



Alchemy at the Chalkface: Pirsig, Pedagogy and the Metaphysics of Quality

Alan McManus

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This book identifies a widespread conceptual vagueness in industry and education today over 'quality' and finds that the Metaphysics of Quality of Robert M. Pirsig provides a valuable clarification. It situates Pirsig's solution both philosophically and in relation to the New Physics, simplifying and clarifying his terminology and expanding his moral hierarchy. The alternative philosophical legacy of Hermeticism is examined, focussing on the technology of the transformation of lower into higher quality, alchemy, recommended by key virtues of holism and amelioration. Alchemy is re-evaluated (and alchemical vanitas interrogated) and employed as a powerful paradigm for this transformation. A mnemonic scheme is employed to structure, illustrate and further the argument of each chapter by personification in typical characters, ancient and modern. The ancient characters are Græco-Roman divinities. The modern characters portrayed are teachers; however the new paradigm of Quality illustrated also has implications outwith the field of education. Alan McManus, M.Theol.(hons), M.Phil, PGDE, M.Litt., Ph.D., is a freelance academic, novelist, playwright and dramaturg. Only Say The Word: Affirming Gay and Lesbian Love, published by Christian Alternative in 2013, is the first in a series of considerations of the ethical implications of his reading of pirsigian metaphysics and is followed by Life Choice: the Ethics and Ideologies of Abortion. This doctoral thesis and his Master's dissertation (which is published as Dreaming Anarchy: a Shut-Eye View of a Utopia) are discussed in his chapter, "Strange Attractors: Myth, Dream, and Memory in Educational Methodology", in the International Handbook of Interpretation in Educational Research published by Springer, 2015. He has also published articles on political philosophy and WW1 remembrance in the online journal, Citizenship, Social and Economics Education. He has published two novellas and one novel of his Bruno Benedetti Mysteries, a series of inclusive stories set in Glasgow, with another forthcoming. His twitter address is @gumptionology.

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