

# Robert M. Pirsig

## Quotes

*People, Thinking, Mind, Quality, Real, Intellectual, Reality, World, Ideas,  
Technology, Way, Patterns, Simple, Men, Understanding, Science, Motorcycle,  
Mean, Struggle, Looks*

The past exists only in our memories, the future only in our plans. The present is our only reality.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When you live in the shadow of insanity, the appearance of another mind that thinks and talks as yours does is something close to a blessed event.

~Robert M. Pirsig

To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The only Zen you can find on the tops of mountains is the Zen you bring up there.

~Robert M. Pirsig

One of the most moral acts is to create a space in which life can move forward.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Other people can talk about how to expand the destiny of mankind. I just want to talk about how to fix a motorcycle. I think that what I have to say has more lasting value.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The truth knocks on the door and you say, go away, I'm looking for the truth, and it goes away. Puzzling.

~Robert M. Pirsig

My favorite piece of technical writing: Assembly of Japanese bicycle require great peace of mind.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Quality is a direct experience independent of and prior to intellectual abstractions.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Any effort that has self-glorification as its final endpoint is bound to end in disaster.

~Robert M. Pirsig

You look at where you're going and where you are and it never makes sense, but then you look back at where you've been and a pattern seems to emerge.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Making an art out of your technological life is the way to solve the problem of technology...Art is anything that you can do well. Anything that you can do with Quality.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If you have a high evaluation of yourself then your ability to recognize new facts is weakened.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Is it hard?' Not if you have the right attitudes. Its having the right attitudes thats hard.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If you become restless, speed up. If you become winded, slow down. You climb the mountain in an equilibrium between restlessness and exhaustion.

~Robert M. Pirsig

We have artists with no scientific knowledge and scientists with no artistic knowledge and both with no spiritual sense of gravity at all, and the result is not just bad, it is ghastly.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The real purpose of the scientific method is to make sure nature hasn't misled you into thinking you know something you actually don't know.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Art is anything you can do well. Anything you can do with quality.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Sometimes it's a little better to travel than to arrive

~Robert M. Pirsig

New York has always been going to hell but somehow it never gets there.

~Robert M. Pirsig

That's all the motorcycle is, a system of concepts worked out in steel.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When you want to hurry something, that means you no longer care about it and want to get on to other things.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When you look directly at an insane man all you see is a reflection of your own knowledge that he's insane, which is not to see him at all.

~Robert M. Pirsig

We keep passing unseen through little moments of other people's lives.

~Robert M. Pirsig

We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world.

~Robert M. Pirsig

In the high country of the mind one has to become adjusted to the thinner air of uncertainty.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Although motorcycle riding is romantic, motorcycle maintenance is purely classic.

~Robert M. Pirsig

From an endless beach of reality, we take a grain of sand and call it the world.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The buddah can reside in the gears of a motorcycle as easily as in a flower on a mountaintop. To believe otherwise is to demean the buddah; which is to demean one's self.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Stuckness shouldn't be avoided. It's the physic predecessor of all real understanding.

~Robert M. Pirsig

For me, a writer should be more like a lighthouse keeper, just out there by himself. He shouldn't get his ideas from other people all around him.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If you run from technology, it will chase you.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Civilization, or "the system" or "society" or whatever you want to call it, is best served not by mules but by free men.

~Robert M. Pirsig

That which destroys the old mythos becomes the new mythos.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The world comes to us in an endless stream of puzzle pieces that we would like to think all fit together somehow, but that in fact never do.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Even though quality cannot be defined, you know what quality is.

~Robert M. Pirsig

I think now the trace of egotism may have been the beginning of all his troubles

~Robert M. Pirsig

You want to know how to paint a perfect painting? It's easy. Make yourself perfect and then just paint naturally.

~Robert M. Pirsig

So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell...is it?

~Robert M. Pirsig

Quality tends to fan out like waves.

~Robert M. Pirsig

For every fact there is an infinity of hypotheses.

~Robert M. Pirsig

A motorcycle functions entirely in accordance with the laws of reason, and a study of the art of motorcycle maintenance is really a miniature study of the art of rationality itself.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The number of hypotheses available to explain any given phenomenon is infinite.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When you've got a Chautauqua in your head, it's extremely hard not to inflict it on innocent people.

~Robert M. Pirsig

It is not good to talk about Zen, because Zen is nothingness... If you talk about it, you are always lying, and if you don't talk about it, no one knows it is there.

~Robert M. Pirsig

No one is fanatically shouting that the sun is going to rise tomorrow. They know it's going to rise tomorrow.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Reality is always the moment of vision before the intellectualization takes place. There is no other reality.

~Robert M. Pirsig

One geometry cannot be more true than another; it can only be more convenient. Geometry is not true, it is advantageous.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If someone's ungrateful and you tell him he's ungrateful, okay, you've called him a name. You haven't solved anything.

~Robert M. Pirsig

I have been a lifelong Democrat. Like all ideas, though, the Democrat ideas need to be dynamic. It needs to be kept current.

~Robert M. Pirsig

(What makes his world so hard to see clearly is not its strangeness but

its usualness). Familiarity can blind you too.

~Robert M. Pirsig

What I am is a heretic who's recanted, and thereby in everyone's eyes saved his soul. Everyone's eyes but one, who knows deep down inside that all he has saved is his skin.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Absence of Quality is the essence of squareness.

~Robert M. Pirsig

An egoless acceptance of stuckness is a key to an understanding of all Quality.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The pencil is mightier than the pen.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Quality... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Metaphysics is a restaurant where they give you a thirty thousand page menu, and no food.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Sanity is not truth. Sanity is conformity to what is socially expected.

Truth is sometimes in conformity, sometimes not.

~Robert M. Pirsig

every answer one finds leads to ten more questions. The more we learn the less we know.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The ultimate test's always your own serenity. If you don't have this

when you start and maintain it while you're working you're likely to build your personal problems right into the machine itself.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Mental reflection is so much more interesting than TV it's a shame more people don't switch over to it.

~Robert M. Pirsig

What we think of as reality is a continuous synthesis of elements from a fixed hierarchy of a priori concepts and the ever changing data of the senses.

~Robert M. Pirsig

That's the classical mind at work, runs fine inside but looks dingy on the surface.

~Robert M. Pirsig

What is seen now so much more clearly is that although the names keep changing and the bodies keep changing, the larger pattern that holds us all together goes on and on.

~Robert M. Pirsig

... the laws of physics and of logic ... the number system ... the principle of algebraic substitution. These are ghosts. We just believe in them so thoroughly they seem real.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Communism and socialism, programs for intellectual control over society ... fascism, a program for the social control of intellect.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The Buddha takes no position on gods, he suggests they may exist or they may not, but either way you can live a moral life.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The only zen thoughts you can find on a mountain summit are those you brought yourself.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The most moral activity of all is the creation of space for life to move around.

~Robert M. Pirsig

It's better not to see than to see wrongly.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Cultivate peace of mind which does not separate one's self from one's surroundings. When that is done successfully, then everything else follows naturally.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The solutions all are simple - after you have arrived at them. But they're simple only when you know already what they are.

~Robert M. Pirsig

It's so hard when contemplated in advance, and so easy when you do it.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When a shepherd goes to kill a wolf, and takes his dog to see the sport, he should take care to avoid mistakes. The dog has certain relationships to the wolf the shepherd may have forgotten.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Talk about rationality can get very confusing unless the things with which rationality deals are also included.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Physical distance between people has nothing to do with loneliness. It's

psychic distance.

~Robert M. Pirsig

There's so much talk about the system. And so little understanding.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Caring about what you are doing is considered either unimportant or taken for granted.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The real cycle you're working on is a cycle called yourself.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If you stare at a wall from four in the morning till nine at night and you do that for a week, you are getting pretty close to nothingness.

~Robert M. Pirsig

What's wrong with technology is that it's not connected in any real way with matters of the spirit and of the heart. And so it does blind, ugly things quite by accident and gets hated for that.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The funny thing about insane people is that it is kind of the opposite of being a celebrity. Nobody envies you.

~Robert M. Pirsig

In the temple of science are many mansions ... and various indeed are they that dwell therein and the motives that have led them thither.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The more you read, the more you calm down.

~Robert M. Pirsig

If your mind is truly, profoundly stuck, then it might be much better off

than when it was loaded with ideas

~Robert M. Pirsig

Who really can face the future? All you can do is project from the past, even when the past shows that such projections are often wrong. And who really can forget the past? What else is there to know?

~Robert M. Pirsig

The best students always are flunking. Every good teacher knows that.

~Robert M. Pirsig

When analytic thought, the knife, is applied to experience, something is always killed in the process.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The past cannot remember the past. The future can't generate the future. The cutting edge of the instant right here and now is always nothing less than the totality of everything there is.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Definitions are the foundation of reason. You can't reason without them.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The bones and flesh and legal statistics are the garments worn by the personality, not the other way around.

~Robert M. Pirsig

I think metaphysics is good if it improves everyday life; otherwise forget it.

~Robert M. Pirsig

There is an evil tendency underlying all our technology - the tendency to do what is reasonable even when it isn't any good.

~Robert M. Pirsig

And what is good, Phaedrus, And what is not goodâ€™” Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?

~Robert M. Pirsig

Data without generalization is just gossip.

~Robert M. Pirsig

The more you look, the more you see.

~Robert M. Pirsig

A person who follows the dharma is unpredictable because the dharma is unpredictable.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Logic presumes a separation of subject from object; therefore logic is not final wisdom. This is Zen. This is my motorcycle maintenance.

~Robert M. Pirsig

Even in the presence of others he was completely alone.

~Robert M. Pirsig

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