirsig's "Phaedrus" self, for example, was almost exclusively classical in his understanding (a fact which contributed to his breakdown). The husband and wife, John and Sylvia Sutherland, on the other hand, with whom Pirsig and his son make the motorcycle trip, are almost exclusively romantic in their understanding. Pirsig sees both the classical and romantic understandings as "valid ways of looking at the world." But they are "irreconcilable with each other."² A main assumption of Pirsig's is that authentic existence must be based on a mode of understanding that is neither strictly classical nor romantic, but that is independent of the two. And he identifies this mode of understanding as "zen." Let us delay our examination of Pirsig's notion of "zen," however, until we have examined his notion of Quality.

The idea of Quality. In the book Pirsig touches upon two thousand years of epistemological theories: those offered by the

Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, and others. He is fascinated by the subject-object distinction that runs through the history of Western philosophy. Inherent to this distinction is the question of whether value, or what Pirsig describes as "Quality," exists merely in the mind (the subject) or whether it exists in the thing itself (the object). Pirsig approaches this question in the following manner:

Quality . . . you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things *are* better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes *poof!* There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it really doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others . . . but what's the "betterness"? . . . So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it?³

If Quality exists in the object, Pirsig maintains, "then you must explain just why scientific instruments are unable to detect it." On the other hand, if Quality exists merely in the mind, "then . . . Quality . . . is just a fancy name for whatever you like."⁴ Neither the answer that Quality exists in the object nor that it exists in the mind is satisfactory from Pirsig's point of view. He describes the discovery he made, therefore, at the time he was Phaedrus, of where Quality does exist:

And really, the Quality he was talking about *wasn't* classic Quality or romantic Quality. It was beyond both of them. And by God, it wasn't subjective or objective either, it was beyond both of *those* categories. Actually this whole dilemma of subjectivity-objectivity, or mind-matter, with relationship to Quality was unfair. That mind-matter relationship has been an intellectual hang-up for centuries. They were putting that hang-up on top of Quality to drag Quality down. How could *he* say whether Quality was mind or matter when there was no logical clarity as to what was mind and what was matter in the first place?

And so: he rejected the left horn. Quality is not objective, he said. It doesn't reside in the material world.

Then: he rejected the right horn. Quality is not subjective, he said. It doesn't reside merely in the mind.

And finally: Phaedrus, following a path that to his knowledge had never been taken before in the history of Western thought, went straight between the horns of the

subjectivity-objectivity dilemma and said Quality is neither a part of mind, nor is it a part of matter. It is a third entity which is independent of the two.⁵

The acquiring of an understanding of Quality, Pirsig implies, depends upon the acquiring of a viewpoint for looking into the essence of things, a viewpoint which Pirsig identifies as "zen."

The idea of zen. Pirsig makes no claim in his book for being fully cognizant of "that great body of factual information relating to orthodox Zen Buddhist practice."⁶ By whatever means of intuition and judgment, however, he seems to have attained a grasp of the Zen Buddhist notion that there is a mode of understanding which is an intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding. Whatever else the term "zen" might mean, in the context of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, it means the unfolding of a worldview unperceived in the confusion of a dualistic mind. When one is under the sway of the zen mode of understanding, the universe and man are one indissolvable existence, one total whole, Only Quality is. Anything and everything that appears as an individual entity or phenomenon (motorcycle or man), is but a temporary manifestation of Quality in form. Or as Pirsig expresses this idea in his own idiom again as he recalls a realization at the time he was Phaedrus:

"The sun of quality . . . does not revolve around the subjects and objects of our existence. It does not just passively illuminate them. It is not subordinate to them in any way. It has *created* them. They are subordinate to it!"⁷

"Zen," for Pirsig, in short, is a realization of the *oneness* of the world with us and around us. Philosophically speaking, he is a *monist*, or one who sees in the universe the manifestation or working of a single principle.

Insofar as Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* has won broad acclaim, he is seemingly a prime spokesman for a mode of philosophical monism which is in vogue in our time. Why should philosophical monism be in vogue? We have suggested a possible answer to this question in the beginning of this essay. The fact that modern man experiences a sense of division within himself, from other people, and from his environment instills in him a yearning for a sense of being-at-home in the universe, a sense of companionship with the world in which he moves and has his being. This yearning for companionship may well be an attempt on the part of modern man to recapture the feeling of

intimate belonging that presumably was characteristic of man in a pretechnological age.⁸

Of course, Pirsig as a thinker recognizes that modern man cannot return to a pretechnological age. Indeed, Pirsig himself is an advocate of technology (as symbolized by the motorcycle). But he also discerns that as modern man's destiny interlocks with technology, he must sustain an apprehension (zen) of that deeper reality (Quality) which underlies and supports the quotidian reality of existence. Apart from such an apprehension, Pirsig's book suggests, human life is bound to be a pretty lackluster affair.

But in spite of the merits of Pirsig's book, at least three major difficulties confront us concerning its intellectual content. First, nowhere does a clear explanation of "Quality" present itself. If, as Pirsig suggests, Quality is the underlying principle which alone is the *ground* of all things, then how can he maintain that some things are *better* in Quality than others? Why should he not maintain that all things are equal in Quality since all things are grounded in Quality? Apparently he holds to some notion of the gradation of Quality, which is not explained by his implied metaphysic.

Second, Pirsig's positive attitude toward the world of entities does not positively and satisfyingly include persons. He tends to take other persons for granted (as is evident in the stoical posture he assumes in relation to the mental anguish of his son). Love and friendship among persons *may be* a concern for Pirsig, but it is not a primary concern. One *feels* that his interest in the world of men is muted.

The third problem that confronts us in the intellectual content of the book, however, requires more extensive analysis than the previous two. I have earlier suggested that religion as a formal mode of thought plays little part in Pirsig's quest for authentic existence. Nevertheless, he shares a disposition with many religious seekers who express a "piety for the Age of Aquarius."⁹ The essence of this piety can perhaps be approached through quotation of a passage by the American poet, Wallace Stevens:

We feel the obscurity of an order, a whole,
A knowledge, that which arranged the rendezvous,

Within its vital boundary, in the mind.

We say God and the imagination are one . . .
How high that highest candle lights the dark.

Out of this same light, out of the central mind,
We make a dwelling in the evening air,
In which being there together is enough.¹⁰

A central argument of these lines is similar to the one advanced by Pirsig in the interest of self-authenticity. Through "imagination" or meditation the self is encouraged to find its identity in "the central mind." The culmination of this process is the realization within oneself of an identity which transcends the self-God distinction ("God and the imagination are one"). The realization of this identity, in Stevens' view, is "A self that touches all edges."¹¹

But is Stevens' purity of mind "enough" in one's quest for authentic existence? Persons who think in these terms — including Pirsig — tend to have as their goal inner detachment. If one has a task to perform (working on one's motorcycle) do it with detachment. If one must act, act dispassionately, for your true self is unaffected by anything that you do. Emerson says in his essay on "Self-Reliance," in a phrase that both Stevens and Pirsig would approve, that "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."¹² When we place our center of balance outside us, Emerson maintained, we are not drawing upon the strengths that are inherent within us. Emerson's outlook has a good deal in common with certain Eastern religions — such as Vedanta, Baha'i, and Zen Buddhism — as they are popularly expressed from within Western culture.¹³ But Western religions have traditionally opposed this outlook. Indeed, when Western religious thinkers encounter the Eastern outlook, as suggested for example in the work of Pirsig, they may well interpret it as a denial of God rather than an alternative way of conceiving God. I am not insisting that the Eastern outlook is useless for dealing with the technomania of society. My question is, however, whether in adopting the Eastern outlook we do not lose sight of a conception of the self that is powerfully and meaningfully at work in the Western outlook?

In Western religions, which have their root in Biblical tradition, the God with whom we have actively to deal is a God who acts. He is a God whose will we may seek, whose judgment we may accept, and whose promises afford us hope. The Biblical writers have persisted in the notion that man makes himself through his action, but he does not do so in isolation. He makes himself through interaction with other persons, and ultimately

through interaction with God. A God who did not act, from the Biblical perspective, would be of no real significance in search for a meaningful self-identity, for God, in Kierkegaardian terms, is none other than the "Teacher."¹⁴ And the self is his agent in the world.

In the view of some persons, the Biblical notion of the self-God relationship is rankling, precisely because it seems lacking in empirical significance. Even so, it raises the possibility that inherent in all our dealing with the world there is an underlying responsibility of the self to the world.

Perhaps no recent religious thinker has developed the notion of the self's responsibility to the world with greater clarity or consistency than H. Richard Niebuhr. His conception of the "responsible self"¹⁵ places the identity of the self within a network of relationships, but not in such a way to exclude relationship to the God of Biblical tradition. On the contrary, he insists that the self can be a unity, or attain authentic existence, amidst all the forces and events which act upon it, only if there is "One beyond the many"¹⁶ with whom the self can interact. If the self has its identity exclusively in relation to the multiplicity of forces and events with which it interacts, it is not one but many. Only as the self acknowledges in trust "that whatever acts upon me, in whatever domain of being, is part of, participates in, one ultimate action, then though I understand nothing else about the ultimate action, yet I am now one."¹⁷

Underlying Niebuhr's argument is a theory of *gestalt*. We tend to view actions upon the self in terms of some larger whole: a social group, a political process, the natural environment. If the context within which the self operates is narrow its capacity for action will be limited. The self will not feel a part of the scope of things, for example, if it understands itself strictly in terms of a religious sect. On the other hand, if the self sees itself in relation to One who acts in all things, it will have a quite different response. It will see those with whom it interacts as belonging to "one universal society which has its center neither in me nor in my finite cause, but in the Transcendent One,"¹⁸ the One beyond the many. And this seeing of the self as distinct from yet as interacting with the Transcendent One has the effect of drawing us not away from the world in detachment, but toward the world in passion, as the realm where God acts.

The quality of this passion toward the world has been aptly described by Kierkegaard in his characterization of the "knight

of faith”:

The knight of faith . . . [belongs] entirely to finiteness . . . He takes delight in everything, and whenever one sees him taking part in a particular pleasure, he does it with the persistence which is the mark of the earthly man whose soul is absorbed in such things . . . He takes delight in everything he sees, in the human swarm, in the new omnibuses, in the waters of the Sound; . . . he is interested in everything that goes on, in a rat which slips under the curb, in the children's play.¹⁹

In Kierkegaard's characterization, the “knight of faith” is “a man for whom the things of this world are profoundly interesting in themselves, in whose mind the ‘truth of things’ is not engulfed and lost in some higher reference, and whose search for an *elsewhere* has led to the discovery that elsewhere is essentially here.”²⁰ Pirsig, in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, is perhaps in quest of a mode of existence that is similar to that of Kierkegaard's knight of faith, but his monistic vision disallows the principle of the Transcendent One who is the Ground of the self.

In an age in which reputedly “God is dead,” it may seem credulous to assent to the notion of the Transcendent One who acts in, through, and with man in the world. Nevertheless, there is a venerable tradition of piety in the history of Western thought – not taken into account by Pirsig – which insists that it is only on the basis of the principle of the Transcendent One that the self can assume a proper responsibility toward the world of things. According to this tradition of piety, man lives ever on the borderland of something more than the self. Even if the self lives under an imperative of responsibility, it is not the overwhelming responsibility of lifting itself by its own bootstraps. “Thought is the hall-mark of man's greatness.”²¹ But the tragedy of his thought is its brokenness. It may well be that man *needs* the conception of the Transcendent One to heal the brokenness.

FOOTNOTES

¹*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1974), pp. 73-74.

²*Ibid.* p. 83.

³*Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 228-29.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁶See the “Author's Note” at the beginning of the book.

⁷*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, p. 240.

⁸The student of primitive thought, Laurens Van Der Post, for example, describes the feeling of primitive man in his relation to the universe in the following manner:

[The] first man lived in an extraordinary intimacy with nature.

There was nowhere that he did not feel he belonged. He had none of that dreadful sense of not belonging, of isolation, of meaninglessness which so devastates the heart of modern man. Wherever he went he felt that he belonged, and, what was more important, where he went he felt that he was known. Wherever this little man went he was known. The trees knew him; animals knew him as he knew them; the stars knew him. His sense of relationship was so vivid that he could speak of "our brother the vulture." He looked up at the stars and he spoke of "Grandmother Sirius" and of "Grandfather Canis" because this was the highest title of honor he could bestow. (*Patterns of Renewal* [Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 121, undated], p. 8).

⁹This phrase is from Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 1037.

¹⁰"Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," *Collected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 524.

¹¹"A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts," *Collected Poems*, p. 209.

¹²*Selected Writings of Emerson* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), p. 169.

¹³See Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 1037-54.

¹⁴*Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 30.

¹⁵*The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 90.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

¹⁹*Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday Company, 1954), pp. 49 ff.

²⁰Conrad Bonifazi, *A Theology of Things* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 25.

²¹Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensées*, trans. Martin Turnell (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 96.

Margaret Hartman

VICTIMS AND VILLAINY: AN EXPOSE OF THE REAL VILLAIN IN *ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE*

In this paper I wish to attack Pirsig and his account of Greek philosophy. I think he plays dirty, and the victims of his attack, Plato and Aristotle, are much too important and too worthy of respect to receive such shoddy treatment. Pirsig makes a number of inaccurate, undefended statements about the teachings of the Greek philosophers. Let me be clear: I have nothing against competent popularizers or innovative theorists; what I am against are popularizers who either do not know their subject matter or who recognize their interpretation is unusual but do not have the gumption to defend it. Indeed, I give his work too much credit by suggesting that it includes an interpretation of Plato and Aristotle. An interpretation is based on texts. Pirsig mentions some texts, but he seldom argues from the text, and what little he says in direct response to texts is usually errant. The passage in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which I find most offensive occurs on pages 352-353.¹

Reason was to be subordinate, logically, to Quality, and he was sure he would find the cause of its not being so back among the ancient Greeks, whose mythos had endowed our culture with the tendency underlying all the evils of our technology, the tendency to do what is "reasonable" even when it isn't any good. That was the root of the whole thing. Right there. I said a long time ago that he was in pursuit of the ghost of reason. This is what I meant. Reason and Quality had become separated and in conflict with each other and Quality had been forced under and reason made supreme somewhere back then.

I cannot imagine any circumstances under which either Plato or Aristotle would endorse doing what is reasonable even when it isn't any good. Contrary to Pirsig's contention Plato and Aristotle emphasize the interrelation of reason and quality; and when they indicate a superior partner in this relationship, both choose goodness (quality). Sarah is right: "Quality is *every* part of Greek thought." (328)

Since I am not impressed with Pirsig's account of Plato and Aristotle and since reading his account makes me furious, I intend to focus my attention in this paper on the works of Plato and Aristotle. My paper should provide adequate textual references for the interested reader to delve into these texts more

thoroughly. Then the reader will be in a position to make his or her own judgment about the adequacies of Pirsig's scholarship. Since it is impossible to discuss all relevant material, I will limit my discussion to three texts: Plato's *Republic* and *Philebus*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.³

The early dialogues work to establish a connection between reason and ethical behavior, but it is not until the *Republic* that Plato directly confronts the question of the relationship between reason and the Good. Plato presents his views through the character Socrates³ who explains that an exposition of the nature of the Good "seems a pitch above the impulse that wings my flight today" (*Republic* 506de). Rather than trying to describe the Good, Socrates presents three images which help illuminate its nature. All three of these images, the Sun, the Line, and the Cave, are attempts to impress upon us the existence of an intelligible world which is distinct from and superior to the world grasped by the senses. The intelligible world is composed of Forms, eternal and unchanging objects which are apprehended by the mind without use of the senses. The Forms are also called Ideas, but they are not creations of the mind. Actions and objects in our everyday world depend on the forms for their existence: actions can only be just if they participate in the eternal unchanging Form of Justice, and sensible chairs (chairs whose existence is grasped by the senses) can only exist if they participate in the eternal, unchanging Form of Chair. An eternal unchanging Form of Justice is generally more acceptable to common sense than an eternal unchanging form of Chair, but textual evidence strongly suggests that Plato's theory of Forms attempts to provide stability for both ethics and physical reality.

This background information prepares the way for the Sun analogy, the image in the middle dialogues where Plato most explicitly articulates the relationship between the Good and reason.

This (the sun), then, you must understand that I meant by the offspring of the good which the good begot to stand in a proportion with itself. As the good is in the intelligible region to reason and the objects of reason, so is this (the sun) in the visible world to vision and the objects of visions. (*Republic* 508bc)⁴

In this passage Plato tells us that we can examine the role of the sun in the visible world in order to increase our understanding of the role of the Good in the intelligible world: thus, we can examine the relationship between the sun and vision in order to

gain illumination concerning the relationship between the Good and reason. Textual exegesis is somewhat complicated, but I believe the following chart presents the essence of Plato's comparison.

<i>In The Visible World</i>		<i>In The Intelligible World</i>	
Sun		Good	
<i>Presence</i>	<i>Absence</i>	<i>Presence</i>	<i>Absence</i>
Sight has clear vision of its objects	Sight has dim vision of its objects	Mind has clear apprehension of its objects	Mind has dim apprehension of its objects
CLEAR VISION	DIM VISION	CLEAR APPREHENSION	DIM APPREHENSION

Just as it is the presence of the sun which produces clear vision, so too it is the presence of the Good which produces clear intellectual apprehension. It is true that scholars debate about the nature of this intellectual apprehension: some scholars maintain that it is mystical apprehension while others declare that it is knowledge attained by reason. But however one chooses to translate the Greek words involved, it remains clear that apprehension of the Good is the highest mental achievement. Furthermore, it is clear that the Good itself is superior to the mental power which apprehends it. At 509a Plato says:

But as for knowledge and truth, even as in our illustration it is right to deem light and vision sunlike, but never to think that they are the sun, so here it is right to consider these two their counterparts, as being like the good or boniform, but to think that either of them is the good is not right. Still higher honor belongs to the possession and habit of the good.

In commenting on this passage Paul Shorey explains that Plato is not scrupulous in distinguishing good and the good.⁵ Nonetheless Plato's lack of precision is not problematic because he maintains that anyone who apprehends the Good will also do the good. In any case, Glaucon responds to Socrates' description exactly as if Socrates had said "Still higher honor belongs to the Form of the Good." Such an interpretation of Plato's statement accords well with the analogy to the sun. Just as the sun is superior to vision (the faculty which functions best in the presence of the sun), so too the good is superior to the mental function which performs cognition. Although Plato's language is not as clear as it might be, the Sun analogy provides strong

evidence suggesting that Plato did not subordinate the Good to rationality.

Reading the Sun analogy leaves one with little doubt that Plato considered the Good superior to the mental function which achieves knowledge and apprehension of the Good, but whatever doubt remains is quickly dispelled by Plato's introduction to the Line, an image presented as a continuation of the Sun analogy. Plato effects the transition to the Line by saying:

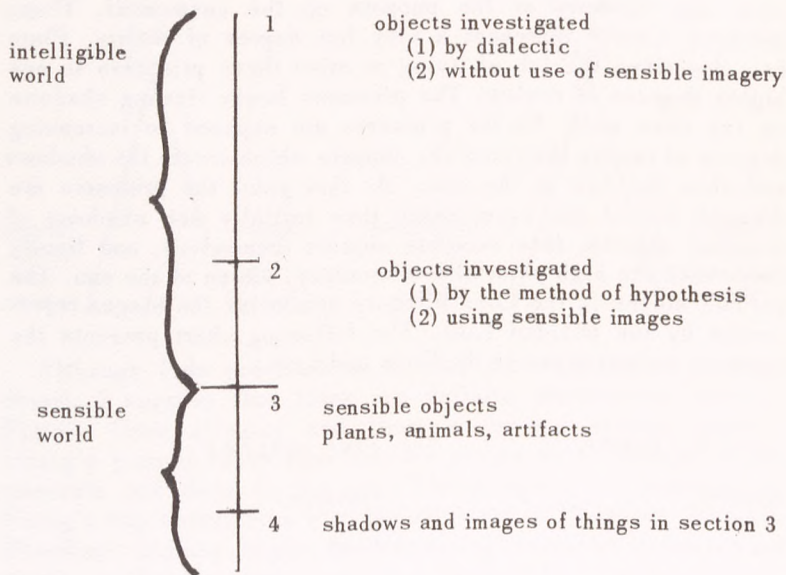
Conceive then, as we were saying, that there are these two entities, and that one of them is sovereign over the intelligible order and region and the other over the world of the eye ball, not to say the sky-ball, but let that pass. You surely apprehend the two types, the visible and the intelligible. (*Republic* 509d)

Plato does not indicate the two identities to which he is referring in this passage, but the Sun analogy has already made it clear that the sun is the cause of things in the visible world and the Good is the cause of things in the intelligible world. In this passage Plato's language emphasizes the superior role of these two entities: the sun is *sovereign* over the visible world and the Good is *sovereign* over the intelligible world. Surely then, the Sun and the Line imagery suggest that Pirsig is wrong when he says that Plato subordinates the Good to rationality.

I believe the material I have presented is adequate to show the inadequacy of Pirsig's comments regarding the relationship of reason and the Good — at least in so far as his claims pertain to Plato's middle dialogues. Before turning to Plato's later period, I will discuss the Line analogy and the Cave allegory. The Line and the Cave images do complement and complete the Sun analogy, but my major reason for presenting them is to establish grounds for comparing the journey depicted by Plato's Cave and Pirsig's journey. This section digresses from the paper's main purpose, but the digression may provide useful tools for interpreting Pirsig. I will begin by describing Plato's Line, for it is important to an adequate understanding of the Cave.

There is some scholarly debate concerning how the line should be drawn, but I feel confident that it should be drawn as a vertical line with its largest section at the top.⁶ Plato's directions for constructing the line specify that the line should be divided unevenly, and then that each of the two sections formed should be divided in the same proportion as the first division. The line which emerges is a 4 section line, the sections

being in the proportion 4:2:2:1. The top two sections represent the intelligible world, and the bottom two sections represent the visible world. The bottom two sections are most easy to explain: The bottommost section represents shadows and images of things in the sensible-world (e.g. a shadow of a tree), and the section immediately above represents the sensible things themselves (e.b. the tree).⁷ The top two sections of the line are distinguished in terms of the methods used to investigate intelligible objects. The bottom section of the intelligible world represents objects which are investigated by the method of hypothesis and the investigation involves use of sensible images. The objects represented by the top section of the line are investigated by dialectic and no sensible imagery is involved. The following diagram should help put the parts of the line in perspective.



The Divided Line is presented at the end of Book VI of the *Republic*, and full appreciation of it depends upon a reading of the end of Book V and the earlier parts of Book VI. These sections of the *Republic* distinguish the philosophical from the non-philosophical life. Plato contends that those who spend their lives emphasizing the pleasures of the sensible world are mere lovers of spectacles – spending their time on what is changing and unstable. More worthy is the philosophical life where one seeks the eternal unchanging world of the Forms. The Divided Line represents different grades of reality; progress up the line

represents progress from the shadow world of the senses (for the sensible world is but a shadow of the intelligible world) to the intelligible world.

The Divided Line presents the different levels of reality, but it is the Cave allegory that discusses movement between levels. A subterranean cave symbolizes the sensible world, and the world outside the cave symbolizes the intelligible world. Plato first describes the region inside the cave. In the center of the cave there is a fire. Around the edges of the cave are prisoners, all chained in such a way that their backs are to the fire and they can only look at the cave wall in front of them. Between the prisoner and the fire is a wall. Extending above this wall are puppets, the shadows of which are cast on the cave wall by the fire. Given this physical set up the prisoners are only able to view the shadows of the puppets on the cave wall. These shadows clearly represent a very low degree of reality. Plato now describes the job of trying to raise these prisoners to see higher degrees of reality. The prisoners begin viewing shadows on the cave wall. As the prisoners are exposed to increasing degrees of reality they view the puppets which create the shadows and then the fire in the cave. At this point the prisoners are dragged out of the cave where they initially see shadows of sensible objects, then sensible objects themselves, and finally they reach the high point of their journey, vision of the sun. The various stages in the Cave allegory symbolize the stages represented by the Divided Line. The following chart presents the symbols and antitypes in the Cave and Line.

CAVE ALLEGORY

(symbol)

Sun

sensible objects
viewed directly

shadows of
sensible objects

Fire

puppets

shadows of puppets
on cave wall

LINE ANALOGY

(antitype)

Good

intelligible objects
apprehended by dialectic

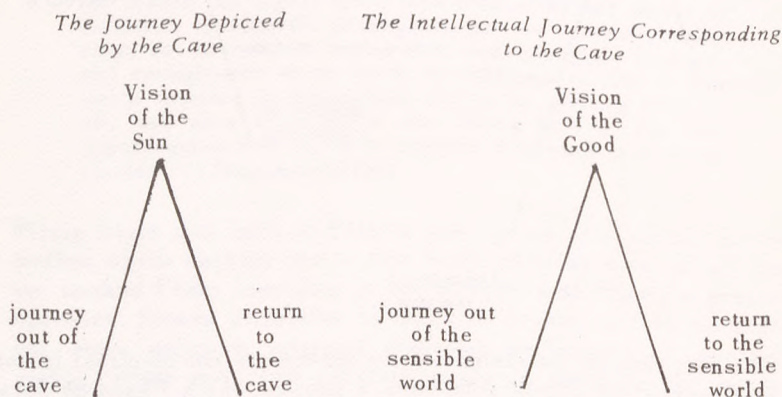
intelligible objects investigated
by method of hypothesis

Sun

sensible objects viewed
directly

shadows of
sensible objects

Thus the release of the prisoners represents guiding them from the lowest level of the sensible world up into the intelligible world and finally to a vision of the Good. If one achieves vision of the Good, one is truly a philosopher. But now the rub. The philosopher who has attained vision of the Good is not permitted to enjoy eternal bliss contemplating it; he or she must return to the cave in order to try to rescue others. Thus the cave allegory has two phases: the rise up out of the subterranean cave and the return down into the cave.⁸ The following diagrams present the journey depicted by the Cave and the intellectual journey the Cave symbolizes.



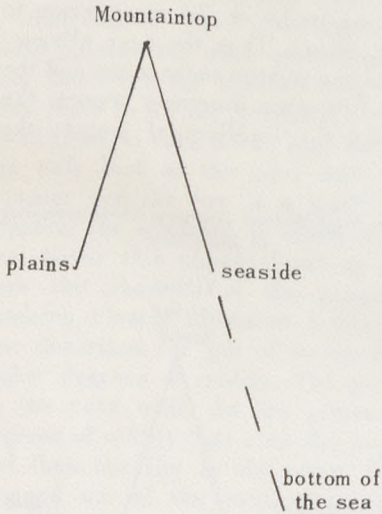
Although I do not wish to develop the comparison in great detail, I suggest that there are definite similarities between Plato's Cave allegory and Pirsig's journey across country. Pirsig's journey takes him from the plains up to the top of the mountain and down to the sea. The geographical structure of Pirsig's trip coordinates with the structure of Phaedrus' journey. Phaedrus' journey begins by examining concrete instances of quality in rhetoric classes and then moves into a purely intellectual journey. On page 269 Pirsig describes Phaedrus' intellectual journey.

But to understand the meaning of Quality in classic terms required a backup into metaphysics and its relation to everyday life. To do that required still another backup into the huge area that relates both metaphysics and everyday life – namely, formal reason. So I proceeded with formal reason up into metaphysics and then into Quality and then from Quality back down into metaphysics and science.

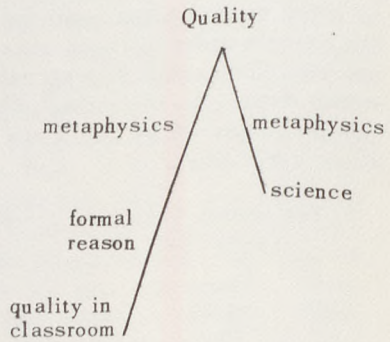
The following diagrams depicting Pirsig's and Phaedrus'

journeys should be compared to the diagrams depicting Plato's Cave allegory.

*Pirsig's Journey
Across Country*



Phaedrus' Journey



The fact that the downsides of the arches are not identical is not problematic for Pirsig completes a journey which Phaedrus does not. Phaedrus does not return to a life filled with concrete instances of quality but ends up in a mental hospital. At the end of the book Pirsig achieves a quality relationship with his son that Phaedrus had not achieved. Perhaps that is one reason that Pirsig says that he will meet Chris at "the bottom of the ocean" (pages 267 and 400) rather than at the oceanside: in so far as the cross-country journey is inadequate to symbolize what Pirsig achieved that Phaedrus did not.

I intend to undertake a brief comparison of Plato's Cave and Phaedrus' journey, but do not expect Plato's Cave to provide a complete explanation of Pirsig's symbolism. The facts that Pirsig is very concerned with his own mental states and that he associates the ocean with "the deepest levels of subconsciousness" (397) suggest that psychological as well as philosophical tools are needed for complete interpretation. I am not in a position to supply the appropriate psychological tools, but I hope that access to Plato's Cave will provide relevant philosophical background for understanding at least part of what the book is about.

The four diagrams I have presented, two arches depicting the journeys related to the Cave and two arches depicting the journeys in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, provide the basis for my comparison. I have already presented the passage in which Pirsig describes Phaedrus' journey in terms of a way up and a way down. Pirsig's language is extremely similar to the language Plato uses in describing the path to apprehension of the Good. Plato's description appears in the Divided Line analogy, but the Line is the prelude to the Cave.

Understand then, said I, that by the other section of the intelligible (the top section of the line) I mean that which the reason (*ho logos*) itself lays hold of by the power of dialectic, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which required no assumption and is the starting point of all, and after attaining to that taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion . . . (Republic 511bc)

Pirsig might well balk at Plato's description of *dialectic* as the method which enables one to rise to the starting point of all, but the method Plato describes is not at odds with Pirsig's general approach. Shorey translates *ho logos* as reason in this passage, but some scholars interpret dialectic as mental or mystical vision. Plato uses two different words to describe the mental state corresponding to the top section of the line. At 511e he calls that mental state *noesis* which suggests some sort of immediate apprehension, but at 534a he refers to the same state as *episteme* which suggests that it is knowledge attained by reason. Pirsig may refuse a mystical interpretation of Plato or he may not even be aware that such interpretations exist, but even if he insists that dialectic is reason, the similarity of his own approach to Plato's is still evident.

From what I have said it should be apparent that there is a great deal of similarity between Plato's Good and Phaedrus' Quality. In fact, at one point Pirsig says that he would have considered them the same except for the fact that Phaedrus vehemently denied it (361). Pirsig later explains how Plato went wrong:

Plato *hadn't* tried to destroy *arete*. He had encapsulated it; made a permanent, fixed idea out of it; had converted it to a rigid, immobile Immortal Truth. He made *arete* the Good, the highest Idea of all. It was subordinate only to Truth itself, in a synthesis of all that had gone before. (373)

Perhaps this passage gets at the heart of Phaedrus' problems with Plato. Pirsig does not seem to understand the nature of the Forms. The Forms are not truths, but objects which make truth possible. Just as one must not confuse vision or color with the cause of vision and color, so too one must not confuse knowledge or truth with the cause of knowledge and truth. If Pirsig were to realize that Plato subordinates truth to Goodness he would find further similarity between their views. I suspect that the real issue between Plato and Pirsig is the absolute versus the relative nature of the Good, but I don't find that Pirsig has addressed that question in any substantial way. I find the idea of mystical apprehension of a relative nature somewhat baffling, but I will not pursue that point since Pirsig avoids the issue.

There is one further similarity between Plato's and Pirsig's journeys which merits consideration. The second half of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is quite concerned with where Pirsig will meet Chris. At first one expects Pirsig to meet Chris at the top of the mountain. On page 222 Chris tells Pirsig about the previous night:

You said at the top of the mountain we'd see everything.
You said you were going to meet me there.

Pirsig does recall Phaedrus' mystical apprehension of Quality at the top of the mountain, but he does not meet Chris there. These facts make sense when interpreted in light of Plato's Cave. Phaedrus' apprehension of Quality which takes place at the top of the mountain is quite like Plato's apprehension of the Good. And just as Plato's philosopher cannot meet those who have not made the journey into the intelligible realm while contemplating the Good, so too it makes sense that Pirsig cannot meet Chris at the top of the mountain. Chris has not shared Pirsig's intellectual journey: if Pirsig wishes to meet Chris, he must return to the everyday world. Both the philosopher and Pirsig must travel their respective "downward paths" before they can adequately communicate with those who have not journeyed through the intelligible realm.

From this digression let us now return to the focus of this paper, the relationship between reason and the Good in the texts of Plato and Aristotle. Earlier I presented the Sun analogy as Plato's clearest account of the relationship between reason and the Good in his middle dialogues. I suspect that Pirsig is not familiar with the later dialogue I now intend to discuss, the *Philebus*, but since Plato's dialogue, *Phaedrus*, is a transitional

dialogue to Plato's later period, I believe discussion of the *Philebus* is relevant. I do not wish to discuss the differences between middle and late Platonic dialogues in great detail, but I do think it is significant to point out that the late dialogues involve a new (or if not new a greatly elaborated) account of the nature of dialectic. I have already presented Plato's account of dialectic in the *Republic*: it is the method by which one rises to first principles. In the *Phaedrus* Plato characterizes dialectic as the procedures of collection and division:

Phaedrus: What procedures do you mean?

Socrates: The first is that in which we bring a dispensed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together — the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition . . .

Phaedrus: And what is the second procedure you speak of, Socrates?

Socrates: The reverse of the other, whereby we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective articulation; we are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher . . . (*Phaedrus* 265de)

The dialectician can identify what multiplicities share a single nature and thus unite them under one form, and he or she can also begin with one form and divide it into natural parts. The fact that Pirsig's former self was so concerned with the procedures of collection and division helps explain why Pirsig refers to his former self as Phaedrus. Perhaps then Pirsig believes the later dialogues are where Plato subordinates the Good to reason. If that is what he wishes to contend, he owes us an account of the *Philebus*.

Ethical concerns play a major role in almost all of Plato's early and middle dialogues, but not in many later dialogues. The *Philebus*, however, picks up earlier ethical concerns, particularly those expressed in the *Protagoras* and *Republic*, and it provides Plato's final answer to the question: is pleasure or reason closer to the good? I trust I will not spoil the dialogue for those of you who have not read it by affirming what you already suspect: Plato believes reason is closer to the good than pleasure. He reaches this conclusion by hunting down the nature of the good.

Socrates: So now we find that the good has taken refuge in the character of the beautiful, for the qualities of measure and proportion invariably, I imagine,

constitute beauty and excellence.

Protarchus: Yes indeed.

Socrates: And of course we said that truth was included along with these qualities in the mixture.

Protarchus: Quite so.

Socrates: Then if we cannot hunt down the good under a single form, let us secure it by the conjunction of three, beauty, proportion, and truth, and then, regarding these three as one, let us assert that *that* may most properly be held to determine the qualities of the mixture, and because *that* is good the mixture itself has become so.

(*Philebus* 64e-65a).

Socrates then demonstrates that of the two, pleasure and reason, reason is closer to the good for it is closer to truth, proportion and beauty. Socrates ends by ranking things which contribute to a good life: (1) what possesses measure, (2) what is proportioned and beautiful, (3) reason and intelligence, (4) sciences, arts, and right opinions, and (5) pure pleasures of the soul, i.e. pleasures which do not also bring pain (*Philebus* 66abc). In light of this text I find it hard to see that Plato subordinated the good to reason.

At the beginning of this paper I said that Pirsig plays dirty. One reason I say that is that his book presents passages which suggest that he knows at least some of his statements are inaccurate. For example, at one point while discussing Aristotle, he says:

I have since read Aristotle again, looking for the massive evil that appears in the fragments from *Phaedrus*, but have not found it there. What I find in Aristotle is mainly a quite dull collection of generalizations, many of which seem impossible to justify in the light of modern knowledge, whose organization appears extremely poor, and which seems primitive in the way old Greek pottery in the museums seems primitive. I'm sure if I knew a lot more about it I would see a lot more and not find it primitive at all. But without knowing all that I can't see that it lives up either to the raves of the Great Books group or the rages of *Phaedrus*. I certainly don't see Aristotle's works as a major source of either positive or negative values. But the raves of the great Books groups are well known and published. *Phaedrus*' rages aren't, and it becomes part of my obligation to dwell on these. (p. 353)

From this it appears that Pirsig does not believe that he can

defend Phaedrus' statements about Aristotle (and I suspect the same applies to Plato) on the basis of texts. But if Pirsig is unwilling to take responsibility for the accuracy of Phaedrus' statements, on what ground can he find an obligation to dwell on "rages"? I suspect that the raves of the Great Books groups are known by a narrower audience than Pirsig's book has reached. The end result is that competent scholars dismiss his work as ignorant undefended rages and the general public comes away with a terribly misguided impression of Plato and Aristotle. Competent scholars may well be at fault for not conveying their understandings to a wider audience, but on the scale of sins I find Pirsig's slander more offensive.

Before turning to Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between the good and reason, it seems appropriate to mention that Pirsig is as ignorant of the pre-Socratic philosophers (whom Pirsig refers to as cosmologists) and the sophists as he is of Plato and Aristotle. It is true that most pre-Socratic philosophers were particularly interested in cosmology, but it is equally true that some of the pre-Socratic philosophers were interested in ethics. Thus I find fault with Phaedrus' search which Pirsig describes on page 373, "Phaedrus searched, but could find no previous cosmologists who had talked about the Good." Since he goes on to say that the sophists talked about the Good, he must not mean Plato's Good; rather, he must mean the good life. But clearly some of the pre-Socratics were concerned about the good life. In different ways the good life is important to Heraclitus, the Pythagoreans, and Democritus. Consider, for example, the fragment from Democritus:

The man who chooses the good of the soul makes a more divine choice; he who chooses the good of the body makes a mortal choice.⁹

This fragment makes it clear that Democritus was concerned about the good life; other fragments discuss in more detail how the good life is achieved.

Pirsig's treatment of the sophists is also distressing. He suggests that it is the sophists who are most concerned about *arete*, i.e. excellence. But Pirsig has very little understanding of the *arete* the sophists discuss. On page 371 lightning hits Phaedrus:

Quality! Virtue! Dharma! That is what the Sophists were teaching! Not ethical relativism. Not pristine "virtue." But arete. Excellence. Dharma! Before the Church of Reason.

Before substance. Before form. Before mind and matter. Before dialectic itself. Quality had been absolute. Those first teachers of the Western world were teaching *Quality*, and the medium they had chosen was that of rhetoric. He had been doing it right all along.

Lightning may have struck Phaedrus, but it's too bad it didn't bring illumination. I find no evidence in Pirsig's text that the *arete* of the sophists is Phaedrus' Quality. Indeed, my suspicion is that neither Pirsig nor Phaedrus have much understanding of the sophists view of *arete*. Pirsig mentions Protagoras' view that man is the measure of all things, but the connection between that doctrine and Phaedrus' Quality is very unclear. I suspect Pirsig would be surprised to learn that the *arete* Protagoras tried to teach was the ability to become a power in the city-state and the *arete* Gorgias tried to teach was the ability to help one's friends and harm one's enemies. "*Arete*" does mean excellence in Greek, but early Greek notions of what constitutes human excellence are quite different from ours.¹⁰ Indeed, Socrates' great contribution was to connect *arete* and reason: rather than separating quality and reason as Pirsig contends, the Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle particularly) connected them in ways that had not been done previously.

I have already shown that Plato considered the Good and reason interdependent and that he considered reason subordinate to the Good. I will not discuss Aristotle in as great detail, but I will discuss the opening lines of the *Nicomachean Ethics* which explain the role of the good in Aristotle's philosophy. Before doing that I would like to make two less important points: both emerge in response to Phaedrus' attack on Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric. Phaedrus complains:

As a branch of Practical Science it (rhetoric) was isolated from any concern with Truth or Good or Beauty, except as devices to throw into an argument. Thus Quality, in Aristotle's system, is totally divorced from rhetoric. This contempt for rhetoric, combined with Aristotle's *own* atrocious quality of rhetoric, so completely alienated Phaedrus he couldn't read anything Aristotle said without seeking ways to despise it and attack it. (p. 358)

First, Pirsig does not seem to know that Aristotle did not prepare the texts of his work which we now have. Aristotle's exoteric works (the works written for distribution outside his school) are all lost. What we have now are texts compiled from the notes of Aristotle's students. God forbid that the quality of my rhetoric ever be judged on the compilation of my students' notes. Second,

Pirsig must not understand Aristotle's distinction between Theoretical and Practical Science. In his *Introduction to Aristotle* Richard McKeon, a highly respected scholar, distinguishes the ends of Aristotle's theoretical and practical sciences:

The end of the theoretic sciences is knowledge, and the subject matters which are investigated and the truths which are sought in them do not depend on our action or our volition. The end of the practical sciences, on the other hand, is not merely to know, but rather to act in the light of knowledge: it is not the purpose of political science, for example, to know the good, but to make men good. (p. xxi)

At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle emphasizes that ethics is a practical science: its purpose is not merely to understand the nature of the good but to make humans good. If Pirsig understood Aristotle's distinction, he would certainly approve Aristotle's placing rhetoric in the practical sciences. Practical sciences are very much concerned with Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

It is now time to examine Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between reason and the good. The *Nicomachean Ethics* opens with the assertion:

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. (1094a 1-4)

Aristotle then goes on to explain that different activities aim at different ends, and that the final end which we seek by pursuing diverse intermediate ends is the chief good. Thus Aristotle contends that all our activity, intellectual and otherwise, is subordinate in a certain sense to the good: whatever we do we do for the sake of the good.

Aristotle explains that it is generally agreed that the chief good which all humans seek is happiness, but that it is not generally agreed wherein happiness lies. Different Greeks argued that happiness consists in wealth or honor or pleasure, but Aristotle's contribution lies in his attempt to argue that the highest happiness consists in reasoning and, in particular, philosophic contemplation. The whole thrust of the *Nicomachean Ethics* develops out of Aristotle's contention that the function of man is activity guided by reason and that the good and happy man who performs his function well.

Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, . . . and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue in accordance with the best and most complete. (1098a)

To this basic account of the human good Aristotle adds the further conditions that the human good includes virtuous activity throughout a complete life (1098a) and that the happy life requires a certain amount of external goods (1099a). When I discuss Aristotle's view of human good, I will speak only of its main thrust, that human good (or happiness) is activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, but the reader should keep in mind that this form is abbreviated.

The statement, "Human good is activity of the soul in accordance with virtue," may not strike anyone as tremendously insightful, but I believe it becomes more significant as one sees what Aristotle is getting at. The Greek word for virtue is "*arete*" and "*arete*" is better translated "excellence." Thus, human good is activity of the soul in accordance with excellence. The excellence of the soul depends on the soul's function. As the passage at 1098a makes clear, Aristotle believes that the function of the human soul is activity which implies a rational principle. The human soul performs its function best when it manifests two kinds of activity involving rational principles: intellectual activity and moral activity. When a soul reasons well and acquires truth, it possesses intellectual excellence. When truth is applied to action and a human uses reason to control his or her desires, excellence is present.¹¹

From my brief remarks about Aristotle's ethics, I believe the relationship between the good and reason is apparent. The good is the final end of all human activity. Humans agree that the final end at which they aim is happiness. Aristotle contends that the highest happiness is produced by intellectual and moral virtue. These virtues or excellences of the soul are present in a soul which performs its function well, i.e. a soul which reasons well. Thus, according to Aristotle, the greatest good and reason are interdependent. The good is higher than reason, however, for we reason for the sake of the good.

Far from separating reason and the good both Plato and Aristotle argue for their interdependence, and far from subordinating the good to reason both Plato and Aristotle subordinate reason to the good. Sarah is right: "Quality is every part of Greek life." But reason is also an important part of Greek life. Plato and Aristotle gave different accounts of the relationship of reason and the good, and yet both are convinced that the soul which embraces reason will live a happier and better life than the soul which rejects reason. Pirsig seems to be suggesting that in order to reach the highest good, he has to reject reason or to expand its normal domain. He seems to be suggesting that by moving into insanity he approaches a higher goal than reason permits. But look at the *quality* of his life prior to his being institutionalized. If that is the life which goind beyond the bounds of reason produces, I prefer not to be insane. I see no evidence whatsoever that insanity produces quality.

That is not to say, however, as Plato and Aristotle did not say, that reason and quality are identical. I believe Plato and Aristotle had it just right: reason and the good are interrelated, and reason helps to produce a quality life. Pirsig seems to believe that he has to leave the Western tradition in order to gain insight into how to achieve peace of mind. It is a shame that his understanding of the Greeks is so shabby for Greek philosophy would take him a long way in the direction he wishes to go. Aristotle tells us that *eudaimonia* (happiness or well-being of the spirit) occurs when humans function well — particularly when they reason well since rational activity is the particular function of man. I suggest that Pirsig owes a debt to Aristotle when he says:

The study of the art of motorcycle maintenance is really a miniature study of the art of rationality itself. Working on a motorcycle, working well, caring, is . . . to achieve an inner peace of mind.¹²

In order to work well at maintaining a motorcycle one must function according to rational principles. Humans who function in accordance with rational principles will function well. As a result they will achieve peace of mind, *eudaimonia*.

Perhaps what makes me maddest about Pirsig's book is that everything I find in it of value, I find the roots for in Greek philosophy — and yet Pirsig has the gall to characterize Plato and Aristotle as villains ultimately responsible for the lack of care associated with modern technology. I hope this paper has

demonstrated that Pirsig gives the Greek philosophers a bad rap. Neither Plato nor Aristotle would ever advocate doing what is reasonable even when it isn't any good. That wouldn't make any sense to them. Reason is a capacity of mind whose function is to promote the good. For Plato reason is either (1) what apprehends the Good or (2) what enables one to reach a further mental state which apprehends the Good. Then reason is used to help create quality in everyday life. For Aristotle reason is that which most effectively helps us attain the ends which we seek. Plato and Aristotle did not subordinate the good to reason; rather, they were among the first who pointed out the important role of reason in creating quality lives. If there is a villain in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (and I think that there is), he is not Plato or Aristotle. He is the slanderer.

INFORMAL FOOTNOTES

1. All references from Pirsig are from Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976). Page numbers appear in the text of the paper throughout.
2. All references from Plato are from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, 1961. The Aristotle references appear in *Introduction to Aristotle* edited by Richard McKeon, 1947.
3. Scholars divide Plato's work into early, middle, and late dialogues. Socrates is the main character in the early and middle dialogues, but the early dialogues are thought to reflect his views whereas the middle dialogues are thought to present Plato's views. In the late dialogues Socrates is sometimes the main character, sometimes a minor character, and sometimes he does not appear at all. The *Republic* is a middle dialogue, and the *Philebus* is a late dialogue.
4. References to Plato and Aristotle will be given via Stephanus numbers, the numbers which occur along the margins of most editions. Stephanus numbers refer to early manuscripts, and their use makes it easier to compare translations.
5. See Paul Shorey's footnote in the Loeb edition of the *Republic*, 1963, page 105. Many of you may be unfamiliar with the Loeb's; they are put out by Harvard University Press, and they present the Greek text on one page and an English translation on the opposite page.
6. The line should be drawn vertically because of its connection to the Cave where up and down are important. The top section should be largest because the top represents the greatest degree of reality.
7. Plato initially says that the bottom portion of the line represents the visible world. The visible world is eventually broadened in the Cave allegory to include all the sensible world.
8. My description of the Cave is but a poor shadow of the original. I encourage everyone to read Plato's Sun, Line and Cave images at *Republic* 506b-520e. The passage is really quite short and well worth your time.

9. See John Mansley Robinson. *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*, 1968, page 229.
10. Greek notions of *arete* have been discussed in detail by Professor A. W. H. Adkins — Professor of Classics and Philosophy at the *University of Chicago*. He presents a valuable brief account of his findings in *Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece*.
11. Book I of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provides a general introduction. Books II-V characterize moral virtue, and Book VI discusses intellectual virtue. Book VII Discusses pleasure, and Books VIII and IX analyze friendship. Book X brings the *Ethics* to a culmination with a final account of the good life. Those of you who wish to explore Aristotle's *Ethics* can get an overview by reading Books I, II, VI, and X.
12. Pirsig's prefatory remark presented inside the front cover.

William T. Hamilton

TAKING PLEASURE WHERE YOU FIND IT

Why are you reading this? Why, for that matter, are you attending this seminar, when you could be playing handball, sleeping late, or, like Good King Wenceslas, gathering winter fuel?

Probably one of your motives is a sense of duty, that virtue, so dear to the puritan west, of deferring pleasure until the Just Reward, which comes precious because it comes late. Attending these seminars is an officially sanctioned and therefore unquestionably responsible use of the Interterm and hence a useful thing to put in the blank on the Faculty Annual Report which asks you to account for your educational use of this period, which the Otterbein establishment insists is not to be considered a vacation. And, since most of you are now professors, you were probably good students in school and college, and, as we all know, good students always read their assignments. Your sense of duty no doubt goes a long way towards answering the simple-minded questions I began with.

I hope, however, that it doesn't account entirely for your presence in the seminar, nor for your having read this far into this paper. I think that some part of the motivation is a hope, probably slight and diminishing by now, for "quality." Maybe, just maybe, there might be something good down the line, if not on this page, perhaps on the next — a joke, an insight, something that would make one or two moments of reading distinguish themselves by their quality from other moments.

In the course of his attempt to define — or rather describe — the undefinable, Robert M. Pirsig associates "quality" with a number of concepts and intuitions. The one that interests me the most as a potential insight into the problems of teaching writing, however, is his association of quality with pleasure (see particularly Chapter 19). "Pleasure" in turn he defines with a disarming simplicity: "what you like." Stated that way, the concept of quality seems trivial, especially when you consider the vast array of things we think are wrong with the way our students express themselves on paper. Think of the dangers that face the professor who announces to his class that the papers he likes best are going to get the A's and B's, while the penalty for displeasing him on paper is going to be a D or F. What if a student claims that her D paper gave her (and, to make it even more

perilous, let us say her roommate as well) a great deal of pleasure, and the teacher's dislike of it is simply a reflection of his own eccentric tastes? What possible defense does the teacher have against the student's charge that he is relying on purely subjective criteria?

It is my current opinion (which means that I may be ready to change it at any moment under the right kind of challenge) that our only chance of solving the "Writing Problem" is to restore to the process of writing and to the teaching of writing this sense of quality-as-pleasure. I am further convinced that this is not a task that English teachers alone can hope to accomplish, that, for reasons I hope to establish, we are all teachers of writing, whether we teach English or nursing or philosophy. To meet this challenge, we need to come up with a convincing escape from the subjectivity trap, or, to put it differently, we need to find ways of pulling our students into the trap with us. One of the best things about *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is that Pirsig suggests some ways of pulling it off: ways of resolving the apparent difficulties of confessing to our own subjectivity, ways of involving the students as writers in events that are characterized by quality-as-pleasure, and finally specific ways of teaching quality when we teach writing. To follow Pirsig's terms, we need to find ways of persuading the student to engage in a "caring" relationship with his work (see Chapter 24).

Let us begin this task with a touch of quality. The following sentence, extracted from a freshman theme written at the University of Washington twenty years ago, was proudly displayed on the bulletin board in the English office:

"The main difference between Christians and atheists is that Christians believe in the Afterbirth."

(If you didn't find that funny, please read the sentence again. If you still don't find it funny, I think I've lost you. Seek quality elsewhere, and let me know where you find it.)

With those of you who are still with me, I want to assume that this is a perfectly marvelous sentence, absolutely brilliant or perfectly inept depending on its context. I think it has three possible contexts, each readily distinguishable from the others in terms of quality:

Context 1:

As it stood, on the UW bulletin board. Here, the readers —

mostly English teachers or advanced English students — got considerable pleasure from watching this student slip on his verbal banana peel and from participating vicariously in the delight of the freshman composition instructor who mined this gem from the barren waste that usually results from assigning this sort of topic to a group of freshmen (“Compare and contrast Christians and Atheists, Russia and the United States, High School and College, or Up and Down. 500 wds. minimum”). For our purposes, this is the least interesting of the possible contexts: there is probably no way we can improve the quality of our lives by asking each of our students to make at least one entertaining Freudian slip during the term.

Context 2:

In an essay in which the student deliberately plays with the words *afterlife* and *afterbirth*. In this context, the reader shares the writer’s sense of play, his sense of the infinitely varied possibilities of our shared language. We’ve only got one sentence here, but if this hypothetical student keeps this up, reading his paper, with its associations of the heavenly mysteries and barnyard realities, is going to be the highpoint of our evening of paper grading. We are going to share this writer’s pleasure in language.

Context 3:

Almost certainly the real one — the context of a theme by a miserably inattentive student who has no understanding of what he’s writing about and little confidence in his ability to choose words. The momentary pleasure of finding the slip soon gives way to despair: what can I do with a student who knows so little about his subject or his language that he falls into such an error? It’s like listening to a piano student who never practices, or watching a mechanically inept professor assemble a rotisserie: no pleasure here, only pain.

We evaluate the sentence differently depending on the context in which it appears, that context depending largely upon the intentions of the writer who presents the statement to us. We evaluate it, of course, for its quality (that seems to be a necessary tautology as I try to work out what’s going on here), and that quality is a matter of the pleasure or displeasure we take.

I've been relying heavily on the pronoun "we" in the last few paragraphs. I need now to defend that pronoun: it's my main defense against the student's charge that my grading standards are unfairly subjective. Let me, *a la* Pirsig, resort to a bit of autobiography. I am confident in using the pronoun "we" in my evaluation of the sentence because I've shared the "afterbirth" anecdote with dozens of people since I first saw the sentence twenty years ago. A very few people didn't get it or thought it was disgusting. Most have reacted to it with pleasure. I belong, I discover, to a language community which shares my evaluation of this utterance. I'm writing (I think) to a part of that community now. If my evaluation is subjective, it is certainly shared by a lot of people. We can't point to the objective standards of quality by which we evaluate it, but neither can we still believe that our evaluation is eccentric, since it seems to be widely shared. Perhaps our standards are *intersubjective*, a term I kept expecting Pirsig to use, especially in Chapter 19, where he convincingly (to me, at any rate) demonstrates that quality is neither objective nor subjective. Our standards are intersubjective in the sense that they derive from our belonging to a community which, in a broad way, seems to agree about them. I think Pirsig is right in maintaining that to call our love or admiration for Beethoven, Tolstoy or Picasso purely subjective (and therefore somehow unreal) is simply silly.

Assuming that we can now safely say to a class of writing students that we are going to evaluate their work on the basis of the pleasure we take in reading it, how do we get our students involved in this pleasure-seeking community? I think Pirsig is highly instructive here, not only in his specific classroom experiment, flawed as he admits it was, but also in the general approach his book takes to establishing the character of quality. I think one of the ways of analyzing the writing problem is along the lines of the classical/romantic split Pirsig identifies. Let me return to the student who insists that she and her roommate both thought the paper I gave her a D on was pretty good. (This, I'm sure you all realize, is hardly a hypothetical case.) I have found that such defenses are seldom coherent. The student can point to a sentence or two which she thinks constitutes the central idea of the paper; she can, if pressed, find a few details or facts that might be construed as supporting that idea, and she may be able to prove that she read the assignment on which the paper was based. But the defense is almost certainly one that relies on the surfaces of the paper and the thought that went into it. She thought that *Sons and Lovers* was about premarital sex, she's against premarital sex, and here — right here — is where she

said so.

What our student cannot do is identify underlying form in the paper. She can't point to where she chose one word because it belongs to the same kind of analysis or structure of feeling as these other words she chose. She cannot show how she prepared the ground for her freshest insight, or attached one sentence or paragraph to another with skillful transitions. There was no strategy, no technique, to the writing decisions she made. And further conversation with her is likely to reveal that a major part of her resentment at the low grade is based on her sense that I take a technological approach to her writing, and she doesn't understand the technology. She's in the same position as the professor trying to put together the rotisserie — she's cut her thumb on the blasted thing, though she tried to follow the directions.

She's right. The problem is a technological one, and I know the technology. I take pleasure in writing (when it's going well) because I know how to do it; or, I know how to do it because I take pleasure in it. To apply Pirsig's terms to the phenomenon, I can experience quality events in my writing because I know how to *care* about the process. Events and caring are active phenomena: I've learned how to please myself. (Not always, of course; I can sympathize with writing students because I often face the intractable: the writing problem where my capabilities in the technology seem to be inadequate. As Pirsig suggests, this is the time to drink coffee, take a nap, or, if it's really intractable, go fishing.) What I hope to come up with is an essay or a poem; because I understand something about the underlying form, I know what to do, how to perform, to loosen the screw or mend the sentence.

It follows, I think, that instruction in writing must be instruction in caring. We must help the student to perform competently, but that means that we must design the instruction so that he experiences quality events in his writing. Most of our students are skillful in something: playing the tuba, kicking a football, arranging a bouquet. One way to begin may be to ask them to examine the underlying form of such skills. We take pleasure from what we do well, but if we look back at the processes by which we became competent at those things, I think we can identify stages at which we had to work very hard and experienced considerable discomfort because we didn't understand the moves. As we become more accomplished, we are able to care: we can refine our skills, attend to more parts of our performance, develop

not only competence, but style and flair.

I think the writing problem most of our students have is the result of the fact that they have had very few pleasurable experiences in their use of language. At least they seem to have had few such experiences with adults outside of the family. To converse with a freshman, at least on first acquaintance, is to be sprayed with a shower of "likes" and "reallys," "you knows" and "he goes." To read his paper is an even more painful experience: even if he can spell and punctuate with some sense of the conventions, he writes as if he were walking through a minefield, conscious that each step may be his last, that his teacher may at any moment find the fatal comma fault, lack of agreement, misplaced modifier, or unsubstantiated generalization. Again, no pleasure, only pain. You can't care in a minefield, only worry, and they're not the same thing. You can only fear a technology you see little hope of mastering.

The first thing we have to do is to clear that minefield. If the student perceives (and he usually does) that his teacher is watching mainly for errors, not successes, his writing strategy is going to be the negative one of trying to avoid errors. Again, this is anxiety, not caring. I don't mean we should stop marking errors: for one thing, I couldn't stop myself from marking them. I have little control of my red pen when I see a sentence fragment, and ultimately we want to make the avoidance of error a part of caring. But we've also got to show the student that we are pleasure-seekers, watching for and responding to positive quality events: a word well-chosen, a familiar fact seen in a new light, a sentence that matches its thought neatly, even a footnote at just the right point and impeccably punctuated. Our marginal comments ought to be copious, and they ought to show that we are *engaged* in his thought process, that we are *entertaining* it, not merely poised to pounce on him when his thought deviates from ours. (What a rotten sense of power Stephen Daedalus's instructor must have felt when he wrote in the margin "This paper has heresy in it!") We are trying to establish a community here, trying to show him we share and take pleasure in his insights, assuming the best about his writing as long as we possibly can. Sometimes a certain duplicity may be required: I've had some success pretending to believe that a student chose a word or advanced a proposition with more skill than was in fact involved. Especially in a conference with a student, I can get him to refine an idea in rewriting he didn't know he had, until it does in a real sense become his idea, with all the pleasure that comes with a sense of discovery — a sense, I think, we don't

often give a student the chance to feel. However we do it, the goal is to clear that minefield, build that community, establish the sense that we are working toward the common goal of pleasure.

The sense of community that the student achieves from having his paper read by a sympathetic, pleasure-seeking professor is only part of the caring-about-quality we need to establish with and for our students. They are going to write (we hope) largely alone, away from that intersubjective community that emerges when writer reaches reader. Our student writers need to start caring as soon as they sit down with that awesome piece of blank paper in front of them, and we need teaching strategies that will affect that performance from the outset.

I have been impressed with two quite different proposals for the teaching of writing, both of which seem to me quite Pirsigian. I suspect an effective college-wide attack on the writing problem might be devised borrowing from both. Both of them are highly critical of the current cry that all we need to do is to get Back to Basics. I agree; a sustained attempt to "teach grammar" is simply a way of building a better minefield.

The first approach is described in a highly readable little book called *Writing and Learning across the Curriculum, 11-16*, a study compiled by Nancy Martin and others of several imaginative programs in Britain. The key words are "across the curriculum." The approach sounds simple-minded: we learn to write by writing about what we're interested in. Many of my ideas here about adopting a pleasure-seeking rather than a mistake-hunting stance towards paper-marking were influenced by my reading of this book a year or two ago. Martin and her colleagues are writing about secondary education in Britain; given our sense that American college students can't write very well, we can hardly dismiss the book as too elementary for our purposes. And the suggestion that writing should be incorporated with learning *across* the curriculum may turn something we've thought was a serious problem from the liberal arts perspective into an opportunity: our concern that our students are too narrowly career-oriented. If our students care deeply about nursing or accounting, let us assume that they'd like to learn to communicate that interest. Perhaps that enchantment with the mysteries of double-entry bookkeeping might lead to a really good essay about it. I'd go further: if a student shows the slightest interest in anything, assign a paper!

It is not, of course, necessarily going to be an English

teacher who uncovers that interest. Thus, again, writing across the curriculum. I have no patience with the argument that chemistry or business professors can't teach writing. If you care enough about good writing to complain bitterly when you discover ugly bits in bluebooks and term papers, you have the essential regard for quality that will enable you to help a student learn to care as much as you do: admit that you belong to the community. For one thing, you can help combat one of the most pernicious results of our division of the curriculum along disciplinary lines: the students' often-confirmed perception that written English is a language only English teachers care about. That makes it as difficult to teach written English as it is to teach Japanese in an environment where the student knows perfectly well he is highly unlikely ever to need to use the language naturally. *Writing and Learning* is full of humane, optimistic, practical advice about making assignments, responding to papers, and creating a sustaining, caring educational atmosphere: I recommend it highly.

The second approach, described by Richard A. Lanham in *Style: An Anti-Textbook*, is to take a frankly epicurean delight in language itself. Lanham argues that composition instruction has suffered from a moralistic emphasis on "clarity," in which we urge the students to "Be Clear" with the same futile fervor of a preacher urging them to "Be Good." Lanham argues, persuasively I think, that few of our utterances are motivated solely by clarity. The prose that pleases us (as writers and readers) is much more active and affective than that, full of the desire to express and flatter ourselves, to adorn our shopworn thoughts for public purposes. Lanham maintains that the subject matter of a writing class should be language itself, its ambiguities, its rhythms, its mysterious ability to accomplish (and sometimes to baffle) our complex intentions. Instead of inveighing against jargon, he urges us to study it, to translate one jargon into another, to learn what our language sounds like, to play with it, to pun with it, to perform with it. I suspect that there is enough rhetorical technology in this book to make it more useful (or at least more accessible) to English teachers than to others, but Lanham too implies ways in which the whole faculty might get involved. What Lanham is urging is that we consider style "opaque" — that is, that we stop trying to read and write as if all that mattered to us was some fact or concept that the language conveys, not the language itself. We do react to the style (hence the frequency of such terms as "elegance" even in scientific discourse): let's look at it more closely. If at least once a week in every course on campus, students were forced to slow down in their mad rush to accumulate knowledge and to examine the

language in which that knowledge was conveyed to them, the quality of that language itself, we'd have gone a long way towards showing them how to care about, how to take pleasure in, their own utterances.

You and I read a lot; most of us write a lot, even if it's mostly memos and reports. Presumably one of the reasons we're here doing this is that we take pleasure in books, in words on a page — not just from the philosophy or chemistry or pedagogy that we think we'll find in or around or under those words. Certainly most of us suffer pain from the inept, ugly writing our students sometimes shamefacedly present for our inspection. Let us take courage from Pirsig: let us confess that, embarrassing as it may be, as old-fashioned and pre-Socratic and rhetorical as you will, we know what we like.

Too much has happened to us as a language community to solve the composition problem by a return to Basics. It's a neat ploy for college professors and state legislators to blame elementary and secondary English teachers for the abysmal prose many young adults write today. If kids watch television instead of reading, call longdistance instead of writing to Granny to thank her for the sweater that didn't fit, and play the guitar instead of writing a poem when they fall in love, no amount of sentence-diagramming is going to fill the gap. I don't have a plan for the public schools; what I have tried to propose is an attempt to rescue the victims when they get to college. It must be a college-wide effort, however, an effort to share with our students the pleasure we take in language well used and to help them learn to care about the language we enjoy in common.

DICHOTOMIES, DELUSIONS AND DEPRESSION; DELIVERANCE

“What is this man, that we pay so much attention to him
and this man’s son that we cry for him.”

*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*¹ belongs in a select genre of literature, one in which personal adaptation and crisis is the essence of the work and the novel is its form. It is essential in this genre that the work be largely autobiographical, the material bubbling up from the unfinished nature of a person in an immense struggle for integration and pleasure. Other than *Zen*, the major work in this area is the often-compared, *Moby Dick*. It would be a provocative and difficult task to discuss what other works should in fact gain admission to this genre; for while nearly every novel plays on this motif as an enhancement of another, few seem to adopt it so starkly as the major form.

The book’s immense appeal aside from its genius of form is its authenticity in depicting a struggle for integration that most of us recognize as the deep resonance of a well-struck chord. To those who have adopted higher education as the way to search for answers to the serious predicaments of personal and social integrity, the metaphor of resonance may seem yet not close enough. Rather it may seem as though Pirsig and the reader are playing the same chord simultaneously on somewhat different instruments. Does this intuitive harmony suggest that Pirsig’s character somehow represents a more general adaptive difficulty present in our current culture?

Rollo May, an existential psychiatrist, suggests that by attending to those persons who become disorganized in a particular culture we can predict the general personal and social problems that will, with time, predominate. The notion is that persons particularly sensitive to a given stress respond most adversely thus becoming harbingers of things to come for the general populace. If this is probable, then Pirsig’s dilemma and the vicarious struggle most readers report call for an honest assessment of Phaedrus/Pirsig.

¹Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976). All quotations from this book are designated by page number in the body of the paper.

In this essay I will attempt a clinical assessment of the personality revealed in the book. Since a complete clinical analysis would be nearly as lengthy as the book, I will necessarily be sharing only a sample of the salient material. I offer the process to you as a provocation to your own analysis. While I offer it with a modesty to which any experienced clinician with scores of analytic misjudgments and cul-de-sacs must confess, I likewise offer it with a confidence gained from intuiting accurately on numerous occasions.

Zen is not an attack on reason. It demonstrates the difficulty a person dedicated to "pure reason" has integrating the non-rational aspects of his person — particularly the emotional aspects. As Pirsig says of Socrates dialogue of the One, ". . . the seeker, trying to reach the One is drawn by two horses, one white and noble and temperate, and the other surly, stubborn, passionate and black. The one is forever aiding him in his upward journey to the portals of heaven, the other is forever confounding him" (p. 382). Dichotomies such as this, and the process of creating such dichotomies as a major personal style of understanding, create immense adaptive strain. In the healthy personality such dichotomies are viewed as polarities and synthesis or integration achieves the necessary balance. For example, persons who conceptualize themselves and others in terms of strength and weakness often choose to identify with strength or weakness predominantly. When this habitual identification with strength or weakness is threatened — when the strong person must recognize weakness or the weak person must do something calling for strength, crisis is imminent. For the person comfortable with elements of each within, synthesized and demonstrated in everyday affairs, crisis is often averted and personal vitality evident.

Dichotomizing often leads to the creation of delusions. Dichotomies implore us to allegiance. We must decide — to be or not to be, to sell or not to sell, to kill or not to kill. While there are positive elements to such definition, nearly always the decision suffers from lack of awareness of contextual realities. As often as I have shared decisive moments with clients deliberating suicide, I am even more awestruck than ever, at the sharp focus on a single issue such a struggle represents. Life has come down to a single intellectual choice, to go on or to end it. To go on represents probable suffering and misery; to end it means relief and in some sense probable pleasure. Reality is relatively unimportant at that moment; the decision will more than likely be reached on the basis of delusion, some belief concocted and

accepted at that moment.

Phaedrus moves from dichotomy to (p. 339-340) delusion in such a way.

He had become so caught up in his world of Quality metaphysics he couldn't see outside it anymore and since no one else understood this world, he was already done for.

I think he must have felt at the time that what he was saying was true and it didn't matter if his manner of presentation was outrageous or not . . .

This was it. He really believed . . . It was a totally fanatic thing. He lived in a solitary universe of discourse in those days.

Few persons reach this level of delusion. Instead some flock to others who share their belief system. While this is nearly the same thing if the belief system is quite homogenous, there is a different reality about consensus. While being angry towards those outside of the belief system you can nevertheless share pleasure with those inside.

Since the world is rarely as simple as our delusions of belief systems would indicate, most delusional people experience eventual depression when the walls separating the dichotomies begin to leak. It's as if some self-correcting force exists independently and chisels away at weak spots in the wall. Attention then must be directed almost exclusively at the wall, its repair and maintenance. Since there is no growth in that, productive activity ceases and despair takes over. This is evident in Phaedrus' definition of the mythos (p. 345).

The mythos grows this way. By analogies to what is known before. The mythos is a building of analogues upon analogues upon analogues. These fill the boxcars of the train of consciousness. [Notice the parallel to the development of a delusional system.] The mythos is the whole train of collective unconscious of all communicating mankind. Every last bit of it. [What a force to have on the other side of the wall.] The Quality is the track that directs the train. What is outside the train, to either side — that is the terra incognita of the insane. He knew that to understand Quality he would have to leave the mythos. That's why he felt that slippage. He knew something was about to happen. (p. 344).

Phaedrus had earlier declared that "to go outside the mythos is to become insane." That definition of reality and the accompanying fear led Phaedrus into despair, then to frenzied activity of

last resort-hostile attacks on all those forces which threatened him, and finally to total depression.

Despair

The despair grows now (p. 325).

Phaedrus arrived at the University of Chicago already in a world of thought so different from the one you or I understand (p. 331).

Hostility

Hostility is really his element . . . down from the mountains to prey upon the poor innocent citizens of this intellectual community (p. 386). [All of whom to Phaedrus were absorbed in the myths.]

The battle lines are defined quickly. And the analogy to a classic battle for survival among lower animals is striking.

At the doorway there are some footsteps, and then Phaedrus suddenly knows — and his legs turn rubbery and his hands start to shake. Smiling benignly in the doorway stands none other than the Chairman.

. . . Courtly, grand, with imperial magnanimity (p. 379).

He perceives the other students as having seats in the arena. The student whom the chairman had previously ridiculed is seen getting a ringside seat to the beating up of Phaedrus. The attack will begin, he thinks, with an attempt to "destroy his status dialectically" and when he finished off he will be asked to "shape up or act out." As the real battle wages Phaedrus, disguised in a beard, begins to gain courage. He is well into the dialogue of the class before the Chairman recognizes him — "a gleam in his eye shows he recognizes who his bearded assailant is." The struggle continues. The Chairman commits a blunder in interpretation and Phaedrus seizes the opportunity and "raises his hand, palm flat out, elbow on the table. Where before his hand was shaking it is now deadly calm" (p. 383), Phaedrus delivers his blow, his whole survival at stake. He bides his time then strikes again. "The Chairman falters and hesitates, acts afraid of his class and does not really engage them" (p. 384). The student on the sideline now enters the fracas, seething in pent up anger. Phaedrus delivers another brutal attack and the fight ends. But victory is sweet for a very short time. There is a lack of authenticity in his overstated hostility and Phaedrus knows it. The next day we find him "making one last attempt somehow to be nice at the next session of the class but the Chairman isn't having any." Unlike the battle of the lower animals where dominance is clearly established the victory here brings great despair.

Meanwhile at the Navy Pier the students are fascinated with Phaedrus. They are eager to hear this "strange bearded figure from the mountains." If simple recognition had been his goal this clearly would have held him in good stead but the issue he waged was much different. To have given into such wooing of popularity would have been to give in somehow to the mythos.

Phaedrus "is no shepherd either and the strain of behaving like one is killing him . . . his days as a shepherd are coming to an end too. And he wonders more and more what is going to happen next." The last spiral toward the bottom picks up speed. Note the passivity and spectator quality that characterizes him in the previous quotation. The small flicker of remaining hostility is now directed towards the classroom. "It is not his nature to talk and talk and talk for hours on end and it exhausts him to do this, and now having nothing left to turn upon, he turns upon this fear." He comes to the classroom and sits in silence. Class after class.

Psychotic Depression

Thus is ushered in deep depression with its characteristic symptoms. Sleep time has dwindled to nothing. The city closes in on him. He wandres aimlessly for three days and finally ends up back in the apartment staring at the wall. He is no longer responsive to others. His thoughts are slowing down. His perception of his own body undergoes bizarre changes. Cigarettes burn themselves out between his fingers with no indication that he feels them. He sits in his own urine. Yet even in such a state the climax comes with his realization that "his whole consciousness, the mythos, has been a dream and no one's dream but his own, a dream he must now sustain at his own efforts. Then even 'he' disappears and only the dream of himself remains with himself in it." (p. 391).

I don't believe I have ever read a more adequate description of depression and particularly of the demise of the fragmented ego that supports this sort of consciousness. It is an accurate picture, one that occurs again and again but a view which usually occurs in the perspective of the clinician or aware family-member who sees the symbolism behind the obvious behaviors. Here we have a striking description of the progressive changes in consciousness that in some eerie sense reverse the order of the way consciousness develops in the infant, culminating in a unique moment of unbirth described in what I consider one of the two or

three most poignant passages in the book.

“And the Quality, the *arete* he has fought so hard for, has never betrayed, but in all that time has never once understood, now makes itself clear to him and his soul is at rest.” (p. 391).

Deliverance:

But the story goes on. Because of its unique form the story picks up not here near the end of the book (p. 391) but rather back at the beginning. We'll call the man on the motorcycle journey Pirsig. His journey is a search for an illusive self-integration. While his emphasis on dichotomy is tempered and his delusional qualities minimal (perhaps the beginning sense of polarity is emerging) integration appears only as a very distant possibility. Pirsig describes himself in fact as

“a heretic who's recanted, and thereby in everyone's eyes saved his soul. Everyone's eyes but one who knows deep down inside that all he has saved is his skin.

I survive mainly by pleasing others. You do that to get out. To get out you figure out what they want you to say and then you say it with as much skill and originality as possible and then, if they're convinced, you get out (p. 396).

But I believe his behavior was chosen for other than the pure deception of others. He is *trying on* the other polarities. He continues:

If I hadn't turned on him I'd still be there, but he was true to what he believed right to the end. That's the difference between us, and Chris knows it. And that's the reason why sometimes I feel he's the reality and I'm the ghost.

The prospects of reintegration are very awesome to Pirsig. Recognition of Phaedrus brings the renewed threat of insanity, but the desire for integration, perhaps the *need* for integration, makes it impossible to leave Phaedrus alone. What an awesome position. How frightening and all-encompassing is the dilemma. Early in the journey (p. 62) Pirsig has a dream which clearly indicates his level of fear of Phaedrus and paints a picture of Pirsig's defense against it.

In the fog there appears an intimation of a figure . . . I am about to say something, to call to it, to recognize it, but then do not, knowing that to recognize it by any gesture or

action is to give it a reality which it must not have. But it is a figure I recognize even though I do not let on. It is Phaedrus.

Evil spirit. Insane. From a world without life or death.

The figure fades and I hold a panic down . . . tight . . . not rushing it . . . just letting it sink in . . . not believing it, not disbelieving it . . . but the hair crawls slowly on the back of my skull . . . he is calling Chris . . .

While this behavior indicates unreasonable fear it is also a part of the healing process. He must let Phaedrus through but he must do it in manageable bits. Note in particular the movement away from delusion — “not believing it, not disbelieving it,” thus trying to experience the phenomenon for what it is.

Pirsig has also begun to apply the principles of Zen he has garnered from his time in the Orient. He has learned that a here and now time orientation is critical to successful adaptation. This is a concept emphasized in most current psychotherapy. Persons predominantly oriented toward the past or future cannot experience and understand the present. Pirsig develops this insight in his comparison between ego-climbing and selfless climbing (p. 206). While

to the untrained eye they may appear identical . . . what a difference. The ego-climber is like an instrument that's out of adjustment. He puts his foot down an instant too soon or too late. He's likely to miss a beautiful passage of sunlight through the trees . . . He looks up the trail trying to see what's ahead even when he knows what's ahead because he just looked a second before . . . He's here but he's not here. He rejects the here, is unhappy with it, wants to be farther up the trail but when he gets there will be just as unhappy because then *it* will be “here.” What he's looking for what he wants, is all around him; but he doesn't want that because it *is* all around him. Every step's an effort, both physically and spiritually, because he imagines his goal to be external and distant.

As the parallel journeys of Pirsig and Phaedrus roll on, Pirsig is aware of Phaedrus' obsessiveness and resolves to be different (p. 217).

He (Phaedrus) wasn't interested in any kind of fusion of differences between these two worlds. He was after something else — his ghost. I (Pirsig) differ from him in that I've no intention of going on to that end. He just passed through this territory and opened it up. I intend to stay and cultivate it and see if I can get something to grow.

Productivity — growth, Pirsig is no longer focused on the wall. To the careful reader his growing strength is evident but somehow masked by the parallel account of Phaedrus who, at this juncture, is in the stage of despair. He is more ready now to allow the image of Phaedrus to become distinct. The difficulty of the integration is clear. Phaedrus is the one of Quality and Pirsig awakes from another frightening dream to see that

He's waking up. A mind divided against itself . . . me . . .
I'm the loathsome one . . . I always knew he would come
back . . . It's a matter of preparing for it . . . (p. 325).

Phaedrus is so much with him now, almost indistinguishable and the expectation of the accompanying insanity is nearly too much. But again this is a different journey. Pirsig, taking in all the beauty around him, capturing the *nowness* of his existence, seems to shout a growing awareness in the form of a question. "How can I love all this so much and be insane? I don't *believe* it!" Both Phaedrus and Pirsig then agree, are unified in the recognition that "the mythos is insane." "The mythos that says the forms of this world are real but the Quality of this world is unreal, that is insane."

That. That now. That ties it all together. It feels relieving when that happens (p. 346).

But Pirsig is not easily convinced. Reality is fuzzy. He can't quite accept this level of integration. It is somehow still role-like and ill-fitting. But the scene is now set for the final integration, this one centering on the most cherished concern of both Phaedrus and Pirsig — Chris. (How I would love to stop and deal with the development of this relationship, but I will suggest only the drama of the relationship in the finale and urge you to go back and mine the beauty that is there.) Both Phaedrus and Pirsig have frequently called out to him in caring unutterable groans.

It is near the end of the trip. Chris has become nearly unmanageable. Pirsig is angry, afraid and then struck with a deep awareness (p. 345).

I can imitate the father he's supposed to have, but subconsciously, at the Quality level, he sees through it and knows his real father isn't here. In all this Chautauqua talk there's been more than a touch of hypocrisy. Advice is given again and again to eliminate subject-object duality, when the biggest duality of all, the duality between me and him, remains unfaced. A mind divided against itself.

But with the recognition of the division, Pirsig still sees no way

to undo the division. The intellectual bed is made. Reason has done its part. It is left for emotion to pull down the covers and welcome the struggling parts to rest together. As Pirsig shares his most intimate fears with Chris, the boy stands imploding against the most terrifying possibility of loss in the universe, one he knows so well in a not too distant memory. He shrieks with a shriek so congruent with the pain he feels that it penetrates to the very soul of his fathers (p. 401).

I don't know what to do now. I have no idea what to do. It's all over. I want to run for the cliff, but fight that. I have to get him on the bus and then the cliff will be all right.

Everything is all right now, Chris. That's not my voice. I haven't forgotten you . . . How could I forget you . . . We'll be together now . . .

The integration is complete. The voice validates the integration Pirsig has been searching out. Growth is again possible. The storm has passed. Chris asks a critical question "Were you really insane" and the answer comes out like the clean smell after the rain. "No" . . . Chris's eyes sparkle. "I knew it" he says.

I would like to believe at this point that Pirsig is alive and well and living in the Azores, or anywhere. All my attempts to discover his whereabouts have turned up nothing. His publishers have no address and there are no disciples in the publishing house who seem to care. Apparently the rumor that he committed suicide is untrue. Perhaps it was created by some perverse spirit who wanted to dash our *belief* in integration against the dividing wall of dualism. I feel at this moment somehow repentant that I could have believed such a rumor. While my clinical realism, grown out of the soil of prevalence, incidence and prognosis data reminds me of how hard it is for such integration to occur in such a personality, there is some deep internal sense that Quality will tip the seemingly uneven scales in the direction of integrity.

In Pirsig's latest writing in *Esquire* in 1977, Pirsig is still together. He has exchanged motorcycle for sailboat but he's still dealing with the topic of depression. The integration theme is stronger here — he's integrating everything in sight (p. 68).

This self that one discovers (when sailing for long periods of time) is in many ways a person one would not like one's friends to know about; a person one may have been avoiding for years, full of vanity, cowardice, boredom, self-pity, laziness, blamingsness, weak when he should be strong,

aggressive when he should be gentle, a person who will do anything not to know these things about himself – the very same fellow who has been having problems with cruising depression all this time. I think it's in the day-after-day, week-after-week confrontation of this person that the most valuable learning of virtue takes place.

But if one will allow time enough . . . a certain understanding of one's self will break through . . . that whether you are bored or excited, depressed or elated, successful or unsuccessful, even whether you are alive or dead, all this is of *absolutely no consequence whatsoever*.

This ending while perhaps more cynical and more Sartre-like is very similar to his major advice, his psychotherapeutic prescription in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

So the thing to do when working on a motorcycle, as in any other task, is to cultivate the peace of mind which does not separate one's self from one's surroundings (including his other selves). When that is done successfully then everything else follows naturally" (p. 290).

THE LOTUS AND THE WRENCH *
AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF
ZEN BUDDHISM ON ROBERT M. PIRSIG

The title of Pirsig's book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* would seem to invite if not demand a comparison of Pirsig's thought with Zen Buddhist thinking. Accordingly, the thesis of this study is that Pirsig's thought can be partially explained and evaluated from the perspective of Zen Buddhism. Before one even begins that explication, however, a disclaimer immediately following the title page of the book must be addressed. Pirsig writes:

What follows is based on actual occurrences. Although much has been changed for rhetorical purposes, it must be regarded in its essence as fact. However, it should in no way be associated with that great body of factual information relating to orthodox Zen Buddhist practice. It's not very factual on motorcycles, either.¹

Pirsig explicitly denies that what follows in his book is factual about Zen or motorcycles, despite the title of the work. We have then a book which purports to be fact but not factual about its title. But if the book is not "factual" about Zen or motorcycles as scholars or technicians understand "factual," it does nevertheless deal with the "fact" of persons, motorcycles, and Zen in that existential crucible of experience, the college of hard knocks, in which Pirsig has tried, tested and "proved" his "facts." Pirsig thus assumes the right to speak to us of Zen and motorcycles, of romance and technology; he assumes the right to speak to us of the *art* (not the technology) of motorcycle maintenance. In short, Pirsig denies the very dichotomies which he thinks tear the fabric of our society. He speaks instead from a vision which unifies all dichotomies. This vision, tested both in

*The title of this paper is derived from the recurring image of a lotus (a Buddhist symbol) with an open end wrench protruding from it. This symbol appears on the cover and at the beginning of each chapter in the Bantam edition of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

¹Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (New York: A Bantam Book, 1976). All quotes from Pirsig are from this edition and are hereafter cited in the text of the paper by page number.

the Church of Reason (his term for the university setting), in the Cuckoo's Nest (Pirsig was once admitted to a mental hospital), and on the back of a motorcycle, is more Eastern than Western, more Zen than Christian in its emphasis on monism. Perhaps, then, it will further our understanding of Pirsig if we test Pirsig's Zen "facts" against that factual body of Zen Buddhist thought and practice.

In the pursuit of Pirsig's Zen (if there is such a thing as an idiosyncratic Zen), I propose the following steps: first we shall note his initial acquaintance with Eastern ideas and review how Pirsig describes Phaedrus' (Pirsig's name for himself before his mental collapse) *satori* or enlightened breakthrough to his vision. Our next three steps will follow him along the way of Zen, articulating Pirsig's insight with regard to the insufficiency of reason, the unity of knowledge, and the importance of the present. Our fifth step, unfortunately, will land us in a pitfall (as judged from a Zen perspective) that Pirsig did not avoid. Finally we will conclude by taking stock of ourselves as we assess the implications of Pirsig's work.

1. Initial encounters with Eastern thought

For a book employing the name Zen in its title, Pirsig's essay makes surprisingly few direct references to Zen Buddhism or to Eastern thought more generally. Among those references, however, are several that indicate Pirsig's early contacts with Oriental philosophy. During Pirsig's early adulthood (i.e. after being expelled from the University), he served in Korea with the United States Army. His contact with things oriental — sliding doors, slate roofs, and open marketplaces — filled him with emotion. In addition he met and conversed with Korean laborers. But most importantly he read F. S. C. Northrup, *The Meeting of East and West*, which caused Pirsig to see the dichotomized existence of Western man. Northrup proposed that, instead of thinking in dichotomies, Westerners would do well to learn to think in continua. That is, the either/or emphasis of Western dialectical thinking should be replaced with the both/and emphasis of Eastern thinking. Pirsig's second contact with the East included living and studying in India just long enough to be completely repulsed by the Indian notion that the phenomena of this world are actually only temporary, hence illusory, appearances of the underlying one. Thus a possible source for learning about unified vision of knowledge was rejected by young Phaedrus because of his conviction of the reality of war and atrocity.

Precisely how and when Pirsig narrowed his Eastern focus and began to study Zen and to what extent he pursued that study he does not tell us. When, however, he comes to describe Phaedruss' breakthrough, his discovery of Quality, Pirsigs' language and even the structure of his essay take on overtones of the Zen experience of enlightenment called satori. Two passages in particular attract my attention. Chris and Pirsig are climbing a mountain overlooking Bozeman, Montana where Phaedruss had taught rhetoric at Montana State College. Pirsig is interweaving Phaedruss' discovery of Quality, the concept which unifies all dichotomies in Pirsigs' thought, with his narrative of his return to Bozeman. Phaedruss had come so far as to discern three principles behind the world: mind, matter, and Quality (p. 232). Phaedruss examines this "Trinity" closer:

I don't know how much thought passed before he arrived at this, but eventually he saw that Quality couldn't be independently related with either the subject or the object but could be found *only in the relationship of the two with each other*. It is the point at which subject and object meet.

That sounded warm.

Quality is not a *thing*. It is an event.

Warmer.

It is the event at which the subject becomes aware of the object.

And because without objects there can be no subject — because the objects create the subject's awareness of himself — Quality is the event at which awareness of both subjects and objects is made possible.

Hot,

Now he knew it was coming.

This means Quality is not just the result of a collision between subject and object. The very existence of subject and object themselves is deduced from the Quality event. The Quality event is the cause of the subjects and objects which are then mistakenly presumed to be the cause of the Quality (pp. 233-4).

Here is the heart of Phaedrus' discovery. Let us dwell first on the event of the discovery itself. Phaedrus had pursued Quality as a thing. He came to realize that it is an event; it is the realization of the *contindua* Northrup wrote about. Phaedrus' thinking, the analytical process, had run its course and intuitive insight had emerged. Now Phaedrus reversed the direction of his thinking; he reasoned from, not to, Quality. As I understand Pirsig, Quality is not the object of intellectual pursuit; it is the event or the vista from which all intellectual pursuit begins. It is not the conclusion of the syllogism but the major premise. Because there is Quality there are subject and object, mind and matter. Phaedrus had searched for Quality until it found him, and he "saw" for the first time. What he saw was that there is no seer without a seen; there is no seen without a seer; there is only the process of seeing, only the continuum and not the dichotomy.

Pirsig reinforces his presentation of this breakthrough by means of the structure of the story he writes. Just at the point Pirsig tells of Phaedrus' insight, his solving of the dilemma, Chris climbs above the treeline of the mountain they are climbing and shouts: "Blue sky!" They race to the summit and there — from their new perspective — the mountain, the forest, and the valley lie below them, and they see clearly the whole picture, the whole lay of the land, for the first time.

Zen, however, does not put any stock in living on mountain tops. As D. T. Suzuki once put it: "First you've got to get on the camel; then you've got to get off the camel." Pirsig recognizes this: "...there are no motorcycles on the tops of mountains, and in my opinion very little Zen. Zen is the "spirit of the valley, not the mountain. The only Zen you find on the top of mountains is the Zen you bring up there" (p. 240). So Chris and Pirsig descend the mountain, but the Chautauqua continues as Pirsig recounts in more detail Phaedrus' realization of his insight.

Then, on impulse, Phaedrus went over to his bookshelf and picked out a small, blue, cardboardbound book. He'd handcopied this book and bound it himself years before when he couldn't find a copy for sale anywhere. It was the 2400-year-old Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu. He began to read through the lines he had read many times before, but this time he studied it to see if a certain substitution would work. He began to read and interpret it at the same time.

He read (from the opening chapter of the Tao Te Ching)*:

The quality that can be defined is not the Absolute

Quality.

That was what he had said.

The names that can be given it are not absolute names.

It is the origin of heaven and earth . . .

Phaedrus read on through line after line, verse after verse of this, watched them match, fit, slip into place. Exactly. *This* was what he meant. *This* was what he'd been saying all along, only poorly, mechanistically. There was nothing vague or inexact about this book. It was as precise and definite as it could be. It was what he had been saying only in a different language with different roots and origins. He was from another valley seeing what was in *this* valley, not now as a story told by strangers but as a part of the valley he was from. He was seeing it all (pp. 246-8).

* (Citation by the author of this essay.)

To be sure Pirsig speaks in this passage not of a Zen text, but of the Tao Te Ching, the seminal text of philosophical Taoism. There is, though, a sense in which Zen Buddhism is Indian Buddhist meditation filtered through Chinese Taoist thought. If Pirsig could substitute the word "Quality" for the word "Tao" in the text, a Zen Buddhist would be pleased to substitute the term "Buddha Nature," the underlying Reality which resolves all dichotomies in Zen monism. Pirsig's text was Taoist, but his thought had been appropriated from the Tao Te Ching Buddhists centuries before. Phaedrus' experience, then, is cast by Pirsig as a Zen enlightenment, the granting of a new insight that (so Zen Buddhists say) allows one to see the world and everything in it for the first time. The contents of this Zen vision are not transferable by words, only by experience: Nevertheless Zen Buddhists from time to time attempt to give us glimpses of that new vision. At least three very typical components of that vision appear in Pirsig. To those components let us now turn our attention.

II. *The insufficiency of reason*

The positing of Quality as the *a priori* category has as its first consequence (or perhaps its first cause) the insufficiency of reason. In his dialogue with DeWeese, Phaedrus complains that analytical reason, dialectic reason, is often held to be the whole truth, but in fact does not prepare us to deal with the whole of our experience (p. 165). Dualistic, rational thinking will always get stuck (p. 277); indeed analysis can never deliver the whole