

## Rebounding off Pirsig – Pirsig Platform

[intro](#)For a while writing has been emerging, I associate that emergence with zen – more later. Whenever I think of Zen I think of Brad Warner who I have followed to zen, and the man himself – Pirsig. Over the years Pirsig has been constant. My first was for a dissertation in 1976, and a friend mused about a reference – [p... Pirsig Corgi 1976] or some such. Since retiring I have studied Pirsig and somewhere have an intellectual zipfile of musings as I studied but this is none of that. I look at the intellectualising in Liverpool and it makes part of me angry – and yet another part was angry because I couldn't get a qualification by distance learning!! Today was the end of the voluntary teaching for another year, I got to the beach, and instead of trying to make sense of Shobogenzo I started reading "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" – ("ZAMM"). I got to the end of first section in which he was discussing the attitude of the Sutherlands to technology, stopped, thought about technology, and decided to write this. I mused over the title. This is not going to be what I think about Pirsig's view of technology although it might start that way. It is just writing that is kicked off by what I am reading, bouncing off Pirsig leading to ..... became rebounding off.

[techone](#)To technology. I am more like the Sutherlands. I grew up in a household where in the end my mother fixed more than my father, a practicality rather than a statement of feminism. I was bookish but worse I was bookishly arrogant and fixing things was not for me. My brother became more of a fixit, and that made my churlish arrogance worse – I was a bully and all should be mine, terrible childish attitude. Once I became older I fixed more but this grew out of patience and a focus on the need for something to be fixed. In Pirsig's criticism of those who cannot zen motorcycle maintenance he appears not to recognise that there is a physical ability – not just lazy intellectual rejection.

But when young that's all it was to me – I was lazy, the intellectual relative success at school came easy to me, and fixing a bicycle was hard – and it hurt. It hurt because I hated it. I hated it because things should work – and even if it was a puncture it should work. When it didn't work I had to fix it but I didn't want to – it was hard and it should work. So childish but true.

Technology should work, why should we need to fix it? That was my childish approach, and I have lost it now. Why? Because technology doesn't work. I buy a computer, and I'm lucky if there isn't a physical problem. I will talk about Thailand because I live there but I lived in the UK until I was 42 – I am now 64. I was a teacher, and on several occasions I have taught computing; I know them a bit. They don't work. Windows doesn't always work. I buy a laptop and have a notional lifespan of 3 years, after that I expect to have problems – and I expect to have problems when I buy it. Technology has problems.

I have a view on this; I cannot substantiate it so it is only a view. There is a built-in obsolescence, they are designed to fail. Computer history has an interesting slant. It is something like this – I am not sure of my accuracy so it is only an opinion. Computers were expensive, and they made a profit from them. As

computers took over the machine manufacturers were looking for profits and couldn't find any. In stepped the spoiled brats and Microsoft and Apple made all the profits from software, Honeywell and IBM kind of disappeared – at least diminished. There were no ongoing profits in machines.

There are no ongoing profits for cars and motor-bikes. If you build a car well it lasts how long .... 10 years? A good motor-bike that is well maintained – the same? But they have made these machines fashion items, and if they are fashion they change – profit. Computers are not fashion items so to make a profit from machines they had to be built badly, hence my 3-year laptop obsolescence notion. It could be they cut corners reducing the cost making the machines cheaper and then you buy again. They tried computer fashion, well they have computer fashion with games. How shameful. They change computer technology so the kids' games look better – but I am old hat games are not just kids. Game players need to update their systems so they can play the latest games – profit.

And then smartphones. There is some kind of rush when a new model i-phone becomes available – fashion – profit.

[chautone](#) Kids will say this is the old man in me. It's not just the old man, it's the zen. Nothing is permanent, everything changes – anicca. And the nearest thing that we have is the anicca that comes from zen, from insight. At 23 I hit bottom, nothing as serious as Phaedrus but at 23 something inside me reacted to all the academic conditioning. I say that but no it wasn't just that – it was a part. I was arrogant, and had a sufficient gift in maths that academic success at school was easy. University wasn't. I got there a year early and lushed out – shamefully. I scraped through until my finals when I tried, this was a peer ethos. I got in with the boys – well on the periphery because I was so shallow, and they all scraped through then slogged it for the exams. Such a waste of what could have been at university, what could have been a place of genuine learning. Girls studied, and boys played – drank, chased girls when they weren't studying. Stereotypes – sure, I wish I had been old enough to know what I wanted to study and studied – that came more when I went back to be a teacher.

So at university I learned to drink and pass exams – I even got onto a masters that gave me another year of playing. And then got a job. That was amusing in itself because I got a good job. There was a question at interview about the error term in a statistical model. I have no idea why my answer was good – we spoke about it when I worked for them; something in me must have latched onto it. Did I know? I think maybe I did because by that time I had studied. I had studied hard to pass my degree, by that time I was hoping for the best. Friends who knew said I had something, I was still not awake (not Buddha awake) so I can't remember. Until I was 23 I was not human, I had no zen, I was just a person who was just intellect – academic and drunk. So I think the guy at work was right about my answer but he did not understand that someone could give that answer and not be awake.

I remember him a bit, he had bought into it all. This firm was special as firms go. It was a consultancy that sold expertise, it could be considered a consultancy of applied academics. These guys applied their academic minds to a problem, and came up with a real-world solution – that made a profit. The fact that they made a profit meant this place was a bit special – academics making a profit; I am guessing such consultancy is now through universities. This guy bought it all. The pub did business and this guy appeared drunk but never was, people told me this when they were warning me about being drunk. I was just drunk – academic and drunk. There were two highlights that year – the first was the Art Lady and the second was some statistical model theory I developed. I can't remember what it was, I loved doing it, the guys were well impressed and .... it just happened. The firm let me go, no wage increase; didn't deserve any. I was just drunk and wasting time BUT I did like that place.

And the next firm turned me over. The good thing about the next place was that it was so bad for me it was good. It was tedious I screwed up got more drunk .... and eventually hit bottom. This time I was sacked – deservedly - over some stupidity. At that time in offices people were stupid but if they brought in the profits it was accepted, I was stupid and a screw-up so when I was stupid I was deservedly sacked. The stupidity was the tip of an iceberg of a childish academic being forced to work at something that was just for profit and that had no meaning for him. I consider the human in me to have been asleep, buried deep under the intellect fuelled by alcohol. But the human fought and out came the stupidity that got me the sack; it broke the pattern of what might have been called a life. I ran to the parents and wandered aimlessly for a few weeks over a Xmas with no idea what was going on.

The human was emerging on his path, the bulb of zen started.

[techtwo](#)All of this was happening in computer firms, technology. And technology is all about zen or zen aversion – not zen. Technology is getting more and more complex, it is so complex they talk of artificial intelligence - I hate that. I can't ever see intelligence in a machine – no matter how complex. Intelligence can't be learned, it can't be done by repetition or following instructions, isn't that the "art" of motorcycle maintenance? As an experiment I once designed art software in which a computer just filled in pixels of different colour randomly. It created a Mona Lisa, several works of Dali and even a Turner but it did not know, so it just went on churning out these different images - to a computer without any intelligence just images of equal status. OK I didn't design the software but why wouldn't that be true? When I use my smartphone I have no idea what is going on. I click the phone app, press a few numbers and I can speak to someone next door or far away. Sure it is based on the electricity of 0 and 1 combined with machines that can create computer chips that man's hands could never create but a smartphone is not intelligent – never can be.

But they want a smartphone or some other phone to be intelligent because it is all about dehumanising by intellect. Humans get in the way of their profits and yet without humans they have no profits. This is the dilemma they live with, conforming humans so that they spend, borrow, create credit crises so they can print more money, lurch into the next crisis, and increase their wealth as measured by 0's in a machine

and excess. So stupid but it's bought into. People look into the lives of rich and famous, and say wow. And this is zen aversion – not zen. It is a whole artificial world of zen aversion, and they have the cheek to call it AI.

And these guys who are “rich and famous” they are coked up, indulgent, chasing desire, all part of this zen aversion. It doesn't make sense.

[thaione](#) Out of the window above the laptop are rooftops in a foreground with Koh Chang behind. There are the tent rooves yet for some design reason there are pyramids. A friend said it reminded him of Mediterranean. They cover most of Koh Chang's outline but the hills or what goes for mountains are there. It's nice. There is a large building with a white wall above another roof. It's just a wall, and looking at it reminds me of walls. There's a wall in zazen and it reminds me of Pirsig's lesson of focussing to create rhetoric. I was language teaching, and my student was good but stuck. To me she was stuck because she limited the ways she used her language to describe. If you don't describe anything complex, how can you use complex language? I thought of Pirsig's focussing but instead I tried brainstorming techniques. In the end the student refused.

[techthree](#) They have taken the art out of technology now. It seems to me that part of Pirsig is consigned to history. I'd love to be wrong. They want to take humans out of the equation. You buy a car. They have maintenance. Japanese guys or whoever sit in offices and work out what needs to be done when. You have your maintenance book, you have the showrooms, you have mechanics who are trained as the office guys tell them to be, they have a schedule, 30,000 km change this, loop this, jump this, hop on this, squirt this - no art. On one level it works for me but I would love to have the art of the bush mechanics. Those were the guys. I first drove a car when I was 43, before that drink had led me to cycling. You couldn't cycle in Africa it was so big and wonderful. A girlfriend had found me and mugged me into buying an old banger – I had no money. She needed a car for her mo-kweri-kweri, the old man she couldn't make her mind up as to whether she could live off him. Mo is a prefix that means people in Setswana, the language of the Tswana people, and kweri-kweri means the tribe that moves on. White people are the tribe of people who live in Botswana and then move on. I love it, and resented it. I was mo-kweri-kweri in the school I taught, and I taught in that school for just over 6 years. By that time maybe only 10 staff hadn't moved on. I lived in Francistown for 6 years before I moved on, and Francistown probably hasn't changed much.

I have just saved this as “Pirsig Platform”, much more comfortable with that as a title.

These bush mechanics have probably disappeared – maybe not. Loved them. They were all over. They pulled things apart, found the part that didn't work, called you in because they had no capital to afford this part, and the old banger was fixed. At least for a while. This was not Pirsig's art but it was more like it than the antiseptic showrooms with their shallow facades. Here's a façade. My place has beauties – suais – who sell the cars, a common approach in Thailand. It doesn't matter what is being sold, a pretty thing, suai, sells it. And this one was pretty, she made me uncomfortable – that's part of the idea. Then they put

them in short skirts so she is all legs, if she sits down she is all legs. And she is not comfortable either, it is her job. So I am trying to avert my eyes, and she is conscious of her legs and short skirt. What we do with sex!!!

I much prefer the bush guy but I used to sit around his place for hours, mind you I sit in the showroom for hours.

[educone](#)It's zen aversion. They don't want you to think, to have gumption, to have the art. It's like they don't teach it. Oh how I hate this in teaching. They teach anything but what needs to be taught. Even zazen. I had an interesting chat with a religious student one time. I was staying at a Tibetan monastery/guest house and this guy was there. He was a student, and was probably there on some kind of student find-out – formal or otherwise. He told me they taught meditation but couldn't call it meditation – so they called it stilling. Meditation suggested Buddhist – too much of one religious dogma. The balance that is nothing. Education can't be seen to search for zen, insight, intuition, any such word.

Look at the way they kick the shit out of creative writing – English literature. It is some kind of analytical hell in which the writer's creative art is dissected, cut up, deduced, screwed up. I hated English because of a run-in with the teacher – had him for 4 years, all of my English time. After those 4 years I did the maths - the maths that was easy. I remember in the sixth form they even had a “keep-your-hand-in” English, and he set a task to write a story. No-one did it but I did for some reason, and wrote a short science fiction story, my first one ever. I remember the story-line now, a stereotype heroic captain, a beautiful sidekick, and a weird offshoot of some sorts. They were on another planet and they came across a cave and in this cave they found paintings that showed Chinese were aliens. Apologies for the racism in the storyline, it was 1967, the ethnicity of the time meant I had one black guy in my school, and my Manchester suburb at that time only had two Chinese take-away shops. I am proud not of the storyline but that it was my first science-fiction and this dickhead English teacher just mocked the story, as did everyone else – but the peer mocking was humour and I never took it as a put-down there was joy. I see the teacher's mocking as professional misconduct – he was so shallow he joined in with the kids, just one of those clashes that should never have happened. It wouldn't happen now, teachers are professionally not allowed to be such dicks. Sadly I would rather see such dicks in teaching than the antiseptic facades that teachers have been forced into.

But this guy kicked the shit out of creative writing as all English literature teachers were supposed to do. I bet English teachers say they teach creatively now, but I bet the exams haven't really changed. You see it isn't the teachers, the 1% don't want you to be creative. Creative is zen, education is training for zen aversion, for fitting in, teaching failure so you will accept any job, and success means earning big fat credit money and buying into the lifestyle of the “rich and famous” – the bank account with zeros.

It is clearing up, I should get to the beach before the Sunday crowds but I am a bit tired and I haven't meditated.

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[thaitwo](#) Well I went to the beach and had a good swim. Exercise is one reason I go to the beach but the other reason is that I can sit with the dogs. I am so lucky to have found a beach where people rarely go, so I can just go there and sit quietly for hours on end, and the dogs like to sit for a long time so long as I pay them with food. This is part of a malaise that has hold of me – a malaise that maybe Pirsig has broken me free of. I am mostly satisfied in retirement. Over the last 10 years I have retired to Thailand and been mostly happy, I am so lucky. Last July I had some horrendous times with landladies, and for a period of 6 months I was just moving house, either physically or mentally – I actually moved twice – I am not completely settled now. When you're retired where you live is a big thing, this 6 month period knocked the stuffing out of that attachment so maybe I won't have where I live as a big thing. It is a good thing not to have where you live as a big thing in your happiness. But where you live has to be sufficiently settled that you can meditate – a big thing.

[chautwo](#) So the malaise is that I am comfortable – and I am afraid of stagnating. For most of my working life I never had stagnation because teaching was such a screwed-up job. I am a teacher, I love teaching, working with kids helping them learn is wonderful, but what goes for teaching is usually none of that. I was going to say I was a career teacher but I am definitely not that. I was paid money for 30 years, I even ended up as head of department but I was never a career teacher. Career teachers buy into the establishment, they want a career, move up the ladder – maybe head of school. Me, I was a teacher, I taught kids. I would love to have taught them zen, if kids can learn zen. They can be creative but can they learn zen? Interesting question. But that's the last thing schools would let happen.

One reason I went to the beach was to read. I think Pirsig Platform is a good thing to do but if I am always going to be pulled back to the same old rant it's just indulgence. I want to explore. "ZAMM" was a discovery – a Chautauqua, I am not on that. If at 64 I am discovering what to do with my life I have wasted it. I haven't wasted it, I have fought for teaching; I have learnt about and fought for teaching – and lost. It's OK I have lost, how many people are able to live a life in which they can fight for something that means something to them? I have to clear away the undergrowth in this Platform because I have to go deep, deep inside my experience to find what Gaia wants my zen to do. The themes will probably be the same but I hope the Platform will go deep.

And what can stop that depth? That is the malaise – comfort. Because I am satisfied I waste time on stuff – tv whatever. I don't sit down to watch movies, and think what am I doing with myself. I could watch movies all day. The 1% need to keep the people controlled so they provide tv, most of it I can't watch but there is so much creativity being wasted in this bilge that it is watchable. It's all about "rich and famous", it has to be. I would love to see all kinds of stuff about zen, how can we find our zen, what zen can do for

us, how people have found their zen – like Pirsig’s “ZAMM”. Why can’t our tv shows be about all the heartaches that surround lives that try to find zen? That would be real creativity. But it would not be pulp, it would not be part of the neoliberal apathy, not about creating zen aversion. I’m OK with that in way, well I’m not really but I can enjoy the wonder of the creativity that goes into the pulp. Because I have some zen I can waste my time, and be comfortable – that is the malaise. And I don’t have that angst that drive, that I had when young, a drive that was forced to be wasted firstly finding who I was and then fighting for what was right when I did know.

So today I also went to the beach for some Pirsig fuel and found it – well not on the beach at the coffee shop I go to - I went to because the beach was Sundayed. I didn’t read much, it was about his travelling. About how he felt on the bike. To me this was being alone with Nature and what it gave him. I never knew he’d run out of gas in a storm and gave up before he learnt his motorcycle Art. That’s such a funny and wonderful part of his journey that had never registered the other times I’d been into Pirsig. Wow, hey that sounds like me. I could imagine having done that – but never did.

I have travelled. In Thailand I joined the love affair with bikes – not because of Pirsig. When I retired I didn’t want to drive a car, I thought I couldn’t afford the expense. And everyone was on 125’s. Kids drive bikes from an early age, it’s a teenage rite of passage. Every driver of a car has been on a bike so you never get “sorry I didn’t see you mate” as if that is acceptable anywhere. There’s still accidents of course but you’re not at the same ignorant risk as the UK on a bike. I rode a 125, then a low cc chopper – Phantom and then a 500. I enjoyed it. Thailand is a monsoon country so riding in the rain happened – in a storm happened – in inches of water happened. But it was all OK.

And then I fell over in the garden. I was pulling a large garden pot and fell back, put my arm out to brace my fall and broke my wrist. Broke my wrist. What kind of fragile twerp am I? I rested the arm a month and then went for physio – only to find that what I thought was a sprain was broken. The falling was so innocuous, it couldn’t have been broken. Two months got on the bike, and just watched in slow motion as the bike went forward, just to turn left and I came off. That was the end of me and bikes. Two years later and the wrist is still improving, but what kind of state would my fragile body be in if I had a bike crash.

So I am in a tin box, and if I tell you I call it a bakkie then some of you will know of the other travelling I did. I was in Botswana and we got in cars and went round game parks. That was great travelling. You get in the car, drive to the game park, put up tents, cook and sit. I loved that for 6 years. Even laughing at overlanders. These poor intrepids! What did they have to do? Lorries, two benches down the side, tarpaulin over a wire frame blocking the view, driving from one game park to another, putting up tents, cooking, taking down tents and driving. For two weeks – same every day. Overlanders.

I loved those game parks, my favourite was Matobo. I got there many times as I lived in Francistown, and I also went there with my other great African passion – the women. If it had worked out with the one I could still be there enjoying the other. No matter, Thailand is great. But I don't feel like travelling. I have lived here 10 years and never travelled.

And this morning I decided that has to end because it is a malaise. I am too comfortable. Travelling in Thailand is not game parks. You don't arrive somewhere and put up a tent, it's much more nesh. You roll up and find a place to stay – there's some camping but it's not the same – sadly. I might camp. No you roll up, find a place to stay and look for a restaurant. But Thailand has beauty, where I live is beautiful. There's not four days of straight road prairies – I've never done that, although the 400km Gabs trip had some of that. Some people saw Botswana like that, the ones who only lasted one contract. 100km of bush is bush, 200km of bush is bush, 400km of bush is bush. It's bush, that's OK. I liked it, can't say it was interesting but it wasn't myriads of flashing changes that stimulated western miseducated minds.

So I have to travel and that means the outskirts of Bangkok. Hey, if I've driven in Lagos ....

Travel broadens the mind, sure. For me my concern is the malaise. When I worked travel drove out the cobwebs of frustration, cleared my mind, recharged the batteries so I could go back and fight. What about the malaise?

[zenone!](#) want to talk a little about my use of the word zen, just a little here because I could go on too much about Buddhism. I like to think my use of the word is the same as it is in "ZAMM" but I have no right to say that – I don't know what Pirsig thinks. We don't as a rule look at our minds, if something pops up it is ours – a thought we have had, an idea we have had. I don't mean this in a unique way, that the idea is my property but I mean it that I as my mind have had the idea. In our minds all kinds of thoughts and ideas jumble about. We experience something, there is a thought idea as a consequence. We look out the window, we see a picture of what we have looked at, and maybe we have thoughts or ideas as a consequence of that picture. This is normal, normal mind, happens to everyone.

But mind is not just this, this is not the mind that anyone is averse to. What if all of those thoughts ideas and consequences of experience could just fall away, what would we be left with? Anything? It is that which is left that I am calling zen or zen mind, when Pirsig discusses quality I think he wants to find that zen of quality. Why should anyone be afraid or averse to this?

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[techfour](#)Pirsig was discussing a bike shop in which they screwed up his bike with incompetence and disinterest. Because he was interested in investigating quality he looked in a certain direction – a legitimate ploy, but he did not analyse the dominant factor – profit. Back in the 60s and 70s matters were less clear cut than they are now. I suggest that few young people would even consider quality as an issue. There has been a redesign (in the Japanese offices), bikes are now made of assembly kits, the company trains the mechanics, the company makes the profits from maintenance and then fixing bikes, and the quality craftsman has died – the artist is dead.

Competence and interest were the two factors that made up the quality care of the bike, Pirsig wanted to examine a situation where these factors could be, or even should be, found in a mechanic. He bemoaned the fact that 9-5 mechanics switched off with the clock. Driven by the profit motive the companies recognised the reality that a drive for profit is incompatible with quality, quality and interest takes time. Puzzling out that the 25 cent oil-delivery system pin had snapped had no profit, even 100% profit could not motivate such a pin. So there are chunks of kit that work, that can be replaced, that can be made by the company, and whose failure can be found by a computer and thus profit the company.

Investigating into this is worth considering beyond motorcycles, the companies needed to break the human connection. What would happen if we found a mechanic who was competent and interested, the owner would go back to him – there would be an allegiance with the trusted mechanic. Companies brand this as customer loyalty but rather than it being trust in the mechanic they want it to be trust in the product – the company's product. Companies do not want trust in people, then they don't have control – no profits. If there is a small mechanic in your area that you trust, he is taking business from the company, they must swallow up his business. Maybe this guy knows when not to buy genuine parts, that the pirate parts won't harm the functioning of the vehicle. But the more important factor for the companies is that they want to swallow up competence, not to make them more competent but to remove the competition because they want product loyalty rather than human allegiance. Competent and interested humans are anathema to companies.

There is another important word that comes with the profit motive, competence and disinterest comes from alienation. 9-5 mechanics, however well they followed the manuals, were probably alienated from their job. This word is so important when considering work. When a bike is fixed who gets the profit? On a factory belt who gets the profit? The owner makes the profit and gives some of it back to the worker as wages, if the owner wants to get more profit or if the business is not doing so well he wants to reduce the wages. There is some connection between profit and allegiance, a customer will come back to that mechanic if s/he is satisfied and so the owner's profits will be increased but will the owner say to the mechanic to spend time developing that allegiance? Or will they say you have spent too long on that job, time is money, and force the mechanic to skimp on the job to fix more motorcycles?

This is a dilemma owners don't like, it means they are forced to rely on their staff. Now in some small businesses there is much more of a symbiotic relationship between the owner and staff. The owner treats the staff well because they know that good staff promotes the business and therefore increases the

profits. The owner recognises the need for competence, and so works with the staff to keep them interested. But this is rare and is getting rarer. And it is not a corporation practise. And again competent small businesses are swallowed up to get rid of competition.

Because of corporate domination our society is moving away from the competence and interest of the individual to company slavery, how can you expect competence with slavery? There is a delusion that is created so that this reality is not confronted, we choose our work and they give that delusion the word “career” – we choose our careers. At school we have careers lessons and young people choose what they want to do. But the choice is this, which slavery do you want? And then these slave-owners complain about the quality of the work!!!

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[chauthree](#)My malaise continues. My house is comfortable, the beach is near, I don't have to waste all that time driving then worrying about accommodation. I am not a young man searching and escaping work, I am retired and comfortable .... and I am writing. Maybe I won't travel.

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[silaone](#)Pirsig is a recluse or at least those that are clamouring for him say he is – I don't know whether he is or not. Mountain men are recluses, I am not a mountain man but one group of social gatherers said I was a recluse. I live on my own, and mostly prefer my own company. But if I could talk with people about this stuff all the time, I wouldn't be on my own so much. Here is what happens when I mix with people. I want to believe and trust them. When they tell me they are my friends I want to believe them. Why? Because that is a better world. It is the world of sila. Sila is a Buddhist word that I have thought is best translated as moral integrity. Sila needs to be the basic building block of the world. Imagine how wonderful the world would be if everyone was trying to be sila.

I have not always had sila – even after I hit bottom. For a while I would even argue against morality because I hear so much moral justification for stuff that was just not moral – I trusted my gut. But my gut was not always right because my gut was not stronger than lust, only sila is stronger than lust. Now sila is stronger than lust but that's because thankfully my lust is so much weaker than it was.

Sila is the natural order of Gaia. That sounds so contrary to the way the world appears but it is still true, and simply shows how far humanity has strayed from Gaia – and we should be warned by that. When you live your life as if the world is sila the world is so much more pleasant. You help people and some help you. You treat people nicely and some treat you nicely. You give things and some people give back. This

is sila, the way humanity wants to treat each other but can't because of the world of work. How can you give things when the measure of success is how much profit you make? How you keep your job!

I retired to Thailand. I had visited often, and in holiday visits people here tolerated my insular nature. It is not a paradise by any means but I am happy with my decision. They have a negotiating system for buying, quite common in the East. If you buy at the stalls they ask for a high price, and it is normal to bring the price down – the initial price is arbitrarily high to allow negotiation room. Many western visitors don't know this, pay the higher prices because they are still far cheaper than the West, and then become indignant when they find out they have been overcharged. They don't feel indignant about being overcharged everywhere in the West, it is a fact of life they ignore because the corporations are so controlling and powerful.

Although there are some wonderful people in the West, people who manage to live there and keep their own sila interact, many others just accept the dominant ethos of dog-eat-dog and adapt to it. It is these westerners, stressed out, fast-living and ignorant that I ran away from when I left the UK – there's much more to leaving than that. Some of these dog-eat-doggers come to Thailand but because I live in sila-world I don't always see them coming. There are two such who would have claimed friendship. There is one who is lonely and insecure, and was a nasty drunk; I never spoke to him then. He stopped drinking and we became friends, and he helped me a bit with my motor-bike. He wanted a biker gang, and I had a bigger bike (bigger than 125). Because riding a bike was such a risk to a body of my age I sold my bike, and this dog-eat-dogger bought it. There were a number of things I had helped him with as I do in sila-world, but when it came to selling the bike he offered me a very low price. He said he had no money but he was my friend and would give the bike a good home. Spending time trying to get the best price was not part of my sila-world, and I accepted his price. The next week he came to my house offering money for my older bike, money the previous week he didn't have. If this is how he treated friends I didn't want to know him. This man was uncomfortable to be with because he won't spend money – he was embarrassing except that if he is poor you don't mind. When I discussed this story with a mutual friend he told me that this man had just bought his sister's share of a house in the UK so he owned a house in the UK, a house in Thailand and my big bike plus two others. I hope he enjoys this because he does not belong in sila-world, he belongs in the UK with the other dog-eat-doggers. This mutual friend later in discussion talked about how I had lost street-smarts, and it is true this would not have happened to me in the UK when I had lived there. I listened to him go on about different tricks he used to be street-smart in Thailand, and I began to feel slimy and uncomfortable. I had to listen to this because I had complained about the mutual friend, his response was street-smarts, and I just wanted to get away. In Thailand you don't speak the language, there is racism, and Farangs are taken advantage of by some; you tacitly join the expat enclave. But I have sila-world here in Thailand for a reason, and this is not dog-eat-dog UK; I will remember that in the choice of friends. If sila-world makes me a recluse then I am a recluse – I would so much rather have sila, live in sila than be tainted by dog-eat-dog.

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I am feeling less like travelling, this writing is going well.

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[chaufour](#) Young people are so important in society but it seems they are so easy bought off – no that's unfair. They are just not listening to old people like me. And I never listened as a child. But as a child I never did anything, I can't even remember it. As a teenager I remember a vague period of hanging around with some girls – only hanging around never any experience. And outside that brief time I was walking. I walked everywhere in my home suburb. Near me was the Mersey and I walked a long way up and down its banks. And I walked across the suburb as far as 4 miles away. I walked. My teenage years were repressed and I walked to get out of the house. I can even remember a visit when I was late 40s, and I used to walk on the Mersey to get out .... but then it was not the same.

My teenage years was the nearest I got to burying a Phaedrus. I was nasty, and I'm afraid my brother suffered. I also recall a nasty once-off bullying of a nerd at school, but I was a coward so never risked being hit. I was just an immature clown, that was how maturity protected me. Until I hit bottom. I remember a lurch from drunkenness into sanity when the drink allowed me to meet a nice girl when 18. She looked at me, and said I had no friends. So obviously wrong when you saw all the people I hung around with – all the people who knew my nickname. But she was wrong although right – I was not a person so how could I have friends? Around me the drunks had some persona, I was just drink, repression and drink. I resent that lost youth – the youth I never had, but the truth is when I started to be a person at 23 when I hit bottom I was young enough to learn about life - to have a late youth. And I had all the system passports that gave me freedom to make some choices – more choices than most within wage-slavery.

The way maturity, the path, protected me was so much a part of who I was until I hit bottom. I was so shy, shyness was always one of my excuses for drinking – although how I managed to rationalise the obnoxious drunk with who I was I don't know. But then there was no person so there was nothing to rationalise with. Even 6 months before bottom the path was still protecting me. A year after leaving uni we would meet up. I don't know what happened. There was this girl, I could never have dreamed she was interested in me – she was a world above me. She sought me out, and I ended on that day walking with her and her friends – I should say hobbling because I had just broken my leg playing football. That was all I remember of the first day, hobbling around after her enjoying my amazement. But of course I was drunk so had some Dutch courage. The next day we left and I was in a bar that I was known for. She came down and sat in the bar waiting for me to talk to her, and I just sat there – shy, closed off, unable to approach her. Another girl I knew there saw what was going on; I was static, my shyness wouldn't let me move. The dream girl was on her own, she waited a significant time drinking alone, must have been confused and angry, and left to find her many friends. On my way back to London I was in the car with someone who knew her well. I realised my stupidity and asked him to send her a letter. He refuse, he could not believe I was doing

anything other than dreaming. 6 months later I hit bottom, and began a proper life; with her I would have been a lapdog she was such a dream I would have followed her anywhere. Protected!

My Phaedrus did not enrage, question, rail against authority. The zen was curled up in a ball inside allowing a persona to mask its presence. What do we put our youth through? We don't see anything on our young that wants to be mature, what we want to do is find a way that they can settle into being wage-slaves. Of course we never recognise it as that because we never see in ourselves wage-slaves. We want to encourage or young – in the right way. It makes me so angry and sad what is done to young people – and I did it of course because I was a teacher. I had no choice. I was a teacher. I had the choice, mould to what they accepted as teaching, or do something else. And by the time the path had started to kick in teaching was what I had.

[eductwo](#)What awful stuff do we do to kids. They are forced into classrooms, made to sit with people who bully them, pressure them, it's no wonder zen runs away. How would such an emerging sensitivity be treated? You have to hide in shyness, or persona as an immature prat. You have to force that zen down because you are too young to cope with it. Zen is so right, so true, but there is nothing true about those cauldrons that are fitting nuts into the bolts of society.

I always blamed my parents especially my father whose emotional weakness bullied my own temporary aggression into emergence. But I don't know what I would now have asked of them. Whilst they were complicit they were just an unaware part of the system. My mother's generation never wanted to think about this sort of stuff, they had just been through the war. They were alive, and they wanted a life for their kids. What is this rubbish about repression? About path?

But it doesn't take anything away from what we did to our kids in those times of repression? And look at what the educated of my age and younger do to child-rearing? They know repression was wrong so they don't repress. But they don't bring up their kids either. For all the repressed kids that grew out of post-war attitudes there were manners and some sort of "knowing-your-place". Now kids are all over the pace. Their minds flit from here to there, a meditational hell. They can't sit down let alone meditate because every whim has been pandered to because they have never learned their place in the order of the universe. Their parents have been too scared to make them learn what-is-what because it might be seen as repression.

What do we do to our kids? It is the power of money over the path.

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[chaufive](#)Pirsig describes a Chautauqua, when I was young and on the path I often imagined myself on a Chautauqua trying to discover what life was about. When you are on a road of discovery that road is focussed on learning about the path. And when you learn about the path your focus has to be inward resolving all the confusions miseducation has brought. But when you are old and you don't have to live with the compromises that work makes you accept you can see what-is-what. In your sila-world you can look back with sufficient money to live your life and see what humanity has done. My parents brought me up in a way that meant I didn't have to suffer war. They kind of wore blinkers about war because they had suffered, they avoided war. But that didn't stop the British from being war-like people. Ever since the time of Cromwell the British have waged war to make profits. It started with Ireland as the first colony and it spread like wildfire until the Americans stepped in to take the spoils of the second world war. And from then on in the warring colonialists of the first and second world war have become agents for American foreign policy as NATO continued to wage war. It is not insignificant that the Founding Fathers of the current hegemony set sail from a miniscule English port brandishing their religion as a justification for profiteering – eventually through war against the indigenous peoples. This is written in English, and English is the language of these war-makers, all of you reading this in English have benefitted from the wars that the leaders who speak this language have waged. The privileges of education and lifestyle of those who read English can be traced to war.

Harsh but true. OK I described the UK as dog-eat-dog, and that's true. England's soldiers fought wars yet many of those people thought they were fighting with honour. When the Americans have left their homeland to fight they have thought they were fighting with honour. When the soldiers of Europe go and fight in the Middle East at the behest of NATO they think they are fighting with honour. Hollywood would say these are men of honour, and portray movies of honourable men. In a sense they were honourable men but what they do and have done is not honourable. These were men, and women more recently, who were duped into fighting wars for profits as honourable people. And I see no end to this suffering, suffering in the hearts and minds of those in the NATO hegemony and physical suffering in the wars these soldiers carry out in far-off lands. And that is before you look at the most heinous, suffering caused by drones fired from TV screens in Nevada bunkers.

Why will there be no end? Pirsig and other young people including myself make their journey and focus inwards on learning. Around them their leaders, old and late in life, are living out their egotisms in their offices of power. What compromises have they made to be in power? The rich need their receptionists, these politicals, to bear the brunt of criticism of war and other policies, and there are always those eager for power. And their egos continue to educate egos of the young who fight with honour, the honour of country. This is the country they were brought up in, this is the country of their family, this is the country where parents and grandparents had their houses, did their shopping, where they went to school. These are all "nice" things, these are not things done by people who start wars in far-off lands for the profits of the wealthy few. The production line of these young and honourable people will continue. Some might argue that if we make more people aware then this production line will stop, but what percentage of our young are these honourable soldiers? And this percentage becomes less and less as the weapons of war become more and more powerful .... and deadly. After all how can we make all young people believe all the lies that our leaders say, all the lies our families colluded with?

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[unityone](#) Are laws of nature human inventions? So important a question because the consequences are at the root of our problems. It draws in two distinctions, the distinction of humanity and that of ideas. Ideas are just thoughts but because we are trained to focus our minds only on intellect, and ideas are the fruit of intellect then the ideas become the fruit of the person. But an idea is just a thought, and these thoughts are only important because of the way we are trained to hold onto ideas. What about our miseducation – education for conformity stability and becoming cogs? So our minds get filled with ideas, ideas from books, ideas from teachers and even encourage creation of our own ideas (mostly a good thing). Then in exams we regurgitate ideas, and this ability to regurgitate, to imitate, is what singles us out for the appalling success/failure paradigm.

So we hold to ideas – attachment, and very often our whole lives are invested in holding to these ideas. How many peoples’ lifestyles are free? We inherit ideas from our parents, school and society, this is how we are taught to live. These ideas become our “destiny”, and this is the path of life we follow – because we hold to ideas that are imposed on us. What is a breakdown? When something inside us sees these ideas as a hollow shell and we question why we are holding onto these ideas – this shell? For many that breakdown occurs too late, because the ideas of that lifestyle has been compounded by the involvement of people. Those ideas include the idea that marriage is happy – is an aim (it might well be happy), those ideas now include a partner and probably children. That breakdown cannot be allowed by the lifestyle, and discipline forces the broken-down back into the mould – the idea set that forms our society. And remember our society exists for the whims of the rich and famous, so that conformity that the breakdown was trying to free itself from is ultimately only for the benefit of the few.

And what is causing that breakdown – the zen. Zen breaks through ideas because holding to ideas is just accepting living with restrictions. And when we break through ideas there is freedom, but this freedom is not your freedom but freedom for all. When one person expresses freedom that expression is the freedom of all. As people we see separation. We see our physical bodies, this is my body, this is your body, so we think all is separate. Then when we are young we are told to attach to our ideas, these are the ideas of that book, these are her ideas, these are your ideas. So ideas help continue that separation, separate bodies, separate ideas, what else is there? And that answer is zen, and that zen is not separate. That is our zen, it is nature’s zen, it is Gaia.

And Gaia has its own laws that we are all subject to. Humans don’t make those laws, Gaia does – idapaccayata. Gravity is a simple “physical” law of Gaia, Gaia makes the law of gravity – it comes with Gaia, it is not separate from Gaia. When Gaia is, the law of gravity is. When humans became part of Gaia gravity became a law that humans knew, it was a human idea.

But the earth has physical laws like gravity, whereas Gaia has other laws. Gaia prescribes a path for us, this is a law, follow your path or get in trouble. For some there is an emergence of zen that brings us to our paths, for some there are breakdowns but for others the miseducation keeps that zen submerged. How do we know it is like that? Look around. Is our world at peace? How is our environment? Are we happy? These are expressions of Gaia's laws.

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[techfive](#) Artificial intelligence is a term I hate, and discussing AI brings me back to the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. There was a divergence because the tech that is now used has been designed to exclude intelligence – zen aversion. And this is an AI strategy – design out humans. But they are not designing out humans because machines are intelligent, they are designing out humans because machines are cheaper. But they can't tell us it is for profit, the rich can't tell us that their greed for profit is a design for society that is marginalising human beings, so they tell us human beings are not as intelligent as machines. This is completely untrue but is a humungous con. Machines are not intelligent, they just follow programmers' instructions. Look at our own computers, how often do they screw up. Windows crashes all the time. The technology they are designing has got too complicated and nobody can fit it all together and get it to work properly. So windows crashes when one person's tech doesn't fit with another's. Then there are all kinds of excuses but in the end they don't care – it's all about profits and not about whether it is working properly. And we continue to pay, that is what they are marginalising us to do – just pay. And if the computers are building it all, how are all the marginalised humans going to be able to pay because they won't be earning?

So when they say artificial intelligence they mean artificial design, designing the way we live so that human labour can be replaced by machines. And here again I converge with Pirsig, where is the quality of life when life is designed for machines? Machines will be designed so humans will be marginalised. Who does this? Rich people with no intelligence. These rich people are afraid of intelligence because it is not something they can buy. Intelligence is something we are born with, feed with experience, and then develop as zen. Money has nothing to do with that so intelligence can never be anything rich people can inherit because they are wealthy, so they want to design out intelligence – zen aversion.

And this is the underlying premise of artificial intelligence. It is not one thing but two – design society so that it can be run by machines by marginalising the intelligence that is humanity.

Look at our education, where is the zen? Does miseducation teach or even encourage creativity? Individual teachers may but the system, the exams, are they creative? Does miseducation help us with insight? Does it help us with intuition, the ability to see clearly, see through? No, because none of these create profits. What would education create? The ability to see that those who are the dominant powers in society are designing out intelligence, making insight obsolete, turn creativity into products for profitability. Zen aversion, the machines are deleting quality.



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[chausix](#) I am reading about the classic/romantic split between the travelling Pirsig and John the drummer, and it reminded me of my time soon after I hit bottom. After being sacked I ran to my parents. It was near Xmas so it seemed like an extended Xmas visit – just under a month. I remember little of that time except walking round Manchester as the offices were closing for Xmas. I listened to the noise in the bars, and felt excluded. There was a double bind. I wanted to be a part of it but never again could I be a part; I kept walking and looking, and in the end I knew that I was never going to be a part again and was happy with that.

Despite the depth of upheaval that was happening inside, there were no bells and banjos moments – although they were soon to follow. The persona was still there, the hollow shell of a man, the suit, the intellect, the shallowness, but inside this zen emergence was trying to get hold. Whilst my parents' house had been a good place to get over the impacts of the drink it was still part of my repressed past – and of course I needed money. I had dreams of small offices, people working happily together as a family doing what they wanted – none of this career stuff, so with this appallingly naïve objective in mind I returned to London and walked into a temp agency. They took one look at me, my CV, and sent me to a career business computing.

In this recollection I cannot remember my parents once, yet I was there nearly a month. I am not now a selfish person and they were good enough to put me up yet in this turmoil I have no recollection of them. What must they have thought? Packed him off to uni, got a good job, parents' job done and dusted – well almost no wife, and .... the sack. What did they think of the turmoil? What did they see of it? In later life I saw how society changed some of their parenting strategies, a change that was governed by fashion, this zen did not emerge in them.

As for the return to London, how ill-conceived was that? Where was I to live? I recall a B&B in Hounslow, the job was in Hounslow. Did I just get off the bus and go straight into the temp agency? Will never know, but my zen started to emerge in a Chiswick bedsit that was the base for a Hounslow commute – a compromise between Hounslow and Central London maybe? I hated the job and remember nothing about it other than manuals and a cubicle. But this time I had one thing that I never previously had – discipline. I had decided to hold down the job – and this was the zen. In fact I had played the discipline card so well that when I resigned my supervisor was surprised.

But the job meant nothing, it gave me the money to tide over the beginning of my new life. And that life was based in the Chiswick bedsit where all kinds of wonderful things started to happen. What I remember were bells and banjos. I think I did yoga, I think I did some meditation, I think I did some writing, but what

I did get was bells and banjos. There was still walking - Chiswick High Road, Hammersmith, Chiswick money but my zen began to be free. I remember a covered area, a cooker and such a sense of cosiness that came from what I can only call life engulfing me when I returned from work to settle. At the end of my few months in Chiswick my compassion was in charge.

Compassion started with a weekend volunteering to take Down's kids on trips. A few weekends and I started working in a kids' home. I saw that as stop-gap and moved to teaching. I was a teacher, it was the right move, it's just that in 1%-world there is no teaching.

Somehow whilst at Chiswick I reconnected with the Art Lady, and there was an Arts Centre. I somehow managed to straddle the art and science world as a science fiction writer. But there was so much more to the classic/romantic in my life at that time. They said "I was black and white and no grey", I remember much later a friend calling me a right f---er, so maybe they didn't grey me enough. I remember a revelation when discussing that so many areas of maths were just isomorphic, but I haven't got a clue what that means now. But their Arts and my zen clashed with my training, and my mind was opened up to so much more. With the compassion I could never go back. Sadly I didn't move forward too well either because of the drink.

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[techsix](#) [educthree](#) We are being prepared for artificial design - or as they call it Artificial Intelligence, because they are taking the humanity out of the way we work. They make our jobs based around rules and targets, one way they have been doing this is "quality assurance". But it isn't assuring quality it is assuring that the quality that we are used to is the quality of rules and targets. 20 years ago I wrote an M Ed paper on quality, I thought I would discuss it here until I found it was too diverse and academic. It was dreary yet interesting at the same time; although I wrote it I could learn from it now as much I have forgotten. Equally I could expand on what is there and try to remove the dreariness. But the medium is dreary – academia, it is not about a Chautauqua of knowledge and learning as is ZAMM. Pirsig writes ZAMM, a book that is conceivably the most important book on aesthetics for ..., and he writes outside academia – and has initial trouble publishing. Doesn't that say something about academia? Would it have been popular if it had required references to justify "removing hang-ups"? Academia has a methodology, postulate and develop by reference (specified) to others in a way that destroys the readability and joy that is in the challenge of learning. Maybe I will go back to the M Ed although that is proving a little difficult as I was not interested enough to make the website properly at the time, and have lost the conclusion.

What made me think of the M Ed was the issue of Quality Assurance, and compared to 20 years ago teaching now is much more measured by exam success – and ever more so compared to 40 years ago when I started teaching. Quality Assurance required measures, and the measures are so obviously

quantifiable exam results. This is so narrow – it is narrow by design. A robot could be designed to deliver and grade exams especially multi-choice. But is there an assurance of quality?

What was interesting about this ISM ([ISM](#) is an Independent Study Module as part of my M Ed) was a diverse source of “processes to quality”. There are many that will be met in ZAMM such as removing hang-ups – how does a robot remove hang-ups? How can AI develop these processes to quality? How can they be programmed? They cannot despite what robot intellectuals with their funding might say. But if in our meeting with the world of work we only confront brick walls – “rules mate, sorry more than my job’s worth”, then we are already prepared for automaton responses. AI – social design in preparation for robots to do work that humans should be doing because of their intelligence. How can you have a caring job done by a machine? If those jobs are so tied up with rules and targets and enforced inhumanity, then it is easy to replace them with machines. Few will be aware of this, even those who are primary participants. It is a conspiracy. But don’t be fooled into thinking a conspiracy requires a great White Brotherhood of cigarette-smoking men, it is a conspiracy of social forces dominated by the profit motive for the 1%. And yet this whole conspiracy is fundamentally flawed because 1% profits requires the earnings of the 99%, take away those earnings and where are the profits?

Here is a definition that could place AI in context:-

“Intelligence is that which a computer can never have.”

Imagine if humans had the freedom to embrace that definition and come to learn what it means. Because we would respect intelligence, wouldn’t we?

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[chauseven](#)A key component of mature aging is evaluation, this is about evaluating. Evaluating is the order of nature, it ought to be a part of giving back but profit directs society to be youth-orientated. As older people we have experience that sees repetition of mistakes amongst others. I look at my own country from afar and keep thinking “why haven’t they learnt?” For me watching what is done has with it a lifetime of experience, and I see young people being enslaved with the same lies of fashion, Britishness and other illusions that ensnare them into toeing the line. I have recently got into the music of my youth again, and the lyrics of the 60s and 70s ring true now. What did we do with that awareness? Nothing, it is now worse. And yet a ray of sunshine, those songs could have come out of Occupy; what will they do? Yet the “revolution” that was the 60s had much wider participation than Occupy – it was fashionable, and yet we did nothing – things are now worse. But maybe it was because it was the forces behind fashion rather than a genuine awareness?

What happens to all the evaluation of the 60s and early 70s? Why can’t society learn from that wisdom?

Of course old age brings with it one factor that society does not want – freedom. The old do not have to scrape to the bosses because their income is independent. Of course the old do not have the energy, they do not have the exploration. I rave about Occupy, I want to encourage young people who see the truth after the years of wage-slavery in conforming classrooms – a conformity it was my job to engender. I have watched 30 years of changing labels worshipped by clones who cannot hear people decrying their indoctrination. I have watched young people enclaved in peer groups ignoring the words of older people because they see what is in store for them. As a teacher how can I expect young people to listen when they see my being cajoled by young thugs, and they see their parents committed to work routines. Why not have fun before becoming slaves? Especially if they can see no way out of their own slavery whereas the rich kids appear to have so much more freedom. Whether this plays into the hands of the taskmaster matters not, they are young – why not use what little freedom they have.

If people evaluated, perhaps this suffering would not continue.

Getting caught in the wage-slavery is much more a retrospective dilemma than what happened at the time – it does not make the need to recognise the servitude any less. Emerging zen brought with it compassion that showed itself first by working in assessment centres – for some reason a degree in maths qualified me for a position there; I am grateful that it did but why? Emerging zen needs to compromise with society. The computing job had discipline without compassion, at the assessment centres I developed discipline with compassion.

At that time I was flying, and my zen was the pilot. My relationship with the people from the Arts Centre developed, balanced by working with my compassion at the assessment centre. Then I met a friend from Belgium on holiday in the UK and he invited me to stay with him. Soon after arriving in Belgium we went to the Ardennes where I had an encounter with Castaneda. “Journey to Ixtlan” was blowing my mind at the time, and I was living with “death over my left shoulder” and other such spiritual aphorisms. With Castaneda spinning in my mind I was walking and got lost – intentionally. Trusting in my ability to find myself I walked until it was time to find my way back to the farm and I walked. I had no idea of time or distance or direction – I walked. Until I came to a road and lost faith in what I was doing and followed the road back to the farm – I later discovered I was almost at the farm and following the road extended my journey. In one day I developed a deep trust in myself, and a distrust of what the system offers. Walking has always been a part of my life – not now in hot climates, but it can be dangerous. Nearly 30 years later I was in China at a skiing village. I went for a short walk up a nearby hill, not far just a space between me and the village. Fog came down, I lost sight of the village. I retraced my steps and got completely lost. I got hot, and tied my walking jacket round my waist. Scrambling through the scrub the forest took my jacket. I was completely lost in a cold mountainous area without clothing – and panicking. I walked and met a road, logic told me to go one way. I did for a short way going downhill, I turned went uphill and arrived back at the hotel. I was on my own and no-one ever knew. No spiritual messages here, walking can be dangerous.

Once my friend was out of the holiday context and he was back in his work environment we found there was little in common, probably more to do with my deep commitment to the path being all that mattered that made me tetchy. So rather than Belgium and friendliness I ended up in a cottage miles from anywhere – so lucky but the path has those breaks. What began was a deep period of consolidation. I picked up books from the British Council library, and just wrote about what I read. Not good books like Pirsig just books. It was a summer of consolidation – zen consolidation. It was the writer in me. I am not a writer but I write a lot – I write to learn. Writing in me is important but it is not a passion that eats me up – although at that time I was thinking it might be. It was an important summer but I returned to a new assessment centre. The Arts Centre had closed and it was effectively the end of my flirtation with the Arts. But I am forever grateful for what those people brought to my life – my zen.

At the second assessment centre compassion consolidated and I stayed a year. But I was still uncertain and I decided to travel the world – an ill-fated trip. I reached what was at the time a nice fishing village on the French coast of Normandy where I duly lost all my money. Fortunately the youth hostel owner let me stay a while and then lent me boat fare back to England; the sila in me apologises because I don't think I paid him back. Why didn't I work – travel the world? Instead I made up my mind to be a teacher, and went back to do a PGCE.

Unfortunately in the second centre I got back into a drinking routine – this drinking is what slowed my forward movement.

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[chaueight](#)This next is tedious but is included for context and completeness. Zen emerged and the compassion took me into teaching. Compassion and what goes for teaching in state schools are fundamentally conflicted. My compassion took me out of teaching after my first school – 8 years, I resigned to work on a youth centre magazine which is worth discussing separately. At this point I made a mistake in my life yet it was not a mistake, it was life it cannot be a mistake. I fell in love, moved out of London and went back into teaching to look after her and her kids. Whilst still in love we split, whilst I loved her I was also being used. The period in which I was in love and the time I took to re-emerge lasted just over 6 years, and I decided to teach abroad.

Working in Botswana for 6 years my compassion for teaching came back, and I only knew this because they had a tradition of the teachers giving a speech when they left the school. When I gave my speech I found myself saying that working there had brought my joy for teaching back; that speech will be remembered more for when I finished one of the students whispered a haunting “we'll miss you”.

I left Botswana because I needed work that would provide a pension, and began teaching in private schools. These places were appalling. They are private because they are making money out of getting

exam passes – not a compassionate education aim. Over a period of 7 years I moved from Oman to Bahrain to China, back to the UK for a year for personal reasons, and then to Nigeria. There are stories there, maybe they will be of interest – or rather included, but at 54 I retired early because compassion and zen were not compatible with working in schools.

I moved to Thailand to study Buddhism on my own.

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[intellect1](#) Intellectuals are people I have battled with all my life. When I hit bottom and zen began to emerge, what came with it was a confidence. The mind of intellect, academic mind, had been completely conscious of peer acceptance – despite the fact that I never was accepted. This was an acceptance based on fear – a fear of being alone. Once zen emerged I found aloneness to be a state to aspire to. Alone in my Chiswick loft bedsit I developed, alone in the Belgian village I developed, alone on the road (for a short time), from being afraid and lonely when I first went to London now being alone was a virtue. Now the zen mind said “I know”, and other Zen minds recognised this.

Intellects however had no such confidence. Knowledge they used was based on proof only, proof and concurrence. If intellectuals agree it must be right. This was the lonely place of academia I had come from. One word that describes this confidence is insight, that “I know” was insight. Insight is an anathema to intellect but there developed a problem in later life, how do Buddhist intellectuals rationalise insight? Buddhist intellectuals accept some version of the suttas (sutras), and whichever version they accept contains the word “insight”. For me this became clear with maths. You would think that maths was purely rational, but in maths there is a clear role for insight. Consider problem-solving. When you look at a solution you see clearly argued logical steps – no insight? When you look at students’ books you see clearly argued steps. But as every maths teacher knows, those students are unable to start. The traditional teaching method of “here’s one example, do 10” recognises the dilemma, students can copy but what they cannot do is start. This start requires that they study the problem, and then come up with the start for themselves – this problem-start is an insight and students cannot find it in general. Finding this starting insight is what makes a mathematician, not the logic that develops the problem – any computer can do that. The home of the intellect requires insight, the language of science requires insight.

For me insight became a badge of honour, I probably clung to it too much and caused conflict. It is the art of the Arts Centre people, their creativity flowed from their insight, my writing flowed from my insight, and my insight flowed from or is my zen.

I see much intellect in Phaedrus, and if that is what he clung to so defiantly then insanity had to follow. Like a little boy I clung to academia, it gave me a modicum of success. My meaning became that of academia so when I left into the world of work where it was almost ridiculed I was left with clinging to

meaninglessness. Whilst in academia there was no threat, in the real world my feebleness that was so dominated by intellect became vulnerable, and with that vulnerability zen could emerge.

The fascinating question that only the Buddha can answer, why does zen not emerge in many more people as this type of personal history is so common?

[chau9](#)When Pirsig awoke in the sanatorium he could not remember Phaedrus, they told him he had to get used to a new personality. I remember little of my childhood. With shame I remember the violence that came through the repression. I remember stupidity, immaturity and drinking. There was a clarity of a blinkered mind that had become focussed to learning for the degree finals. And of course the walking. So with the new personality, what happened to the old?

I have spoken of being protected about lifetime decisions. I see it like that because once I hit bottom when the zen emerged there were no impediments to its coming to fruition, any decisions about my life were made post-bottom – after the beginning of zen. That is not to say that all the decisions were good – far from it. I had a weakness for drink, and that came back with a vengeance. It took a while but the joy that comes with zen does not happen continuously, you need discipline in your daily life; whilst zen gave me some of that what I had was nowhere near enough. I did not have sila. I had confidence in the emerging zen which at times I thought of as soul. And I thought having a soul was enough; it wasn't, the soul needs sila.

And there was of course the big desire, lust. Zen and my lust never seemed to get it together. Before bottom shyness protected me from any permanent damage, once zen emerged I was not afraid to be myself. Whilst this excluded me from the majority of women for whom zen pursuits would be derided, this still left many women. Now with confidence I would be who I was, and could then meet women. Not a Casanova because lust for lust's sake was never one of my mistakes, but I don't know how any man can ever live his life without dealing with lust. I so wish women understood that problem. I am not a woman so I don't know how true this is but I feel that no amount of equality gives women the same level of physical lust that a man feels – except in pornography (male fantasies). It is only a woman who can describe her desires, and she can never know whether they are as driven as they are in men. In traditional homes mothers cajole their daughters in these matters primarily because of the risk of early pregnancy, some such societies require virginity. For most societies men are given no such control, in my view sila needs hammering home from father to son yet even with strong moral integrity lust still rears its ugly head. Male lust is so controlling it is a disaster waiting to happen although all men experience it differently – as do women.

As I said I never had any such sila before I hit bottom but shyness protected me. With zen came some sila control but when drunk I just lurched. I eventually recognised my alcoholism but prior to that my

confidence meant that I had the stupidity to stagger up to women drunk, and think that such was attractive. But by this time I was a teacher and my relationships were with teachers – mostly.

So was there a new personality, what was that personality I think is the real question? And that question is so hard to answer. Even to ask what is my personality now is difficult to answer. I think of myself in terms of zen, in terms of what I do and have done, in terms of sila now and before, but what is personality? The word comes from persona which means mask. In my childhood there was the mask of repression showing itself in childishness and stupidity. After zen emerged I had no mask, it was just the striving zen; I have a recollection of an outsider personality – prickly and aggressive. I tell a current friend how much I have mellowed and she doesn't believe me, of course being compassionate in the world of work has its own aggressive dynamic. Over time the world of work and becoming used to the zen produced change in that mask. In me there is always the nature of zen to express itself but in daily life when is such expression appropriate and trying to be zen leaves you vulnerable. In the dog-eat-dog world I had a mask – it grew around the zen. Now I am retired, I am not in the world of work, I want to get more in touch with the zen and I become isolated. No wonder the Buddha called for the Sangha.

The more I think of it I intentionally have multiple personalities, masks for different people and situations. I want to push out the zen but what is the point if the language of zen has no meaning. I want to be compassionate but what is the point if there are only dogs to eat it? You go as far as you can. Multiple personalities – many personas. Or live alone – on your own.

The drink and intellect have much more to say.

[zen2](#)Nor is the book about Zen Buddhism, it is ZAMM not ZBAMM. I have absolutely no knowledge or authority to discuss this, it is not from Pirsig. But I think the word Buddhism is very cogent here. I want to say Buddhism has been completely messed up by all the intellectuals but that would be so arrogant – this is the best compromise way of saying it. How many intelligent and wonderful people work hard at Buddhism, but then look at the confusion. It seems to me if you ask a Christian what Christianity is you will get similar answers yet Christians have fought wars about their faith. Before 9/11 if you had asked Muslims about their faith it would seem that there would be more consensus. The response to 9/11 has created such division and violence that consensus, if it was ever there, has gone. But it seems Buddhism is so divided.

And the cause of that division is intellect, whenever you see deep divisions you can see the work of intellect – the work of that knife. Without intellect there would be unity – well so much more unity. You have three branches – Vajrayana, Mahayana (that includes Zen Buddhism) and Theravada. If you ask what Buddhism means to each of these it seems to me the answer would be different. I have one friend who said to me he didn't see Buddhism as a nature religion and yet



there is(was) a leading Thai Buddhist who describes the Buddhist God as nature – idapaccayatta. You have Tibetans dancing around in costumes banging gongs and drums whilst Thais have proliferating events in their wats it is more like a community centre.

Intellect is the key to understanding all of this, as I said where there is division there is intellect. What I have been calling zen cannot be experienced by the intellect. I am loathe to do this but I am going to quote. Buddhadasa says “Now intuitive insight, or what we call ‘seeing Dhamma’, is not by any means the same thing as rational thinking. One will never come to see Dhamma by means of rational thinking. Intuitive insight can be gained only by means of a true inner realization” [Handbook for Mankind], and Dogen says “Consequently, those who sit in meditation will, beyond doubt, drop off body and mind, and cut themselves free from their previous confused and defiling thoughts and opinions in order to personally realize what the innate Dharma of the Buddha is”[Shobogenzo p35]. I am sure there are many more examples throughout the suttas/sutras, they can’t even agree on the word –one has to use Pali, one Sanskrit. History has made the credulity of what the Buddha said difficult. There are no verbatim recordings or transcriptions. Some claim various are exact because of aural transmission yet I believe it is at least 50 years after the death of Gautama that these transmission were first written down. Theravada holds these first as sacrosanct - as the word of the Buddha - Tipitaka. Mahayana uses different suttras (my word) that one monk describes as important but some kind of collatedness. Then there all the commentaries and commentators. Books about suttras, books about the books. Now blogs about them all. Message boards, online groups, armchair discussions, moments of zen. Just endless, endless, endless proliferations – sankhara. Arguments abound concerning what is and what isn’t, and these endless proliferations create the divisions.

Where do these divisions come from? Throughout Buddhism (ism is a clue) people are holding to ideas. This is the idea set I hold to, it is different to yours, yours is wrong. In Buddhism there could be unity, Buddhadasa said all Buddhisms were “removing the I and mine from the 5 khandas”. Whatever this means to you, finding zen by letting the mind and body fall away, there is unity in it because it is working towards one thing that is the same throughout Buddhism – whatever words and ideas get in the way.

So the book is ZAMM not ZBAMM, maybe?

[Diatribel](#) There are no mean guys, it’s just the system. As you could imagine someone who uses the term wage-slavery freely would hit the roof at this. And I did, after reading it I couldn’t get it out of my mind.

Maybe I should try to mitigate. This was published in 1976, so written in the 70s experienced in the 60s and 50s? There were corporations then but the illusion that power lay with governments was almost universal. I wasn't politically active in the 70s so my perceptions although anti-system were emotional and rejecting government impositions. Marxism had been around for a century and the early twentieth century was its heyday with the Soviet revolution, fighting in Spain, and later Castro and Guevara liberating Cuba. There were many groups around in the 60s, 70s and 80s for whom proletariat and bourgeoisie were common parlance. But the accumulation of power and wealth by the corporations had not reached the horrendous peak it now reaches.

I would have to assume that Pirsig was not a fan of Howard Zinn however because his history of the US could perhaps be called a History of Mean Guys. Gore Vidal, the archetypal 1% whistleblower, pointed out in many of his books the power and wealth of the US family aristocracies. And if you want to do a more complete historical review, the Plymouth Brethren might have described themselves in religious terms but they were part of a feudal system that stretched back to 1066 in the UK – and some could argue further.

So was Pirsig saying that because the system had existed for so long those who benefitted and those who were exploited had no choice in the matter, and so those who benefitted are not mean guys. Back in the 70s there was some merit to this. Much of business was small business, family-run, or perhaps slightly larger. These businesses were often integrated into communities, and the relationship between owners and workers was more harmonious – or if not still closer. Whilst the banks, insurance and large corporations still existed then, their accumulation had not reached the numbers they now have; nor had their power. However since the 70s there has been a steady takeover of these smaller businesses so that now they are a rarity. With such smaller businesses a view of the system as having no mean guys was more acceptable.

Such an apologist position could also be argued today. We now definitely live in a corporatocracy, and it is evident for anyone who looks to see the power of these behemoths – typically Citizen's United where corporations are persons? Ordinary people work in these corporations, do we say those people are mean guys or are they just looking after their families? Should such people be tarnished by the practices of the corporation? I know what I would do – did do, but are they mean guys? It is unlikely that these people make mean decisions on a daily basis – or if they do those decisions would only be seen as a bit mean “it's only business after all”.

Is it worth describing the CEO's as mean? They are in charge of huge corporations whose ethos is to make a profit at all costs, and this in reality means make a profit at the expense of Gaia – earth and humanity. But do they suddenly become CEO's? Or is it a progression that happens all their life moving up the ladder from whatever rung they start on? Is this just the same system with their hue – a hue that appears as if they have more control?

Are there mean guys or is it just the system?

My answer is unequivocal then and even more so now. With wealth comes responsibility. It matters not whether that wealth is inherited or earned it is still wealth that brings with it responsibility. This wealth is Gaia. Without here getting into the intricacies of what money means, how our world is now run on a fiat economy, there is definitely a causal link between money and Gaia. When the rich do not accept their responsibility to Gaia they are being “mean guys” even if they are not choosing to be.

Do they just give away their money? Would it were so simple? With money accumulates power, accepting responsibility means accepting power and doing something with it for Gaia. No easy matter.

But there are few with power who accept their responsibility, the mean guys think they are happy.

Yet that I seriously question, I don't see the mean guys as happy. I see them as wealthy, accepting a system that brands the wealthy as special, and accepting all these different impositions the system places on them. Their lives are controlled by living up to the lifestyle their wealth requires of them, they are not free. Their image is a requirement of them and their lifestyle. They have to show their wealth, their ostentation becomes a prison, a prison that most envy but still a prison. They have replaced happiness with wealth accumulation, and their system requires of them to promote that ostentation as a meaningful and happy life. When one has little money one is envious but is there much to be envious of?

What is it these mean guys can never have? Freedom. And how do they get this freedom? Zen, zen brings happiness.

[Intellect2](#) I had finished a section of the platform, and went to meditate but this was on my list to respond to and my intellectual mind couldn't let it go. Genuinely, what a scourge.

I remember when I first read ZAMM it was all about reason. My mind jumped from one reason anecdote to the next eating them up whilst ignoring the countryside the relationship with Chris and so much more. This was the Phaedrus in me – prickly and intense. I was still mixing with the Arts Centre, and I was their barometer – black and white with no grey barometer. This was a nice

role to have – balancing on a classic-romantic tightrope with the intellectual history of a maths and stats education and a writing muse busting out from inside.

I had to write this, and it is probably a common place response from statisticians. He was discussing the outcomes of an experiment whether it was favourable, it had failed or there was no outcome. DoE, Design of Experiments jumped out at me 43 years after completing the course – OK I have taught stats A level but .... I had to write this, my intellect said so; it is a bone as I am going to quieten the intellect in meditation when I have finished this. So there are three choices – favourable, failure or no outcome. All three can be acceptable from the design point of view so long as the design sees the three possibilities as having meaning. But usually they don't. The purpose of a hypothesis is to gain information about the statement of the problem. The number of hypotheses about a problem is vast and variable. You choose the hypothesis in such a way that the experiment carried out will provide a definite conclusion - usually favourable or failure. Acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis then follows, providing information about the stated problem. What Pirsig did not say is that if there is no outcome, no accepting or rejecting the hypothesis, then the hypothesis has been chosen badly, this is what my intellectual mind was pushing me to say.

It's nothing, isn't it?

Of course if conclusions can be drawn from the no outcome result – other than that the hypothesis was inappropriate, the statistician would then argue that the design was good. But then there are lies, damn lies and statistics??

Can you see how hooked I would have been with Pirsig's ghost of rationality?

[Progress1](#) Yesterday a friend raised the issue of progress, and I reached this quote [Q1] when reading today. My friend who I consider too intellectual said something similar to Pirsig, and the clue is in Pirsig's last sentence "the sole agent for this progress is reason itself". I have accepted progress as a theme (hence Progress 1) because to do the question justice will take a while.

And the first that must be established is the benchmark, how do we judge progress? Although Pirsig does not say this in his last sentence I contend that he primarily is assessing progress using the benchmark of reason or intellect – a classical benchmark. To be crass, to measure progress we examine technological advance; simplistically this could be an intellectual benchmark. However I am not contending that such is the limit of Pirsig's benchmark. Within the [quoted paragraph](#) he also presents a romantic benchmark of death and destruction which he contends does not hold up.

Within Buddhism there is an approach that says a human is made up of the 5 khandas – rupa – body, vedana – feelings, sanna – perceptions, sankhara – thoughts and vinnana – consciousness. What Pirsig is discussing as romantic-classic split is vedana/sankhara. Why have I bothered with this Buddhist terminology? According to Ajaan Buddhadasa there is a theme common in all Buddhisms – “the removal of attachment to the 5 khandas”. In his discussion of progress Pirsig is suggesting measuring progress by reason (sankhara) – countering measuring progress by feelings (sanna). Yet both ways are measuring progress by an attachment whereas I suggest one needs to be detached to measure progress. A romantic must see the death and destruction as primary for a romantic would judge by compassion, whereas a classic assessment would see the importance of technology, the ability of that technology to counter climate issues and so on. Can these approaches – classic and romantic – ever be detached to evaluate progress?

Detachment is a term that is often applied to the state of mind that comes from meditation, this meditation could be producing mindfulness, and one definition of mindfulness I heard was that it was judgement-free awareness. If there were judgement-free awareness of progress, would that not be appropriate?

And in this platform I have used the word Zen to describe the state of mind that detaches from mind and body in meditation. So I am contending that the appropriate benchmark to evaluate progress is Zen mind.

In Buddhism life is often described as having three characteristics – anatta (no self), anicca (permanence) and dukkha (suffering). Perhaps the zen mind could be considered anatta leaving it to judge life’s progress in terms of permanence and suffering. This brings an obvious question:-

*Do we judge progress by the level of suffering in society?*

What is anicca – this permanence? That which doesn’t change. Within consideration of progress there is an element that doesn’t change, for example timeless truth. A Buddhist would automatically describe the dhamma as this timeless truth, and whilst I agree such a statement is not appropriate here because it is dogma. The zen mind needs to consider how this timelessness helps us evaluate progress as well as measuring progress in terms of suffering. In this [quote](#) Pirsig did consider suffering, is zen mind happy with his measuring? But was there any timelessness in his assessment? I suggest not because the measure was intellect.

How important is to see progress through the zen mind and these three characteristics? Progress is confusing, and needs to be examined further.

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Pirsig broke up his philosophical themes by descriptions of the bike journey and the Montana countryside as well as descriptions of his relationship with his son. I have no bike journey, maybe have recollections in my life to break up the philosophy but on progress I have written 5 sections consecutively. Amusing. Shall I describe my regular trips to the beach? Today the waves rolled over, they are getting bigger as the heat of the dry season changes to the rainy season. It's not Montana and bikes. Neither is life in Thailand sufficiently different to merit that type of anecdotal splicing.

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[Progress2](#) There is an interesting mechanism that Buddhadasa uses to understand the Dhamma – that of absolute and relative. Understanding anatta is very difficult. Anatta is no-self but I have a body so there is some sort of relative self. I look at my neighbour there is another self. These are undeniable truths but how important are they? Are they absolutely important or are they just truths that apply to daily life – relative truth? One cannot deny that at a particular moment the 5 khandas are experienced there is a body that lives, a mind that feels perceives and thinks and our minds can choose to be conscious of those feelings perceptions and thoughts. But there is the absolute truth that detachment from the 5 khandas – detachment from I and mine, that helps develop a zen mind and helps us awaken.

In a similar vein we can examine progress in terms of absolute and relative. Consider the three characteristics that I was using to determine progress – anatta (no self), anicca (permanence) and dukkha (suffering). Anatta makes absolute progress as individuals through the development of zen mind, anicca was a consideration of timeless truth and dukkha was a measure of suffering. How does progress fit in with this? How does the progress that we measure in society fit in with this?

This brings me to a fascinating absolute question, can there be absolute progress? And with that starts to question the Bodhisattva vow? The absolute question revolves around the notion as to whether all people can attain awakening or whatever enlightenment is supposed to be – I don't look at the word "enlightened" as I feel it is a word that can only be described by those who experience it. Absolute achievement would be that all people attain enlightenment but is that possible? Is that ever meant to be? Absolute progress would have to be some form of assessment as to whether society is moving towards this absolute enlightenment.

Are there any indications historically that more and more people have the potential for enlightenment? Are more people meant to be enlightened? Are we all ever meant to be enlightened? If ever there is an unanswerable question this is it. This contains within itself the necessity of being in God's mind, the kamma of Idapaccayata etc.

My own feelings are that this is not meant to be, and dukkha is my reason. The Buddha spoke of the 4 Noble Truths, it was something that some consider is unique to him. In it he talks of dukkha as existing, and how individually we can overcome that suffering. He does not speak of "whilst there is suffering", but that there is suffering. This implies to me that suffering is always – a characteristic of existence, there is always going to be suffering, and whilst individuals can awaken and maybe get to "enlightenment" (whatever that is), but for all to do that is not consistent with there being suffering. So is there ever meant to be enlightenment for all? Is there ever meant to be absolute progress on the way to total enlightenment? With suffering existing it appears it is not meant to be?

If suffering is meant to be, can we ever make progress on suffering?

So in terms of absolute progress we cannot know whether there is meant to be enlightenment for all because there is suffering. And we cannot know whether suffering for all is meant to decrease. If we look at Pirsig's brief assessment in that [quote](#) on dukkha then and now, he describes a change in suffering. His progress assesses that the suffering in daily life experienced by hunter-gatherers is worse than the suffering of those in the world of wars for profits. Today I question whether any Syrian would agree, that is my feeling – assessment, that suffering is worse now. But I have no suffering-meter to measure, it is a personal judgement – as is Pirsig's.

If we cannot measure suffering and we cannot know whether there is meant to be absolute progress towards total enlightenment, then can we measure absolute progress? We cannot measure progress in what matters.

But we can consider relative progress, progress in daily life. It is sad to think there cannot be all being free from suffering, take a moment that is deeply saddening.

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[Intellect3](#) Pirsig has just introduced the Church of Reason, and the beginnings of why he became so fanatical; discussions on the Church or Reason was perhaps the major attraction to me after I

hit bottom and was with the arts crowd. I have read ZAMM a few times since even analysing previously but had not got the sense of Pirsig's age when Phaedrus went mad. Checking he was born in 1928 and ZAMM was first published in 1974 (46), how long did he take to write it?

My earlier perception of Phaedrus was of a younger man, but Phaedrus had spent 10 years in India as well as other stuff. It has come as a surprise to me that the fanaticism, and eventual breakdown, presumably occurred in his late 30s or early 40s.

It was good to read today that he saw that the fanaticism was caused by a blind faith in reason – one reason for the term “Church of Reason”. One simplistic way of looking at this fanaticism is putting reason in its place – something that has not been evident in ZAMM so far, it wouldn't be - his Chautauqua is a recount. This is a lesson I would love to see Buddhists learn. Well everyone really, but as I consider that deep within Buddhism is a clear imperative to put reason in its place I want to discuss that first.

Dogma is not Buddhism. My quoting Buddhadasa and saying “removing attachment to the 5 khandas” is just that – a quote, if I understand what Buddhadasa is saying then that is Buddhism. Sadly it is my view that there is little of the understanding of the dogma. However the Sangha lifestyle is so good, the meditation and the daily routines, the sustainable existence and so on, many monks are convinced they have understanding. In truth I am not in their heads so any judgement is not real, but there is a practice that could be without understanding – but most important there is practice.

In my view there are many who using reasoned acceptance of the dogma consider themselves Buddhists. I perceive this as making Buddhism a faith for them, a traditional religion akin to beliefs in bearded wonders somewhere out there. There has to be a dominant indefinable core that excludes reason (whilst being innately and deeply reasonable), in the “Platform” I am calling this zen although previously I have used insight.

One reason I have used the word zen is that I have just become more hooked into zen but the other is that I discussed with one intellectual insight and he had found a way of appropriating it as reason. I have a problem when I discuss reason with these intellectuals, my own penchant for reason makes me fall prey to them. It took a powerful awakening to shake the traps that I was falling into during the discussion with him.

This discussion is of two paths, the insight path and the analytical path. It began with a quote from HHDL:-



““If you are serious about Dharma practice, it is important to cultivate a good understanding of the teachings. First of all, it is important to read the texts. The more texts you read – the more you expand the scope of your learning and reading – the greater the resource you will find for your own understanding and practice. When, as a result of deep study and contemplation on what you have learned as related to your personal understanding, you reach a point on each topic when you have developed a deep conviction that this is how it is, that’s an indication you have attained what is called understanding, derived through contemplation or reflection. Before that, all your understanding will have been intellectual understanding, but at that point it shifts. Then you have to cultivate familiarity, make it into part of your daily habit. The more you cultivate familiarity, the more it will become experiential.”

Dalai Lama, The Middle Way: Faith Grounded in Reason”.

I broke this down into 6 stages:-

“1) Deep study 2) Contemplation or reflection 3) Deep conviction that this how it is – these 3 are intellectual

4) Shifting 5) Cultivating familiarity 6) Experiential understanding”

and felt that the shift was most significant. When I said this, the intellectual ignored it – had to, but he admitted lacking realisation. Very reasonable, after all saying we realise all is very arrogant – I am not saying that. When I spoke of insight the intellectual described it as unconscious reason, I had not heard that before - impressed. This intellectual was better than most. He never lost his temper when inconsistencies in his approach were exposed – he glossed over them. In fact he was too good; his knowledge of Buddhist scriptures and all the different varieties of Buddhist far outweighed mine. We had a concurrent position, he liked Buddhadasa. I gave him this quote:-

““Now intuitive insight, or what we call ‘seeing Dhamma’, is not by any means the same thing as rational thinking. One will never come to see Dhamma by means of rational thinking. Intuitive insight can be gained only by means of a true inner realization” [from Handbook of Mankind quoted [here](#)]”

and he said he had to disagree; that was all. For me this quote is fundamental putting reason in its place but the intellectual was not phased. At the end of my discussions on the two paths I had a turbulent night in which an awakening clarity prevailed. Analysis was so clearly NOT a path, and reason was relegated back to that of khanda – sankhara. Soon after something linked me to Brad Warner, and I began zazen; this Dogen quote putting reason in its place:-

““Consequently, those who sit in meditation will, beyond doubt, drop off body and mind, and cut themselves free from their previous confused and defiling thoughts and opinions in order to personally realize what the innate Dharma of the Buddha is” Shobogenzo [p35].”

This intellectual is dangerous because of his knowledge and sincerity - and because of his lack of anger. Intellectuals are supposed to be detached but most are not. Their adherence to the processes of intellect means that when the inadequacies of that intellect are exposed, when the intellect is exposed to the zen there is usually anger – bitter anger (future case studies will show this). This intellectual had none of that, and because he was so widely read he could deflect. He was older than me, and I suspect has spent years defending his approach and becoming skilful at that. But he is not seeking the insight, not seeking the zen, accepting no meditation; he seems content with discussion, talking about Buddhism. Whilst fulfilling many characteristics of the good this intellectual is dangerous – so unintentionally dangerous.

This also highlights an online danger. In person we communicate much more than in words – they sometimes call it non-verbal-communication, but what is NVC in my view does not begin to talk about the level of communication that is carried on in person. You know when someone does not understand, you look, you can see – and when you see you can focus. Online this cannot happen, it is no wonder online is the medium of the intellect.

[Progress 3](#) So far I have described progress as absolute and relative, and questioned whether there can be the absolute progress that I would like to see. Society has fashions and there are people who describe those fashions as being of greater importance, such as the Age of Aquarius. If the Age of Aquarius were to have the meaning that some suggest, that would have to be a time when more people were on a path of “enlightenment”.

At the time of the Buddha the gospel describes many people as awakening. I would describe the 60s and early 70s as a time of awakening. I could imagine there would be times in other countries when awakening would be on the increase such as the times of Nagarjuna in India or Tshongkapa in Tibet. In the time I have been alive there have been people such as Eckhart Tolle who have encouraged “enlightenment”. Theosophists might argue that since the formation of their society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there has been increased progress to “enlightenment”. But are these times indicative of a trend – of progress? In terms of absolute progress I would suggest a harmonic “progress” with peaks and troughs but no increase or decrease towards general enlightenment.

I suspect many in the West would disagree with this. And many who discuss progress writing in the English language would also disagree. But here we have a progress of different sorts. Throughout the history of the world there have been centres of learning eg Athens, Timbuktu, Nalanda (wiki – Ancient Higher Learning Institutions). Many might say Harvard or Oxbridge were now centres of learning. But this apparent progress needs some analysis first. Education especially now requires financial input, research cannot continue without funding. And this funding is an offshoot of accumulation, the more money there is in society the more can exist for funding. When business requires new technology to market, they expect the universities to provide that technology and provide funding for such. Rejection of education or recognition of miseducation can lead to awakening – as I have described in my case. There are others who have written about awakenings in a similar vein – Eckhart Tolle is famous for such; my awakening was extremely important to me but genuine humility is not making a comparison with Tolle only that we are talking of awakenings. Because funding and people are now focussed on western education centres I would expect an increase in awakenings or an interest in awakenings in the West. Without this analysis one might consider there to be absolute progress but if considered globally such progress is not evident. Having said that the hippy trail lay eastwards, would that be an indication of progress to the absolute in the East?

We also have improved communication. People all over the world know of the Buddha now, 2500 years ago would they have known of him. And there is now developing a use of English as global “business language”, many westerners are English-speaking and so there is a tendency to identify the increased awareness written in the English language as a global trend. There is what might be described as a cultural egocentricity focussing on the West and the language of English, and a tendency from those within to describe this as progress. This is a relative progress and not for the best of reasons.

[Influence1](#) Our world is controlled by violence despite what liberals say. In my own country I grew up with people hitting each other at the drop of a hat, this was an expression of how violence is in control. Other countries are less violent than the UK because the repression is less. However the British are showing a major character flaw with their racism flourishing because of the wars for profits against Islamic countries. But all of that is a consequence of the violence of the 1%.

Governments are in power because they control the military, this is beginning to change. Military is privatising and the 1% are employing their own violence – their own security. This is a worrying development. But be clear violence is the reason that people can influence and be influenced. Influence is the major currency of the 1%, and I will go into that. But here I want to talk about how violence influences in another way, the bullying of liberals.

When a liberal uses verbal argument this is not reason. Reason might be the means of the argument but before reason can be used violence has already exerted its power. When we have the rule of law it is not because the law is correct and reasonable that such laws are enacted and adhered to it is violence. If the law punishes by putting you in prison it is because the violence that underlies society has enable the police to arrest you, take you to court enabling the judge to pass sentence , and the crime is punished.

We can see that it is rule of violence and not rule of law when the 1% continually escape punishment.

So when a liberal is being superior by discussing something, it is not the power of the argument that wins the day it is the violence. Good argument ameliorates the situation so that sila can prevail, but the reality is that the prevailing power of society is underpinned by the violence that perpetuates the 1%. It was my job to argue. In school the students were forced to be there. When people say they are there to be educated that is not true. They are there to be kept off the streets enabling parents to be wage-slaves and also fitting the students to be wage-slaves themselves. Teachers in general do not see this, and if as a teacher you do see this you still do the same thing because if you care for your students you want to do the best for them – and they want exams passes.

A typical discussion would arise out of poor behaviour, teenagers trapped in a classroom where there are peer conflicts has got to produce poor behaviour. When I grew up such poor behaviour could be punished by quick violence, but now the prevailing ethos is against teachers using violence although the hypocrisy that the state is using violence to get students to school in the first place seems almost completely lost. Most students will be damaged by the pressures, behave badly and then eventually accept that they should make some effort to conform – learn. Occasionally students don't because they know they are there because of violence and yet teachers cannot use violence to keep them there. So there is complete disruption, the disruption that is caused as the teacher takes time to argue, and the disruption caused by the occasional who calls the teacher's bluff. I am not advocating teacher violence but the violence that controls society has not given teachers adequate powers to control the students. This is intentional, the 1% only need their own children to be educated – the rest need to conform to wage-slavery.

I grew up in the generation where feminism first started, and this feminism was needed as violence against women was too common and many women were chattels in their own homes. Whilst there is violence against one woman and whilst one woman is a chattel, feminism needs to continue. But now society's violence is supporting women. Whilst this is sila because a good society must protect and there was abuse, but such protection is not enough. There needs to be sila to ensure that the violence is not being misused. If violence unquestioningly supports there is potential for misuse. It is necessary to continually question whether those who are being supported by violence are treating others with sila. There are many men who complain. This could be because men used to

have power and now the violence is redistributing gender power more equally – and violent men are missing out gender-wise. But are these complaints being dismissed out of hand rather than being given appropriate questioning? Dynamics change over time, when the violence is being used to control wise-minded people start to question otherwise new oppression arise.

**Progress4** What I have described as progress so far bares little relationship to what is normally considered progress. This is because my benchmark is zen, awakening or “enlightenment”, and I used the three characteristics of anatta, anicca and dukkha for more detail. I have referred to this as absolute progress.

For most consideration of progress it is relative that is usually considered, Pirsig considered this. This type of progress is a self-fulfilling process. Society or fashion dictates what people see as important, people accept this, embrace it, pay for it and it then becomes recognised as progress. By all objective measures the technology in my lifetime, the last 50 years, has made progress. At school and university I was using a calculator where I turned a handle, or I used a slide rule; at university I was beginning to program using punched cards, and the internet started when I was in my 40s. From this point of view this morning I am typing on the computer having done a search on ear muffs, and updating my apps on the smartphone. Technology has completely changed life, begrudgingly I say for the better. These technologies have become communication devices. When I grew up I am not sure there was a phone in the house, I was not phoning friends socially. If I wanted to talk to them I went round their house, and maybe they weren't in. In terms of the use of time technology is much more efficient, in terms of quality of contact much has been lost. As far as I am aware as I just touch on these areas, young people relate to each other through smartphones and software technologies such as Line, facebook, instagram, tumblr, reddit, blogs and so on. I believe such technologies can be used with depth, I don't really know how they are used by the young but my feeling is that depth is not a criterion. I am at a loss to assess it, yet this is fundamentally what thoughts on social progress has to be about. Social progress is concerned with our relationship to technological gadgets.

Where technological progress has made advances is in business. It has changed the office, the production line, and most jobs require some computer interface. This is a long way from my mother's office of typewriters, phones and fax. As a teacher I was always playing catch-up with technology, even though for most of the time in the institutions I worked in my computer competence was often in the forefront. The reason for the catch-up quite simply was cost, to keep contemporary with computer advances was never possible based on the budget. I think this is true now. However because teachers own their own computers, own smartphones, and pay for their own internet access computer usage is much more contemporaneous, but there is still the historical problem – teachers have not been a part of the world of work. Investment in technology has led to increased profits – the intention of the investment.

How has this technology affected people? Can it be said that people have progressed?

Education4 It is bad enough that I am responding to Pirsig without my getting on his bandwagon of Phaedrus popping at education but at the beach today I decided I would. He began his discussion on education by discussing accreditation, and for most westerners outside university, the US and outside the US system accreditation is not normally spoken of. However it is important to discuss the difference between the US system and elsewhere in the West. At school the issue of accreditation doesn't arise because students learn for public exams, and using the results of these exams to gain university entrance. Whilst originally this process was transparent, over the last 30 years it has become less so – we maybe need to look at that but not yet. Accreditation at universities became an issue in the UK in the 80s, we should look at that as well – but not at the beginning. Whilst the US has SAT's these are not equivalent to the exams because the school has internal exams and scores for these exams are combined with the SAT's to secure university entrance. School accreditation is an issue in the US, but not in the West generally. In the US there must be some sort of moderation on these internal exams but internationally within the US system the system is remarkably flawed.

I worked in secondary schools, and the longer I was a teacher the more I worked with students just below university because I was more experienced and knew better how to get them through the exams. When I left teacher training college I was interested in self-realisation so how did I then become an exam crammer. I am guilty of "plagiarisation" throughout so when I call my level of education the Conformist Church of Exams you might see some similarity? This is better understood using this sentence:-

*Before you go to the Church of Reason you need first to pass through the Conformist Church of Exams.*

The students that Phaedrus worked with, and was critical of, had spent many years in the Conformist Church of Exams before they entered the more liberal Church of Reason. Let me be clear the purpose of my level of education was not to get kids to pass exams, its primary purpose was conformism. And this conformism I have referred to many times, most of the students in state education had to be trained to accept wage slavery. Society does the first job, it makes the students want money. The Church then tells them that the best way to make money is to pass exams, and once the students have accepted this most students then fail. At this stage they have been indoctrinated in the need for money, learnt that they are failures and are so ready to take uninspiring jobs - wage-slavery. This is not a new analysis, I learnt it when I went to teacher training college 40 years ago but it is truer now than it was then.

So what happens to those who are successes, those who will get to join Pirsig's level? These are the more intelligent, and therefore more of a danger to the status quo – the system that the 1% have created. Their conformisation is much more intense. First and foremost they are taught fear. They are placed in cauldrons of classrooms where it is intended the teacher does not have control. I have already discussed the impact of removing the power of the teacher to use violence. This ends the short sharp shock. Don't be fooled into thinking the right wing want to bring this back – they don't, they already have it in their schools if it is needed. They are making political capital about the disruption to increase the likelihood of parents paying for private education because state schools are disrupted.

Kids with street smarts know before they start that there is no chance for them, they know they will fail. Some have already chosen to use their intelligence on the streets – in crime. Once they have decided that, the teacher has completely lost control. I remember a discussion with a bright student. His father gave him two dinner moneys, one for his food and one for the gangs; it worked he ate. How do bright kids perceive these kids? They are frightened. For some the street kids dumb down the “boffs” who are scared to try hard. The more affluent the school the less street kids but there are always plenty – enough to make the smart kids see exams are the best way for them. Pass the exams at all costs.

Once the intelligent kids are frightened enough, they do what is required to pass the exam. And the main requirement is conformity. When a child is young and free, they have questioning minds. By the time they are entering these Conformist Churches, they are beginning to question society – that is the intelligent response. Immediately they would want to question the teacher, and some teachers would want to respond to such questioning. But that questioning is not curriculum, it is not exams, and other bright children want to pass the exams. So if there were a sympathetic teacher the fear amongst the other boffs would be sufficient to maintain conformity. Soon such intelligent people learn that questioning is not the game, and they get the qualifications to enter the Church of Reason – and they have been taught the mindset that Pirsig was trying to fight.

So as a teacher why didn't I go mad, why did I become an exam crammer? Bought off eh?

[Progress 5](#) Health is the area where we can really start to analyse the doubts concerning progress. There have been advances in medicine through technology, and these advances have helped medical practice that is connected with these advances. Medical advances have become so costly that it is mostly only feasible to consider these advances if covered by insurance. It could be argued that insurance now controls the treatment one is given. Doctors are trained to treat in a certain way based on advances, if insurance will pay patients get these treatments. In health financial restraints

are extremely evident. Despite the vocational aspect of most medical practitioners, finance and profit have become the dominant motivations.

The cancer industry is a clear example of this. Cancer treatments are very expensive involving expensive drugs and expensive equipment, such treatments cause much heartache and are often only available or feasible if patients have appropriate insurance. Cancer is also a clear example of how one might consider progress. Undoubtedly the cancer technologies did not exist in the past, now that they do exist and insurance can pay for them they are used greatly. But there are scientific doubts as to the effectiveness of such treatments, some even say chemotherapy and radiation therapy hasten death. And if that is not accepted what is clear is that such treatments lessen the quality of life for the short time remaining.

There is a general acceptance among patients that if doctors recommend these treatments they must be helpful. But the companies providing the technology also dominate the medical teaching establishment – as do the companies who provide the chemicals – drugs. Students go to medical schools to be taught to use technology and drugs that are provided by the companies. Question – are these students taught the best way to keep patients healthy? Are they taught the best way to provide quality of life for patients?

Here is where all the edges come in with regards to progress in health. In the West diseases of the poor have been dying out, that is not to say that the same is true globally as there are so many dying of hunger and poverty. But to focus on the West only, because finances have moved westwards it is clear that diseases from poverty have mostly disappeared; with current austerity policies some are returning. But what is less clear is the quality of life? People might have more material possessions but the quality of their health has perhaps decreased. It could be argued that western people have sufficient health to do their jobs, and are provided with drugs to return to work if ill.

It is definitely the case that there has been an increase in what are known as degenerative diseases in the West. These would include Alzheimer's, heart disease, cancer and diabetes II amongst many others (Wiki: degenerative disease). One could describe progress in health as improvement in healing technologies whilst there is an increase in degenerative disease.

Many people focus on lifestyle and diet as being the causes of the degenerative disease. What is meant by lifestyle? It is a word that covers up the problem. Many people see the lifestyle as the drugs that are used for entertainment, drugs legal or not. But lifestyle is a totality of work-slavery and drugs. For a long while I was an alcoholic, but when I wasn't working – for a year I ran a magazine – I wasn't drinking. I have no doubts the lifestyle was caused by work. When I stopped drinking I was mid-30s, my health improved but I was still stressed, and that stress remained with



me until I retired early. During my working life I never saw sufficient importance in diet, and when I began a vegan diet (with a little fish) soon after retirement my health greatly improved. It was not just the food, it was the lifestyle – not having to work. Early retirement and then healthy living by the sea eating a healthy diet has so far seen off degenerative disease.

I would go as far as saying wage-slavery and poor diet produces degenerative disease, or perhaps safer there is a correlation between “wage-slavery and poor diet” and “degenerative disease”.

So with regards to health where is the progress? Technology advances have increased profits, altered the fabric of our society with social networking, improved certain aspects of health, yet we have increased degenerative disease. And that is in the West where finances have removed poverty as a disease factor – ostensibly (before austerity). Yet globally there are deaths from hunger and poor health due to poverty. How careful must we consider progress!

[Chautauqua 10](#) Remembering was an important part of Pirsig’s journey, I can’t remember how integrated Pirsig became with Phaedrus in the end – at the moment he sees him as another person. Remembering has a different purpose for me in this platform, these are the memories of an “old man” triggered by what I have read – these are not forgotten memories nor is there a need to integrate with my past. My chautauqua is just remembering

Here I am interested in how the mind functions in terms of forgetting. Phaedrus was presented as someone to be feared by Pirsig when writing, I am not sure whether that was simply a writer mechanism – maybe I will learn more of that fear. Pirsig, as writer, was a new person waking up in a sanatorium as a new person with Phaedrus behind him – forgotten. When the memory forgets has been integral in my life. Memory in my life prior to hitting bottom has always been negligible. When I was a young adult I associated this with an emotionally-repressive upbringing but now I consider that my zen was “hiding” because I personally didn’t have the tools to cope with that awareness when young. Clear memory comes from zen mind.

I consider my life as a young person with similar disdain that Pirsig had for Phaedrus, my disdain is that I recall a child who was immature and violent. Since bottom people have not considered me immature. And I recall only considered institutional violence as an adult, in my personal life I have never been violent – something I’m ashamed to say my younger brother and some family peers would never believe. I consider the childhood violence a combination of pecking order violence in the family, and a selfish demand that completely lacked control by who I am – by zen mind.

There is another aspect of memory failure that I have not discussed yet, and it is in the next part of my life. After I hit bottom I went through a consolidation process in which I was educated by the Arts people and then my compassion took me into child care and eventually into teaching. Once I became a teacher, my path in life was decided – I had to learn how to be a teacher in what society laughingly calls schools. At university I first connected with my addiction – alcohol. The lifestyle there was alcoholism for the lads – the boys, and there were many good people who learnt to be alcoholics there. Fortunately my worst behaviour when drunk was hidden by blackouts, there was a social convention amongst these alcoholics – if you blacked out it wasn't you; true amongst all alcoholics? There are however behaviours that I do remember with shame – not always when drunk although connected with the drug, this was my worst time of non-sila and I am lucky how little I paid for this behaviour.

When I started with the computer consultancy I drank but don't recall blackouts or bad incidents – just falling asleep on the last train!! Nor do I recall blackouts in the last job. I drank heavily, my sleep pattern was completely messed up – awake at all hours, but no blackouts, not that drunk; just lonely and living with drink. I see that as a time when I needed to be aware of the mess I was in, but it was as if the real battle in life was taking place in the background. I turned up to work only half aware, was completely incompetent at my job as I was never focussed, and completely deserved the sack. I have had many dust-ups at work but that was the only one I got what I deserved – and am so glad I did.

Over the period of hitting bottom and early afterwards I barely drank – about 2 years, although it was noticed I had a potential problem. But in the job prior to starting teacher training there was a drinking ethos, and I slipped into it easily – drunk but no blackouts. This was getting towards the end of my consolidation process – to the time I recognised I was a teacher. But unfortunately I had re-associated having a good time with the drink. In my teacher training year I studied well but drank too much. It was a good year. I was a mature student, knew what I wanted, and had more going for me than just the college. I was student plus London, and for some reason had reasonable money – enough for the alcohol. Enjoyable. Starting work I easily slipped into my drinking teacher life – work hard, drink during the week and sleep at the weekend. I cannot remember having behaved too unreasonably – just drunk too much. Wandering London drunk was not safe so I kept within bounds except for Fridays where I got drunk, fell out of the pub and into a cab opposite

When I moved to Brighton because of the relationship the blackouts became a problem, I was living with someone and the relationship was a complete mess. I told her to find me a place to sleep it off, so I would return home and not bother her. But she seemed to want to meet the blackouts so that the next day she had something to hold over me – the things I said when I had no control; no complaints of violence or attempting sex. During that relationship the number of blackouts increased drastically – because I lived in a mess, I wanted to forget what I was in. When the relationship ended so did the blackouts, and soon after so did the booze.

Looking at this part of my personal history there seems no connection with the path or awakening. But for me it is important to understand what the blackouts were. They were the compromise. I had found my path as a teacher but had to compromise as a teacher. Instead of educating I was indoctrinating – preparing for wage-slavery, because of how I was complicit in dismantling the students compassion turned my drinking to blackout. When you add a relationship that I wanted to forget the blackouts increased. However sadly there was always a carrot to the drink, when I was a young adult there were many times I enjoyed when drinking; none of that was path.

The awakening did however continue to consolidate. The first couple of years of teaching were obviously concerned with learning the trade but very soon the long holidays became the focus of my awakening and development, I can remember holidays where I got into myself, studied and occasionally wrote. Only the rare drink. I even remember a theosophy year in which I stopped drinking, attended theosophy meetings, met theosophists and generally did theosophy. But I was not meditating and I did not have sila yet so one evening with a few drinks and I lost theosophy. But there was not much to lose because I was only into the ideas of theosophy. There was so much that was fascinating about The Secret Doctrine, about rounds and giants, layer cakes and clairvoyance. It was so easy to get hooked into the ideas. They spoke of yoga and meditation, and they had courses that involved both but there were so many ideas – my intellect revelled in it. At a training course I remember an old guy looking at me (I was maybe 30 then) and seeing ideas spinning around everywhere, and commenting. I dismissed him especially when on the second occasion (of two) I met him I learned he lived off stocks and shares. But he was right about me, I don't know if I was right about him as I never knew him. It is odd I remember what he said; I remember the truth – or the zen remembers the truth. Maybe there were those in theosophy who were awakened. What they spoke about was wonderful but it was not awakening itself, maybe some awakened had found a place where they could teach something resembling the truth, who knows? Annie Besant brought Krishnamurti to theosophy and so to me, and he was very formative for me. But when I was into him I was still into ideas – but improving; his ideas about not having ideas were great – empty the contents of consciousness.

Teaching took over my life. Drinking during term and developing the path during holidays. I remember wonderful holiday trips where I just pitched up somewhere, walked and I was on my own. Days on my own along coast paths avoiding towns, holiday destinations avoiding people. This was my life in the UK. Battling with the drink without knowing it, developing slowly as I came to terms with teaching and guzzled ideas about the path from all over, and becoming the loner (not lonely) some of the time, the loner who for some of the year engaged with the path.

The blackouts were in some way a Phaedrus. In my youth I didn't remember because there was no zen, with the drink the blackouts came when the compromise was too much – especially in the

relationship where my zen and I had got so far apart – zen was mostly buried. Phaedrus was a fanatic whose imbalance led to his being blacked out. During Phaedrus-time Pirsig had not found his zen so there could be no balance. His ideas engulfed him making him fanatical about ideas. He identified so much with his ideas, and his ideas brought him into conflict. There were two conflicts. The first conflict was the obvious one – the conflict with the teaching establishment. But this conflict was only fuel for his identity and stubbornness - clinging to the ideas. The real conflict was happening inside – the emergence of his zen. Phaedrus was focussed on ideas, holding onto ideas, living for ideas, living the ideas. Ideas and zen are in conflict if the zen is not in control, and if the ideas don't know their place. When your whole being is placed into a minor part there is no balance, and potential for calamity. In most cases people are forced into a world of ideas and are trapped in that world by a wage-slavery that prevents freedom. Because most people do this there is a gestalt consciousness, a general acceptance, that this is the way it is meant to be. So when the imbalance within them, their own zen-Phaedrus, starts to emerge, family and social duty are usually enough to maintain control, the zen focusses on the good in that and there is no insanity – sadly there is not a life dominated by zen either. With Pirsig his emerging zen brought conflict and because he was he was so focussed on the ideas and the passion for those ideas his identity became those ideas. He was fighting the establishment, his zen wanted to emerge, and all his identity wanted was more ideas. His passion drove him down a blind alley of ideas, and eventually blacked him out.

I disclaim that I am no Pirsig expert, I have never met the man, he knows not of me or this platform. Is what I say of Pirsig and Phaedrus true? Judge for yourself, let your own zen consider this.

As a young person I had no zen, can young people have zen? Or more correctly, can they have emerging zen?

[Unity2](#) This is an issue that arose from discussions at the beach rather than ZAMM but I could imagine it would be an issue Phaedrus would have – discipline and appropriate compromise. To begin with the issue does not appeared connected to Gaia - real unity, yet it is. We were discussing politics, and the situation where this friend was accused of racism. He was German, and was accused of racism because he said Germany could not take all the refugees. This caused the racist outcry amongst the intellectuals on the left.

There was another issue he was called a racist. Similar to what is happening in The UK Labour party at the moment (May 2016). He criticised the Zionists for their activities against the Palestinians, and because of Germany's history with Jews 70 years ago the collective guilt of the intellectuals called him a racist. Whilst the argument is straight-forward to counter the Zionist publicity machine at the moment has the upper hand. It has managed to persuade the world that all Jews are the same and they support the Zionist government. This is far from true, but when you

stand up and support the position of Jewish socialists the Zionists attack you as anti-semitic. This is just a Zionist tactic – but sadly it is working. It is not helped by public statements from intellectuals such as Ken Livingstone whose ill-discipline has enabled the Zionists to bring Corbyn into disrepute – long-standing ally (discussed in detail in a blog [here](#) – scroll down to zionism). For all my time in local politics Ken was a figure, repeatedly caused discipline problems and bounced back.

Ken has always lacked discipline, and this is primarily caused by his ego. I am not talking about his being overly-arrogant – I don't know him well enough to comment, but what The Buddhists call ego. This Buddhist ego is too attached to self, personal identity, the importance of “Ken” or whoever, and by attaching to this self there is a lack of unity – a separation within Gaia. This is part of the Buddhist principle of anatta – no self. Now Ken is an avowed Trotskyist, he holds to the ideas of Trotsky, and by holding to those ideas causes disagreement between peoples whose interests are fundamentally aligned. If idealists did not see the importance of their ideas and chose to seek an alliance of interests the left wing of British politics - and elsewhere – would not be so divided and easily discredited. And sadly the mass movement (99%) is the only movement in theory able to do anything about the 1%. And the 99% are easily divided because of the ego of their figureheads.

For the greater unity of the 99% it is necessary for the intellectuals to shut up. For my German friend arguing about refugees and Jews, whilst he was correct he needed to be less divisive. The refuge situation is caused by blowback. Europe has invaded the Middle East on a number of occasions in the last 25 years, fleeing those invasions Arabs are seeking help. How can such a situation not occur? If the US and Europe are taking the natural resources of these countries, why wouldn't the people follow them? My advice to my friend – focus on the blowback. And as for the Jews the question is straight forward, seek the support of like-minded Jews, find appropriate material and references, and dispel the Zionist propaganda that all Jews are the same – dispel their tactic of calling anti-racists racist.

Phaedrus clearly had an issue with holding to ideas. He was attacking the Church of Reason for the way it held to reason yet he held to reason in a different way. As Pirsig says Phaedrus' fanaticism to his version was the source of his insanity. Such principles of non-attachment and non-clinging are so important in all areas of life, sadly we lack so much unity.

But there are times when attachment is appropriate but this is not attachment to ideas but attachment to sila. The damage to Gaia, life, ecology and humanity, is carried out in the world of work. Transnational conglomerates are destroying our planet. What happens in these profit giants? Do people go to work and say how are we going to destroy the world today? No. What happens is that the bottom line is profit – the company must work towards the increased accumulation of

wealth to the few. For most companies this means increase the profits for the shareowners. This is enough to screw up the world. When a company's effluent is destroying the environment this is not one person's decision, it is an accumulation of decisions all the way down using the restriction of maximising profit. No-one person makes the big decision but many people make smaller decisions. How do these people act? With deference to sila or profit? If someone stands up for morality too often, they lose their job because they lose the company profits. Here there is no room to compromise on sila but people do.

In my own case I could not accept such compromising and I sought solace in a caring profession – teaching. But it is no better there. As teachers we are supposed to educate young people, in practise all we do is prepare them for wage-slavery – a career (for a fuller analysis see [here](#)). In the caring professions life is far worse in a sense. There is intentionally never enough money. If there is a likelihood that genuine education might occur there is a cut in funding. There is funding available for career but not education. In private schools there are the facilities because the 1% needs to provide jobs for their family. If the students disrupt education they are out – no question, yet in state schools students sit next to crooks.

I reflect on my life as a teacher, and feel a deep sense of frustration. I made a decision to work for students, and in the end the work I did was just part of wage-enslavement. If young me asked me now, I would say “don't waste your time, find a commune where you can work with like-minded people and help each other”. Don't compromise with the system, there is no sila there only exploitation – no matter how high the caring index is supposed to be.

[Women 1](#) In ZAMM Pirsig doesn't talk about women – obviously he does more so in Lila. In this section I make a tenuous link to Phaedrus but that is an excuse – more I want to investigate “women”. On a personal level in society (person-to-person), perhaps the greatest miscommunication is that between women and men. To be open I have a certain amount of anger and frustration towards women, I have never found a woman I could live with and I have never felt comfortable sexually with a woman, because of this I live alone – yet there is still a part that is not realist that hopes. This assessment looks bad – demeaning to women and therefore to me. What would I want in a relationship, two people living together as individuals but their individuality being enhanced because they are living together. For my failed relationships I would be continually asking “what am I gaining from this?” and then “what am I losing from this?”, after the initial passion subsided the answer to the second was always greater. As I grew older I asked “what does a woman gain from living with me?” I have no answer except I felt I had nothing to offer because I don't understand what the women wanted – I know what it appeared like but I am unwilling to commit that to print because I am not sure of its truth - and I **am sure** I am not detached enough to give a fair answer. So when I talk about women I only intend to use what they say about themselves because I am not unbiased.

The Phaedrus link is that I am asking “where did Phaedrus come from?”, and, apart from his mother, the answer I am going to give comes from Jane Fonda. I admire Jane Fonda in many ways. Sadly the first is a weakness, I admired Barbarella so admired her physically. At that young age I shamefully did not see anything else in her. Then there was the male fantasy of “saving the prostitute” in Klute, but this still had no perception of Fonda as a person. I never saw “China Syndrome” as her activism – just a good movie, there I should definitely have been better. I never followed her much otherwise, until I heard a TED talk on the third act – activism for the old, and I thought that was wonderful. And that brings me finally to a talk on her book “My Life so Far” at Santa Barbara - [Ref1](#). She talks about the patriarchy which starts working on males at 5. Men have an image to work up to from the age of 5. I guess that comes from two sources – your father and society. I can’t ever remember looking up to my father - I have no wish to say more, and as regards to peers there was never any desire to be like them – and I put that down to my zen. My zen working in the background withdrew me from all that conditioning. This felt lonely as a child, but it was so much better for me as an adult after hitting bottom.

Can you imagine not having all that conditioning and then eventually to be able to grow up as me? I live in Thailand where there are western men who say they live in Thailand because they can get sex from the young girls. Whilst the girls are pretty, the ones who are offering that sex do have strings attached, but to watch these men is totally confusing to me because I don’t have that conditioning – I have the lust but not the conditioning. I see little boys in big bodies, I am perplexed – completely perplexed. Not least of all because I have slaved all my life for what little money I have, and why do I want to throw it away on a young gold-digger? These men do, it is so confusing to me. Yet when they have been conditioned by the male ego since 5, perhaps I should understand. You know I think they believe they are attractive to these women – old bodies with beer bellies being attractive to these beautiful women makes no sense to me. But I was lucky that conditioning passed me by, in Jane’s words I felt “I never had my manhood to prove”. It passed me by, I became engrossed in intellect until it took over, and then zen kicked in making me hit bottom. Can this be where Phaedrus came from? In ZAMM Pirsig never indicates male conditioning, Phaedrus is overwhelmed by intellect as an answer for everything, and then he hits bottom remembering being the ZAMM Chautauqua. Is this lack of conditioning where Phaedrus came from? Only Pirsig can answer that.

I did not arrive at the Fonda talk through Phaedrus. I recently have listened to the Carpenters in the car, what a wonderfully creative voice Karen had! I didn’t know her but her voice sounds so zen. I went to university at the time she was starting, and that music did not suit the “hippy rebel”. Her music was always around, and so I knew it when I played it in the car - with youthful prejudices gone. And only this week (May 2016) did I learn she died from anorexia. How can such a wonderful zen voice die from anorexia? As I investigated this I grew more and more tearful – thinking of her, hearing her music, knowing the anorexia I am still tearful. And then I find Jane

Fonda was bulimic. The woman whose body was perfect in *Barbarella* was bulimic. There is so much wrong with how we condition for that to happen, for what happened to Karen. Karen has so rocked me that when my anger and frustration with women returns, I can rebalance myself thinking of these mental conditions that were imposed on Karen and Jane.

In the referred Santa Barbara talk Jane talks about developing an emptiness inside in her adolescence. This is an emptiness I can relate to. It was an emptiness Jane retained and it became an eating disorder - amongst other problems. My emptiness was filled with the academic crap which eventually blew up when I hit bottom.

From the talk it appears that Jane's zen is kicking in now, only she can know. But her talk has more, and she mentioned Carol Gilligan who offers a moral development that is different for women. That is fascinating. A woman saying her *silas* is different, that has to be something to engage with, that is a platform.

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[Education5](#) I have just read an interview with the [Tim Adams from the Observer](#) I had saved – [my version](#). Just note this for perspective. The interview refers to a discussion with Baggini ([The philosopher magazine article](#)) so I looked at that as well – and the [transcript](#). In reading [the Baggini transcript](#) I had to stop and write this, it is what I consider my gatekeeper experience with academia.

I wasted my education time at school and uni, because of my lack of zen it was never about genuine learning – just going through hoops to get bits of paper. When I studied for my PGCE it was different, I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to learn about how people thought teaching should be done, and as I was older – a “mature” student of 25 – it was meaningful. I have already noted that on one of my PGCE dissertations submitted in May 1977 I had the reference ZAMM [Corgi 1976], I am amused by this as was a friend. Overall this was a positive education experience, not plain-sailing but positive.

One learning experience was exam nerves, I still remember them. I cannot recall ever being overly nervous for exams – just healthy nerves. Because I was so interested in teaching I was well prepared for the Summer exams. In the one year course teaching practise had finished by April, and as soon as it finished I was up in the library learning. At university my final term before the B Sc finals was a 8-hour day at the library. I had a table and disciplined myself – 9.30-12.30, 1.45 – 4.45 and 7.00 – 9.00. That was the first time I ever properly studied, and in truth it was too much. When it came to the PGCE finals I started earlier, and decided that if I felt stressed I wouldn't push



myself. I studied, analysed past papers, and felt I was well prepared. The paper was something crazy like 3 essays from 20, and I think I prepared something like 6 topics. I was definitely well prepared .... And nothing of what I chose came up. I freaked. I had no idea what to do. In the end meditation came to the rescue, I breathed, found questions related to what I had learnt, and started work. My friend was invigilating, he was one of the staff who drank in the college bar and I had got to know him; he came to me afterwards and said he had seen me freaking!! This is just to note that exam nerves can happen even if you are prepared.

There was another incident that happened. I did a course on moral education, and the lecturer had decided that there would be a field trip to a youth centre to discuss a porn film with the teenage youth. I didn't want to do it. At that stage in my life I did not have sila and was having some "success" in sexual relations, but for some reason I could not face going to the youth centre and discussing a porn film with kids. There were two trips and I didn't attend either. I was later told that the lecturer failed me on the dissertation I wrote, and this meant I would not have qualified as a teacher. At some stage there was a moderation process, and the dissertation was remarked. I have not thought about this in a great detail until now, how different would my life have been if I failed that PGCE and had never been a teacher.

But Baggini really reminded me of what happened later in my life. After teaching for nearly 20 years I was working in Botswana. It was a good school to teach in because the students wanted to learn – and at that time I had lost my teacher mojo. I learned this in a strange way. It was custom and practise for teachers leaving to make a speech at assembly – sounds daunting, doesn't it? Several teachers complained they didn't want to do it but when it came to my turn, I pushed myself forward. Maybe I will get into the teacher conflicts I had there but the kids were mostly good to teach. I had not thought much of what I was going to say – winging it, but I found myself saying that teaching the kids there had resurrected my vocation – in student language. I surprised myself in saying that truth, and as I got down I walked past a student who said in a haunting voice "We will miss you" – what a nice experience.

Whilst Botswana is a beautiful place there is not a lot to do especially if you don't drink – I had stopped by then. I met someone who was studying for an M Ed by distance learning, and I derided him; a couple of years later it seemed a good idea – and it was. I got into it, and have discussed my [submissions](#) already in parts. The education institution had a programme with the local teachers, so the tutor was there with them – and made some time for me. As with the PGCE I enjoyed studying this. Their sales pitch was that an M Ed would be awarded for students/teachers who could draw conclusions from their practical experience based on further study. I chose the topics from my professional experience, and they chose the texts that could add to the experience. I can remember hours sat at Shashe dam shaded by the 8 foot reeds reading, thinking and sleeping, then getting home and bashing out inspiration at the keyboard. Years later the M Ed didn't seem to matter, and some of it time has purloined.

But my “Baggini” experience occurred after I had the M Ed. I had discussed a possible Ph D with my tutor. I don’t know whether he thought I was serious, but one Summer soon after I had finished my M Ed and finished in Botswana - awaiting a contract in Oman I turned up at the college to discuss the Ph D. I don’t think he was prepared for this, and he fobbed me off. He would never have been my Ph D tutor but he had not expected to have to think about it. I was given a few hurdles and showed that I was prepared to jump over them. I was then passed on to a lecturer little more than half my age who told me I needed to study more philosophers before I can use my experience to write a Ph D; he suggested an undergraduate course. I complained to my tutor about this gatekeeper, and eventually a tutor was found.

In retrospect they were trying to burn me out. Firstly the gatekeeping young kid dismissing me with the undergraduate course. Then what happened with the tutor. To their credit they didn’t try to take my money but this tutor did make me engage with some undergrad studies. I accepted this, and there was some slow interchange that led up to a turning point – the point where the gatekeeping burned me out. I wrote something which the tutor was totally dismissive of. And it ended. In the end I didn’t mind because the work at Oman took up more time than in Botswana.

I have no desire to say that what I write for the Ph D was good, it was the same style and approach where they were willing to give me a M Ed. This is why I think there was a gatekeeping approach. Intelligent application of professional experience has got to threaten academics who have never been in the world of work.

Baggini said “From the submissions sent to me at The Philosophers' Magazine, I know independent scholars almost invariably think that their philosophy explains everything...”

And Pirsig countered “I don't receive these submissions and so don't have the skepticism you must acquire from reading so many contributions that are supposed to explain everything. But as I think about this I wonder if, other things being equal, which philosopher is preferable; one who only tries to explain a few things and succeeds or one who tries to explain everything and succeeds. Isn't the purpose of philosophy to explain everything? Which philosopher is best trying to live up to the ideal of his profession?”

My intention with the Ph D was to investigate mind – and this followed from some of the M Ed studies. It seemed that the gatekeepers were pushing me down some minor dirt path when I wanted to investigate “mind”. Yet with mind there is one big academic question that they have no answer for – “what is mind?” Why doesn’t academia have a position on mind? They don’t want one. Each mind-defining chair demands obedience to their dictum on mind, a dictum that is decided by

intellect – or the Church of Reason, and there is no desire to resolve differences and achieve concurrence. Yet there is much agreement on mind amongst the non-intellectuals in the world of spirituality. When the Bacon-split categorised knowledge and understanding as spirit and science, his schism was meant to be positive. Over the years science has claimed rights to “knowledge and understanding”, and the spiritual whether it be intuition, insight, zen, creativity and far more have been relegated to non-science, non-knowledge, non-understanding. Whilst the better of the spiritual world to this day continues to work to a concurrent understanding of mind, academia, supposedly the home of mind and its education, makes no attempt at commonality accepting differing definitions and separation as a reality, a fence that need not be crossed.

Using Baggini’s words I might have been attempting “to explain everything of mind” – and failing according to the gatekeepers, but for Pirsig I was trying to live up to the ideal of the profession. I make no assumptions about the quality of what I was doing or what I had achieved but it was Pirsig’s ideal, I take pride in that. For me I will never know because academia, almost by overarching principle, can never reach consensus on mind, and in my view is threatened by attempts to do this using gatekeepers to bar the way. There was money and kudos in the programme of using professional experience as a platform for an M Ed, but there is no desire to allow the world of work to infringe on the lofty towers of academic intellect. This is quite simply the fear of zen, the zen that is at the root of good professionalism – unspoken or not.

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### [Chautauqua 11](#)

15/5/17

I moved away from the Pirsig Platform – can’t remember why. I did not take a break from writing – I seem to be getting more and more prolific. In truth it is probably for bad reasons, I have no contact with anyone to discuss the things that matter to me. I would prefer contact because of the interaction but with contact there is usually misunderstanding. I had understanding when I was young at the Arts Centre – I was also fashionable then, but I knew far less naturally. Now my understanding borders with cantankerousness. I seem unable to get through to people – I suppose that is common. Ego seems to be blocking everything, you go so far and then ego gets threatened, the blocks go up and sometimes the insults go out. Ah well .... if it was easy.

Most of the writing has been blogging at [Zandtao](#) and the building of the [Unity Platform](#), but over this school break I have finished [Sannadee](#) and [The Arico Chronicles](#). When I think about it, it is a lot – and I hope quality. But I am always conscious of how little of it is read.

Yesterday I started again, and the whole ideas thing started flowing again. I do so much enjoy this platform. Pirsig's writing is just so different that it wakes areas other things don't go near. There was a comparable process in my life. After the Arts Centre I was invited to stay in Belgium by Yves – I will always be grateful even though we never got on. He was so generous to let me stay in his cottage in google where. I had a fascinating time in the Ardennes and then moved to this cottage. There was nothing there but spiders and I was frightened of spiders then. I joined the British Council library, got any book out and just bounced off the books – on paper that has long since gone. It was a wonderful month. It was my first time where I really loved alone; I had lived alone because I had to. At Belgium cottage place I learned to love it and really experience the wonder of "aloneness". And I was bouncing.

Now "aloneness" is the way I am, and I don't want it any other way. And I have the bouncing of Pirsig.

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### [Tech 7](#)

17/5/17 – bounced from Ch 10.

And the first bounce on my way back is to renounce science – tremendous. One of my things with Pirsig is that he appears to have too much faith in science but perhaps that is Phaedrus. Using Phaedrus to attack science is nice although to be fair part of this is an attack he agreed with.

In my view science always needs to be viewed historically to give a proper context concerning knowledge per se. Here is a scientific axiom that ought not to be controversial, science is all knowledge – the two terms ought to be interchangeable. Back in the day Francis Bacon dichotomised knowledge into that which could be proved and that which could be observed but was not subject to rational proof, it is my understanding he did this to help classifying knowledge. Putting it simply but not exactly knowledge could be split into science and religion. What was science was subjected to rational proof, and religion was that which is observable – empirical knowledge. Over the years knowledge has gradually become restricted to scientific knowledge, and religious knowledge is not now considered as knowledge – faith or sometimes more like superstition rather than knowledge. Scientific method does not examine religion even though it can be observed empirically. This is something HHDL discusses when he talks of meditation as having an observable structure that can be repeated – one of the tenets of scientific method.

Now all of this is context, and I want to get to what he discussed - hypotheses. Pirsig came up with a flippant law "The number of rational hypotheses that can explain any given phenomenon is infinite." Placing this in the context of what he wrote he was describing where hypotheses came from, coming up with one there were always more. When discussing science especially in the context of the Bacon dichotomy I have always claimed that there needs to be two approaches to knowledge, that which is

rational and provable and that which is empirical and observable but cannot be proved by scientific method. This is usually answered by those who subscribe to reason only as science will have all the answers – not just yet, in other words what I consider to be religious knowledge is either not considered as knowledge or is knowledge that has not yet been rationalised. Yet Phaedrus is suggesting scientific method has infinite hypotheses ie phenomena can never be fully explained. This is also good from a holistic position and Dedekind cuts, the whole can never be the sum of all the parts as each whole has infinite parts. I parallel this with the question answered by Dedekind cuts - “how many numbers are there between 0 and 1?”

So holistically there are now two indicators that science cannot fully explain everything, sum of parts and infinite hypotheses. And that is without the consideration that there is empirical knowledge that can be observed but is not explained by rational science. As Pirsig says “If all hypotheses cannot be tested, then the results of any experiment are inconclusive and the entire scientific method falls short of its goal of establishing proven knowledge.” Now I think this Pirsig statement is a biggy, as big if not bigger than all the stuff about Church of Reason. Science in the form we now practise it cannot fulfil its objective of explaining everything ie science is fundamentally flawed. This understanding did not send Phaedrus crazy so maybe that is why it is not focussed. But it is a biggy. With all the flock of the Church of Reason who are around, telling them that there are arguments that say science cannot explain everything is quite huge. A biggy! To me a significant biggy.

Prior to discussing infinite hypotheses he asked “where do hypotheses come from?” He suggested that coming from nature was too simplistic, but it is not if nature is Gaia. Nature and Gaia are terms I am very clear about but my usage is not what is generally accepted for either; I tend to use Gaia in a special way, and call this Nature with a capital n. So the accepted definition (James Lovelock) of nature (and gaia) might be what comes under the subject of ecology – it is physical. There is the totality of the physical earth with plants and animals living on it, and there is man separate living on gaia. For me this is not a good definition. There is one life on One Planet – Unity. I am part of the lifeforce that includes all life on earth, and is only one lifeforce – Unity – integrated together; I call this Gaia. This is in line with James Lovelock’s Gaia Hypothesis (see wiki) but I take it further. His hypothesis “proposes that [organisms](#) interact with their [inorganic](#) surroundings on [Earth](#) to form a [synergistic self-regulating, complex system](#) that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for [life](#) on the planet.” But is man considered separate – separate man living on Gaia; I think separation is the way it is seen. For me this is not the Unity that is spoken of in some Eastern approaches. These Eastern approaches speak of Unity (Gaia) as an integrated life including what separation calls “all life on earth”. This would be one consciousness of which human consciousnesses are all part, one totality of Gaia containing different but not separate lifeforms of humanity, animals, plants etc.

With this understanding of Gaia hypotheses coming from nature follows as there is no separation, hypotheses are part of consciousness, part of Gaia, part of Nature, those creating hypotheses just have to be open to this lack of separation; Pirsig described this openness as infinite hypotheses, once one came others automatically followed as part of the learning experiment. In a way because of my

“hypothesis” about Gaia and Nature, the question of whether hypotheses come from nature is almost a tautology. There is only Gaia so hypotheses come from her. Hypotheses are a creative part of science, it is like the insight of problem-solving. With a clear mind a hypothesis would arise like an insight because we are part of Gaia. “The act of formally writing everything down precisely and clearly seemed to suggest them [BZ hypotheses].” This is also interesting when I think about my writing (blog) as putting the flesh on the bones after a meditation insight, or like creative writing – Wai Zandtao does not know what is happening in the stories until he writes it.

When we consider the confusion that is sub-atomic physics then perhaps this discussion might have a more practical bent. For a long time Newton’s laws were completely adequate, and atoms and molecules tended to fit in with those laws. When science went sub-atomic the Newtonian paradigm struggled as measurement was difficult. Fritjov Capra, in *Tao of Physics and Turning Point*, noted that sub-atomic functions could be considered particle or wave depending on the status of the observer. In trying to hold to the Newtonian paradigm all kinds of theories are coming up – all far too complex for me (see books by Hagelin and [my blog](#) about him), and more they sound a little deluded except that science adheres to them so they have community credibility. There never seems a totality of explanation. As science begins to measure more deeply it postulates new particles with new properties, and then measuring further new particles with properties. I suppose this fits in with scientific method but then there is stuff that cannot be explained and in comes probabilities and Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. It becomes complex to understand, and that difficulty gives it credibility within the scientific community; if it is hard it is science. But I never got into all of these scientific explanations of sub-atomic physics then because at the time of reading those books it struck me that chi/energy much more sensibly explained function on a sub-atomic level. As Capra indicated especially in *Turning Point* science had its Newtonian paradigm, and was going to continue with its paradigm sub-atomically. In my reading at the time, and my understanding now, there was an existing explanation for all that understanding but because it was more “religious” science didn’t want to know. Accepting the existence of this energy as chi or prana and then explaining its function and properties would have been, for me, a much more profitable avenue for science to have taken.

“Until it is tested a hypothesis is not truth”. I don’t like the word truth in this context, for me truth is universal and timeless and as such is much more than scientific method. What might be understood as scientific truth is a hypothesis at a particular moment in time that gets ratified by scientific methodology. Pirsig quoted Einstein “*Evolution has shown that at any given moment out of all*

*conceivable constructions a single one has always proved itself absolutely superior to the rest,”* and Pirsig focussed on “*at any given moment*”. “Did Einstein really mean to state that truth was a function of time?” If truth is timeless and permanent and if scientific truth depends on the moment then scientific truth is not permanent. If we consider the Buddhist characteristic of *anicca* then because all is changing so are the scientific hypotheses that the methodology calls “scientific truth” after ratification. Therefore scientific truth is not permanent. “Some scientific truths seemed to last for centuries, others for less than a year. Scientific truth was not dogma, good for eternity, but a temporal quantitative entity that could be studied like anything else.” Pirsig in Ch10.

“But there it was, the whole history of science, a clear story of continuously new and changing explanations of old facts.” This needs to be measured against *anicca*, what is the relationship between *anicca* and “old facts”? And “old facts” also need to be considered in terms of Dedekind cuts. An atom is a solid as opposed to a length but the approach is valid. Old facts discussed the atom almost as a fundamental unit, yet we have gone sub-atomic and it is now infinite. The facts of the atom as they were understood don’t appear to have changed (nucleus containing protons and neutrons with electrons orbiting). It is my understanding that this description has not been refuted by sub-atomic physics, it is just that it does not explain everything because science is now able to investigate within the atom. Can science ever fully explain the atom because there will always be spaces within spaces within spaces .... inside the atom? This is equivalent to “how many numbers are there between 0 and 1?” Mathematically the answer to such a question is termed uncountable and is infinite. Whilst the volume is finite, there are infinite spaces inside if we are able to develop technology to investigate further. Scientific understanding of the atom is based on the limitation of the measuring technology, and will therefore always change. Does that mean the “old facts” have changed? That is not a good question. Has that atom changed because we understand it more? Effectively yes, arguably no. It is not the “old fact” of the atom that needs to be considered in these situations but “scientific understanding of the atom”. And understanding is always changing – *anicca*. “Scientific truth was not dogma, good for eternity, but a temporal quantitative entity that could be studied like anything else.” But truth does not change, the truth that scientific understanding is always changing is always true. *Anicca* is always true. Can scientific understanding ever reach the end? No as in the case of the atom each space is infinite. Science cannot explain all and that brings us to consideration of this:-

*“Man tries to make for himself in the fashion that suits him best a simplified and intelligible picture of the world. He then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it -.He makes this cosmos and its construction the pivot of his emotional life in order to find in this way the peace and serenity which he cannot find in the narrow whirlpool of personal experience -.The supreme task-is to arrive at those universal elementary laws from which the cosmos can be built up by pure deduction. There is no logical path to these laws; only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them -.”* Pirsig quoting Einstein in Ch10 p.227/893.

That first sentence sounds very egotistical although it is definitely true of “man” in general – of science. On an individual level I feel understanding is so much different, and this difference very much depends on the level of maturity of the person. Maturity is a word I started to use more in [“The Arico Chronicles”](#), but its usage there very much applies in a “real life” context. Religions postulate a substantive Path. Once on this Path there are empirical observations of a common approach. Such observations are not observed methodically by science, and so is not recognised as truth or knowledge. Yet those on the Path feel a common experience. At the same time science has difficulty grasping the concept of Path because it has no way of measuring it, and Path does not fit into the ego of science. Scientists, the caretakers of knowledge, usually do not experience the Path because of their scientific ego and the way science directs them, and so when those on the Path might claim some form of knowledge science rejects the Path as non-measurable and therefore not knowledge.

In [Arico](#) I began using mature as a word that described increasing awareness once on the Path, and similarly postulated that an adult was a person who had started on the Path. Up until people have started on the Path their understanding is based on instinct and conditioning – adolescent awarenesses by nature. Moving beyond instinct and conditioning is the beginning of Path, and as one progresses along the Path the adult becomes more and more mature. Science has a conditioned role within the 1%-system now, this science is primarily geared towards technology that then leads to profits from technology. Research is funded by the 1%-system, and such research is not geared towards knowledge in general but science that can be turned into profit. This is far from the knowledge that Bacon dichotomised for the purpose of classification.

People on the Path with increasing maturity perceive the importance of Gaia, and they fit in with Gaia as much as possible, the Path is the Path of Nature. There is no fashioning, there is simply Nature and the Path is learning about Nature – not with any perspective, not fashioned in any way but simply learning. There is Nature, mature adults have a humility with regards to Nature, and work within unwritten laws of Nature continually following their Path of learning. Only Nature knows where this Path takes the mature, and such adults simply follow where Nature takes them. There is no fashioning or replacing Nature with a limited man-made cosmic plan. There is knowledge and infinity of knowledge, and a humble acceptance of an individual role within this.

However this is not the conditioned approach of most people, and this conditioned approach could be the one Einstein was describing. For most people their lives are conditioned. Nature makes provision for the immature to survive through instinct. But Nature expects that instinct to drop away, and the mature adult to follow the Path. However the ego clings to instinct because mature adults recognise the ego as a failing. In society this holding to ego is accepted behaviour, and it is behaviour that is passed on through the generations by conditioning. Each new child follows instinct as Nature intended but then as they grow older instead of that instinct falling away as they start on the Path of the adult, conditioning kicks in. What most people accept as normal behaviour is based on instinct and conditioning, and for adults beginning on the Path there is conflict between the Path and conditioning that often leaves the mature as outsiders. Ego conditions man to fashion a limited description of Nature, and lives within this limited view to overcome Nature. Whilst this sounds highly theoretical the conclusion is obviously observable. Humanity is slowly destroying the ecology. Humanity's limited science has recognised climate change yet egos in power in the US have paid for "climate deniers" to further their profits.

Within this conditioned ego-cosmos life is measured by the materialism of instinct and profit, and we have a substitution for peace – fear, where limited materialism satisfies the grown adolescents. There is no peace in this compromise, there is only the fear and the conditioned agreement that a family with a nice house, a regular job and an education for their children is sufficient for life's meaning. All of this conditioned agreement leads to increased profits for the 1% whilst the Path and maturity are eschewed from "normal" life. And sadly for most a life run by intuition, insight and creativity is lost. The "narrow



whirlpool of personal experience” is the turbulent life that comes from the ego accepting a life governed by instinct and conditioning. There is the egoic science that feels the axiomatic laws can be used to deduce Nature yet there is a bone to truth in recognising that such axiom would be determined by intuition. For science to consider that its laws can explain Nature is a contemptible arrogance that sadly most subscribe to.

Notice throughout all of this there is no attempt at scientific rationalising, it is empirical observation. This is an observation of the Path that those on the Path will recognise, and those not on the Path will consider this speculation or arrogance. As observation of and the following of the Path are the only hopes for humanity it is a deep sadness that science fails to recognise the religious branch of science. And fails to use adapted scientific methodologies to empirically verify what is the Path and what is charlatanism.

End

[\[Quote1\]](#)

It's sometimes argued that there's no real progress; that a civilization that kills multitudes in mass warfare, that pollutes the land and oceans with ever larger quantities of debris, that destroys the dignity of individuals by subjecting them to a forced mechanized existence can hardly be called an advance over the simpler hunting and gathering and agricultural existence of prehistoric times. But this argument, though romantically appealing, doesn't hold up. The primitive tribes permitted far less individual freedom than does modern society. Ancient wars were committed with far less moral justification than modern ones. A technology that produces debris can find, and is finding, ways of disposing of it without ecological upset. And the schoolbook pictures of primitive man sometimes omit some of the detractions of his primitive life—the pain, the disease, famine, the hard labor needed just to stay alive. From that agony of bare existence to modern life can be soberly described only as upward progress, and the sole agent for this progress is quite clearly reason itself.

[p107] [Back](#)

Reference1 – Search on you-tube for “Jane Fonda My Life so Far” -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3HATmTo-vc>

[Back](#)