For two days John and Sylvia and Chris and I loaf and talk and ride up to an old mining town and back, and then it's time for John and Sylvia to turn back home. We ride into Bozeman from the canyon now, together for the last time.

Up ahead Sylvia's turned around for the third time, evidently to see if we're all right. She's been very quiet the last two days. A glance from her yesterday seemed apprehensive, almost frightened. She worries too much about Chris and me.

At a bar in Bozeman we have one last round of beer, and I discuss routes back with John. Then we say perfunctory things about how good it's all been and how we'll see each other soon, and this is suddenly very sad to have to talk like this...like casual acquaintances.

Out in the street again Sylvia turns to me and Chris, pauses, and then says, "It'll be all right with you. There's nothing to worry about."

"Of course," I say.

Again that same frightened glance.

John has the motorcycle started and waits for her. "I believe you," I say.

She turns, gets on and with John watches oncoming traffic for an opportunity to pull out. "I'll see you," I say.

She looks at us again, expressionless this time. John finds his opportunity and enters into the traffic lane. Then Sylvia waves, as if in a movie. Chris and I wave back. Their motorcycle disappears in the heavy traffic of out-of-state cars, which I watch for a long time.

I look at Chris and he looks at me. He says nothing.

We spend the morning sitting at first on a park bench marked SENIOR CITIZENS ONLY, then get food and at a filling station change the tire and replace the chain adjuster link. The link has to be remachined to fit and so we wait and walk for a while, back away from the main street. We come to a church and sit down on the lawn in front of it. Chris lies back on the grass and covers his eyes with his jacket.

"You tired?" I ask him.

"No."

Between here and the edge of the mountains to the north, heat waves shimmer the air. A transparent-winged bug sets down from the heat on a stalk of grass by Chris's foot. I watch it flex its wings, feeling lazier every minute. I lie back to go to sleep, but don't. Instead a restless feeling hits. I get up.

"Let's walk for a while," I say.

"Where?"

"Toward the school."

"All right."

We walk under shady trees on very neat sidewalks past neat houses. The avenues provide many small surprises of recognition. Heavy recall. He's walked through these streets many times. Lectures. He prepared his lectures in the peripatetic manner, using these streets as his academy.

The subject he'd been brought here to teach was rhetoric, writing, the second of the three R's. He was to teach some advanced courses in technical writing and some sections of freshman English.

"Do you remember this street?" I ask Chris.

He looks around and says, "We used to ride in the car to look for you." He points across the street. "I remember that house with the funny roof --. Whoever saw you first would get a nickel. And then we'd stop and let you in the back of the car and you wouldn't even talk to us."

"I was thinking hard then."

"That's what Mom said."

He was thinking hard. The crushing teaching load was bad enough, but what for him was far worse was that he understood in his precise analytic way that the subject he was teaching was undoubtedly the most unprecise, unanalytic, amorphous area in the entire Church of Reason. That's why he was thinking so hard. To a methodical, laboratory-trained mind, rhetoric is just completely hopeless. It's like a huge Sargasso Sea of stagnated logic.

What you're supposed to do in most freshman-rhetoric courses is to read a little essay or short story, discuss how the writer has done certain little things to achieve certain little effects, and then have the students write an imitative little essay or short story to see if they can do the same little things. He tried this over and over again but it never jelled. The students seldom achieved anything, as a result of this calculated mimicry, that was remotely close to the models he'd given them. More often their writing got
worse. It seemed as though every rule he honestly tried to discover with them and learn with them was so full of exceptions and contradictions and qualifications and confusions that he wished he'd never come across the rule in the first place.

A student would always ask how the rule would apply in a certain special circumstance. Phædrus would then have the choice of trying to fake through a made-up explanation of how it worked, or follow the selfless route and say what he really thought. And what he really thought was that the rule was pasted on to the writing after the writing was all done. It was post hoc, after the fact, instead of prior to the fact. And he became convinced that all the writers the students were supposed to mimic wrote without rules, putting down whatever sounded right, then going back to see if it still sounded right and changing it if it didn't. There were some who apparently wrote with calculating premeditation because that's the way their product looked. But that seemed to him to be a very poor way to look. It had a certain syrup, as Gertrude Stein once said, but it didn't pour. But how're you to teach something that isn't premeditated? It was a seemingly impossible requirement. He just took the text and commented on it in an unpremeditated way and hoped the students would get something from that. It wasn't satisfactory.

There it is up ahead. Tension hits, the same stomach feeling, as we walk toward it.

"Do you remember that building?"

"That's where you used to teach -- why are we going here?"

"I don't know. I just wanted to see it."

Not many people seem to be around. There wouldn't be, of course. Summer session is on now. Huge and strange gables over old dark-brown brick. A beautiful building, really. The only one that really seems to belong here. Old stone stairway up to the doors. Stairs cupped by wear from millions of footsteps.

"Why are we going inside?"

"Shh. Just don't say anything now."

I open the great heavy outside door and enter. Inside are more stairs, worn and wooden. They creak underfoot and smell of a hundred years of sweeping and waxing. Halfway up I stop and listen. There's no sound at all.

Chris whispers, "Why are we here?"

I just shake my head. I hear a car go by outside.

Chris whispers, "I don't like it here. It's scary in here."

"Go outside then," I say.

"You come too."

"Later."

"No, now."

He looks at me and sees I'm staying. His look is so frightened I'm about to change my mind, but then suddenly his expression breaks and he turns and runs down the stairs and out the door before I can follow him.

The big heavy door closes down below, and I'm all alone here now. I listen for some sound -- .Of whom? -- Of him? -- I listen for a long time -- .

The floorboards have an eerie creek as I move down the corridor and they are accompanied by an eerie thought that it is him. In this place he is the reality and I am the ghost. On one of the classroom doorknobs I see his hand rest for a moment, then slowly turn the knob, then push the door open.

The room inside is waiting, exactly as remembered, as if he were here now. He is here now. He's aware of everything I see. Everything jumps forth and vibrates with recall.

The long dark-green chalkboards on either side are flaked and in need of repair, just as they were. The chalk, never any chalk except little stubs in the trough, is still here. Beyond the blackboard are the windows and through them are the mountains he watched, meditatively, on days when the students were writing. He would sit by the radiator with a stub of chalk in one hand and stare out the window at the mountains, interrupted, occasionally, by a student who asked, "Do we have to do -- ?" And he would turn and answer whatever thing it was and there was a oneness he had never known before. This was a place where he was received...as himself. Not as what he could be or should be but as himself. A place all receptive...listening. He gave everything to it. This wasn't one room, this was a thousand rooms, changing each day with the storms and snows and patterns of clouds on the mountains, with each class, and even with each student. No two hours were ever alike, and it was always a mystery to him what the next one would bring -- .

My sense of time has been lost when I hear a creaking of steps in the hall. It becomes louder, then stops at the entrance to this classroom. The knob turns. The door opens. A woman looks in.

She has an aggressive face, as if she intended to catch someone here. She appears to be in her late twenties, is not very pretty. "I thought I saw someone," she says. "I thought -- " She looks puzzled.
She comes inside the room and walks toward me. She looks at me more closely. Now the aggressive look vanishes, slowly changing to wonder. She looks astonished.

"Oh, my God," she says. "Is it you?"

I don't recognize her at all. Nothing.

She calls my name and I nod, Yes, it's me.

"You've come back."

I shake my head. "Just for these few minutes."

She continues to look until it becomes embarrassing. Now she becomes aware of this herself, and asks, "May I sit down for a moment?" The timid way she asks this indicates she may have been a student of his.

She sits down on one of the front-row chairs. Her hand, which bears no wedding ring, is trembling. I really am a ghost.

Now she becomes embarrassed herself. "How long are you staying? -- No, I asked you that -- "

I fill in, "I'm staying with Bob DeWeese for a few days and then heading West. I had some time to spend in town and thought I'd see how the college looked."

"Oh," she says, "I'm glad you did -- . It's changed -- we've all changed -- so much since you left -- ."

There's another embarrassing pause.

"We heard you were in the hospital -- ."

"Yes," I say.

There is more embarrassed silence. That she doesn't pursue it means she probably knows why. She hesitates some more, searches for something to say. This is getting hard to bear.

"Where are you teaching?" she finally asks.

"I'm not teaching anymore," I say. "I've stopped."

She looks incredulous. "You've stopped?" She frowns and looks at me again, as if to verify that she is really talking to the right person. "You can't do that."

"Yes, you can."

She shakes her head in disbelief. "Not you!"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"That's all over for me now. I'm doing other things."

I keep wondering who she is, and her expression looks equally baffled. "But that's just -- " The sentence drops off. She tries again. "You're just being completely -- " but this sentence fails too.

The next word is "crazy." But she has caught herself both times. She realizes something, bites her lip and looks mortified I'd say something if I could, but there's no place to start. I'm about to tell her I don't know her but she stands up and says, "I must go now." I think she sees I don't know her. She goes to the door, says good-bye quickly and perfunctorily, and as it closes her footsteps go quickly, almost at a run, down the hall.

The outer door of the building closes and the classroom is as silent as before, except for a kind of psychic eddy current she has left behind. The room is completely modified by it. Now it contains only the backwash of her presence, and what it was I came here to see has vanished.

Good, I think, standing up again, I'm glad to have visited this room but I don't think I'll ever want to see it again. I'd rather fix motorcycles, and one's waiting.

On the way out I open one more door, compulsively. There on the wall I see something which sends a spine-tingling feeling along my neck.

It's a painting. I've had no recollection of it but now I know he bought it and put it there. And suddenly I know it's not a painting, it's a print of a painting he ordered from New York and which DeWeese had frowned at because it was a print and prints are of art and not art themselves, a distinction he didn't recognize at the time. But the print, Feininger's "Church of the Minorites," had an appeal to him that was irrelevant to the art in that its subject, a kind of Gothic cathedral, created from semiabstract lines and planes and colors and shades, seemed to reflect his mind's vision of the Church of Reason and that was why he'd put it here. All this comes back now. This was his office. A find. This is the room I am looking for!
I step inside and an avalanche of memory, loosened by the jolt of the print, begins to come down. The light on the print comes from a miserable cramped window in the adjacent wall through which he looked out onto and across the valley onto the Madison Range and watched the storms come in and while watching this valley before me now through this window here, now -- started the whole thing, the whole madness, right here! This is the exact spot!

And that door leads to Sarah's office. Sarah! Now it comes down! She came trotting by with her watering pot between those two doors, going from the corridor to her office, and she said, "I hope you are teaching Quality to your students." This in a la-de-da, singsong voice of a lady in her final year before retirement about to water her plants. That was the moment it all started. That was the seed crystal.

Seed crystal. A powerful fragment of memory comes back now. The laboratory. Organic chemistry. He was working with an extremely supersaturated solution when something similar had happened.

A supersaturated solution is one in which the saturation point, at which no more material will dissolve, has been exceeded. This can occur because the saturation point becomes higher as the temperature of the solution is increased. When you dissolve the material at a high temperature and then cool the solution, the material sometimes doesn't crystallize out because the molecules don't know how. They require something to get them started, a seed crystal, or a grain of dust or even a sudden scratch or tap on the surrounding glass.

He walked to the water tap to cool the solution but never got there. Before his eyes, as he walked, he saw a star of crystalline material in the solution appear and then grow suddenly and radiantly until it filled the entire vessel. He saw it grow. Where before was only clear liquid there was now a mass so solid he could turn the vessel upside down and nothing would come out.

The one sentence "I hope you are teaching Quality to your students" was said to him, and within a matter of a few months, growing so fast you could almost see it grow, came an enormous, intricate, highly structured mass of thought, formed as if by magic.

I don't know what he replied to her when she said this. Probably nothing. She would be back and forth behind his chair many times each day to get to and from her office. Sometimes she stopped with a word or two of apology about the interruption, sometimes with a fragment of news, and he was accustomed to this as a part of office life. I know that she came by a second time and asked, "Are you really teaching Quality this quarter?" and he nodded and looked back from his chair for a second and said, "Definitely!" and she trotted on. He was working on lecture notes at the time and was in a state of complete depression about them.

What was depressing was that the text was one of the most rational texts available on the subject of rhetoric and it still didn't seem right. Moreover he had access to the authors, who were members of the department. He had asked and listened and talked and agreed with their answers in a rational way but somehow still wasn't satisfied with them.

The text started with the premise that if rhetoric is to be taught at all at a University level it should be taught as a branch of reason, not as a mystic art. Therefore it emphasized a mastery of the rational foundations of communication in order to understand rhetoric. Elementary logic was introduced, elementary stimulus-response theory was brought in, and from these a progression was made to an understanding of how to develop an essay.

For the first year of teaching Phædrus had been fairly content with this framework. He felt there was something wrong with it, but that the wrongness was not in this application of reason to rhetoric. The wrongness was in the old ghost of his dreams...rationality itself. He recognized it as the same wrongness that had been troubling him for years, and for which he had no solutions. He just felt that no writer ever learned to write by this squarish, by-the-numbers, objective, methodical approach. Yet that was all rationality offered and there was nothing to do about it without being irrational And if there was one thing he had a clear mandate to do in this Church of Reason it was to be rational, so he had to let it go at that.

A few days later when Sarah trotted by again she stopped and said, "I'm so happy you're teaching Quality this quarter. Hardly anybody is these days."

"Well, I am," he said. "I'm definitely making a point of it."

"Good!" she said, and trotted on.

He returned to his notes but it wasn't long before thought about them was interrupted by a recall of her strange remark. What the hell was she talking about? Quality? Of course he was teaching Quality. Who wasn't? He continued with the notes.

Another thing that depressed him was prescriptive rhetoric, which supposedly had been done away with but was still around. This was the old slap-on-the-fingers-if-your-modifiers-were-caught-dangling stuff. Correct spelling, correct punctuation, correct grammar. Hundreds of rules for itsy-bitsy people. No one could remember all that stuff and concentrate on what he was trying to write about. It was all table manners, not derived from any sense of kindness or decency or humanity, but originally from an egotistic desire to look like gentlemen and ladies. Gentlemen and ladies had good table manners and spoke and wrote grammatically. It was what identified one with the upper classes. In Montana, however, it didn't have this effect at all. It identified one, instead, as a stuck-up Eastern ass. There was a minimum prescriptive-rhetoric requirement in the department, but like the other teachers he scrupulously avoided any defense of prescriptive rhetoric other than as a "requirement of the college."
Soon the thought interrupted again. Quality? There was something irritating, even angering about that question. He thought about it, and then thought some more, and then looked out the window, and then thought about it some more. Quality?

Four hours later he still sat there with his feet on the window ledge and stared out into what had become a dark sky. The phone rang, and it was his wife calling to find out what had happened. He told her he would be home soon, but then forgot about this and everything else. It wasn't until three o'clock in the morning that he wearily confessed to himself that he didn't have a clue as to what Quality was, picked up his briefcase and headed home.

Most people would have forgotten about Quality at this point, or just left it hanging suspended because they were getting nowhere and had other things to do. But he was so despondent about his own inability to teach what he believed, he really didn't give a damn about whatever else it was he was supposed to do, and when he woke up the next morning there was Quality staring him in the face. Three hours of sleep and he was so tired he knew he wouldn't be up to giving a lecture that day, and besides, his notes had never been completed, so he wrote on the blackboard: "Write a 350-word essay answering the question, What is quality in thought and statement?" Then he sat by the radiator while they wrote and thought about quality himself.

At the end of the hour no one seemed to have finished, so he allowed the students to take their papers home. This class didn't meet again for two days, and that gave him some time to think about the question some more too. During that interim he saw some of the students walking between classes, nodded to them and got looks of anger and fear in return. He guessed they were having the same trouble he was.

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 really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others -- but what's the "betterness"? -- So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it?
Chris and I have had a good night's sleep and this morning have packed the backpacks carefully, and now have been going up the mountainside for about an hour. The forest here at the bottom of the canyon is mostly pine, with a few aspen and broad-leaved shrubs. Steep canyon walls rise way above us on both sides. Occasionally the trail opens into a patch of sunlight and grass that edges the canyon stream, but soon it reenters the deep shade of the pines. The earth of the trail is covered with a soft springy duff of pine needles. It is very quiet here.

Mountains like these and travelers in the mountains and events that happen to them here are found not only in Zen literature but in the tales of every major religion. The allegory of a physical mountain for the spiritual one that stands between each soul and its goal is an easy and natural one to make. Like those in the valley behind us, most people stand in sight of the spiritual mountains all their lives and never enter them, being content to listen to others who have been there and thus avoid the hardships. Some travel into the mountains accompanied by experienced guides who know the best and least dangerous routes by which they arrive at their destination. Still others, inexperienced and untrusting, attempt to make their own routes. Few of these are successful, but occasionally some, by sheer will and luck and grace, do make it. Once there they become more aware than any of the others that there's no single or fixed number of routes. There are as many routes as there are individual souls.

I want to talk now about Phædrus' exploration into the meaning of the term Quality, an exploration which he saw as a route through the mountains of the spirit. As best I can puzzle it out, there were two distinct phases.

In the first phase he made no attempt at a rigid, systematic definition of what he was talking about. This was a happy, fulfilling and creative phase. It lasted most of the time he taught at the school back in the valley behind us.

The second phase emerged as a result of normal intellectual criticism of his lack of definition of what he was talking about. In this phase he made systematic, rigid statements about what Quality is, and worked out an enormous hierarchic structure of thought to support them. He literally had to move heaven and earth to arrive at this systematic understanding and when he was done felt he'd achieved an explanation of existence and our consciousness of it better than any that had existed before.

If it was truly a new route over the mountain it's certainly a needed one. For more than three centuries now the old routes common in this hemisphere have been undercut and almost washed out by the natural erosion and change of the shape of the mountain wrought by scientific truth. The early climbers established paths that were on firm ground with an accessibility that appealed to all, but today the Western routes are all but closed because of dogmatic inflexibility in the face of change. To doubt the literal meaning of the words of Jesus or Moses incurs hostility from most people, but it's just a fact that if Jesus or Moses were to appear today, unidentified, with the same message he spoke many years ago, his mental stability would be challenged. This isn't because what Jesus or Moses said was untrue or because modern society is in error but simply because the route they chose to reveal to others has lost relevance and comprehensibility. "Heaven above" fades from meaning when space-age consciousness asks, Where is "above"? But the fact that the old routes have tended, because of language rigidity, to lose their everyday meaning and become almost closed doesn't mean that the mountain is no longer there. It's there and will be there as long as consciousness exists.

Phædrus' second metaphysical phase was a total disaster. Before the electrodes were attached to his head he'd lost everything tangible: money, property, children; even his rights as a citizen had been taken away from him by order of the court. All he had left was his one crazy lone dream of Quality, a map of a route across the mountain, for which he had sacrificed everything. Then, after the electrodes were attached, he lost that.

I will never know all that was in his head at that time, nor will anyone else. What's left now is just fragments: debris, scattered notes, which can be pieced together but which leave huge areas unexplained.

When I first discovered this debris I felt like some agricultural peasant near the outskirts of, say, Athens, who occasionally and without much surprise plows up stones that have strange designs on them. I knew that these were part of some larger overall design that had existed in the past, but it was far beyond my comprehension. At first I deliberately avoided them, paid no attention to them because I knew these stones had caused some kind of trouble I should avoid. But I could see even then that they were a part of a huge structure of thought and I was curious about it in a secret sort of way.

Later, when I developed more confidence in my immunity to his affliction, I became interested in this debris in a more positive way and began to jot down the fragments amorphically, that is, without regard to form, in the order in which they occurred to me. Many of these amorphic statements have been supplied by friends. There are thousands of them now, and although only a small portion of them can fit into this Chautauqua, this Chautauqua is clearly based on them.

It is probably a long way from what he thought. When trying to recreate a whole pattern by deduction from fragments I am bound to commit errors and put down inconsistencies, for which I must ask some indulgence. In many cases the fragments are ambiguous; a number of different conclusions could be drawn. If something is wrong there's a good chance that the error isn't in what he thought but in my reconstruction of it, and a better reconstruction can later be found.

A whirr sounds and a partridge disappears through the trees.

"Did you see it?" says Chris.

"Yes," I say back.

"What was it?"
"A partridge."
"How do you know?"

"They rock back and forth like that when they fly," I say. I'm not sure of this but it sounds right. "They stay close to the ground too."

"Oh," says Chris and we continue hiking. The rays of the sun create a cathedral effect through the pines.

Today now I want to take up the first phase of his journey into Quality, the nonmetaphysical phase, and this will be pleasant. It's nice to start journeys pleasantly, even when you know they won't end that way. Using his class notes as reference material I want to reconstruct the way in which Quality became a working concept for him in the teaching of rhetoric. His second phase, the metaphysical one, was tenuous and speculative, but this first phase, in which he simply taught rhetoric, was by all accounts solid and pragmatic and probably deserves to be judged on its own merits, independently of the second phase.

He'd been innovating extensively. He'd been having trouble with students who had nothing to say. At first he thought it was laziness but later it became apparent that it wasn't. They just couldn't think of anything to say.

One of them, a girl with strong-lensed glasses, wanted to write a five-hundred-word essay about the United States. He was used to the sinking feeling that comes without disparagement that she narrow it down to just Bozeman.

When the paper came due she didn't have it and was quite upset. She had tried and tried but she just couldn't think of anything to say.

He had already discussed her with her previous instructors and they'd confirmed his impressions of her. She was very serious, disciplined and hardworking, but extremely dull. Not a spark of creativity in her anywhere. Her eyes, behind the thick-lensed glasses, were the eyes of a drudge. She wasn't bluffing him, she really couldn't think of anything to say, and was upset by her inability to do as she was told.

It just stumped him. Now he couldn't think of anything to say. A silence occurred, and then a peculiar answer: "Narrow it down to the main street of Bozeman." It was a stroke of insight.

She nodded dutifully and went out. But just before her next class she came back in real distress, tears this time, distress that had obviously been there for a long time. She still couldn't think of anything to say, and couldn't understand why, if she couldn't think of anything about all of Bozeman, she should be able to think of something about just one street.

He was furious. "You're not looking!" he said. A memory came back of his own dismissal from the University for having too much to say. For every fact there is an infinity of hypotheses. The more you look the more you see. She really wasn't looking and yet somehow didn't understand this.

He told her angrily, "Narrow it down to the front of one building on the main street of Bozeman. The Opera House. Start with the upper left-hand brick."

Her eyes, behind the thick-lensed glasses, opened wide. She came in the next class with a puzzled look and handed him a five-thousand-word essay on the front of the Opera House on the main street of Bozeman, Montana. "I sat in the hamburger stand across the street," she said, "and started writing about the first brick, and the second brick, and then by the third brick it all started to come and I couldn't stop. They thought I was crazy, and they kept kidding me, but here it all is. I don't understand it."

Neither did he, but on long walks through the streets of town he thought about it and concluded she was evidently stopped with the same kind of blockage that had paralyzed him on his first day of teaching. She was blocked because she was trying to repeat, in her writing, things she had already heard, just as on the first day he had tried to repeat things he had already decided to say. She couldn't think of anything to write about Bozeman because she couldn't recall anything she had heard worth repeating. She was strangely unaware that she could look and see freshly for herself, as she wrote, without primary regard for what had been said before. The narrowing down to one brick destroyed the blockage because it was so obvious she had to do some original and direct seeing.

He experimented further. In one class he had everyone write all hour about the back of his thumb. Everyone gave him funny looks at the beginning of the hour, but everyone did it, and there wasn't a single complaint about "nothing to say."

In another class he changed the subject from the thumb to a coin, and got a full hour's writing from every student. In other classes it was the same. Some asked, "Do you have to write about both sides?" Once they got into the idea of seeing directly for themselves they also saw there was no limit to the amount they could say. It was a confidence-building assignment too, because what they wrote, even though seemingly trivial, was nevertheless their own thing, not a mimicking of someone else's. Classes where he used that coin exercise were always less balky and more interested.

As a result of his experiments he concluded that imitation was a real evil that had to be broken before real rhetoric teaching could begin. This imitation seemed to be an external compulsion. Little children didn't have it. It seemed to come later on, possibly as a result of school itself.

That sounded right, and the more he thought about it the more right it sounded. Schools teach you to imitate. If you don't imitate what the teacher wants you get a bad grade. Here, in college, it was more sophisticated, of course; you were supposed to imitate..."
the teacher in such a way as to convince the teacher you were not imitating, but taking the essence of the instruction and going ahead with it on your own. That got you A's. Originality on the other hand could get you anything— from A to F. The whole grading system cautioned against it.

He discussed this with a professor of psychology who lived next door to him, an extremely imaginative teacher, who said, "Right. Eliminate the whole degree-and-grading system and then you'll get real education."

Phaedrus thought about this, and when weeks later a very bright student couldn't think of a subject for a term paper, it was still on his mind, so he gave it to her as a topic. She didn't like the topic at first, but agreed to take it anyway.

Within a week she was talking about it to everyone, and within two weeks had worked up a superb paper. The class she delivered it to didn't have the advantage of two weeks to think about the subject, however, and was quite hostile to the whole idea of eliminating grades and degrees. This didn't slow her down at all. Her tone took on an old-time religious fervor. She begged the other students to listen, to understand this was really right. "I'm not saying this for him," she said and glanced at Phaedrus. "It's for you."

Her pleading tone, her religious fervor, greatly impressed him, along with the fact that her college entrance examinations had placed her in the upper one percent of the class. During the next quarter, when teaching "persuasive writing," he chose this topic as a "demonstrator," a piece of persuasive writing he worked up by himself, day by day, in front of and with the help of the class.

He used the demonstrator to avoid talking in terms of principles of composition, all of which he had deep doubts about. He felt that by exposing classes to his own sentences as he made them, with all the misgivings and hang-ups and erasures, he would give a more honest picture of what writing was like than by spending class time picking nits in completed student work or holding up the completed work of masters for emulation. This time he developed the argument that the whole grading system and degree should be eliminated, and to make it something that truly involved the students in what they were hearing, he withheld all grades during the quarter.

Just up above the top of the ridge the snow can be seen now. On foot it's many days away though. The rocks below it are too steep for a direct hiking climb, particularly with the heavy loads we are carrying, and Chris is way too young for any kind of ropes-and-pitons stuff. We must cross over the forested ridge we are now approaching, enter another canyon, follow it to its end and then come back at an upward angle along to the ridge. Three days hard to the snow. Four days easy. If we don't show up in nine, DeWeese will start looking for us.

We stop for a rest, sit down and brace against a tree so that we don't topple over backward from the packs. After a while I reach around over my shoulder, take the machete from the top of my pack and hand it to Chris.

"See those two aspens over there? The straight ones? At the edge?" I point to them. "Cut those down about a foot from the ground."

"Why?"

"We'll need them later for hiking sticks and tent poles."

Chris takes the machete, starts to rise but then settles back again. "You cut them," he says.

So I take the machete and go over and cut the poles. They both cut neatly in one swing, except for the final strip of bark, which I sever with the back hook of the machete. Up in the rocks you need the poles for balancing and the pine up above is no good for poles, and this is about the last of the aspen here. It bothers me a little though that Chris is turning down work. Not a good sign in the mountains.

A short rest and then on we go. It'll take a while to get used to this load. There's a negative reaction to all the weight. As we go on though, it'll become more natural

Phaedrus' argument for the abolition of the degree-and-grading system produced a nonplussed or negative reaction in all but a few students at first, since it seemed, on first judgment, to destroy the whole University system. One student laid it wide open when she said with complete candor, "Of course you can't eliminate the degree and grading system. After all, that's what we're here for."

She spoke the complete truth. The idea that the majority of students attend a university for an education independent of the degree and grades is a little hypocrisy everyone is happier not to expose. Occasionally some students do arrive for an education but rote and the mechanical nature of the institution soon converts them to a less idealistic attitude.

The demonstrator was an argument that elimination of grades and degrees would destroy this hypocrisy. Rather than deal with generalities it dealt with the specific career of an imaginary student who more or less typified what was found in the classroom, a student completely conditioned to work for a grade rather than for the knowledge the grade was supposed to represent.

Such a student, the demonstrator hypothesized, would go to his first class, get his first assignment and probably do it out of habit. He might go to his second and third as well. But eventually the novelty of the course would wear off and, because his academic life was not his only life, the pressure of other obligations or desires would create circumstances where he just would not be able to get an assignment in.
Since there was no degree or grading system he would incur no penalty for this. Subsequent lectures which presumed he'd completed the assignment might be a little more difficult to understand, however, and this difficulty, in turn, might weaken his interest to a point where the next assignment, which he would find quite hard, would also be dropped. Again no penalty.

In time his weaker and weaker understanding of what the lectures were about would make it more and more difficult for him to pay attention in class. Eventually he would see he wasn't learning much; and facing the continual pressure of outside obligations, he would stop studying, feel guilty about this and stop attending class. Again, no penalty would be attached.

But what had happened? The student, with no hard feelings on anybody's part, would have flunked himself out. Good! This is what should have happened. He wasn't there for a real education in the first place and had no real business there at all. A large amount of money and effort had been saved and there would be no stigma of failure and ruin to haunt him the rest of his life. No bridges had been burned.

The student's biggest problem was a slave mentality which had been built into him by years of carrot-and-whip grading, a mule mentality which said, "If you don't whip me, I won't work." He didn't get whipped. He didn't work. And the cart of civilization, which he supposedly was being trained to pull, was just going to have to creak along a little slower without him.

This is a tragedy, however, only if you presume that the cart of civilization, "the system," is pulled by mules. This is a common, vocational, "location" point of view, but it's not the Church attitude.

The Church attitude is that civilization, or "the system" or "society" or whatever you want to call it, is best served not by mules but by free men. The purpose of abolishing grades and degrees is not to punish mules or to get rid of them but to provide an environment in which that mule can turn into a free man.

The hypothetical student, still a mule, would drift around for a while. He would get another kind of education quite as valuable as the one he'd abandoned, in what used to be called the "school of hard knocks." Instead of wasting money and time as a high-status mule, he would now have to get a job as a low-status mule, maybe as a mechanic. Actually his real status would go up. He would be making a contribution for a change. Maybe that's what he would do for the rest of his life. Maybe he'd found his level. But don't count on it.

In time...six months; five years, perhaps...a change could easily begin to take place. He would become less and less satisfied with a kind of dumb, day-to-day shopwork. His creative intelligence, stifled by too much theory and too many grades in college, would now become reawakened by the boredom of the shop. Thousands of hours of frustrating mechanical problems would have made him more interested in machine design. He would like to design machinery himself. He'd think he could do a better job. He would try modifying a few engines, meet with success, look for more success, but feel blocked because he didn't have the theoretical information. He would discover that when before he felt stupid because of his lack of interest in theoretical information, he'd now find a brand of theoretical information which he'd have a lot of respect for, namely, mechanical engineering.

So he would come back to our gradeless and gradeless school, but with a difference. He'd no longer be a grade-motivated person. He'd be a knowledge-motivated person. He would need no external pushing to learn. His push would come from inside. He'd be a free man. He wouldn't need a lot of discipline to shape him up. In fact, if the instructors assigned him were slacking on the job he would be likely to shape them up by asking rude questions. He'd be there to learn something, would be paying to learn something and they'd better come up with it.

Motivation of this sort, once it catches hold, is a ferocious force, and in the gradeless, degreeless institution where our student would find himself, he wouldn't stop with rote engineering information. Physics and mathematics were going to come within his sphere of interest because he'd see he needed them. Metallurgy and electrical engineering would come up for attention. And, in the process of intellectual maturing that these abstract studies gave him, he would he likely to branch out into other theoretical areas that weren't directly related to machines but had become a part of a newer larger goal. This larger goal wouldn't be the imitation of education in Universities today, glossed over and concealed by grades and degrees that give the appearance of something happening when, in fact, almost nothing is going on. It would be the real thing.

Such was Phædrus' demonstrator, his unpopular argument, and he worked on it all quarter long, building it up and modifying it, arguing for it, defending it. All quarter long papers would go back to the students with comments but no grades, although the grades were entered in a book.

As I said before, at first almost everyone was sort of nonplussed. The majority probably figured they were stuck with some idealist who thought removal of grades would make them happier and thus work harder, when it was obvious that without grades everyone would just loaf. Many of the students with A records in previous quarters were contemptuous and angry at first, but because of their acquired self-discipline went ahead and did the work anyway. The B students and high-C students missed some of the early assignments or turned in sloppy work. Many of the low-C and D students didn't even show up for class. At this time another teacher asked him what he was going to do about this lack of response.

"Outwait them," he said.

His lack of harshness puzzled the students at first, then made them suspicious. Some began to ask sarcastic questions. These received soft answers and the lectures and speeches proceeded as usual, except with no grades.
Then a hoped-for phenomenon began. During the third or fourth week some of the A students began to get nervous and started to turn in superb work and hang around after class with questions that fished for some indication as to how they were doing. The B and high-C students began to notice this and work a little and bring up the quality of their papers to a more usual level. The low C, D and future F's began to show up for class just to see what was going on.

After midquarter an even more hoped-for phenomenon took place. The A-rated students lost their nervousness and became active participants in everything that went on with a friendliness that was uncommon in a grade-getting class. At this point the B and C students were in a panic, and turned in stuff that looked as though they'd spent hours of painstaking work on it. The D's and F's turned in satisfactory assignments.

In the final weeks of the quarter, a time when normally everyone knows what his grade will be and just sits back half asleep, Phædrus was getting a kind of class participation that made other teachers take notice. The B's and C's had joined the A's in friendly free-for-all discussion that made the class seem like a successful party. Only the D's and F's sat frozen in their chairs, in a complete internal panic.

The phenomenon of relaxation and friendliness was explained later by a couple of students who told him, "A lot of us got together outside of class to try to figure out how to beat this system. Everyone decided the best way was just to figure you were going to fail and then go ahead and do what you could anyway. Then you start to relax. Otherwise you go out of your mind!"

The students added that once you got used to it it wasn't so bad, you were more interested in the subject matter, but repeated that it wasn't easy to get used to.

At the end of the quarter the students were asked to write an essay evaluating the system. None of them knew at the time of writing what his or her grade would be. Fifty-four percent opposed it. Thirty-seven percent favored it. Nine percent were neutral.

On the basis of one man, one vote, the system was very unpopular. The majority of students definitely wanted their grades as you keep constant every cause you can think of except one, and then see what the effects are of varying that one cause. In the classroom you can never do this. Student knowledge, student attitude, teacher attitude, all change from all kinds of causes which are uncontrollable and mostly unknowable. Also, the observer in this case is himself one of the causes and can never judge his sense of adventure to tell him, but after enough trips into the high country, the YMCA desire for adventure diminishes and the

As DeWeese said, from here straight south you can go seventy-five miles through nothing but forests and snow without ever encountering a road, although there are roads to the east and the west. I've arranged it so that if things work out badly at the end of the second day we'll be near a road that can get us back fast. Chris doesn't know about this, and it would hurt his YMCA-camp sense of adventure to tell him, but after enough trips into the high country, the YMCA desire for adventure diminishes and the more substantial benefits of cutting down risks appear. This country can be dangerous. You take one bad step in a million, sprain an ankle, and then you find out how far from civilization you really are.

This is apparently a seldom-entered canyon this far up. After another hour of hiking we see that the trail is about gone.

Phædrus thought withholding grades was good, according to his notes, but he didn't give it scientific value. In a true experiment you keep constant every cause you can think of except one, and then see what the effects are of varying that one cause. In the classroom you can never do this. Student knowledge, student attitude, teacher attitude, all change from all kinds of causes which are uncontrollable and mostly unknowable. Also, the observer in this case is himself one of the causes and can never judge his effects without altering his effects. So he didn't attempt to draw any hard conclusions from all this, he just went ahead and did what he liked.

The movement from this to his enquiry into Quality took place because of a sinister aspect of grading that the withholding of grades exposed. Grades really cover up failure to teach. A bad instructor can go through an entire quarter leaving absolutely nothing memorable in the minds of his class, curve out the scores on an irrelevant test, and leave the impression that some have learned and some have not. But if the grades are removed the class is forced to wonder each day what it's really learning. The questions, What's being taught? What's the goal? How do the lectures and assignments accomplish the goal? become ominous. The removal of grades exposes a huge and frightening vacuum.

What was Phædrus trying to do, anyway? This question became more and more imperative as he went on. The answer that had seemed right when he started now made less and less sense. He had wanted his students to become creative by deciding for themselves what was good writing instead of asking him all the time. The real purpose of withholding the grades was to force them to look within themselves, the only place they would ever get a really right answer. The removal of grades exposes a huge and frightening vacuum.

But now this made no sense. If they already knew what was good and bad, there was no reason for them to take the course in the first place. The fact that they were there as students presumed they did not know what was good or bad. That was his job as instructor...to tell them what was good or bad. The whole idea of individual creativity and expression in the classroom was really basically opposed to the whole idea of the University.

For many of the students, this withholding created a Kafkaesque situation in which they saw they were to be punished for failure to do something but no one would tell them what they were supposed to do. They looked within themselves and saw nothing and
looked at Phædrus and saw nothing and just sat there helpless, not knowing what to do. The vacuum was deadly. One girl suffered a nervous breakdown. You cannot withhold grades and sit there and create a goalless vacuum. You have to provide some goal for a class to work toward that will fill that vacuum. This he wasn't doing.

He couldn't. He could think of no possible way he could tell them what they should work toward without falling back into the trap of authoritarian, didactic teaching. But how can you put on the blackboard the mysterious internal goal of each creative person?

The next quarter he dropped the whole idea and went back to regular grading, discouraged, confused, feeling he was right but somehow it had come out all wrong. When spontaneity and individuality and really good original stuff occurred in a classroom it was in spite of the instruction, not because of it. This seemed to make sense. He was ready to resign. Teaching dull conformity to hateful students wasn't what he wanted to do.

He'd heard that Reed College in Oregon withheld grades until graduation, and during the summer vacation he went there but was told the faculty was divided on the value of withholding grades and that no one was tremendously happy about the system. During the rest of the summer his mood became depressed and lazy. He and his wife camped a lot in those mountains. She asked why he was so silent all the time but he couldn't say why. He was just stopped. Waiting. For that missing seed crystal of thought that would suddenly solidify everything.
It's looking bad for Chris. For a while he was way ahead of me and now he sits under a tree and rests. He doesn't look at me, and that's how I know it's bad.

I sit down next to him and his expression is distant. His face is flushed and I can see he's exhausted. We sit and listen to the wind through the pines.

I know eventually he'll get up and keep going but he doesn't know this, and is afraid to face the possibility that his fear creates: that he may not be able to climb the mountain at all. I remember something Phædrus had written about these mountains and tell it to Chris now.

"Years ago," I tell him, "your mother and I were at the timberline not so far from here and we camped near a lake with a marsh on one side."

He doesn't look up but he's listening.

"At about dawn we heard falling rocks and we thought it must be an animal, except that animals don't usually clatter around. Then I heard a squishing sound in the marsh and we were really wide-awake. I got out of the sleeping bag slowly and got our revolver from my jacket and crouched by a tree."

Now Chris's attention is distracted from his own problems.

"There was another squish," I say. "I thought it could be horses with dudes packing in, but not at this hour. Another squish! And a loud galoomph! That's no horse! And a Galoomph! and a GALOOMPH! And there, in the dim grey light of dawn coming straight for me through the muck of the marsh, was the biggest bull moose I ever saw. Horns as wide as a man is tall. Next to the grizzly the most dangerous animal in the mountains. Some say the worst."

Chris's eyes are bright again.

"GALOOMPH! I cocked the hammer on the revolver, thinking a thirty-eight Special wasn't very much for a moose. GALOOMPH! He didn't SEE me! GALOOMPH! I couldn't get out of his way. Your mother was in the sleeping bag right in his path. GALOOMPH! What a GIANT! GALOOMPH! He's ten yards away! GALOOMPH! I stand up and take aim. GALOOMPH! -- GALOOMPH! -- GALOOMPH! -- He stops, THREE YARDS AWAY, and sees me -- . The gunsights lie right between his eyes -- . We're motionless."

I reach around into my pack and get out some cheese.

"Then what happened?" Chris asks.

"Wait until I cut off some of this cheese."

I remove my hunting knife and hold the cheese wrapper so that my fingers don't get on it. I slice out a quarter-inch hunk and hold it out for him.

He takes it. "Then what happened?"

I watch until he takes his first bite. "That bull moose looked at me for what must have been five seconds. Then he looked down at your mother. Then he looked at me again, and at the revolver which was practically lying on top of his big round nose. And then he smiled and slowly walked away."

"Oh," says Chris. He looks disappointed.

"Normally when they're confronted like that they'll charge," I say, "but he just thought it was a nice morning, and we were there first, so why make trouble? And that's why he smiled."

"Can they smile?"

"No, but it looked that way."

I put the cheese away and add, "Later on that day we were jumping from boulder to boulder down the side of a slope. I was about to land on a great big brown boulder when all of a sudden the great big brown boulder jumped into the air and ran off into the woods. It was the same moose -- .I think that moose must have been pretty sick of us that day."

I help Chris get to his feet. "You were going a little too fast," I say. "Now the mountainside's becoming steep and we have to go slowly. If you go too fast you get winded and when you get winded you get dizzy and that weakens your spirit and you think, I can't do it. So go slow for a while."

"I'll stay behind you," he says.

"Okay."

We walk now away from the stream we were following, up the canyon side at the shallowest angle I can find.

Mountains should be climbed with as little effort as possible and without desire. The reality of your own nature should determine the speed. If you become restless, speed up. If you become winded, slow down. You climb the mountain in an equilibrium.
between restlessness and exhaustion. Then, when you're no longer thinking ahead, each footstep isn't just a means to an end but a unique event in itself. This leaf has jagged edges. This rock looks loose. From this place the snow is less visible, even though closer. These are things you should notice anyway. To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain which sustain life, not the top. Here's where things grow.

But of course, without the top you can't have any sides. It's the top that defines the sides. So on we go -- we have a long way -- no hurry -- just one step after the next -- with a little Chautauqua for entertainment -- .Mental reflection is so much more interesting than TV it's a shame more people don't switch over to it. They probably think what they hear is unimportant but it never is.

There's a large fragment concerning Phædrus' first class after he gave that assignment on "What is quality in thought and statement?" The atmosphere was explosive. Almost everyone seemed as frustrated and angered as he had been by the question.

"How are we supposed to know what quality is?" they said. "You're supposed to tell us!"

Then he told them he couldn't figure it out either and really wanted to know. He had assigned it in the hope that somebody would come up with a good answer. That ignited it. A roar of indignation shook the room. Before the commotion had settled down another teacher had stuck his head in the door to see what the trouble was.

"It's all right," Phædrus said. "We just accidentally stumbled over a genuine question, and the shock is hard to recover from."

Some students looked curious at this, and the noise simmered down.

He then used the occasion for a short return to his theme of "Corruption and Decay in the Church of Reason." It was a measure of this corruption, he said, that students should be outraged by someone trying to use them to seek the truth. You were supposed to fake this search for the truth, to imitate it. To actually search for it was a damned imposition.

The truth was, he said, that he genuinely did want to know what they thought, not so that he could put a grade on it, but because he really wanted to know.

They looked puzzled.

"I sat there all night long," one said.

"I was ready to cry, I was so mad," a girl next to the window said.

"You should warn us," a third said.

"How could I warn you," he said, "when I had no idea how you'd react?"

Some of the puzzled ones looked at him with a first dawning. He wasn't playing games. He really wanted to know.

A most peculiar person.

Then someone said, "What do you think?"

"I don't know," he answered.

"But what do you think?"

He paused for a long time. "I think there is such a thing as Quality, but that as soon as you try to define it, something goes haywire. You can't do it."

Murmurs of agreement.

He continued, "Why this is, I don't know. I thought maybe I'd get some ideas from your paper. I just don't know."

This time the class was silent.

In subsequent classes that day there was some of the same commotion, but a number of students in each class volunteered friendly answers that told him the first class had been discussed during lunch.

A few days later he worked up a definition of his own and put it on the blackboard to be copied for posterity. The definition was: "Quality is a characteristic of thought and statement that is recognized by a nonthinking process. Because definitions are a product of rigid, formal thinking, quality cannot be defined."

The fact that this "definition" was actually a refusal to define did not draw comment. The students had no formal training that would have told them his statement was, in a formal sense, completely irrational. If you can't define something you have no formal rational way of knowing that it exists. Neither can you really tell anyone else what it is. There is, in fact, no formal difference between inability to define and stupidity. When I say, "Quality cannot be defined," I'm really saying formally, "I'm stupid about Quality."

Fortunately the students didn't know this. If they'd come up with these objections he wouldn't have been able to answer them at the time.
But then, below the definition on the blackboard, he wrote, "But even though Quality cannot be defined, you know what Quality is!" and the storm started all over again.

"Oh, no, we don't!"

"Oh, yes, you do."

"Oh, no, we don't!"

"Oh, yes, you do!" he said and he had some material ready to demonstrate it to them.

He had selected two examples of student composition. The first was a rambling, disconnected thing with interesting ideas that never built into anything. The second was a magnificent piece by a student who was mystified himself about why it had come out so well. Phædrus read both, then asked for a show of hands on who thought the first was best. Two hands went up. He asked how many liked the second better. Twenty-eight hands went up.

"Whatever it is," he said, "that caused the overwhelming majority to raise their hands for the second one is what I mean by Quality. So you know what it is."

There was a long reflective silence after this, and he just let it last.

This was just intellectually outrageous, and he knew it. He wasn't teaching anymore, he was indoctrinating. He had erected an imaginary entity, defined it as incapable of definition, told the students over their own protests that they knew what it was, and demonstrated this by a technique that was as confusing logically as the term itself. He was able to get away with this because logical refutation required more talent than any of the students had. In subsequent days he continually invited their refutations, but none came. He improvised further.

To reinforce the idea that they already knew what Quality was he developed a routine in which he read four student papers in class and had everyone rank them in estimated order of Quality on a slip of paper. He did the same himself. He collected the slips, tallied them on the blackboard and averaged the rankings for an overall class opinion. Then he would reveal his own rankings, and this would almost always be close to, if not identical with the class average. Where there were differences it was usually because two papers were close in quality.

At first the classes were excited by this exercise, but as time went on they became bored. What he meant by Quality was obvious. They obviously knew what it was too, and so they lost interest in listening. Their question now was "All right, we know what Quality is. How do we get it?"

Now, at last, the standard rhetoric texts came into their own. The principles expounded in them were no longer rules to rebel against, not ultimates in themselves, but just techniques, gimmicks, for producing what really counted and stood independently of the techniques...Quality. What had started out as a heresy from traditional rhetoric turned into a beautiful introduction to it.

He singled out aspects of Quality such as unity, vividness, authority, economy, sensitivity, clarity, emphasis, flow, suspense, brilliance, precision, proportion, depth and so on; kept each of these as poorly defined as Quality itself, but demonstrated them by the same class reading techniques. He showed how the aspect of Quality called unity, the hanging-togetherness of a story, could be improved with a technique called an outline. The authority of an argument could be jacked up with a technique called footnotes, which gives authoritative reference. Outlines and footnotes are standard things taught in all freshman composition classes, but now as devices for improving Quality they had a purpose. And if a student turned in a bunch of dumb references or a sloppy outline that showed he was just fulfilling an assignment by rote, he could be told that while his paper may have fulfilled the letter of the assignment it obviously didn't fulfill the goal of Quality, and was therefore worthless.

Now, in answer to that eternal student question, How do I do this? that had frustrated him to the point of resignation, he could reply, "It doesn't make a bit of difference how you do it! Just so it's good." The reluctant student might ask in class, "But how do we know what's good?" but almost before the question was out of his mouth he would realize the answer had already been supplied. Some other student would usually tell him, "You just see it." If he said, "No, I don't," he'd be told, "Yes, you do. He proved it." The student was finally and completely trapped into making quality judgments for himself. And it was just exactly this and nothing else that taught him to write.

Up to now Phædrus had been compelled by the academic system to say what he wanted, even though he knew that this forced students to conform to artificial forms that destroyed their own creativity. Students who went along with his rules were then condemned for their inability to be creative or produce a piece of work that reflected their own personal standards of what is good.

Now that was over with. By reversing a basic rule that all things which are to be taught must first be defined, he had found a way out of all this. He was pointing to no principle, no rule of good writing, no theory...but he was pointing to something, nevertheless, that was very real, whose reality they couldn't deny. The vacuum that had been created by the withholding of grades was suddenly filled with the positive goal of Quality, and the whole thing fit together. Students, astonished, came by his office and said, "I used to just hate English. Now I spend more time on it than anything else." Not just one or two. Many. The whole Quality concept was beautiful. It worked. It was that mysterious, individual, internal goal of each creative person, on the blackboard at last.

I turn to see how Chris is doing. His face looks tired.
I ask, "How do you feel?"

"Okay," he says, but his tone is defiant.

"We can stop anywhere and camp," I say.

He flashes a fierce look at me, and so I say nothing more. Soon I see he's working his way around me on the slope. With what must be great effort he pulls ahead. We go on.

Phædrus got this far with his concept of Quality because he deliberately refused to look outside the immediate classroom experience. Cromwell's statement, "No one ever travels so high as he who knows not where he is going," applied at this point. He didn't know where he was going. All he knew was that it worked.

In time, however, he wondered why it worked, especially when he already knew it was irrational. Why should an irrational method work when rational methods were all so rotten? He had an intuitive feeling, growing rapidly, that what he had stumbled on was no small gimmick. It went far beyond. How far, he didn't know.

This was the beginning of the crystallization that I talked about before. Others wondered at the time, "Why should he get so excited about 'quality'?" But they saw only the word and its rhetoric context. They didn't see his past despair over abstract questions of existence itself that he had abandoned in defeat.

If anyone else had asked, What is Quality? it would have been just another question. But when he asked it, because of his past, it spread out for him like waves in all directions simultaneously, not in a hierarchic structure, but in a concentric one. At the center, generating the waves, was Quality. As these waves of thought expanded for him I'm sure he fully expected each wave to reach some shore of existing patterns of thought so that he had a kind of unified relationship with these thought structures. But the shore was never reached until the end, if it appeared at all. For him there was nothing but ever expanding waves of crystallization. I'll now try to follow these waves of crystallization, the second phase of his exploration into quality, as best I can.

Up ahead all of Chris's movements seem tired and angry. He stumbles on things, lets branches tear at him, instead of pulling them to one side.

I'm sorry to see this. Some blame can be put on the YMCA camp he attended for two weeks just before we started. From what he's told me, they made a big ego thing out of the whole outdoor experience. A proof-of-manhood thing. He began in a lowly class they were careful to point out was rather disgraceful to be in -- original sin. Then he was allowed to prove himself with a long series of accomplishments...swimming, rope tying -- he mentioned a dozen of them, but I've forgotten them.

It made the kids at camp much more enthusiastic and cooperative when they had ego goals to fulfill, I'm sure, but ultimately that kind of motivation is destructive. Any effort that has self-glorification as its final endpoint is bound to end in disaster. Now we're paying the price. When you try to climb a mountain to prove how big you are, you almost never make it. And even if you do it's a destructive act of submission to this holiness. The holiness of the mountain infused into their own spirits enabled them to endure far more than they would have been able to without it. But the holiness was not the pilgrimage or the mountain, and thus wasn't ready for it. The holiness of the mountain was not ready for it.

Phædrus wrote a letter from India about a pilgrimage to holy Mount Kailas, the source of the Ganges and the abode of Shiva, high in the Himalayas, in the company of a holy man and his adherents.

He never reached the mountain. After the third day he gave up, exhausted, and the pilgrimage went on without him. He had the physical strength but that physical strength wasn't enough. He had the intellectual motivation but that wasn't enough either. He didn't think he had been arrogant but thought that he was undertaking the pilgrimage to broaden his experience, to gain understanding for himself. He was trying to use the mountain for his own purposes and the pilgrimage too. He regarded himself as the fixed entity, not the pilgrimage or the mountain, and thus wasn't ready for it. He speculated that the other pilgrims, the ones who reached the mountain, probably sensed the holiness of the mountain so intensely that each footstep was an act of devotion, an act of submission to this holiness. The holiness of the mountain infused into their own spirits enabled them to endure far more than anything else, with his greater physical strength, could take.

To the untrained eye ego-climbing and selfless climbing may appear identical. Both kinds of climbers place one foot in front of the other. Both breathe in and out at the same rate. Both stop when tired. Both go forward when rested. But what a difference! The ego-climber is like an instrument that's out of adjustment. He puts his foot down an instant too soon or too late. He's likely to miss a beautiful passage of sunlight through the trees. He goes on when the sloppiness of his step shows he's tired. He rests at odd times. He looks up the trail trying to see what's ahead even when he knows what's ahead because he just looked a second before. He goes too fast or too slow for the conditions and when he talks his talk is forever about somewhere else, something else. He's here but he's not here. He rejects the here, is unhappy with it, wants to be farther up the trail but when he gets there will be just as unhappy because then it will be "here." What he's looking for, what he wants, is all around him, but he doesn't want that because it is all around him. Every step's an effort, both physically and spiritually, because he imagines his goal to be external and distant.

That seems to be Chris's problem now.
There's an entire branch of philosophy concerned with the definition of Quality, known as esthetics. Its question, What is meant by beautiful?, goes back to antiquity. But when he was a student of philosophy Phædrus had recoiled violently from this entire branch of knowledge. He had almost deliberately failed the one course in it he had attended and had written a number of papers subjecting the instructor and materials to outrageous attack. He hated and reviled everything.

It wasn't any particular esthetician who produced this reaction in him. It was all of them. It wasn't any particular point of view that outraged him so much as the idea that Quality should be subordinated to any point of view. The intellectual process was forcing Quality into its servitude, prostituting it. I think that was the source of his anger.

He wrote in one paper, "These estheticians think their subject is some kind of peppermint bonbon they're entitled to smack their fat lips on; something to be devoured; something to be intellectually knifed, forked and spooned up bit by bit with appropriate delicate remarks and I'm ready to throw up. What they smack their lips on is the putrescence of something they long ago killed."

Now, as the first step of the crystallization process, he saw that when Quality is kept undefined by definition, the entire field called esthetics is wiped out -- completely disenfranchised -- kaput. By refusing to define Quality he had placed it entirely outside the analytic process. If you can't define Quality, there's no way you can subordinate it to any intellectual rule. The estheticians can have nothing more to say. Their whole field, definition of Quality, is gone.

The thought of this completely thrilled him. It was like discovering a cancer cure. No more explanations of what art is. No more wonderful critical schools of experts to determine rationally where each composer had succeeded or failed. All of them, every last one of those know-it-alls, would finally have to shut up. This was no longer just an interesting idea. This was a dream.

I don't think anyone really saw what he was up to at first. They saw an intellectual delivering a message that had all the trappings of a rational analysis of a teaching situation. They didn't see he had a purpose completely opposite to any they were used to. He wasn't furthering rational analysis. He was blocking it. He was turning the method of rationality against itself, turning it against his own kind, in defense of an irrational concept, an undefined entity called Quality.

He wrote: "(1) Every instructor of English composition knows what quality is. (Any instructor who does not should keep this fact carefully concealed, for this would certainly constitute proof of incompetence.) (2) Any instructor who thinks quality of writing can and should be defined before teaching it can and should go ahead and define it. (3) All those who feel that quality of writing does exist but cannot be defined, but that quality should be taught anyway, can benefit by the following method of teaching pure quality in writing without defining it."

He then went ahead and described some of the methods of comparison that had evolved in the classroom.

I think he really did hope that someone would come along, challenge him and try to define Quality for him. But no one ever did.

However, that little parenthetic statement about inability to define Quality as proof of incompetence did raise eyebrows within the department. He was, after all, the junior member, and not really expected to provide standards quite yet for his seniors' performance.

His right to say as he pleased was valued, and the senior members actually seemed to enjoy his independence of thought and support him in a churchlike way. But contrary to the belief of many opponents of academic freedom, the church attitude has never been that a teacher should be allowed to blather anything that comes into his head without any accountability at all. The church attitude is simply that the accountability must be to the God of Reason, not to the idols of political power. The fact that he was insulting people was irrelevant to the truth or falsehood of what he was saying and he couldn't ethically be struck down for this. But what they were prepared to strike him down for, ethically and with gusto, was any indication that he wasn't making sense. He could do anything he wanted as long as he justified it in terms of reason.

But how the hell do you ever justify, in terms of reason, a refusal to define something? Definitions are the foundation of reason. You can't reason without them. He could hold off the attack for a while with fancy dialectical footwork and insults about competence and incompetence, but sooner or later he had to come up with something more substantial than that. His attempt to come up with something substantial led to further crystallization beyond the traditional limits of rhetoric and into the domain of philosophy.

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Chris turns and flashes a tormented look at me. It won't be long now. Even before we left there were clues this was coming. When DeWeese told a neighbor I was experienced in the mountains Chris showed a big flash of admiration. It was a large thing in his eyes. He should be done for soon, and then we can stop for the day.

Oops! There he goes. He's fallen down. He's not getting up. It was an awfully neat fall, not very accidental-looking. Now he looks at me with hurt and anger, searching for condemnation from me. I don't show him any. I sit down next to him and see he's almost defeated.

"Well," I say, "we can stop here, or we can go ahead, or we can go back. Which do you want to do?"

"I don't care," he says, "I don't want to --"

"You don't want to what?"

"I don't care!" he says, angrily.
"Then since you don't care, we'll keep on going," I say, trapping him.

"I don't like this trip," he says. "It isn't any fun. I thought it was going to be fun."

Some anger catches me off guard too. "That may be true," I reply, "but it's a hell of a thing to say."

I see a sudden flick of fear in his eyes as he gets up.

We go on.

The sky over the other wall of the canyon has become overcast, and the wind in the pines around us has become cool and ominous.

At least the coolness makes it easier hiking -- .

I was talking about the first wave of crystallization outside of rhetoric that resulted from Phædrus' refusal to define Quality. He had to answer the question, If you can't define it, what makes you think it exists?

His answer was an old one belonging to a philosophic school that called itself realism."A thing exists," he said, "if a world without it can't function normally. If we can show that a world without Quality functions abnormally, then we have shown that Quality exists, whether it's defined or not." He thereupon proceeded to subtract Quality from a description of the world as we know it.

The first casualty from such a subtraction, he said, would be the fine arts. If you can't distinguish between good and bad in the arts they disappear. There's no point in hanging a painting on the wall when the bare wall looks just as good. There's no point to symphonies, when scratches from the record or hum from the record player sound just as good.

Poetry would disappear, since it seldom makes sense and has no practical value. And interestingly, comedy would vanish too. No one would understand the jokes, since the difference between humor and no humor is pure Quality.

Next he made sports disappear. Football, baseball, games of every sort would vanish. The scores would no longer be a measurement of anything meaningful, but simply empty statistics, like the number of stones in a pile of gravel. Who would attend them? Who would play?

Next he subtracted Quality from the marketplace and predicted the changes that would take place. Since quality of flavor would be meaningless, supermarkets would carry only basic grains such as rice, cornmeal, soybeans and flour; possibly also some ungraded meat, milk for weaning infants and vitamin and mineral supplements to make up deficiencies. Alcoholic beverages, tea, coffee and tobacco would vanish. So would movies, dances, plays and parties. We would all use public transportation. We would all wear G.I. shoes.

A huge proportion of us would be out of work, but this would probably be temporary until we relocated in essential non-Quality work. Applied science and technology would be drastically changed, but pure science, mathematics, philosophy and particularly logic would be unchanged.

Phædrus found this last to be extremely interesting. The purely intellectual pursuits were the least affected by the subtraction of Quality. If Quality were dropped, only rationality would remain unchanged. That was odd. Why would that be?

He didn't know, but he did know that by subtracting Quality from a picture of the world as we know it, he'd revealed a magnitude of importance of this term he hadn't known was there. The world can function without it, but life would be so dull as to be hardly worth living. In fact it wouldn't be worth living. The term worth is a Quality term. Life would just be living without any values or purpose at all.

He looked back over the distance this line of thought had taken him and decided he'd certainly proved his point. Since the world obviously doesn't function normally when Quality is subtracted, Quality exists, whether it's defined or not.

After conjuring up this vision of a Qualityless world, he was soon attracted to its resemblance to a number of social situations he had already read about. Ancient Sparta came to mind, Communist Russia and her satellites. Communist China, the Brave New World of Aldous Huxley and the 1984 of George Orwell. He also remembered people from his own experience who would have endorsed this Qualityless world. The same ones who tried to make him quit smoking. They wanted rational reasons for his smoking and, when he didn't have any, acted very superior, as though he'd lost face or something. They had to have reasons and plans and solutions for everything. They were his own kind. The kind he was now attacking. And he searched for a long time for a suitable name to sum up just what characterized them, so as to get a handle on this Qualityless world.

It was intellectual primarily, but it wasn't just intelligence that was fundamental. It was a certain basic attitude about the way the world was, a presumptive vision that it ran according to laws...reason...and that man's improvement lay chiefly through the discovery of these laws of reason and application of them toward satisfaction of his own desires. It was this faith that held everything together. He squinted at this vision of a Qualityless world for a while, conjured up more details, thought about it, and then squinted some more and thought some more and then finally circled back to where he was before.

Squareness.

That's the look. That sums it. Squareness. When you subtract quality you get squareness. Absence of Quality is the essence of squareness.
Some artist friends with whom he had once traveled across the United States came to mind. They were Negroes, who had always been complaining about just this Qualitylessness he was describing. Square. That was their word for it. Way back long ago before the mass media had picked it up and given it national white usage they had called all that intellectual stuff square and had wanted nothing to do with it. And there had been a fantastic mismeshing of conversations and attitudes between him and them because he was such a prime example of the squareness they were talking about. The more he had tried to pin them down on what they were talking about the vaguer they had gotten. Now with this Quality he seemed to say the same thing and talk as vaguely as they did, even though what he talked about was as hard and clear and solid as any rationally defined entity he'd ever dealt with.

Quality. That's what they'd been talking about all the time. "Man, will you just please, kindly dig it," he remembered one of them saying, "and hold up on all those wonderful seven-dollar questions? If you got to ask what is it all the time, you'll never get time to know." Soul. Quality. The same?

The wave of crystallization rolled ahead. He was seeing two worlds, simultaneously. On the intellectual side, the square side, he saw now that Quality was a cleavage term. What every intellectual analyst looks for. You take your analytic knife, put the point directly on the term Quality and just tap, not hard, gently, and the whole world splits, cleaves, right in two...hip and square, classic and romantic, technological and humanistic...and the split is clean. There's no mess. No slop. No little items that could be one way or the other. Not just a skilled break but a very lucky break. Sometimes the best analysts, working with the most obvious lines of cleavage, can tap and get nothing but a pile of trash. 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 almost 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.

Phaèdrus wrote, with some beginning awareness that he was involved in a strange kind of intellectual suicide, "Squareness may be succinctly and yet thoroughly defined as an inability to see quality before it's been intellectually defined, that is, before it gets all chopped up into words -- .We have proved that quality, though undefined, exists. Its existence can be seen empirically in the classroom, and can be demonstrated logically by showing that a world without it cannot exist as we know it. What remains to be seen, the thing to be analyzed, is not quality, but those peculiar habits of thought called 'squareness' that sometimes prevent us from seeing it."

Thus did he seek to turn the attack. The subject for analysis, the patient on the table, was no longer Quality, but analysis itself. Quality was healthy and in good shape. Analysis, however, seemed to have something wrong with it that prevented it from seeing the obvious.

I look back and see Chris is way behind. "Come on!" I shout.

He doesn't answer.

"Come on!" I shout again.

Then I see him fall sideways and sit in the grass on the side of the mountain. I leave my pack and go back down to him. The slope is so steep I have to dig my feet in sideways. When I get there he's crying.

"I hurt my ankle," he says, and doesn't look at me.

When an ego-climber has an image of himself to protect he naturally lies to protect this image. But it's disgusting to see and I'm ashamed of myself for letting this happen. Now my own willingness to continue becomes eroded by his tears and his inner sense of defeat passes to me. I sit down, live with this for a while, then, without turning away from it, pick up his backpack and say to him, "I'll carry the packs in relays. I'll take this one up to where mine is and then you stop and wait with it so we don't lose it. Then I'll take mine up farther and then come back for yours. That way you can get plenty of rest. It'll be slower, but we'll get there."

But I've done this too soon. There's still disgust and resentment in my voice which he hears and is ashamed by. He shows anger, but says nothing, for fear he'll have to carry the pack again, just frowns and ignores me while I relay the packs upward. I work off the resentment at having to do this by realizing that it isn't any more work for me, actually, than the other way. It's more work in terms of reaching the top of the mountain, but that's only the nominal goal. In terms of the real goal, putting in good minutes, one after the other, it comes out the same; in fact, better. We climb slowly upward and the resentment leaves.

For the next hour we move slowly upward, I carrying the packs in relays, to where I locate the beginning trickle of a stream. I send Chris down for water in one of the pans, which he gets. When he comes back he says, "Why are we stopping here? Let's keep going."

"This is probably the last stream we'll see for a long time, Chris, and I'm tired."

"Why are you so tired?"

Is he trying to infuriate me? He's succeeding.

"I'm tired, Chris, because I'm carrying the packs. If you're in a hurry take your pack and go on up ahead. I'll catch up with you."

He looks at me with another flick of fear, then sits down. "I don't like this," he says, almost in tears. "I hate this! I'm sorry I came. Why did we come here?" He's crying again, hard.
I reply, "You make me very sorry too. You better have something for lunch."

"I don't want anything. My stomach hurts."

"Suit yourself."

He goes off a distance and picks a stem of grass and puts it in his mouth. Then he buries his face in his hands. I make lunch for myself and have a short rest.

When I wake up again he's still crying. There's nowhere for either of us to go. Nothing to do but face up to the existing situation. But I really don't know what the existing situation is.

"Chris," I say finally.

He doesn't answer.

"Chris," I repeat.

Still no answer. He finally says, belligerently, "What?"

"I was going to say, Chris, that you don't have to prove anything to me. Do you understand that?"

A real flash of terror hits his face. He jerks his head away violently.

I say, "You don't understand what I mean by that, do you?"

He continues to look away and doesn't answer. The wind moans through the pines.

I just don't know. I just don't know what it is. It isn't just YMCA egotism that's making him this upset. Some minor thing reflects badly on him and it's the end of the world. When he tries to do something and doesn't get it just right he blows up or goes into tears.

I settle back in the grass and rest again. Maybe it's not having answers that's defeating both of us. I don't want to go ahead because it doesn't look like any answers ahead. None behind either. Just lateral drift. That's what it is between me and him. Lateral drift, waiting for something.

Later I hear him prowl at the knapsack. I roll over and see him glaring at me. "Where's the cheese?" he says. The tone's still belligerent.

But I'm not going to give in to it. "Help yourself," I say. "I'm not waiting on you."

He digs around and finds some cheese and crackers. I give him my hunting knife to spread the cheese with. "I think what I'm going to do, Chris, is put all the heavy stuff in my pack and the light stuff in yours. That way I won't have to go back and forth with both packs."

He agrees to this and his mood improves. It seems to have solved something for him.

My pack must be about forty or forty-five pounds now, and after we've climbed for a while an equilibrium establishes itself at about one breath for each step.

We come to a rough grade and it changes to two breaths per step. At one bank it goes to four breaths per step. Huge steps, almost vertical, hanging on to roots and branches. I feel stupid because I should have planned my way around this. The aspen staves come in handy now, and Chris takes some interest in the use of his. The packs made you top heavy and the sticks are good insurance against toppling over. You plant one foot, plant the staff, then SWING on it, up, and take three breaths, then plant the next foot, plant the staff and SWING up -- .

I don't know if I've got any more Chautauqua left in me today. My head gets fuzzy about this time in the afternoon -- maybe I can establish just one overview and let it go for today -- .

Way back long ago when we first set out on this strange voyage I talked about how John and Sylvia seemed to be running from some mysterious death force that seemed to them to be embodied in technology, and that there were many others like them. I talked for a while about how some of the people involved in technology seemed to be avoiding it too. An underlying reason for this trouble was that they saw it from a kind of "groovy dimension" that was concerned with the immediate surface of things whereas I was concerned with the underlying form. I called John's style romantic, mine classic. His was, in the argot of the sixties, "hip," mine was "square." Then we started going into this square world to see what made it tick. Data, classifications, hierarchies, cause-and-effect and analysis were discussed, and somewhere along there was some talk about a handful of sand, the world of which we're conscious, taken from the endless landscape of awareness around us. I said a process of discrimination goes to work on this handful of sand and divides it into parts. Classical, square understanding is concerned with the piles of sand and the nature of the grains and the basis for sorting and interrelating them.

Phædrus' refusal to define Quality, in terms of this analogy, was an attempt to break the grip of the classical sandsifting mode of understanding and find a point of common understanding between the classic and romantic worlds. Quality, the cleavage term between hip and square, seemed to be it. Both worlds used the term. Both knew what it was. It was just that the romantic left it
alone and appreciated it for what it was and the classic tried to turn it into a set of intellectual building blocks for other purposes. Now, with the definition blocked, the classic mind was forced to view Quality as the romantic did, undistorted by thought structures.

I'm making a big thing out of all this, these classical-romantic differences, but Phædrus didn't.

He wasn't really interested in any kind of fusion of differences between these two worlds. He was after something else...his ghost. In the pursuit of this ghost he went on to wider meanings of Quality which drew him further and further to his end. I differ from him in that I've no intention of going on to that end. He just passed through this territory and opened it up. I intend to stay and cultivate it and see if I can get something to grow.

I think that the referent of a term that can split a world into hip and square, classic and romantic, technological and humanistic, is an entity that can unite a world already split along these lines into one. A real understanding of Quality doesn't just serve the System, or even beat it or even escape it. A real understanding of Quality captures the System, tames it, and puts it to work for one's own personal use, while leaving one completely free to fulfill his inner destiny.

Now that we're up high on one side of the canyon we can see back and down and across to the other side. It's as steep there as it is here...a dark mat of greenish-black pines going up to a high ridge. We can measure our progress by sighting against it at what seems like a horizontal angle.

That's all the Quality talk for today, I guess, thank goodness. I don't mind the Quality, it's just that all the classical talk about it isn't Quality. Quality is just the focal point around which a lot of intellectual furniture is getting rearranged.

We stop for a break and look down below. Chris's spirits seem to be better now, but I'm afraid it's the ego thing again.

"Look how far we've come," he says.

"We've got a lot farther to go."

Later on Chris shouts to hear his echo, and throws rocks down to see where they fall. He's starting to get almost cocky, so I step up the equilibrium to where I breathe at a good swift rate, about one-and-a-half times our former speed. This sobers him somewhat and we keep on climbing.

By about three in the afternoon my legs start to get rubbery and it's time to stop. I'm not in very good shape. If you go on after that rubbery feeling you start to pull muscles and the next day is agony.

We come to a flat spot, a large knoll protruding from the side of the mountain. I tell Chris this is it for today. He seems satisfied and cheerful; maybe some progress has been made with him after all.

I'm ready for a nap, but clouds have formed in the canyon that appear ready to drop rain. They've filled in the canyon so that we can't see the bottom and can just barely see the ridge on the other side.

I break open the packs and get the tent halves out, Army ponchos, and snap them together. I take a rope and tie it between the two trees, then throw the shelter halves over it. I cut some stakes out of shrubs with the machete, and pound them in, then dig a small trench with the flat end of the machete around the tent to drain away any rainwater. We've just got everything inside when the first rain comes down.

Chris is in high spirits about the rain. We lie on our backs on the sleeping bags and watch the rain come down and hear its popping sound on the tent. The forest has a misty appearance and we both become contemplative and watch the leaves of the shrubs jolt when struck by raindrops and jolt a little ourselves when a clash of thunder comes down but feel happy that we're dry when everything around us is wet.

After a while I reach into my pack for the paperback by Thoreau, find it and have to strain a little to read it to Chris in the grey rainy light. I guess I've explained that we've done this with other books in the past, advanced books that he wouldn't normally understand. What happens is I read a sentence, he comes up with a long series of questions about it and then, when he's satisfied, I read the next sentence.

We do this with Thoreau for a while, but after half an hour I see to my surprise and disappointment that Thoreau isn't coming through. Chris is restless and so am I. The language structure is wrong for the mountain forest we're in. At least that's my feeling. The book seems tame and cloistered, something I'd never have thought of Thoreau, but there it is. He's talking to another situation, another time, just discovering the evils of technology rather than discovering the solution. He isn't talking to us. Reluctantly I put the book away again and we're both silent and meditative. It's just Chris and me and the forest and the rain. No books can guide us anymore.

Pans we've set outside the tent begin to fill up with rainwater, and later, when we have enough, we pour it all together in a pot and add some cubes of chicken bouillon and heat it over a small Sterno stove. Like any food or drink after a hard climb in the mountains, it tastes good.

Chris says, "I like camping with you better than with the Sutherlands."

"The circumstances are different," I say.
When the bouillon is gone I get out a can of pork and beans and empty it into the pot. It takes a long time to heat up, but we're in no hurry.

"It smells good," Chris says.
The rain has stopped and just occasional drops pat down on the tent.

"I think tomorrow'll be sunny," I say.
We pass the pot of pork and beans back and forth, eating from opposite sides.

"Dad, what do you think about all the time? You're always thinking all the time."

"Ohhhhh -- all kinds of things."

"What about?"

"Oh, about the rain, and about troubles that can happen and about things in general."

"What things?"

"Oh, about what it's going to be like for you when you grow up."

He's interested. "What's it going to be like?"

But there's a slight ego gleam in his eyes as he asks this and the answer as a result comes out masked. "I don't know," I say, "it's just what I think about."

"Do you think we'll get to the top of this canyon by tomorrow?"

"Oh yes, we're not far from the top."

"In the morning?"

"I think so."

Later he is asleep, and a damp night wind comes down from the ridge causing a sighing sound from the pines. The silhouettes of the treetops move gently with the wind. They yield and then return, then with a sigh yield and return again, restless from forces that are not part of their nature. The wind causes a flutter of one side of the tent. I get up and peg it down, then walk on the damp spongy grass of the knoll for a while, then crawl back into the tent and wait for sleep.