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ABSTRACT

INDIFFÉRANCE

by
John F. Pohorylo Jr.

The main intention of this thesis is to wrestle Derrida's notion of *différance* from an endless free-play of signification into some sense of boundedness, and to release meaning, knowledge and understanding from its relentless grasp. In achieving this goal, an entirely new field of "value" and "Quality" based discourse would open up within applied schismatic architectural theory.

Robert Pirsig offers a strong alternative to *différance* with his discourse on the Metaphysics of Quality, wherein he defines "Quality" as a pre-intellectual reality. This pre-intellectual reality, which I call "*indifférance*", is made up of the lenses of inorganic, organic and social Quality that effect the intellectual Quality that ultimately interprets each experience that we encounter. "*Indifférance*" marks a small fissure in the armour of difference overlooked by Derrida, which defines a whole new avenue of metaphysical discourse that applied schismatic architectural theorists can explore further.

INDIFFÉRANCE

by
John F. Pohorylo Jr.

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
New Jersey Institute of Technology
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Architecture**

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APPROVAL PAGE

“Indifference”

John F. Pohorylo Jr.

Dr. Zeynep Celik, Thesis Advisor Date
Associate Professor of Architectural History, Theory and Criticism, NJIT

Dr. Karen Franck, Committee Member Date
Associate Professor of Architecture and Sociology, NJIT

Dr. Donald Wall, Committee Member Date
Associate Professor of Architectural Theory and Criticism, NJIT

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Author: John F. Pohorylo Jr.
Degree: Master of Architecture
Date: May 1998

Undergraduate and Graduate Education:

Master of Architecture,
New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, 1998

Bachelor of Engineering in Art and Architectural History
Tufts University, Medford, MA, 1994

Major: Architecture

In loving memory of Mark Whittier

and

In living memory of Eva Papoutsakis

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CHAPTER ONE

Foreword

“It is customary to preface a work with an explanation of the author’s aim, why he wrote the (piece), and the relationship in which he believes it to stand to other earlier or contemporary treatises on the same subject. In the case of a philosophical work, however, such an explanation seems not only superfluous but, in view of the nature of the subject matter, even inappropriate or misleading. For whatever may be said about a philosophy in a preface – say a historical *statement* of the main drift and the point of view, the general content and results, a string of random assertions and assurances about truth – none can be accepted as the way in which to expound a philosophical truth.” [G. W. F. Hegel, in the opening of *Phenomenology of Spirit*]

In coining the term "*indifférance*", one immediately sights a debt paid to the French philosopher, literary theorist, and contemporary cultural critic Jacques Derrida for his work concerning the mechanisms at play in the seminal concept of "*différance*". This thesis applauds the post-structuralist genius of Derrida, and at the same time attempts to turn one of the author's most famous mechanisms, the analytical fulcrum entitled "Deconstruction", back upon the author's own work. Derrida has been noted to encourage this sort of subversion/inversion of his work from time to time in various interviews and articles. In order to accomplish a solid deconstruction of the godfather of Deconstruction, the work of two other great minds has been referenced to build an investigative foundation: that of fellow French scholar Roland Barthes, and the American pop-literary philosopher Robert M. Pirsig. Barthes has been employed to lend late-structuralist support to Derrida's theoretical work, while Pirsig has been utilized for his somewhat isolated conclusions that simultaneously acknowledge the concept of *différance* and open a door for a redefinition of the term itself.

Robert Pirsig's work has been the true inspiration for this thesis, and the author is probably the least understood of the authors described above. Therefore, a brief preface is in order to isolate the methodological reasoning for the use of Pirsig's rather unconventional thoughts in a serious academic exercise like a Masters Thesis in Architectural Theory and Criticism.

Throughout his main body of work, Robert Pirsig has utilized the idea of 'interchapters' as his primary mode of communication. The 'interchapter', beautifully employed in texts such as Stienbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath", is

considered a 'between' chapter, allowing for a pause or meditation before continuing with the story line, plot, or philosophical rumination. Originally, the 'interchapter' was considered a 'secondary' chapter, containing lighter commentary and more iconic imagery than traditional text. Pirsig builds upon this idea in his books, refraining from distinguishing between primary and secondary chapters --- permitting an equi-valent reading of the more literary, dialogue-based and technical, philosophically-based portions of his texts. The "digital" format of this thesis was intended to be an evolution built upon Robert Pirsig's employment of the 'interchapter' in his work --- where the hypertext elements allow for 'inter-inter-chapters' of complex valence relations

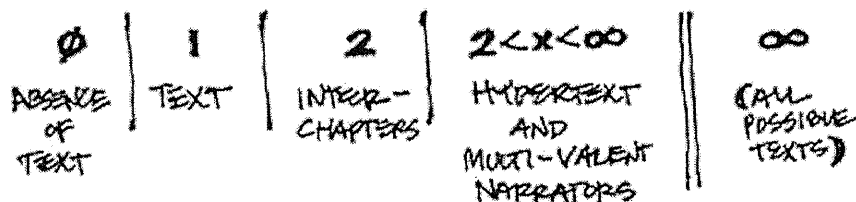


Figure 1.1

This thesis was also intended to be a evolutionary "digital" counterpart to the "analog" computer Pirsig has employed and described in detail in the central text of this project: Lila: An Inquiry into Morals. Instead of being overly critical and judgmental of his own ideas, Pirsig describes how he has collected an incredible body of 'scraps of thought' over the years on 3 x 5 cards and built Lila... up from the bottom --- rather than beginning with a clear (yet inevitably biased) thesis working down from there. The digital arena proved infinitely more

effective than Pirsig's archaic card-catalog style analog "computer", allowing for ideas collected throughout time and space to be connected and reconnected into an elaborate web. Much to my surprise, the closer I came to the end of this project, the more and more my web became similar to a typical, linear publication. (This should not have been as much of a surprise as it was, though, since Pirsig was able to arrive at a fairly coherent linear text from his analog system.) However, this ultimate similarity to a typical linear text should not overshadow the incredible complexity and intricacy involved in the design of this system of intellectual production. Though the process of building this web could be likened to a bunch of scattered ideas in various notebooks and on scraps of paper, the "digital" format of this thesis has allowed for a fluidity of arrangement of these ideas unprecedented in my academic career. I feel that it would not have been possible for me to arrive at the conclusions I have achieved had I not attempted to proceed with thesis in this unorthodox manner.

In addition, there are inherent theoretical reasons for the employment of a web rather than the typical linear process of hypothesis, deletion, and production. As a postmodern thinker, semiology is one of many concerns when attempting to convey meaning. Since there have been considerable shifts in semiological theory since the time of Saussure, it is necessary to contend with these shifts any time one attempts to describe or produce cultural artifacts. Of all of the Derridian scholars that have taken issue with post-structuralist semiology, Mark C. Taylor has detailed the mechanisms involved in the conveyance of meaning most succinctly:

"...the distinction between signifier and signified is actually a product of consciousness itself. Though not always aware of its own activity, consciousness attempts to give itself a criterion by which to judge itself. The signified is distinguished from the signifier and serves as the standard by which all signs are measured.

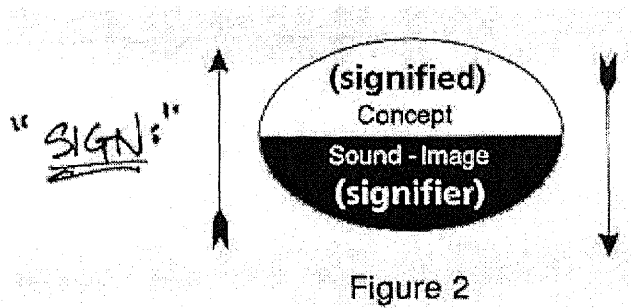


Figure 1.2

For the most part, consciousness regards its criterion as external to, independent of, and imposed upon itself. But this interpretation of experience fails to do justice to the creativity and productivity of consciousness. That to which consciousness points is always already within consciousness itself. This analysis of the relationship between signifier and signified overturns the traditional understanding of signification. The signified is neither independent of nor superior to the signifier. To the contrary, the signified is a signifier. Consciousness, therefore, deals only with signs and never reaches the thing itself. More precisely, the thing itself is not an independent entity (be it "real" or "ideal") to which all signs refer but is itself a sign."

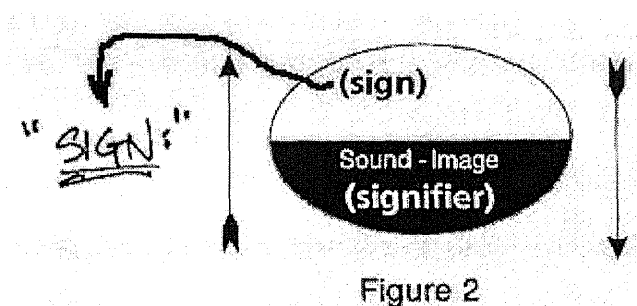


Figure 2

Figure 1.3

"...The/A word is nothing in itself; it is a play within a play, a play that is forever an interplay. This play is a play of differences that forms and reforms the word itself. The specificity of any signifier is a function of its entwinement within a complex signifying web. This differential network of signs is 'the functional condition, the condition of possibility, for every sign.' [ref. Derrida01] It's name is writing." [ref. Taylor01 pp. 524-525]

Lastly, I was inspired by a lesser known essay / story by Jorge Louis Borges, entitled A New Refutation of Time, wherein the author includes two versions of the same text from two distinctly different time periods. What is unique about this approach is that the two versions come to completely different conclusions, and yet proceed from the same basic premise. By including a temporal dimension with this text, it becomes much richer with meaning, without falling into the banality of prescriptive / proscriptive discourse. It is impressive when an author has enough command of his craft to be able to have the physical structure of a text reflect its philosophical and intellectual underpinnings, and I wished to emulate this in my writing.

As an acknowledgement to the "interplay of differences" in writing, coupled with the desire for the intellectual structure of this thesis to be reflected within its physical structure, this "digital" web was born. The original intent was to create an elaborate labyrinth of ideation, conveying a deeply seated fear of endless signification to the reader, forcing him or her to come to terms with the realities of Derridian deconstruction and *différance*. Due to time constraints and graduation requirements, and the ultimate conclusions of this thesis, the radical bent of this project has been diminished. As a tool, the web has been indispensable for organizing and searching my text and the texts of others, and allows for immediate publication on the Internet. As a theoretical fulcrum, however, the web remains in its infancy.

"...hypertext thinks itself to be structural rather than serial thought --- thought in space rather than thought for space. 'Serial thought,' says Umberto Eco, 'aims at the production of history and not at the rediscovery --- beneath history --- of the atemporal abscissae of all communication'" [ref. Joyce01 p.189]

I also must preface the fact that although this is a philosophical endeavor, references to the numerous philosophers and philosophies of the past are kept to a minimum. This is in part because the central author that is the basis of this thesis, Robert Pirsig, has eloquent thoughts on this issue. In [Lila: An Inquiry into Morals](#) he illuminates the difference between philosophologist (as rigorous student of philosophy) and philosopher (as creator of philosophy):

"Philosophologists often have an interest in creating philosophy but, as philosophologists, they subordinate it, much as a literary scholar might subordinate his own interest in creative writing. Unless they are exceptional they don't consider the creation of philosophy their real line of work.

As an author, Phaedrus (one of Pirsig's many narrative voices) had been putting off the philosophology, partly because he didn't like it, and partly to avoid putting a philosophological cart before the philosophical horse. Philosophologists not only start by putting the cart first; they usually forget the horse entirely. They say that first you should read what all the great philosophers of history have said and then you should decide what you want to say. The catch here is that by the time you've read what all the great philosophers of history have said you'll be at least two hundred years old. A second catch is that these great philosophers are very persuasive people and if you read them innocently you may be carried away by what they say and never see what they missed.

Phaedrus (Pirsig), in contrast, sometimes forgot the cart but was fascinated by the horse. He thought the best way to examine the contents of various carts is to figure out what you believe and then see what great philosophers agree with you. There will always be a few somewhere. These will be much more interesting to read since you can cheer what they say and boo their enemies, and when you see how their enemies attack them you can kibitz a little and take a real interest in whether they were right or wrong." [ref. Pirsig02 p.323]

I share Robert Pirsig's thoughts on this issue, not out of ignorance, since I have read a good portion of the important philosophers in history; as a 'schismatic' postmodern architectural theorist, I believe that there is a time when we must proceed into the dark without assistance in order to find a new source of light --- without undertaking an aggressive deletion of the enlightenment that has facilitated our arrival into the darkness.

CHAPTER TWO

Outwork

"Thus we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift nor a defect. To enter upon its path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming that thinking is a craft. Not only is the main step from work to art a circle like the step from art to work, but every separate step that we attempt circles in this circle." [ref. Heidegger01]

2.1 Static and Dynamic Practice and Theory

A basis for intellectualizing about and through architecture was born with the rise of architectural theory in the post-Renaissance "Humanist" period, born out of Gothic scholasticism. The earliest theories, such as the Brunelleschian and Albertian perspectival studies, archaeological reinterpretations of the Greco-Roman orders, and the French Neo-rationalist planometric studies gave rise to the first 'static' intellectual modeling of architecture. These breakthroughs allowed previously unseen and uninterpreted information to be communicated between architects and their apprentices, producing the general discourse of architectural theory.

In and around the turn of the nineteenth century, new materials such as concrete and steel were introduced to the realm of architecture that necessitated a more developed understanding of the science of materials. Based on simple physics, the study of the properties of these inorganic materials required more of an investment in time by architects and builders during the design process, but the results were more efficient ways to create space and an expanded vocabulary of form for the architect/builder. This shift gave rise to the first mode of architectural engineering theory: the idealized study of the static nature of inorganic materials --- "Statics".

Architectural engineering theorists began to realize that there were limitations involved in the idealizations that a "static" interpretation of a structure after Statics became fully understood and employed within the building trades and

buildings became taller and more complex. Statics takes into account only the information involved in a discrete moment of the existence of a structure; and this ideal interpretation, although helpful in the initial understanding of Statics, made it more difficult to envision comprehension tools that lie beyond Statics. Buildings are not static structures --- they are affected by "dynamic" loads such as wind, snow, and earthquakes. Understanding these non-ideal dynamic conditions required more complex mathematical procedures, which utilized calculus and differential equations, giving rise to the second mode of architectural engineering theory: the non-idealized study of the dynamic nature of inorganic materials --- "Dynamics". Dynamics, which takes into account information beyond a discrete moment of the existence of a building, was no better tool than Statics. But when Dynamics was used in conjunction with Statics, it allowed for a more complete picture of the existence and temporal transformations of a structure.

An analogy can be made between this shift in perspective within architectural engineering and that of general architectural theory during the second half of the twentieth century. Over the past fifty years there has been a general trend in architectural theory away from the more "static" nature of "Humanism" and toward the more "dynamic" nature of "Post-Modernism" . This is exemplified by projects like the shard-like, anthro-mechanistic drawings of Lebbeus Woods, Daniel Libeskind's angularly monolithic addition to the Berlin Museum, Peter Eisenman's crumpled and interstitial Wexler Art Center, Bernard Tschumi's field of colliding programmatic objects in the Parc de la Vilette, and Coop Himmelblau's unsettling fiery, planar UFA Cinema Center in Dresden. There has

been such a drift away from traditional Western Architecture by these and other late 20th-century designers that the student of architecture is left with a very nebulous idea of what architectural theory is. This then introduces the incredible need to overhaul and reorganize the divisions within the discourse of architectural theory.

2.2 The Doubles of Post-Modernism?

In 1980, Robert M. Stern published an influential essay entitled *The Doubles of Post-Modernism*, in the first issue of the *Harvard Architectural Review*. Within this piece he takes a long, hard look at "post-modernism" --- a term that has been kicked around in political history and literary and art criticism --- now with respect to a post-Charles Jencks discourse of architecture. Stern begins his analysis of post-modernism by splitting "modernism" (what he considers to be the "Western Humanist/Post Renaissance" period) into two different camps: with the help of Kermode he labels the first mode the schismatic, and with the help of Spender he labels the second mode 'traditional'. He says that "...The schismatic argues for a clean break with Western Humanism...", while the traditional "...argues for a recognition of the continuity of the Western Humanist tradition..." This binary-dialectical splitting within discourse is in itself a very 'traditional' move on the part of Stern, since binary opposition is a crucial part of Western Humanist thought --- however, Stern fails to acknowledge this fact within the essay. Luckily, Stern does not limit himself to this simple set of initial oppositions. This re-interpretation of his 1980 essay will attempt to show that Stern's own ideas can

be taken much further away from the 'traditional' sense of discourse than he was able to or had desired to at the time of writing.

The approach taken by Stern in this essay is self-proclaimed to be "...nonargumentative, leading to an interpretation of the historical and cultural place of Post Modernism rather than polemics for it." [ref Stern01 p.75] What Stern fails to realize is that it is impossible for a cultural critic not to show his or her polemics when defining the core aspects of Post-Modernism. We all know from his shingle-style, sub-urban-minded rhetoric is that he himself is a traditional post-modernist to the core. Thus, to claim to proceed "nonargumentative"-ly in this essay is absurd.

Stern makes this clear in his overall approach to historical analysis. After naming the binary 'schismatic'/'traditional' pair, he starts off by talking about the doubles of modernism (small "m") and then those of Modernism (big "m"), finishes with the doubles of Post-Modernism. In moving from a brief discussion of modernism to expound at length about the two modes of Modernism, Stern proceeds to claim that there cannot be only two modes of Post-Modernism. This makes sense, since Post-Modernism prides itself on being pluralistic. But, rather than breaking the Post-Modern period into all of its possible combinations (based upon the logic of his discussion thus far), he wearily contends that there are exactly two types of the two modes of 'schismatic' and 'traditional' Post-modernism --- even going so far as to explicitly favor one of each of the two modes. These are 'traditional' Western discourse traps that Stern is falling into:

"...(Modern Western) philosophy...does not regard these (binary) opposites as equivalent. It refuses to allow the possibility that oppositional terms can coexist peacefully. Invariably one term is privileged through the divestment of its relative. The resultant economy of privilege sustains an asymmetrical hierarchy in which one member governs or rules the other throughout the theological, logical, axiological, and even political domains. It is against just this (binary) hierarchy that so many post-modern thinkers rebel..." [Taylor 01, p.54]

This odd splitting-upon-splitting technique ultimately leads to great confusion when attempts are made to comprehend his interpretations of Post-Modernism. Stern does not give clear reasoning why only this limited branching occurs; but it can be construed that throughout his analytical process, Stern is merely proceeding in a 'traditional' Western "binary" fashion in order to deal with the complexities of Post-Modernism.

2.3 Traditional and Schismatic Postmodernism

Since we were already within the grips of the Post-Modern age (even as of 1980), anyone attempting to analyze the Post-Modern period with respect to the past will subconsciously do so while looking through a lens of judgement clouded by the current state of affairs. Robert Stern does not include this notion in his historical analysis, which leaves it lacking in depth considerably. The initial premise and early methodologies included in this essay are so strong that it would be a shame to toss Stern's work aside and begin anew. Therefore, it is now necessary to reorganize Stern's essay. Instead working through the

temporal sequence of modern-Modern-Post Modern, we will instead look at all possible permutations of the interactions between these three relatively well-entrenched period-labels, based on the perception of the Post-Modern.

In this re-interpretation of Stern, "Western" replaces his notion of the "modern" or "Western Humanist/Post Renaissance" period, to avoid confusion. Also, in each of the following cases it is presumed that Western Humanist period came about with a break from the rest of Architectural History:

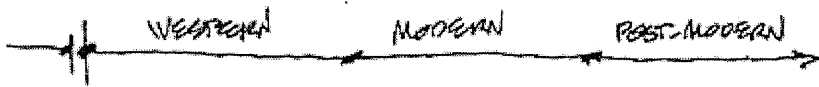


Figure 2.1

Type I: Traditional Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern period follows the Modern, which follows the Western Humanist age; this is a standard time line approach to representing history. Each period remains distinct, yet builds upon the previous period. This is the polemical approach taken by Robert A. M. Stern from at times, but more so by Aldo Rossi with his style of historical continuity and synchronic signification, and by Michael Graves later on in his career with his mix of Classical motifs and inexpensive, modern materials.

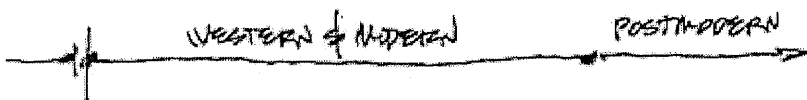


Figure 2.2

Type II: Traditional Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern period follows a period that is viewed as the Modern / Western Humanist age; this is a special case where the Modern and Western periods are seen as unbroken, as was portrayed in much of the work of Colin Rowe, especially in Mathematics of an Ideal Villa.

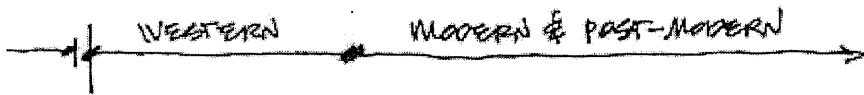


Figure 2.3

Type III: Traditional Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern and Modern periods follow the Western Humanist age; this is a special case where the Postmodern and Modern periods are seen as unbroken, as is the polemical approach taken by neo-Corbusians such as Richard Meier and the early Michael Graves.

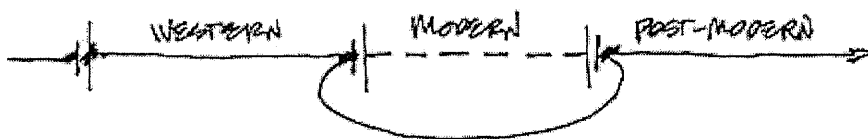


Figure 2.4

Type IV: Traditional-Schismatic Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern period directly follows the Western Humanist age; this is a special case that tends to favor its 'traditional' component over its 'schismatic' component, wherein the Modern period is

deleted from history at all cost. This is the polemical approach taken by conservative reactionaries such as T.J. Smith and for the most part, Robert A. M. Stern.

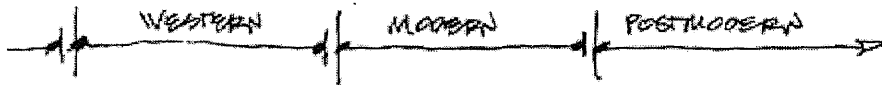


Figure 2.5

Type V: Schismatic-Traditional Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern period continues the tradition begun by the Modern period of breaking off completely with the previous period, the Western Humanist period. This is a special case that tends to favor its 'schismatic' component over its 'traditional' component, and is the polemical approach taken by liberal radicals such as Lebbeus Woods, Daniel Liebeskind, and Morphosis.



Figure 2.6

Type VI: Schismatic Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern and Modern periods appear unbroken, yet break completely with the Western Humanist age; this is a special case where the Modern and Post-Modern periods, though conflated into an overarching era, are viewed as radically different from the Western Humanist age. This is the polemical approach taken for the most part by Jean Nouvel, Rem

Koolhaas and early Peter Eisenman, where modern motifs get recycled in a strange manner.



Figure 2.7

Type VII: Schismatic Post-Modernism:

Here is the case where the Postmodern period breaks off from the Modern / Western Humanist age; this is a special case where the Postmodern period is set free from the menacing combination of the Modern / Western Humanist periods. This is the polemical approach taken by any Postmodern architect who respects the work of Colin Rowe, including Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, and Steven Holl.

The point of the previous reinterpretation of Robert A.M. Stern's 1980 essay is to briefly narrow down the scope of the theoretical and polemical concern of this thesis. Both the 'traditional' and 'schismatic' modes of Postmodern architectural theory are evolutionary in nature, but the 'schismatic' modes have been significantly more "forward-thinking" than that of any of the 'traditional' modes. In accepting the notion of caesura, or "breaking off", from previous historical periods, the 'schismatic' modes have directed very potent and agile "attacks" on the body of Modernist / Western Humanist thought --- whether it be in the realm of Tschumi's disjunctional programming, Morphosis' adaptation of particle physics diagrams to world scale topographies, or Eisenman's semiological applications of computer-aided design. The 'traditional'-minded

semiological applications of computer-aided design. The 'traditional'-minded designer believes that the past is a fertile pasture for light-hearted tinkering, while the 'schismatic' designer acknowledges the fact that we cannot forget the past, however we must try at all costs to distance ourselves from it in order to produce innovative work that challenges the theoretical status quo. In addition, it can be said that the 'traditional' designer views these three main historical periods as an interplay between the two-dimensional world of design and the three-dimensional world of production, while the 'schismatic' designer compresses and muddies the two, three, and four-dimensional aspects of space and time into both design and production. The "dynamic" nature of this 'schismatic' discourse is considerably more in-sync with the fast-paced late-capitalist MTV style on-the-brink-of virtual architecture world we currently live in. For these reasons, this thesis will concentrate further only on the 'schismatic' mode of postmodern architectural theory.

Beginning in the 1960's with the work of Archigram, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, Peter Eisenman, and the likes, 'schismatic' postmodernist architectural theory gained a critical sense of mass. These pioneering thinkers planted the seeds of a period of unprecedented theoretical evolution. In shifting their focus upon the previously marginal and culturally taboo realms of pop-art, computer-aided design, signs and signage, Las Vegas, and advertising, these designers paved the way for a new tradition (as Eisenman would say) of "de-centering the metaphysic" of architecture --- injecting new life into the historically entrenched realm of architectural theory. The theoretical work these men and

women introduced into the discourse of architectural theory for the most part arrived on the scene not in the form of buildings and structures, but rather as images. Lasting, powerful images... in books, in magazines, on computer screens... but overall, disseminated primarily as images.

This shift from relying solely upon the dissemination of ideas surrounding built work to that of representations of both buildings and conceptual frameworks signals a key period in the evolution of schismatic architectural theory. These investigations have led to a dearth of examinations of the interplay of semiology and architecture, most notably the investigations of Diane Agrest and Mario Grandelsonas in Semiotics and Architecture: Ideological Consumption or Theoretical Work (1973) and that of Geoffery Broadbent in A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture (1977). But in order to fully understand the mechanisms of the semiology and architecture, we must first understand the mechanisms of semiology in general, and for that we must turn to renowned scholar and linguist Roland Barthes.

2.4 Barthes and Semiology

"...semiology... knows only one operation: reading, or deciphering." [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.114]

The prime candidate for a rich, multi-dimensional model of the sign is Roland Barthes. In his seminal essay entitled "The Imagination of the Sign", Barthes states right off that "Every sign includes or implies three relationships." [Barthes, *The Imagination of the Sign* in *A Barthes Reader* edit. by Sontag, p. 211] He

goes on to say that there is "...an interior relationship... and two exterior relationships... a virtual and an actual one." These three relationships are described as follows:

1. **The "symbolic" relationship (interior):** basically the traditional, "geological" [ibid. p.213] relationship between the signifier and signified as first proposed by Saussure, wherein there lies a symbol (signifier) and a concept (signified) that are tightly connected in the entity of the sign. Example: the term "bus" and the iconic image of a yellow school bus we all carry around somewhere in our psyche. This type of 'consciousness' of the sign relies on resemblance and on the analogical relationship between the symbol (signifier) and the concept (signified), which together generate the form of the sign. Barthes states that this relationship has "dominated the sociology of symbols and of course a share of psychoanalysis in its early stages..." [ibid. 213] "The **symbolic** consciousness implies an imagination of depth; ...the relation of form and content is ceaselessly renewed by time (history) , the superstructure overwhelmed by the infrastructure, without our ever being able to grasp the structure itself." [ibid. 216]
2. **The "paradigmatic" relationship (exterior, virtual):** a more linguistic relationship, one which "implies the existence of a 'memory' of forms from which it is distinguished by the smallest difference necessary and sufficient to effect a change of meaning." [p.211] This relationship relies upon the knowledge of the reader to surround the sign with other terms that are very similar, but imply slightly different meanings. Example: the terms "busses",

“school bus” and “Peter Pan bus” all describe “bus”, but each one is slightly different. “The **paradigmatic** consciousness therefore defines meaning not as the simple encounter of signifier and signified, but, according to Merleau-Ponty’s splendid expression, as a veritable ‘modulation of co-existence’; it substitutes for the bilateral relation of the symbolic consciousness a quadrilateral or more precisely a homological relation.” [ibid. 214] ‘The paradigmatic consciousness... is a formal imagination; it sees the signifier as linked, as if in profile, to several virtual signifiers which it is at once close to and distinct from: it no longer sees the sign in depth, it sees it in its perspective...’ [ibid. 216]

3. **The “syntagmatic” relationship (exterior, actual):** “the sign is no longer situated with regard to its (virtual) ‘brothers’, but with regards to its (actual) ‘neighbors’. [p.212 (parenth. Barthes)] In other words, this relationship implies the shifts in meaning that occur due to the words that the sign is actually in play with in a given phrase. An example would be the way “bus” is deformed in meaning by the other terms in the phrase: “the double-decker bus with no driver on the top”. This consciousness of the sign is “essentially a consciousness of the constraints, tolerances, and liberties of the sign’s associations.” [ibid. 215] “The **syntagmatic** imagination no longer sees the sign in its perspective, it foresees it in its extension: its antecedent or consequent links, the bridges it extends to other signs; this is a ‘stemmatous’ imagination of the chain or network...” [ibid. 217]

Barthes makes it very clear that these are not three independent types of signs, but rather “correspond to a certain moment of reflection” upon any sign. All three of these relationships are at work any given time that we interpret a sign, and all three can be perceived about any sign, just not at the same time. These descriptions of the “Imagination of the Sign” provide a more detailed road map of the mechanisms of *différance*. Not only is there a differment and difference at work within the symbolic signifier/signified aspect of the sign, but there is also play involving the linkage between the meanings of “virtual, homological” terms of the paradigmatic consciousness and the network of “actual, stemmatous” terms of the syntagmatic consciousness. This is obviously dependent upon the point of view you take during the analysis of a reading of signs.

“What is characteristic of myth? To transform a meaning into form. In other words, myth is always language-robbery.” [Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, p. 131]

Another way that Roland Barthes has elaborated on a rich, multi-valent model of semiological signification is in his ruminations on ‘myth’ in *Mythologies*. He sets out from the onset to clarify that myth is not what we refer to when we think of Aphrodite and Zeus, Mercury and Thor. No, he says, “myth is a type of speech... (and) since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no ‘substantial’ ones. Everything, then, can be a myth? Yes, I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions...” [Barthes,

Mythologies, p.109] Barthes also goes on to explain that there is a discrete semiology of myth, one that is equally as complex as that posed by Derrida through *différance*.

Barthes begins this semiology of myth by describing the birth of semiological discourse: "...since Saussure himself, and sometimes independently of him, a whole section of contemporary research has constantly been referred to the problem of meaning... no longer concerned with facts except as much as they are endowed with significance. Now to postulate a signification is to have recourse to semiology... I do not mean that semiology could account for all these aspects of research... but... they are all sciences dealing with values. They are not content with meeting the facts: they define and explore them as tokens for something else" [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.111]

Barthes begins an elaborate and compelling deconstruction of myth by stating: "Mythical speech is made of material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance. This substance is unimportant..." [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.110] Pirsig relies upon loose reference to quite a number of famous and revered thinkers to render credibility to his search for meaning through a pluralistic study of values and morals, relying on what Barthes just described as 'material which has already been worked on...'. Following these associations with poetic accounts of his motorcycle trip across America with his ten year old son, his text becomes suddenly more credible

when viewed as myth and not as philosophic or scientific fact. A good example of this would be where in the 'afterword' of *Zen*, Pirsig ruminates on the Ancient Greek view of time – one where they “saw the future as something that came upon them from behind their backs with the past receding before their eyes.” [Pirsig, *Zen...*, p. 375] Pirsig latches onto this well-worn concept of temporal movement through a series of questions, integrating the philosophical and mythical qualities of the argument into his own mythical account of his sons death soon after the completion of the novel.

The mechanisms involved in this “mythologizing” are simple and yet complex. Barthes outlines them clearly in *Mythologies*, but in a more scattered rather than succinct format. He says, “In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern... (of) the signifier, the signified and the sign. But myth is a particular system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second order semiological system*. That which was a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second.” . As a clarification of this he writes:

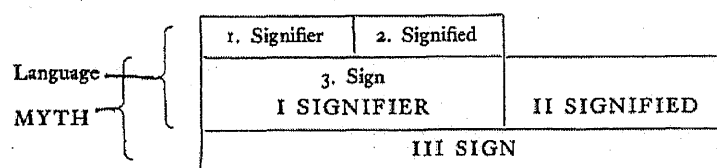


Figure 2.8

“It can be seen in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or the modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call the

language-object, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build its own system; and the myth itself, which I shall call *metalanguage*, because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first. [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.115]

Barthes cites this image of a Negro soldier saluting the French flag as myth:

“I am at the barber’s, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an aged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is the presence of the signified through the signifier.”

Barthes clarifies the mechanism that underlie these first- and second-order systems by defining a three key terms: “meaning” -- which is the sign on the plane of the linguistic first-order system (3. above), “form” – which is the signifier on the plane of the second-order system of myth (I. above), and “concept” – which stands as the second-order mythic sign (III. above). These

definitions are crucial to understand in order to grasp his ultimate statements on mythic signification: "The signifier of myth presents itself in an ambiguous way: it is at the same time meaning and form, full on one side and empty on the other. ...in the meaning, a signification is already built, and could very well be self-sufficient if myth did not take hold of it and did not turn it suddenly into an empty, parasitical form. The meaning (the first-order sign) is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions. When it becomes form (the second-order signifier), the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains. There is here a paradoxical permutation in the reading operations, an abnormal regression from meaning to form, from the linguistic sign to the mythical signifier." [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.117]

The author reiterates this point by describing just what happens during that switch from first-order linguistic sign to the second-order mythic signifier: "...the essential point of all this is that the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal. ...the form must constantly be able to be rooted again in the meaning and to get there what in nature it needs for its nutriment; above all it must be able to hide there. It is this constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth. The form of myth is not a symbol: the Negro who salutes is not a symbol of the French Empire: he has too much presence, he appears as a rich, fully experienced, spontaneous, *indisputable* image. But at the same

time this presence is tamed, put at a distance, made almost transparent; it recedes a little, it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed, French imperialism: once made use of, becomes artificial.” [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.118]

Continuing from the “meaning” (the first-order sign) to the “form” (the second-order signifier), onward to the to the “concept” (the second-order sign), Barthes states: “Unlike the form, the concept is in no way abstract: it is filled with a situation. Through the concept, it is a whole new history which is implanted in the myth. ...In this sense, we can say that the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be *appropriated*...” [Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.119]

Yet in analyzing a myth, Barthes acknowledges that there is no clear way to “demystify” this appropriation: “...we constantly drift between the object (text, image...) and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. It would seem that we are condemned for some time yet to speak excessively about reality.”

Barthes shows us that myth functions on a more lateral basis than *différance*, where signifiers become signs through an exterior mechanism of scale rather than of interior signification. What the author is explaining is that this discussion of myth as a second-order metalanguage shows yet another road map to the deferral and difference that can function in a semiological reading of a text.

CHAPTER THREE

Pirsig and Derrida: a Pre-“différance” Presence

"...In many ways, deconstruction might seem an unlikely partner for religious reflection. As a form of thought it appears avowedly atheistic. Derrida speaks for others as well as himself when he adamantly maintains that deconstruction "blocks every relationship to theology." [ref. Derrida03] Paradoxically, it is just this antithetical association with theology that lends deconstruction its "religious" significance for marginal thinkers. By reflecting and recasting the pathos of so much contemporary art, literature, and philosophy, deconstruction expresses greater appreciation for the significance of the death of God than most contemporary philosophers of religion and theologians... One of the distinctive features of deconstruction is its willingness to confront the problem of the death of God squarely even if not always directly. The insights released by deconstructive criticism suggest the ramifications of the death of God for areas as apparently distinct as contemporary psychology, linguistics, and historical analysis." [ref. Taylor01]

3.1 Différance

Since the late 1970's and early 1980's, a good portion of the discourse of 'schismatic' post-modern architectural theory has been willfully trapped within the grip of the profound French cultural critic Jacques Derrida. From Peter Eisenman to Bernard Tschumi to John Hejduk to Daniel Libeskind to Coop Himmelblau, 'schismatic' post-modern architectural theory has fully embraced the radical ideas put forth by Derridian *différance* and Deconstruction. Tschumi had Derrida design a park-object at La Villette, and Eisenman has included Derrida in his writing and lecturing. At the same time, with this overwhelming urge to thoroughly work out Derrida's inherently dynamic ideas within the theoretical discourse of architecture, almost all of the 'schismatic' post-modern architectural theory that has been disseminated and put into practice has eventually stagnated into the free-play of architectural form. It is as if the blatant application of 'schismatic' theory to architectural practice leaves an inherent gap between the experience and intellectualization of these postmodern structures. This is ultimately due to the fact that formal exercises are all that can ultimately be achieved within a theoretical framework that relies upon these two Derridian tenets:

1. There can be no true knowledge or understanding because a radical deconstruction based on *différance* begins and ends in the free-play of all signification, and...

2. Therefore there can be no consciously applied discourse, because after application, conveyance of meaning is trapped within the same endless free-play of *différance* that undermines the production of discourse itself. As a result no

architectural theory can stand up to close scrutiny and criticism, and no architectural theory can be conveyed through architectural production. Thus, architectural theory ends by folding into itself within this free-play of signification.

As one can see, these tenets leave an incredible sense of despair to the architectural theorist basing his or her work on the most radical notions of Derridian 'deconstruction'. In not accepting the impending facile death of applied 'schismatic' post-modern architectural theory based on deconstruction and *différance*, this thesis attempts (with a great debt paid to authors Robert M. Pirsig, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes) to unhinge the unwieldy grip that *différance* has had on the general production of discourse and the specific production of applied schismatic postmodern architectural theory.

Derrida has ambivalently lead a handful of the strongest, riskiest, and most eloquent architectural theorists of the late 20th Century down a thickly brambled path. In an attempt to continue Nietzsche's "nihilistic and subjectivist devaluation and annulment of what traditionally has been taken to be the truth about reality..." Derrida has shown theorists in all veins that "...since access to any objective, privileged meaning is illusory, philosophical or scientific truth is unmasked as a kind of error." [ref. Mugerauer01 p.66] Derrida cites *différance* to be the temporal / spatial fulcrum for the ultimate deconstruction of all experience. Since it denotes the "delays" involved in all sense-oriented experiences, in the simple fact that the Latin roots of the term *différance* signify "to differ" and "to defer", *différance* as a verb puts all experience into play. This compelling argument was put forth by Derrida in his famous essay(s) on the topic; an

argument that talks of the interpretive and translational powers at play in every moment of our cognizance, conveniently rendering all experience into a text that is then open to all of his other textual / analytical devices.

What Derrida has taught us is that due to the inherent 'slipperiness' of semiological meaning, what we assume to be the foundations of Western thought can not and will not ever be completely foundational. Robert Mugerauer has summarized Derrida's concerns brilliantly and succinctly in Derrida and Beyond:

"Perhaps more than any other contemporary thinker, Jacques Derrida points a way to architectural deconstruction as a situational strategy. According to Derrida, Western culture is built on the assumption that there are intelligible first grounds or causes... Derrida contends that (these) are nothing more than strategies that enable us to assume and act as if the world were intelligible. By means of metaphysics, the West has concealed from us its own unintelligibility, its own fictive character....

...What metaphysics conceals is that it rests on a supposition: the desired objective center is achieved only insofar as a more primal situation is concealed. A more fundamental, but complex, difference (*différance*) is suppressed and concealed by the dominating metaphysics. Derrida holds that difference itself --- the binary tensed difference (essentially Heideggerian) or pairing of presence / absence, Beings / beings, identity / difference --- is what makes possible the seeming priority of one and only one member of each pair... This *différance* is primal but is no ground in itself; it necessarily has no origin or end but is just continuing difference...

Différance, as Derrida uses it, has two senses. It means differ and defer. To differ means to be spatially separate (nothing, not even the present or consciousness, is self-present or identical; there is no original identity). To defer means to temporally separate (nothing ever is wholly present; even the present is always delayed). Since what we take to be objective reality is fundamentally spatial and temporal... Derrida is claiming that there is no moment when anything is given as itself, in full self-present identity; there is always a gap, an absence in the heart of reality. Indeed, it is this difference which is primal. Metaphysics erases the primal difference in order to suppress absence, beings, death, and so on; that is, in order to provide us with a false comfort, both in the most rigorous activities of high culture and in the everydayness within which we are submerged." [ref. Mugerauer01 p.67]

Derrida himself says, "An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject." [ref. Derrida04 p.13]

If difference, and ultimately *différance*, is the foothold of reality, then there can be no true comprehension of reality. Period. Without comprehension of reality, there is no communication of reality, and ultimately no solid form of discourse, ever. *Différance* brings about the pervasive sense of despair

described earlier by affecting the absolute dynamism of all discourse. Mugerauer, Eisenman, Tschumi and others go on from here and embrace the radical and analytical 'deconstruction' of discourse as the never-finished task of the theorist willing to invest in *différance*. These thinkers create elaborate theses and theories based on the fundamental right to be able to solicit or 'shake-down' any metaphysical, political, intellectual, or quotidian edifice. Yet, the same *différance* employed as a foundational aspect of the discourse of these theorists stands as the ultimate trap of any schismatic postmodern architectural theory that itself is based on the mechanisms of *différance*. How can one expect to disseminate information that itself is corrupted by *différance*, and have it be any more pertinent or compelling than that which they are 'deconstructing'? This situation only produces, and has produced, a discrete number of totemic theorists egotistically vying for supremacy within a self-proclaimed rhetorical arena.

3.2 A Way Out of the Labyrinth of *différance*

Yet, there must be a way out of this trap of endless signification without condemning all theory that recognizes and respects the potential of *différance*. There must be more to *différance* and the limits of semiology than just endless signification. A way out of the labyrinth of *différance* would lead to a schismatic mode of architectural theory that did not wholly contradict itself by disseminating information that is no better nor worse than its critical source. Seeking a way out of this labyrinth of contradiction is the main focus of this thesis.

At this point it is pertinent to cite Bataille's guttural claim that an exit does not exist from the labyrinth of language and knowledge:

"Bataille reverses the traditional metaphorical sense of the labyrinth that generally links it with the desire to get out. Just as philosophy allows one to leave Plato's cave, the labyrinth (from Bacon to Leibnitz) is where those without access to the thread of knowledge are condemned to lose their way. Knowledge always takes the form of something to end all error and errantry. Bataille, on the contrary, denounces ("Icarian") solutions. Above all, he denounces the wish that it lead somewhere, have a solution (whether a scientific one, praising the merits of the "ancient geometric conception of the future", or an artistic-utopian one, dreaming of escape), because the only result of this wish is that, far from being a real exit from the labyrinth, it transforms the labyrinth into a prison. To will the future (and not to desire it) to submit to planning and projects, to wish to construct it, is to lock oneself into a devalorized present that is airless and unlivable. "The project," according to Bataille, "is the prison." (4) To want to get out of the labyrinth, making this into a project, is to close it, or to close oneself inside it. [ref. Hollier01 p.61] (more Bataille)

Yet to not attempt to escape from the labyrinth is to accept Hollier's reading of Bataille as a type of 'transcendental signified', removing it from the possibility of 'deconstruction'. One strong possibility of a way out of the differential maze is to question what happens during the spatial / temporal "delay" that Derrida cites as the primary / primal mechanism of *différance*. Since

Derrida places *différance* before conception, cognition, and interpretation of the 'sign' --- but after the experience of the 'sign' --- there is a somewhat defined space and time left unexamined. Derrida himself notes this possibility of deconstructing *différance* prior to the consumption of the 'sign', in the essay of the same name --- "*Différance*" :

"...But can one not conceive of a presence, and of a presence to itself of the subject before speech or signs, a presence to itself of the subject in a silent and intuitive consciousness?"

In other words, Derrida asks the question --- Can a presence be conceived that exists between the 'experience' of an event and the subsequent 'interpretation' of that event?

"...Such a question therefore supposes that, prior to the sign and outside it, excluding any trace and any *différance*, something like consciousness is possible. And that consciousness, before distributing its signs in space and in the world, can gather itself into its presence. But what is consciousness? What does 'consciousness' mean? Most often, in the very form of meaning, in all its modifications, consciousness offers itself to thought only as self-presence, as the perception of self in presence. And what holds for consciousness here holds here for so-called subjective experience in general. Just as the category of the subject cannot be, and never has been, thought without the reference to presence as *hupokeimenon* or as *ousia*, etc., so the subject as consciousness has never manifested itself except as self-presence. The privilege granted to consciousness therefore signifies the privilege granted to the present; and even if

one describes the transcendental temporality of consciousness, at the depth at which Husserl does so, one grants to the 'living present' the power of synthesizing traces, and of incessantly reassembling them.

This privilege is the ether of metaphysics, the element of our thought that is caught in the language of metaphysics. One can delimit such a closure today only by soliciting the value that Heidegger has shown to be the ontotheological determination of Being; and in thus soliciting the value of presence, by means of an interrogation whose status must be completely exceptional, we are also examining the absolute privilege of this form or epoch of presence in general that is consciousness as meaning in self-presence."

Thus one comes to posit presence --- and specifically consciousness, the being beside itself of consciousness --- no longer as the absolutely central form of Being but as a "determination" and as an "effect". A determination or and effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but of *différance*, a system that no longer tolerates the opposition of activity and passivity, nor that of cause and effect, or of indetermination and determination, etc., such that in designating consciousness as an effect or a determination, one continues... to operate according to the lexicon of that which one is de-limiting."

Admittedly, the above is a nearly impenetrable passage of Derrida. However, since an understanding of this passage is absolutely critical to continue with this project, a "close reading" will be necessary.

What Derrida is trying to say here is that, if we are working to intellectually conceive of a presence that exists prior to the spatialization of signs (or prior to the mechanisms of *différance*), then we are essentially trying to conceive of a presence that exists during the spatial / temporal delay between experience and interpretation of an event. In order to conceive of a presence that exists prior to the spatialization of signs, there must be a consciousness that exists prior to the spatialization of signs, to do the work of conception --- where consciousness is self-presence. Since presence implies a connection with the present, then that presence contains the inherent delay of *différance*. In the same light, both presence and the present have been deemed privileged Western metaphysical phenomena by Derrida due to the primal nature of *différance* --- rendering both presence and the present fictional. Lastly, he says that presence is essentially an effect and a determination, and a metaphysic based on *différance* does not allow for either effect or determination.

Essentially, Derrida says here that there cannot be any consciousness without presence, and there cannot be any presence because presence is conceptually undermined by *différance*. This can be reduced to the fact that there cannot be any consciousness before *différance* --- therefore one cannot conceive of anything prior to the mechanisms of *différance*. In a nut-shell, this means that Derrida feels that there is nothing that can be conceived of during the spatial / temporal delay between experience and interpretation of an event.

3.3 Quality and Différance

Let us recall Derrida's initial question of whether a presence can be conceived that exists between the experience and the interpretation of an event: "...But can one not conceive of a presence, and of a presence to itself of the subject before speech or signs, a presence to itself of the subject in a silent and intuitive consciousness?" In answering this question in order to avoid criticism on this pre-*différance* front, Derrida has missed a few key aspects that can fall under criticism. These key terms are "conceive" and "subject", and these terms mark the fissure, the crack in the armour of *différance* that this thesis will take its critical aim upon. This marks the beginning of a lengthy deconstruction... which could quite possibly lead to the ultimate deconstruction --- the deconstruction of *différance*, the 'original' seed of all previous deconstruction.

The main fulcrum that will be employed for this deconstruction is the work of Robert M. Pirsig. There are many reasons to employ Pirsig for this task, and equally, if not more reasons to shy away from employing his work in an academic inquiry. One of the main reasons I first became enamored with the work of Robert Pirsig is his absolute abhorrence of the subject-object nature of Western Metaphysics. That is why an analytical deconstruction of Pirsig's work must be undertaken before the intersection between Pirsig and Derrida may take place.

The most challenging aspect of this deconstruction of *différance* is the method of analysis. A deconstruction of Robert Pirsig's two books, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values and Lila: An Inquiry into Morals, is required prior to a full deconstruction of *différance*, in order to clarify

the most potent and powerful aspects of his work and to exclude the portions that undermine itself. Only when that is accomplished can the deconstruction of différance proceed, paradoxically, upon terra firma.

A deconstruction of Pirsig's work must begin with "Quality", the central investigation of the body of his work.

Soon after beginning to teach Creative Writing at Minnesota State University, a colleague told Robert Pirsig "I hope you are teaching Quality to your students." [ref. Pirsig01 p.160] A few months later this colleague trotted by his office again and said "Are you really teaching Quality this quarter?" --- to which he replied "Definitely." [ref. Pirsig01 p.161] Later on that day Pirsig realized that he himself did not truly understand what "Quality" was, and yet was using the term to describe his teaching style. After a deliberating about this for hours on end, he left his office at 3 a.m. and "confessed to himself that he didn't have a clue as to what "Quality" was..."

"Most people would have forgotten about 'Quality' at this point, or just left it hanging suspended... But he was so despondent about his own ability to teach what he believed, he really didn't give a damn about whatever else he was supposed to do, and then he woke up the next morning and there was 'Quality' staring him in the face..."

Quality --- you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more Quality. But when you try to say what the Quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what

Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it does exist... What is Quality?" [ref. Pirsig01 p.163]

From this day forth Robert Pirsig began an obsessive quest to truly understand "Quality". He made it the focus of both Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values and Lila: An Inquiry into Morals, and through these inquiries has achieved an unprecedented understanding of the concept of "Quality". Pirsig has continually refused to define the term "Quality" itself, even though both of his novels deal with the act of defining the inner mechanisms of "Quality":

"And yet here was Quality; a tiny, almost unnoticeable fault line; a line of illogic in our concept of the universe; and you tapped it, and the whole universe came apart, so neatly it was unbelievable. He wished Kant were alive. Kant would have appreciated it. That master diamond cutter. He would see. Hold Quality undefined. That was the secret." [ref. Pirsig01 p.196]

Pirsig does not entirely leave "Quality" undefined, however. In sub-titling his book, An Inquiry Into Values, he is directly linking "Quality" to 'value'. This is a key linkage. He confirms this in saying in Lila..., "...Before he had gone up into the mountains, he had written a whole book on values. Quality. Quality was value. They were the same thing." [ref. Pirsig02 p.58]

In his first book, Zen..., Robert Pirsig attempts to examine "Quality" with respect to the history of Western Philosophy. In the process, he directly challenges the subject / object dichotomy that is the cornerstone of Western

Philosophy, by questioning whether "Quality" exists merely in the mind (of the subject), or exists in the thing itself (in the object).

Pirsig's response to the critical question is as follows: If "Quality" exists only in the mind, "then, ...Quality... is just another name for whatever you like..." [ref. Pirsig01 p.229] and if "Quality" exists in the object, "then you must explain just why scientific instruments are unable to detect it..." [ref. Pirsig01 p.228]

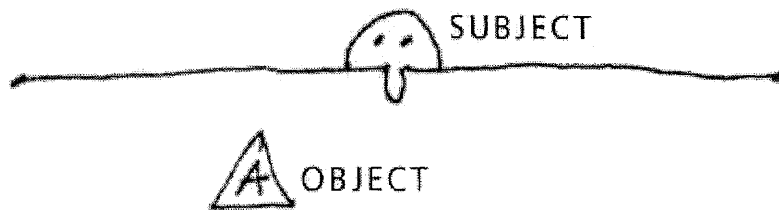


Figure 3.1

For instance, here we have an image, a representation of an object, "A", and a subject, "You" (the reader). As you begin to comprehend this image, you have already experienced "Quality". To explain exactly what "Quality" is requires a trip back in time, back to this point of recognition.

Pirsig states: "...although you normally associate Quality with objects, feelings of Quality sometimes occur without any object at all. This is what lead him at first to think that maybe Quality is all subjective. But subjective pleasure wasn't what he meant by Quality either. Quality decreases subjectivity. Quality takes you out of yourself, makes you aware of the world around you. Quality is opposed to subjectivity." [ref. Pirsig01 p. 214]

From here Pirsig moves on to begin to more concretely define "Quality":

"...Quality couldn't be independently related with either the subject or the object but could be found only in the relationship of the two with each other. It is the point at which the subject and object meet... Quality is not a thing. It is an event... at which the subject becomes aware of the object. And because without objects there can be no subject --- because the objects create the subject's awareness of himself --- Quality is the event at which awareness of both subjects and objects is made possible... This means Quality is not the result of a collision between subject and object. The very existence of subject and object themselves is deduced from the Quality event. The Quality event is the cause of subjects and objects, which are mistakenly presumed to be the cause of Quality!"
[ref. Pirsig01 p.228]

This intervention of "Quality" before the 'subject' and the 'object' is a radical departure from traditional Western Humanist philosophy. From the Greeks to Decartes to Heidegger, the sacred cow of the subject / object as primary-dialectical / metaphysical-split has remained central to this philosophy. Yet, having made this move, the concept of "Quality" remains vague and 'mystical' at this point, so we must delve further into Pirsig's "definition of "Quality".

In Lila..., Pirsig further elaborates on "Quality" as he sees it working within the patterns of human evolution. Citing the discourse of anthropology (specifically its developments into 'evolution', 'natural selection', and 'survival-of-the-fittest') as the impetus for this move, Pirsig goes on to summarize the "Quality" levels of human evolution as four main strata: the inorganic level, the

organic level, the social level, and the intellectual level. What he is saying is that as humans evolved from mere electrons, protons, neutrons and molecules (inorganic) to carbon-based self-replicating creatures with complex, inter-dependent organ structures (organic), they organized themselves into nomadic and settled communities (social), where they finally collected and shared through language thoughts and ideas concerning the nature of existence (intellectual). Thus the four main strata are the inorganic, organic, social, and intellectual levels. Pirsig cites Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" as the historical declaration of independence of the intellectual level of evolution from the social level of evolution, and the ability of 'life' to overcome 'death' as the historical declaration of independence of the organic level of evolution from the inorganic level of evolution. The difference between the exterior interactions of an individual in a society and the internal working of that individual constitute the independence of the organic and social levels of Quality. During this summary, Pirsig also describes the two main modes of "Quality" at play between and during these evolutionary levels as 'static' and 'dynamic' Quality.

All of these terms require further definition. It has been found that it is initially more effective to discuss these evolutionary patterns synchronically, rather than diachronically, since they comprise the mechanisms of the 'system' of the "Quality" event. (Later on it will be necessary to examine these terms diachronically as well.) Pirsig presents these six terms as a hierarchical ladder, much like this:

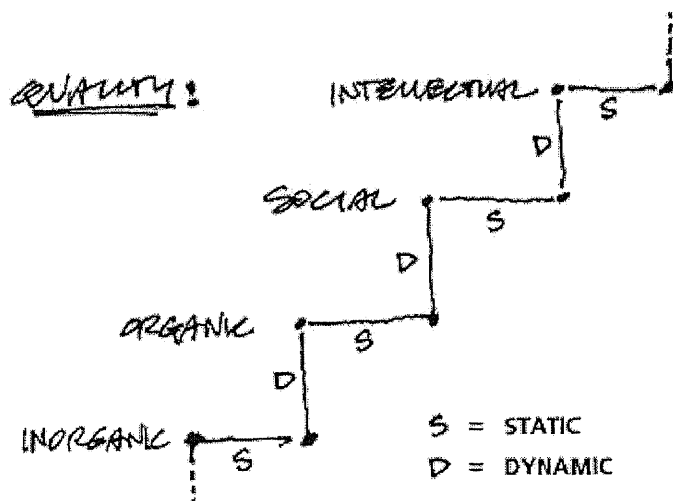


Figure 3.2

As one can see, each level of evolution is connected to the other by this sense of "static" and "dynamic" Quality. Since these levels were attained over millions of years, and not in this simple seven-step process, this model is undoubtedly an over-simplification. Yet it clearly illustrates the fact that each "static" plateau of evolution was followed by a "dynamic" period of change. As Pirsig sees things, each subsequent level is built upon the "static" foundation of the previous level or levels. It would not be possible to have living (organic) beings without a relatively stable set of molecular (inorganic) building blocks; just as it would not be possible to have interactive (social) beings without their first living (organic) beings, nor thinking (intellectual) beings without the interactive (social) exchange of language and information. Each level is **dependent** upon

the previous levels, and at the same time has its own internal mechanisms that act **independently** of those levels. After all, there are parts of the 'brain' that simply control motor skills and subconscious habitual actions --- organic central nervous locations --- that are different than those parts of the brain that compose the 'mind' --- the pondering, sentient, intellectual center of the being --- yet, both take place within the organic structure of the brain itself.

What is fascinating about Pirsig's Metaphysics of Quality is the fact that it is a working system – one where there are static and dynamic aspects to each of the four levels of Quality described above. These two modes of "static" and "dynamic" Quality also could be easily misconstrued as yet another simple binary dialectical opposition to replace the long list of Western Humanist polar opposites utilized in theoretical pursuits, but this is certainly not the case with the work of Robert Pirsig. Rather than merely positing another binary opposition within which culture can favor one term and suppress the other, Pirsig has acknowledged the interdependence of "static" and "dynamic" Quality from the very beginning:

"Sometimes a dynamic increment goes forward but can find no latching mechanism and so it fails and slips back into a previously latched (static) position. Whole species and cultures get lost this way. Sometimes a static pattern becomes so powerful it prohibits any dynamic moves forward. In both cases the evolutionary process is halted for a while. But when it's not halted the result has been an increase in power to control hostile forces or an increase in versatility, or both. The increase in versatility is directed toward dynamic Quality.

The increase in power to control hostile forces is directed toward static Quality. Without dynamic Quality the organism cannot grow. Without static Quality the organism cannot last. Both are needed." [ref. Pirsig02 p.147]

Obviously, Pirsig is using the word "organism" loosely here, basically to stand in for any complex "static" level of Quality. But other than that, this is not a 'loose' statement at all. To provide a first-split of a metaphysics as an interdependent pair of terms, and acknowledging their interdependence to this degree is again, unprecedented. It is as if Pirsig is creating a metaphysical system that includes an analytical deconstruction of itself within its very first moves, and yet does not come crashing down with the realization of that important fact. Essentially here we have hit upon Picasso's famous quote: "You must learn the rules in order to break them." Learning the rules is "static" Quality. Breaking the rules is "dynamic" Quality.

Pirsig also goes on to say: "Static Quality patterns are dead when they are exclusive, when they demand blind obedience and suppress dynamic change. But static patterns, nevertheless, provide a necessary stabilizing force to protect dynamic progress from degeneration. Although dynamic Quality, the quality of freedom, creates the world in which we live, these patterns of static Quality, the quality of order, preserve our world. Neither static nor dynamic Quality can survive without the other." [ref. Pirsig02 p.121]

Let's get back to Pirsig's initial hierarchical ladder of Quality, and what this information means for our earlier example of subject (the reader) / object ("A") interaction. Looking at this from Pirsig's point of view and using the fulcrum of

Quality, this becomes a completely different event than the decision of whether Quality exists within the subject or object. You will see now that question has been rendered moot.

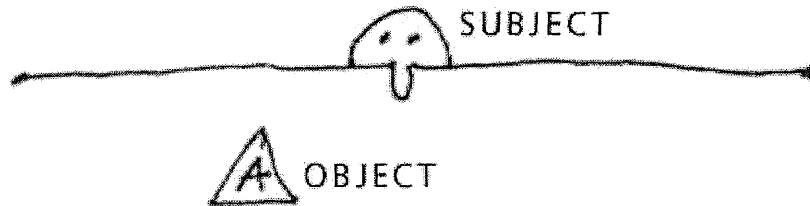


Figure 3.3

The object now defined as a three-dimensional pyramid made up of "inorganic" Quality, while the subject (you) is defined as a complex interdependent system of "inorganic", "organic", "social", and "intellectual" levels of Quality. Quality is not only at work within the object and the subject, but also an inseparable component of the interaction between subject and object. In seeing object "A", you (the subject) are being bombarded by (inorganic) light waves emanating from a source and landing on the retina in your (organic) eyes which are made up of carbon-based (inorganic) molecules and various atoms. The information from your eyes is then transferred to your brain by a complex (inorganic: electrical / organic: carbon-based conduit) neurological network. This information gets translated into an image through an extremely complex process of (socially) shared and (intellectually) intuited language, into an image of object "A" (which marks the beginning point of the semiology of this exchange). Each of these evolutionary levels that take part in this exchange of information have

sought out their own static level of Quality over thousands of years, based on the nature of each piece. Instead of this event merely encompassing an 'intellectualized' metaphysical experience, the event of the subject (you) seeing the object ("A") utilizes numerous levels of Quality, from inorganic to intellectual -- at times moving dynamically within the system, at other times coming to rest into some static "form".

Lets say that object "A" is a copper pyramid that has a green patina on it -- - only you (the subject) are red-green colorblind (though rare, this condition can occur in both men and women). Because you are colorblind, you are unable to see the green patina, and as result the whole pyramid appears copper. Does this mean the green patina is not there? Of course not. Something about yourself, your (organic) genetic makeup has denied you (the subject) the ability to see the colors green and red. But this fact does not change the (inorganic) molecular makeup of the pyramid (the object) itself, and the temporal weathering which produced the patina. You are just unable to see it. In the same light, all humans are unable to see most of the electro-magnetic spectrum, of which visible light comprises only one percent. Our perception of the world would be quite chaotic if we could "see" all of microwaves, radio waves, television broadcasts in transit, infrared waves, and gamma waves around us every day. Just because we are unable to "see" these does not mean that they do not exist.

In other words, under the metaphysics of Quality, objects and subjects are made up of complex levels of inorganic, organic, social, and intellectual Quality, and essentially lose their distinction as subjects and objects. All of the

complexities of subject / object Western Humanist metaphysics dissolve under the Metaphysics of Quality. There is no longer a question as to whether objects exist only in the mind of subjects, or if objects create subjects, or even if subjects and objects exist independently.

Though this is a simple model of an observation under the Metaphysics of Quality, it illustrates beautifully how the act of observation itself is far more complex than metaphysics has ever contended it to be. These complexities unearthed by the Metaphysics of Quality will be employed further on in this thesis to explore and reconsider Derrida's definition of *différance*.

At this point it is now possible, after pointing out the various types of Quality, to further define Quality in general. In Lila..., Robert Pirsig attempts to go beyond his definition of Quality in Zen..., which was as an analytical, descriptive sense of value. In Lila... he claims that Quality is more than a sense of value, and points the whole novel towards the idea that Quality is a proscriptive and prescriptive sense of morality. Unfortunately this signals the end of Pirsig's valid attempt at redefining Western Humanist metaphysics with the Metaphysics of Quality. By forcing Quality from a realm of analysis into one of judgment, Pirsig effectively neutralizes his own thesis --- a thesis which was at first 'academic', now becomes 'ideological' in nature.¹

¹ Since elaboration on this realm of Quality as morality interferes with the continuity of the argument for the intersection of Quality and *différance*, the explanation of this ideological problem has been shifted to Appendix B.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pirsig, “Quality”, and “Indifférance”

"...at the cutting edge of time, before an object can be distinguished, there must be a kind of nonintellectual awareness, which he called awareness of Quality. You can't be aware that you've seen a tree until after you've seen the tree, and between the instant of vision and the instant of awareness there must be a time lag." [ref. Pirsig01 p.221]

4.1 Quality and Indifférance

If Quality remains a temporal and spatial nexus of static and dynamic patterning and is not forced into an ideology of morality (See Appendix A), it can be shown that Quality as an analytical notion of value is an indispensable tool for understanding the full mechanisms of *différance*. This is now the task at hand.

It has been shown that there is a circular, non-sensical, endless play of signification that Deconstruction and *différance* impose when working simultaneously; and thus all experience is forced to become an interpreted text. This effectively neutralizes experience into a non-communicable, solitary non-entity. Plato has taught us, in so many words, that "The Unexamined Life is not Worth Living"; but Derrida has taught us that, "The Examined Life is Never Experienced, Only Interpreted."

Let's say one is having an experience --- like walking a dog, or washing a car --- and let's call this experience, *the experience*. Now, *the experience* is made up of information, which is in turn made up of a series of experienced signs: in the case of walking a dog, these signs are aspects of the weather, the type of dog, the interaction between oneself and the dog... or in the case of washing a car, the type of car, and the location of the event... etc. come into play. In attempting to comprehend *the experience* in terms of the signs involved, one is forced to rectify the temporal and spatial delays imposed by the concept of *différance* --- delays which force one to interpret *the experience*. Once interpretation is conjoined with *the experience*, *the experience* essentially becomes a type of text which is being interpreted. In this act of interpretation, *the*

experience is rendered impotent, since all interpretations of a text require a deep analysis of the play of the signification of each sign involved in the text. According to Derridian deconstruction, each of these signs do not signify an object or a meaning associated with that sign (as Saussure would have us believe) but rather begin a complex march of signifying other signs, which in turn signify other signs, which in turn signify other signs.

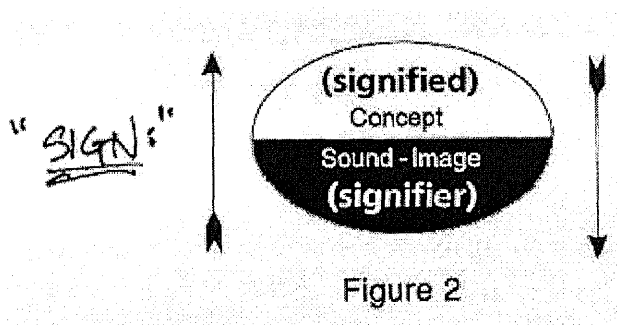


Figure 4.1

Thus *the experience* becomes a tangled mess of signs, signifiers and signifieds...ad nauseum. When attempts are made to comprehend *the experience* through interpretation, this interpretation can be and will be eventually deconstructed into a free play of signification.

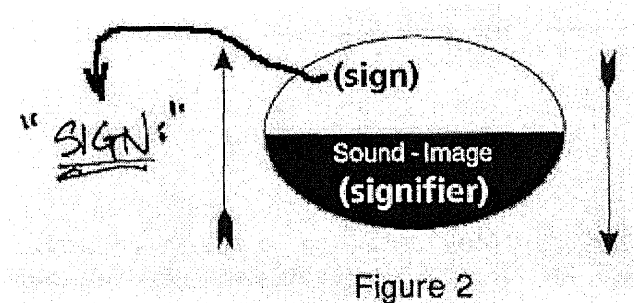


Figure 4.2

But, as one may note, there is a space of time and a time of space involved in the delay between experience and interpretation. What actually occurs in this space and time that lies between experience and interpretation?

What actually occurs in this space and time that lies between 'experience' and 'interpretation' is a fascinating chain of events – one which I call “*indifférance*”. It is obvious that if one wishes to comprehend *the experience*, one must stop experiencing, and begin interpreting the experience --- that is what Derrida speaks volumes of with *différance*. Since we as humans are not capable of experiencing and interpreting experience simultaneously, an infinitesimal space and time open up between these two actions, specifically because the nature of experience and the nature of interpretation are so very different. The key here is that it is not just that we experience and interpret experiences, but that *value* plays an integral role in how we proceed from experience to interpretation.

Robert Pirsig supplies us with the fodder for an explanation of this. In his quixotic pursuit of Quality in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, he provides the understanding that Quality is the nexus of static and dynamic Quality which occurs within the space and time between 'experience' and 'interpretation' described by *différance*. As he states in Zen...:

"...at the cutting edge of time, before an object can be distinguished, there must be a kind of nonintellectual awareness, which he called awareness of Quality. You can't be aware that you've seen a tree until after you've seen the tree, and between the instant of vision and the instant of awareness there must

be a time lag. We sometimes think of that time lag as unimportant. But there's no justification for thinking that the time lag is unimportant --- none whatsoever.

The past exists only in our memories, the future only in our plans. The present is our only reality. The tree that you are aware of intellectually, because of that small time lag, is always in the past and therefore is always unreal. Any intellectually conceived object is always in the past and therefore unreal. Reality is always the moment of vision before the intellectualization takes place. There is no other reality. This pre-intellectual reality is what Phaedrus (Pirsig) felt he had properly identified as Quality. Since all intellectually identifiable things must emerge from this pre-intellectual reality, Quality is the parent, the source of all subjects and objects." [ref. Pirsig01 p.221-222]

The key here is that Pirsig notes the same identical lag, or temporal / spatial delay that Derrida cites as the impetus for *différance* -- and describes that this period is occupied by Quality, but not just any Quality; a "pre-intellectual reality". This in itself is a bit odd when you think of his definition of Quality in Lila... as comprising the four main levels of inorganic, organic, social, and intellectual Quality. This occurs when one notices that the Quality that occupies the time lag is pre-intellectual, and yet Quality contains a subset of intellectual Quality. Something is strange here.

What is strange is that in defining Quality over a period of twenty-five years through two novels, Pirsig has missed this key distinction between pre-intellectual and intellectual Quality. And herein lies the key overlap with Derrida's concept of the temporal and spatial delay of *différance*.

Let us recall Derrida's unprovoked rebuttal regarding a pre-conceptual presence, a presence prior to the act of signification: "...But can one not conceive of a presence, and of a presence to itself of the subject before speech or signs, a presence to itself of the subject in a silent and intuitive consciousness?" Recall also that this question was rephrased as: Can a presence be conceived that exists between the experience of an event and the subsequent interpretation of that event? The answer is 'yes', a presence can be conceived that exists between the experience and the interpretation of an event.

The key to this presence is that it cannot be conceived during the delay between experience and interpretation, though this presence definitively exists. This presence is made up of the pre-intellectual aspects of Quality --- thus the inability for it to be conceived. It has been shown that there are numerous levels of Quality that have nothing to do with intellectualism -- namely inorganic, organic, and social Quality. These levels of Quality act as filters during the space / time lag before the moment of interpretation that follows experience. In Lila: An Inquiry into Morals, Robert Pirsig cites a keen example of what truly occurs during the space and time between experience and interpretation, wherein he discusses the concept of a static filter. While travelling down the Hudson River in his sailboat, collecting his thoughts for Lila..., he came across this very peculiar experience:

"A few months back a static filtering had occurred that could have been disastrous. It was in an Ohio port where he had come in out of a summer storm on Lake Erie. He had just barely been able to sail to windward off the rocks

through the night until he reached a harbor about twenty miles down the coast from Cleveland.

When he got there and was safely in the lee of the jetty he went below and grabbed a harbor chart and brought it up and held it, soaking wet, in the rain, using the boat's spreader lights to read by while he steered past concrete dividing walls, piers, harbor buoys and other markers until he found the yacht basin and tied up at a berth.

He had slept exhausted for most of the next day, and when he woke up and went outside it was afternoon. He asked someone how far it was to Cleveland.

'You're in Cleveland,' he was told.

He couldn't believe it. The chart said he was in a harbor miles from Cleveland.

Then he remembered the little "discrepancies" he had seen on the chart when he came in. When a buoy had a "wrong" number on it he presumed it had been changed since the chart was made. When a certain wall appeared that was not shown, he assumed it had been built recently or maybe he hadn't come to it yet and he wasn't quite where he thought he was. It never occurred to him to think he was in a whole different harbor!

It was a parable for students of scientific objectivity. Wherever the chart disagreed with his observations he rejected the observation and followed the chart. Because of what his mind thought it knew, it had built up a static filter, an

immune system, that was shutting out all information that did not fit. Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing." [ref. Pirsig02 p.335]

Essentially, what Pirsig describes here is a case where value intervenes between experience and interpretation. It was of more value to Pirsig at this point to feel like he was traveling the right way to Cleveland, than it was for him to acknowledge that he was already in Cleveland --- so much so that it deformed his interpretation of the experience at hand.

Recall Pirsig's summarization of Quality as a "pre-intellectual reality". [ref. pirsig01 p.241] This is an incredibly important point. To say that Quality is pre-intellectual implies that it comes before intellect, which implies that it precedes comprehension -- a valuable static level of intellectual Quality. In order for one to comprehend an experience, that experience must be filtered through the mechanisms of Quality into the intellect. Pirsig makes the point very clear in his texts that conceptualizing itself is the enemy of Quality responses to experience -- and from time to time he warns that "all the classical talk about (Quality) isn't Quality." [ref. Rodino01 p.53]

And here is a way out of the labyrinth of endless, circular, non-sensical play of signification that Derrida confronts us with the deconstruction/*différance* pair of hyperactive terms. The way out of the labyrinth of Derrida's endless play of signification is not a simple set of directions --- but, with the understanding that Quality operates between 'experience' and 'interpretation', there is a possibility of intervention that did not exist before.

If Quality is the ultimate mechanism of value, and if Quality operates between experience and interpretation, then it follows that value can infect, effect, and influence interpretation. Thus, the endless play of signification can be affected by value. In just the same way that Pirsig's sense of value filtered out the necessary information he needed to realize that he was no longer going *to Cleveland* and was rather *in Cleveland*, value in general acts by limiting the possibilities of the beginning of interpretation. Derrida's conception of the free play of the signifier caught in the grips of deconstruction and *différance* fails to recognize the filtering and limiting influence of value upon interpretation.

This distinction between Quality and talking about Quality in itself is the final word on the complete separation between the mechanisms of experience and those of interpretation --- essentially reinforcing Derrida's exhaustive study of *différance*. Since conceptualizing about Quality is never Quality itself, there is a delay between the experience of Quality and the interpretation of Quality. This, however, says nothing about the space and time between experience and interpretation exemplified by *différance*. It can still be maintained that value or Quality works between experience and interpretation, especially with the help of the 'Cleveland Harbor Effect'. The filtering of information between experience and interpretation that occurred during Pirsig's approach to the harbor was a non-intellectual or pre-intellectual event. The information that was of value to Pirsig (a.k.a. the Quality information) was all that he used in his interpretation of the data.

4.2 An Experiential Example

1. 0 (HAVE EXPERIENCE)

Figure 4.3

For instance, here we have a spatial / temporal model of an experience. Let's say this experience occurs during a fatal car accident. The model above labeled (1) is the exact moment that the experience occurs: the moment of death, the pain of impact of a head against a steering wheel, the instant of catching a the glance from an oncoming driver, or the image of a speedometer pushing 80 m.p.h. ... whichever type of experience you prefer.

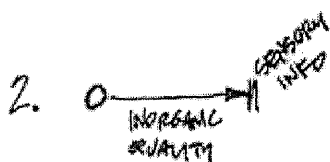


Figure 4.4

The model labeled (2) is a moment just after the experience, but before the interpretation of the experience. This is the inorganic Quality phase of the delay; the phase during which inorganic sensory information is transferred between the participants of the experience. This inorganic information takes the form of light waves, sound waves, instances of touch, smell, and taste. Interference with any of this information will effect ultimately the interpretation of the experience. For instance, if the windshield cracks upon impact, the visual nature of the event becomes fractured by spidering safety glass. If an electrical line is cut at impact, the sonic information from the radio will cease. Burying your

face in the air freshener hanging from the rear view will force an excess of "evergreen" scent upon the event...

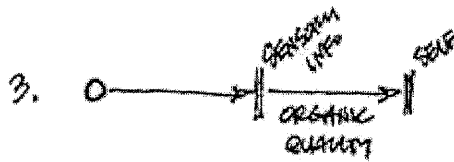


Figure 4.5

The model labeled (3) is a moment after the experience and the inorganic phase, but before the interpretation of the experience. This is the organic Quality phase of the delay; the phase during which inorganic sensory information is interiorized within the static organic patterns of the event. This organic information is influenced by the organic Quality of the systems involved. Interference with any of this information will effect ultimately the interpretation of the experience. For instance, if the neurological system involved is faulty, the inorganic sensory information may become altered during transit, or may not transmit at all (as in the case of paralysis). If there is a bio-chemical deficiency in the brain, inorganic sensory information may become exaggerated or diminished in accordance. If blindness is involved, light waves may be subdued, or may not reach the brain at all.

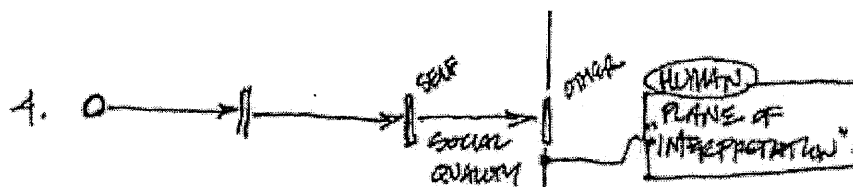


Figure 4.6

The model labeled (4) is a moment after the experience, the inorganic, and organic phases, but before the interpretation of the experience. This is the social Quality phase of the delay; the phase during which organic sensory information is interiorized within the static social patterns of the event. This social information is influenced by the social Quality of the systems involved. Interference with any of this information will ultimately effect the interpretation of the experience. For instance, if impact has occurred with an inanimate, inorganic system (a light-pole), or with an oncoming vehicle, awareness of the other will be drastically different. If a small child is in the oncoming car, or your mother, or a drunk driver then in each case the social Quality of the event encompasses a much greater intensity than striking a light-pole. Depending upon how many other cars become influenced by the accident, the social Quality will be increased or decreased. Whether or not onlookers use their cellular phones may make the difference between life and death. In addition, embedded 'social' patterns, customs, and language effect the translation of information.

Notice here that the "Human Plane of Interpretation" falls just beyond the 'social' Quality phase, and just before the 'intellectual' Quality phase. This critical plane begins the moment of intellectual 'interpretation'.

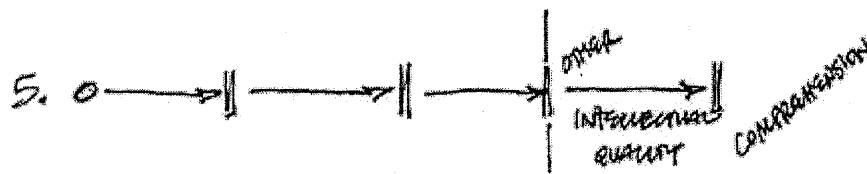


Figure 4.7

The model labeled (5) is a moment after the experience, the inorganic, organic, and social phases, immediately after the beginning of the interpretation of the experience. This is the intellectual Quality phase that marks the end of the pre-intellectual delay. Interference with any of this information will ultimately effect the interpretation of the experience --- and during the intellectual Quality phase, there is always interference to this information. Prior to this phase, all intellectual information had been filtered by the inorganic, organic, and social phases of the event, dictating the starting point of the intellectual interpretation of the event. This filtered information is then analyzed by the mind and comprehended; signifiers are tendered as signifieds, and meaning is established.

Let's look at these phases of Quality together in one chart. This chart completes the description of the temporal and spatial delay between experience and interpretation that was never taken up by Derrida himself when discussing *différance*. Using Robert Pirsig's elaborate study of Quality, it was possible to begin to understand that the pre-intellectual aspects of Quality are actively distorting the data we encounter during the period of *différance* which follows any discrete event, called "*indifférance*". Knowing that inorganic, organic and social Quality are at work prior to any act of interpretation or conceptualization opens up an entirely new field of theoretical inquiry in and around all applied schismatic architectural discourse involving *différance*. This means that although highly theoretical architects may focus exhaustively upon the underpinnings of their projects, when these projects are finally realized in space and time, these three levels of pre-intellectual Quality will always precede the interpretation of the

theory behind the design. Thus, to focus all energies into the theoretical aspects of a built design is to forego the opportunity to inform the pre-intellectual filtering that begins the intellectual process of interpretation of any event.

Ultimately, though, the signification that takes place during the intellectual Quality phase must be held accountable to the very mechanisms of *différance* that designated the spatial and temporal delay which allowed for pre-intellectual filtering by the inorganic, organic, and social Quality phases. In other words, although the interpretation of the event begins with information that was filtered by these inorganic, organic, and social Quality phases, with the meaning of the event affected by these filters --- the chain of signification that continues from there remains caught in the endless cycle of signified as sign as signified as sign... ; once signs occupy the space of the intellect and are attempted to be comprehended, they fall prey to the endless, non-sensical play of signification of *différance*. This reinforces the idea that no highly theoretical architect will ever be able to directly convey the meaning of their theoretical pursuits through building; and any designer who attempt to do such while foregoing the inorganic, organic, and social Quality of their building (since we cannot control these aspects of the interpreter) is, again, forfeiting the opportunity to inform the pre-intellectual filtering that begins the intellectual process of interpretation of any event.

In conclusion, all of this discussion tells us that the levels of Quality that are at work in the space and time between experience and interpretation are the non-intellectual levels: namely inorganic, organic and social Quality. Suddenly

these levels of Quality take on a level of precedence (both in a temporal and hierarchical way) over intellectual Quality in a way that has never been completely expressed before. It is not true that intellectual pursuits are in any way, shape or form are higher than any other pursuits in life. And herein lies the ultimate deconstruction of Pirsig's shift of Quality from that of value in Zen...: An Inquiry into Values to that of moral in Lila: An Inquiry into Morals. Not only was Pirsig's shift from value to morality rendered impotent due to its ideological nature, but his decision to hierarchically place the intellectual as the supreme level of Quality is incongruous with the results of his own detailed investigation into Quality. Thus, Robert Pirsig's attempt to utilize Quality as a contemporary moral fulcrum is undermined by itself.

ANALYSIS OF FEDERAL HALL: 26 Wall St., New York, NY 10013

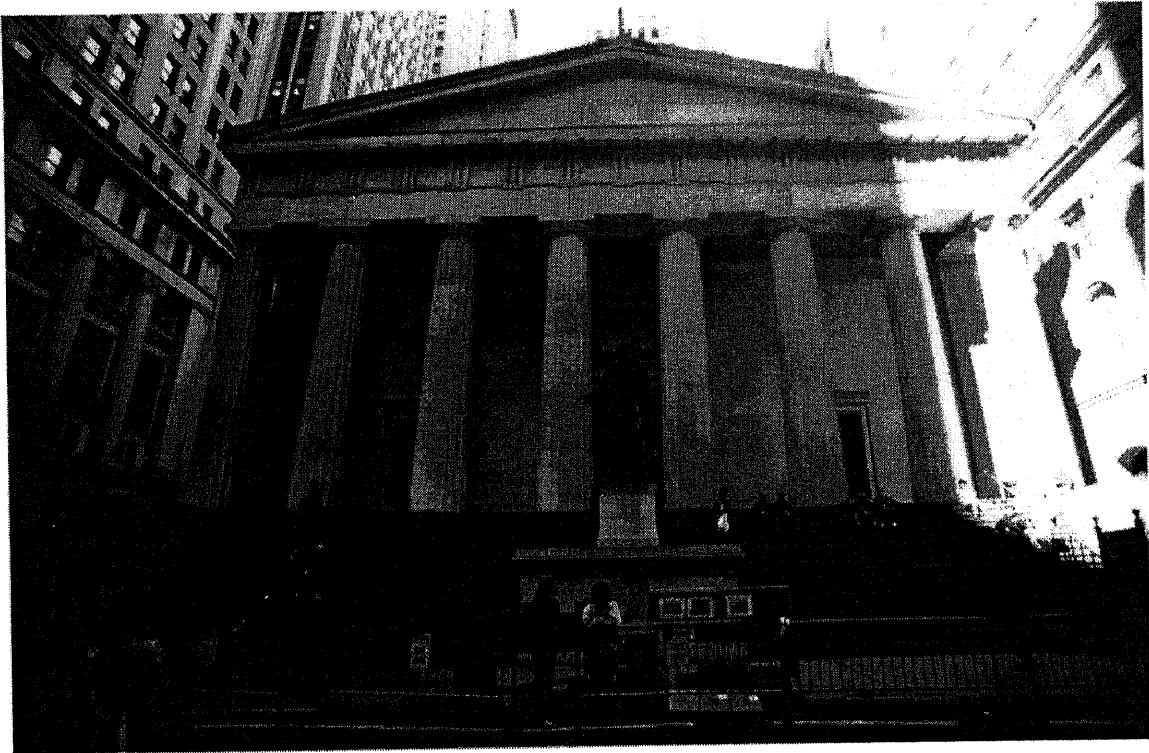


Figure 5.1

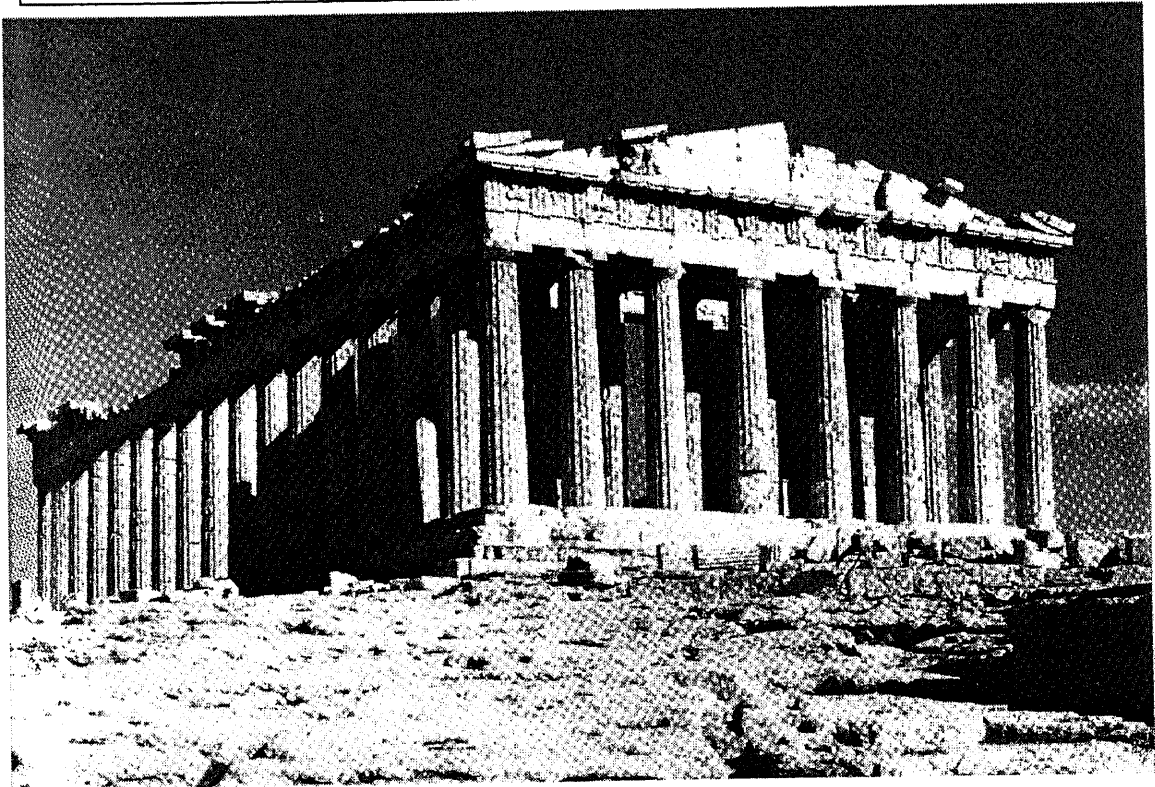


Figure 5.2

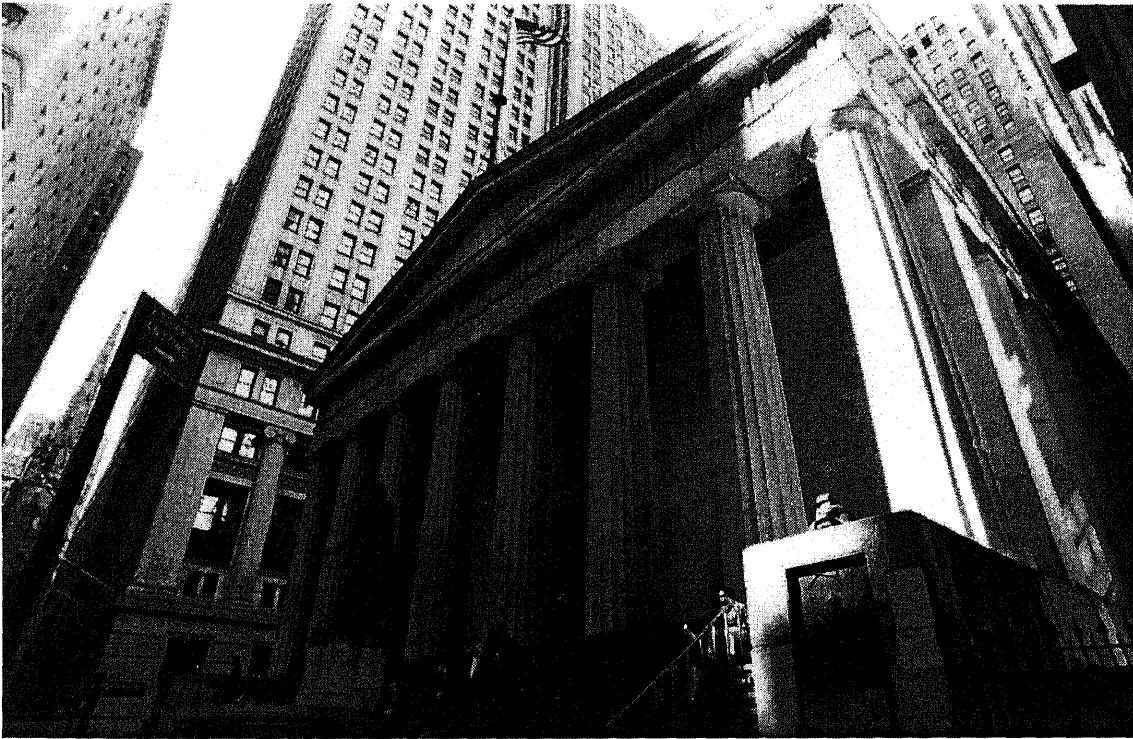


Figure 5.3

The obvious references to the Parthenon and the Pantheon made by the designers of Federal Hall in lower Manhattan make it a rich piece for an example of a semiological study of architecture. These references allow for complex secondary and tertiary readings of the multi-valent set of signs that comprise the structure itself.

Up until now, this thesis has worked very hard to define the essential new term "*indifférance*". *Indifférance* is simply a set of theoretical lenses that function within the moment of temporal deferral and spatial difference described in Derrida's *différance*. It is clear up until now that both *différance* and *indifférance* are purely intellectual concepts, yet the key to *indifférance* is that it is comprised of multi-valent mechanisms that function on a pre-intellectual levels of inorganic



Figure 5.4

Quality, organic Quality, and social Quality. These levels, or lenses, are the only mechanisms that exist to possibly effect the infinite regression that makes *différance* such a deadly opponent to the pursuit of true semiological (and ultimate philosophical) meaning. Once the interpretation of an experience is underway, there is no way to effect the infinite semiological regression described by Derrida in *différance* as the replacement of the sign's signified with that of another sign. There can be no filtering of the vast amount of relatively senseless information that comes after the delays of *différance*, but there is a way for the mechanisms of *différance* to be effected by the lenses that make up the inorganic, organic and social Quality of the both the signs and the readers of those signs that comprise the experience. The idealized mechanisms of both



Figure 5.5

différance and *indifférance* with respect to semiology and philosophy will now be explained through an analysis of my singular experience of the "reading" of the architectural text that is "Federal Hall". It should be understood before reading this example that I have restricted only to what I knew of the history of the structure at each given moment in the reading of the signs that comprise the structure.

This example of the mechanisms of *indifférance* is complex because non-intellectual or pre-intellectual means must be employed to elaborate upon of an intellectual concept within in an intellectual language. Therefore the representation of the experience of reading Federal Hall will undoubtedly be



Figure 5.6

flawed and underexecuted. Also, my expertise in the fields of architecture, architectural history, and architectural theory will add a considerable dimension to this example, far beyond that of the layperson as experiencer. Only with these concerns in mind will a reader of this thesis gain anything from a serious representation of the experience of reading of an architectural text.

The Experience

Since my life has gone through some serious changes over the past few months, I had gotten myself in a rhythm of visiting my close friend David¹ at few times a week to get out of my apartment in the middle of the week. I would take the

¹ name has been changed.



Figure 5.7

subway over to David's 45 Wall St. apartment often, since there was much more for us to do in his area of lower Manhattan than in my area of Jersey City, New Jersey. It got to the point where I was walking by Federal Hall at 26 Wall St. about four or five times a week, at various times of the day, and it always seemed to catch my eye. I mean, it has such a prominent site on the corner of Wall and Broad streets, right across from the New York Stock Exchange. And that statue of George Washington... that commands some visual interest. But the real draw was the blatant reference made on its exterior to the Parthenon in Athens. This corner site in New York City was so incredibly different than that of the Acropolis, that ancient "city on high" in Greece, and yet this did not seem to phase the designers of this building at all. Obviously they were going for some



Figure 5.8

sort of scholarly reference when came to choosing the clothes for this building in the 1830's. I mean, I know that during that period in American Architectural History the buzz was the German's archeological findings of the ancient world, and that led to a serious Neoclassical drive in terms of the style of U. S. architecture, but Federal Hall was not like the other large buildings in the area that seemed to work an ancient temple front somewhere in to the facade or the roof of the structure. No, this was a replica of the shell of the Parthenon located in the heart of lower Manhattan. This can be seen through the rest of the series of photographs of Federal Hall that are located at the end of this section.

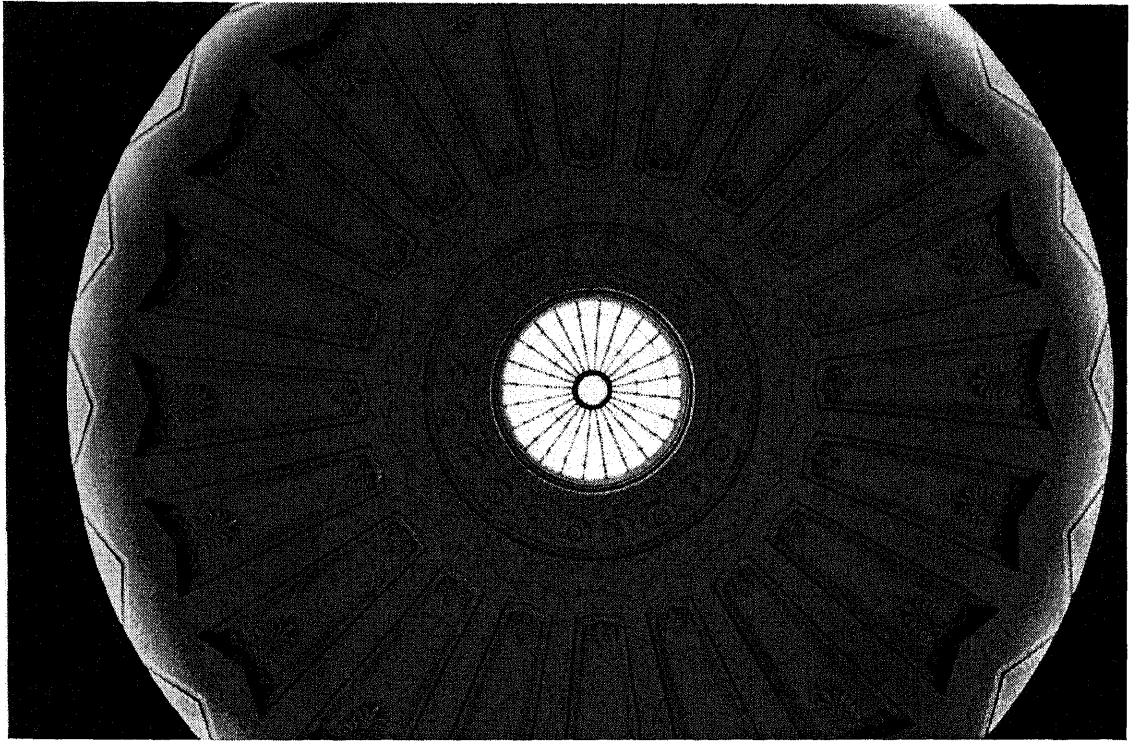


Figure 5.9

What does that mean to me? Why would the founding fathers of the United States enshroud the first capitol building of the country with an Ancient Greek skin? I was taught in school that these kind of references are made to give a foundation to the government based upon the concept of Greek Democracy, even before American Democracy was truly in place. Since the ancient Greeks built the Parthenon, and the ancient Greeks were the first culture to create a working Democracy, then any reference made to the Parthenon would reference that idea of Democracy. The same was done in Prussia, where references to the same ancient structures was supposed to give that culture an instant sense of credibility. That is what I have been taught to be the intended meaning of this type of reference: to build upon the lineage of ancient Greek Democracy. At the

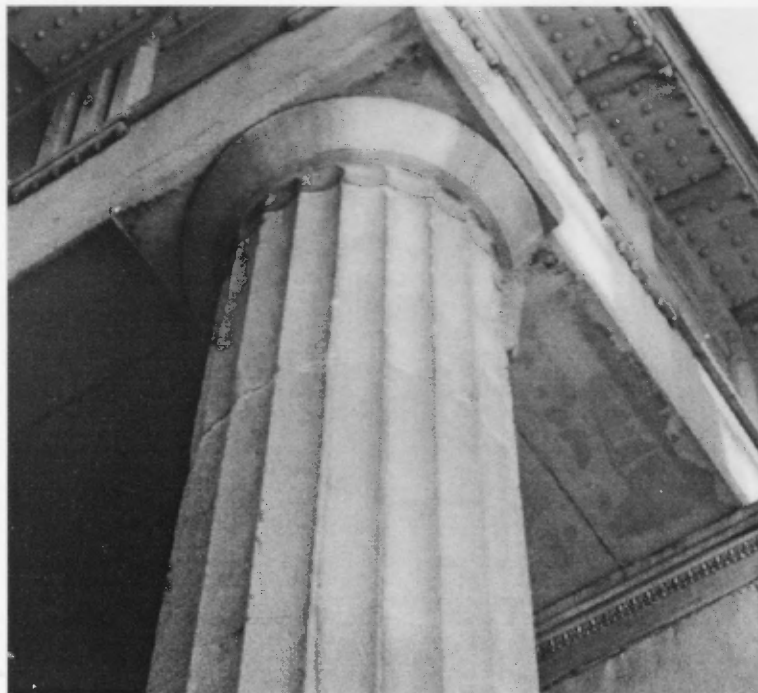


Figure 5.10

same time, however, I know that the Parthenon was a religious structure, and yet the Federal Building was never intended to be a religious institution -- it was always determined to be a government building. Does this mean that our founding fathers wanted us to revere the Federal Government with the same fear and obedience that was required toward the God of the 1830's? But the Parthenon was not erected to God (singular), but rather to the goddess Athena in Greek Mythology. Does that mean that our founding fathers wanted to infuse government with a new religious fervor, and that this copy of the Parthenon was indeed cited based on a religious (governmental) text, similar to the way the original site of the Parthenon was decided upon? I think here I am beginning to stray from the intentions of our founding fathers. And yet these are all plausible meanings that I can derive from the reference of Federal Hall to that of the Greek



Figure 5.11

Parthenon. What can I employ to critically corral these meanings into a serious reading of the architecture of Federal Hall? Do I need a scholar of American Architecture? A Park and Rec. tour of the now museumified Federal Hall? A trip to Greece? To talk directly to the designers of the structure? What will end the plurality of meaning that I am faced with here in reading this structure and help me focus in on a reasonable set of intended meanings based on a serious reading of this architectural text? Perhaps a trip inside the structure of Federal Hall will help clarify things. As I said, this building is now a museum dedicated to documentation of the previous uses of the building: as capitol building, customs house, bank, etc. But there is also another blatant reference made to another ancient culture, that of the Romans, as a scaled down copy of the interior of the Pantheon makes up the majority of this space. Perhaps this too is a religious



Figure 5.12

reference, this time to the pantheistic Roman mythologies. The dome over the Corinthian columns is unmistakably based upon those of the Pantheon, aside from the overall scale and the fact that the oculus in Federal Hall is covered with glass. Or maybe the sign out front of the structure speaks the truth when it states that this is a reference to the political and economic power of the Romans, power that we here in the U.S. should emulate. But then is this truly a set of multi-valent references, or just a motley melding of various ancient signs with no clear intention. The Greco-Roman heritage is a clear one in history, but seems a bit confused when the Parthenon and the Pantheon are conflated into a single structure. And then there are the complete dismissals of reference altogether. Take for instance the fact that there are glass windows in the entablature, between the triglyphs, signifying an attic! How blasphemous is that? What does

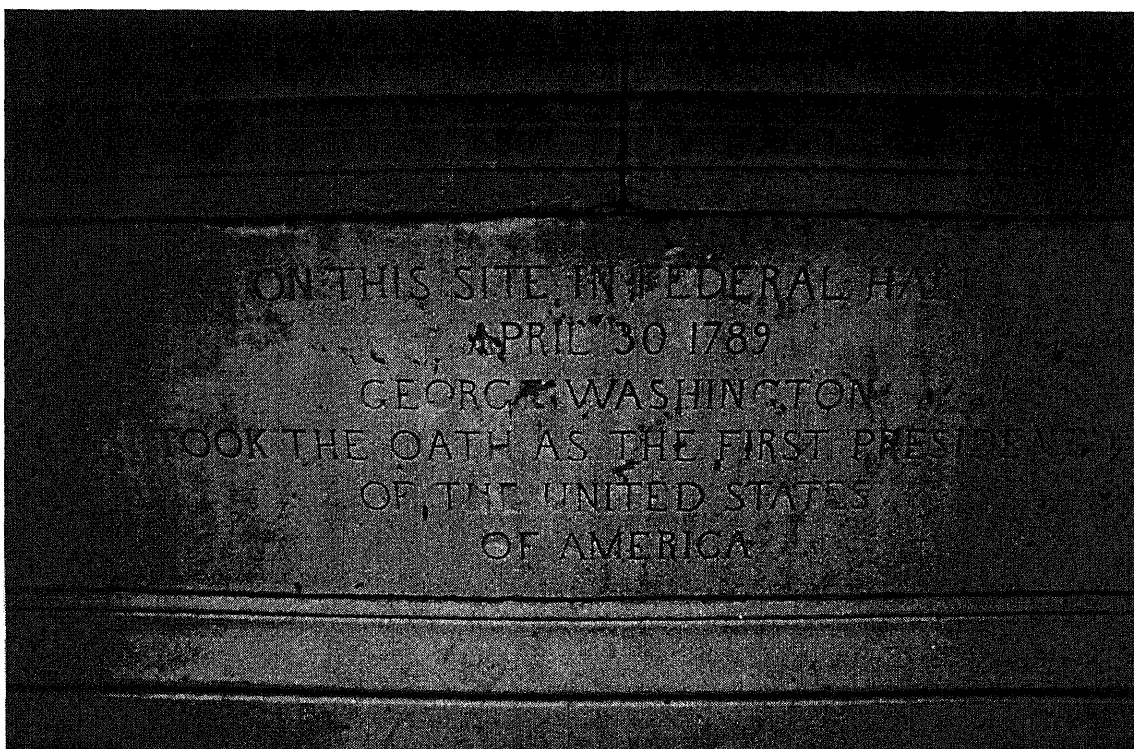


Figure 5.13

the utility pipe sticking out of the attic signify to me about the meaning of this building with respect to government? And what about the fact that the structure is inhabitable! Never could an individual enter a Greek temple unless you were the high priest offering a human or animal sacrifice to the specific God the temple was dedicated to. The inhabitation of the structure leads to the fact that the interior walls are pushed out as far as possible to the exterior, engaging the perimeter columns on both sides, rendering them essentially pilasters. And the building being sited next to large buildings, even skyscrapers like the Trump tower! What does that mean? This search for semiological and philosophical meaning is becoming very confused.

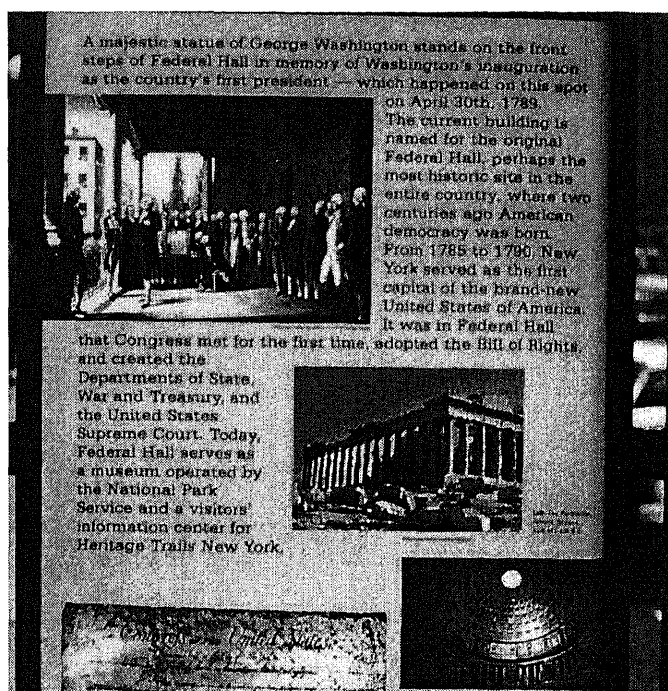


Figure 5.14

It seems that I am caught in a dilemma. I have been taught most of the signifieds of these architectural signifiers over the many years of my architectural education. And yet this plethora of information leaves me with less of a clear idea of the true intentions of the authors of this architectural text than that of a barely-informed tourist who takes the meaning of this structure right off the sign in front of the front steps!!! My sense of the meaning of this structure is based more on the power of the various forms of rhetoric that have gone into informing the signifieds of these signifiers than on the factual information that I have dug up on the subject. Do I value more the information of the nameless, faceless Federal Hall museum curators or that of my professors that I have met and interacted with socially, inside and outside of class? Do I value more the congruities of the referential qualities of this structure with respect to the Parthenon and the Pantheon, or the incongruities of their hybridization?

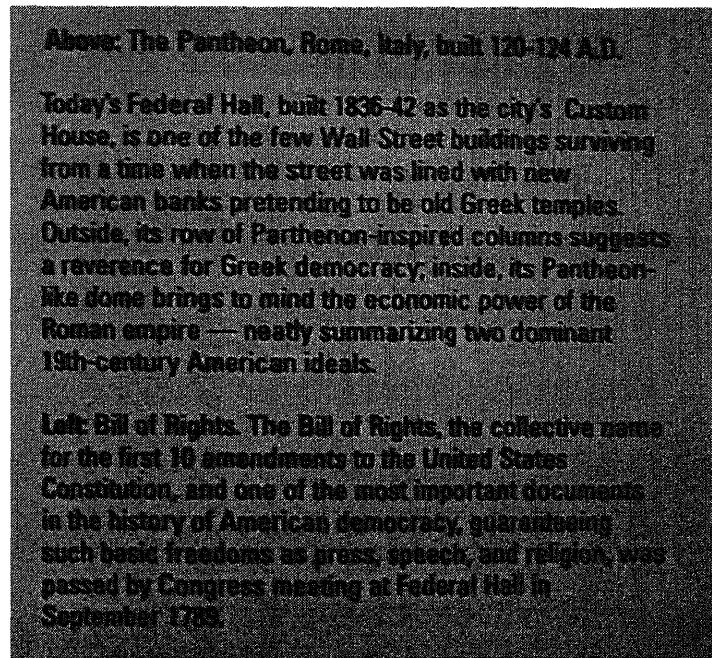


Figure 5.15

It is clear that I am going to have to make inherent value judgements about what has been presented to me in Federal Hall in order to arrive at a succinct, plausible sense of meaning from the structure. I am going to have to rely on other sources, and decide whether those sources are themselves readings of value of this structure. Otherwise, the signifieds of meaning that I have arrived at will continue to defer and differ to other signs and signifieds, as Derrida has taught us through *différance*, until I can make absolutely no sense of this analysis any longer.

The key here is that not only is the power of the rhetoric that I have been introduced to surrounding the semiological and philosophical meaning of this structure going to greatly effect the ultimate meaning that this structure holds for me, but also the realities of the lenses that make up the inorganic, organic and social Quality of the both the signs and the reader of those signs (myself) that

comprise the events prior to the interpretation of the experience of reading this architectural text. At the same time there were many factors at play before I even began to interpret the semiological data before me at Federal Hall; factors that dictated what I was able to see in terms of signs prior to interpreting them.

These factors are a part of *indifférance*, factors which function as lenses to filter out information when a semiological interpretation an experience is undertaken. Again, these three filters are the inorganic, organic and social Quality of the reader and the signs that the reader has read. Examples of all three lenses will now be attempted. Keep in mind that these are specifically pre-intellectual lenses, so intellectualizing about them me seem crude or underdeveloped. Also understand that though Quality precedes the subject and the object in an interaction, Quality does not exist independent of a subject and an object. To talk about the "quality" of an object is of no interest to this thesis; what is of interest is the sense of Quality described up until now, a Quality that is metaphysical, not merely descriptive. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss Quality with respect to individual parts of an interactive experience -- all discussions on Quality must include the viewer and the viewed.

Inorganic Quality lens: My Particular Reading of Federal Hall

Federal Hall has a very high sense of inorganic Quality about it. The building is superbly intact after 150+ years and appears to be quite resistant to natural weathering and disasters. The building is only incongruous as a reference to the works it is based upon, which is an intellectual incongruity. As a building, it

functions very well on its own. Therefore, as a reader of Federal Hall, it is very easy to learn about the building simply through its presence. There is no need for extensive excavation or restoration in order to study it; it is not a ruin like the Parthenon; and because it was so well designed and cared for, Federal Hall will retain its very high sense of inorganic Quality for many years to come.

Organic Quality lens: My Particular Reading of Federal Hall

Federal Hall has a high sense of organic Quality about it. The Classical sense of beauty that has been imported from Greece and Italy, copied directly from two of the most iconic structures in the Western world, has been revered for millennia for its symmetries, hierarchies, and sense of visual balance. The organic quality of this type of aesthetic brings peace and harmony to the vast majority of its viewers / inhabitants. This relatively static, singular aesthetic would only aggravate a radical liberal member of the design world's supposed avant garde, since it would run counter to their more dynamic, pluralistic philosophies; but for the vast majority of the public, it retains a high sense of organic Quality.

Social Quality lens: My Particular Reading of Federal Hall

Federal Hall has a very low sense of social Quality about it. During periods of normal use, the structure was obviously off-limits to many a viewer / inhabitant. During most of the time this building has been functional it was a government building, and therefore was off limits to most, if not all, of the public. Now this is

even worse, with the museumification of the space, as there are no users even to interact with in the building. The national parks guard at the desk was the only person there during nearly all of the investigations made on the premises, and he only granted me the power to take as many photographs as I wanted and directed me to the governmental pamphlets that supplied a watered-down version of the history of the building. Basically, there is almost no way to learn information about the building by interacting with people within its confines, which is why it has such low social Quality.

How do these lenses function in the intellectualization of the building?

For the most part, the pre-intellectual conceptualization of Federal Hall is only impeded by its low sense of social Quality. It is almost a requirement that a structure based upon two of the most revered museums of the Western world would one day too become a museum in its own right. The inability to interact with users and see the building function for more than a bunch of outside viewers severely impairs the ability of a reader to make a sound intellectual reading of the overall structure. All that is left to interact with within the interior of the building is a series of panels erected by the museum curators -- essentially a series of textual and pictorial representations of how the building used to function from a social perspective. These intellectualized representations of the social Quality of the building are misleading in their own right, because they are gross overgeneralizations of reality, and themselves fall into the immediate trap of différance, functioning only on the level of intellectual Quality. On the levels of

inorganic and organic Quality, the structure does not inhibit the beginnings of an intellectual reading of the structure -- in fact these lenses work well to facilitate a serious critical analysis of the building by supplying undisturbed inorganic data and subsequently a fine example of the organic aesthetic of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Conclusions

The main intention of this thesis was to grapple with Derrida's notion of *différance* and finally wrestle the endless free-play of signification that it describes into some sense of boundedness, as to release semiological meaning, knowledge and understanding from its relentless grasp. In achieving this goal, a chain reaction would begin that would free the discourse of applied schismatic architectural theory from the post-structuralist vice of *différance*, opening up an entirely new field of "value" and "Quality" based discourse.

This thesis uncovered a beautiful intersection between the critical work of Robert M. Pirsig and Jacques Derrida: by reinscribing "Quality" within the space of "value" rather than that of the "moral", and acknowledging its importance within the mechanisms of *différance*, this thesis posits that there be new light shed on the complex filtering aspects of "*indifférance*", generally within the discourse semiology and specifically within the field of applied schismatic architectural theory.

We have seen how to navigate a way out of Derrida's haunt of *différance* by acknowledging the fact that the intellectualization of signs is impossible under the grip of this powerful concept, and therefore the only options that remain are the critical analysis of the pre-intellectual aspects of the sign -- the socio-political, biological, and inorganic aspects of "*indifférance*" ..

APPENDIX A:

THE IDEOLOGY OF QUALITY AS MORALITY

"The Metaphysics of Quality says that if moral judgments are essentially assertions of value and if value is the fundamental ground-stuff of the world, then moral judgments are the fundamental ground-stuff of the world. It says that even at the most fundamental level of the universe, static patterns of value and moral judgment are identical." [ref. Pirsig02 p.156]

Since human evolution proceeded in order from "inorganic" to "organic" to "social" and then to "intellectual" Quality, with each "static" level branched off "dynamically" from of the previous level, Pirsig employs this ordering system as the basis for his new morality. Thus, a hierarchy is established which places "intellectual" above "social" Quality, "social" above "organic" Quality, and "organic" above "inorganic" Quality --- much like his previous ladder analogy. This ordering pattern is true in the sense of evolution, but becomes meaningless forced upon when morality. Yet, Pirsig still goes on to say:

"...the Metaphysics of Quality supports this dominance of intellect over society. It says intellect is a higher level of evolution than society; therefore, it is a more moral level than society. It is better for an idea to destroy a society than it is for a society to destroy an idea." [ref. Pirsig02 p.277]

and,

"...'Vice' is an example. In an evolutionary morality the meaning of vice is quite clear. Vice is a conflict between biological quality and social quality. Things like sex and booze and drugs and tobacco have a high biological quality, that is

they feel good, but are harmful for social reasons. They take all of your money. They break up your family. They threaten the stability of your community. [ref. Pirsig02 p.163]

and,

"...It's out of this struggle between conflicting static patterns that the concepts of good and evil arise. Thus, the evil of disease which the doctor is absolutely morally committed to stop is not an evil at all within the germ's lower static pattern of morality. The germ is making a moral effort to stave off its own destruction by lower-level inorganic forces of evil. [ref. Pirsig02 p.163]

This shift from Quality as 'value' to Quality as 'morality' is ineffective, at best. Pirsig converts the Metaphysics of Quality from a powerful analytical tool into an ideological / theological act of judgment. In effect, he alters the essence of Quality: instead of it remaining a vessel of value that contains its own 'erasure', Quality becomes the 'transcendental signified' of all interactions and presencings.

But, Mark C. Taylor explains the systematic demise of the 'transcendental signified' as a part of the "loss of God" that has occurred in the twentieth century in his 1984 essay *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. In this essay Taylor discusses the indelible link between "word" and the "Word of God". If a "word" is a "sign", which is made up of a "signifier" and a "signified" (as Saussure revealed), then the "signified" is the ultimate meaning of the word. In a theological age, "...God, or His substitute, appears either overtly or covertly to be the final meaning of the word. Put differently, God is, in effect, the

'transcendental signified' that grounds the structure of signification. Since the 'sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth,' the 'age of the sign is essentially theological.' " [ref. Derrida02]

This link between 'God' and 'transcendental signified' is readily apparent, but when seen in conjunction with the "death of God", "word" is left in a rather precarious position. When the "sign" is viewed with respect to the "death of God" that has permeated this twentieth century, the passing of the "One" also signals the passing of the "transcendental signified" as well. Taylor completes this analysis in saying:

"It should be clear that writing inscribes the disappearance of the transcendental signified. In this way, scripture embodies and enacts the death of God, even as the death of God opens and releases writing. The disappearance of the transcendental signified closes the theological age of the sign and makes possible the free play of a/theological writing."

So, where does all this discussion leave us? This is clear: Pirsig's attempt to replace "Quality" as the "transcendental signified" is a lost attempt at reinscribing writing into a theological / ideological state. "Quality" is not the mystical, undefinable entity that he claims it is. "Quality" has a definition in the dictionary, just as limited and in play as any other word. Just because Pirsig capitalized the word does not give it special privileges. "Quality" is a special word, but in the end it is nothing more than a shell or a husk that delimits a space of meaningful "play-on-words". This 'meaningful space' contained within Pirsig's term "Quality" (which will continued to be used to designate this space, for lack of

a better term) is an incredible nexus of static and dynamic patterns. Pirsig states himself that these patterns are in a state of continuous evolution. "Quality" is ultimately a temporal and spatial vessel of 'value', and nothing more. Taylor reinforces this in stating: "the/A word is nothing in itself; it is a play within a play, a play that is forever an interplay." [ref. Taylor01] If the/A word is in play, then any particular instance of a word must also be in 'play'; particularly "Quality". Creating an ideology around a term in this day and age is impossible.

T.J. Clark, in his theoretical introduction to *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, sets forth a fine description of the pitfalls of theory and/or discourse as ideology:

...The sign of an ideology is a kind of inertness in discourse: a fixed pattern of imagery and belief, a syntax which seems obligatory, a set of permitted modes of seeing and saying; each with its own structure of closure and disclosure, its own horizons, its way of providing certain perceptions and rendering others unthinkable, aberrant, or extreme. And these things are done ... as it were, surreptitiously. Which is to say that ideologies, like any forms of knowledge, are constructs..." [ref. Clark01]

Throughout *Lila*, Robert Pirsig works extremely hard to craft his personal interpretation of "Quality" into a "better" or "higher quality" notion than those that have come before him. He toils in order to release "Quality" from the grips of various "Inorganic", "Biological", "Social", and "Intellectual" patterns that already exist, as this act of liberation stands as the ultimate goal of his "Metaphysics of Quality." Inconsistently, rather than set "Quality" free, Pirsig instead shackles

"Quality" to the leg of another staid, hierarchical sense of morality. This attempt at liberating "Quality" has in fact just re-inscribed the term in another, more covert cage, in effect placing ideological concerns upon the undefinable "space" of experience. Another look to T.J. Clark continues the description of the cancerous effect of ideology in the world of discourse:

"...one ought to beware of a notion of ideology which conceives it merely as a set of images, ideas, and "mistakes," for its action on and in the process of representation is different from this: it is more internal, more interminable. Rather, an ideology is a set of limits to discourse; a set of resistances, repetitions, kinds of circularity. It is that which closes speech against consciousness of itself as production, as process, as practice, as subsistence and contingency. And of necessity this work of deletion is never done: it would hardly make sense to think of it finished."

This is a far cry from Pirsig's own notions of 'dynamic' Quality: "Dynamic Quality is not structured and yet it is not chaotic. It is value that cannot be contained by static patterns." If Quality is made up of a symbiotic coupling of the seemingly opposing terms of 'static' and 'dynamic', then imposing morality, in any sense, upon Quality restricts it from continuing to exist as a nexus of 'static' and 'dynamic' patterning.

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