

# A Quest for Balance: Reconciling the Apollonian and Dionysiac Poles in Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

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## Abstract

This research article examines Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* using Nietzsche's theory of Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses as a framework. It sees the motorcycle journey in the novel as an Apollonian quest for balance and harmony in the tumultuous world of 1960s America. Apollo represented rationality, clarity, and order while Dionysus symbolized irrationality, ecstasy, and chaos. This tension between order and chaos fuels the evolution of the narrator's consciousness through the motorcycle journey to unity and a holistic understanding of life. Applying Nietzsche's dichotomy between Apollonian and Dionysiac, this article studies the novel as a quest for balance between order and chaos, reason and emotion. The study investigates the conflict between the character of the narrator and his alter ego, Phaedrus, as a reason for the quest for Apollonian harmony and understanding. Moreover, it examines Phaedrus's trajectory from madness to reconciliation and the role of Chris in facilitating the narrator's reconciliation with Phaedrus through memories and flashbacks. The methodology involves close reading and textual analysis of the novel's quest narrative by the character of the narrator throughout the motorcycle journey. The approach elaborates on the natural imagery of plains, mountains, and oceans, which is symbolic and parallels the novel's plot. The approach analyses the author's perspective on the conflict between the counter-culture and the mainstream culture. The narrator's first-person narrative is examined for the quest narrative technique of the novel, which pursues balance and harmony. The study also highlights Pirsig's criticism of Western culture and the modern human condition. Hence, the study seeks the reconciliation of Apollonian and Dionysian impulses within the narrative, offering insights into the human condition and Pirsig's recommendation for the pursuit of Apollonian understanding. The research contributes to the understanding of modern humanity's pursuit of balance and harmony in the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** Apollonian, Dionysus, reconciliation, American Dream, mainstream culture, counterculture, hippies, squares, madness, chaos, harmony.

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## Introduction

*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* narrates the story of a father and son beginning a motorcycle journey from Minnesota to Northern California in America. While they travel, the father engages in philosophical discussions, called “Chautauqua’s,” exploring ideas like logic versus emotion and the nature of “Quality.” Chautauquas were the travelling tent shows in late nineteenth-century America for entertainment and education, and they brought enlightenment and culture to the people. These discussions interlink with flashbacks exploring the life of the father's alter ego, Phaedrus, and his pursuit of the same philosophical concepts. As the journey progresses, the father struggles with anxieties about his mental state and the potential influence of Phaedrus. The story ends in a dramatic revelation that forces the father to confront his inauthenticity and embrace a more open and honest approach to life, leaving him with hope for the future. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* emerged as a cultural touchstone during significant social upheaval. Released during an era marked by the rise of beatnik and hippie cultures, mass movements, and a generation questioning conventional societal norms, which led to a split in the classic and romantic perspectives, Pirsig's novel resonated deeply with a generation in flux. It provided a goal that doesn't restrict or limit freedom. The book's exploration of themes, such as the quest for quality and the balance between rationality and emotion, mirrored the cultural and philosophical inquiries of the time. Gaining a cult following, it became a culture-bearer book, symbolizing a broader search for meaning and truth in a rapidly transforming modern society. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a philosophical novel that explores the social inquiry of 1960s America. Previous research on Robert M. Pirsig's novel focuses on narrative intricacies and philosophical aspects of the text. However, there is a lack of study on the novel's motorcycle journey as a symbol of the quest for balance and harmony amidst twentieth-century socio-cultural chaos. The article focuses on the novel's quest for balance and harmony in the midst of the cultural split between classic and romantic perspectives of the twentieth century, emphasizing modern man's search for meaning, understanding of the human condition, and life. Pirsig tries to resolve social concerns through the reconciliation of life-affirming values of Apollonian reason and Dionysiac emotion.

## Research Questions

1. How does Pirsig's narrative structure in the novel contribute to the reconciliation of the Apollonian-Dionysiac conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus?
2. Through which stages does Phaedrus's trajectory into madness and social chaos lead to the eventual reconciliation with the narrator at the end of the story?

3. Which fictional techniques does Pirsig use to show the influence of the character of Chris on the narrator's reunion with Phaedrus?

## Literature Review

In his analysis of Pirsig's work, Melton (2013), in "Immediate Consciousness and the American Open Road: Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*", emphasizes the urgent need for heightened consciousness to address societal challenges and foster a harmonious relationship between humans, technology, and the natural environment. Jeffrey argues that the virtues of riding a motorcycle on the open road strip away the compartmentalization of the journey in a car, suggesting the need for a change in the social perspectives of Americans. The motorcycle journey of the novel navigates the cultural split between the counter-culture and the mainstream values of the 1960s, aiming to unite cultural conflicts and opposing antagonism or isolation. Furthermore, the novel's narrative becomes a road map for resolving the fractured American psyche, serving as a societal plea for mindful living, and the motorcycle itself becomes a powerful metaphor for unified experience, renewed American consciousness, and mindful living. However, Jeffrey's interpretation of the novel lacks the quest for balance and harmony, as it overlooks the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, incorporating the classic and romantic divide in the 1960s.

In his article "Irony and Earnestness in Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*," Rodino (1980) examines the contrast between the narrator's philosophical journey and his strained relationship with Chris, highlighting the irony in their interactions and the narrator's struggle to reconcile his metaphysical journey with his real-world relationships. Rodino argues that the narrator's over-intellectualization leads to neglect of genuine human connections, emphasizing the conflict between abstract intellect and concrete traditional dynamics. Rodino points out that the failure to acknowledge the layering of irony and earnestness results in misunderstanding and a lack of genuine kindness towards Chris, as evidenced by their failed attempt to climb the mountain. Rodino suggests that comprehending this irony and earnestness is crucial for a holistic understanding of philosophical and personal inquiry. However, Rodino overlooks the quest narrative of the motorcycle journey, which ultimately leads to balance and harmony, thereby providing a complex perspective on the conflict and resolution within the narrative.

In "A Mind Divided Against Itself: Madness in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*," Gross (1984) explores the protagonist's internal struggle and madness, emphasizing the emergence of the alter ego, Phaedrus, and the pursuit of Quality in life. Gross presents the novel as an intellectual biography, focusing on the motorcycle journey as a catalyst for the restoration of sanity through the synthesis of the narrator and Phaedrus. Gross highlights the dichotomy between the two characters and their role in achieving peace of mind. However, Gross overlooks the quest for balance and harmony amidst social chaos, leading to an inquiry into the

modern human condition.

In "The Second Satori: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," Fanning (1983) re-evaluates Pirsig's narrative through the lens of Zen philosophy, challenging prevailing misinterpretations and revealing new insights into the novel's profound connections to Zen thought. Fanning claims that Zen Buddhism forms the backbone of both the philosophical journey and the personal narrative, leading from a fragmented self to a harmonious vision. Additionally, Fanning explores Pirsig's philosophical evolution from a staunch rationalist to a seeker of a more holistic understanding of reality, ultimately embracing Zen enlightenment.

Harpham's (1998) "Rhetoric and The Madness of Philosophy in Plato and Pirsig" provides a comprehensive analysis of the philosophical and literary aspects of Pirsig's work. Harpham argues for a shift in the validity of literary criticism and the roles of literature and rhetoric, previously subordinated to philosophy. Harpham discusses the complex boundaries between literary and philosophical discourse and emphasizes the blurring of lines between literature and philosophy in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Harpham explores the narrative's complexity, the dialogical nature mirroring Plato's texts, and the concept of ghosts symbolizing past influences in Pirsig's work. Harpham argues that Pirsig's narrative is a tool that questions and deconstructs philosophical discourse, presenting a dynamic relationship between literature and philosophy through Plato and Pirsig's work. However, Harpham's article neglects the pursuit of balance and harmony in the exploration of the modern human condition of the twentieth century.

Rodino's (1981) "The Matrix of Journeys in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*" explores the complex narrative structure of Pirsig's work, revealing a dynamic interaction of journeys that collectively form a distinctive and thought-provoking literary landscape. This journey is complex as it combines personal journey, past identity, and philosophical inquiry. This journey explores existential and philosophical concerns that were prevalent in the 1960s. Moreover, it also explores father-son dynamics as there is tension between Chris and the narrator. Rodino highlights the matrix of a journey through the protagonist's internal conflict, philosophical inquiry and personal life. Additionally, In the philosophical journey, the narrator seeks the concept of Quality, which was pursued by Phaedrus and eventually led to a mental breakdown. Meanwhile, Rodino asserts that the protagonist's philosophical musings mess up his perception and reality of existence. Consequently, in father-son relations, there is tension and misunderstanding, which may hint at a generation gap. However, this journey also leads to connection and mutual understanding. Ultimately, Rodino argues that this father-son relationship provides deep insight into the human condition. Moreover, these journeys reveal the complexity of balancing individual aspirations, familial desires, and societal expectations. However, Rodino's article lacks the social inquiry into the human condition of the modern man in the twentieth

century, which eventually leads to balance and harmony.

Hayles (1984) examines the complex rhetorical structure of Pirsig's novel, "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance." She explores the 'field concept' of reality from a Zen perspective and its relation to the Western tradition. Hayles identifies three distinct rhetorical strategies used by the characters in the novel and critiques the narrator's attempt to achieve consensus without defining Quality, indicating a multi-level discourse encompassing intellectual inquiry, physical journey, and spiritual quest. The novel dramatizes the embodiment of Quality and leaves unexplored the complex interplay of Apollonian and Dionysian elements within the rhetorical frameworks. The analysis could be expanded to explicitly address how these rhetoric strategies reflect the Apollonian pursuit of order, reason, and harmony, juxtaposed with Dionysian elements of emotion, ecstasy, and chaos. The novel's exploration of Quality through the lens of Zen, juxtaposed with Western rationalism, resonates with the Dionysian embrace of life's irrational aspects and the Apollonian quest for clarity and form. The novel's rhetorical complexity and philosophical inquiries serve as a battleground for the Dionysian and Apollonian forces within the narrative, offering a deeper understanding of Pirsig's work in reflecting the human condition's dual nature. Addressing this gap can provide deeper insights into the novel's enduring appeal and its philosophical significance in the context of the era in which it was written, shedding light on the broader existential questions it poses.

This article examines Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) as a quest for balance and harmony. The study utilizes Nietzsche's theory of Apollonian and Dionysian impulses from "The Birth of Tragedy" (1993) to explore how they lead to life-affirming values.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology rooted in close reading and textual analysis to explore the dichotomy between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses in Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. By examining the text through Nietzsche's (1993) theoretical framework, the research seeks to elucidate how the motorcycle journey serves as a metaphor for the quest for balance and harmony amidst the cultural upheaval of 1960s America. Close reading is the primary analytical technique employed in this research. This method involves a meticulous examination of the novel's narrative structure, character development, and thematic elements. Special attention is given to the narrator's philosophical "Chautauquas" and the implications of his relationship with his alter ego, Phaedrus. By analyzing key passages, the study aims to identify the tensions between order and chaos, reason and emotion, that characterize the narrator's journey. The textual analysis focuses on specific symbols and imagery that reflect the Apollonian and Dionysian themes, such as the natural landscapes of plains, mountains, and oceans encountered during the motorcycle journey. These elements are

analyzed in relation to the protagonist's evolving consciousness and his quest for a holistic understanding of life. The interplay between the counter-culture and mainstream culture of the time is also examined, considering how it informs the narrative's exploration of Western culture and the modern human condition. The study analyzes the first-person narrative technique employed by Pirsig (1999), which is crucial for understanding the quest narrative within the novel. The narrator's introspective reflections and the contrasting experiences with his son, Chris, is scrutinized to reveal how these interactions contribute to the overarching theme of reconciliation between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses. Additionally, a comparative analysis is conducted between the protagonist's trajectory and broader cultural movements of the 1960s. By situating Pirsig's (1999) narrative within the socio-cultural context of the time, the study seeks to uncover insights into modern humanity's pursuit of balance and harmony. This analysis is supported by relevant secondary literature on Pirsig's work, providing a comprehensive view of how the novel addresses the existential questions of its era. While this methodology aims to provide a robust analysis of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The qualitative nature of the study may not encompass every interpretation of the text, and the findings may reflect the specific lens of Nietzsche's (1993) dichotomy. Future research could explore alternative frameworks or conduct quantitative analyses to expand the understanding of Pirsig's work.

## **Discussion**

“Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” is a novel about the motorcycle journey across America, searching for meaning and balance in a twentieth-century world filled with cultural upheaval and existential anxieties. The narrator is the orator of the story and the father of Chris. Phaedrus is referred to as a ghost haunting the narrator and Chris. Phaedrus is the narrator's alter-ego and a ghost from the past that haunts the narrator. The conflict between the narrator's Apollonian impulses and Phaedrus's Dionysiac impulses is mutually enriching, as it leads to the pursuit of balance and harmony in the novel. Chris is the narrator's son, representing the younger generation caught between the counter-culture movement and mainstream society. Sutherlands and DeWeeses are the supportive characters representing the hippies of the counter-culture movement.

## **The Narrator and Phaedrus's Quest for Balance and Harmony**

Pirsig utilized a quest narrative to illustrate the motorcycle journey as a pursuit of balance and harmony in the novel, drawing parallels to the existential journey of Goethe's poem *Erlking*. The conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus is triggered after the narrator mentions Goethe's

poem and the existential journey. Similarly, the novel and the poem have a parallel journey of a father and son through mist and fog as a ghost haunts them. Initially, the novel's plot follows the poem's tragic trajectory as the ghost becomes dominant. However, Pirsig subverts the tragic ending by reconciling the narrator and Phaedrus, bringing balance and harmony to the novel.

In the novel, the narrator is a character created by Pirsig to embody the Apollonian structure and journey towards balance and harmony. Additionally, there is a conflict between the narrator and the ghost of Phaedrus, which significantly impacts Chris as the novel resonates with Goethe's Poem. To grasp the Apollonian quest and reconciliation in the novel, it's important to differentiate between the author and the narrator. "The trouble is that essays always have to sound like God talking for eternity, and that is not the way it ever is. It has never been anything else, ever, but you can't get that across in an essay." (Pirsig 174-175). The passage significantly presents the author's intentions regarding the quest narrative and the journey undertaken by the narrator as a character in the novel. Pirsig used the fictional technique of a narrative to represent the journey to wisdom to relate with the novel's reader rather than being a "God" like authority in the essays. Pirsig makes the journey through order and chaos so engrossing that the reader undergoes the quest that Pirsig has planned for him/her from the beginning. There's a clear distinction between the narrator and author of the novel as Pirsig uses the narrator's character as the orator of the story to remove the essayistic elements from the novel. The narrator, being the character created by Pirsig, hints at the Apollonian journey to reconcile the Dionysiac impulses in the novel. "An old poem by Goethe— The strange feeling comes back. I try to recall. A man is riding along a beach at night, through the wind. It's a father, with his son, whom he holds fast in his arm. He asks his son why he looks so pale, and the son replies, 'Father, don't you see the ghost?' 'How does it end?' 'In failure -- death of the child. The ghost wins.'" (Pirsig-65-66). Pirsig used the literary technique of intertextuality to create a parallel connection between the existential quest in the novel and Goethe's poem. Goethe's poem is about a father and son fleeing a ghostly pursuer, which takes on a deeper meaning when considering Phaedrus's ghost, the narrator's fragmented former self. The "ghost" manifests the narrator's existential anxieties and the unresolved conflict between reason and emotion. Additionally, the ghost is also symbolic of the neglected Dionysiac emotions. It haunts Western mainstream culture as 1960s America was dominated by science and Apollonian reason. The motorcycle trip itself becomes a metaphor for the narrator's existential journey. The journey transforms from a physical adventure into a symbolic journey towards self-confrontation. It mirrors the narrator's internal battles as he struggles with the remnants of Phaedrus, his Dionysian impulses, and seeks Apollonian harmony. The novel's narrative structure becomes critical in conveying this Apollonian and Dionysiac conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus. Therefore, the novel's plot runs parallel to Goethe's "Erlkönig," which represents the conflict between the father and the ghost,

which relates to an existential journey between the father and son.

The narrator recognizes the conflict between himself and Phaedrus as a duality that he has been ignoring. The narrator acknowledges this duality through the Apollonian approach of understanding, revealing a conflict of the divided self between himself and Phaedrus. "In all this Chautauqua talk there's been more than a touch of hypocrisy. the biggest duality of all, the duality between me and him, remains unfaced. A mind divided against itself." (Pirsig-412). The passage highlights the conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus. Pirsig presents the internal conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus as the conflict of the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses, highlighting the complexity of their relationship. The narrator acknowledges the inauthenticity in his attempts as all the ideas of the Chautauqua were derived from Phaedrus, but the narrator did not acknowledge Phaedrus. The narrator portrays this conflict as "the biggest duality" between rationality and irrationality, control and chaos. This duality or conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus is situational and may also refer to the social conflict between the hip and squares of 1960s America, which resulted in a fragmented American psyche. This duality strongly contrasts the idealized pre-breakdown Phaedrus with the narrator's current self. The former self, Phaedrus, had Dionysian impulsiveness, while the narrator possesses Apollonian restraint. Pirsig develops the quest narrative through the duality and conflict between the narrator and Phaedrus, leading to reconciliation and harmony.

The narrator highlights the shared pursuit of rationality between Phaedrus and himself. Phaedrus had a Dionysian approach of revelry as he sought revenge against rationality. However, the narrator's approach is Apollonian as he tries to understand Phaedrus's pursuit. "I want to pursue further now that same ghost that Phædrus pursued...rationality itself." (Pirsig -106). Pirsig emphasizes the shared quest of Phaedrus and the narrator in this passage. The narrator inherits Phaedrus's obsession with the concept of Quality and the underlying crisis of reason in the modern world. The narrator aligns himself with Phaedrus's quest. This shared pursuit can be seen as a search for a more integrated way of transcending the Apollonian-Dionysiac conflict. The narrator's decision to follow Phaedrus foreshadows a potential for reconciliation between the fragmented aspects of himself. By confronting the "ghost" together, they embark on a joint journey towards a more holistic understanding of the human condition. This resonates with Pirsig's belief that embracing both rationality and irrationality is crucial for unlocking life's mysteries and attaining harmony in life. The novel explores the Apollonian and Dionysian conflict not as a competition but as a shared human endeavor for a balanced life that values both reason and emotion.

The dreams are symbolic as they refer to unresolved issues and the past. Phaedrus bypasses the narrator to communicate with Chris, which creates panic and anxiety in the narrator. The narrator's anxiety leads to self-reflection regarding his relationship with Phaedrus. The sense of guilt

prevails in the narrator as he becomes hopeless and prepares for the worst. “The dreamer isn't me at all. It is Phædrus. He's waking up. I'm the evil figure in the shadows. I'm the loathsome one. -- I always knew he would come back. The sky under the trees looks so grey and hopeless. (Pirsig - 339). The passage emphasizes the importance of embracing the Dionysiac aspect of Phædrus, which is also a significant aspect of human life. Pirsig marks a significant turning point in the novel as it highlights the climax where the characters of the narrator and Phædrus appear to invert. The narrator identifies Phædrus as the “dreamer” who is waking up, signifying a potential recovery from his mental breakdown. In contrast, the narrator refers to himself as the one divided and evil, suggesting a descent into despair. This reversal of roles challenges the initial portrayal of Phædrus as the antagonist and the narrator as the hero. It compels readers to reconsider their understanding of the characters' mental states. The narrator's despair is evident in his self-loathing and fear of Phædrus' return. Moreover, the dream may also refer to the American Dream, which was predominant in mainstream culture and focused on consumerism and materialism. This was rejected by the counter-culture movement, as the hippies abandoned capitalist values. The embrace of capitalist values and materialism was seen as leading to a lack of individuality and freedom. The potential shattering of the American Dream may reflect the existential anxiety of 1960s America and the fractured American psyche. The imagery of the “grey and hopeless” sky represents the narrator's emotional state and highlights the gravity of his internal conflict. It confronts the narrator with the possibility that his sanity is fractured while Phædrus might be achieving a form of clarity. Pirsig compels the reader to consider the fluidity of sanity and madness by portraying a reversal of characters. This highlights the long-awaited reconciliation of the narrator's Apollonian and Phædrus's Dionysiac impulses, which leads to balance and harmony in the novel.

Chris's affirmation plays a significant role in reconciling the narrator's Apollonian impulses with Phædrus's Dionysiac impulses. Moreover, Phædrus's debate with the Chairman regarding Socrates's analogy for truth becomes the analogy for reconciliation between the narrator and Phædrus, leading to balance and harmony. “I knew it” he said. For God's sake relieve him of his burden! Be one person again!” (Pirsig- 422). The affirmation from Chris marks a significant turning point in the narrator's journey towards reconciliation with Phædrus and represents a potential resolution to the Apollonian and Dionysian conflict within the narrator. Additionally, Chris may also represent the younger generation, which could play a crucial role in reconciling the conflict between the counter-culture and the mainstream culture, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of life in western culture. Chris's statement, “I knew it”, signifies his intuitive understanding of the narrator's inner conflict. This affirmation serves as a validation of the narrator's emotional chaos and the possibility of reconciliation with Phædrus. Chris's affirmation marks a turning point towards resolving the internal conflict and a potential bridge between the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses in the novel. “The Chairman has not

stated it yet, but he is at the point at which he must now announce that the white horse is temperate reason, the black horse is dark passion, emotion.” (Page 401\_403). The passage synthesizes the main argument of the novel as it highlights the importance of balancing emotion and reason, which is the central theme of the novel. Pirsig highlights the life-affirming values of Apollo and Dionysus by referring to the debate between Phaedrus and the chairman regarding Socrates' analogy of a chariot drawn by two horses. White Horse represents “temperate reason”, mirroring the Apollonian emphasis on order, logic, and control. In contrast, Black Horse represents “dark passion, emotion”, reflecting the Dionysian embrace of chaos, instinct, and unbridled passion. Both the chariot and the motorcycle can be seen as metaphors for life's journey. Chariot requires the charioteer, the conscious mind, to navigate between the two horses of reason and emotion to achieve a balanced approach to life. Similarly, the Motorcycle's two handlebars are analogous to the dual forces, as maintaining control requires a balance between reason representing steering and emotion representing throttle control for a smooth ride. The key to a successful journey, in both the chariot and motorcycle metaphors, lies in achieving a balance between the two forces of Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses. Pirsig emphasizes that neither reason nor emotion alone can navigate the complexities of life. The need for balance aligns with the potential reconciliation between the narrator and Phaedrus. The reconciliation between the narrator and Phaedrus reflects the potential for integrating the Apollonian and Dionysian forces within each individual. By finding the balance between reason and emotion, they can achieve a more complete and life-affirming way of being. Pirsig suggests that the narrator and Phaedrus, by potentially reconciling their opposing viewpoints, can achieve a state of greater wholeness, mirroring the harmonious balance needed to control the chariot or motorcycle. The imbalance of the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses in the narrator and Phaedrus leads to a divided self. Moreover, the divided self also reflects the modern human condition, caught between mythos and logos, spirituality and materiality, representing the conflict between the irrational and rational aspects of human life. The conflict between the counter-culture and mainstream culture has led to a fragmented and lost Western culture. The novel emphasizes the need to reconcile the counter-culture and the mainstream culture by reconciling the classic and romantic perspectives of life. This ultimately triggers an Apollonian quest to reconcile with Dionysiac impulses in the novel, aiming to achieve a harmonious balance in life and restore the fractured American psyche of 1960s America.

## **Phaedrus's Trajectory from Madness to Reconciliation**

The narrator acknowledges that the Chautauquas he is delivering are the ideas from Phaedrus. Phaedrus, who was not properly buried, is a ghost haunting the narrator. The Chautauquas on Phaedrus's life serve the purpose of burying him forever. “I've decided today's Chautauqua will begin to explore Phædrus' world. He never was buried right, and that's exactly the source of the trouble.” (Pirsig-69). In the beginning of the

novel, the narrator was not even willing to acknowledge Phaedrus. Ironically, the narrator is now discussing Phaedrus, which leads to the resurrection of Phaedrus rather than his burial. The narrator's attempt at facing Phaedrus may hint at a confrontation with unresolved issues or a troubled past that has turned into a ghost haunting the narrator. The act of "burying" may hint at Apollonian resistance as the narrator wants to bury the Dionysiac Phaedrus. Moreover, the act of burial may also signify the mainstream culture's attempt to eradicate the counter-culture, as the mainstream media labeled hippies as drug addicts and vagabonds. However, there is a positive aspect to burial that may lead to recognizing Phaedrus and the counterculture. The Chautauquas may also refer to the desire to bring enlightenment and culture to 1960s America in order to embrace the irrational aspect of human nature. Additionally, the Chautauqua tells the story of Phaedrus and, at the same time, ironically educates the reader regarding madness and irrationality. Moreover, Pirsig also educates the readers regarding counter-culture movements. This marks a turning point in the novel as the narrator has changed his approach from avoidance to engaging with Phaedrus and his insanity.

Phaedrus's descent into madness is connected with his pursuit of "Quality" as he becomes obsessed with it while teaching in Montana. Phaedrus tries to understand the split in the culture of 1960s America. Phaedrus tried to resolve this split by finding common ground that led to quality. Phaedrus blamed the Apollonian rationality for causing this split between "hip" and "square". "In his pursuit of a concept of Quality, Phaedrus kept seeing again and again little paths all leading toward some point off to one side. He had asked Sarah, who long before had come by with her watering pot and put the idea of Quality in his head, where in English literature quality, as a subject, was taught." (Pirsig-343). The passage emphasizes the pursuit of "Quality," which led to Phaedrus's Dionysiac madness. Phaedrus discovered that an excess of rationality and science can suppress the emotional and irrational aspects of individuals, leading to alienation and the emergence of counter-culture. Similarly, the hippies of the counter-culture movements also believed that science and rationality are dehumanizing humans and destroying the environment. This belief led to their rejection of the squares of mainstream culture, resembling Dionysiac non-conformity and revelry. Moreover, the hippies believed that modern human beings are alienated by technology and mechanical values, leading to a loss of meaning, individuality, and authenticity. Phaedrus's descent into madness was triggered by Sarah when she mentioned the concept of Quality. Sarah, a classic scholar of Greek, and Phaedrus' colleague, was referred to by Phaedrus as a Delphic oracle because she planted the seed of Quality in his mind. The pursuit of Quality led Phaedrus to ancient Greek philosophy. The ancient Greeks combined the classic and romantic perspectives, leading to balance and harmony in their art and culture. In contrast, 1960s America witnessed an imbalance of classic and romantic aspects, leading to a lack of quality. Like the Delphic Oracle, Sarah made cryptic prophecies that Phaedrus considered to have deep significance. Sarah's statement about the Greeks catalysed Phaedrus's inquiry into the

concept of Quality. The phrase "off to one side" suggests that Phaedrus's paths led to madness, as Phaedrus was an outcast and declared insane. Similarly, the counterculture was outcasted as they also sought an alternative perspective toward life, which was labelled as madness by mainstream culture. Hence, Phaedrus blamed the classical mode of understanding as the root cause of the division in the hip and squares of 1960s America, which led to an imbalance. Phaedrus struggled to find a common ground for the peaceful coexistence of Romantic and classic modes of understanding, which relates to the central theme of order and chaos in the novel.

Phaedrus's pursuit of seeking revenge on rationality ultimately leads to his descent into madness. The court ordered Electroconvulsive Shock therapy, which resulted in the annihilation of Phaedrus. His family suffered due to his pursuit of revenge on rationality. "He was dead. Destroyed by order of the court, enforced by the transmission of high-voltage alternating current through the lobes of his brain, in a process known technologically as "Annihilation ECS." (Pirsig-91). The passage represents the madness and suffering of Phaedrus. The narrator is compassionate as he tries to understand Phaedrus, who was Dionysiac as he sought revenge from rigid structures of social conformity, leading to his madness. Similarly, the counter-culture also sought revenge against the traditional mainstream culture as it tamed and suffocated the human spirit of freedom. The court order shows the societal power over nonconforming Phaedrus, as he was given shocks twenty-eight times in a row, resulting in the liquidation of his personality. The narrator mentions that Phaedrus's personality was liquidated by a technologically faultless act, which may hint at technology overpowering human values. Similarly, the hippies were concerned that technology could be a dehumanizing force that damages human values. Phaedrus's Dionysiac impulses were overpowered by Apollonian technology. However, Phaedrus returns as a ghost, which haunts Chris and the narrator while they are on a motorcycle journey. Similarly, Phaedrus's return may hint at the impact of counter-culture movements, which can be observed in various social movements such as the civil rights movement, women's empowerment, anti-war protests, and environmental concerns.

Phaedrus sought to balance mythos and logos by integrating classic and romantic modes of understanding, lamenting the dominance of reason in mythos, which represented the logos-oriented shared beliefs and values of 1960s America. However, Phaedrus was declared insane because he sought an alternative path to the logos while exploring the vastness of the mythos. The narrator emphasizes the importance of mythos for maintaining sanity, as mythos is an ongoing process that shapes and transforms human beings, uniting the people of a culture. "The mythos-over-logos argument points to the fact that each child is born as ignorant as any caveman. the continuing, ongoing mythos, transformed into logos but still mythos." (Pirsig-359). The passage elaborates on the significance of mythos, which represents a community's shared beliefs and values. The narrator underlines the significance of logos as a dominant part of the

enduring mythos of 1960s America, but it overlooks the emotional appeal of pathos. The narrator claims that mythos shape individuals, and without it, human beings are reduced to ignorant cave people as mythos is the ongoing process of human evolution based on reason and emotion. Mythos represents the vast body of shared knowledge that unites civilization and the individual. In the 1960s, the dominance of rational thinking led to a world that felt emotionally and spiritually empty. In response, counter-culture movements emerged in America, rejecting the idea of the American dream focused on material success and upward mobility, which ignored the spiritual and emotional aspects of humans. The new generation believed that this dream was a false promise, leading to a superficial and impersonal way of living devoid of meaningful existence. This dominance of rationality contributed to an imbalance, reflecting the central theme of order and chaos in the novel. The narrator explains the relationship between mythos and logos using the analogy of a tree and a shrub. It is argued that logos is like a shrub, part of the continuous development of mythos, which is compared to a growing tree. The process of human evolution continues through mythos. Unfortunately, Phaedrus strayed from America's reason-dominated mythos and was electrocuted for being considered insane.

The narrator and Chris arrive in Montana, where Phaedrus used to teach. The narrator visits old haunts, bringing back past memories that eventually lead to the re-emergence of Phaedrus and madness... "I step inside and an avalanche of memory, loosened by the jolt of the print, begins to come down. this valley before me now through this window here, now -- started the whole thing, the whole madness, right here!" (Pirsig-184). The passage highlights the place and time where Phaedrus's descent into madness began as the narrator tries to come to terms with the past. The narrator's visit to the old haunts of Montana triggers his memories of Phaedrus's madness. The phrase "avalanche of memory" suggests a loss of control and increasing emotional intensity, which may hint at Dionysiac impulses overpowering Apollonian resistance. Phaedrus's Dionysiac impulses are becoming stronger, while the narrator's Apollonian impulses are losing control. Ironically, the narrator's attempt to bury Phaedrus results in the emergence of Phaedrus and his Dionysian madness. Moreover, the motorcycle journey with Chris was all along a trip to the old haunts of Montana and the past. The window is the source of everything that led to madness. It's the place where Phaedrus used to stand and ponder about Quality to resolve the polarization of 1960s America into the counter-culture and mainstream culture. The preservation of the room suggests the preservation of Phaedrus's memories. The narrator's tension and emotional intensity are associated with Phaedrus' mental breakdown, highlighting the Dionysiac pole. The tension and fragments of memories highlight the ongoing conflict between the narrator's Apollonian desire for order and understanding with the undeniable Dionysiac emotional connection with Phaedrus. The window and the spot may hint at the lingering emotional impact of the haunts on the narrator.

In the story, dreams serve as a catalyst for change, bringing the narrator's

repressed memories and anxieties to the surface as they become a passage for Phaedrus. As the narrator's sense of control deteriorates, it foreshadows a relapse into madness. Pirsig cleverly subverts the role of the narrator and Phaedrus. The narrator experiences an awakening, realizing that the dreamer is not the narrator but Phaedrus as the threat of madness becomes imminent. "The dreamer isn't me at all. It's Phaedrus. He's waking up. I always knew he would come back. -- It's a matter now of preparing for it." (Pirsig-339). The passage emphasizes Phaedrus's resurgence and his madness, which forces the narrator to confront his alter ego. The narrator realizes that the unknown figure in the dream is actually the narrator himself. The narrator's realization of Phaedrus's awakening indicates his anxiety and panic due to Phaedrus's reappearance, hinting at chaos and suffering. Furthermore, the awakening may foreshadow the final confrontation between the narrator and Phaedrus. In the story, Phaedrus is the dreamer, and the narrator symbolizes Apollonian resistance by guarding the glass door, highlighting the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysiac poles. The glass door may also be symbolic of new insight, as now Pirsig is emphasizing the emotional aspect of the narrator's alter ego, Phaedrus. Moreover, it may also refer to giving value to the emotional aspect of life. However, the narrator's efforts to guard the door demonstrate a desire to prevent the chaos and suffering that Dionysiac madness would bring upon Chris and his family. The increasing suspense and tension are related to an imbalance, now based on the dominant Dionysian pole.

Pirsig skillfully connects the event of madness in the narrator's current story and Phaedrus's past. Both the narrator and Phaedrus experience uncertainty and a lack of direction. Chris plays an interesting role in both timelines, witnessing the trauma of madness. "Chris, you're looking at a father who was insane for a long time, and is close to it again." And not just close anymore. It's here. The bottom of the ocean." (Pirsig- 417). The passage focuses on the narrator's confession to Chris about the potential collapse into the Dionysiac madness. The acknowledgement of madness might indicate a potential reconciliation between the narrator and Phaedrus. Phaedrus mentioned that he would meet Chris at the bottom of the ocean, suggesting that madness is on the horizon and Chris is destined to cross paths with Phaedrus. The depth of Phaedrus's pursuit of Quality, compared to the bottom of the ocean, leads to madness and fear in the narrator. The narrator is taking final measures to protect Chris by deciding to send him home because the narrator has lost control over Phaedrus. The narrator feels hopeless and sad as he bids goodbye to Chris. The narrator admits to not being angry with Chris, indicating an acknowledgment of responsibility for the madness and trauma. Chris is also a victim of the narrator's madness, and the narrator accepts this, not wanting Chris to suffer again. Chris witnessed Phaedrus's madness and endured trauma. The narrator wants to protect Chris from suffering again, similar to the father in Goethe's poem. This marks the climax of the novel, as it seems that the narrator and Chris are going to be separated, resembling the tragic trajectory of Goethe's poem, reflecting the existential aspect of the novel. The narrator and Phaedrus are striving to find balance in the midst of chaos

and madness.

Chris's revelation about the glass door event triggers the narrator's embrace of Phaedrus' madness. The narrator's journey becomes a testament to the importance of facing past traumas of madness and confronting internal anxieties. "I haven't been carrying him at all. He's been carrying me! For God's sake relieve him of his burden! Be one person again!" (Pirsig-423). The passage focuses on Chris's affirmation that compels the narrator to embrace his Dionysian madness in order to reconcile the narrator's Apollonian and Dionysian poles. The narrator acknowledges Chris' role as a bridge between himself and his repressed emotions. The confrontation of past events of madness and hospitalization suggests the narrator's acceptance of madness that he had previously denied. Chris' emotional well-being becomes the motivation for the narrator to embrace the Dionysiac impulses of Phaedrus. The phrase "Be one person again" signifies the need to end the conflict and polarity of Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses. Moreover, it highlights the need for balance and uniting the conflicting poles to attain life-affirming values. Similarly, Being One Again may also suggest mending the fractured American psyche between the counterculture and the mainstream culture by embracing the emotional and irrational aspects of hippies. These impulses and the emergence of Phaedrus' past and madness lead to the long-awaited reconciliation of the narrator's Apollonian impulses and Phaedrus' Dionysiac impulses. The integration of Apollonian reason and Dionysiac emotions leads to life-affirming values and a holistic understanding of life.

## **Chris's Role in The Reconciliation of The Narrator and Phaedrus**

Chris's character serves as a bridge between the narrator and Phaedrus. Chris also embodies the Dionysian personality, expressing anger, nonconformity, and strong emotions. Moreover, Chris also compels the narrator to confront his past and Phaedrus, leading to the reconciliation of the narrator and Phaedrus. Chris may also refer to the younger generation that witnessed the conflict between the counter-culture and mainstream culture.

Chris plays a significant role in initiating the conversation about the ghost, which acts as a catalyst for the narrator's eventual revelation of Phaedrus. "His name, Chris, since it doesn't matter, is Phaedrus. It's not a name you know." (Pirsig-39). The passage focuses on Chris's role in initiating a conversation that leads to the introduction of Phaedrus. The narrator's response suggests a desire to protect Chris from Phaedrus. There's a similarity of this reluctance to Goethe's poem as the father dismisses the acknowledgement of the ghost. The denial may be a father's way of protecting and comforting his son, avoiding a difficult situation. Furthermore, the denial may refer to the protective nature of the narrator, which remains prevalent throughout the novel. Chris's persistent insistence plays a significant role in reviving Phaedrus in the novel. Additionally,

Chris's initiation of a conversation about ghosts leads to an eventual confrontation between the narrator and Phaedrus. "Did you see him on the motorcycle in the storm?" "Sylvia said she thought you saw a ghost." (Pirsig-39). The passage highlights the significance of ghost in the novel. Sylvia remarks on the narrator's pale face as they navigate through the storm. Chris refers to this event and asks that the ghost was Phaedrus. The narrator has seen the ghost of Phaedrus in the storm but chooses not to reveal it. The ghost may symbolize the narrator's internal struggle and anxiety, as well as the past and memories that the narrator is attempting to suppress. The narrator protects Chris from emotional turmoil and the past by not revealing about the ghost in the storm. However, Chris Unintentionally sets in motion a chain of events that leads to the eventual revelation of Phaedrus. The discussion about the ghost of Phaedrus foreshadows the upcoming confrontation between the narrator and Phaedrus as they seek balance and harmony.

The narrator is deeply anxious about Chris's illness, his protectiveness, and the looming shadow of Phaedrus. The narrator attributes Chris's distant behavior to his mental illness. "mein Kind...my child. There it is in another language. Mein Kinder -- "Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind." (Pirsig-66) The passage highlights the protective relationship of the narrator with Chris as he is suffering from illness. The narrator demonstrates paternal love and affection towards Chris by using the German phrase "mein kind," which means "my child." This phrase highlights the narrator's emotional bond with Chris. The illness may refer to the estranged or cold relationship of the narrator with Chris. Similarly, the illness may also refer to the split in the classic and romantic perspective of 1960s America, which led to an estranged and cold relationship between the mainstream and the counter-culture. The narrator compares the existential journey of the father and son with his own journey with Chris. The existential nature of the journey emphasizes the seriousness of the journey, as it can be a matter of life and death. Similarly, the gap between counter-culture and mainstream culture can also be seen as existential, as people struggled to find the meaning of life amidst social upheaval. Sylvia asks the narrator about the ending of the existential journey of the father and son in the poem. "In failure--death of the child. The ghost wins" (Pirsig-66). The narrator's interpretation of the poem's ending foreshadows a looming threat of the ghost of Phaedrus. The failure to protect Chris could lead towards a negative outcome which creates suspense and tension in the novel. The parallels to the Erlkonig highlight the universal themes of paternal fear and the challenges of parent-child relationships. The narrator, Chris, and Phaedrus are involved in an existential conflict between emotion and reason, leading to an imbalance that is resolved through the quest narrative of the motorcycle journey in the novel.

Pirsig creates suspense and uncertainty as Phaedrus re-emerges, and the narrator becomes concerned about Chris and himself. "That dream that keeps recurring haunts me because I can't escape its meaning: I'm forever

on the other side of a glass door from him which I don't open. He wants me to open it." (Pirsig-323). The passage focuses on the barrier between Chris and his father. Apart from facilitating communication between Phaedrus and Chris, the narrator's dreams also haunt the narrator. The narrator continuously dreams about a glass door, symbolising a barrier between the narrator and his family, especially Chris. Similarly, the barrier may refer to the conflict between the classic and romantic perspectives, which led to cultural chaos and social upheaval. Moreover, the barrier prevents a holistic experience and understanding of Western culture. Chris's gesture of waving and signalling to the narrator to open the "glass door" signifies his desire for reconciliation. In the dream, the narrator is uncertain about the place he is in and whether he is alive or dead. The narrator mentions an unknown figure which may or may not be Phaedrus, adding to the barriers he is facing. The figure prevents the narrator from reuniting with Chris and his family. Hence, the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysiac poles reflects an imbalance and a barrier that can only be overcome by reconciling the classic and romantic perspectives, leading to balance and harmony.

Pirsig used a chilling metaphor of a duck incident to illustrate Chris's and the narrator's existential states. The narrator's rigid Apollonian reason prevents him from recognizing the emotional impact of his actions on Chris. The narrator had shot a small duck, which then gazed strangely at the narrator. The narrator snapped its neck, and the penetrating gaze became empty. The narrator compared Chris's gaze with that of the small duck as the narrator is about to kill Chris. "That gaze -- I've seen it somewhere -- somewhere -- somewhere. -- In the fog of an early morning in the marshes there was a small duck, a teal that gazed like this." (Pirsig-418). The passage emphasizes the impact of Apollonian rationality, resulting in emotional emptiness and a lack of empathy, which Chris observed from the narrator. The narrator relives the moment of snapping the neck of a small duck, but this time it is Chris on the other end. Chris's gaze forces the narrator to re-evaluate his approach to life. The excess of Apollonian reason has deprived him of emotions and empathy. The Apollonian rigidity is suffocating the Dionysiac emotional side of the narrator. The incident with the duck reveals the narrator's lack of emotion and inhumane nature. The realization of this harsh aspect of rationality sends chills through his body as he understands that he is about to do the same to Chris. This realization may indicate the need for soul-searching. Similarly, the negative effects of materialism and technology have led to the alienation of modern man, as rational values have suffocated the emotional values of people. The narrator's approach to control the situation backfires due to his lack of understanding and emotions. The fog symbolizes uncertainty and confusion regarding the relationship and the mental state of the narrator and Chris. Similarly, the fog of uncertainty and confusion hangs over Western culture as the modern human condition deteriorates despite technological innovations and material success. The negative impact of materialism and excessive reliance on logic has resulted in dehumanizing values and an imbalance in modern human life. Pirsig

stresses the importance of introspection in Western culture to adopt life-affirming values that encourage harmony and balance.

Chris's emotional breakdown eventually leads to the reconciliation of the narrator and Phaedrus. "Everything is all right now, Chris. That's not my voice. I haven't forgotten you." (Pirsig-419). The passage focuses on Chris's role in forcing the narrator and Phaedrus to reconcile. The relationship between the narrator and Chris undergoes a shift as the narrator decides not to separate. Chris's inhuman wails are replaced with soft human cries. The phrase "that's not my voice" suggests that the narrator is adopting Phaedrus's Dionysiac side. Moreover, the phrase reflects the narrator's internal conflict as he acknowledges the resurrection of his emotional aspect, hinting at the resolution of his internal conflict. The narrator understands that Chris misses Phaedrus and the emotional connection he has with him. It is Phaedrus and his Dionysiac emotions that accept and affirm Chris. Chris compels the narrator to let go of his Apollonian rigidity and allow Phaedrus's Dionysiac emotions to surface, which were previously suppressed by the narrator. Similarly, Pirsig suggests resolving the conflict between the counter-culture and mainstream culture to advance with mutually enriching, life-affirming values of the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses, leading to balance and harmony.

## **Conclusion**

The study interpreted the motorcycle journey in the novel as a quest for balance and reconciliation amidst the cultural chaos of the twentieth century, using Nietzsche's (1993) concepts of the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses leading to life-affirming values to contemplate the modern human condition.

The article interprets the motorcycle journey as a quest narrative leading to the reconciliation of the Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses of the narrator and Phaedrus. The pursuit of "Quality" and the reconciliation of conflicting perspectives represent a broader implication for societal and cultural balance and harmony. The analysis sheds light on the fractured American psyche of the 1960s and the ongoing pursuit of resolving societal divisions. Furthermore, the mutual enrichment of Apollonian and Dionysiac impulses highlights the importance of embracing diverse perspectives for a holistic understanding of the modern human condition. The motorcycle journey provides valuable insights into Western culture, revealing an imbalance between reason and emotion that leads to the creation of polarizing values. Therefore, there is a need to balance Dionysiac emotions and Apollonian reason, ultimately leading to life-affirming values.

Phaedrus's pursuit of "Quality" led to his descent into madness and hospitalization, but ultimately resulted in the narrator's reconciliation with his alter-ego. The emergence of Phaedrus and the narrator's acceptance of

his Dionysiac madness symbolize their reconciliation, stemming from the journey of madness and confrontation with the past. Phaedrus's madness compels the reader to ponder mythos' vastness while recognizing logos' limitations.

The character of Chris serves as a bridge between the narrator and Phaedrus, leading to the eventual confrontation and reconciliation. The journey blurs the lines between reality and illusion, highlighting the connection between internal struggles and the outside world. Ultimately, the narrator and Chris's ability to overcome challenges showcases the human spirit's capacity for growth and adaptation. Moreover, the character of Chris represents the younger generation, which may act to resolve and reconcile the fractured psyche of 1960s America.

The study concludes that Pirsig's inquiry into the values of Western culture suggests embracing the irrational Dionysiac aspect of life. This is seen as necessary because excessive Apollonian rationality suffocates life, leading to imbalance, social anxiety, and cultural chaos. Moreover, modern humans are tormented by a lack of emotion in a society dominated by consumerism and technology. Modern man feels dehumanized and disconnected in a world driven by reason, leading to the rise of counter-culture movements and social disorder. Pirsig's novel is widely accepted as a cultural-bearer book, offering a critique of Western culture and emphasizing the balance of emotion and reason. Hence, there is a need to embrace the rational and emotional aspects, leading to life-affirming values that are essentially for balance and harmony in life.

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