

## Exploratory notes on Robert Pirsig's *Lila* in the light of the historicity concept

In *Lila* Pirsig gives us his most complete articulation of his Metaphysics of Quality concept. In fundamental ways, - invoking a penetrating foundationalism, an implicit pan-psychism like those of Nietzsche and Whitehead, and an enactivist overall vision, - Pirsig's vision is very sympathetic to me, especially while I considered the 'enactment' concept a sufficiently comprehensive one, and I long considered it a major breakthrough. However, whilst it *invokes* the concept of *historicity* in several ways, it does not make the conception explicit, and things shift interestingly if one *does* make it explicit. *Lila* is also just on, but not over, the edge, of the post-modernist revolution, which in my understanding is through and through based on historicity. This note explores some aspects of these shifts and rebalancings.

(See also:

<http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/docs/Commentary-on-The-Muse-as-Therapist.pdf> pp.108/9 ff)

He discusses and explores a case of the Zuni priest/shaman, which Ruth Benedict had spotted, but misunderstood in terms of the concept of a 'misfit', (and of whom, p. 128, in his identification, he says: 'It was the same feeling he got at the peyote meeting. This Zuni Indian was not exactly someone else.' ). This man had defied the priesthood, and, whilst being given an estrapade type of punishment, had called on his contacts with the white men and had defeated the priesthood. But later he had become one of the most important shamans in Zuni history. The full story is necessary to make sense of this but it leads Pirsig to the crystallisation of his central distinction between Static and Dynamic Quality:

'When this understanding first broke through in Phaedrus's mind, that ethics and science had suddenly been integrated into a single system, he became so manic he couldn't think of anything else for days. The only time he had been more manic about an abstract idea was when he had first hit on the idea of undefined Quality itself. The consequences of that first mania had been disastrous, and so now, this time, he told himself just to calm down and dig in. It was, for him, a great Dynamic breakthrough, but if he wanted to hang on to it he had better do some static latching as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.' (*Lila* p.181)

Later he maps the evolutionary sequence:

'The Metaphysics of Quality says there are not just two codes of morals, there are actually five [paired in 'direction of evolution', later one first, - except for the last, which is dialectical]: inorganic vs chaotic; biological vs inorganic; social vs biological; intellectual vs social; and Dynamic vs Static. This last, the Dynamic/Static code says that what's good in life isn't defined by society or intellect or biology. What's good is freedom from domination by *any* static pattern, but that freedom does not have to be obtained by the destruction of the patterns themselves.

Rigel's [Phaedrus's 'conventional' alter ego, who ends up taking *Lila* off him] interpretation of recent moral history is probably a pretty simple one: old codes versus new chaos. But a

Metaphysics of Quality says its not at all that simple. An analysis of separate moral systems sees the history of the twentieth century in an entirely different way.

Until World War I the Victorian social codes dominated. From World War I until World War II the intellectuals dominated unchallenged. From World War II until the seventies the intellectuals continued to dominate but with an increasing challenge - call it the 'Hippie Revolution' - which failed. And from the early seventies on there has been a slow confused mindless drift back to a kind of pseudo-Victorian moral posture accompanied by an unprecedented and unexplained growth in crime.

Of these periods, the last two seem the most misunderstood. The Hippies have been interpreted as frivolous spoiled children, and the period following their departure as a 'return to values', whatever that means. The Metaphysics of Quality, however, says that's backward: the Hippie Revolution was the moral movement. The present period is the collapse of values.

.....  
Phaedrus thought that the reason this movement has been so hard to understand *is that 'understanding' itself, Static intellect, was its enemy.*' [my italic]  
(Lila p.345-6)

So, reconstructing a little, we can conjecture that Pirsig thinks that the 'Hippie Revolution' had an obscure intuition of 'Dynamic Quality', but failed, so to say, to do its homework, and to recognise the need to balance 'social quality' (which is much like what Nietzsche invokes under the heading of 'morality of mores', herd morality, broadly speaking [http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political\\_Thought/Nie-GenologyofMorals.pdf](http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Nie-GenologyofMorals.pdf) Part II section 2) with intellectual quality, as the *vehicles*, so to say, of the intrinsic dialectic of Dynamic and Static Quality, which was, implicitly, the 'real' Hippie preoccupation (- something in this but perhaps a little idealised methinks!)

Pirsig also thinks that the whole preoccupation with human rights and equality is about intellectual freedom (p. 352). We, however, who know that 'political correctness' in its later developments, know that it, at best, is only concerned with intellectual freedom as one value amongst others, and it will be overruled if, for instance, it conflicts with racial equality. Here, again, he is confusing the Dynamic/Static dialectic with the Intellectual/Social one. And yet, conversely, when he is exploring his earlier insight (in the peyote meeting with Dusenberry) that the Native Americans are the 'Originators' (pp. 44/45: 'Then the huge peyote illumination came: They're the *originators!*') of the intrinsic American ethos of Jeffersonian equality, he writes (p. 54):

'There's no nation in Europe which doesn't trace its history to a time when it was 'self-evident' that all men are created unequal. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who is sometimes given credit for this doctrine, certainly did not get it from the history of Europe, or Asia, or Africa. He got it from the

impact of the New World upon Europe and from contemplation of one particular type of individual who lived in the New World, the person he called 'the Noble Savage'.

The idea that all men are created equal is a gift to the world from the American Indian.

Europeans who settled here only transmitted it as a doctrine that they sometimes followed and sometimes did not. The real source was someone for whom social equality was no mere doctrine, who had equality built into his bones. To him it was inconceivable that the world could be any other way. For him there was no other way of life. That's what Ten Bears was trying to tell them.' [in his testimony to the whites in Washington] (p. 54)

So here equality is about 'Dynamic Quality', in Pirsig's terms, i.e., about what the 'Hippie Revolution' was about, not essentially about 'intellectual quality'. Pirsig also argues that Hitler's entire stance, including his gigantic scapegoating projection upon the Jews, is explained by a hostility to 'Intellectual Quality' in the name of 'Social Quality' (pp. 312/313), surely a massive over-simplification, though a partial truth, no doubt.

There is much confusion here, which inclusion of the category of 'historicity' would sort out in many ways, though at the price of a less simplified picture. But Pirsig remains ultimately a scientific philosopher and would-be ahistorical empiricist (like Wittgenstein does, perhaps residually, despite the huge advances symbolised in *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*), and therefore misses the aid which history and literature would have given him. As in the reference to Rousseau just quoted, he invokes historicity implicitly many times. Thus he, rightly, says Descartes' appeal to the emancipation of intellect in his 'Cogito ergo sum' would not have been possible in 17th Century China (pp. 343/344), and he adds: 'If Descartes had said, 'the seventeenth century French culture exists, therefore I think, therefore I am', he would have been correct' (p. 344).

This is clearly a very precise appeal to historicity, yet he does not use the category. Because of this he misses the scale and degree of his excessive generalisation. Take the claim that Native Americans were the Originators of the American Ethos. This is highly comparable with Colin Woodard's claim in *American Nations* (which in turn relates to that in David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*) that there are eleven primal American cultural-national templates, derived in each case from that one's 'Originator' cultural template or 'nation'. But Pirsig, instead of seeing this in its particularity as *one* valid and extremely important instance, sees it as *the primary transmission*, and therefore the relationship of this *particular* origination to the Metaphysics of Quality remains obscure. (Woodard, for his part, paradoxically, does not actually include it at all, in *American Nations*, until he reaches his Epilogue, and then not as an Originator but as a survival from which we can learn! It is as if, unlike Pirsig, he cannot conceive of an Origination not taking the form of a body of immigrants! But Pirsig does not relate *his* insight to other related phenomena.)

Now, it is a truth of historicity that the huge nineteenth century burgeoning of science and scientific ideology was matched, in great measure, by *a comparable burgeoning of historical enquiry and ideology*. John Stuart Mill remarks, in his essay on Coleridge, that the ‘Germano-Coleridgean school’... ‘were the first who pursued, philosophically and in the spirit of Baconian investigation, not only this inquiry [into society], but others ulterior and collateral to it. They thus produced, not a piece of party advocacy, but a philosophy of society, *in the only form in which it is yet possible, that of a philosophy of history*[my italic]; not a defence of particular ethical or religious doctrines, but a contribution, the largest yet made by any class of thinkers, towards the philosophy of human culture. The brilliant light which has been thrown upon history during the last half century, has proceeded almost wholly from this school.’ (C.f., John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*.)

Thus, when Pirsig talks about *the triumph of intellectual quality* after World War I, he only considers this systematically in the light of science, without considering historicity based investigation in the widest sense - consider such works as *The Wasteland*, *The Rainbow*, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *Being and Time*, *Interpretation of Dreams*, *Process and Reality*, *Philosophical Investigations*, *Ulysses*, *Nostramo*, *The Magic Mountain*, *The Glass Bead Game*, *The Golden Bough*, *Commentary on Romans* (Barth), *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Bultmann), and many others (not all formally ‘post-war’, some pre-war precursors, but all clearly ‘modern’, and all exhibiting the character of reflexive historicity relating to the modern age) - all of these, deeply individual as each of these are, are *utterly pervaded by the actuality of historicity*, as an implicit canon of enquiry, as indeed is Pirsig’s work itself, despite his lack of articulating this.

What difference does it make? Well, to begin with, his own fourfold ‘evolutionary’ narrative, meta-framed by the contrast of Dynamic and Static Quality, is certainly imbued with historicity, in the sense of being at least post-Hegelian and probably intrinsically twentieth century (*Process and Reality* and *Philosophical Investigations* offer, to a huge degree, comparably nuanced evolutionary-historicity based accounts). However, if we also bring in Julian Jaynes ([http://s-f-walker.org.uk/pubsebooks/pdfs/Julian\\_Jaynes\\_The\\_Origin\\_of\\_Consciousness.pdf](http://s-f-walker.org.uk/pubsebooks/pdfs/Julian_Jaynes_The_Origin_of_Consciousness.pdf) whom, like Nietzsche, but unlike William James, Pirsig does not mention in this book) we might begin to glimpse a certain somewhat autistic limitation in Pirsig, which means that he does not seriously explore the reflexivity of historicity (and it also goes some way to account for his cardboard treatment of Lila herself, yet at the same time his fundamental penitence in relation to her. His view of her is, as I argued in <http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/docs/Commentary-on-The-Muse-as-Therapist.pdf> pp.108/9 ff) so schematic as to be archetypal - and perhaps in this static schema we even have one clue to why Jung himself sought sometimes to construe his ‘archetypes’ as phenomena of biology and physics.)

Thus, if we take Pirsig's reference to Descartes: 'If Descartes had said, 'the seventeenth century French culture exists, therefore I think, therefore I am', he would have been correct' (p. 344), it is also a *lack of historicity* which makes him forget that Descartes, with his very strong mathematical-physics based bias, *would not have been more than partially aware of this*. The many refutations of Descartes' Cogito argue, in effect, this view; classically, Wittgenstein takes it partly towards the recognition of historicity, discussing the (im)possibility of 'private language', and recognising, thence, that all conceptualisation is, in a radical sense, repetitively 'writing', and hence through and through *contextual*, (the post-modern recognition), in *Philosophical Investigations*, and Heidegger takes a closely related position in *Being and Time*. George Huppert writes about all this (in *The Idea of Perfect History*), and about the earlier sixteenth century French efflorescence of awareness of historicity and historical method. *Prima facie*, we may presume that the French Historians of Perfect History did indeed anticipate major elements in, and indeed most of, the modern concept of historicity. Huppert comments (p. 166): 'It disappeared again – or at least it was weakened and suppressed - in the course of the next century, precisely during the time when science and Cartesian rationalism became important features of European culture.'

Something parallel happened to the British awareness of historicity, after Shakespeare and the Metaphysical Poets, in what TS Eliot calls the *Dissociation of Sensibility*. So the awareness of historicity, at the macro level, also presupposes a multi-layered conception of reflexivity, at the micro level, which is bound up with the reflexive awareness of *process*. (Two classical expressions, one 20th Century (TS Eliot, *Portrait of a Lady*), the other 17th Century (Donne, *The Sun Rising*):

<http://www.bartleby.com/198/2.html>

<http://www.bartleby.com/105/3.html> )

The deep awareness of the background of reflexive consciousness, reflexive consciousness which Descartes had brought into view in such a stupendous way, had to wait until Hume and, even more profoundly, Kant, to reveal its own full problematic, in the structure of *difference* (though Spinoza and Leibniz took vital steps), and then, in turn, until Hegel, to reveal its *intrinsic connection with the awareness of other persons and the cultural dimension*, which anticipates Wittgenstein and Heidegger. Hegel is the supreme philosopher who therefore first tackles historicity comprehensively.

But how is historicity so much as possible? In effect, like Nietzsche, Pirsig implicitly postulates a value seeking drive extending through all being, but, as it were, indifferently; he does not do justice to the reality that historicity is *the reflexive 'my-ness' of unique perspective*. Otherwise he would have emphasised the emerging historicity of 'Dynamic Quality', concurrent with its growth, as it grows from organic being, through social being, to 'intellectual being'. But

‘intellectual being’ necessarily has to turn out to be *reflexive self-consciousness*, i.e., historicity, whereas Pirsig, as primarily a scientist, is focused upon the *content*, not the *process*, of intellectual being. Had he really explored the process, he would have seen that historicity reflects backwards, retroactively, on all intuition of being, not only epistemologically, but ontologically as well. He comes nearest to realising this in discussing ‘insanity’, by way of Lila’s breakdown and her seeking refuge on Phaedrus’s boat. But he does not quite attain the Foucault/Derrida/Jaynes realisation that madness itself has a history, and so he treats the element of ‘intersubjectivity’, (which he rightly grasps), as a kind of timeless requirement of the status of madness. The a-historicity of the Eastern traditions, from which he draws, also do not help him here.

The upshot is a strange paradox. The philosopher of Dynamic Quality, who above all things wishes to overcome the subject/object disjunction, and to realise, - as a *third* position, - a non-static, *enactive* conception of existence, nevertheless ends up with an implicit, evolutionary, objectivism, failing to do justice to the individuated character of the self-examining philosopher (think of Kierkegaard, for instance!), for whom the entire ‘objective reality’, of the existent world-realm, is mediated, totally and all-embracingly, through the eye of the needle, the ‘narrow pass’, of the individuated/ing unique person. That is the deep all-compellingness implicit in individuated historicity.

And, in that light, we are reminded that one of the significances of Descartes’ ‘cogito’ is to inaugurate, for the modern age, that kind of self-examination of the philosopher, in the form, in his case, of ‘Meditations on First Philosophy’, and which looks back to Montaigne, (whom the ‘world-introspecting Hamlet’ has also read), and Augustine and Plato.

Descartes leads on to the great *Ethics* of Spinoza, another delineation of the conditions of choiceful activity in the world, and thence to Leibniz’s conception of the monad, *each of which reflects the entire universe from its own point of view*. In conjunction with the sceptical self-examining empiricism of Hume, here then is the catalyst for Kant’s great and ‘all-pulverising’ transcendental exploration of the conditions of worldly differentiation, which make possible, and provide a basis for, self-consciousness at all. And that then, in turn, mutates into Fichte and Hegel. Here there is a huge, historically informed, meditation between philosophers evolving over nearly 200 years (and it goes on until at least the 20th Century, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, and Derrida). Pirsig had had a more explicitly differentiated grasp of all this in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. He has also, in *Lila*, abandoned the Romantic-Classic disjunction, which indeed may not have been generic enough, but carried the force of historicity, in its in depth relation to the *arete* of the pre-Socratic philosophers, and then Socrates Plato and Aristotle. He manages to take this a step further in *Lila* when he takes it, *arete*, back to the Sanskrit *rta*:

‘He could only guess how far this ritual-cosmos relationship went, maybe fifty or one hundred thousand years. Cavemen are usually depicted as hairy, stupid creatures who don’t do much, but anthropological studies of contemporary primitive tribes suggest that that stone-age people were probably bound by ritual all day long. There’s a ritual for washing, for putting up a house, for hunting, for eating, and so on – so much so that the division between ‘ritual’ and ‘knowledge’ becomes indistinct. In cultures without books ritual seems to be a public library for teaching the young, and preserving common values and information. *These rituals may be the connecting link between the social and intellectual levels of evolution* [my italic]. One can imagine primitive song-rituals and dance-rituals associated with certain cosmology stories, myths, which generated the first primitive religions. From these the first intellectual truths could have been derived. If ritual always comes first and intellectual principles always come later, then ritual cannot always be a decadent corruption of intellect. Their sequences in history suggest that principles emerge from ritual, not the other way round. *That is, we don’t perform religious rituals because we believe in God. We believe in God because we perform religious rituals.* If so that’s an important principle in itself.’ (*Lila*, p. 442/443, my italics)

Our cognitivist-representational bias makes us look askance at such a conception. ‘These rituals may be the connecting link between the social and intellectual levels of evolution.’ This is the glimpse of historicity, here, - not pursued! My note on it leads on to Ninian Smart’s wonderful inadvertant confirmation of this in *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*.

<http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/docs/Commentary-on-The-Muse-as-Therapist.pdf> (p.103ff)

‘Briefly, one could characterise \*Exegesis as the result of a split in religious thinking – a split between the references of religious activities (e.g., the gods or God) and those activities themselves. \*Exegesis belongs essentially to those forms of religion which centre upon the numinous and sacramental activities: it has no interest in contemplation and mysticism. And yet by a strange paradox, it loses all concern for the ‘objects’ of worship and sacrifice. It abandons the gods, virtually, and yet not by way of substituting one God or the Absolute of Brahmanism. Instead, it substitutes for the gods only ritual power – it is solely through the right performance of religious duties that salvation accrues. It is as though a Christian were to become an atheist, and yet believe in the independent efficacy of the sacraments.’

My comment on this ran:

‘Yet, tempting as this cognitivist-ontological-representational stance is - in the light of 2500 years of its dominance! - in the re-emergence of something like the \*Exegesis position in demythologised forms of religion and secular versions of the sacred, it may well occur to us that this is indeed the oldest form of the sacred, as well as the newest, and that the trend in Nietzsche and Heidegger, in sociologists and anthropologists like Durkheim and LeviStrauss, in novelists like DH Lawrence, and in psychologists like Jung, and the Freud of Totem and Taboo, and Julian Jaynes, to create bridges between the oldest pre-Christian forms and the ‘post-Christian’, may well be accurate, and encompass this matter of enactivity also.’

We get a glimpse of this 'subjective dimension' of historicity, when Nietzsche brings the Eternal Return into view in *The Vision and the Enigma in Zarathustra*. Here is, in symbolic form, the 'objective world' recapitulated in the individual subjectivity, the tension between them in its extremest form, the dwarf being the embodiment of mere objectivity, and therefore symbolising the avoidance of personal responsibility for the whole:

[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0053](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm#link2H_4_0053)

"Halt, dwarf!" said I. "Either I—or thou! I, however, am the stronger of the two:—thou knowest not mine abysmal thought! IT—couldst thou not endure!"

Then happened that which made me lighter: for the dwarf sprang from my shoulder, the prying sprite! And it squatted on a stone in front of me. There was however a gateway just where we halted.

"Look at this gateway! Dwarf!" I continued, "it hath two faces. Two roads come together here: these hath no one yet gone to the end of.

This long lane backwards: it continueth for an eternity. And that long lane forward—that is another eternity.

They are antithetical to one another, these roads; they directly abut on one another:—and it is here, at this gateway, that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'This Moment.'

But should one follow them further—and ever further and further on, thinkest thou, dwarf, that these roads would be eternally antithetical?"—

"Everything straight lieth," murmured the dwarf, contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle."

"Thou spirit of gravity!" said I wrathfully, "do not take it too lightly! Or I shall let thee squat where thou squattest, Haltfoot,—and I carried thee HIGH!"

"Observe," continued I, "This Moment! From the gateway, This Moment, there runneth a long eternal lane BACKWARDS: behind us lieth an eternity.

Must not whatever CAN run its course of all things, have already run along that lane? Must not whatever CAN happen of all things have already happened, resulted, and gone by?

And if everything have already existed, what thinkest thou, dwarf, of This Moment? Must not this gateway also—have already existed?

*And are not all things closely bound together in such wise that This Moment draweth all coming things after it? CONSEQUENTLY—itself also?* [my italic]

For whatever CAN run its course of all things, also in this long lane OUTWARD—MUST it once more run!—

And this slow spider which creepeth in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and thou and I in this gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must we not all have already existed?

—And must we not return and run in that other lane out before us, that long weird lane—must we not eternally return?"—

Thus did I speak, and always more softly: for I was afraid of mine own thoughts, and arrear-thoughts.'

Then there follows the episode of the dog, the shepherd, and the snake. But here it is clear that *Eternal Return includes, and is grounded in, the subjective perspective and will of the individual*, eternally. It is, as it were, the apotheosis of the attempt to reconcile a vision of objective science with absolute subjectivity. And this, too, of course, is historicity. When the ultimate neurologist, in the last cyber-neurology laboratory in the world, has fully brought into view my own thought's dependence on my cerebral processes, so that I am fully aware of it, that thought itself will still remain, in all its reflexivity, even if written in letters of fire on a brainscreen, and, consequently, will remain all its historical reach, without limit. All writing is still writing, even if it is brain writing. That is another consequence of Wittgenstein's 'private language' argument. It follows from the infinite regress here. There are indeed two infinities here! Once we see this instance, we see the same thing in Leibniz, in Kant, in Hegel, in Kierkegaard, in Proust, and many others. Historicity, historical self-consciousness, becomes even more primary than science, at one of the infinities, whilst it is a mere speck of dust, 'ces espaces infinies', yet as 'thinking reed', in Pascal's terms, at the other infinity.

The nearest Pirsig comes to this in *Lila* is the recognition of the dimension of *rta*, in the way we have seen. It would be clear, within this vision, that everything is numinously potent and sacred within such ritual, yet at the same time quite ordinary, which is what Phaedrus grasps in the peyote ceremony to which Dusenberry takes him.

*Yet, for us, the livingness of historicity is the functional equivalent of such primordial ritual of meaning.* This is Pirsig's connection between the intellectual and the social. *The intellectual does not supersede the social; it must collaborate with it - as historicity.* Without the dialectic of the social and the intellectual what would be the actuality of Dynamic Quality? It has to consist in historicity. This is what Leavis, in particular, came within a hairs breadth of grasping, e.g., in the Richmond Lecture on CP Snow, when, in his Kantian way, he recognised language as prior to science, this is what he *almost* grasped (c.f., again, <http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/docs/Commentary-on-The-Muse-as-Therapist.pdf> (p.103ff)), but which Pirsig, absorbed in his scientific bias, has under his nose, yet misses. It is obvious, once seen, but not so easy to see when one has not seen it. Historicity, unlike Pirsig's Dynamic Quality in its actuality (*though not its full potential*), is *dialectical* and *can be explored, at infinite length, through process, and interactively.*

For instance [this note is taken from a talk given to psychotherapists]:

### **‘The Alternative: Historicity**

What then is historicity? It carries two further concepts in its wake, which are the concept of enactment, and the concept of text. Let me gradually explain and begin by illustrating the concept of historicity with two well known advertisements. Please note how close this theatre of the absurd is to psychotherapy!

### **Heineken and Guinness Adverts**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7waiVCP-io>

In the Heineken advert, from the early eighties, we have a delightfully skilfully managed appeal to deep English historical-cultural values, embodied in the Wordsworth poem of the daffodils, and the accompanying music of the *Nimrod* variation from Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*; the parody is so delicate and humorous as not to be at all offensive but, rather, successfully to make us laugh out loud at both the lead up, and the final pun on ‘poets’ and ‘parts’.

Now, historicity is *the use and recognition of individual process to achieve, and reference indexically, reflexive communication, involving awareness of the movement, genre and culture of historical time-process and potentiality*. So it is the unique state of historical consciousness at a given moment. As such, it is essentially more as well. But therefore, already, the Heineken advert is in itself a very rich illustration of historicity. And if we further take account of the fact that that degree of seriousness about the cultural-historical heritage very soon afterwards became well-nigh impossible to sustain, in ironical post-modern Britain, because of the advance of technocracy, and of post-modern awareness, we have an even stronger illustration of historicity. So already in the Guinness advert, after 10 years of Thatcherism, and with ten years of Blairism shortly to come, the scale of cultural parody and dissociation has gone way beyond the serious appeal to cultural-historical meaning of the Heineken advert.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Om15TM7t9g>

This is completely post-modern. As such it is pure enactment. It has a mere illusion of a message.’

This gives, in a vivid form which can be the starting point of many more elaborated illustrations, a glimpse of what I am talking about; it clearly inescapably implies subjective-historical context as the background of intelligible intentionality here. The question, for someone like Pirsig, would be, how can historicity not be named, and used as a ritual-symbolic organiser, when it is the inescapable background of all his enquiries, and relativises even his concept of science, also? For, it seems, almost in proportion to the advance of technocracy, occurs simultaneously both the deepening of historicity in popular consciousness, and yet its being combined with the increasing obliviousness of it in reflexive meta-concepts within the total culture, which succumb to positivist paradigms in the foreground of the explicit meta-concepts of the culture.

Yet it is characteristic of Pirsig's book that it manifests its irrepressible cultural curiosity, by such instances as his putting before us the 'Cleveland Harbour phenomenon' parable (*Lila*, pp. 385-7), when Phaedrus pulls into a harbour which he systematically misidentifies (it is in fact Cleveland Harbour), which I since experienced, with both chagrin and delight, in a parallel way myself, and used to illustrate the potency of historicity, in three of the greatest cases of 'deceptive displacement'.

<http://hewardwilkinson.co.uk/sites/default/files/MadisonTalk.pdf>