

Class Meeting 4

Theme: Quality in Arts, Technology and Life
Learning from Experience: Comparing/Contrasting MFA Observations

In preparation for class

READ: 4-1 ZAAMM Part II: Chapters 8-15 (pages 97-184)

Keep going. Prepare for some rough passages through here. Hard problems will be raised, tough questions will be asked, go slow, but keep going!

- a. What is a motorcycle?
- b. What is a system?
- c. What is the scientific method?
- d. What does all this have to do with "affect"?

At the start of this section of the book the Chautauqua picks up on some earlier remarks about "the machine" and proceeds through a component systems analysis (is this term familiar to you? What does it mean?) of a motorcycle and a discussion of the scientific method. This leads back into the history of the development of scientific ideas. The section ends with a passage in which Pirsig has his narrator recall an episode from Phaedrus' past in which we find his former persona (and alter ego, the youthful university instructor he would have us believe he once was) pondering a puzzling remark that has just been made to him by a senior academic colleague. This leads him to put the question to his students and leads us to put the question to you directly in relation to your own confrontation with the book's ultimate question: "What the hell is Quality? What is it?"

The answer that Pirsig puts in the words of his narrator and alter ego is the very same one that Plato claimed to have heard out of the mouth of his fabled teacher, Socrates, namely that truth and beauty are human social constructs; that we recognize "quality" through an ultimately unknowable, inscrutable, unconscious and indescribable yet somehow true and trustworthy inwardly-experienced, cognitive/affective mental process.

Interpret and evaluate this response.

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9.68 Affect: Neurobiological, Psychological and Sociocultural Counterparts of "Feelings"
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