# Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals Study Guide

## Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals by Robert M. Pirsig

BOOKRAGS

# Contents

# Plot Summary

Lila: An Inquiry into Morals by Robert Pirsig is the follow-up book to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. In this second volume, Pirsig moves beyond the ideas that he illustrates in his first novel to explore these concepts even more deeply. The book is the story of the main character, Phaedrus, a very thinly veiled version of Pirsig himself, sailing up the Hudson river with his newly acquired passenger, Lila. Juxtaposed with the story is Phaedrus's philosophical narrative, as he explains the piece of persuasive literature he is writing. He explains that this project originates with his friend, Professor Dusenberry, and a peyote-induced vision quest ceremony on an Indian reservation. Phaedrus begins studying the field of anthropology in hopes that his ideas can be heard, only to realize that the field of anthropology is set up in such a way as to reject ideas such as his own. He decides instead to operate under the umbrella of Metaphysics, where his concepts can truly blossom and flourish in any direction they choose. In essence, Phaedrus comes to realize that he is going to have to chip away at the very foundations of science and philosophy in order to be heard and that he is the best man to tackle such a mammoth undertaking.

According to Phaedrus, the universe is divided up into the "static" categories biological, inorganic, social and intellectual. The opposite of static quality is "Dynamic Quality," which cannot be defined. Phaedrus's ideas are attacked by "devil's advocate" character Richard Rigel whom Phaedrus determines to be steeped in Victorian idealisms. Phaedrus sails on with Lila while pondering not only Victorian ideals, but the progression of our culture from the time of the Victorians, through the World Wars, the Hippie revolution and up to present day.

In the meantime, Pirsig is telling the story of Lila, the woman whom Phaedrus picks up in a bar in Kingston, and who is experiencing a mental breakdown. Phaedrus, who has had his own experiences with insanity, ponders the concept of sane versus insane in light of his exposure to Lila. Phaedrus and Lila dock in Manhattan and are thrust into the chaos and corruption of the city. Phaedrus meets with Robert Redford to discuss the movie rights for his first book, and also with his publisher while he is in town. Things do not go well for Lila once she is separated from Phaedrus, and she spirals further down into her alternate reality. She eventually makes her way back to Phaedrus's boat, where he finds her in a catatonic trance, cradling a baby doll that she has fished out of the river. Phaedrus realizes that he is going to have to take care of her, a fact that he first resents but then later comes to accept. After some drama with an old acquaintance of Lila's, she and Phaedrus leave Manhattan for Sandy Hook, a harbor up the Hudson River.

Richard Rigel meets up with them there, and Lila decides to leave Phaedrus's boat and travel with Rigel instead, which is actually what her goal has been all along. Rigel tells Phaedrus that Lila claims Phaedrus is trying to kill her. Rigel also reveals that he has been Lila's obsession for some time now, and that she chased him all over the state of New York. Phaedrus is in a state of shock over Lila's immoral lie and her sudden departure. Once she is gone, however, Phaedrus is able to find closure of the "Lila"

chapter of his life, and experiences a profound feeling of freedom and a fresh start. He buries her doll, which she leaves on the boat, and debates whether or not he will begin where he left off on his project. He decides to return to the idealisms of the Indians in order to simply sum up the crux of his theory—that "good" is a noun rather than an adjective.

# Part I: Chapters 1-15

## Part I: Chapters 1-15 Summary

The main character, Phaedrus, is introduced the morning after a night of drinking. He is waking in the berth of his sailboat with Lila, a woman he met in the bar. The reader is taken back to the scene at the bar the previous evening, and is shown how Phaedrus encounters Lila. Phaedrus is there drinking with his new friends, Capella and Rigel. They are discussing his travels up the Hudson river by boat. Lila enters the scene in a rage, seeking out her boyfriend and his new girlfriend. When Phaedrus meets Lila, he gets the feeling he has seen her before and recounts the times and places where that may have occurred. Lila tells Phaedrus that the boyfriend invited her on a trip and is now switching his affections to someone new. Lila and Phaedrus drink and dance, and then leave together to spend the night on his boat.

In Chapter 2, Phaedrus wakes and begins remembering things from the previous night. He sees Lila's suitcase and remembers she went back to the boyfriend's boat, packed her things in anger and re-located to Phaedrus's boat. It was an uncomfortable scene, and Phaedrus is apprehensive about his new traveling partner. He decides they will be together for a short time, as surely she will want to disembark in Manhattan. He realizes suddenly that the addition of her suitcase in the small space has almost caused his tray of "slips"—nearly eleven thousand of them—to spill onto the floor. He begins thinking about these slips in detail, giving the reader a further insight into his journey and the project upon which he is working. These slips represent different fragments of information—observations that he has been recording and attempting to organize. The overall subject of this collection of thoughts he calls a "Metaphysics of Quality," (p. 22). We learn a little more about Phaedrus towards the end of this chapter, including that he is an established intellectual. He muses over one of the slips randomly, which says "Dusenberry" on it. Here we are introduced to Verne Dusenberry, associate English professor at Montana State College, who dies of a brain tumor in 1966.

In Chapter 3, Phaedrus begins to recount the time and place he knew Professor Dusenberry, who was an eccentric man and emphatically enthusiastic about Indians. He is writing his PhD in anthropology about the Chippewa-Cree Indians, and is the advisor to all the Native-American students on the college campus where Phaedrus is a fellow faculty member. Dusenberry is shunned in anthropological circles because he does not accept the idea of "objectivity" as an anthropological criterion; to do so, he asserts, is to alienate oneself from the people. He is particularly interested in the religion of Native-American cultures. By mid-chapter, he invites Phaedrus to an Indian reservation for a vision quest ceremony involving peyote. During the course of the night Phaedrus realizes that he feels a certain connectivity with the Native American people as well, and that they somehow remind him of the heroes of American western films. Phaedrus realizes that the American Indians are familiar because they are the originators of "frontier values." The frontier men enthusiastically imitate the Indians, and pass their stoic, hardworking attitudes onto their successors, to whom the source is invisible.

Phaedrus's entire project is originally centered around what he discovers that night. In time, however, his thoughts spiral him into something far more complex. From this original idea, he expands to the conclusion that the American Indian is the originator of the American lifestyle and personality. Phaedrus is planning to write his book, essentially, as a piece of persuasion.

In Chapter 4, Phaedrus is thinking of the time of Dusenberry's death, and how shortly thereafter, he heads to the mountains of Montana to try and sketch out a plan for his book. The more he learns about the field of anthropology, however, the clearer it becomes that what he has to say will be roundly considered unacceptable. His ideas will be discarded until he does things by the rules of anthropology. He decides that the idea of anthropology having no "values" is the best place to launch his attack on the "wall of prejudice" that he has hit. Franz Boas, Columbia University's first professor of Anthropology, lays down the rules for Anthropology as a science, and Phaedrus realizes that the key will be to re-examine Boas's philosophical attitudes. Boas has merely established a method of anthropological investigation, and Phaedrus's theories, as an "armchair anthropologist" will be considered irrelevant because he will be able to offer no empirical evidence. Phaedrus calls this "Victorian" science, which insists that science is only a method for determining what is true. He concludes that because patterns of culture do not operate in accordance with the laws of physics, you cannot prove scientifically that a certain culture has certain values. Hence, science has no official values. When he leaves the mountains of Montana, he does so with his ideas in a box and the knowledge that he cannot work his theories within the constraints of anthropology. It is then that he discovers an article on genius and "failure" by William James Sidis. Sidis is a boy genius, who is castigated by the press and falls out of favor, dying in 1944 having essentially accomplished nothing with his life. It turns out that Sidis spends most of his time writing, and one of the pieces he produces contains the exact same thesis on Indians that Phaedrus is contemplating. Phaedrus concludes, gravely, that if a man like Sidis can come to the same conclusion he has, and is lambasted practically to the point of exile because of it, then the problem with the thesis is not its validity, the problem is that people will not be interested in accepting such a theory.

In Chapter 5, Phaedrus decides that he needs to expand the format of anthropological thinking, and present his ideas in a way no one has ever considered. He decides that the key to this new format will be the concept of "values." The idea of values as being something important in the field of anthropology is swept under the rug because it is deemed improper for consideration by natural sciences. Values, after all, are hard to define and open to interpretation, thus cannot be a scientific variable. What is being overlooked, however, is the certainty that though they may be difficult to define, values are in actual practice. Phaedrus decides that though values may be vague, the idea that they should not be used for primary classification is wrong. Values are not vague when you apply them to actual experience. Further, the rules for the way the field is discussed should have originally been set up differently; he will not try to reconstruct the ideas of anthropology, he will instead work his theories under a new heading: Metaphysics. He realizes that if there is a way to close the gap between anthropology and the understanding of the Indians, Metaphysics is the bridge. Phaedrus settles on the idea that his project should be called a "Metaphysics of Quality" because it is a contradiction

in terms; in order for something to be a metaphysics, it must be definable. Quality is indefinable and thus the idea is a logical absurdity. The "Metaphysics of Quality" will restate the foundations of a philosophy that emphasizes science as the only source of knowledge and will do so with more precision. It will assert that values are empirical evidence, more empirical in fact than "subjects" or "objects." Value is between the subject and the object, and cannot be assigned to them. Phaedrus intends to make Quality a separate category all its own, and show how it contains both subjects and objects, to prove that things make much more sense when it is assumed that "Quality is the primary empirical reality of the world," (p.67).

In Chapter 6, Phaedrus, Richard Rigel and Bill Capella go to breakfast at the bar/restaurant where they drink the night before. Over breakfast, Rigel launches into a scathing diatribe directed at Phaedrus and Lila. We learn that Rigel is a lawyer and knows Lila very well; he disagrees with her morality. Rigel wants to know if Phaedrus believes that Lila has "Quality." Rigel explains that he has problems with the ideas in Phaedrus's first book and begins to voice them. Rigel asserts that Phaedrus ties his critics' hands, because he refuses to define Quality, thus allowing them no opportunity to give him any opposition. Phaedrus retorts by saying that "Quality" is the universal source of things. The "objects" upon which people disagree will vary and waver, and refuses to concede that Lila is a person of low quality. Rigel explains to Phaedrus that, to him, quality is found in the values he has grown up with and used all his life. Refusing to define Quality makes it a very dangerous commodity. It allows the people who read his book to invent their own morality during a time (the 1960s) of revolution, granting people the right to justify their radical beliefs. By the end of this rant, Phaedrus is stunned. He must set sail, as must Rigel and Capella. When the men return to the dock, Lila is waiting for Phaedrus on the deck of his boat.

In Chapter 7, Phaedrus and Lila set sail up the Hudson River, and Phaedrus is lost in thought for most of the day. Lila is angry because there is no food on the boat. Phaedrus questions Lila about Rigel, in an attempt to understand why he would so scathingly reproach him for his philosophical ideas until it begins to irritate her. As they travel up the river, it occurs to Phaedrus that Rigel is inflated with Victorian virtue, an aristocratic approach to morality that must be administered to those of lower upbringing who did not "get it." Phaedrus concludes that the Victorians are "gaudy, fraudulent, ornamental peacocks" (p. 96) whose entire essence is nothing more than smug posing. For them, the pose is the Quality, and the Quality is the "social corset." As a result of this egotistical idealism, the natural effect is World War I, after which society overcorrects with the roaring 20's. In effect, Victorianism's long-term effect is to leave a "moral vacuum" (p.97) in its wake, a void in which we are still living. Phaedrus asserts that Rigel really has no idea what he is talking about; he is just trying to be a good Victorian. He regrets that he can do little more than sit stunned after Rigel's tirade, but realizes that he cannot have answered him easily. Phaedrus begins to realize that in order to combat this way of thinking, he will have to go back to the idea that Quality and morality are identical, and that they are the primary moral order of the world.

In Chapter 8, Phaedrus acknowledges that the idea of "Quality" is a difficult one to understand and accept at first; it is nothing more than a vague idea meant to tell us

what we think about something. He declares that his "Metaphysics of Quality" explains more of the world and explains it better than "subject-object" metaphysics because it is more inclusive. The reason value has been avoided by empiricists in the past is because the deductions surrounding it are made under false premises, and no one wants to challenge the foundations of science as they are. Phaedrus uses the example of the Platypus, which is a zoological paradox, displaying tendencies of mammals as well as reptiles. In order to accept a creature such as the platypus, science needs to create a new order in which to classify it. It is the same with Quality; scientists cannot classify it so they claim there must be something wrong with it. When we take apart the "subject-object" universe and put it back together as the "value-centered Metaphysics" universe, all the Platypi of science fit in much more easily. The fields of mathematics, physics, biology, history, and law all have value foundations built into them that reveal many previously hidden and misunderstood things.

In Chapter 9, Phaedrus begins explaining the idea of "first division" and why, if this first division is incorrect, the system of classification that you build off of that foundation can never be completely correct. He realizes that if you are going to take on something so huge, you have to be prepared to deal with people like Richard Rigel and have a ready-made answer prepared. However, he asserts, one cannot create a "perfect" metaphysics, any more than one can create a chess strategy that will win every time. It is an endless cycle of one position taken, that position leading to questions, leading to different positions and so forth. In reading Ruth Benedict's Patterns of Culture, he reads the case-history of a Zuni Indian "brujo" (defined as a person who acts outside of society or against cultural authority) who, because he does not fit into his own society, is branded as a "witch" and tortured until he is crippled. He dispatches help from outside his culture, and the priests of the tribe who torture him are imprisoned. The Zuni brujo is, later in his life, made governor of his tribe and dies a well-respected man. Phaedrus concludes that the story is one of good vs. evil, but how does one determine which is which? Phaedrus ponders this until he realizes that Benedict has missed the moral of the story—that the tribal frame of values by which the priests justify torturing the man is "static good:" the fixed laws and traditions of a culture and the values that underlie them. The opposite to static good, then, is "dynamic good:" ideals that lie outside of the culture that must be continually rediscovered as culture evolves. The brujo's values are in contrast with what the tribe knows and understands; thus, he symbolizes the precursor for cultural change. Phaedrus ponders that the dynamic is that which is ever-changing or new, whereas the static are ruts into which we fall. However, Phaedrus realizes that it is unfair to negatively connotation the idea of the static, as the dynamic cannot exist without it. Static is truly the opposite of dynamic, but without it, the dynamic is in chaos. Static stabilizes Dynamic.

In Chapter 10, we are taken away from the philosophical ponderings of Phaedrus, and taken back into the narrative between he and Lila. This chapter is from Lila's perspective, and she is thinking about how hungry she is, and how much her head hurts from the night before, and how much money she has left. She decides to try to talk to Phaedrus and develop a relationship with him but it does not go well. He speaks in an intellectual way that is beyond her. She decides that she may wish to accompany him to Florida, where he is ultimately sailing. Before long, it becomes clear that she and

Phaedrus are incompatible. She acknowledges that there is something wrong with her, but no one will tell her what it is. The howling of the wind that has picked up outside, along with the sudden roaring of the engine brings on a psychotic episode.

In Chapter 11, Phaedrus continues to contemplate the question: Does Lila have Quality? He determines that she is a person with a set of fixed static patterns with whom it is pointless to argue. He determines that she is composed of "static patterns of value and these patterns are evolving toward a Dynamic Quality," (p.139). Although life is just an extension of the properties of atoms, in the Metaphysics of Quality it is the static patterns of value that are evolving. According to The Theory of Evolution, when viewed in a cause-and-effect way, man is controlled by the universe while his body is not. It brings to mind the question of "survival of the fittest." It is illogical for life to survive. Evolutionists say that "no goal or pattern has ever appeared toward which life is heading." Naturally there is no mechanism towards which life is heading; Dynamic Quality can only appear in the "spur of the moment," (p.143). Phaedrus discovers, that the Law of Gravity, a static pattern of the order in the universe, is continuously challenged and disobeyed. A different theory of evolution can be inferred; life deliberately and defiantly works around the physical laws. The patterns of life are "constantly evolving in response to something better than that which these laws have to offer," (p.144). The Metaphysics of Quality unites the theory of evolution with the idea that life has purpose by expanding understanding into a larger metaphysical structure in order to accommodate both of these contradicting doctrines. Phaedrus calls this the "migration of static patterns toward Dynamic Quality," (p.145). He asserts that this idea fits the facts of evolution and allows us to interpret them in new ways as well. He sees that the evolution of Evolution must be "a process of ratchet-like steps in which there is a Dynamic movement forward...and a static latching-on of the gain that has been made," (p.146). Without the dynamic quality, the organism cannot form or grow, and without the static quality, it cannot last; both are essential.

In Chapter 12, Phaedrus concludes that the "static patterns of value" consist of four systems: inorganic patterns, biological patterns, social patterns and intellectual patterns. These static value patterns build off of one another, but operate almost independently. Phaedrus decides that the reason no one before him has come up with the idea that everything is value is because it is more confusing than it is clarifying. However, that confusion is removed when value is sorted out according to levels of evolution. Phaedrus suggests that everything, not just life, is an ethical activity and nothing else. When inorganic patterns of reality create life, the Metaphysics of quality suggests that it is "better" and that this "betterness" (p. 157) is an "elementary unit of ethics upon which all right and wrong can be based." This breakthrough, the idea that ethics and science are integrated into a single system, sends Phaedrus into a frenzy and he realizes that he had better "static latch" the idea quickly and thoroughly.

In Chapter 13, Phaedrus goes on to ponder that the evolutionary structure of the Metaphysics of Quality shows that there are many moral systems. Once we deal with morals on the basis of reason, we can analyze moral arguments with greater precision. He asserts that an evolutionary morality suggests that a societal structure will preserve itself as a whole before the individuals in the society, but to kill an individual is to kill

their thoughts as well. It is more moral for an idea to kill a society that it is for a society to kill an idea. If the priests would have killed the Zuni brujo, for example, they would have harmed the society's ability to grow and change, given the artistic and civic contributions he made in the end. This is dynamic morality. He decides that Lila has biological quality, but not social quality. Intellectually, she has no value whatsoever, but most importantly, she is ferociously dynamic. Rigel, he concludes, is doing nothing more than applauding a traditional, socio-biological code of morals that he does not even understand. Phaedrus concludes that this century has been both one of fantastic growth and at the same time, one of fantastic social destruction. He and Lila dock at the Nyack Yacht Club for the evening.

In Chapter 14, the point of view switches again back to Lila. She is trying to remember what set her off earlier; she remembers that she got frightened and then she fell asleep. Lila decides that she wants to stick with the Captain for a while longer because he needs someone like her, and because it will be of her benefit to do so. She and the captain pick up some groceries at the local store and are about to head back to the dock. Back on the boat, Lila and Phaedrus cook dinner and talk about who they are and tell stories of their lives. Lila offers to accompany Phaedrus to Florida, if he would like her to come. Phaedrus answers her by explaining that he wishes to study her. He learns that she was once married and had a baby at seventeen. Both the husband and the baby are dead. She learns that Phaedrus was once studying to become a chemistry professor. He digs deeper into who she is until she begins to take offense. She decides that his questions are just a waste of time, and that while he claims he is trying to find out who she is, she is whatever his questions want to turn her into. Phaedrus, tired and frustrated, excuses himself for bed.

In Chapter 15, alone now, Phaedrus begins to reflect on what Lila has said. He falls asleep with his thoughts. He is awakened from a dream by Lila, and they make love. He decides that the two people who have just made love are not really Lila and Phaedrus. The "first" Lila, the one he ate dinner with and eventually annoyed with his questions is not the same Lila that comes in and makes love with him. Sexual selection is dynamic, he concludes, and it is what has propelled life beyond its simple, single-celled, bacterial beginnings. The "Lilas" of the world are the beings that choose who to join with and if among the selection are males deformed or unable to satisfy her in some way, they will not be chosen. Phaedrus thinks again of William James Sidis, who felt abstinence was necessary in order to devote himself fully to his intellect. Phaedrus thinks that it should be possible to have both intellectual and sexual stimulation in a well-rounded life. In condemning sexuality, he reasons, we are condemning static biological antagonism to social and intellectual Quality. The chapter closes out with Phaedrus deciding that his own cells are sick of intellectualizing. He falls asleep thankful that his body and Lila's body can lay side by side and pay no attention to the social and intellectual differences of the people that own them.

# Part I: Chapters 1-15 Analysis

In Chapter 1, we are introduced to the two main characters, Phaedrus and Lila. The book begins as a narrative, giving us a time and place in which the action can occur. Phaedrus meets Lila in a bar and they drink and dance and end up leaving together to spend the night on Phaedrus's boat. Phaedrus is in the bar with Richard Rigel and crewmate Bill Capella. Rigel seems to know Lila upon her arrival, and she is clearly very angry. She is there looking for her boyfriend who has ditched her for another woman. Lila is not afraid to speak her mind, nor to make a scene in a public place. When Phaedrus sees Lila, it is interesting that he remembers her from somewhere. He re-enacts a scene in his head where he may have encountered her on a streetcar where she and a friend were giggling at him. He recalls the scene with sadness, knowing how he looks in the eyes of the women. The reader is unable to tell, definitively, if he literally means it was Lila herself, or if it was another woman who looks like this Lila he is seeing in the bar—an idealized version. Phaedrus clearly has self-image issues, and the way he is perceived by others is a question always in the back of his mind. The scene in the bar is boisterously loud, with a jukebox whose speaker has been set way too high. Phaedrus lets himself "go" in the bar scene, dancing with abandon in a way he never has before, and is "rewarded" with Lila's company.

In the second chapter, it is the morning after the bar scene and Phaedrus is awake while Lila sleeps. We are introduced to Phaedrus's "Metaphysics of Quality" and we learn that the book itself is a philosophical vehicle for Pirsig's ponderings through the thoughts of Phaedrus. Phaedrus is clearly a thinly veiled Robert Pirsig, as Phaedrus is the author of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Pirsig's first novel. Phaedrus, we learn, is working on a huge project where he is trying to sort out his ponderings into a persuasive piece of literature. He chooses to record his ideas on "slips" rather than cataloguing them into a volume of some sort. He feels it is important to be able to access the information randomly. He likens this idea to a post office, where patrons can access their individual boxes anytime and at random, rather than having to wait in line. He explains that rigidity is deadly in a case such as this and that information organized in small chunks which can be accessed and sequenced at random causes it to become far more valuable. Phaedrus believes that random access is at the heart of organic growth. Phaedrus is presented to the reader in this chapter as an established intellectual. He is often interrupted from his work with the slips and their topics by someone calling and asking if he will lecture or to congratulate him on his book, and these interruptions block him from the flow of his thoughts which are essential to his project. Thus, he has decided to travel via his sailboat to gain the isolation needed to think and work. It almost seems like he is trying to rationalize his isolation here, carefully showing the reader how essential it is that he be alone. Lila thrown into the mix presents an interesting wrench in his plans. The fact that Pirsig calls Phaedrus's randomly accessed information chunks "slips" is significant from a foreshadowing point of view. As the story unfolds we see Phaedrus "slipping" in other ways, and Lila as well.

In Chapter 3, Phaedrus begins to reminisce about the time he knows Professor Dusenberry, who is in essence, his inspiration for this project as well as his mentor. It is

because of Dusenberry that Phaedrus takes an interest in Native Americans in the first place and without Dusenberry's passion, Phaedrus's vision quest may not have effected him quite so deeply. Phaedrus remembers thinking of Dusenberry's view of the field of anthropology as being eccentric in the beginning, but really coming to understand it in the end. Indeed, Phaedrus becomes like Dusenberry himself in the end to a certain degree—isolated, eccentric, intellectual and misunderstood. Phaedrus comes to the conclusion in this chapter that the Native American people are the originators of American frontier values, and it is partially thanks to Dusenberry that Phaedrus finds it unacceptable that the Indians are never given credit for this contribution. Phaedrus, in a way, picks up where Dusenberry has left off, but has no idea how far he will go from this beginning point.

In Chapter 4, Phaedrus reaches the mountains of Montana and is reading everything he can get his hands on about anthropology. He is expecting this to be a very fulfilling experience, when in fact, the more he reads, the more frustrated he becomes. It is in this chapter that he begins to see the prejudices of the field of anthropology and the exclusions that the glaring gaps within the field of study create. There is no room for ideas like his, because there is no way for anthropology to accommodate them. Phaedrus decides that if this is the case, he will just have to re-write the foundations of science in order to incorporate his theories. Some people might consider this an incredibly arrogant thing to do; to go back and question a foundation that has stood for many, many years. It is, however, a revolutionary thing to do and, historically, the only way to advance a culture—to dare to question authority and establishment. Pirsig goes further into this later when Phaedrus discovers the Zuni brujo and equates him to dynamic quality. In doing so, Pirsig is describing Phaedrus himself.

Once we reach Chapter 5, the engine that is Phaedrus's mind has sprung to life, and it is churning out idea after idea, stacking them one on top of the other. He begins to think of the first divisions of science—he is going back to the roots to figure out what the problem is. This leads him to begin thinking in terms of value, which leads him to understand that the idea is overlooked because it cannot be defined, and so on. This is a parallel to the sailing of his boat; kicking back and "thinking" all day might look to an outsider like relaxation, just like sailing around all the time on a sailboat would. In reality, the sailing of his boat is a non-stop, constant chore, and there is always something to be done. Developing this Metaphysics of Quality is also a non-stop chore. One question leads to another and another; one answer also churns out many answers and questions in its wake. It is in this chapter that Phaedrus begins to understand that no matter what he does, Anthropology will not accommodate him. He must operate under a different heading. He decides that this heading will be that of Metaphysics. He revels in the idea that a "Metaphysics of Quality" is a contradiction in terms, a logical absurdity. This is not the only logical absurdity at play, however. There is a great deal of irony also in the fact that Phaedrus is a man who lives a life of extreme social isolation, who is trying to write a book on the study of man. Eventually he does come to realize that his ideas must have some validity because when applied against the framework of many different disciplines, the formerly unexplainable suddenly makes sense. The trouble is, how will he be able to tell anyone about his discoveries? He is so isolated, so eccentric; he is the

only one who could draw these conclusions, but is the worst person for the job of conveying them.

In Chapter 6, Phaedrus and Rigel have the all-important conversation debating whether or not Lila has quality. This question is not an easy one for Phaedrus to answer, nor are the rest of Rigel's arguments easy to combat. Rigel is the "devil's advocate" of this story, needed in order to see Phaedrus's philosophy from the contrary position. In order to really understand what Pirsig is trying to say, we must see his ideas in action, not just on paper. This is true of all philosophy; it is abstract until viewed in practical application. The best way for Pirsig to start this dialogue is to introduce Rigel, who disagrees with Phaedrus, and then Pirsig can spend the rest of the book explaining why he, Phaedrus, is right. Rigel accuses Phaedrus of tying his critics' hands in his first book because he refuses to define quality, allowing no opportunity for an opposing point of view. Clearly, this is something that Pirsig comes across after the publishing of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance which he feels needs to be handled. In fact Rigel seems to present several different arguments that must have been lobbed at Pirsig and this book is clearly a way to volley those back to his critics. Phaedrus is stumped by Rigel's arguments, and his tirade folds a dog-ear on the pages of Phaedrus's mind, so he can set sail and come back later to thinking about Victorian virtues and what they mean not only to his theory, but to the concept of our culture as a whole.

In Chapter 7, Phaedrus and Lila set sail down the Hudson River, and Phaedrus contemplates the idealisms of the Victorian era. He concludes that their sense of morality is a fundamentally flawed, aristocratic sensibility and that this is the morality to which Rigel clings. Also, Phaedrus concludes that the arrogance of Victorianism leads us to World War One, and creates a moral vacuum in which we still exist today. Pirsig is trying to explain to us, as the reader, why we think what we think today, what the history behind it is. One cannot understand what they think they know until it is dissected. In essence, Pirsig is taking the scalpel to the idealisms that have become so ingrained that we have forgotten they even exist. Only then can we see the components of these patterns in order to fully understand them. Rigel, like the rest of us, would go about blindly defending Victorian virtues forever because they are all he and we really know. By the end of this chapter, Phaedrus is conceding the idea that he is going to have to come up with an argument that will combat the arguments of the Rigels of the world—in other words, Pirsig's critics. However, coming up with a perfect, complete answer is going to be tricky. Maybe impossible. The questions he faces are complicated and involved and so are the answers.

In Chapter 8, Phaedrus admits that his ideas may be hard to accept at first, but mainly the reason no one has thought of them before is because no one wants to take on the huge challenge of re-constructing scientific thought. The only way to do so is to view it from a metaphysical perspective. Phaedrus concludes that what he is essentially trying to do is to re-categorize traditional thought away from a subject-object pattern and into a pattern of value and quality instead. In doing so, Phaedrus assures us that much that has been previously misunderstood in the universe will suddenly begin to fall into place. Again we see philosophy in practical application when Phaedrus tells the story of the platypus. Everyone knows what a platypus is, mainly because it is such a unique oddity

that elementary education feels compelled to disclose it to us, thus it is well known. When we think of a platypus, we already equate it with the concept of unique individuality—a creature so unique that science had to create a new category in order to define it. Pirsig is telling us that quality is the same thing—this allows us to relate it to something we know and understand. He is telling us that if we can just put our prejudices aside for a minute, and try to see what he is saying—that a value-centered metaphysics universe can explain much more than a subject-object universe—we, as a culture and society, will be the ones to benefit in the end.

In Chapter 9, we are introduced to the all-important ideas of static quality and dynamic quality. While static good is stability, dynamic good is chaos, and one cannot survive without the other. In the meantime, between Phaedrus's philosophizing, the story between Phaedrus and Lila is developing, and we are learning that while she seems like a very basic, simple person, driven by her biological needs more than anything, she is also very complicated in her own way. Also, she has a mental illness. She represents the Zuni brujo; she is the definition of dynamic quality. Everything she does is dynamic, ever changing and unpredictable because of her mental condition. Phaedrus concludes that the brujo and the "Lilas" of society are the most valuable people in the culture, as they are the only way society can truly change. Pirsig subtly imbeds the idea that Phaedrus is also the same as the Zuni brujo. He has battled mental illness as well, and he is developing a concept so far outside of the box that it will undoubtedly be scorned and discarded. However, this does not stop Phaedrus. He will go so far as to deconstruct the foundations of science as we know it, as we have known it since the beginnings of recorded history, in order to be heard. How much more "Zuni brujo" can one person be? He is out there on the edge of rational thinking, challenging and questioning like a true contrarian, in the name of the greater good. Thus, he, too is the definition of Dynamic Quality.

In Chapter 10, we see things for a while through Lila's eyes. The reader needs a break from Phaedrus's ponderings, for one, and also it is important for Pirsig to allow the perspective of someone less intellectual to view Phaedrus for a while. It is easy to sympathize with Lila in this chapter. She has too much to drink the night before, is hung over and there is no food to eat on the boat; she is dreadfully uncomfortable. In any event, she decides she should just make the best of it, and get to know this strange man with whom she is now traveling. She attempts to reach out to him, but because of the gap in their levels of intellect, it goes badly. She and Phaedrus speak of Florida, and she remembers with a great deal of fondness the time she spent there. Indeed, she seems to view Florida as an idyllic paradise to which she would very much wish to return. As the reader gets to know Lila, we find out that she speaks rather simply and thinks fairly basic thoughts, but we cannot help but hope she does stay with Phaedrus for a few reasons. We get the feeling that Lila could use someone to take care of her as much as Phaedrus could use someone to talk to. Things get strange when she goes below deck and we can see her disintegrating, getting inexplicably colder and colder until when the engine starts up and the wind begins to howl, she goes into an "episode." Clearly, there is something wrong with her mentally—not only because of this but also because of her tendency to become irrationally angry. She knows there is something

wrong with her, but no one will explain it to her fully. She has obviously been looked at by psychiatrists who have given her medication to help regulate her mental state.

In Chapter 11, Phaedrus is still wrestling with the Rigel argument: does Lila have Quality? Rather than defining her as simplistic, he defines her using the Metaphysics of Quality and says that she has a set of fixed static patterns with which it is pointless to argue. Lila is like the rest of us in this way—the reason Pirsig's theories bounce off of people is because of these set static patterns. This gets Phaedrus thinking about the idea of evolution and how this puzzle-piece fits into his theories. He thinks of the idea of survival of the fittest, and how the Lilas of the human race are the ones who decide who will survive, because they are the ones who chose whom to mate with. In this chapter he also introduces us to the idea of "static-latching," dynamic steps forward and the static latching-on of that gain. The Dynamic and the static are yin and yang; without the Dynamic, there is no growth, but without the static, there is no stability. Both elements are essential to survival.

In Chapter 12, Phaedrus is going into deeper detail regarding the elements of the static patterns of value, breaking them down into the categories of inorganic, biological, social and intellectual. Phaedrus explains that he understands that his ideas are, at times, more confusing than they are clarifying, and that this is possibly the reason no one has before wandered down this same path of thought. In saying this, Pirsig, via Phaedrus, is trying to relate to the common thinker. Yes, it is confusing and it is a lot to swallow for the reader, the inhabitant of the twentieth century. Pirsig/Phaedrus promises that this will make more sense when we sort value out according to the levels of evolution. Life and all of its components, in moving forward in their natural patterns, are performing an ethical activity—gravitating towards their natural preferences. Again we go back to the idea of survival of the fittest. The pursuit of Quality is the pursuit of "betterness," and this idea, according to Phaedrus, is the first division of ethics upon which all right and wrong can be based. Interestingly, in chapter twenty-nine, the idea of insanity is described in this same way; when an insane person goes to their "happy place," they have found their "betterness." Insanity is not the sickness, according to this theory, insanity is the cure. At the end of this chapter, Phaedrus comes to the conclusion that ethics and science are integrated into a single system, and the idea greatly excites him. He recognizes that he must "static-latch" this idea before it escapes him.

Chapter 13 is really just a continuation of Chapter 12; Phaedrus is still lost in his thoughts, trying to untangle his theories. He is thinking further on the idea of evolution, and the fact that there are many moral systems. Phaedrus is pondering the idea that to kill an individual is to kill their ideas as well, thus potentially harming the ability of the society as a whole to grow and thrive and change. Again, Pirsig is paralleling Phaedrus and Lila with the Zuni brujo and justifying in accordance to the Metaphysics of Quality the contrarians of society—as they all three are. Lila, Phaedrus and the Zuni brujo are all proponents of the pursuit of Dynamic Quality that he is talking about in this chapter. Lila, he concludes, using his categorization of the different elements of the static patterns of value, has biological value but not social or intellectual value—especially not that. The important thing about Lila is that she is ferociously Dynamic. It is becoming easier for Phaedrus now to let go of the conversation he had with Richard Rigel

because he is able to conclude that Rigel is just being a good little Victorian, applauding morals that he scarcely understands. Pirsig again is showing us, the reader, that we are like Rigel's character in this regard. Again, we are following a social moral code blindly, not even realizing our blindness, let alone the pattern. By the end of the chapter, Phaedrus and Lila have arrived at their destination, the Nyack Yacht Club, where they dock for the night.

In Chapter 14 we are back inside Lila's head. Again we see how fiercely Lila is driven by her biological needs and we are able to relate to her in a very human way. It is pretty simple; she is basely instinctual in her need for survival, and her hunger has immediate precedence. When she and Phaedrus, "the captain," as she calls him, go shopping for groceries, there is an interesting interaction at the store. The woman who works in the store is first unnecessarily rude to Lila in the aisle and then there is an ugly scene at the cash register with a local girl whom the woman handles roughly. Lila reacts almost violently to the woman's treatment of the little girl, going so far as to say she is going to involve the police—all over a stranger. Later in the chapter we learn that Lila's infant daughter was accidentally killed in the crib when she smothered in her blanket. Lila's husband was also killed. As she is telling these stories, you can almost physically see her walls going up, as these memories are too painful to really remember. She warns Phaedrus not to push her for information. As we learn more about Lila, we are able to understand her actions on another level. She tells Phaedrus that she reacted to the situation in the store the way she did because she disapproves of "mean" people and that people should be nicer to kids. What she is really saying is that she wishes people would be nicer to her, and in general, and that she wishes she had had a happier childhood. Also, there is an instinctual protection that Lila feels towards the little girl, and wished to intervene because she failed to protect her own daughter. Lila then, after eating and satisfying that biological need, lashes out at Phaedrus when he presses her for answers to his questions in his attempt to study and analyze her. She does not want him analyzing her, because she does not want to know these answers for herself. She is mentally fragile enough as it is, and certainly does not need Phaedrus steering her in any specific direction according to whatever answer he is seeking. She is reacting angrily to the idea of him turning her into what he wants her to be. Lila clings desperately to herself and her reality and the more Phaedrus chips away at that, the worse it is for her. By the end of the chapter, Phaedrus and Lila have finished eating and Phaedrus goes below to bed. The two need to separate for a while and each go their own way with their thoughts.

Chapter 15 begins with Phaedrus in a deep sleep, when Lila comes in and arouses him and they make love. Despite the fact that they are arguing not so long before, here they are making love again just like the night before. This is the reaction of their biological selves, who ignore the protests of their intellectual selves. This interaction gets Phaedrus to thinking, once Lila has fallen asleep, whether or not abstinence is necessary to devote one's self to the intellect. Phaedrus believes that it should be possible to have both. He muses how strange it is that there is the Lila and Phaedrus from above decks, and there is the Lila and Phaedrus of below decks as well. This dichotomy exists in us all to some extent. Of course we all have many different sides, but the difference between who we are in waking hours and who we are when we

become lovers is a phenomenon in and of itself. In regards to "studying" Lila, Phaedrus discovers that it is like an archeological dig—burrowing through lots of garbage in an attempt to find the treasure. Part one, and chapter fifteen, end with Phaedrus wanting to drift away into sleep, tired from the day and from intellectualizing. He is just happy that his body and Lila's body, for now, are ignoring their intellectual differences in favor of lying side by side.

# Part II, Chapters 16-23

## Part II, Chapters 16-23 Summary

Chapter 16: Phaedrus and Lila make it to New York City, and they are meeting her friends, Jamie and Fatso. This chapter is from Jamie and Fatso's point of view. He and Jamie dislike Phaedrus as soon as they meet him. Before long, Lila tells Jamie that she wants him to come along on the journey to Florida, because "the Captain" needs a crew member to assist him with the boat. Jamie is offended by this; Phaedrus assures Jamie that it is not his idea and excuses himself. Jamie asks Lila what she is trying to pull and she says she is just trying to do him a "favor." She asks him to think about the offer, because the captain will not live forever, and that it would be good to have Jamie around if the captain "accidentally happens to fall overboard, or something." They chat a little longer, catching up, and Lila leaves. Jamie and Fatso begin to ponder the possibilities of taking advantage of Phaedrus.

Chapter 17: Phaedrus is walking back to his hotel room amidst the bustle and chaos of New York City. He is angry because of the encounter with Lila's "friends" and thinks that while Lila does seek Quality, she seeks it at the most basic, biological level. She completely misses intellectual Quality and social Quality because they are beyond her. He begins to think of New York City, and how it resembles a giant. Underneath the manholes of New York City is an underground world of networks, like the nerves and arteries of a giant organism. He thinks of the Giant in terms of farm animals; they are cared for by the farmer until the farmer decides to slaughter them and eat their flesh. The city, the Giant, does the same thing; it devours the lives of the people that live in it for its own purposes. Phaedrus believes that science is a search for truth and the idea of having to sell out to the Giant is never an idea that pleases him. However, he realizes, he is as much of the Giant as anyone, as his publisher is based in New York City. He decides that New York City is the most dynamic place on earth, when looked at through the eyes of a Metaphysics of Quality. He muses that one of the great things about New York is that it has never been committed to the preservation of its static patterns; it is always ready to change.

Chapter 18: In this chapter, the point of view switches back to Lila. She is wandering the streets of New York City, spitting mad at Phaedrus after the meeting with Jamie and Fatso. She regrets, however, not having kept her mouth shut and knows that she needs to go get her things off his boat, as he does not want her there any longer. She decides to sit down at a restaurant and have a drink and a meal before heading to the boat to get her suitcase. Then, she can get a hotel and figure out what she wants to do. She sits down and has a few drinks before she realizes that not only are her pills missing out of her purse, so is her wallet. She concludes that Jamie's friend Fatso, who was sitting next to her purse at the bar, must have taken them. She beings to get scared because she cannot pay for her drinks and she has not been without her pills since she "left the hospital." She tells the waiter that she cannot pay and she leaves the name of Phaedrus's boat as her address, promising to come back and pay when she can get her

money. She wanders back out onto the street, where it has gotten dark and cold and she is frightened.

Chapters 19 and 20: Phaedrus is in his hotel room awaiting a guest, Hollywood celebrity Robert Redford. He is coming to talk about the film rights to Phaedrus's first book. When he arrives, the two chat for a while, and they get on well. Phaedrus tells Redford that he may have the film rights to the book, as they have a similar vision for the project. Redford tells him that he will be in touch through his lawyer and he leaves. Phaedrus begins to analyze his meeting with Redford and begins to feel "something wrong" in the back of his mind. He remembers what his attorney said to him: "if you love your book don't sell it to Hollywood," (p. 251). Phaedrus realizes that there are two different cultural evaluations of himself: the self that lives in the "celebrity" world, and the ground-level self that lives at the level of Lila and Rigel. He decides that the Zen definition of hell is being able to see life all around you but being unable to participate in it. When a person becomes famous, this is exactly what happens. He considers three different images of himself: through the eyes of Rigel, who sees him as a moral degenerate; through the eyes of Lila, who sees him as a "tedious old nerd;" and through the eyes of Redford, who is going to portray him heroically. He sees that each different person is a mirror and culture controls those mirrors. When a person becomes star-struck, like Phaedrus is when he first meets Redford, it is a very real, primary reality, an empirical perception. He decides that "celebrity" is a conflict between social and intellectual patterns; it is a cultural force all its own. He begins to think of this film Redford proposes as being a social pattern of values that will ultimately devour the intellectual pattern of his book. It will be "a lower form of life feeding upon a higher form of life," (p. 259).

Chapter 21: Phaedrus's thoughts drift away from celebrity and back to Victorianism. The Victorian era, he reasons, is the last static social pattern in modern history. He thinks of his headmaster back at his boyhood school, Blake, who believes, like all Victorians, that grace and morals are something you can only aspire to. Inherently, we are all bad and can only be molded into the appearance of goodness by social mannerisms. This, Phaedrus suggests, is a social pattern without any real intellectual penetration of the meaning of Quality. He asserts that the Victorians are not a specific group of people or a biological pattern, but rather a pattern of social values that are dominant in a period between the American Civil War and World War I. The Victorians are the last to believe patterns of society are dominant over patterns of intellect. Now we believe that intellect is superior to society. This attitude, Phaedrus concludes, is what leads us to World War I, to our own stupid self-destruction, with thanks to a social base lacking any intellectual meaning or biological purpose.

Chapter 22: Phaedrus continues to dissect this idea by pondering that before WWI and before the Gatling gun, battle is viewed as heroic. Death is something that occasionally happens in battle, and it is a noble way to die. The Victorians have no idea that they will send to slaughter millions of their own children during the war and those who survive are left with a lost bitterness against the nation who could have done such a thing to them. Thus, the social climate is dramatically changed. The entire population is cut loose both physically, as a result of technologies pushing workers from farm to city. and morally, from the static Victorian social standards. These times represent chaotic social

patterns, because the "Victorian jail of staleness and conformity" (p.272) has been sprung open. A dominance of intellect over society is beginning to emerge. Intellectual snobbery is replacing social snobbery. People begin to realize that we have to use our intellect to discover what is right and wrong, and not just blindly follow customs. Phaedrus reasons that while his Metaphysics of Quality supports this dominance of intellect over society, it goes on to say that subject-object science has no provision for dealing with morals, since they are not factual, and therein lies the defect. Suddenly, the question is no longer whether or not society approves, it is now whether or not the decisions we make are rational or irrational. Anthropology is a new field in which people place the hope that we will somehow find facts upon which we can base the new scientific rules for governing our society. Thus, the fascination with the American Indian emerges. The Victorians see the Indians as worthless, primitive savages, but under this new intellect, they are a wealth of moral indigenous American ways of life.

Chapter 23: In this chapter, we are back to Lila's point of view. She is wandering the streets still, scared, and losing her grip on reality. She is searching for street markers, to make her way back to the boat, but she is lost. As she walks, she is contemplating her failing looks; she thinks of herself as a future bag lady, like a Halloween witch. She is thinking that it is time to swear off men forever and she is regretting having lost her opportunity with the captain. She begins to think back to her childhood, of her relationship with her mother, her sister and her Grandfather. Her grip on reality really begins to slip as she sees her old dog, Lucky, who has been killed by a car, and she remembers a horrible car crash in her past wherein someone she loved died. She sees the dog again, and the smashed truck—both whole again—and the dog leads her miraculously to the boat. By the end of the chapter, she is sitting on Phaedrus's boat and wanting to let go into the warm water. She sees a hand in the water, a baby's hand, and she retrieves its lifeless body from the river to coddle it.

## Part II, Chapters 16-23 Analysis

Part Two of the book is spent entirely on the island of Manhattan and in the harbor there. In Chapter 16, Phaedrus and Lila dock and are thrust into the chaos of new York City. It is a particular culture shock for Phaedrus who has been isolated for so long. When Phaedrus and Lila sit down for their meeting with Jamie and Fatso, a few peculiar things happen. First of all, we notice that the character Jamie is nothing like the great old friend of Lila's that she described in a previous chapter. Also, the reader cannot help but feel sympathetic towards Phaedrus, to side with him against Jamie and Fatso, as they are clearly crooked people and the thought of Jamie sailing to Florida with Lila and Phaedrus is completely ludicrous. Phaedrus becomes fed up and excuses himself. Once he is gone, Lila shockingly suggests to Jamie that there may be an opportunity to double-cross Phaedrus; here the reader really begins to question Lila's morals. Prior to this point, she is portrayed as almost a victim, but when she makes this suggestion she looks more like an opportunist. Pirsig does an interesting thing here with the integration of the characters Jamie and Fatso, as they represent the corrupt city slicker demographic of society. Phaedrus is going to react less that favorably towards these two and, of course, we are going to "side" with Phaedrus in this matter.

After Phaedrus extracts himself from the scene in the bar with Fatso and Jamie, in Chapter 17, he walks the chaotic streets of New York City thinking about the relationship of the people to the city, or the "Giant," as he calls it. This chapter is basically a commentary on New York City, and how Phaedrus sees that the lives of the citizens are like livestock to the farmer; they are there to feed the Giant. Phaedrus realizes that he, too, is a part of the Giant's network, because his publisher lives there. This is a part of the reason he needs to come to Manhattan. As much as he wishes he were above it, the Giant has him, too, in its grasp—not as tightly as the people who live in the city, but it has him nonetheless. He thinks of New York as the embodiment of Dynamic Quality—existing to change, to re-invent itself on the cutting edge, always. Though it is a place of crime and chaos, Phaedrus makes us realize that you have to love New York for that reason. It is unpredictable, refusing to stay static. This rush of Dynamic Quality is overwhelming, but it has a beauty of its own because without it, nothing would ever change. The static would take over. Phaedrus also ponders the idea that the restrictions that would stop degenerate behavior can also squelch Dynamic Quality—people like the Zuni brujo or Lila (or, of course, himself)—and what a shame that is for culture in the long run. Phaedrus's tone towards Lila changes to one of separation, but with a tinge of sympathy. He knows she is trouble and he decides it will be best for him to escape her while he can.

When we switch back to Lila's perspective in Chapter 18, she is enraged with Phaedrus and glad to be away from him. She regrets missing her opportunity to get to Florida by breaking with him, but she is tough and she will figure it out for herself. It is difficult for the reader to really sympathize with Lila at this point because she is clearly in the wrong and behaving so irrationally. Lila decides to stop in a restaurant and gather her thoughts, come up with a plan and have a meal and a drink. A few drinks in, she reaches for her pills—which she needs to control her mental condition—and discovers that her pills and her wallet are missing. She has no means to take care of herself now; she is completely vulnerable. As a result of this vulnerability, the reader again begins to sympathize with her. It becomes clear that her things were taken during the meeting with Fatso and Jamie, and Lila becomes even more vulnerable as we realize she was delusional enough to think she could trust those two.

In Chapters 19 and 20, Phaedrus is waiting for a guest in his hotel room, and it turns out to be Robert Redford. He is there to negotiate with Phaedrus the making of his first novel into a movie. Phaedrus is clearly star-struck, despite his own level of celebrity. Phaedrus is pleased that he is able to relate to Redford on certain levels, for example in the discussion of the Blake school which Phaedrus attended. A connection is made because Redford's former roommate also attended Blake. Phaedrus quickly and emphatically offers Redford the movie rights to his book and their meeting is soon ended. Phaedrus begins to realize, after he has a chance, alone, to think about it, that the making of his book into a move will be disastrous. He begins to ponder celebrity, and determines most accurately that celebrity is a cultural force in and of itself and that it is a particularly American phenomenon which elevates an individual in celebrity status to the point where they finally accept their worth, only to ri that status away from them and pronouncing them to be in fact, unworthy. How very true Pirsig is on this point and one can produce example after example within modern-day celebrity to prove it.

Phaedrus thinks of himself in three different ways: as Rigel's moral degenerate, as Lila's bleating old nerd, and as Redford's hero. He decides that these perceptions are beyond his control; they are under the control of societal perception and thus he cannot—must not—worry about them. He can do only what any of us can do—go on living our lives as we best see fit. It is interesting, however, to think of Phaedrus in terms of our perspective, as the reader, a perspective that perhaps Pirsig is himself unable to see. Phaedrus clearly over-thinks things, and as such, in some cases is unable to see the forest for the trees. For example, when we consider Phaedrus the explorer, we see that the sailing of his sailboat is one constant in his life. He is able to get wherever he needs or wants to go when he is on the water. Navigating a Metaphysics of Quality, however, is more tricky.

By Chapter 21, Phaedrus is drifting away from his ponderings on celebrity and back to Victorianism. He considers how the Victorians value society so much more than intellect. The idealisms of the Victorians are social patterns bereft of any real intellectual penetration of the meaning of Quality. Victorians, like Rigel, like his headmaster at Blake, never think beyond this idealism; why would they? It is how they are raised, it is how their parents are raised. They are taught never to question, only to wear the social corset and hope that if they do everything right, perhaps someday they will be worthy of social rank. This is just the way it is for a very long time—between the eras of the American Civil War up until World War One.

Chapter 22 is a history lesson from Phaedrus and a Metaphysics of Quality's point of view. It throws the twentieth century into sharper focus and helps us to understand what really happened, culturally and morally - something that could not previously be explained so thoroughly. In understanding a historic event—something like the first World War—it is important to try and see things through the eyes of the people who lived during that era. Pirsig/Phaedrus explains to us how society is irrevocably altered with a weapon—the Gatling Gun—that changes battle from being something heroic to something horrific. When we look at our nation's history within this framework, it becomes easier to understand how the cultural atmosphere dramatically shifted into something much darker. People are first stunned, and then angered by the events of this war. As Pirsig explains, this is what leads us to realize that we need to think things through before we blindly succumb to ritual and custom. Thus, the dominance of intellect over social custom begins. At this point, our society is suddenly given the task of re-inventing itself, and we turn to anthropology and ancient civilizations searching for a map.

In Chapter 23, we are back to Lila's point of view. She has narrowly escaped the restaurant, and is wandering the very dark, very dangerous streets of New York. In addition, she is beginning to lose her grip on reality and she cannot find her way back to Phaedrus's boat. How much more vulnerable can she possibly get? It is interesting that Lila sees herself in the shop window glass and sees that she is haggard; she thinks that she looks like a Halloween witch. The setting of the book is meant to be in autumn, so it would be natural that Halloween imagery would be all around the city. What is interesting is that Lila refers to herself in specifically this way, when Phaedrus also makes mention of this imagery earlier in the book, referencing the absurdity of the

modern symbol of a witch when we take into consideration the original meaning of an ancient Druid priestess. The reader's sympathy for Lila, at this point, is restored and we just want her to make it back to the safety of the boat and Phaedrus. He may be irritated with her, but he is a good man—a moral man—who will take care of her. It is interesting how Pirsig lays out this conundrum for us as the reader, in light of his ponderings about moralism. We cannot help but ask ourselves: what would you do in that situation? Would you take her in and help her? The reader is relieved that she makes it back to the boat, especially amidst her hallucinations about the smashed-up truck and her old dog Lucky, hit by a car, back to guide her to safety. When she does reach the safety of the boat and she reaches down into the water to retrieve a doll—what she thinks is a real baby—we know that now she has completely abandoned reality and we are left to wonder what Phaedrus will do once he gets back to his boat and finds her there.

# Part III, Chapters 24-32

## Part III, Chapters 24-32 Summary

Chapter 24: Phaedrus determines that the question of Lila's quality involves more than society and biology. He decides that what makes Rigel so angry is the fact that an intellectual like Phaedrus is telling him to believe that it is unintelligent to repress biological drives. Rigel is attacking an intellect versus society code of morals. Phaedrus determines that his Metaphysics of Quality equates objects with inorganic and biological value, while subjects have social and intellectual value. Thus, this larger system of understanding allows subject and object as well as mind and matter to exist within a moral, evolutionary relationship. If examined historically, Phaedrus reasons, the Victorian social codes dominate society until World War I. Between the world wars, the intellectuals dominate unchallenged. After World War II, there is a hippie revolution and after that fails, there is a drift back to the last static latch—Victorian morals. He decides that the old Victorian social moral codes are all but dead, and society has reverted to a might-makes-right morality. He thinks of New York as the most Dynamic place on earth, a place where a war of society against patterns of reason rages, a war that was started by the mistakes of this century. He reasons that morals cannot function because they have been declared "intellectually illegal" by a subject-object metaphysics. His Metaphysics of Quality can solve the problem by replacing the paralyzing intellectual system in place, which is allowing the destruction to go unchecked. With a Metaphysics of Quality, human rights are seen as essential to the evolution to a higher level of life, but Phaedrus realistically concludes that a completely harmonious society is utopian and naïve. A Metaphysics of Quality asserts that man is composed of "static levels of patterns of evolution with a capability of response to Dynamic Quality," (p.311). Phaedrus decides that intellectuals must find biological behavior and destroy destructive biological patterns with moral ruthlessness. Phaedrus takes a break from his philosophizing to think of Lila, and how he is sorry to have seen her leave him in anger the way she did. He decides not to stay in his hotel room after all, takes a shower, packs his things and heads back to his boat for the night instead.

Chapter 25: When Phaedrus gets back to the boat, Lila is there and there is clearly something wrong. Her eyes are wide and staring, she is speaking words of nonsense and acts as though she does not recognize Phaedrus. He sees that she is holding a doll, as though it were a real baby, and he decides that this is not a drug-induced state; he has seen this sort of thing before and it is real trouble. Phaedrus helps her into the bed on the boat and she quickly falls asleep. He realizes that, for now at least, he is stuck with her. He realizes that this is what Rigel was trying to warn him about. He begins thinking of his own time as a mental patient. He remembers how hard it was to deal with the righteousness of the "sane." His insanity was a release from a static pattern of his life; a freedom he did not know existed. Phaedrus ponders the chaos and culture shock of New York, and he decides to do some reading rather than trying to sleep.

Chapter 26: Phaedrus begins thinking of the idea of "philosophology," which is basically the field of study devoted to studying philosophy, rather than actually philosophizing. The idea of the philosophology is to read everything written by all the great philosophers, and then decide which idea suits you best. Phaedrus asserts that one should decide what their ideas are first and then read to discover who agrees with you. Real philosophy is not guided by preconceived notions of what is or is not important; real philosophers are interested in solving puzzles that non-philosophers would consider trivial and unimportant. Phaedrus goes on to ponder the idea of insanity. He concludes that an "insane" person is nothing more than a person who values intellectual patterns outside of what their culture perceives as having value or quality. A culture's immune system will shuffle such an individual into an asylum to protect itself from such foreign ideas that could destroy the status quo if left unchecked. He thinks of psychiatrists and how much they resemble members of the old priesthood whose job it was to discover heresy. He was forced to "recant" or conform in order to appear "normal," and he regards this normalcy as a stage persona that he has never dropped. He determines that "insanity" can only exist in relation to others in the same culture, and that the only "test" for insanity is in comparison to conformity of cultural status quo. Each culture experiences insanity, and each culture has a different criteria for what constitutes it. Further, not only does insanity vary from culture to culture, so does sanity. Phaedrus reasons that every culture assumes that its beliefs correspond to some external reality, but the truth that is the external reality varies enough from culture to culture that one could insist reality to be pretty much anything. The "insane" resent the static ruts the "sane" people have fallen into, because they realize that sanity is not truth; sanity is nothing more than conformity to what is socially accepted. Phaedrus remembers a theory of his called the "Cleveland Harbor Effect," when he rejected what he had seen on a chart while sailing, and he had shut out any information that did not fit with what he thought he knew. Phaedrus considers this to be a "static filter" or immune system, where we build up a cultural intellectual pattern based on "facts," and when a new fact does not fit the pattern, we retain the pattern and simply discard the fact. He thinks about a concept called "Dharmakaya light," which is a natural phenomenon that occurs when one looks at something and is able to view a light on or around it. Phaedrus thinks about how he has experienced this, and how it is something that has been culturally filtered out of our society. Indeed, to see it or admit to seeing it is to declare one's self insane.

Chapters 27 and 28: Phaedrus wakes up to someone pounding on his boat and it turns out to be Lila's friend, Jamie. He has decided to join the "crew" and accompany them to Florida. Phaedrus tells him his services are not needed, and Jamie insists on speaking to Lila. Suddenly, Richard Rigel is walking down the dock towards him. In the meantime, Jamie emerges from the boat hatch with his face bloodied by Lila. Jamie claims that Lila tried to kill him and that he is going to call the police. Rigel advises Phaedrus to just sail away fast, and goes to speak with the people at the marina office. Phaedrus goes below to check on Lila, and she claims she attacked Jamie because he tried to kill her baby. Lila's nose is bleeding and her eye is swollen from where Jamie obviously struck her. Rigel returns to inform them that Jamie is gone, but that the people in the marina office are thinking of calling the police. Phaedrus decides that it will be best if they just leave quickly, otherwise they may be stuck in New York City for much longer. Rigel advises

Phaedrus to head for an anchorage at Sandy Hook, and he and Lila sail away. Phaedrus has the feeling of having just barely escaped the grasp of the Giant as he moves out onto the water and away from the city. The sudden rush and calamity of the morning ebbs away as Phaedrus sails into a calm and beautiful morning. As he sails on, he watches the New York and New Jersey skylines, and longs for the open waters of the ocean. Soon his boat approaches Sandy Hook, and he turns on the radio for the weather forecast.

Chapter 29: Lila is in a catatonic trance and Phaedrus explains to her that he will be taking care of her for a while. He decides that Lila will either wind up in an institution, or she will learn to adjust the way he has learned. He decides that a better way to deal with "sanity" or "insanity" is to talk about truth instead. Truth, Phaedrus reasons, is a metaphysical term upon which everyone disagrees. He decides that if truth can be described according to a Metaphysics of Quality, then truth is just a high-quality set of intellectual patterns, and insanity is nothing more than a low-quality set of intellectual value patterns. Phaedrus ponders the idea of trance and hypnosis, two things that are very real. He thinks of our own cultural acceptance of both, in terms of movies and TV. We know what we are watching is not really happening in front of us, yet we react to these images emotionally. This can be called a temporary insanity, but it is culturally accepted because movies and TV can be manipulated to the culture's benefit. What drives the truly creative people is the feeling of needing to break the static patterns and abandon the status quo. These are the "contrarians" of society; these are the people who actively pursue Dynamic goals. He determines that the "Lilas" of the world—the insane and the contrarian—are the most valuable people a society has. They are the ones who bring about cultural change.

Chapter 30: When Phaedrus awakes, he goes in to check on Lila and she is making contact with him again. He fixes breakfast for her and she tells him that Richard is coming. Phaedrus is surprised by this revelation and assumes that she is mistaken. She tells him, strangely, that she is "ready," and that she does not wish to go ashore with him to buy groceries. He goes alone and thinks of Lila as he walks and how she is a culture of one; she has her own reality which no one else has been able to see or understand. A person will not be considered insane if there are a number of people who believe the same thing. He also thinks of the idea of "dhyana" which is a Sanskrit word basically meaning "meditation." It is the reason he purchased his sailboat, and a very effective way to "cure" the insane; by simply leaving one alone to figure it out for themselves. He begins to think back to his education in India and runs through different Hindu and Sanskrit words and their meanings. He identifies "rta" and "arete" as being enormously valuable, providing a historical panorama in which the fundamental conflict between static and Dynamic Quality have been resolved. Phaedrus comes to the water's edge and realizes that he and Lila are not alone.

Chapter 31: When Phaedrus returns to his boat he sees that Rigel's boat is tied alongside. Suddenly Phaedrus realizes that when Lila told him Rigel would be coming, she was right and he is baffled by this. Rigel tells Phaedrus that the conversation they had back in Kingston has stuck with him, and that he would like to know how Phaedrus came to the conclusion that Lila has quality. Phaedrus assures him that it was never a

conclusion, only a perception. Rigel then surprises Phaedrus by informing him that Lila has been chasing him—Rigel—all the way across New York for some time now. He says that she was in the bar in Kingston only because he was there. Rigel informs Phaedrus that Lila wants to return to Rochester with him, and that Lila says Phaedrus is trying to kill her. Phaedrus returns to his boat to hear Lila tell him this herself, because he fears Rigel will move to have her institutionalized. She insists she wants to go with Rigel and that she is alright. She and Rigel leave hastily.

Chapter 32: A sudden sense of loneliness settles in on Phaedrus as he realizes he is never going to see Lila again. He realizes that he should be overjoyed to be rid of her, but the whole experience has left him with a strange sadness. He feels that Lila was one step away from her own freedom when she decided to double back on her path. He also realizes that in a sense he was trying to kill Lila. He was trying to kill the static patterns to which she clung. He thinks of the "program" slip where he wrote that he would pick up where he left off as soon as Lila was off his boat. He wonders if he wants to go back to it, and realizes he is attempting to capture the Dynamic within a static pattern and the longer he works on a Metaphysics of Quality, the less correct it will probably become. He suddenly notices that Lila left her doll on his boat. Now that Lila has overlaid her set of value patterns on it, it has taken on the quality of a religious idol. He realizes that he must give the doll a proper burial. He has an imaginary conversation with the doll, who explains that the story has a happy ending because everyone gets what they want. Phaedrus tells the doll that he disagrees, knowing what will most likely happen to Lila. The doll tells Phaedrus that telling Rigel Lila had quality was his saving grace. It was a moral thing to say, and thus it infused her with that quality. Phaedrus buries the idol, and in doing so experiences a feeling of elation; of having his slate wiped clean and a new start being made. He realizes that in regards to his project, he needs to return to the Indians, where it all started. When the Indians classified something as "good," they were making a statement about the nature of a thing. He realizes that this is the center of his theory: good is a noun, rather than an adjective.

## Part III, Chapters 24-32 Analysis

The third and final section of this book begins with Chapter 24, where we find Phaedrus still in his hotel room, pondering again the big question: whether or not Lila has Quality. He continues on with the cultural history lesson, as viewed in terms of A Metaphysics of Quality, and how the Victorian era is the last "static latch" that our culture has known. He ponders how the Rigels of the world inevitably drift back to it, and how reverting to Victorian morals cannot work anymore since the world has changed too much in the interim. As a society, we must learn from our mistakes and move forward, rather than blame another race or culture for the mistakes that have been made. By the end of the chapter, Phaedrus realizes that the hotel room's usefulness has expired and he should sleep on his boat, just to make sure all is well on the water.

When he returns to his boat in the beginning of Chapter 25, the reader learns with relief that Phaedrus is, indeed, the moral man we took him to be, and will take care of Lila. He sees that she in real trouble mentally, and he can sympathize since he has been in the

same place himself. We begin to learn in this chapter, once Phaedrus has put Lila to bed and she is fast asleep, that he has struggled with "insanity" himself and we begin to learn more about his experiences. He realizes, in essence, that he is the best person for Lila to be with, as he understands the "righteousness" of the sane over the insane, as only someone who has experienced it first-hand could. Here we see the idea of insanity being a place of "betterness" for the insane, a place that cannot be reached nor understood by the "sane." It is interesting as well, when we consider Phaedrus as a man; he was initially attracted to Lila physically, not knowing anything about her, and is willing now to care for her in her catatonic state despite the fact that she is virtually a stranger to him. Strange that Pirsig never touches on the idea of love as being one of his values, nor is it discussed as being an element of Quality. Yet, Phaedrus is loving Lila in the only way he knows how. He is going to allow her to distract him entirely, distraction being the very thing he is sailing up the river to avoid. Certainly this is love in its own right, and a thing of value and quality.

In Chapter 26, we see that Phaedrus, like Albert Einstein or William James, is a creative philosopher in the purest sense. Part of what contributes to his "insanity" is nothing more than being an outsider to society and having radical ideas. He is a contrarian like the Zuni brujo. In his experience, it is to his own benefit to "recant" and "conform"—or as he puts it, to develop a certain stage persona which he is forced to keep in place. When we consider this as a more common idea, and not necessarily something exclusive to the mentally ill, it really makes perfect sense. Do not we all develop certain masks, certain persona that we adopt depending on the situation we are in? For example, and to put it in simple terms, we are different people at work than when we are with our friends and family. The persona that Phaedrus is forced to assume is essentially the same thing, just slightly more intense. Phaedrus is telling us that the "insane" have often merely created an illusion for themselves that suits them better than those which society offers. To go to a place of insanity is to break with your static patterns and experience true freedom. However, this attitude is dangerous to the status quo, thus the immune system of the culture will filter out such individuals. He offers the example of the Dharmakaya light phenomenon, something that he himself has experienced as being a very real thing that has been accepted by certain cultures, just not our own. Therefore, to experience it and talk about it and believe in it is to be classified as insane, despite how real it is or how many others in another culture may have witnessed it. It does not fit into our cultural pattern, thus it is filtered out. When we think of insanity as actually being brave enough to admit that such a thing exists, it causes "sanity" to take on a while new meaning.

In Chapters 27 and 28, we switch again out of Phaedrus's thoughts and back into the story. Jamie has, surprisingly, arrived to join the crew. The reader cannot help but feel a certain amount of dread upon his arrival; it can mean nothing but trouble. Lila reacts violently to him, claiming that he is trying to kill her "baby." Lila's reaction is clearly that of a mentally ill individual, but at the same time we are glad that she is rejecting Jamie so completely. The arrival of Richard Rigel is just as surprising, but while he and Phaedrus disagree on certain things, the reader identifies with Rigel as being a person of integrity and stability. While Phaedrus is a man of integrity, we are not so entirely sure of his stability. Rigel, on the other hand, will handle whatever comes his way, as he does

in this case. He deals with the marina management, pays Phaedrus's bill and tells Phaedrus exactly where he needs to sail to next. Rigel bids Phaedrus to flee quickly, as it will be best for all. Lila and Phaedrus hastily exit the Manhattan harbor and Phaedrus likens this "escape" as having just barely evaded the Giant. This is a powerful and appropriate image, as Pirsig has done a good job of illustrating the corruption of the city and the ease with which one can be inescapably sucked into it. We as the reader experience a feeling of freedom and escape with Phaedrus as he sets sail onto the river again, the promise of the open waters of the ocean more alive than ever. His circumstances have changed, obviously, because he has shouldered the burden of caring for Lila, but it is to his benefit as well as hers. He can help her, first of all, which is a morally valuable thing to do, and he can observe her as well, which is in the interest of his theorizing. We are glad to see Lila and Phaedrus escape the giant, of course, but more relieved that they escape together. Both are lost in their own way, and the companionship of the other is something priceless.

Lila is in a catatonic trance at this point, and Phaedrus watches her with wonderment because he has never seen "it" from this perspective before. This indicates, of course, that he is the one in the trance before, the one being watched in wonder. He asks us to considers the idea that insanity is the insane person's "happy place" from which they have no desire to return. Insanity is not the problem, it is the solution. The truly creative people, the "insane," the misfits, the contrarians—they are the ones who break the static patterns of society and without them, dynamic quality cannot and does not exist. Thus, these people are irreplaceably valuable to our culture, yet we are so quick to shuffle them out of view so that they do not interrupt the status quo. It strikes Phaedrus how backwards and wrong this is, and if society could just understand insanity in terms of his Metaphysics of Quality, it would be to the benefit of the greater good. It is interesting to view "insanity" in terms of "truth" instead. What is the truth? Is there any possible way for everyone, everywhere to agree on the truth? Or is truth something subjective and ever-evolving? When we go see a movie with a sad story, and we walk out of the theatre teary-eyed, are we reacting to truth or to illusion? We are reacting to illusion—and for the previous two hours, we, too, sit in a catatonic trance. For someone unfamiliar with the phenomenon of the moving pictures on the screen, our actions would look like insanity. It all depends on what we think we understand to be the "truth." The bottom line that Pirsig is getting at in this chapter is that our society needs to stop vilifying the insane, stop shuffling them out of sight and out of mind. In order to create something new, we must ride the wave of Dynamic Quality, and to do this is to go against what is known, what is static. By definition, this is what is means to be insane. What Pirsig is trying to make us understand is that all the great ideas which resulted in great art, science, literature and accomplishment, began with an idea that someone once called "crazy."

In Chapter 30, Lila is coming around a little. She is making contact with Phaedrus and even complaining, which he takes to be a good sign. As Phaedrus walks into town to buy groceries, he thinks some more about Lila and her situation, and how in truth, she is a culture of one. Her choices are few: she can be institutionalized, she can repent and conform, or she can abandon all static patterns and pursue dynamic quality exclusively. He decides that he will assist her in every way he can, whatever she decides. Oddly,

Lila tells Phaedrus that Rigel will be coming soon. Phaedrus thinks she must mistaken and confused, and leaves her on the boat to run his errands. At the end of the chapter, when Rigel, indeed, has followed them to Sandy Hook, we begin to see that there is more to the relationship between Lila and Rigel than we previously realized.

Chapter 31 is a conversation between Phaedrus and Rigel about Lila. We are surprised to hear that the conversation about Lila having Quality stuck with Rigel as much as it had with Phaedrus, but a little irritated with Rigel when he presses Phaedrus for an answer. Phaedrus explains that it was a perception, not a conclusion—he is telling Rigel that he needs to let it go, and that he, Phaedrus, is entitled to his opinion. It is a surprise to find out that Lila has been chasing Rigel, but it explains a few things. It suddenly makes sense why Lila slammed her suitcase on the deck of Rigel's boat while he was sleeping and why she became so irritated with Phaedrus when he was asking questions about Rigel. It turns out that Lila was only in the bar in Kingston because she knew Rigel was going to be there; not for her boyfriend George after all. When Rigel tells Phaedrus that Lila wants to leave with him, it is a shock—and then when Rigel tells Phaedrus that Lila says Phaedrus is trying to kill her, it feels like a slap in the face. Phaedrus calls this, the lie that she tells, the only truly immoral thing she has done. She knows it, too, as Phaedrus reads the guilt on her face as she refuses to meet his gaze. She assures Phaedrus that she is "alright," and Lila and Rigel are suddenly gone with abrupt and complete finality.

In the book's final chapter, we are as stunned as Phaedrus that Lila is gone; he was planning to take care of her for the rest of her life and now, just like that, he is never going to see her again. We have mixed feelings about her departure. It is difficult to be angry with her, considering the state she is in. On the other hand, telling Rigel that Phaedrus is trying to kill her seems almost like an act of desperation. Why does she need to go to such an extreme? It makes us wonder what we are missing from the story of she and Rigel. Phaedrus decides that he needs to bury the idol doll that Lila has left on his boat, because now that she has given it value, it cannot just be unceremoniously cast aside. As he is walking to bury the idol, Phaedrus is finding his own sense of closure for this chapter of his life, and deciding if he really wants to continue with his gigantic, all-encompassing Metaphysics of Quality project that he put on hold while Lila was in his life. He thinks about the project in terms of the idea that the more he works on it, the further he gets into it, the more it will unravel, and the less "right" it will continue to become. It is ironic how when Phaedrus is sailing his boat, he always knows where he is headed. Sailing is the one constant in his life. He does not know, on the other hand, exactly where he is going with his book, nor does he know where his relationship with Lila is going to go. Being on the water is an escape for him from directionless uncertainty. As the reader of his ideas, we too become lost at certain points in this book. Phaedrus tries to create something out of nothing with Lila, the same way he is trying to create something out of nothing with his project. At the end of this book, both endeavors have resulted in nothing; Lila is gone, and Phaedrus does not know if he will, or even can, finish his work. In the very end, Phaedrus comes to the conclusion that the Indians, with whom the entire undertaking start, have had the answer all along: "good" is a noun, not an adjective. In other words, goodness is much more than a characteristic that can be attributed to something. It is the thing that does or

does not make us, implicitly, who we are. This determination gives Phaedrus the closure he needs. There is enough finality in this conclusion that it gives him, and us as the reader, enough satisfaction to close the book.

# Characters

## Phaedrus

Phaedrus is the main character of Lila: An Inquiry into Morals. He is a thinly veiled alter-ego version of Robert Pirsig, and thus, the book is semi-autobiographical. Phaedrus is introduced in Kingston, New York, where he is sailing his boat down the Hudson river but is stymied by the closure of a river passage. Here he meets Lila, whom he picks up in a bar and takes back to his boat. They proceed to sail down the river together. Phaedrus is an intellectual man, an author, who is a philosopher in the purest, creative sense. He is working on a writing project that he calls "A Metaphysics of Quality," an all-encompassing undertaking that begins when he attends a vision-quest ceremony on an Indian reservation. Within this Metaphysics of Quality, Phaedrus is attempting to re-think the foundations of scientific philosophy in order to create a forum where his "armchair anthropology" can have a chance to be heard. Part of his theory centers around the idea of morals and values and in Lila, Phaedrus has found an ideally observable subject. What he discovers as he sails with Lila is that while she is very straightforward, she is mentally unstable and on the verge of collapse. Phaedrus is very sympathetic towards Lila because he himself dealt once with a bout of insanity, and he understands what it means to have to deal with the righteousness of the "sane." Phaedrus is in every sense a loner, and spends most of his time wrapped up in his own thoughts. Since he is Pirsig's alter-ego, it is plain to see that Pirsig spends a lot of time deeply thinking through ideas and theories and branching them off into previously uncharted territories. By the end of the book, when Lila has decided to go her own way, Phaedrus is once again alone. The reader is torn between feeling relieved for Phaedrus for having escaped Lila, and feeling saddened by his return to loneliness.

## Lila

Lila is a very troubled woman; this is clear from the first scene in which she appears. She enters the bar in Kingston, searching for someone, who in the short-term seems to be her "boyfriend," and in the long run turns out to be Richard Rigel. She is easily angered and, in fact, her angry outbursts are essential for her to avoid more serious mental episodes. Lila attaches herself to Phaedrus once she moves off her boyfriend's boat, in hopes that Phaedrus will allow her to sail with him to Florida. For Lila, Florida represents paradise and an opportunity to make a new start. On the surface, Lila appears to be a fairly simple person—certainly not an intellectual like Phaedrus—who is driven primarily by her biological urges. As the reader gets to know her through the story however, it is clear that there is a lot more to Lila than previously assumed. For instance, it is made clear that she was once a prostitute. She was married once, very young, and had a baby who smothered and died in her crib. Lila did not have a happy childhood, always second best in the eyes of a critical mother. Certain terrors of her childhood, such as her grandfather dying in a car accident and her beloved dog Lucky being hit by a car, come back to her as apparitions as she loses her grip on reality. In

Manhattan, when Lila encounters Jamie and Fatso, the reader loses sympathy for Lila, thinking she is the same level of opportunist as these two crooked characters. Once she is out on her own, however, wandering the streets of New York City, as lost mentally as she is literally, we begin again to sympathize with her and hope she finds her way back to Phaedrus. Once she does make her way back to his boat, she finds comfort in a doll she finds in the water, clinging to it as though it were her own lost baby. Beyond this part of the book, there are no more chapters from her point of view, as she slips beyond the capacity for rational thought. In the end, we discover that she has been obsessively chasing Richard Rigel across the state of New York for some time and ultimately betrays Phaedrus by telling Rigel a lie that prompts him to remove her from Phaedrus's care.

## Professor Verne Dusenberry

Professor Verne Dusenberry is a fellow professor with Phaedrus at the Montana State College in the 1960s. Dusenberry is raised in Bozeman, Montana and teaches at the college for over 20 years. He is more than enthusiastic about Native Americans; fellow staff members say that he is obsessed with them and their culture. Of Professor Dusenberry, the Indians would say he is a "good" man, an idea that eventually helps Phaedrus sum up his theories concisely. It is with Dusenberry that Phaedrus attends the vision quest ceremony on the Indian reservation which alters his point of view and sends him down a new philosophical path. Dusenberry is the one who first introduces Phaedrus to the idea that anthropology as a field of study is a flawed thing and explains to him the trouble with the "objective approach."

## Richard Rigel

Phaedrus meets Rigel in Oswego, but gets to really know him in Kingston. At breakfast, the morning after Phaedrus's night with Lila, Rigel and Phaedrus discuss whether or not Lila has Quality, and Rigel warns Phaedrus about her mental condition. Rigel, now a successful lawyer, has known Lila since they were children. He represents of one of her lovers during divorce proceedings in which Lila plays the role of the "other woman." Rigel's character is the "devil's advocate" to Phaedrus's intellectual theorizing and sets Phaedrus's thoughts reeling when he counters his arguments with Victorian idealisms. In the end of the story, we learn that Rigel has become Lila's obsession and, in fact, she was looking for him in the bar in Kingston, as much as she was looking for the boyfriend.

## Bill Capella

Capella is a character that goes largely undeveloped. All we find out about him, really, is that he is Rigel's crewman, that he meets Phaedrus at the same time Rigel does in Oswego. He seems to be yin to Rigel's yang, in that he is easy-going and cheerful.

## Robert Redford

The appearance of Robert Redford is a bit of a surprise, as is the knowledge that Phaedrus is sailing to Manhattan partially for the purpose of meeting with the celebrity. Redford comes to negotiate the movie rights for Phaedrus's first book, and Phaedrus—a minor celebrity in his own right—is uncharacteristically star struck. Robert Redford represents the ultimate in celebrity A-list, and gets Phaedrus thinking about celebrity and how it effects our society. Redford enters the meeting with Phaedrus probably expecting some sort of negotiation to take place, but Phaedrus hastily offers the film rights to his movie, and their encounter ends quickly.

## Jamie and Fatso

Jamie is an old friend of Lila's, and Fatso is his "partner in crime." Lila deliberately seeks Jamie out when she and Phaedrus dock in Manhattan. She believes it will be a good idea for Phaedrus to have a second crew member aboard, though Phaedrus is reluctant. Upon meeting Jamie and Fatso, Phaedrus knows it is a bad idea and will never work. He can tell immediately that Jamie and Fatso are crooked opportunists who will do nothing but take advantage every chance they are given. They are equally disenchanted by Phaedrus whom they perceive as cold and calculating. It becomes clear that Fatso and Jamie acted as pimps to Lila at some point during her past. In regards to the role these two characters play in this work, it seems that Pirsig inserted them for a few different reasons. First, they give us some idea about Lila's past—what kind of people she associated with and what kind of life she led. Secondly, they represent "city morals."

# Objects/Places

## Manhattan

From Nyack, Lila and Phaedrus sail to the dock in Manhattan. The entire second section of the book is spent on the island of Manhattan. Here Lila and Phaedrus encounter Jamie and Fatso and are bombarded by the corruption, chaos and culture shock of New York City. Phaedrus meets with his publisher as well as with Robert Redford to discuss movie rights to his first book and, in very Phaedrus fashion, ponders the idea of the city as "the Giant," consuming the lives of its inhabitants the way a farmer consumes his livestock. Separated from Phaedrus, Lila does not fare well in Manhattan. After the disastrous meeting with Jamie and Fatso, she wanders the streets, quickly losing her grasp on reality. Her lowest point is sitting in a restaurant and drinking, preparing to order a meal and hopefully come up with a plan, when she discovers that her wallet and the pills for her mental condition have gone missing. Upon escaping the restaurant, she rapidly declines into a state of total non-reality, and is "led" back to Phaedrus's boat by the apparition of her childhood dog that, years earlier, is killed when hit by a car. When she reaches the boat, she fishes a baby doll out of the river and clings to it as fiercely as she clings to her rapidly ebbing sanity. Phaedrus and Lila leave Manhattan in a hurry after a brief and violent encounter with Jamie at the dock.

## Sandy Hook

Once they "escape" New York City and "the Giant," Lila and Phaedrus sail a little further up river to Sandy Hook. Phaedrus had hoped to obtain some supplies in Manhattan, but things did not turn out the way he had planned. Lila begins to come out of her catatonic trance somewhat in Sandy Hook, which Phaedrus takes as a good sign. He disembarks his boat to hike inland for supplies and, while he is walking, he thinks about the situation with Lila. He realizes that he will need to care for her and decides that he is up to the job, having had his own personal experience with insanity. When Phaedrus returns to the boat, he sees that Richard Rigel has arrived and he and Phaedrus discuss Lila. It is revealed that she wishes to leave Phaedrus and return to her home town and family with Rigel. Phaedrus is abandoned and left with mixed feelings of freedom and loneliness. It is in Sandy Hook that Phaedrus takes Lila's idol doll, has an imaginary conversation with it and then buries it in the sand of the beach.

## The Cleveland Harbor Effect

Phaedrus uses the "Cleveland Harbor Effect" as an example of static filtering. He tells the story of how he was once sailing out of a summer storm and into a harbor down the coast from Cleveland. Once he was safe, he slept for most of the next day, and awoke to ask someone how far it was to Cleveland. He was shocked when they told him he

was in Cleveland, for the chart he had studied said he was miles away. It was then that he realized all of the discrepancies he had seen during his passage, which he dismissed as differences on the chart which had not been notated during the passing of time. It had not occurred to him that he was actually in a completely different harbor than he had originally thought. He realized then that he had been shutting out all information that did not fit, and that instinctually, when a fact does not fit the pattern, we discard the fact rather than the pattern. Phaedrus discovers this to be an important finding within his theories because knowing this will help him help society accept new and misunderstood information as being potentially valid.

## The Idol Doll

In Manhattan, when Lila's sanity is deteriorating into a catatonic state, she fishes a discarded baby doll out of the Hudson River off the side of Phaedrus's boat, and coddles it like her own lost child. Lila clings to this discarded doll, which would be regarded by most as a piece of trash not worth touching much less idolizing, as though her very life depends upon it. When she leaves Phaedrus, she leaves the doll on his ship and he realizes that he cannot simply cast it aside as garbage. Now that Lila has superimposed her values onto the doll, it has become the idol of a religion of one. Phaedrus has an imaginary conversation with the idol doll as he walks ashore to bury it. The idol doll explains to Phaedrus that the story actually has a happy ending, because everyone ultimately gets what they want and that saying to Rigel that Lila has quality is the moral act that "saved" him in the end. Once Phaedrus buries the doll, he is overwhelmed with a euphoric sense of closure and is ready to begin a new chapter in his life.

## Florida

Florida is the idyllic destination which Lila never reaches. Through the book, it is discussed. Lila used to live in Florida and to her it is a certain type of paradise, offering her an opportunity to start her life anew. She is sailing aboard a boat called the Karma, with her boyfriend, when she and he split due to his involvement with another woman. It is at that point that Lila departs his boat for Phaedrus's.

## Oswego

Phaedrus meets Rigel and Capella in Oswego when a hurricane causes a canal to close. During this time, several boats are stuck in the harbor due to this closure and the people inhabiting the boats have nothing better to do for two weeks than socialize with one another. It is during this time that Phaedrus gets to know both Rigel and his crewman Capella.

## Kingston

The next stop up the river after Oswego, Kingston is where Phaedrus meets up again with Capella and Rigel and then meets Lila. It is the bar in Kingston where Lila comes to confront the man with whom she had been sailing, and who is now with another woman. Lila packs her suitcase and moves off his boat and onto Phaedrus's boat, after a night of dancing and drinking with Phaedrus at the bar. The morning after the bar, and having spent the night on his boat with Lila, Phaedrus accompanies Rigel and Capella to breakfast in Kingston. It is at breakfast that Rigel and Phaedrus have the "does Lila have Quality?" discussion that haunts Phaedrus through the rest of his journey.

## Nyack

Lila and Phaedrus sail away from Kingston to Nyack and get to know each other in the meantime. The sail to Nyack is a particularly painful one for Lila, who had too much to drink the previous night, and who is terribly hungry due to Phaedrus having very little food on his boat. Once they anchor in Nyack, Phaedrus and Lila head to the grocery store for supplies and cook dinner on the boat. During dinner they discover that they are intellectually incompatible, but after dinner, in bed, their biological compatibility is clear.

# Themes

## Anthropology

Phaedrus, the book's central character, becomes interested in Anthropology after a peyote-induced revelation comes to him during a ceremonial vision quest on an Indian reservation. He realizes that the American Indian is the "originator" of American idealism; the exact straight-forward stoic, hard-working quality that the original American cowboy who tamed the wild west is infused with. This insight leads him to the mountains of Montana, where he intends to isolate himself from society and read every book on anthropology that he can find in order to understand the Indians better and thus be able to pick up where his friend and mentor, Professor Dusenberry, had left off with them when he died. What Phaedrus discovers is that the foundation of the field of Anthropology is created in such a way that every original idea Phaedrus has will be deemed unacceptable. He begins to realize that to present any idea to Anthropology, it cannot be based on observations and intuition, it must be supported by empirical evidence. Dusenberry tried to warn Phaedrus that "objective anthropology" is the only accepted form of Anthropology, and that "armchair anthropologists" are weeded out of the field as having presented nothing more than "speculative intuitive rubbish unsupported by any real facts," (p.51). Having discovered this prejudice, this "cultural immune system" (p.52), Phaedrus begins writing his "Metaphysics of Quality." He understands that in order for his ideas to be considered or even heard for that matter, that he will not be able to work within the confines of Anthropology; he must instead operate inside the stratosphere known as metaphysics.

## Metaphysics

Aristotle calls Metaphysics the "First Philosophy" (p. 62) and it is defined as a collection of "the most general statements of a hierarchical structure of thought," (p. 62). It has also been defined as being "that part of philosophy which deals with the nature and structure of reality," (p. 62). Metaphysics, though it has been a central part of philosophy since the time of the Ancient Greeks, is not considered to be a universally approved field of knowledge. In calling his work a "Metaphysics of Quality," Phaedrus is actually employing a logical absurdity. A "Metaphysics" must be definable and knowable otherwise it does not exist. Quality, on the other hand, does not have to be defined because it is direct experience independent of and prior to intellectual abstractions. Now that he is free to think through his ideas, rather than being paralyzed by purposeless structure, Phaedrus is able to really make some headway with his project. He discovers that his Metaphysics of Quality is able to re-state the empirical basis of logical positivism with more precision and inclusiveness and thus is able to explain things in terms never before seen and allows certain mysteries of the universe to be solved. He decides that "values" are actually the essence of logical positivism, and more empirical than subjects or objects. Phaedrus asserts then, that a subject-object metaphysics is flawed and in order to really understand the universe as a whole, it needs to be thought of in terms of

static good versus Dynamic Quality. According to Phaedrus, the universe is divided up into the "static" categories biological, inorganic, social and intellectual. The opposite of static quality is "Dynamic Quality," which cannot be defined. The static and the Dynamic cannot exist independently, however. Static is needed for balance, while Dynamic is needed for continuous exploration and discovery.

## Insanity

Interacting with Lila throws into sharp relief for Phaedrus the concept of insanity. Having "gone insane" himself once, Phaedrus is particularly sympathetic to Lila's condition and understands how to deal with her. It is revealed in chapter eighteen that Lila was once hospitalized due to her condition, and that she needs to continuously take pills in order to regulate herself. When her pills are stolen from her in New York City, she rapidly declines into a state of non-reality and then into a catatonic trance. This is the condition in which Phaedrus discovers her on his boat. He simply puts her to bed and keeps her safe, which is exactly what she needs at that point. He reasons that society is quick to shuffle the "contrarians" into asylums, hospitals and institutions where they are out of sight and out of mind because they represent a threat to the status quo. Insane people are taken to these places to "get better." He begins to think about the place in her mind to which she has escaped, and how when he once went to that very same place, it was "betterness." In order to be allowed to function in society again, and to get out of the insane asylum, Phaedrus adopts a "stage personality" that he simply cannot drop. Also, he understands that every culture and society has its own definition of what sanity and insanity mean. For example, Phaedrus gives an example of a Sicilian man who speaks little English visiting a hospital in American for a minor ailment, who speaks of being "witched" by a certain woman. The man is institutionalized in a psychiatric ward as a result for many years. What the hospital staff fails to realize is that in Sicilian culture, for the people of the man's age group, it is quite common to believe in witchcraft. In a different cultural setting, however, it is construed as mental derangement. Phaedrus concludes that to be insane, essentially, is nothing more than failing to operate within the limits of cultural reality.

# Style

## Point of View

This book is written from a third-person omniscient point of view, which allows the narrator to penetrate the thoughts and minds of all characters. The perspective shifts from Phaedrus to Lila to Rigel and back, but the lion's share is devoted to Phaedrus, the author's alter-ego. The focus is devoted almost exclusively to Phaedrus because Pirsig is hashing out his philosophical theories throughout the bulk of the work. The perspectives of Lila and Rigel are included so that the reader can identify with these characters in a way which ultimately supports the perspective of Phaedrus. It is important to see Phaedrus from Lila and Rigel's point of view because it helps to ground his theories into reality. Without their perspective, his ideas cannot "static latch" onto the reader, since they are "Dynamic" and new.

## Setting

This story takes place along the Hudson River in the state of New York. It begins in Oswego, where the main character, Phaedrus, meets up with Richard Rigel and Bill Capella. From Oswego, all the boats that were stymied sail up river to Kingston, where Phaedrus meets Lila. From Kingston, Phaedrus and Lila sail to Nyack and then onto Manhattan. From Manhattan, they sail to Sandy Hook where Lila leaves Phaedrus to sail back to Rochester with Rigel. Other points of reference include Bozeman, Montana and Montana State College, where Phaedrus and Dusenberry are professors; Benares, India, where Phaedrus does his graduate work in Hindu philosophy; and Florida, the idyllic paradise to which Phaedrus and Lila are supposedly sailing.

## Language and Meaning

Pirsig utilizes the English language to its fullest in this work. In many cases, the words that he chooses may seem unnecessarily intellectual, but when considered in context, are the exact word for the occasion. Phaedrus, or Pirsig, studies in India and thus during the course of his theorizing reverts back to some of the language he learns during this time. This gives some of his ideas a cultural backdrop, making them more diverse and universal. For example, he discusses the idea of "Dhyana," which is a Sanskrit word literally meaning "meditation." Phaedrus applies the idea of Dhyana in a broader sense as it is meant to translate, to mean all forms of emptying out of the "static clutter" of one's life in order to settle into tranquility. He also goes into detail about other Sanskrit words: "Rta," meaning the cosmic order of things, and "Arete," which was translated by the Victorians to mean "virtue," but really means "control in righteous hands." Basically, the two together mean that there is order in the universe because the control is in the hands of the righteous. In translating these words together, Phaedrus

realizes that his Metaphysics of Quality is not a new idea after all; it is in fact the oldest idea known to man.

## Structure

This book is comprised of three "parts," contains 32 total chapters, and is 409 pages long. Part One consists of fifteen chapters; Part Two consists of eight chapters; Part Three consists of nine chapters. The first fifteen chapters introduce us to the main characters, Phaedrus and Lila and how they meet, and the two then continue on through the story to travel by sailboat down the Hudson River together. In Part One, the locations include Oswego, Kingston and Nyack. Part Two occurs completely on the island of Manhattan in New York City. During the second part of the book, while Lila and Phaedrus are in Manhattan, we meet a few more characters, including Jamie and Fatso, as well as Robert Redford. In Part Three Lila and Phaedrus leave Manhattan for Sandy Hook. Lila ultimately heads back to Rochester with Rigel, and Phaedrus is free again to travel on—presumably to Florida, his original destination.

# Quotes

"But the point of Phaedrus' thesis was the reason it came 'naturally' and that audiences responded to it 'naturally' was that the film reached a root source of American feelings for what is good. It is this source of what is good, this historic cultural system of American values, which is Indian," (p. 43).

"Values are not the least vague when you're dealing with them in terms of actual experience. It's only when you bring back statements about them and try to integrate them into the overall jargon of anthropology that they become vague," (p. 61).

"The Metaphysics of Quality would show how things become enormously more coherent—fabulously more coherent—when you start with an assumption that Quality is the primary empirical reality of the world....but showing that, of course, was a very big job..." (p. 67).

"Rigel continued, 'One of the things that angered me most about your book was its appearance at a time when so many young people all over the country put themselves above the law with criminal acts—draft dodgers, arsonists, political traitors, revolutionists, even assassins, all of them justifying themselves with the belief that they alone can see the God-given truth that no one else can see,'" (p. 79).

"It's a peculiarly American phenomenon, to catapult people suddenly into celebrity, lavish wealth and praise upon them, and then, at the moment they at last become convinced of their worth, try to destroy them. At their feet and then at their throat. He thought that the reason was that in America you're supposed to be socially superior like a European and socially equal like an Indian at the same time. It doesn't matter that these goals are contradictory," (p. 86).

"Reality, which is value, is understood by every infant. It is a universal starting place of experience that everyone is confronted with all the time. Within a Metaphysics of Quality, science is a set of static intellectual patterns describing this quality, but the patterns are not the reality they describe," (p. 103).

"A subject-object metaphysics is in fact a metaphysics in which the first division of Quality—the first slice of undivided experience—is into subjects and objects. Once you have made that slice, all of human experience is supposed to fit into one of these two boxes. The trouble is, it doesn't," (p. 108).

"It seemed to Phaedrus that if one gathered together enough of these deliberate violations of the laws of the universe and formed a generalization from them, a quite different theory of evolution could be inferred. If life is to be explained on the basis of physical laws, then the overwhelming evidence that life deliberately works around these laws cannot be ignored," (p. 143).

"Morality is not a simple set of rules. It's a very complex struggle of conflicting patterns of values. This conflict is the residue of evolution. As new patterns evolve they come into conflict with old ones. Each stage of evolution creates in its wake a wash of problems," (p. 163).

"The Cartesian 'Me,' this autonomous little homunculus who sits behind our eyeballs looking out through them in order to pass judgment on the affairs of the world, is just completely ridiculous," (p. 201).

"The Metaphysics of Quality goes on to say that science, the intellectual pattern that has been appointed to take over society, has a defect in it. The defect is that subject-object science has no provision for morals. Subject-object metaphysics is only concerned with facts," (p. 277).

"A scientific, intellectual culture had become a culture of millions of isolated people living and dying in little cells of psychic solitary confinement, unable to talk to one another, really, and unable to judge one another because scientifically speaking it is impossible to do so," (p. 283).

# Topics for Discussion

Define Metaphysics and explain the difference between subject-object metaphysics and a Metaphysics of Quality.

In terms of "morals," why are the characters Jamie and Fatso important to the story?

How do you, as the reader, feel about the idea of insanity after reading this book and does it effect the way you will interact with people who operate outside the "norm"?

Clearly, Robert Pirsig is a creative philosopher to have thought these concepts through so deeply and thoroughly. Why are people like him important to society? How does he compare to the Zuni brujo?

Describe Phaedrus in terms of Dynamic Quality. How is he a proponent of it in his day-to-day living?

Some of the critics claim that even after having read the book several times, it is still confusing and unclear what Pirsig is trying to say. Do you feel that way and why?

How do Phaedrus's ideas of anthropology change your opinion of the field and why?

Define morals in terms of Lila. Given her background and, taking into account her mental condition, are her morals justified or is it even up to someone else to judge?

How do Phaedrus's opinions of Victorianism effect you as the reader and did reading this book give you a different opinion about WWI?

Phaedrus refers to New York City as "the Giant." Explain why or why not you agree with his ideas about the Giant's consumption of its inhabitants.