

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: CERVANTES' *DON QUIXOTE* AND THE  
QUARREL BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND  
POETRY

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Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and the Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry examines the Platonic account of the differences between the philosophic and poetic educations and Cervantes' contribution to the millenary debate that has developed around this account. The dissertation argues that *Don Quixote* is Cervantes' contribution to this debate and attempts to demonstrate to what extent he opposes Plato's perspective and particular political objectives. The argument is grounded on a philosophical investigation of some of the literary techniques used in the writings of earlier philosophers and poets, techniques that form part both of an autonomous language of communication between certain writers and their readers and also part of the education of a specific moral character. And it proposes to show that the most important condition for discerning the genesis and development of philosophy and the desire to philosophize is the moral education provided by its poets and their imaginative works.

CERVANTES' *DON QUIXOTE* AND THE QUARREL BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY  
AND POETRY

By

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## Preface: Cautionary Note to Readers

It should be known that any inquiry in political philosophy is like a planned expedition to new and strange lands, in which we go into the journey equipped with the tools provided by past practical experience, and the hope of success in the unforeseen and a safe return home that rests on perspectives provided by the latest science and, in some cases, by the belief in God's merciful providence. Prudence and hope, however, play only a part at the beginning of the plan. For we willingly embark on an expedition to strange lands precisely so that we may gain the new insights and discoveries that will forever change our perspectives and the way we do things: already able to anticipate in the beginning that were we to repeat the same expedition we would most likely have prepared and equipped ourselves differently, at the very least we also know that whatever the outcome we will return home as different, better persons. And success is measured less in the value of the trinkets we may bring back than in the faithful recollection of the intricacies and complications of the whole journey. Similarly, in political philosophy, because of the way we read, think and put thought into action, we begin our inquiries with a question and a reasoned path to an answer that are warranted by the knowledge and skills we have

acquired. The new questions and different paths that actually arise between the beginning and the outcome of the inquiry are, like the complications in strange lands, not to be avoided, regretted or discarded but carefully noted, collected and treasured for later consideration upon return home. And success is measured less in verifying in the texts we read any of our initial presuppositions, however informed they may have been, than in abandoning our selves and allowing the texts to speak in their stead. Here, in distilled form, is my account of this journey.

To say that the original purpose in what follows was to explain if only in outline the basics of a particular kind of secret or subversive writing seems even in retrospect preposterous. The idea behind this dissertation was – and still is – to present a complete and coherent account of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry that Plato introduced in the *Republic* through critical reflections on Cervantes' intention in *Don Quixote*. But from the path foreseen in the beginning the original purpose was that this account would shed light on the question of the best education, that is, whether and in what way the philosophical education was superior to the poetic education. The dissertation's pages would put forth the detailed arguments in favor and against the respective philosophical and poetic educations, the final pronouncement of the judgment having been left to the reader, and the usefulness of the dissertation would be recognized in the whole exercise of revisiting or returning to the thought of the ancients. While much will still be said about the best education, to answer the question on its own fails to sufficiently show the way in the direction of an understanding of political philosophy that seriously takes into account the extent of its power in terms of the most ambitious of possibilities. For at a practical level

political philosophy is not simply the defense and preservation of the possibility of philosophy in the city, but pretends to be *the* solution to the human political problem. To make clear just how far these two pretensions are and what exactly is “the most ambitious of possibilities” thus becomes an important part of this dissertation.

Much like the *Odyssey* begins with Telemachus at Ithaca, while Odysseus was wasting away with homesickness in the arms of Calypso, because it is necessary to shift the focus from addressing the formulation of the original question to an examination of the intricacies and complications of the investigation, I cannot begin at the beginning but somewhere along the way. Why the vehemence to adopt such a design can be explained in part by reflecting on the difference between this approach and one that follows the straightforward chronology of an elegant proof or an apology, and its relation to the effect of the philosophical education envisioned by Plato. To begin somewhere along the way of an investigation means not only to begin at a point when other events start to take place elsewhere or when things begin to go wrong but also that every statement is colored by the efforts of memory, especially from recalling things read in the remote past. Also, unlike proofs that follow the standard course of hypothesis-experiment-result or that weigh the justice or truth of an opinion, which intend to give directions or appeal to the same places and circumstances, the approach here intends to open up and be a guide to new, future places. In particular, an approach that brings to the fore an awareness of situations in which all of the recollecting and reasoning takes place when things have gone wrong has been chosen because it is useful in relation to a better understanding of the

‘turning-around’ of the soul that Plato writes about in his famous image of the cave – or the image of our education in nature – in the *Republic*.

And yet it should be noted that the approach used here does not attempt in any way to effect the “turn-around” but to describe the change itself. While Plato’s image of the cave is a very powerful presence in our collective imagination, the way to certain knowledge is always different for everyone, and nothing could be further from my intention than to presume that what takes place in these pages will happen again to others, in the same manner.

To the extent that my investigation is more philosophic than scientific, I am not concerned with raising questions about the varied aesthetic elements used in imaginative works, about the aesthetic quality of the works themselves, or even about their place in literary history -- the authority of poets and students of comparative literature and traditional poetics on these matters is a given. If some direction must be given to the reader, it would then be more appropriate to say that this dissertation is an attempt *to question the necessary connection between prudence in speech and political and religious persecution*, and that the goal is to raise questions about (1) the relationship between a political regime’s level of tolerance or freedom of opinion and the character of moral education; (2) the nature of the moral education provided by the study of literary techniques of the past; (3) the relationship between a political regime’s level of tolerance and the communication between writers and readers who live under the same regime or different political regimes; and (4) in what way there is any truth to the notion that in times of perfect tolerance or freedom of opinion it is very difficult or almost impossible for a reader to fully “hear” a writer.

Furthermore, it should be known that I am certainly not the first to propose or take seriously that a political-philosophical study of literary techniques might shed light on an autonomous language of communication between certain writers and their readers and the education of a particular moral character. I initially took an interest in the secret or subversive writing of the ancients thanks to the efforts of Leo Strauss. While I am aware that there are other, newer and alternative perspectives on the subject, his system is the tacit backdrop for this dissertation and he is the principal interlocutor of the work that follows, whether he is explicitly mentioned or not. Above all, this means that even though I am aware that the prevailing scholarly opinion holds that no author is or can be in control of the varied interpretations of his or her writings that may come about in the future – an opinion which necessarily precludes even the effort to speculate about a writer’s original intent – I nevertheless as a matter of principle attempt to arrive at *what I believe to be* the original intention of the authors studied. It does not, however, mean that this dissertation speaks or responds to any of the current interpretations produced by those who studied directly under Strauss. If any connection has to be made it is rather that this dissertation should be taken as an antidote to certain opinions these interpretations carry and spread and which have already had negative repercussions on the moral reputation of the person and legacy of the work of Strauss. Throughout the reading of the dissertation it should be kept in mind that I take on the challenge presented by three of Strauss’ propositions, namely, that (1) a return to the direct study of the thought of the ancients in political matters is worthwhile and relevant to contemporary political science; that (2) there is something good in the esotericism of the ancients; and that



(3) any attempt to express the meaning of “writing between the lines,” “the peculiar technique of writing” of “all writers who hold heterodox views,” in “unmetaphoric language would lead to the discovery of a terra incognita, a field whose dimensions are as yet unexplored and which offers ample scope for highly intriguing and even important investigations.”<sup>1</sup> All efforts have been made to seriously follow his suggestion to set aside all presuppositions – including his – and to directly read and think about the writings of the many authors discussed below. Whenever this was not entirely possible the sources of the opinions used have been carefully noted.

Finally, like so many do at the beginning, I say that everything written in these pages has no other purpose than the protection of all that is good and innocent from the vicissitudes of Fortune, and ask you not to dismiss or judge in an instant the efforts of more than five years of work.

*Bon voyage!*

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1. Strauss, Leo *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1988), page 24.

## Foreword

Car l'histoire de l'art est périssable. Le babillage de l'art est éternel.

Milan Kundera, *Le rideau: essai en sept parties*, 2005.

## Dedication

To

My parents, of course, who gave me books and left me at the gates of the city,

My teacher, who gave me Plato and Aristotle to show me the way home,

Primrose, who prayed on my behalf to Judas Thaddeus, the saint of impossible

causes, so that I could finish this dissertation. It worked!

And to anyone who is or has been oppressed, exploited, unrequited in love or

down in luck.

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## Chapter 1: On the Usefulness of Literature and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*

No one can argue against the notion that in order to reflect on the usefulness of poetry and literature in political inquiries Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a fine choice: just as all the great thinkers of all times have had or have a dialogue with Plato, all great novelists have had or have a dialogue with Cervantes, and at first sight this fine choice would seem to allow for the momentary meeting of two most important dialogues that were once connected by their conflicting but potentially complementary views of the human being and the city. That is, the choice provides an opportunity to a return to the wisdom of the ancients in order to take a serious look at the poetic articulation of the modern problem in its first splendor. To put it differently, to reflect on the usefulness of poetry and literature in political inquiries through *Don Quixote* allows for the possibility to revisit, within the realm of classical political philosophy, Plato's formulation of the question of justice as set forth in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' speeches in Book 2 of the *Republic*; Plato's subsequent articulation of the direction to the correct solution to the question of justice – not necessarily in its entirety from what he says in the *Republic* – and its political implications on the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, and then to leap

forward to attempt to examine the modern articulation of the question of justice through *the* modern model of literature under this ancient light – as if it were possible today to invoke Plato himself so he could make sense of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, and possibly of modernity as well.

This is the presentation of the question of the usefulness of poetry and literature in political inquiries at its most fundamental level. But, even though that in order to appreciate the contributions of poetry and literature to politics a return to Plato can be justified by the manner in which he addressed his defense of justice and the just human being, can this return be justified as to the understanding of modernity, where Plato’s teaching is questioned? One superficial look at *Don Quixote* is enough to reinforce this objection: Don Quixote’s madness, caused by reading books about times that no longer existed, consisted of his ambition to try to restore knight-errantry in order to solve what he believed to be the most important problems of the world – first the attainment of peace, and then the attainment of distributive justice.<sup>1</sup> Can it not be said that to some extent *Don Quixote* and its hero’s failure are the comical equivalent of this proposed return and its possible fate? However, the one big obstacle to overcome is to make the return as smoothly as possible, so to speak, in order to allow for the serious consideration of the different problems and ideas that arise throughout the investigation.

If the purpose of this chapter seems to be limited to a preliminary investigation into the usefulness of novels and the nature of comedy, it tries to at least convey an awareness of the more fundamental questions. Thus, and before simply

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1. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (2000), first part, chapter 1, pages 37-38, and chapter 37, pages 389-390.

revisiting Plato's *Republic* and its complement the *Laws*, the theoretical framework that follows is an attempt to compare two methods of investigation – the methods of Plato and Rousseau – on the nature of poetry and its usefulness in political inquiries, and a brief commentary on Rousseau's Second Preface to the *Julie*, where he discusses the potential usefulness of novels with his publisher, in apparent disagreement with what he stated in his *Letter to D'Alembert*. Furthermore, this investigation also profits from Leo Strauss' reflections on comedy in *Socrates and Aristophanes*, and political philosophy in general. The chapter is also limited by an interpretation of the famous chapters 32-41 of the first part of *Don Quixote*, the events that follow right after Don Quixote and his friends leave the Sierra Morena mountains and reach the inn he had earlier imagined being a castle. The chapters under consideration stand out at first sight because they do not seem to be related to Don Quixote's mission: two separate stories – a novella left behind by a guest at the inn, and an account of the life of one of the guests at the inn (a captive who happened to know Cervantes the author) – and in between these stories a speech made by Don Quixote, with unusual lucidity, on the differences between the life of arms and the life of letters. And yet these chapters give a taste of the charm and understanding contained in the entire book.



## *On the Usefulness of Literature in Political Investigations*

There are two complementary examples of methods of investigation of the use of poetry and literature in political inquiries: the method of Plato and the method of Rousseau. For Plato, the study of poetry is not only useful but also necessary in political considerations because of poetry's claim to and share in knowledge – that is, the extent to which it mirrors the way of life of the city – and the way poetry is practiced – its effect on the soul. For Rousseau, the study of poetry and literature is useful but not necessary in political considerations because the appearance of poetry and the arts in a society is but an indication of the society's corruption, and therefore to study their effect on already corrupted souls is at best misleading. The main difference between the two approaches, to put it in a huge oversimplification that is nevertheless to the point, is in their understanding of nature: whereas for Plato the healthy city or political order should reflect the good and perfect natural order, for Rousseau the healthy political order should correct the shortcomings of the natural order or the state of nature. This difference is of extreme importance not only for the perplexing political implications and questions that arise from it – implications and questions that above all may become part of the obstacle to a return to classical political philosophy, and to Plato in particular, in the search for answers. But also, and concerning the possible merits of the reflections on *Don Quixote*, poetry and literature that follow, this difference is important because comedy plays with the ambiguity of nature's standing with respect to the city or civil society, and is thus useful in shedding light on these political questions, especially in relation to what is

virtue – its most interesting manifestation in poetry and literature.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Republic*, it is in Adeimantus' demands for the definitive defense of justice, that complemented Glaucon's praise of injustice, where the need to investigate poetry arises.<sup>3</sup> Adeimantus agrees with Glaucon that the popular, common opinion seems to praise the appearance of justice, but he is more interested in the opinion of the eminent, and in the opinion of the poets in particular, because these opinions, in their superficial praise of justice, corroborate the common opinion of justice and the just human being.<sup>4</sup> According to Adeimantus' outline of this eminent opinion, justice is never praised for its benefits to the human soul, but for its external benefits – for what is evident to the gods and human beings.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, the poets praise justice but question whether it is humanly possible to practice, and on the other hand their speeches describe gods that allot fortune and misfortune indiscriminately, and that if given the appropriate offerings and sacrifices, can be persuaded to forgive injustices.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, while admitting that the poor and weak are better, the poets dishonor and offend them, and praise publicly and privately the wealthy and powerful.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the effect these speeches have on the young with potentially good natures is that they try to avoid the unnecessary difficulties of seeking a virtue that seems too likely to be destined only for rare divine natures, and

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2. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980), pages 31-32, 139-140.

3. Plato, *Republic*, 362D-367E.

4. Ibid. 363A.

5. Ibid. 363A-363E.

6. Ibid. 363E-365A.

7. Ibid. 365A.

meanwhile deal with other human beings with persuasive arguments, learned from teachers of persuasion, or force, and with the gods – in the case they exist or care about human affairs – with offerings and sacrifices.<sup>8</sup> What Glaucon had only hinted at, Adeimantus made evident: an adequate account of the entire human being's perfection – not only about the traits that manifest through the body's action, but also about the soul's virtues – had yet to be made. It was left for Socrates to investigate the extent to which this claim was fair.

The realization that the poets did offer contradictory opinions about the gods and the human virtues, and finally, and more importantly, that they could not imitate the virtues of the just soul, led Socrates to purge the poets – and many musicians and the craftsmen of their instruments – from his beautiful city, clearing the way, so to speak, so he could present the account demanded by Glaucon and Adeimantus.<sup>9</sup> From this springs forth the most useful consequence of a serious consideration of poetry and literature in political inquiries: the reflections on poetry open the way for self-knowledge and philosophy. That is, the possibility of philosophy is one of poetry's effects – perhaps its most important effect – on the soul, a consequence even Rousseau could not deny to the Mountaineers of Neufchatel<sup>10</sup> discussed below. Perhaps this is one way – the simplest way – to explain what Strauss meant when he said that it was “impossible to say whether the Platonic-Xenophontic Socrates owes

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8. Ibid. 365A-367A.

9. Ibid. 377E-378A; 392C-398B; 399C-399E; 401B-401D.

10. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert on the Theater* (1996), pages 62-63.

his being as much to poetry as does the Aristophanean Socrates.”<sup>11</sup> Of the more complicated way to explain this statement by Strauss, what can be said at this point, and not without some circumspection, is that this impossibility to *declare* on the definitive utility of the literary or poetic form chosen by a philosopher to express his or her opinions is of extreme importance because it elucidates the nature of philosophical truths and their ambiguous standing with respect to political truths, and the realization that the possibility exists that, in confronting a world hostile to philosophy, the philosopher may use any writing resources available to him or her in order to conceal, and thus be able to preserve and transmit philosophy to other philosophers.<sup>12</sup>

However, in the *Republic*, the account of the soul reveals itself first in the city in the paradox of the philosopher-kings, and then more fully – and as if further away from the city – in the education and the perfect virtues of the philosophic life.<sup>13</sup>

The dialogue’s happy ending is intensified when the poets and their powerful charm are asked to return to the beautiful city provided they make an apology worthy of the soul, and Socrates tells of the greatest rewards for virtue.<sup>14</sup> But although everyone probably agrees that this ending seems even more optimistic and triumphant than one written by Aristophanes, the question still remained as to what Socrates meant by asking the poets for an apology worthy of the soul: that is, what more does

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11. *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980), page 314.

12. Leo Strauss, “The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*,” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1988), page 121.

13. Plato, *Republic*, 449A-592B.

14. *Ibid.* 607B-621D.

the example of non-imitative narrative prose he gave in Book 3<sup>15</sup> of the beginning of the *Iliad* need in order to be worthy of the new and complete account of the soul? Or if this example is not the model, then what is? After Plato no other philosopher besides Rousseau thought more about the answers to these questions and the possibility of their application.

Rousseau presents his method on the study of literature and novels most clearly in two writings, the *Letter to D'Alembert*, on the effects of the theater, and the Second Preface to the *Julie*, on the usefulness of novels. Without getting into detailed theoretical considerations on Rousseau's understanding of nature here, the fact that he did not find the study of the effects of literature necessary in political investigations is interesting because it complicates the understanding of virtue. This is certainly not the first instance in which the ancient understanding of virtue was questioned, but precisely because Rousseau often invokes ancient examples of virtue, it is from his reflections that the breadth of the modern problem with virtue is most clearly visible.<sup>16</sup> Insofar as he finds an obstacle to a coherent understanding of human virtue in the diversity of peoples – in all the different men modified by “religions, governments, laws, customs, prejudices, and climates” – Rousseau seems to want to hint that the original of the imitation of virtue created by the poet or author is also a useless illusion.<sup>17</sup> That is, in the theater the appearance of reason is substituted for

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15. Plato, *Republic*, 393D-394B.

16. Cf. Leo Strauss, “On the Intention of Rousseau” (1947), pages 476-477. And in Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (1965), pages 261-262, 290-292.

17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert* (1996), pages 17-18, 27.

wisdom.<sup>18</sup> It is true that this critique of the theater is similar to the critique of poetry in Book 10 of the *Republic*, as Allan Bloom states in his introduction to the translation cited here, but Rousseau goes even further: although from the conclusion of the *Republic* it is still possible to say that the drama is “good for the good, and bad for the vicious,” Rousseau – only upon consideration of what changes would occur in the occupations of potential spectators who were to introduce the theater into their society – concludes that “when the people is corrupted, the theater is good for it, and bad for it when it is itself good.”<sup>19</sup>

The example used to illustrate this principle in the *Letter to D’Alembert* is worth mentioning with more detail: the Mountaineers were simple, decent families that lived spread out on a mountain near Neufchatel – they did not even make up a small village – that worked in and around their houses, cultivated and enjoyed the produce of their lands, and were thus self-sufficient.<sup>20</sup> In their spare time they built not only their furniture and other household implements, but also all sorts of interesting mechanical instruments, from watches to cameras obscura.<sup>21</sup> They read, painted, played musical instruments, and sang, and they enjoyed all these amusements with each of their particular families.<sup>22</sup> And they had no government structure – they did not pay poll taxes nor duties, nor had commissioners nor forced labor.<sup>23</sup>

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18. Ibid. page 45.

19. Ibid. pages xxi, 20, 58, and 65.

20. Ibid. pages 60-62.

21. Ibid. page 61.

22. Ibid. page 62.

Rousseau speculated that had a theater been set-up at the summit of the mountain – strange sight, indeed – these Mountaineers would have eventually worked less in order to devote time to go to the theater and think about its lessons, spent more money on theater fees and dresses, decreased their trade because they worked less, established taxes to maintain the theater, and introduced luxury in order to satisfy the fashion competition among the women.<sup>24</sup> Thus, without going into the details of the different types of theater and their effects on morals, all these terrible consequences would seem to have indicated the inevitable ruin of the Mountaineers.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the wits in Paris, the Mountaineers were simple, decent and hard working: because they were unaccustomed to society, they were not busybodies – they did not know what genius is, nor about honors nor insults.<sup>26</sup> The virtue of the Mountaineers was in their uncorrupted, natural goodness. In contrast, the hopeless viciousness of the Parisians was in their irreversible corruption. And the distraction of the theater was good in the sense that it prevented them from scheming and carrying out more crimes against humanity, that is, “for preventing bad morals from degenerating into brigandage.”<sup>27</sup> And thus for Rousseau the question of the good man was no longer only about the gentleman but about the simple soul as well: he found that virtue in this world was less like the struggle to find a natural mean between the excesses and deficiencies of the longings of the best souls, than a defense of the natural goodness of less virtuous

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23. Ibid. page 59.

24. Ibid. page 63.

25. Ibid. page 64.

26. Ibid. page 60.

27. Ibid. pages 64-65.

souls against the siege of the vicious, so to speak. Nevertheless, and in spite of this hopelessness, Rousseau wrote on the one hand the *Confessions*, the *Dialogues*, and the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* – his autobiographical accounts as philosopher – and on the other hand the *Julie*, the *Emile*, and the *Solitaries* – his imitative accounts of simple souls.<sup>28</sup>

To sum up the argument as it has developed thus far: in the *Republic* the examination of what poetry said about justice led to the philosophical account of the just soul, and the realization that if the beautiful city was to have charming poetry, the philosopher-kings would have to supervise the creation of – or maybe even personally create – the new poetry that would be both pleasant and useful. But, it can be speculated, from the consideration of the qualities of the beautiful citizens, the new opinions about the gods, and above all the arrangement of the parts of the just soul, and the non-imitative narrative style that was left from Socrates' purge of the poets, musicians and craftsmen, that a new charming but useful poetry, like the rule of the philosopher-kings, was, for comparable reasons, highly unlikely. That is, while the full comprehension of the importance of the respect for the belief in the harmony between the just and the pleasant requires, according to the Athenian Stranger of

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28. In passing, this distinction seems to necessarily place Rousseau's *Dialogues* as the appropriate reply to Plato's *Republic*, and not the *Emile*. Whether or not the connection between the *Republic* and the *Emile* is correct depends not only on the soundness of making the education of Emile Rousseau's equivalent to Plato's education of the philosophical guardians, or even the education of Glaucon and Adeimantus, but also on the understanding of what is the definitive teaching of the *Republic*. That Rousseau admits that he addressed the *Emile* to philosophers does not make a difference in light of the contrast between Emile and Rousseau as philosopher-tutor: it suffices to point out the superficial observation that Emile is not educated to resemble or follow the path of the tutor. It can be said that this makes Rousseau's imitative accounts of simple souls his reply to Plato's *Laws*. The issue then becomes whether the education of the philosopher in the *Republic* is meant to be taken more seriously than the dialogue's teaching in the preservation and transmission of philosophy. And this proposed investigation could not follow any other approach than the one developed by Alfarabi in the *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*.



Plato's *Laws*, an education that "would be more thorough than that of the majority, or indeed of the poets themselves,"<sup>29</sup> the education of philosophers in poetic charm may prove to be just as difficult. But why is it important to reflect on the poetic training of the philosopher? While the *Republic* is perhaps the model example of this new poetry – the "truest tragedy," according to the Athenian Stranger – Rousseau's new understanding of the soul and its virtue allowed him to take this idea of Plato's new poetry beyond him, with more success, and apply it in a novel way for the benefit of modern times.

Perfect justice cannot be done here to the numerous observations made by Rousseau on the effects of the theater on the souls of the spectators in his *Letter to D'Alembert*, but the closest approximation to it can be stated as follows: in writing the *Julie*, Rousseau violated every recommendation he made in that letter for the benefit of simple souls. Aware of the apparent contradiction of publishing a work that, according to his own principles, could not be of any use to the readers he intended to address, he elaborated on, in the Second Preface to the *Julie*, the single case in which recourse to the inherent usefulness of a novel could be made: when the pleasure of the work derived solely from its truth. But, frankly speaking, because what Rousseau wanted to teach through the example of the *Julie* is already too unfamiliar for the mechanics of our contemporary morals to handle, in order to fully understand Rousseau's preface it is necessary to go back again to a more extreme example from Plato for a moment, to where the Athenian Stranger explained this notion most clearly when he investigated – as Alfarabi put it – whether there was a

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29. Plato, *Laws*, 667B-671A (Book 2). The quote is from 670E, and the translation is by R.G. Bury (1994), volume I, page 151.

situation in which the deprivation of intellect and knowledge proved to be beneficial for the lawmaker, and defended the benefits of the essential participation of a Dionysian chorus – the drunken, singing chorus composed of the oldest citizens of the city – in the wine-drinking festivals of Magnesia.<sup>30</sup> The investigation established that the best way to judge the pleasure of the wine-drinking festivals was not simply through the convulsive state its charm released from the drunken participating souls, nor the benefit for those who let go of the awe and shame that excessively restrained them when sober, but through the intelligent management of a group of sober onlookers, who could discern the weaknesses and strengths of the citizens, and tailor their education laws accordingly. That is, from the drunken spectacle the sober onlookers would be able to establish laws not too strict or not too lax, but that would truly exercise the souls toward their proper virtues. To sum it up in the spirit of Rousseau’s maxim, this is how a drunken spectacle is wise.<sup>31</sup> It is in this sense that the *Julie* as a whole is a true and salutary portrait or tableau: *Julie* is the sober representation of virtue by a sober onlooker surrounded by a drunken world. Can other equivalents to Plato’s example be found in the preface to the *Julie*? Who is the equivalent to the sober onlooker? Rousseau, but because of the ambiguity of the origin of the letters, perhaps also Monsieur de Wolmar. Who is the drunken Dionysian? Certainly Milord Edward Bomston.<sup>32</sup> Who is the equivalent to the

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30. Plato, *Laws*, 667B-667E. The reference is to what makes something charming. The whole discussion of the Dionysian chorus is in 665B-674C. And in Alfarabi, *Summary of Plato’s Laws*, translated by Muhsin Mahdi, unpublished manuscript, Second Discourse, page 16 of Gabrieli’s text.

31. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps* (1997). Cf. second preface, page 16. Rousseau’s maxim is “this is how the world’s madness is wisdom.”

beneficiary of the virtuous laws? St. Preux. What is the equivalent to the fiery liquid that releases the convulsive movements of the soul? Love.<sup>33</sup> Here it can also be said that Rousseau's critique of the theatrical representations of love in the *Letter to D'Alembert* is similar to the Athenian Stranger's critique of the laws' silence on the habits of human beings regarding pleasures and pains, and that in representing love he not only used the natural weakness of human beings toward this sentiment to his advantage – to please the readers easily – but also meant to instruct about the true nature of love and how to regulate its passions. What is the equivalent to the weaknesses observed in the moments of transports? The ignorance of the illusory character of love reflected in the belief that the attraction between two persons is always founded on mutual esteem, and that the person loved is worthy of that love.<sup>34</sup> The style of the letters reflect that what is expressed comes from simple souls in love, and not the maxims of an author that wants to shine and display wit, and that what is experienced is not a philosophical transport, but the divine raptures of love.<sup>35</sup> How is this weakness represented in the novel, and exercised for the benefit of virtue? The weaknesses are represented through the struggle to make the best out of past errors and calamities – the fantasy that “no one is perfect,” as opposed to a wishful representation of the loves between two perfect human beings – and, because love is the domain of women, through the detailed representation of the beautiful soul of

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32. Ibid. second preface, page 13.

33. Cf. *Letter to D'Alembert* (1996), page 56.

34. Ibid. page 56.

35. *Julie or the New Heloïse* (1997), second preface, pages 10-11.

Julie<sup>36</sup> – as opposed to a representation of a woman of unblemished virtue.<sup>37</sup>

Rousseau hoped that these letters would serve as one more good reason for simple souls to be content with their lot in life, and not to despise their natural goodness and simple surroundings, that perhaps in the end could make them mad.<sup>38</sup> That it was not certain that the letters were fiction would also add to their power of persuasion.<sup>39</sup> Are we ready for *Don Quixote*? Almost – only one question and its answer remain: if the entire world’s madness is wisdom – and not simply the benefit of the reflections on the virtues of a hypothetical wine-drinking festival – what is the status of happiness for the best soul? To put the answer in Rousseau’s own words in relation to Milord Bomston’s happiness, “Blind men that we are, we all spend [life] chasing our illusions! Ah! Shall we never learn that of all men’s follies, only the just man’s makes him happy?”<sup>40</sup> Or is this question unimportant? How would the Athenian Stranger respond to this? And the political question that sneaks by? Human happiness? Is it enough to take care of the simple souls, and to spread them throughout the territory of their nations?<sup>41</sup> What about the corrupted souls living in the big cities? Could the Athenian Stranger help here, too? ...The questions come up, and the stories faithfully send back their answers only to get back more questions that

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36. Cf. below what is hinted about Cervantes’ discussion of the status of women in the interpretation of the story of the Captive in *Don Quixote*. Julie should be compared with Cervantes’ representation of the virtuous woman.

37. *Julie or the New Heloïse* (1997), second preface, pages 8, 9, 17-19.

38. Ibid. second preface, pages 15-16.

39. Cf. *Letter to D’Alembert* (1996), pages 25-26, 34.

40. *Julie or the New Heloïse* (1997), in Appendix I, “The Loves of Milord Edward Bomston,” page 620.

41. Ibid. second preface, pages 14-15.

never seem to end. ...Finally, a beautiful question: could anyone doubt the usefulness of literature in political inquiries?

*An Interpretation of Chapters 32-41 of The First Part of Cervantes' Don Quixote*

For the purposes of this chapter, the whole of the theoretical framework developed, and above all the preceding discussion on the wine-drinking festival in Plato's *Laws* and Rousseau's *Julie*, are extremely important because they will be part of the unfailing standard by which the definitive usefulness of *Don Quixote*, and in particular of the chapters under consideration, can be determined. In passing, it is difficult to find a limit to the wisdom contained in the Athenian Stranger's discussion of the benefits of introducing a wine-drinking institution in the laws, especially in the manner in which Alfarabi summarized it, which makes any thoughts on the usefulness of literature and Rousseau's approach very special instances of this discussion. The preceding reference to the wise drunken spectacle would also most certainly help, as it did with *Julie*, in the preliminary understanding of the whole of *Don Quixote*. Nevertheless, if there is one important lesson for writers to learn from Cervantes it is that the more stories, the better. Thus, what follows is a discussion on some points on the nature of comedy, and for this purpose it will be helpful to take a look at Strauss' reflections on comedy in *Socrates and Aristophanes*. In particular, the discussion will focus on what he said about Aristophanes' *The Peace*,<sup>42</sup> not only

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42. *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980), pages 136-159.

because there he comments on most of the important elements of comedy necessary for the careful investigation of any comedic work, but also because there are enough similarities between the *Peace* and *Don Quixote* to make the play helpful in a serious consideration of what Cervantes had to say about religion. This is not easy to prove briefly, and it is not the purpose of this paper to present a satisfactory answer to the question of religion as Cervantes articulated it in *Don Quixote*. It suffices to point out that it is almost impossible to imagine that the discussions between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza – between an understanding completely affected by tales of knight-errantry and one deprived of any learning – could ever lead into explicit and coherent statements about God. But what is possible to say is that any readers who were to explore this play by Aristophanes in relation to *Don Quixote* would not be disappointed. That is, the more comprehensive Aristophanean comedy might, to begin with, help make explicit what Cervantes did not or chose not to make explicit about God. For example, it might help raise the question of whether Don Quixote, had he been Greek, would have thought and acted like Trygaios did before the will of the gods – a question that could not be raised as effectively through the investigation of Rousseau's *Julie* because the nature of Don Quixote's madness is closer to Trygaios' madness than the madness of love.

There are several interesting similarities and contrasts between the *Peace* and *Don Quixote*, and first in order is the nature of Trygaios' madness and his plan. *The Peace* is the story of Trygaios, a vinedresser that decides to go to heaven to ask Zeus why he harms the Greeks – why he keeps them at war with each other. When he gets to heaven he finds that the gods are gone because Zeus had decided that he would not

continue to watch over the Greeks in perpetual war. He had buried the goddess of peace, Eirene, under stones, and left Hermes and the god of war, Polemos, watching the pit where the goddess was buried in order to make sure that no one would disinter her. Trygaios manages to evade Polemos, and persuade Hermes – with bribes and threats – to help him and the chorus of farmers disinter the white Eirene. Because she would not talk directly to them, Eirene explains her absence and asks questions to Trygaios and the farmers through Hermes – she whispered to the god, and he in turn spoke to the humans. In the end Trygaios took Eirene back to earth and succeeded in bringing temporary peace and prosperity to the Greeks and was praised and admired by all. Strauss pointed out that Aristophanes made a distinction between Trygaios’ madness and the ordinary madness of the Athenians: the hero of the play talked to and railed at Zeus to find out why he harmed the Greeks and whether he did this wittingly.<sup>43</sup> And Trygaios’ madness was progressive: first he talked to himself about talking to Zeus, then he actually made a plan and went up to heaven on a huge dung beetle in order to talk directly to Zeus.<sup>44</sup> Trygaios’ idea for the plan came from Aesop’s fable that told of how the beetle, because of its hatred of the eagle, was the only winged being that reached the gods without their permission.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Strauss also pointed out that the *Peace* was the “triumph of madness,” and he explained that this was perhaps related to Aristophanes’ approval of Trygaios’ attitude toward the gods, and that in this play, the hero’s aim was not private but

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43. Ibid. page 137.

44. Ibid. page 137.

45. Ibid. page 138.

public peace.<sup>46</sup> That is, Strauss hinted at the connection between the characteristics and aims of the hero and the outcome of his enterprise. Thus, in the case of the *Peace*, Trygaios was perhaps successful because he threatened and disobeyed the gods for the sake of the Greeks.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, for Cervantes, Don Quixote's madness was also unique – he wanted to make himself a knight-errant in order to win fame and set right the injustices to the weak – and progressive – first he talked to himself and spent hours slashing the walls of the library in his house with his sword, until he actually decided to leave his village to search for real adventures.<sup>48</sup> And Don Quixote's idea came from reading knight-errant stories.<sup>49</sup> Don Quixote encountered many adventures, and met many persons, and they in turn related to him their own adventures. After what seem to be endless failures, Don Quixote is forced to return to his village when he loses in single combat to a friend that posed as a knight. He finally recovers his sanity, and shortly after dies of melancholy. Like Aristophanes, Cervantes seemed to make the heroes he approved of succeed, and those he disapproved of fail. This is especially evident in the *Exemplary Novels*, which is filled with the appropriate exacting examples, not to mention the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent*, and the story of the captive discussed below. Thus, Don Quixote's failure – the failure of madness – could be ultimately related to Cervantes' disapproval of his hero's contempt for and war-like spirit toward his fellow human beings. But while Don Quixote's plan was presented as a true story

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46. Ibid. pages 137, 144-146, 158.

47. Ibid. pages 144-147.

48. *Don Quixote* (2000), first part, chapter 1, page 38, chapter 2, page 42, chapter 5, page 64.

49. *Don Quixote* (2000), first part, chapter 1, pages 37-38.



researched and recorded by several historians – in the Second Part Don Quixote is even told of the publication of the first part of *Don Quixote*, and the false sequel by Avellaneda – Trygaios’ plan was impossible to the point of absurdity. Like the connection found between approval and success, and disapproval and failure, the same could be speculated with respect to the differences between the possibility of the plans and the specific virtues of the heroes: that Trygaios’ plan was impossible allowed Aristophanes to be more explicit about the gods, and thus about Trygaios’ courage before them; and the reality of Don Quixote’s adventures allowed Cervantes to show Don Quixote’s lack of knowledge of the world he lived in. Why is this connection important to discuss? Besides the complementary relationship between the gods and the human things that may help understand what Cervantes had to say about religion mentioned above, this connection was important for Strauss because he wanted to demonstrate with certainty that Aristophanes disapproved of Socrates – in his apology, Socrates cites the *Clouds* as one of the first false reports about him<sup>50</sup> – because he wanted to seriously understand *why* he disapproved of him. That is, was the portrait of Socrates in the *Clouds* accurate or the product of a convenient theatrical trick? Was Aristophanes a careful thinker? Strauss’ investigation of all of Aristophanes’ extant plays made him realize that Socrates’ portrait was accurate in the sense that a thoughtful poet created it, but not because it agreed with the portraits made by Plato and Xenophon. Similarly, in the case of Cervantes, if it is important to try to take him seriously for the investigation on the usefulness of literature, then it is important to know for certain whether he was a careful thinker, or, as the Athenian

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50. *Apology of Socrates*, 18A-18E.

Stranger would say, he is worth discussing if there is truth in his charm.

Strauss' investigation of all of Aristophanes' extant plays also allowed him to elaborate on the nature and principles of comedy, and therefore finally set right the loss of the last part of Aristotle's *Poetics*. In Trygaios' flight to heaven on a huge dung beetle, Strauss found the perfect expression of the all-comprehensive character of comedy.<sup>51</sup> Comedy relieves the human beings' longing to return to nature – the natural inclination to unburden our selves from the constraints of convention – through its reflection of what is lowest and highest by nature.<sup>52</sup> For example, in the representation of a simple country-dweller flying to heaven on a disgusting animal, and when finally in heaven, attracting the attention of the god Hermes because of the beetle's stench, Aristophanes is appealing to what is lowest by nature, and in this case, to what is lowest by convention as well: the repulsiveness and offensiveness of the scene is what causes the laughter. And in the representation of Trygaios actually making it to heaven, and showing no fear of the gods Hermes and Polemos, Aristophanes is appealing to what is highest by nature: the success of the plan literally shows that the gods are not as powerful and awe-inspiring as they are presumed to be.<sup>53</sup> Thus, comedy manages to “debunk” what is simply by convention, and what is high by convention, by distinguishing between what is highest by nature and what is highest by convention.<sup>54</sup> Hopefully this distinction between nature and convention will become clearer through the *Don Quixote* chapters.

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51. *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980), page 140.

52. *Ibid.* pages 139-140.

53. *Ibid.* pages 142-143, 158.

54. *Ibid.* page 140.

The last element that is important to consider briefly before the interpretation, and which in a way is a result of the all-comprehensive distinction between the natural and the conventional, is the comical equivalent.<sup>55</sup> The comical equivalent of a thing can be said to be its lower counterpart; that is, “the laughable is the defective of a certain kind.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it necessarily follows that the natural is the defective counterpart to the conventional, and vice-versa, depending on the way a thing is viewed. Thus, for example, in the *Peace*, the disinterring of Eirene can be said to be the comical equivalent of the conclusion of the peace negotiations of Nikias – of what was actually happening in Athens: the theological explanation is the comical equivalent of the natural explanation.<sup>57</sup> However, what is most important to understand is that the comical equivalent is simply the result of a boastful claim: it is the difference between the claim made about something and the extent to which that something lives up to the claim.<sup>58</sup> Thus, for example, Strauss suggests that Zeus may be the greatest example of boasting – given that, according to the Aristophanean Socrates, Zeus may not even exist.<sup>59</sup> This must be further explained: because it can be speculated that Zeus is the greatest example of boasting, Strauss took this to mean that, for the Aristophanean Socrates, the comedy *par excellence* is the comedy of the

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55. Ibid. pages 142-143.

56. Ibid. page 143.

57. Ibid. page 143.

58. Ibid. page 143.

59. Ibid. page 143.

gods.<sup>60</sup> That is, to take this a bit further, the comedy of the gods is perhaps the comedy *par excellence* for philosophers; the comedy of the highest by convention is the best comedy for what is highest by nature – for the best human beings. Then what about when the problem is not the possibility of what is highest by convention, but the possibility of what is highest by nature? That is, what is the comedy *par excellence* for human beings as human beings?<sup>61</sup> There is no doubt that the biggest claim made by a human being as human being was made by Socrates in the *Republic*:

“Unless...the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place, while the many natures now making their way to either apart from the other are by necessity excluded, there is no rest from ills for the cities, dear Glaucon, nor I think for human kind, nor will the regime we have now described in speech ever come forth from nature, insofar as possible, and see the light of the sun (473D-473E).”<sup>62</sup>

And thus, it can perhaps be said that the comedy *par excellence* for human beings as human beings is the comedy of the philosophers. But as Strauss explained, there is no comical equivalent of the charm of the philosophers, or as Rousseau put it, there is no comical equivalent of the virtuous human being: the comical equivalent of perfect

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60. Ibid. page 143.

61. Ibid. With respect to the comical equivalent of Socrates: in the chapter on the *Clouds*, Cf. pages 50-53. And with respect to Aristophanes’ characterization of Socrates: in the conclusions, Cf. pages 311-314.

62. Translation by Allan Bloom in *The Republic of Plato* (1968), pages 153-154.

virtue is despicable.<sup>63</sup> The next best thing is the comical equivalent of the effects of the philosophical teaching – like the effects of Socrates’ education on Strepsiades and his son Pheidippides in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* – or, as Cervantes seems to suggest in *Don Quixote*, the effects of the rule of philosophy. But, is there not a quarrel between philosophy and poetry? Does poetry not claim to be superior to philosophy in the knowledge of human things? Does philosophy not claim that a human being is better off not reading poetry at all? Then, to settle this quarrel once and for all, what is better than putting side by side the comical equivalents of these two boastful claims? Would it not then be possible to fairly judge the claims of philosophy up against the extent to which it actually lives up to these claims? In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes answers this question with a resounding YES: let the comical equivalent of the greatest example of poetic boasting – a mad, old, weak and melancholy country gentleman whose understanding is completely affected by the worst kind of literature – be put side by side with the comical equivalent of the greatest example of philosophical boasting – a stupid, ignorant and self-satisfied country peasant whose understanding is completely affected by nothing more than the effects of the political system he lives in – and let the comparison show whose claim is truly most exaggerated. And thus the comedy *par excellence* for human beings as human beings is the comedy of the quarrel of philosophy and poetry. Could it be concluded that the uncertainty as to what constitutes Cervantes’ definitive opinion on the question of belief in *Don Quixote* was due to his caution, or the result of his primary intention in writing the novel? It certainly has been proven that the comparison with the *Peace* –

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63. *Socrates and Aristophanes* (1980), pages 50-53, and *Letter to D’Alembert* (1996), pages 37-40.

and most certainly the *Clouds* – can help, in the beginning, with the answer to this question. And finally, what does this mean in relation to the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry? Along these lines, what does Rousseau’s *Julie* represent? Can *Julie* be considered both Rousseau’s acknowledgment of the validity of Cervantes’ claim on behalf of poetry, and his correction of Cervantes’ teaching – his apology – on behalf of philosophy? Perhaps, nay most positively, the only philosopher that can determine these questions with certainty is the one who started the problem in the first place: Plato. However, for the present purposes of this dissertation, the key to Cervantes, and thus to *Don Quixote* in particular, is in the serious and thorough comprehension of all the possibilities of application of the comical equivalent. Herein lies the simple beauty of his portraits and meaningful artistry, and this is perhaps the most important reason the comparison with the *Peace* was brought up here in the first place.

#### *Cervantes’ First Prologue to Don Quixote and Some Guidelines to the Interpretation*

Now, let Alfarabi’s summation of the question of what constituted the benefits of the discussion of the wine-drinking festivals for the lawmaker be restated as follows: is there a situation in which the deprivation of intellect and knowledge is *not* beneficial for the comedic novelist that is representing the effects of the rule of philosophy? And what we have is perhaps the fairest summation of *Don Quixote*. But ultimately this question is best expressed through a brief consideration of the

three important admonitions made to the reader in the prologue to the first part. First, Cervantes presents *Don Quixote* as the story of a story of nature – the imitation of the imitation of nature. He presents it as the work of a poet. But *Don Quixote* is not the natural offspring but the stepson of Cervantes: the inspiration for the image of nature represented comes less from the tranquil natural physical world that surrounds us than the uncomfortable and sad nature of a prison; his inspiration comes from an image of nature that is the creation of a human being that is not a poet. Second, he presents it without philosophical ornaments: without any clever inventions, learned style, concepts, erudition, doctrine, footnotes or A to Z references to philosophers. For he proves to the reader *ad oculus*, by presenting his dialogue with a friend helping him write the prologue – instead of actually following his advice – that there is nothing easier than to confuse the appearance of reason with wisdom. Furthermore – his friend reminds him – the purpose of the novel demands that careful attention must be paid to this potential source of confusion if it is

“...[To] move the sad to laughter, the smiling to increase his laughter, the simple to remain untroubled, the discreet to admire its invention, the serious to not despise it, and the prudent to not praise it.”<sup>64</sup>

From this dialogue two more things follow. First, the dialogue with his friend is an example of the way in which he will go about writing the different stories in *Don*

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64. The passage in the Spanish original is: “Procurad también que leyendo vuestra historia el melancólico se mueva a risa, el risueño la acreciente, el simple no se enfade, el discreto se admire de la invención, el grave no la desprecie, ni el prudente deje de alabarla.” (Prologue to the first part).

*Quixote*; that is, he will not appear to be a philosopher in the bad sense – he will not display wit – nor appear to be so in the good sense either – he will not use the esotericism of the philosophers. Does this mean he will use a different sort of esotericism? Perhaps. And second, he is not addressing the reader as a philosopher because he is addressing all human beings, that is, because he is pleasing and instructing all human beings – including philosophers. Finally, he asks the reader to thank him, not for the presentation of Don Quixote but for Sancho Panza, in whom all of the “squirely virtues” are to be found. That is, he asks to be thanked not for having imagined the effects of the man-made prison he exactingly presents on a country gentleman that relieved his melancholy – even if foolishly – by reading fantastic tales of knight-errantry, but its effects on an ignorant peasant that did not even need or have access to bad books for relief.

Although a detailed division of *Don Quixote* cannot be presented in this chapter,<sup>65</sup> the first part of the novel can be roughly divided into three parts: the first part includes all of Don Quixote’s adventures from the moment he leaves his home until he is forced to run away into the Sierra Morena mountains (Chapters 1 through 22); the second part involves the events that happened in the Sierra Morena (Chapters 23 through 30); and the last part involves all of the events that happened during Don Quixote’s return back home (Chapters 31 through 52). The chapters under consideration here are in the third part of this division. Chapter 31 is not interpreted here, but it is important in the sense that it signals the beginning of the end: Don Quixote meets again with Andrés, the peasant boy he tried to help back in his first

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65. The necessary comparison between Cervantes’ division of the first part of *Don Quixote* and the division proposed here cannot be considered here either.



adventure in Chapter 4, only to find out that he did not help him at all, but actually made his situation worse – the boy explains what really happened, and begs Don Quixote to ignore him if they ever meet again, curses all knights errant, embarrassing Don Quixote in front of all his new friends, and finally runs off.

The events that occur in chapters 32-41 can be divided into six parts as follows:

- (1) The Book Burning Revisited (Chapter 32)
- (2) The Novel of the Curious Impertinent (Chapters 33-35)
- (3) The Wine Giant Incident (Chapter 35)
- (4) The Civil Order Restored (Chapters 36-37)
- (5) The Curious Discourse by Don Quixote on Arms and Letters (Chapters 37-38)
- (6) The Story of the Captive (Chapters 39-41)

Because Cervantes is addressing all human beings there are necessarily three possible interpretations to the book as a whole, and therefore to the stories individually. The possible interpretations are: the natural, the poetic and the philosophical. However, in the interpretation of the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* it will become evident that the correct number of interpretations is six, because to each possible interpretation there are corresponding true and false interpretations. In addition, he uses true and false examples to simultaneously sharpen and cloud the meaning of his teachings. One word of caution: the distinction made here between true and false does not mean that the false interpretations are not important; it simply

means that the false interpretations do not serve the purposes of this chapter. However, Cervantes also placed more obstacles to the correct interpretations: sometimes he split the stories between two or more chapters; sometimes he split the stories throughout the book – as is the case with Andrés’ story – sometimes he presented two similar stories with minor differences – as is the case with the first and second book burnings – and sometimes he did not conclude the stories at all. In other words, it seems Cervantes is giving philosophers a taste of their own medicine, so to speak. Hopefully, this chapter will present the three true interpretations of each story. But Cervantes did give some help, and, again, this will become evident in the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent*. Because chapters 32-41 limit this interpretation, the main focus will be on the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* (Part 2 of the division), the discourse on arms and letters (Part 5), and the story of the captive (Part 6). That is, the three possible interpretations will be given to these three stories. Nevertheless, serious efforts have been made to briefly and coherently explain whatever is needed from earlier chapters in order to make sense of the events and interpretations.

### *The Novel of the Curious Impertinent*

In chapter 32, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and their new friends settled down at the inn he had earlier imagined being a castle, after having returned from the Sierra Morena Mountains, back to civilization. After eating, Don Quixote went to bed, and the Priest, the Barber, Cardenio and Dorotea sat together with the innkeeper,

his wife and daughter, and their servant Maritornes, and talked about Don Quixote's strange madness. This led into a conversation about knight-errantry books. The innkeeper revealed his penchant for them, and showed the guests his own collection. While they studied the books, the Priest reminded the Barber of the book burning in Don Quixote's library – back in chapter 6 – and together they reviewed the innkeeper's books in the same spirit of the earlier book burning. These two book burnings will not be compared here, but what is necessary to point out is that back in chapter 7, after the Priest and Barber burned Don Quixote's books, they sealed the door of the library so he would never find out what really happened. When at the time Don Quixote asked his niece what happened, she told him that while he was away, a sorcerer had come into the house and entered the library, had it disappear, and before leaving said that he had it disappeared because he was a secret enemy of its owner. She also told him that the sorcerer's name was the wise Muñatón. Don Quixote corrected her and said the name was probably Frestón. And she replied, "I don't know...if his name was Frestón or Fritón; I only know that his name ended with *-tón*." Could it have been Platón, the Spanish for Plato? In any case, the point is that the two book burnings should not only be compared with each other, but also serve as a signal from Cervantes to the reader of what is to come next.

But to return to chapter 32, the Priest found the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* among the innkeeper's books, and they all decided he should read it aloud to them. Just as the title of the novel immediately attracted the Priest – it practically demands to be read with impertinent curiosity – it should also stand out for other reasons: Don Quixote is not present during the reading, and it is the only novel

within the novel – it is the only declared fiction among the many stories within *Don Quixote*. The novel is a story about two noble and virtuous Florentine men, Anselmo and Lothario, who were perfect friends – they were known throughout Florence as *The Two Friends*. One day Anselmo decided to marry Camila, a beautiful, noble and virtuous lady. After some time Anselmo asked Lothario for a strange favor: he wanted Lothario to secretly seduce Camila so he could test her virtue, because even though he knew she was virtuous to the point of perfection, he could not get out of his mind that virtue was not virtue until properly tested. Lothario refused, and gave Anselmo six reasons for his refusal to go through with a plan that could only take away their dignity and thus their lives. Lothario first argued that given the nature of Camila’s virtue – retired, honest, disinterested and prudent – and its worth – for there was nothing above perfection and the proper estimation it was due – Anselmo should not go through with a test that could only make things worse, and for which there was no other form of compensation – no favors from God, no benefits of fortune, and no honors – equal to the value of the thing itself. Second, Lothario argued that even if things worked out for the best – that is, that Camila did prove to resist the temptation and thus maintain her virtue – it would be no consolation that the plan was secret because his conscience would reproach him for having doubted his wife’s virtue. Third, Lothario explained that his plan was similar to the notion of pounding a huge and beautiful diamond – highly valued by everyone without exception – with a hammer to test if it was really a diamond: the pounding might chip it, or worse, the pounding might break it into smaller diamonds which may each still have some value, but could never add up to the value of the big diamond. He gave Anselmo two

examples on the nature of Camila's virtue: he compared it to an ermine, the little white animal that was trapped by hunters by leading it to a puddle of mud – the animal would rather stop than touch the mud and smear its snow white fur – and to a sparkling crystal mirror, which the faintest breath could fog. Fourth, Lothario recited a poem that compared the virtue of a woman to glass, which was easy to break, and that once shattered cannot be put together again. Fifth, Lothario argued that Anselmo would trigger a chain of dishonors that would shame them not only among themselves but also among their neighbors. Finally, Lothario explained that the man cheated by his wife was also guilty because the institution of marriage was founded on the divine bond resulting from God having made Eve from one of Adam's ribs, and which entailed that the spouses act and think as one soul and one body.

Anselmo would not listen and finally convinced Lothario to seduce Camila. Lothario at first pretended to seduce Camila, but in the end fell in love with Camila's beauty. After a long struggle Lothario decided to betray his friend and became Camila's lover, convinced that Anselmo's madness and confidence were worse than his own faithlessness – even in the eyes of others and God. Years went by, and one day Anselmo discovered the affair, but Camila had already run away to a convent and Lothario had disappeared. Anselmo died immediately of a broken heart. Days later, Camila received this news, and also that Lothario had died in battle. She died of melancholy after receiving the news of Lothario's death.

As soon as he finished reading the novel, the Priest commented:

“This novel seems good to me, said the Priest. But I cannot persuade myself that this is true, and if it's feigned, the author feigned badly,

because it cannot be imagined that there is such a foolish husband who would want to have such a costly experience as Anselmo. If this case were presented as between a gallant and a lady, it would fly, but between a husband and wife, it has something of the impossible. And in what is due to the way it was told, it doesn't displease me."<sup>66</sup>

The *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* is the most ridiculous application of the principle that true virtue is tested virtue. This is also true in the case, suggested by the Priest, in which a woman's virtue is tested between lovers, for as Lothario demonstrated in his speech to Anselmo, a woman's virtue is either absolutely perfect or it is not virtue – a woman cannot be moderate with respect to sex. Was Cervantes questioning the principle of tested virtue or the proper virtue of women? The answer to this question only becomes evident upon further reflection on the possibility suggested by the Priest, that is, when the question is posed in the following manner: is there another – possible – case, besides the virtue of women, in which an impertinent curiosity could lead to a similar tragic end? If Camila were the Truth (la Verdad), Anselmo the Philosopher (el Filósofo), and Lothario the Poet (el Poeta), the moral of the story would also seem to apply. But is the truth like glass or like a huge diamond? Most probably like a diamond. Is the truth about honoring and dishonoring others or about following the individual conscience? The conscience. And, unlike God's gifts, the truth is valued for its sake alone, and not for its benefits.

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66. This is at the very end of chapter 35. The translation is mine and it is literal.

The moral of the novel seems to be that the truth should not be tested – not pounded on – because the death of the philosopher, the poet, and finally the truth itself would follow soon after. But even this needs further inspection: if the truth is like the three first reasons Lothario gave Anselmo – let these reasons be called ‘diamond reasons’ – then Cervantes seems to be questioning the effect of the secret testing of the truth, the secret plan between the philosopher and the poet, on the conscience. That is, Cervantes, a *poet*, is not only fully aware of the secret discourses between philosophers, but also morally questions them. To put it differently, Cervantes proves Plato wrong – for a poet in truth is not simply inspired by nature, and who only manages to instruct and please by chance, but has true knowledge of human things and the talent to please and teach this knowledge. And Cervantes also corrects Plato – the secret discourses cannot be a means to prove the virtue of the philosopher, because this cannot be accomplished without more harm than good to the truth. Indeed, that the truth dies after the poet’s – not the philosopher’s – death perhaps indicates that there is a difference between the manner in which philosophy and poetry handle the truth: while the philosopher surrounds and imprisons it with mud, the poet simply fogs its brilliance. And it can be said that this therefore would explain why Cervantes suggests that it is preferable to liken the truth less to a huge diamond than to shattered glass: there is always the possibility to gather the broken pieces and put them back together again, and, more importantly, the huge diamond is left intact. But even though the philosopher and the poet cannot be “*The Two Friends*” when it comes to the truth, they can be friends in everything else. It can be said that *Don Quixote* is Cervantes’ most wonderful attempt to demonstrate the

mechanics of this friendship.

*The Curious Discourse by Don Quixote on Arms and Letters*

The *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* is the key to the whole of *Don Quixote*, and the preceding interpretation is but an overview of the story's possibilities. However, what is important to keep in mind is that the characters represent ideas, and, in its development and different actions, the plot of the story represents the different thoughts on the particular ideas introduced. It is also important to note that because the ideas of reason, freedom, justice, wisdom, truth and peace, for example, are feminine in the Spanish, Cervantes had the opportunity to articulate his thoughts on women. And what the stories in *Don Quixote* say about women must be taken as seriously as Cervantes took his writing, especially in relation to the ideas developed in each story. Special attention to this point is advised especially for when the time comes to reflect on the meaning of the beautiful Zoraida, the Muslim woman that saved the Captive. But ultimately Cervantes' thoughts on women will be important because there are sufficient indications and similarities between Rousseau's *Julie* and *Don Quixote* to suggest that Rousseau understood *Don Quixote* in the same manner as the interpretations and explanations proposed here; that Rousseau, while he acknowledged the validity of Cervantes' critique of philosophy, nevertheless in the end departed from Cervantes in this respect; and thus the comparison between Cervantes and Rousseau should shed light on their contribution to the discussion of



the question of freedom as the end of a just society that is humanly possible, and which is connected to these thoughts on women.

However, to come back to the discussion of the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent*, what is left to be said is in relation to Don Quixote's interruption of the reading of the novel, which occurs right before its tragic outcome. Don Quixote, while still asleep and in bed, shouted curses and flung his sword all around him, because he believed he had encountered and slayed Pandafilando de la Fosca Vista, the giant that had taken over Queen Micomicona's kingdom, part of the adventure his friends had invented so he would leave the Sierra Morena mountains and eventually go back home. What he had actually done was pierce a bunch of wineskins hanging above his bed, and what he believed to be the giant's blood was the spilled wine. This slaying is important because it is one more necessary obstacle to overcome for the successful continuation of Cervantes' project begun back in nature: the events of the Sierra Morena mountains represent Cervantes' account of nature, and the artifice to return Don Quixote back home represents the comedic poet's account of the return of reason to civil society, which will culminate, in chapters 36–37, with the vindication of reason and the proper restoration of justice to the virtuous soul, and finally – in the story of the Captive – allow for the truly salutary account, which a poet in truth is capable of giving, of the liberation of the virtuous soul from the man-made prison of philosophy. That is, if Don Quixote did not slay the giant Pandafilando de la Fosca Vista, it could be speculated that he did slay another, perhaps more dangerous, giant: the Wine giant, or what is the same, the consequences and implications of Plato's whole discussion of the benefits of lawful wine-drinking

festivals. Indeed, it is not only interesting to note the reaction of the innkeeper and his wife – and their young daughter’s silence and smile – to Don Quixote’s massacre of their wineskins, but also, above all, Sancho Panza’s uncertainty as to what really happened, and which, incidentally, brings back memories of Sancho Panza’s insatiable appetite – to the point of unconsciousness – for wine and food. From this, for example, it could be speculated that, were a sober onlooker to observe Sancho Panza after one of his drinking bouts – he usually collapsed and fell peacefully asleep – he or she would have little to learn or say about virtue and virtuous habits. That is, Cervantes seems to suggest that just as the philosopher may err with respect to the testing of the truth, he or she may err with respect to the virtues and their proper moderation. Incidentally, this observation certainly gives a deeper meaning to Rousseau’s two reversed maxims<sup>67</sup> discussed in the Second Prologue to *Julie* and his intention in publishing this novel: he seems to reply to Cervantes with a salutary application of Plato’s experiment, and at the same time question, in his censure of the letters – he cautioned that they were not to be read by young virtuous women – the soundness of the poet’s substitution of love for wine.

The other obstacle to overcome before Cervantes’ presentation of the salutary poetic portrait developed in the story of the Captive, is the question, raised by Socrates’ comparison between his and Achilles’ courage, in his defense to the Athenians, of whether Achilles’ rage against Agamemnon was just.<sup>68</sup> And from the

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67. The maxims are: “the world’s madness is wisdom,” instead of “the world’s wisdom is madness,” and with respect to writing stories about “ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances,” Rousseau stated that the story of *Julie* is about “extraordinary people in ordinary circumstances.”

68. Because of Cervantes’ dialogue with Plato, all of the references here correspond to Plato’s version

discussion in the *Curious Discourse by Don Quixote on Arms and Letters*, Cervantes seems to have considered – in addition to the other claim in his defense that poets are simply inspired madmen that do not have true knowledge of things (22A-22C) – Socrates’ comparison as yet another unforgivable affront to Homer and all poets in truth. After the wine giant was killed, the civil order restored, and the Captive and Zoraida made their first appearance, the innkeeper prepared dinner and all the guests sat down to eat. Don Quixote, moved by the earlier events, and seeing everybody sitting beside him, gave the curious speech that began as a praise of knight-errantry, but soon turned into a comparison between the life of arms and the life of letters. Like the six-reason division introduced by Lothario in the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent*, Don Quixote’s speech also consists of six parts. First, Don Quixote argued that the reason it was believed that the life of letters was superior to the life of arms, was that in relation to the notion that the labors of the spirit exceeded those of the body, it was believed that the life of arms was only practiced through the labors of the body. And he showed that in the understanding needed to calculate the intent of the enemy, the strategies, difficulties and prevention of damages, for example, there was only the spirit at work. Second, having shown that like the life of letters, the life of arms required spirit, Don Quixote proceeded to investigate whose spirit – whether of the man of letters or of the warrior – worked hardest, through the discussion of their respective ends. Don Quixote distinguished three ends: the end of divine letters – to lead souls to heaven – the end of human letters – the attainment of distributive justice and to give to each his or her own, and to understand and preserve the good laws – and the end of arms, or of war – the attainment of peace. He quickly dropped

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of Socrates’s apology.

the end of divine letters – for it was an “end without an end” in sight – and said he could only speak of human letters; and with respect to war’s end he made three references to the life and teaching of Christ that exhorted to the attainment of peace as if it were the highest good; and thus showed that peace seemed to be the highest aim humans beings could aspire to. Third, since the end of war seemed more worthy than the aim of letters, Don Quixote proceeded to investigate whose body worked hardest, through the discussion of their respective physical efforts, and with a similar purpose to the discussion of ends, in the extreme of hardships and poverty. He first noted that while it was true that the student of letters in poverty did suffer – in hunger, cold and nakedness – he nevertheless did manage to eat, warm up and dress with the scraps of the rich, and after much effort still finish his studies and even get a chance to govern and manage the world in comfort – the price justly deserved for his virtue.

Continuing in chapter 38, Don Quixote next discussed the life of the active warrior in poverty, and found that the warrior’s prize was quite miserable when compared to the considerable dangers to his life and conscience. Indeed, it seemed that at every step of his career the warrior was less concerned with his extreme poverty than with his survival, and Don Quixote noted that very few warriors were actually fortunate enough to survive in the end and have the opportunity to be honored. Fourth, Don Quixote said that to those who argued that it was easier to compensate students than soldiers because there were fewer of them, he would reply, in spite of the “labyrinth” of arguments he knew he was getting into, that everything he discussed about prizes should be reversed with respect to students, because in the end students would always find something to entertain themselves with, and they did

not, in principle, need another prize – that is, the student’s prize seems to be less in the recognition of his merits than in his own work. And unlike the student, the warrior that managed to survive could only be rewarded with a prize from his lord – that is, the warrior can only be properly rewarded with a prize that symbolizes the recognition of his achievements. Fifth, to the argument that war has its own laws and is subject to them, and that these laws fall under letters and the student of letters, Don Quixote replied that the laws could not be sustained without arms, because arms defended republics, preserved kingdoms, safeguarded cities, secured roads, freed the seas of pirates, and without them all of these things would be subjected to the severity and confusion that came with war. Finally, Don Quixote argued that what cost more should be esteemed more. To prove this he compared examples of the trials and hardships of achieving eminence in letters with those of becoming a good soldier, and in each showed that the good soldier surpassed the eminent man of letters not only with respect to hardships, but also in that he always risked his life. After Don Quixote finished his speech, Cervantes noted that everybody present was moved by the realization that Don Quixote had a good understanding in everything except when it came to knight-errantry, and felt pity for him.

If the guidelines given in the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* are used to interpret this speech on arms and letters, Cervantes – in the mouth of a reputed madman, for this is what, according to Socrates, a poet is – seems to have put forth the following opinion: Socrates’ ridicule of Achilles was unfair because even though the labors of the spirit surpass those of the body, and the attainment of justice and the understanding and preservation of the laws are the highest aims human beings should

aspire to, Socrates could not claim in his particular case – perhaps the most perfect case – that he had chosen not to rule or participate in politics because of the danger to his life, but rather because – as he also admitted to the Athenians – his way of life was not unpleasant.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, he did not give up his way of life when his life was finally in real danger, not because he believed he was defending the city, but because he would not go against his conscience, which told him that in philosophizing he was doing the greatest good for the city, and that in dying he was defending justice.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, when Homer said Achilles was a “useless weight on the good land,”<sup>71</sup> he meant to show that, without the possible recourse to ease the pangs of the conscience, the only just compensation for a warrior – even one as perfect as Achilles – was the prize, the honor, the respect that was due for his courage. To take this a bit further, Cervantes seems to suggest that there is a difference between intellectual courage and political courage that is important to keep in mind, especially with respect to the philosopher: while the end of political courage is to uphold, preserve, safeguard and protect republics, the end of intellectual courage is to uphold moral truths. And just as Achilles’ rage proved to have unimaginably terrible consequences for both Greeks and Trojans, the equivalent of this rage in the philosopher – let it be called expediency – could prove to bring forth terrible consequences for a world that does not understand the importance of upholding a moral truth like the honor due to a soldier, or simply the honor due to political courage. And it is thus not only that the

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69. Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 33B-33C.

70. Ibid. 29C-30D.

71. *Iliad*, XVIII.104. Translation by Richmond Lattimore in *The Iliad of Homer* (1967), page 378.

testing of the truth is a danger to the truth itself, or that the caution with which a philosopher expresses him or herself is due to intellectual magnanimity – that is, the understanding that all human beings are to be instructed in the truth, according to their different capacities – but that part of the end of philosophy is the courage to uphold, preserve, safeguard and protect moral truths. This must be taken still a bit further: it could be said that in having uttered his offensive comparison with Achilles, Socrates showed, most clearly, that even the most perfect philosopher that ever lived could not be, in the end, erotic in the most perfect sense. This could perhaps then explain why it was up to the Athenian Stranger – and not Socrates – to set down, on behalf of Plato, the most erotic philosophical teaching yet to be uttered by a human being.

### *The Story of the Captive*

Just as Plato – a philosopher in truth – presented the account of the entire human being's perfection demanded by Glaucon and Adeimantus only after he expelled the poets from Socrates' beautiful city, Cervantes – a poet in truth – presented, in the story of the Captive, the truly salutary portrait of the virtuous soul after he expelled Plato, the philosopher Cervantes seemed to consider ultimately responsible for the effects of the rule of philosophy. Incidentally, if it is possible to assume for a moment that the first part of *Don Quixote* is Cervantes' reply to Plato's *Republic*, and the second part is his reply to the *Laws*, then it is interesting to note that while Plato managed to expel the poets in the first third of the *Republic*, Cervantes

only managed to expel the philosophers in the last third of *Don Quixote* – almost at the end of the first part – as if trying to suggest that the harm of the philosophical teaching was far more difficult to overcome than the harm of the poetic teaching. However, like the first part of *Don Quixote*, the story of the Captive is divided into three parts – chapters 39, 40 and 41. And its beginning is almost identical to the beginning of *Don Quixote*.<sup>72</sup> It could be said that the main difference between the story of *Don Quixote* and the story of the Captive is due to Cervantes' recent purge of the philosophers: one story is the product of the worst sort of literature, and the other of the best sort. Could the rule of philosophy be responsible for bad poetry? In any case, what is important is that the stories should be compared with each other down to the smallest details.

Chapter 39 – the first part of the story of the Captive – is the story of how the Captive became a soldier and the events that led up to his imprisonment, after the fall of La Goleta and its fort, which had been set up by don Juan of Austria to defend Tunis. First, the circumstances through which the Captive became a soldier should be compared to the circumstances through which *Don Quixote* became a knight-errant. But for now it suffices to say that the fundamental difference between them is that

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72. Note the Spanish original of the first sentences of chapter 1 and chapter 39:

“En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor. Una olla de algo más vaca que carnero, salpicón las más noches, duelos y quebrantos los sábados, lentejas los viernes, algún palomino de añadidura los domingos, consumían las tres partes de su hacienda” (Chapter 1).

“En un lugar de las montañas de León tuvo principio mi linaje, con el que fue más agradecida y liberal la naturaleza que la fortuna, aunque en la estrechez de aquellos pueblos todavía alcanzaba mi padre fama de rico, y verdaderamente lo hubiera sido así se hubiera dado maña en conservar su hacienda como se la daba en gastarla. Y la condición que tenía de ser liberal y gastador le procedió de haber sido soldado los años de su juventud: que es escuela la soldadesca donde el mezquino se hace franco, y el franco, pródigo; y si algunos soldados se hayan miserables, son como monstruos que se ven raras veces” (Chapter 39).



while fortune had been more liberal to Don Quixote, nature had been more liberal to the Captive. Next, the fall of La Goleta and its fort (el fuerte) are interesting in that they symbolize the fall of glory and valor for Spain, and from what the Captive said about them, it seems the fall was due to the misguided efforts – and money wasted – to preserve the memory of the undefeated Carlos V, instead of making a serious effort to defend the actual place and fort that was needed. The Captive then mentioned two poems by a soldier poet, who was recognized to be the brother of don Fernando – an important character in Cervantes’ restoration of the civil order, and present at the inn – and after he realized the soldier poet had made it back to Spain safely, the Captive thanked God, and said that there was nothing on earth that could equal the contentment of attaining freedom lost.

In the first part of chapter 40, the Captive described the conditions he lived in while he was imprisoned. His first master – a renegade, that is a Christian who had renounced Christianity and taken the Muslim faith – had been kind to his captives, but his second master – a former captive set free and given captives as inheritance by his first master – was terribly cruel with them. The only good thing that happened to the Captive was that he was moved from Constantinople to a prison in Algiers, and was thus closer to Spain and had more chances to escape. In Algiers there were two sorts of prisons, one for captives that were gentlemen and could potentially be ransomed – the “Moorish” prison – and one for captives that had no money, whose liberty was almost impossible, and thus were destined to forced labor in public works and the like for the Turks and Moors – these prisoners were called “captives of the council.” Although the Captive had no fortune, he was put in the Moorish prison

because he was a captain. From the cruelty and what seemed the natural inclination to kill all humanity of Azán Agá – the Captive’s second master – only one captive seemed to have escaped: Cervantes himself, whose life’s story the Captive said was worth being told, were it not that he was then talking about himself.

In the second part of chapter 40, the Captive began the story of his liberation. One day, when the prison was almost empty – all of the captives except four including the Captive had been forced to labor – a rod with a small bundle attached to one end appeared from a small window of a house that was right above the prison’s terrace, and which moved up and down. One of the captives tried to reach the bundle, but the rod moved up and then sideways as if saying ‘no’. The other two captives tried, and the same thing happened, until the Captive tried, and then the rod and bundle were released and upon falling on the ground opened and revealed ten Moorish coins. When they looked up they saw a very white hand opening and closing the window. The captives thanked who they believed to be either a captive Christian or renegade woman with ‘zalemas’, from the Arabic ‘salam,’ the greeting or courtesy that means ‘peace’. The window opened and the hands showed a cross made of rods. Fifteen days went by without a sign from the small window, and they knew nothing about the house except that it belonged to Agi Morato, a very rich and noble Moor. But one day when the prison was alone again with the same captives, the rod and a bigger bundle appeared. Again they went through the same testing of the rod, and again the bundle was released to the Captive, and this time the bundle revealed forty gold coins and a letter written in Arabic, signed with a big cross at the end. The Captive decided to ask a renegade from Murcia who had become his friend,

and proved he could be trusted in spite of his actions to translate the letter. The renegade translated the letter and told them that wherever the name Lela Marién appeared in the translation they should interpret it as Our Lady the Virgin Mary. In the letter the woman of the white hands – Zoraida – said that as a child she had been taught Christian prayers in Arabic by a woman slave who said many things about Lela Marién; that although now dead, the Christian captive woman appeared to her twice, and told her to go to a Christian land to see Lela Marién, who loved her very much; that she did not know how to get to this land, but that she had chosen him, because he seemed a gentleman, to take her there with the fortune she had, and if he so desired – for she was beautiful, young and rich – marry her there, or if not, still take her there and Lela Marién would most likely help her find a husband; that he should not trust any Moors because they were all traitors, and were their plans to be revealed to her father, her father would throw her into a pit and cover her with stones; and finally that she would wait for his reply. They were all happy, and the renegade, swearing upon a crucifix he had concealed under his clothes, that in spite of his past sins he promised to be loyal and risk his life in order to help them attain their freedom. Everyone agreed to trust the renegade, and quickly wrote a reply to the lady that said that they agreed but that she should pray to Lela Marién and ask her for an idea for a plan; that they had a Christian captive that could translate her Arabic responses; and that the Captive would marry her once they set foot on Christian soil. The Captive took the reply to the terrace, and the rod appeared and he attached the letter to it. After a brief moment, the window reopened and showed a cross with the white flag of peace, and a bundle that dropped and opened to reveal all sorts of gold

and silver coins – over fifty of them. Later that evening, the renegade returned to the prison to tell them he had confirmed the lady’s story in the letter. Four days later, Zoraida replied in a letter that she had not heard from Lela Marién but that she had a plan in which she would give them a great amount of money so that they could rescue themselves; have one of them buy a ship in Christian land, and return afterwards to rescue the rest; and finally rescue her at night from her father’s garden – in his summer house next to the sea. The renegade suggested a slightly different plan – he volunteered to buy the ship, but he would buy it in Algiers – and none of the captives contradicted him so he would not get upset and ruin the plan. The Captive replied to Zoraida that the plan was as good as if Lela Marién had come up with it, and that they all agreed to proceed. Days later, Zoraida dropped 2000 gold coins and a paper that said that they should meet the first ‘jumá’ or Friday, and that she would give them as much money as they needed before she left for the garden. The money was used to buy the ship and pay the ransom for the captives.

In chapter 41, the Captive finished telling the story of his liberation. The renegade had found and bought a ship, recruited Moorish sailors to conceal his true intention, and even tested the ship between Algiers and another port close by. During his sailing he tried to get close to Zoraida’s garden to become familiar with the place, and perhaps even meet and talk to her, without luck. Once they realized they were ready to act, the Captive visited Zoraida’s garden to try to talk to her and give her the news. In the garden, the Captive met first with her father, and spoke to him in *lingua franca*. Zoraida then came to them, and as if Cervantes had not already given the reader enough symbols that pointed to Aristophanes’ *Peace*, had the Captive

comment, in his first impression of Zoraida, that she was so beautiful – she was covered with white pearls from head to toe – she seemed a deity from the sky that had come to earth for his pleasure and remedy. He then spoke to her through signs, and the help of the father’s translation, and managed to tell her the news in code. They finally left him alone, and he explored the garden and became familiar with the exterior of the summerhouse. The big day finally arrived, with the renegade always guiding the way. They first took over the ship’s Moorish crew, and then sailed to Zoraida’s garden. She immediately came out, dressed with all of her precious jewels, and everybody – down to the last unsuspecting sailor – kissed her hands as if somehow recognizing that she was the lady of their freedom. The renegade said he wanted to take the father and his treasures, but Zoraida said that the only things of value they could take she had already on her, except a small chest of coins she returned inside the house to get. As she came back outside, the father woke up and on seeing them, shouted for help. The renegade went into the house with some assistants and brought back Zoraida’s father tied up and muzzled. Two hours later, everybody on board and the ship already sailing, Zoraida asked the Captive to let her father and the Moors go, but the renegade said they had to wait for the winds to change. They did, however, remove the father’s gag, which gave him the opportunity to address them for the first time. He told them he doubted they would be generous enough to set him free, even if they had realized that it was in their interest to do so, but that he nevertheless offered them all of his fortune if they let him and his daughter go. For this Zoraida looked at him and hugged him tenderly. The father noticed her dress and asked her why she was dressed in her most precious gown and her most

precious jewels. The renegade replied for her that she was truly a Christian, the cause of their liberty, and that she had chosen to escape with them and was in this as content as one who had come out of the fog into the light, from death to life, and from pain to glory. Zoraida confirmed this, but added that she had not planned to hurt him, but do herself good. When the father asked her what good she meant, she replied that he should ask Lela Marién, who knew how to explain it best. Having heard this, the father suddenly jumped into the sea, and would have drowned had the sailors not saved him. When the ship reached La Cava Rumía – which means the Bad Christian Woman – they dropped off Zoraida’s father and the other Moors. As they were sailing away they heard her father first shout curses – he said she was getting rid of him so she could be openly dishonest, that she was blind to think she should run off with their natural enemies, and damned the day he conceived her and the gifts he gave her – then beg – he asked her to come back and that he forgave her. Zoraida finally shouted back that he should pray to Lela Marién, the cause of her conversion, for consolation. After some time, in the evening, they encountered a ship with French pirates, and when they did not identify themselves, the French ship shot the captives’ ship twice and sent a skiff with sailors to pick up the survivors. Before anyone noticed, the renegade threw Zoraida’s treasure chest into the sea and joined the rest. On board the French ship, the captain had Zoraida remove all her jewels, but otherwise respected her, and decided to put them all in the skiff with some food and water. They finally reached Spain. One of the captives was recognized, and they were taken to a nearby village, where the people admired Zoraida’s beauty. The Captive, Zoraida and the renegade went to the church to thank God, and in the church

the renegade explained the images of Lela Marién to Zoraida, and she understood the explanations naturally, with good understanding. Then the renegade left for the Inquisition in order to present his formal return to the Christian faith, and the Captive and Zoraida continued in their own journey.

The opinion set forth by the natural interpretation – that is, if the story is to be taken as a truly salutary portrait for the virtuous, simple souls – should first be discussed. While the potentially virtuous man lives in one of the man-made prisons resulting from the effects of the rule of philosophy – there is almost no possibility for improvement or escape for the souls of the men subjected to forced labor – the potentially virtuous woman, perhaps because she is not formally educated in philosophy, lives above the prison, and only seems to be constrained by the prison created by her parents – or perhaps just the father’s prison – which Cervantes seems to indicate to be first, the prison of religion, and second – and more difficult to escape from – the prison of luxury and comfort. That is, Zoraida, too, lived in two prisons, so to speak, but of the two, the one more difficult to escape from was not the education in religion – which Zoraida did not receive perfectly, but would have been given to her by her mother had she been present – but the life of luxury and comfort provided by the father. Indeed, when Zoraida is compared to Marcela, the wise shepherdess that broke Grisóstomo’s heart, back in chapters 11-14, it is interesting to wonder whether Zoraida would have bothered lowering her gaze into the Moorish prison had she had, like Marcela – her father died and she inherited all his fortune – control of her estate and destiny. Thus, in principle, because women are not subject to the laws in the same manner as men are, they have an advantage over men: the

potentially virtuous woman is practically free. It seems the status of women is, in principle, similar to the status of philosophers. However, this could also mean, generally speaking, that for Cervantes, given the way things are, the less education in philosophy, the better. Once the virtuous woman decides to be free she has two options: she can, like many of the heroines in Cervantes' other writings, go to a convent – be free alone – or she can, like Zoraida, choose a partner worthy of her love, and go and live together far away from society.<sup>73</sup> In this option, the Virgin Mary is the symbol of the necessary caution of the liberated woman – Zoraida never addressed a man, not even the Captive, as if she was acting alone – for a woman can never be openly free. Like the honor due to the soldier, Zoraida's actions seem to suggest that a woman's cautious discretion is one of those moral truths by which the very foundation of society stands or falls. But Cervantes' message to women is quite clear: the father and the Moorish sailors are left behind with the symbol of the Bad Christian Woman (La Cava Rumía).

Next to be discussed is the opinion set forth by the poetic interpretation of the text, which reveals itself as a very free interpretation of Aristophanes' *Peace* – that is, it seems that times have changed. Zoraida is Eirene, the Peace. The Captive is the potentially virtuous soul, but he is no Trygaios: he has a special connection to Zoraida, and he is her husband, he is worthy of her love. From this it follows that Don Quixote is a defective Trygaios in the sense that he did not recognize that times had changed. Zoraida's father is God, but unlike Zeus, he had not buried the Peace;

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73. From the examples given in *Don Quixote* it is worth mentioning Camila in the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent*, who ends up in a convent, and also Marcela, the wise shepherdess mentioned above, who, because of her independence in wealth, preferred to live on her own, and spent most of her time idle, and conversing freely with other shepherds (First part, chapters 11-14).



there was still time to take her before God buried her under stones. And the renegade is the poet, and he is like Hermes, but he is not Hermes: he is no longer divine, but a human being. Because of these differences with Aristophanes' *Peace*, the story, too, is different: Peace chooses the gentleman, and sends him – and only him – a sign and a message, that are interpreted by the poet in a way that guides the gentleman to take Peace from external political conflicts – in this case, the wars with the Muslims – back to Spain to bring about the domestic peace needed to preserve Cervantes' recent poetic restoration of the civil order. This means that unlike Trygaios, the Captive does not speak the language of nature. From this it can be speculated that there is a break between nature and human beings that the poet needs to restore.

Finally, the philosophical interpretation needs to be discussed briefly. Like Cervantes' modification of Aristophanes' *Peace*, this interpretation should be taken as Cervantes' correction of Plato's image of the cave. That is, it should be taken as a correction in the sense that the idea of the cave is no longer true: the cave might have once existed, but now it no longer exists. First, the cave – what Plato understood to be the natural condition of human beings – Cervantes understood to be man-made: Plato's cave has turned into a man-made prison within another man-made prison, and one of the prisons is inescapable. Second, the idea of the Good – the father (el bien) – and the phantom of the now dead idea of the Noble – the Christian captive woman who only lived through an image – engendered Freedom (la libertad). Freedom, not Wisdom, is the imperfect offspring of the Good that comes to be after the death of the Noble. Then Cervantes seems to be asking, "Is it fair to ask the virtuous soul to return when a prison is all that is left?" And he seems to answer 'No', and this 'No'

has two parts – one part for the poet in truth, and another for the philosopher in truth. Because of the crucial role of the renegade, he seems to say to the poet in truth, “No, you will continue to be the reputed madman or traitor Plato and the philosophers have made you; in the interest of all human beings, you will leave behind the idea of the Good – you will not appropriate it; throw away its treasures before they get into the hands of other scoundrels – for today it is the Moor, but tomorrow it will be the French pirate; and instruct the virtuous to escape the prison for good, never to return, for in the end the virtuous will know your true worth.” And because there is no equivalent to the philosopher in the story of the Captive, Cervantes seems to say to the philosopher in truth, “No, you take the freedom that is left, and you go far away, and you stay away, silent, for without the intellectual courage – the moral virtue – you need in order to temper your impertinent curiosity, you are far too dangerous for the little that is left of the beauty of this world.”

Let there be no conclusion, and the interpretation stand on its own, not because the conclusion would raise the question of whether this dissertation should have been written at all, but, frankly speaking, because it might raise the question of whether this dissertation should have been written differently. However, what can be briefly hinted at is that Rousseau, who understood Cervantes well, did not remain silent, but replied to Cervantes through his imitative accounts of simple souls. It is not a coincidence that *Julie* was written as a series of letters – the renegade that interpreted the letters between Zoraida and the Captive was the poet in disguise. Nor is it a coincidence that the critique of books in the *Emile* centered on a critique of histories – *Don Quixote* is a history – nor that Emile immediately falls in love and

marries Sophie – he is educated to recognize and marry wisdom, not freedom. And from this it becomes necessary to reflect on the meaning of the *Solitaires* – two letters addressed to Rousseau the tutor, that refute the teaching of *Emile*.

## Chapter 2: Common Sense Reading and the Peculiar Writing of Plato and Aristotle

“If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything.”

Mark Twain

*Notebook*, 1894

A peculiar technique of writing requires a peculiar technique of reading. “Writing between the lines” has several meanings. The meaning at issue is the technique in which there is a secret message hidden somewhere in the text of the writing. “Somewhere” can mean that the secret is physically hidden in the text, or it can mean that the secret is “somewhere else,” that is, not on paper but implied by the whole argument or story, or by a choice word, sentence, or section of it. However, before we can begin to realize the important difference between these two places and in order to master the special reading skills required to get the most out of this kind of writing it is necessary to first understand the basics of the activity of reading itself – its practitioners, purpose, and materials.

There are three kinds of readers, divided into two groups. In the first group, some readers use reading to improve themselves morally and some use reading to improve themselves intellectually.<sup>1</sup> In the second group, readers use reading for

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1. It could be said that there is a third kind of readers in this group, the ones who read to pass the time or escape reality. If such readers do exist, this chapter and dissertation are not concerned with them.

pleasure. It could be said that in comparison with the second group, the first group of readers are readers only incidentally. They seek pleasure, too, but it is outside or beyond the activity of reading. Thus, it is possible that a reader from the second group may also use reading for moral and intellectual improvement but it is unusual for a reader from the first group to use reading for pleasure because he or she already has a different purpose. From this it follows that in reading there are also three purposes, divided into two groups: metaphysical pleasure, in the knowledge of good and evil and knowledge of truth and falsehood, and physical pleasure. Metaphysical pleasure in reading comes from the learning experienced by the reader, whether the learning was about what the reader was looking for or not. Physical pleasure in reading can come from the physical and imaginative reading materials of the work and the physical and psychical states of the reader. The physical reading materials are the paper, ink, pages, letters and their font and size, words, overall page layout and design, the book and its weight, the light used to read, the time of the day, the relative silence and comfort of the surroundings where the reading takes place, and the sound of the words read aloud. The imaginative reading materials are the language arrangements that bring about the imaginative evocation of the senses, and the health and concentration of the reader.

All of these reading materials come together and have the potential to stimulate all of the five senses. The most obvious or immediate are those that stimulate the eyes and ears, but it is possible that reading also stimulates the nose, tongue and palate and fingers. For example, an old used book may have paper that is worn out, with sheets no longer of white color, some of them pasted together or

missing, fragile or rough to the touch, and imbued with strange scents and flavors from previous readers. The more complex effects – those that are still palpable, midway between the immediate stimulation and the imaginative evocation of the senses – are the result of the arrangement of the text, and these range from punctuation to paragraph and chapter divisions to vocabulary and style choices between simple and unfamiliar terms and sentence structures, their repetition and variation, and straight-forward or chronological and disordered or labyrinthine overall designs.

In principle, some of the reading materials depend on the reader. Some readers are careful about the materials that depend on them and some are not. It makes a big difference whether the reader is, for example, distracted or alert, right out of or about to go to bed, on an empty stomach or in the middle of digestion, sober or under the influence of alcohol, calm or upset, in good or bad physical shape, at home or work, or even whether he or she acquired a cheap or authoritative edition of the book, reads quickly or slowly, repeatedly interrupts or devotes prolonged hours to reading, or has or not a comfortable place where to read. Some readers are close in time or place from the native language or nation of the writer and some are distant. It makes a big difference whether the reader speaks the native language of the writer or needs a translation, or shares or not the way of life or the laws and customs of the writer.

Presumably in one respect the greater the distance in time and place between the writer and reader may mean that the more obstacles, in the form of literary transformations and commentaries, there are for the reader to receive the images or

understand the original significance of the arguments that make up the reasoning of the text. Although one could also wonder whether the greater the distraction for the reader from these differences in time and place to the writer translates into greater physical exertion and pleasure in reading. However, the important thing is not to determine whether some readers are better or more perceptive than others but to understand that reading is not simply an intellectually pleasing activity, but also a highly physically pleasing – and demanding – activity. Above all to realize that just as he or she is aware, anticipates and prepares the story and argument without losing sight of the idiosyncrasies and prejudices of the readers, it is possible that a competent writer is fully aware and thus anticipates and prepares one way or the other for that part of the physical reading materials that depends on the reader. And that as long as there are readers who read for pleasure, the competent writer can choose to dedicate as little or as much energy to exert from the reader this sort of physical efforts.

Those who read for pleasure expect nothing and everything from the writer. On the one hand they want to live whatever they read, no matter how poor the imitation or discourse is, but on the other hand they want to be surprised, moved, educated. They do and do not care about the writer's identity: for all they know, the text before them is all true, a key to the writer's soul, or all invention, about somebody or something else unrelated to the writer. One day they are the sternest judges of character and writing critics, mocking every comma, term and sentence choice, the next day they become abject slaves to the whims of the same text, falling for any and every trick in it. Another day they demand the writer to tell them the

meaning of life, who they are and how they should behave, the next day they beg to know only everything about the writer, what he or she eats, wears, reads, and whatever he or she thinks about the greatest and smallest of things. The important thing to understand is that this kind of reader reads patiently, widely and indiscriminately, always reading, even under difficult circumstances, and always giving the text the benefit of doubt, unafraid to reread it until the meaning or image is clear to mind and heart. This means that to these readers writers are usually one of two extremes, divine and eternal or nothing and dead, and that text on paper is as big, chaotic and awe-inspiring as the universe we inhabit.

The peculiar writing technique of Plato and Aristotle seems to have been crafted with a view to challenging the most smitten and seasoned of this kind of reader. To try to span the vastness that results from putting together their works elicits the same sense of awe that is experienced when we look up at the starry sky in a clear night from a beach or an open space away from the city lights. Even so, to find the secrets in this huge and chaotic textual universe is not impossible. For although it may demand additional strenuous efforts on the part of the reader, there is in the text a well-ordered system that follows a special kind of logic. The first step is to grasp the physical aspect of reading, that is, that the text on paper is perfectly parallel to the physical universe we live in, and thus entirely perceptible through our five senses.

The second step is to get accustomed to navigating comfortably through this universe, or what is the same, to let go of our presuppositions about the differences between being a living creature on earth and being a living creature in the text-on-



paper universe. I am aware that on first impression this suggestion seems to go against all previous existing advice on how to read Plato and Aristotle, but if there is a lesson to be learned from the history of the transmission of Plato and Aristotle's thoughts it is that changes in circumstances require changes in means, and that this lesson is to be applied no matter the cost or sacrifice, not even if it means not to heed the arguments of those writers to whom we are indebted and who we hold most dear.

As things now stand, students of philosophy give more importance to the philosophical, religious and political commentaries that directly mention, explain, attack or defend the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle and, much like students of poetry and literature, take a secondary interest in any mention of Plato and Aristotle in histories and imaginative works or to the extent that the references in those works shed light on the philosophical perspective and education of the poet. As far as students of philosophy are concerned, poetic works are crippled by their purpose to please general audiences. As far as students of poetry and literature are concerned, any mention or concern with philosophy is conditioned by and subordinate to the purpose of successful imitation. Because of this, certain, selected reading rules to study and get the most out of Plato and Aristotle have come down to us.

Of these rules, for example, the most obvious or the one that seems intuitively most important is that there are careful and careless readers. I have already debunked the importance of this distinction in relation to the physical aspect of reading but what needs to be added now is that it established the notion that these two kinds of readers experience two very different books. Careful readers are disciplined and methodic: they, for example, read slowly, take notes, count terms, pay attention to word

ambiguity and minor changes in spelling and grammar, and above all, are obedient to any authority on the subject mentioned in the text and take great care not to fall into the habits of careless readers. Careless readers are believed to be lazy and, for all practical purposes, do the exact opposite of what careful readers do: they read quickly, do not count terms, take the obvious or literal meaning of terms used, and above all, are disobedient. Furthermore, most probably a consequence of this distinction, the belief has come down to us that Plato and Aristotle and their commentators can only be fully understood when read carefully. For example, it is an established reading rule that the most important information of a philosophical text is in the middle of the division of the text envisioned by the writer. A careful reader will divide the argument correctly, determine the middle, and pay close attention to, record and think about this middle. Why is this so, that is, why is the important part of the work placed in the middle? The rule says that careless readers pay no attention to things placed in the middle, that is, the rule says that the middle is a safe place to keep things from a careless reader's attention. The problem with this rule is that once any reader becomes aware of it, all his or her efforts are steered towards becoming a careful reader – because nobody wants to be a careless reader – and therefore, experiences in careless reading are avoided and no attention is paid to the possibility that there are rules in reading carelessly or at least certain principles that may serve as precautions for the writer. For example, it is a corollary of the previous rule that the least important information of a philosophical text is in the beginning and end sections of the text. This means that a careful reader will not pay close attention to or give importance to the information in these two parts because it is intended for

careless readers. Thus, knowledge of this rule preconditions the reader to a single experience of the text – to that of the careful reader – and impedes the careless reading experience.

I am also aware that “to let go of our presuppositions” about reading Plato and Aristotle has come to mean “to try to understand Plato and Aristotle as they understood themselves,” which is still an ambiguous expression that has nevertheless come to mean only one thing: that history – the distance in time and place between them and us – has given us a sense of progress or the idea that we are better, smarter than those who lived before us, and that the only way to understand their thought is through a return or a disregard or forgetting of history. While this notion has its practical advantage – it makes the writings of the past and present equal – its great disadvantage is that it gives the impression that the idea of progress is the only or greatest obstacle to the thought of the ancients. Indeed, it is given more importance than another supposed contemporary misconception, the distinction between facts and values, for to make such a distinction is evidence that we are not at all superior to the ancients.<sup>2</sup>

However, the question is not whether the debate about the superiority of the moderns is worthwhile or whether letting go of the idea of progress is sound, but whether they are the easiest way to bring back to life the thought of the past and of

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2. Strauss, Leo, *Natural Right and History* (1965), pages 13-19, 22-25, 61-62, and “Progress or Return?” in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (1989), page 242.

What needs to be understood is that I am not avoiding confrontation with or dismissing without due argument the truth of the claim of Strauss’ critique of the historical approach. Indeed, I have as a result of it become aware of the implications of the attitude behind what he calls the thesis of radical historicism in its “radical dependence of thought on fate,” and the difference between approaching the thought of the past (and the possibility of natural right in particular) in this manner and approaching the same questions through a “philosophic critique.” *Natural Right and History* (1965), pages 10, 28.

Plato and Aristotle in particular. With or without the idea of progress, there are still obstacles, for if there is some truth in numbers, then we present-day moderns are the freest, most informed and conscious human beings that have ever lived, and if numbers are not to be trusted, we are alive and the writers of the past are still dead. Whatever the case, we are the most comfortable to be under our skin: we are the human beings with the strongest sense of “identity” and “honesty” that have ever lived. And yet this also makes us strong-willed: there is no obstacle too difficult to overcome to keep us from attaining what we most desire. The question then becomes, what do Plato and Aristotle have, that we do not, that is desirable to the point that what they did – philosophize – should be repeatedly recommended to not just a select few but to everyone?<sup>3</sup> A good answer must wait but the short answer is that Plato and Aristotle have the solution to the human political problem.

At first the difference between being a living creature on earth and a living creature in the text-on-paper universe seems to be only of medium. While on earth we need air to breathe and ground to rest our two feet on or move around a three-dimensional space, it seems that on the text page there is no air to breathe, it is difficult to imagine where we would place our feet since space is two-dimensional, and movement seems to be restricted to the movement of reading eyes – along a line from left to right and then a jump to the left of the next line, and sometimes a jump to a footnote at the bottom of the page, and if the book is used, to the marginal notes written in the page, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> The problem seems to be like one of the

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3. See, for example, Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, (III, sec. 99).

transformations Ovid describes in the *Metamorphoses*, in which some human beings are transformed into trees or stars or animals and they have trouble adapting to the new bodies not only out of incredulity but also out of attempts to move as humans in their new bodies. (It should be pointed out that just as Ovid's transformations can never completely let go of their human origins – for example, the poem is filled with trees and animals that cry – moving around text is never perfectly effortless.) But soon enough we realize that everything on earth and beyond has an equivalent in the text but is expressed differently. A basic example, “to eat” in the text usually means, “to learn” in reality. A complex example, the well-known community of women and children of the philosopher-guardians discussed in the *Republic* is really a set of the same ideas and the product of those ideas when a specific kind of human being apprehends them. Upon reflection on Socrates's description it is possible to realize that it is as if Plato were actually saying, “give them all the same ideas and they will generate opinions that are indistinguishable and perpetuate those same ideas, and make sure that to keep a tight guard on them so that the multitude can easily know who they are you have them believe that they should always express themselves and exchange these ideas publicly, so that nobody can go unobserved to think things through on his own, at least not until they are ready to do so or are too old to do any harm to the multitude or to our cause.” A more complex example, “nature” here is usually the “text,” so every time Aristotle uses his well-known statement, “nothing in nature is in vain,” he is really saying, “nothing written has one meaning or nothing written means what it means literally,” and because he uses it often it is as if he were

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4. There are, of course, equivalent movements up and down, “above” corresponding to pages already read and “below” corresponding to pages that have not been read.

trying to change the importance of this notion into an image or form of a whispering echo inside the mind of the reader, and because it is a phrase that always accompanies an example, it is as if he were also saying, “this example I just gave you teaches you about a rule or law of how to write to cause a desired effect on the reader, and if you cannot figure it out, be patient, because it means that you need to read something you have not read or reread and think about what you have already read.”

It seems sufficiently clear that if there is an equivalent in the text for everything that is in our world it is possible to figure out the hiding place of secrets easily once the logic of the translation of terms is mastered. It is also clear that although the awareness of the physical aspect of reading and the translation of terms have injected some life into the writings of Plato and Aristotle, we need to wonder whether this is all the life texts can have. That is, we know that each term has a new term in the text, but we still do not know whether this is the only safety mechanism, so to speak, or what determines its proper place or the “somewhere” – the hiding place. Thus, two questions seem necessarily to follow. What, if any, is the additional safety mechanism? And if there is one, is it like the translation of terms, based on certain physical rules, or does it depend on something or someone specific in or outside the text?

The third step is to learn to move comfortably between the different texts of writers like Plato, and to realize the precise relationship between two writers or two writings by different authors, especially the precise relationship between Plato and Aristotle and those influenced by them. Without getting into a full explanation of the decision to devise the system of dialogues in the manner that he did, it is possible to

say a few things about Plato and political philosophy by way of introduction. Two reasons have prompted us to shed light on the physical aspect of reading. The first is to explain in outline what “writing (and reading) between the lines” involves. The second reason is to show that political philosophy not only has a theoretical but also a practical dimension. If books have a life of their own, then it is possible that there is more to political philosophy than to individually know and practice the good life. We do indeed read Plato because we want to live happier, better lives, and to know about Socrates and love and friendship. But we are also curious about Plato himself and his secret. If there is a secret there is a conspiracy, and if there is a conspiracy there is a cause, and we want to discover the cause and the conspiracy to root them out if they are harmful or join them if they are beneficial.

The easiest way to understand Plato’s motivation<sup>5</sup> for taking action is through serious reflection on his version of Socrates’s apology and trial. He was there as part of the group vouching for Socrates.<sup>6</sup> This is as close as we will ever be to Plato in this world,<sup>7</sup> and he gives us a direct report, without commentary or interpretation of physical appearances and attitudes, as if he were saying, “I saw what happened,” instead of, “I heard what happened.”<sup>8</sup> We see what he sees:<sup>9</sup>

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5. Cf. Strauss, Leo, “On the *Euthyphron*,” in *Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (1989), page 187.

6. Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 34A, 38B.

7. This is asserted in relation to the dialogues.

8. Again, everything on text is different. Because who reports and how the conversation was reported make a big difference in meaning, it should not seem too exacting to point out that in reading dialogues we see speeches that we have witnessed and hear emotions that we have not witnessed.

9. All of the references on the list that follows are from Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*.

(1) From what his friend says there are four ambitious accusers, a comedic poet and three young men (19C, 23E-24A), pressing the same charges, that is, to quote the text exactly:

- (a) The accusation of the poet: “Socrates does injustice and is meddling, by investigating the things under the earth and the heavenly things, and by making the weaker speech the stronger, and by teaching others these same things (19B-19C),” and
- (b) The accusation of the young men: “Socrates does injustice by corrupting the young, and by not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other *daimonia* that are novel” (24B-24C).<sup>10</sup>

It seems philosophers and sophists have a bad reputation, or at least that when they meddle they do more harm than good, and it looks like what Socrates does around the city (20B-23C). It seems the ambition of the poet drove him to slander, or what is the same, not to think much about the consequences of slander, and the ambition of the young men to a politically motivated trial, or what is the same, not to think much about the consequences of giving an evidently weak and harmless man trouble. Also, it seems that the poet informs or teaches the people, including the young men.

(2) From what his friend says – that he obeys the gods and served the city and does not presume to teach anybody – it seems a case of mistaken identity. It seems that part of the confusion and resentment that give weight to the claims

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10. Translations by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry, in *Plato and Aristophanes: Four Texts on Socrates. Plato's Euthyphro, Apology and Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds* (1995), pages 66, 73.



of the accusers is due to the young men who follow him around, who when asked what he teaches out of ignorance repeat the slander the poets spread about philosophy (23C-23E). Indeed, from what his friend says, the men who actually brought the case to trial came from this group of young men (23E).

(3) A public trial before a big jury of the people that was at first openly hostile but then was almost persuaded, even though he spoke frankly, without oratory tricks or making a pathetic fool of himself, and then ran out of time. Also, from what his friend says, that the jury was almost persuaded was something he did not expect (36A).

(4) From what his friend says, especially when he says that what he does is to try to persuade others on behalf of a god to care for virtue (31B), and what he deserves as punishment and then his presence of mind before the death sentence, and from the way one of the young men performed when he interrogated him, it seems the trial was unjust.

If we consider the result of the trial from the perspective of a grief-stricken true friend the question we need to ask on behalf of Plato is, what would I do to make it up to my friend, avenge his death and somehow relieve the immense pain of this loss? Conversely, if we remove from this list any occurrence of the phrase, “from what his friend says,” we experience a different trial and speech. Thus, without the phrase we are free to call into question the intention or truth about any of the statements made by Socrates – we can be as cynical as is humanly possible. But in the reading with the phrase we should not question Socrates’s motives or honesty or

that the trial was unjust because we should not question the purity of the friendship between Plato and Socrates – we must be as naïve or innocent as is humanly possible. The only statement that would be unaffected by the removal of the phrase and remain the same between the two experiences would be:

*A public trial before a big jury of the people that was at first openly hostile but then was almost persuaded, even though he spoke frankly, without oratory tricks or making a pathetic fool of himself, and then ran out of time.*

Whether cynical or innocent, the practical question becomes – for as the saying goes, revenge is a dish best served cold – how and what would it take for this result or injustice to be reversed in the future? The “how” seems to be to show in frank speech to everyone who the real Socrates or someone like him is, by showing his true identity and removing the slander. And the “what it would take” seems to be to make more time. We are now ready to slowly take leave of this fleeting opportunity to experience Plato in our world to move back into the text-world and see what he made of his plight.

Even though we live in a world in which newspapers, television and the internet fill our imagination with true stories of persons with disturbing habits and extreme self-destructive behavior, the notion that more time is needed to explain what “to persuade others on behalf of a god to care for virtue” should on first impression perplex everyone but the most cynical of minds. Indeed, to forego of the possibility that in principle all human beings hope and strive for a way of life that will bring

them complete bliss must not only be a gloomy moment, but also the moment we forego of any hope to make a connection with and finally understand Plato. Again, this is not said in order to preclude or thwart a negative but very real perspective or attitude towards sharing life here on earth with other human beings in favor of a more positive one but to open our minds and hearts to both kinds of attitudes. Otherwise we only see one part of the story: we give in to the forces of authority and tradition. That is, if, and only if, we keep these two attitudes in mind and heart while we read his other dialogues then we will never find ourselves taking Plato's motives or "moral character" for granted.<sup>11</sup> For twenty-three hundred years of great minds repeating over and over that Plato is first and foremost a philosopher, or what is the same, that he is free from animal passions, do not come and go by without effect, especially on people who read. Thus, to get the key or the most out of the dialogues it is vital to allow for the possibility that *to articulate a worthy proof of love for his wronged friend that will survive the test of time* (and not simply to articulate a defense to preserve the possibility of philosophy in the city) is the motivation or driving force behind Plato's writing. And the wonderful realization of the fact that the inclusion of a defense of philosophy in this proof of love is incidental to Plato's final solution to his problem should open up in mind and heart, to speak metaphorically, gates that have been completely sealed for so long that to sight they were almost impossible to distinguish from the protective walls of the castle-fortress inside.

However, to return to the subject immediately at hand, while it may be shocking or perplexing to the innocent to think that more than one day is needed "to

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11. See note 5 above.

persuade others on behalf of a god to care for virtue,” it still makes sense to ask just how much more additional time is needed to accomplish this and then how to go about it. Is it a matter of a few more days or do we need to think in weeks, months or years? But then first we need to clarify the kind of difficulty we are dealing with. Is there an intellectual difficulty – that is, is the knowledge and practice of virtue intellectually challenging? And how difficult is this? Or is it about curbing the social and political ambitions of those who have more power over what we believe and think? Or is it about determining and countering the precise weight or force of slander or of the anxiety of keeping up a certain reputation about what we presumed to know or the appearances associated with our socio-economic status? These questions are all difficult to answer and the only safe thing to say is that they preview a daunting task in which many things need to be clarified to many persons at the same time, each of whom is potentially quite different in character and intellect. It seems that to be on the safe side as much time as can possibly be made is necessary, and yet it would not be fair to those who are quickly persuaded, who quickly grasp the meaning like the Athenians who voted in favor of Socrates after only one day. But what if it were possible to make time that is flexible, that is, that shortens itself with the quick and prolongs itself with the more hardheaded?

And then there is still the question of the true identity of Socrates and the proof of love that stands the test of time. While it cannot be denied that to have justice finally served where it was once denied is indeed a good atonement for not having been able to prevent the trial or have it dismissed, it is no worthy or poignant testament about whom Socrates really was or what kind of friend he was to others and

to Plato. Are these impossible demands? Is it too much to ask that something satisfy the rigorous demands of justice and be lovable at the same time and for all time? But what if it were possible to make the impossible possible in this case? We know that there are those who make the impossible possible all the time – the poets. No one else, part or not of the trial, can make the impossible possible to the extent the poet can, not the craftsman, orator, politician, sophist or diviner. But the poets were largely responsible for what happened to Socrates. Yes, the poets are the mortal enemy....

### Chapter 3: The Moral Education of the Poets I: Literary Techniques and Character

“L'homme, cet être flexible, se pliant dans la société aux pensées et aux impressions des autres, est également capable de connaître sa propre nature lorsqu'on la lui montre, et d'en perdre jusqu'au sentiment lorsqu'on la lui dérobe.”

Montesquieu (1748), Préface, *De l'esprit des lois*.

#### *Introduction*

The study of political philosophy encourages a fascinating combination of realistic and fantastic thoughts that are difficult to pull apart. Ever since and because of Plato, what is known as ‘the concern for the preservation of philosophy in the city’ has been and is a matter of special interest to the student of classical political philosophy for the simple reason that philosophy was seen as a dangerous alternative to the beliefs and opinions that hold together a city, state or society. And as such, philosophy could not be practiced and discussed openly without the complete freedom its methods required, and therefore, whose preservation could only be guaranteed surreptitiously.

In life reservation, aloofness, caution, and even irony have become parts of the image we collectively have of the external demeanor and character of the philosopher. The philosopher was physically and morally reserved not for his sake or because he was useless to the city or simply strange but for the sake of philosophy

and its closely guarded knowledge. The new moral significance of this reserved exterior was in large part the result of the elimination of all but the simplest and martial music, rhythms and poetry from the earliest education of the guardians philosophers-to-be in the *Republic*. And it is supposed that the philosopher's books were crafted with the same reserve. Again, in relation to poetic works, Socrates gives an example of the kind of unimitative and unfeeling prose that would agree with the new reserved and sober temper of his pro-philosophical citizens.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not clear whether philosophers would be responsible for composing this kind of prose, for the responsibility of working out the details of the new laws concerning truth is left to the 'physicians.'<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle's contribution to Plato's project complicates the history of the model of philosophical commentaries.

In reading these books the student of classical political philosophy has an immediate interest in the political problem itself – in understanding the nature and causes of political or religious persecution and intellectual oppression in general.<sup>3</sup> But he or she also has a greater, long-term interest in being the protagonist of Plato's plot: in searching for, discovering and understanding the millenary secret knowledge. And, as chapter 2 of this dissertation illustrates, all students have an idea of what that knowledge may be and where they are in that search.

However uncertain the realization of the latter long-term goal may be, in relation to the political problem it is nevertheless fair to say that the discussion of the

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1. See above chapter 1, note 15.

2. *Republic*, 289B-289D.

3. And in the particular case of *Don Quixote*, why Cervantes would be opposed to Plato's political project.

nature of a millenary literary conspiracy with Plato as its founder and ringleader, without demonstrative proofs or certain knowledge of its original cause, is similar logically and in its circumspection to the discussion of something as enigmatic as the nature of the universe without demonstrative proofs or certain knowledge of what created it and why. Before the modern approach to political philosophy came about, philosophical knowledge was sometimes compared to and sometimes distinguished from the knowledge God gave prophets about these things. This was in part due to the opportunity the discussion gave writers to use religious and political circumstances and subjects to candidly discuss philosophical matters, and in part due to the actual philosophical experiences first described by Plato and Aristotle. In the *Republic* the definitive philosophical experience is with much sober restraint called the ‘turn-around,’ but in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* dialogues, for example, it is more like a mad possession and metaphysical ascent that could take hold of a person passionately or piously in love.

What is important to understand is that, psychologically speaking, in the study of classical political philosophy there is necessarily what C.S. Lewis called egoistic and disinterested castle-building. Egoistic castle-building is the pleasing imaginative construction evoked by the fiction in which the reader becomes the hero and “everything is seen through his eyes.” In disinterested castle-building the reader “will be present in the fiction, but not as hero; rather as spectator.”<sup>4</sup> The student of classical

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4. C.S. Lewis, “The Meanings of ‘Fantasy,’” in *An Experiment in Criticism* (2003). Both quotes are on page 52. These are the subdivisions of what Lewis calls normal castle-building. There is also in his classification an extreme version of readers who engage in morbid castle-building, “a waking dream – known to be such by the dreamer,” which “becomes the prime consolation, and almost the only pleasure, of the dreamer’s life....Realities, even such realities as please other men, grow insipid to him. He becomes incapable of all the efforts needed to achieve a happiness not merely notional” (page 51).



political philosophy has a genuine interest in philosophizing and therefore in exercising what Socrates stated in the *Republic* are the natural qualities required to succeed as philosophers<sup>5</sup> whether these qualities exist or not in him or her. At the same time, because the language, stories, speeches and arguments are of the past, everything read is experienced with the distance that naturally lies between spectator and spectacle.

Incidentally, the student of classical political philosophy has an attitude to his or her life and object of thought – and the manner these two relate – like Don Quixote has with his life and knight-errantry novels. Throughout his history Don Quixote lives the life of a knight-errant and when he is defeated in single combat and forced to abandon it he dies. And, as he shows in his discourse on arms and letters, he demonstrates presence of mind and lucidity in everything that is not knight-errantry. But once this object of thought arises in real life he is unable to distinguish it from what he is physically or sensibly experiencing at that precise moment: he attacks the puppets of a puppet show with his sword when he realizes that the plot of the play insinuates that the virtue of Melisendra – the object of affection of Gaiferos, one of Roland's cousins in the Spanish songbook tradition – is less than perfect.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the dynamics of discussions in classical political philosophy<sup>7</sup> is

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5. These natural qualities are: good memory, quick apprehension, magnificence, grace, friendly to truth, justice, brave and enterprising spirit, sobriety, sagacity, orderly, quiet, stable and most comely. Cf. 487A, 490C-490D, 494B, 503C, 535A-536B.

6. *Don Quixote*, Part II, Chapter 26. Don Quixote even compensates the puppeteer for the damages to the puppets according to their virtue: he agrees to pay a high price for the damage to the puppet representing King Charlemagne but demands a lower price estimate for the damage to the puppet representing Melisendra because he argued that the puppet could not be her but a lady of inferior rank.

grounded on two contrary notions. On the one hand, there is the notion that although Plato's dialogues emulate spontaneity of conversations, nothing in them is accidental. Let us reverse this statement of the notion for the sake of clarity and say that although nothing written in Plato's dialogues could be accidental, they emulate the spontaneity or something spontaneous about conversations. And let us take this one step further and say, quite naturally, that what is perhaps spontaneous is less the performance of the conversation or the form of the text than what the chance reader apprehends or learns by accident from the dialogues. In general, these apprehensions from the writings are the content of political philosophy discussions. On the other hand, it could be said that learning by accident is impossible insofar as we only naturally desire or strive for what is within our powers,<sup>8</sup> and learning by accident does not seem to be one of them.<sup>9</sup> This is why classical political philosophy discussions are the result of a struggle between the rigidity – even stubbornness – of the written text and the workings of the student's imaginations, that is, a struggle between the extremes of possible nothings and impossible chimeras.

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7. I have in mind here what Alfarabi understands by training in dialectics, the art by which “man trains himself to acquire the capacity for quickly finding all possible syllogisms as are found by the investigator be ready for the application of the scientific rules” that are used in discerning the truth, “so that with it man will be equipped to show his power of finding a syllogism quickly when he is investigating with others.” He goes on to say, “For, when he is equipped with this art, it also substantially develops the faculty in him for using it when he is alone by himself, and makes him exceedingly cautious and more quick-witted. For when man imagines in everything he is investigating by himself there is as it were somebody else who is supervising or examining him, his mind will be made more quick-witted and he will be more likely to be cautious. Therefore he [Aristotle] equipped man with it so as to employ it with others in question and answer” (*Philosophy of Aristotle*, i.78.7-i.79.1). Translation in Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, by Muhsin Mahdi, Ithaca: 2001. Part III, section 13, page 87.

8. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2.19.1392a25-26.

9. This is addressed once in the dialogues. When, for example, the question of whether one can learn things by accident is raised by Socrates in the *Alcibiades*, at 106D, Alcibiades immediately answers that it is impossible to learn things by accident, and the conversation quickly moves forward, without any objections from Socrates, to the sophism of whether in learning we seek what we do not know or what we already know.

*An Unusual Theory*

It was suggested earlier in the interpretation of the *Novel of the Curious Impertinent* in the first part of *Don Quixote* that Cervantes as poet knew and morally opposed the secret discourses between philosophers and Plato's political project.<sup>10</sup> This interpretation led to a revisiting of all of Plato's dialogues and most of Aristotle's works in an attempt to understand why Cervantes could be opposed to these philosophers and the quarrel between philosophy and poetry. What follows is a theory that explains this question.

This interpretation then led to a reexamination of all of Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's works in an attempt to understand the quarrel between philosophy and poetry and why Cervantes could be opposed to these philosophers. What follows is a theory that explains this question.

The following summary of the *Republic* should suffice for the discussion of the conspiracy immediately below.

The *Republic* is a conversation about whether it was better for the soul of a human being to practice justice or injustice secretly, that is, without the benefits of external rewards from the gods and other human beings. A just city was founded in speech where philosophers protected the laws and governed the citizens. In discussing the education of the protectors or guardians of the laws it was decided that the city would do without the music and poetry that could in any way foster innovation and changes to the original constitution of the city. In discussing the

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10. See above pages 29-35.

election of the rulers it was decided that the physically stronger and intellectually more steadfast of the guardians would be given an education that introduced them to the idea of the Good and imposed on them the responsibility of government. After some final considerations on the nature of poetry it was decided to give poets an opportunity to make an argument in favor of readmitting them into the just city. In the end it was agreed by the participants in the conversation that with or without external rewards justice was indeed superior to injustice.

It was relatively easy to single out the *Apology of Socrates* from the rest of the dialogues as the point of departure, but given the point of departure it is not easy to give a good reason for singling out the *Republic* as the blueprint or outline of Plato's solution. On the one hand, if the poets are the mortal enemy, to find out in the first place why or how it came to be that poets are at odds with philosophers and sophists seems the reasonable thing to do, and then the *Republic* becomes all important because, the *Laws* and *Epinomis*<sup>11</sup> aside, it is the only dialogue that explicitly discusses the quarrel between philosophy and poetry. On the other hand, this path might be misleading. To say that the *Republic* is the only explicit account on the nature of the quarrel itself is not to say that other philosophers did not pick up on or discussed the necessary tension between philosophy and poetry, for according to Socrates the quarrel was old,<sup>12</sup> but rather that in the rest of Plato's dialogues there is no treatment of poetry and the poets quite like there is in the *Republic*. Unlike the problem with the sophists, which throughout the dialogues is less a quarrel than a

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11. Until the case of mistaken identity is resolved, the dialogues with the Athenian Stranger, the *Laws* and the *Epinomis*, must be put aside.

12. Plato, *Republic*, 607B.

full-scale battle on all fronts, the problem with the poets does not seem to even exist. Socrates did not like to interpret poetry before others. In the *Protagoras*, for example, he compared the interpretation of poetry to the banquets of vulgar and base persons who out of want of education prefer to entertain themselves with the voices of hired flutes than with the voices of their own speeches.<sup>13</sup> But when he was forced to interpret poetry, Socrates did everything in his power to find or make the causes and intentions in poetry to be in perfect agreement with those of philosophy. His interpretation of Simonides' verses on Pittacus, again in the *Protagoras*, and which ranged from a justification of the beautiful and enigmatic qualities of the Spartan sage's pithy sentence, "It is difficult to be good," to a harmonization of Simonides' choice of words and meaning in his reply and an explanation of the dialogue between the sage and the poet, is a good example of this perfect agreement.<sup>14</sup> But as Aristotle points out about the *Hippias Minor*, Socrates could also go as far as to develop fallacious reasoning in order to make sense of what Homer said about the virtues of Achilles and Odysseus.<sup>15</sup> The *Symposium* is by all means a friendly encounter between Socrates and two poets, Aristophanes and Agathon. And the mention of poetry in the *Minos* is about being careful not to get a poet upset, but not about a quarrel with philosophy.

By preponderance alone, that there is one dialogue that has philosophy and poetry at odds against many dialogues that do not may mean that there is no quarrel

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13. Plato, *Protagoras*, 347C-347D.

14. Ibid. 342A-347A.

15. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Δ, 1025a5-1025a12.

and that what is said about it in the *Republic* is a lie or exaggeration, or it may mean the contrary, that the *Republic* is truthful and the rest of the dialogues are ironic. Does this mean, then, that what the dialogues show about Socrates and the sophists is a lie or exaggeration? It seems then that it would help to investigate in what way what is unique about the *Republic* among Plato's dialogues is connected to the poets and poetry. Is the *Republic* unique because of its subject, justice? But what makes it superior to the *Gorgias* in this respect? And what makes justice a subject more important than, for example, the praise of the god of love, the subject of the *Symposium*? Then, does the *Republic* stand out because it is a story retold by Socrates? There are other dialogues that are stories retold by Socrates, like the *Lysis*, *Lovers* or the *Charmides*. Aristotle did not seem impressed at all by this or by Socrates's political expertise, even saying that this dialogue was not only less about the regime than about "extraneous discourses, particularly concerning the sort of education the guardians should have,"<sup>16</sup> and for all practical purposes dismisses its arguments, but also that this shortcoming in the arguments was proof that nobody can do everything well.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, there is not enough certainty about Socrates's identity to firmly decide that the dialogues that discuss political matters are more important than the ones that discuss questions of science. Authority and tradition are divided about the worth of the arguments of the *Republic*, although most agree that it is Plato's best-crafted, best-written dialogue. But why give in to what they say?

Quarrel or no quarrel, the fact is that Plato's problem is not solved until he

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16. Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.6.1264b39-1264b40. Translation by Carnes Lord in *The Politics* (1985), page 64.

17. Ibid. 2.6.1265a10-1265a12.

corrects the injustice done to Socrates for all time, and this means above and first of all to get and secure the poets' gift for making the impossible possible and exact just punishment from them at the same time. He then has to solve the case of mistaken identity, that is, he has to teach the wealthy, idle young men about the difference between what Socrates does and philosophy and exact punishment from them at the same time. Although the poet and the wealthy idle young men share the same understanding or misunderstanding about philosophy, their attitudes towards it are very different. The poet is genuinely suspicious of philosophy insofar as it meddles and poses a threat to the city. The poet may want fame and glory above anything in the world, but in order to win them he or she needs to know what the people want in order to give it to them. The wealthy idle young men could care less about the dangers or benefits of philosophy or about anything as long as it entertains them. The only thing they feel strongly about is their superiority in means and the place it gives them in the city. Again, the problem for Plato is not simply that philosophers could die unjustly for meddling in the affairs of the city, but that nothing can stop a large group of organized, wealthy, idle young persons or their parents from getting what they want or defending what they already have, and that a majority does not seem able to make a clear distinction between a philosopher, a sophist and a simple, decent man like Socrates.

Given the circumstances, he can and cannot do certain things. He cannot do away with Fortune: he cannot take away the poet's gift of understanding and conversing with the muses, or take away the wealth and leisure that certain persons are born in. But he can counter or mitigate its effects: he can try to establish a

connection with the poet through his or her gift, and keep the idle busy to keep them away from causing trouble. However, these are very difficult tasks, especially if they are to be done at the same time. First, it would require that the poet willingly shift his or her gift away from nature in the direction of Plato, and second, that potentially a lifetime of idleness would need to be filled up with non-stop activity. On top of everything, the poet is suspicious of philosophers and sophists, and the wealthy idle are fickle and unaccountable in everything. One thing is certain: Plato may allow himself the hope of making a successful connection with the poet, but he cannot let the wealthy idle young men have the same easy access to the opportunity to do mischief – he cannot hope that they will not again and again be part of the group of accusers of someone like Socrates, not even if he in the end proved to be a philosopher or a sophist, or stand idly on the sides while an innocent man is charged for a crime that he did not commit. From this it follows that Plato needs to quickly neutralize the wealthy idle young men and at the same time use his powers to slowly steer the gift of the poet in his direction. Indeed, both of these things need to be carried out stealthily and with precision, especially in the beginning, because any hint of foul play, and the poet will shift his or her attention back to nature and the idle will move on to something more challenging and exciting.

Therefore, the first thing he does is to isolate the wealthy idle young men and women by formally breaking, while they are still young, an already shaky connection between them and the poet and between them and the people. He feeds their spoiled, stubborn and whimsical characters by satisfying and ennobling their tendency to belittle, complain and argue about anything to the last hair-splitting possibility by



providing it with never-ending interrogations and considerations that are equal or superior to the task and calling it a natural disposition for truth, justice and beauty. He especially encourages this tendency in relation to belittling the multitude and the poets. He even calls it philosophical and urges them to set aside their worldly possessions and devote their lives to philosophy, and to push it even further, he creates a city in speech, in which they are the unquestioned supreme rulers, but, as a final blow, tells them that the city will never exist and they can only be content to live a private life, far away from politics. As if this were not enough, he removes all joy from their lives and makes them at best believe in a god that is for all practical purposes good for nothing, by vanishing from their life the love between spouses and between parents and their children and between brothers, the private property that would allow them to be helpful and generous to friends, all poets, musicians and their craftsmen, painters and sculptors that do not imitate the calmest of rhythms or simplest of thoughts, and devising gods that never lie or change their shape and are responsible only for the good that happens. They could become serious, cynical, misers and coldhearted but they are for all practical purposes harmless because they have no interest in politics or anything human, too preoccupied and busy with the never-ending hairsplitting they mistake for philosophy, and if they dared to aspire to hold political power their outward appearance and demeanor would be too clear a mark for the people to be misled again. In short, if they are completely duped by and obedient to Plato in the extreme they become the perfect copy of the slander they spread about and the charges they brought against Socrates and philosophy, their spirits are corrupted in youth and forced to believe in novel *daimonia*.

Meanwhile, Plato hopes that among those who read him there is one who wishes or believes him or herself a philosopher but spends a bit more time with the wishing than with the exercises in logic, mathematics and astronomy, and little by little replaces nature with his own creation, in which everything a human being hopes for is possible. For Plato not only has stories about anything and everything in the world, but also about the strange and fantastic things people imagine. He fills this overactive imagination with gods, demons, souls, heroes, diviners, dreams, sacrifices, prayers, incantations, luck, and premonitions, hoping that he fills this imagination to the point that it wishes these things were real, tangible, and that by a stroke of luck he can connect with and speak to it. When and if he does, Plato reveals himself, tells the whole truth, to repeat, briefly, that the whole thing is a monumental lesson to those who accused and condemned Socrates to death, and to demonstrate his love for Socrates, that he or she has the gift of conversing with the muses – that he or she is a poet, not a philosopher – and he asks the poet to repeat it to others so that it become an eternal lesson and his love for Socrates would live forever. Again in the case of the poets, then, the lesson means Plato has them become the perfect copy of the slander they spread about Socrates and philosophy: by shifting the poet's gift in his direction, that is, by replacing nature with his own creation, the poets are tricked into the situation of having to be meddlesome and investigating the things under the earth and in heaven *of the text-universe he created* in order to fulfill their purpose.

Although this brief account only describes the extreme possibilities, it should be sufficient to grasp Plato's intention. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that those earlier commentators who have chosen to speak about these matters in

theological terms have used the image of prophetic revelation to evocatively describe its effect. For anyone who reads and studies this sort of commentaries, to attempt to live or reenact the actions associated with this image would help understand or firmly grasp Plato's intention. Three examples may help visualize how this part of the message is manifested in the text of the *Republic*. Again, it is important to bear in mind that a term, statement or story has many meanings, and what follows should be taken in the same spirit used to appreciate and judge translations of foreign writings and not of fully reasoned discourses.

### *Proofs*

The first is an example of significance that comes from name translation. Cephalus or Kephalus, and Κεφαλυς in Greek letters, is the name of the host of the conversation in the *Republic*. The root of the name, as is, means "head" (Κεφαλ). However, the name has other meanings if the letters and syllables are manipulated to form new roots according to rules explained in the *Cratylus*. The ending of the name indicates the gender of the new term(s). In this case, since "υ" is in the last syllable it means the new term or name is feminine. If there is a "φ" it is changed to "μ," and vice-versa. The first root always remains in the first position, unchanged. The other roots move their position according to their weight. In this case, the result is Κελ μαια = Κελλω (which can mean marvelous, wondrous, to run into, to set in motion) + μαια (which can mean mother, midwife) = Κελλα μαια. That is, marvelous, wondrous midwife, etc. This means that (1) Cephalus is a messenger of something

beyond good, that (2) the first speech in this and the rest of the dialogues is trustworthy and most important, and because of its place in the dialogue, that the closer the text is to the beginning, the more important,<sup>18</sup> and that (3) the significance of the name should be contrasted with the disguise, that is, the wealth, age, references used, attitude towards religion and habits. In this case, Plato delivers a “marvelous” message, in the least expected of disguises, through an old wealthy man, who quotes the established poets, and is extremely pious and conservative.

The second is an example of significance that comes from the actions and speeches of participants of the conversation, or of participants and elements of stories told in the conversation. To use Cephalus again, he enters, says something quickly, and then leaves. This means that this is the manner in which important things will and should be introduced and how the purpose of the dialogue as a whole will and should be summarized. Also, Cephalus gives the very first definition of justice, that is, “the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another” (331C).<sup>19</sup> This not only represents the justice due to the poet, but also serves as a signal to reverse the reading, and therefore it means the demand asked of the poet. For example, after

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18. This part of the message tells us something about Strauss’ own system or political philosophy. It is well known that Strauss stresses the importance of the beginning or setting of dialogues. However, he urged students to think if possible about the historical setting or circumstances that could have influenced the dialogue itself, thus, for example, he would have us assume that the dialogue “takes place in an era of political decay of Athens, that at any rate Socrates and the chief interlocutors... were greatly concerned with that decay and thinking of the restoration of political health,” and perhaps have us associate the participants named at the beginning of the *Republic* and their fate later during and after the reign of the Thirty Tyrants. (See “Plato,” in *History of Political Thought* (1987), page 34.) The interpretation proposed here does not tell us that Strauss erred in his interpretation but instead that it is possible he pointed us in the right direction but *did not choose* to remove all of the obstacles. (Cf. “On Plato’s *Republic*,” in the *City and Man* (1978), pages 62-64.)

19. Bloom translation cited above, page 7. An alternative translation is “truth-telling and paying back what one has received from anyone,” in Paul Shorey’s translation of the *Republic* (1969), volume I, page 19.

reading this definition of justice and then returning to (reversing) the text of the exchange between Cephalus and Socrates it is possible to read how Plato is really saying, “You’ve now reached the end of the journey, you are in peace, have good character, and in the time we’ve spent together I’ve kept you out trouble. It is now time to settle accounts. I gave you some of the skills that you have – yes, I acknowledge that you did have and acquired some of them on your own – nevertheless, it is time for you to pay back with a favor and share this gift with others,” and so forth.<sup>20</sup>

Third is an example of significance that comes from metaphor/simile translation: the story of Gyges’s ring.<sup>21</sup> The ring was found inside a bronze horse that had been buried in the earth but was visible from a chasm that opened up in an earthquake,<sup>22</sup> that had little windows or doors cut out so that it was possible to look inside from the outside. When Gyges approached it there was a dead, larger-than-life naked man inside with the ring on one of his fingers. Gyges put the ring on and left. At a meeting with fellow shepherds he turned the ring around his finger and realized, when his friends talked about him as if he was not there, that he was invisible, and that he would reappear and the friends would stop talking about him, when he turned it back to the original position. He then devised the plan to seduce the reigning king’s queen, conspire with her to kill him and usurp the throne. The story means that (1)

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20. From this it also follows that money or property in general is effective skill, the ability to not only read and understand the message but also to talk back and prompt change in others.

21. Plato, *Republic*, 359C-360B.

22. Notice in what follows immediately how reflection on the metaphorical meaning of this story is literally an example of “investigating the things under the earth,” that is, because the bronze horse is found in a chasm opened up after an earthquake.

justice must be carried out without anyone's notice, for three reasons. The first is the one given in the dialogue, that is, so that no one can question the motives or interests of the poet. The second reason, which is in another dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, is to tighten the bonds of love between the poet and reader.<sup>23</sup> The third reason is to successfully seduce Wisdom and usurp the throne of the philosopher, of which more will be said below. (That one of the reasons is found in another dialogues indicates that not everything is found in one dialogue, and that the dialogues are all intertwined, the message being divided in parts and dispersed in several dialogues. This is why it is important not to prioritize the dialogues in the mind or heart.) It also means (2) the external form of the writing: the bronze and the horse represent swift combat, that is, all writing efforts should be driven and guided by a ferocious spirit of war that aims to vanquish, impose, and expand or die. The windows represent the openings in the text that allow the reader to see the poet, and the larger-than-life naked man represents how the poet should be and reveal him or herself to the reader. That inside the horse he has the magic ring means that even if the reader finds the windows, he or she might see or not see the poet, that is, the poet shows him or herself at will. Also, in Gyges's finger the ring means that whenever the discussion mentions the poets it is as if the participants were not aware that the poet was present, and when the discussion does not mention the poets it is as if they were aware that the poet was present, that is, that the meaning of things depends on who is present or not in the

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23. All of this is explained in the first speech of the dialogue, the one read by Phaedrus, written by Lysias, and which praises the person who is not in love over the lover, that is, which praises no outward manifestations or expressions of love. Notice that Lysias is the son of Cephalus, and how quickly the connection to the *Republic* is made, right at the very beginning of the dialogue (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 227A).

conversation. In the case of the *Republic*, the poets are mentioned in the beginning and the end. This has two additional important consequences. The first is that (3) the rest of the dialogues should be approached in the same manner. The second is that this is the internal structure to be imitated, that is, that the beginning and end should say what is important to the poet as poet and human being, and the middle should say what is important to the poet as teacher.

### *Continuation of the Theory*

In the same way, it is necessary to examine why and how the poets resemble their image of philosophy in making the weaker speech the stronger and teaching others these same things. If what the idle young men have in their minds is not philosophy but hair-splitting, what is philosophy really? Plato's answer is unequivocal: "if you're looking for an answer to this question in my dialogues, you're wasting your time, because it's not here." The only one who can know with certainty whatever philosophy may be is the philosopher. We did know one thing: philosophers never or rarely descend from their mountain or forest retreats or ivory towers into the city. This is the reason we do not really know what philosophy is in the first place. All we know about philosophy is rumor, gossip – an indirect account. Then Socrates is not a philosopher? No. Is he a sophist? No. What is he? He is a believer – he believes in the gods, his *daimonion*, and in reward and punishment in the afterlife. But what about the rumors? The philosopher and the believer are similar in one important respect: they are the only ones who know what they know,

and everything we know about what they know is either too foreign to everyday experience to comprehend or rumor. The sophist and the believer are similar in one important respect: they indiscriminately want to make people better – they like people, any kind of people, and people like them – and again, everything we know about this generous sentiment is rumor. Is it possible that everything Plato wrote about him is gossip? Yes. Then Plato is not a philosopher? No. Is he a believer? No. What is he? He is a poet disguised as a philosopher.

While we may come out of the dialogues without a better idea of philosophy we do know that the less we are able to empathize with others, the less we are able to make genuine distinctions between the diversity of human characters. The less we open our hearts and love others, the less we are able to understand how close or similar we are to them. The less we understand how close we are to others, the less we are able to channel or redirect our desires away from ourselves, and the less we are able to see everything in this world as a reflection of ourselves. And the more we see everything in this world as a reflection of ourselves, the greedier we are, and thus the more dangerous we are to those we share this world with. Given the circumstances, the idle young men or women of any city are the persons most at risk. They already have all the gifts of Fortune – the highest social status, the best education, and possibly the largest share of money, and even beauty or at the very least good health. Everybody admires, loves, and believes them and wishes them well, especially the multitude. If they are not of sterling character, they soon begin to love themselves above everybody and everything else, and soon enough they redirect any love or compassion for others towards themselves. Without opposition, the



desire for love – or for anything else for that matter – becomes insatiable. Any concession to something or somebody else is too painful for them. They become greedy, wanting and taking more of the good and less of the bad.<sup>24</sup> There could be grave consequences, not just to the city but also on their intellectual potential as well. A person who loves him or herself and nobody or nothing else cannot see or hear or feel anything outside him or herself and is effectively a castaway from the world. All we need to do to understand this is think about how Narcissus, lost in the forest, not only could not realize that the reflection on the surface of the fountain water he fell in love with was not somebody else's but his own, but also that he could not hear the nymph Echo expressing her love, regret and sorrow: Narcissus could not see the water or Echo's form, perceive the sentiment underneath the mocking voice Juno punished her with, and when she touched him he was disgusted!<sup>25</sup> How can someone without sound sense perception of nature like Narcissus have any serious pretensions in philosophy?

And yet paradoxically, were it not for Plato, these fragile characters unopposed would eventually enslave the human beings they live with and not have a genuine opportunity to perceive and finally know the world they live in and the creatures and things that inhabit it. The day Socrates, a poor, simple, and decent old man who shared his personal opinion about the gods and his *daimonia* with whomever was willing to talk to him, was sentenced to death, Plato understood this and all its implications, and patiently and secretly planned and devised a world with a

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24. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 5.1.1129b10. The term he uses is *pleonektês*.

25. The story of Narcissus and Echo referred to here is in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.337-435.

future when this would no longer be possible, where the opposite of justice would no longer be injustice – where the opposite of justice would be friendship. Nature itself would one day be replaced.

However, until that day comes, justice itself will have to be inverted and the weaker speech made the stronger. There are three reasons for this. Very much like the water fountain and the nymph Echo in Narcissus's story, the poets are condemned by Plato to go about the painstaking education of these weak characters in the hope that one day they realize the truth and change their ways and their loyalties. Because the slightest opposition irritates the weak in character to their very core and they see everything the exact opposite of what really is, their education is carried out by stealth: while their lessons and all communications between the poet teachers must be hidden from them, they will have to be portrayed as the stronger, and the rest – the multitude – will have to be portrayed as the weaker. And because the poets are the only ones who can imitate anything and anybody in nature and, together with the craftsmen, take more pleasure in the effect their creations and imitations have on others than in the effect their actual selves could ever have,<sup>26</sup> they would slowly be nurtured and educated to be sensitive to everything in this new world down to the smallest atom, and then make them its defenders by turning them into ruthless, loyal warriors, with the gentlest of hearts, and a pious devotion to their creator.

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26. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.7.1167b35-1168a4.

## *Proofs*

Again, it helps to briefly look at examples of how this part of the message is visualized in the text. I have already stated that the secrecy with which the education of the young is carried out condemns the poets to communicate indirectly with each other and with the young, which at the same time means that the poets must become meddling, investigators of the things beneath the earth and in heaven, in order to discover the messages hidden by their fellow poets.

Because it is the blueprint of all of Plato's system, the *Republic* is the most explicit dialogue about conventions and procedures. It provides us with the meanings about its subject that are important, interconnecting with other dialogues, and teaches us how to read other dialogues, but it also tells us what is the core of Plato's laws, the most fundamental of his conventions. This does not mean that the law is set in stone or unquestionable but rather that special attention to the order of everything and the significance of each term and turn of phrase is crucial, and should be consulted whenever in doubt about what is happening in other dialogues.

In principle, if Cephalus represented the justice that was due to the poets, then this means that Polemarchus and Thrasymachus also represent other kinds of justice. In the text of the *Republic*, the definitions of justice given in Book 1 are presented in the following order:

- (1) Cephalus, "truth-telling and paying back what one has received from anyone."
- (2) Polemarchus, son of Cephalus, "to render to each his due" (331E).

(3) Thrasymachus, “the advantage of the stronger” (338C).

However, this does not mean that there is a progression. Once the text begins it continues discussing other things, and when it reaches the end it reverses, but time continues – the book in reverse deals with new matters. It is always necessary to look at the significance of names or terms to understand the new subject or change of topic.

Usually nature generates the same nature.<sup>27</sup> Polemarchus is no exception. The name, as is, means, “war leader.”<sup>28</sup> In Greek letters the name is Πολεμαρχυς. We know that because of the “υ” the new term will be feminine. When we manipulate the letters according to the rules given in the *Cratylus*, the following transformations take place:

Πολε = πολεες = πολυς = πολλος	This term means the “many.”
εμαρχυς ↔ εφαπκρ ↔ αποκρυπτο ↔	“To hide from.”
αποκρυφη	“Hiding place.” (Term is feminine in Greek.)
πολλος αποκρυφη	New Term: Many hiding place(s)

Thrasymachus is Θρασυμαχυς in Greek letters. The name, as is, means “bold in battle.” Again, we know that because of the “υ” the new term will be

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27. Plato, *Cratylus*, 392E-393C.

28. His name means the same thing as his father, “head” ≈ “war leader.” However, we have to guide ourselves by the new terms, and again they agree.

feminine. However, when we manipulate the letters according to the rules given in the *Cratylus*, the following transformations take place:

Θρασ = Θαρσος	This is a name used by Homer for Athena. <sup>29</sup>
υμαχ = υφακ = φυκα = φυκος (φυ καριον)	This term means “rouge.”
φυ κω ↔	“To be rouged.”
το προσωπον ↔	“Face, visage, countenance.”
τας παρεια ↔	“Cheek.” (Term is feminine in Greek.)
παρηιον	Singular form of “cheek” used by Homer.
Θαρσος παρηιον or παρεια	New Term: Athena cheek

This new term is quite significant if we think of the definitions of Athena in the *Cratylus*, “mind” (*nous*) and “intellect” (*dianoia*) according to Homer, and “mind of God” (*hê theou noêsis*), “unequalled knowledge of divine things” (*ta theia noousa*), or “wisdom of character” (*en êthei noêsis*), according to the unnamed maker in the dialogue.<sup>30</sup>

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29. See for example, Homer, *Iliad*, 5.2.

30. Plato, *Cratylus* 406D-407C. Translation by Harold N. Fowler in *Cratylus. Parmenides. Greater Hippias. Lesser Hippias*. (1977), page 95.

The names tell us the new subjects. The discussion with Polemarchus is about where to hide things, and the one with Thrasymachus is about the reasoning behind the inversion of justice.

Chapter 4: The Moral Education of the Poets II: The Foolish Loves of Amadis and Orlando

Quel che l'uom vede, Amor gli fa invisibile,

E l'invisibil fa vedere Amore.

Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, Canto Primo, verso 56.

*Preliminaries*

An unusual theory needs unusual tools of investigation. Above all this means the theory needs an explanation of how it fits or not into accepted expert criticism and a rough definition of the new elements of study. At the same time, if the theory is about a conspiracy whose influence extended over expanses of place and time, then it is necessary to root the plausibility of this explanation on a foundation that is subject less to the logic that supports an act of faith or strict adherence to the accepted criticism or philosophic and poetic theories than to that which supports the demands or constraints of an oath of allegiance and secrecy. Simply put, it is necessary to explain or describe in what way “within the bounds of legal procedure... a careful writer of normal intelligence is more intelligent than the most intelligent censor.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1988), page 26. This is the second of two axioms articulated by Strauss on “the fact which makes this literature [writing between the lines] possible,” and, it should be noted, this axiom “is meaningful only so long as persecution remains within the bounds of legal procedure” (pages 25-26). The first axiom is that “thoughtless men are careless readers, and only thoughtful men are careful readers,” and, it should be noted, this axiom is meaningful

There are at any moment in time no more than three censors or arbiters of the intellectual and moral qualities of writings:

- (1) The political authority: the arbiters of justice generally and therefore of whether contemporary and past writings benefit or harm the laws of the political regime.
- (2) The expert authority: the traditional arbiters of the reasons for the fame, erudition and invention of contemporary and past writings. In Platonic terms, they are those who know, “those who look at each thing itself – at the things that are always the same in all respects...[Those who] delight in and love that on which knowledge depends.”<sup>2</sup> These, in the particular case of the study of *Don Quixote* and the quarrel between philosophy and poetry, comprise:
  - (a) Political philosophy scholars,
  - (b) Literature and comparative literature scholars, and
  - (c) Writers (philosophical and poetic).
- (3) The doxophilist:<sup>3</sup> in Platonic terms, he (or she) is the “good man [or woman] who doesn’t believe that there is anything fair in itself and an idea of the

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only so long as there is any truth to the “Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge, and therefore that thoughtful men as such are trustworthy and not cruel” (page 25).

2. *Republic*, 479E-480A. Bloom translation, page 161.

3. This is the term used by Plato in the *Republic* at 480A, left untranslated by Paul Shorey. Shorey adds a footnote that states, “Plato coins a word which means “lovers of opinions”” (Note *a*, volume I, page 534). Bloom translates it as “lovers of opinion,” without including an explanation in the endnotes – his edition does not include the original Greek text. “Doxophilist” is the term opposed to those who know or the “lovers of wisdom,” or finally, “philosophers.”

At this point it is important to try to follow my discussion of the translation of terms in the footnotes. Because my grasp of ancient Greek is poor, I will limit my comments to the meanings of terms as found in the standard *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (1889), edited by Henry George Lidell and Robert Scott. I will be using and referring to either one of Bloom and Shorey’s translations in my discussion when I believe the translation of terms allows for a wider interpretation or agrees



beautiful itself, which always stays the same in all respects, but does hold that there are many fair things, this lover of sights who can in no way endure it if anyone asserts the fair is one and the just is one and so on with the rest.”<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that because we are discussing “within the bounds of legal procedure” there is no need to address here those persons who have completely rejected or freed themselves from the rules and methods that guide traditional politics and scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Doxophilists are distinguished from the political authority in that their idea of the Beautiful seems to extend to all opinions and not simply limited by the opinions of a particular city or regime. However, there is no need to further and individually address the political authority or doxophilists, except perhaps only to the extent their contrast with the expert authority is useful, because we are interested only in describing the strongest case and therefore in describing only the habits and prejudices of the most intelligent of censors. To this effect, one more clarification is in order.

The distinction between the philosopher and the doxophilist comes up in the *Republic* in Book 5 after Socrates stated that the just city could only be realized if and when philosophers ruled it, and it became necessary to distinguish who was and who was not a philosopher. Because it was difficult to distinguish the philosopher as a

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with the terms I use in my investigation. I will try to point out how the translations differ whenever possible and whenever it clarifies and does not go far from my own intentions and methods.

4. *Republic*, 479A, Bloom translation page 160.

5. I have in mind only the rejection or break with tradition that usually comes about before becoming personally acquainted with and sensible to the rules and methods of tradition. I would include here those brilliant minds that need no education to guide them – for example, the pre-Socratic philosophers Nietzsche discusses in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*.

lover of learning from the lovers of spectacles and the arts and men of action in general,<sup>6</sup> Socrates distinguishes the delight in the “beautiful in itself” from the “delight in beautiful things.”<sup>7</sup>

From this it followed that the first distinction between them was that while the philosophers could see and delight in the “nature of the beautiful itself,” the doxophilists delighted in “beautiful tones and colours and shapes and in everything that art fashions out of these, but their thought is incapable of apprehending and taking delight in the nature of the beautiful in itself.”<sup>8</sup> The second distinction was that the doxophilists were like dreamers – whether asleep or awake – because they believed “a likeness of something to be not a likeness, but rather the thing itself to which it is like,” whereas philosophers were always awake because they believed “that there is something fair<sup>9</sup> itself and is able to catch sight of both of it and of what participates in it, and doesn’t believe that what participates is itself, nor that it itself is what participates.”<sup>10</sup> To put it in Lewis’ psychological terms used earlier in chapter 3, there is in the doxophilist a strong element of egoistic – even morbid – castle-building, in the sense that there is *willingly* little use of thought in the estimation of things. The belief of the philosopher was called ‘knowledge,’ and the belief of the doxophilist was called ‘opinion.’ And it was determined that ‘opinion’ was a

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6. *Republic*, 475D, 476A.

7. There is an imaginary argument between Socrates and a doxophilist throughout 476D-480A.

8. *Republic*, 476B. Shorey translation, Volume I, page 519.

9. The term *kalon* is translated by Bloom as “fair” and by Shorey as “beautiful.” Both are correct, but I have chosen to use “beautiful” in my own discussions.

10. *Ibid.* 476C-476D. Bloom translation, pages 156-157.

midpoint between knowledge and ignorance, that is, 'opinion' was defined as the knowledge of what is between what exists always and what does not exist – what sometimes exists and sometimes does not exist.

The discussion then turned to the different kinds of knowledge and powers, and which ones were proper to the philosopher. Socrates here compares knowledge and the power to grasp it to the shape and color of objects that the sense of sight captures for the soul to apprehend. This comparison allowed him to speak of knowledge and ignorance in terms of light and dark, and to say that to have knowledge was like having a light shed on things that are eternal – that are always the same or never change. And thus, similarly, it was possible for him to say that to have opinion was like having a light shed on things that were constantly changing, sometimes existing, sometimes not.

At this point the doxophilists are dropped and the discussion turned to the character of the philosopher.

Afterwards the discussion of the Good comes up in Books 6 and 7 of the *Republic* because the business of the election of the philosopher-kings is at stake, and only the physically strongest and most loyal and steadfast are introduced to the education that will lead them to the apprehension of this idea, and then afterwards give them the responsibility to rule the city. In discussing the kind(s) of power(s) developed by this education, Socrates makes a distinction between what the soul sees and what it apprehends, and accordingly distinguishes two orders of things, the visible and intelligible orders. Again, already in Book 5, when he discusses the difference between the philosopher and the doxophilist, Socrates speaks of

knowledge and ignorance in terms of light and dark, then in Book 6 in terms of the seeing and the blind, and in Book 7 in terms of the simile or image of the cave. Two things must be highlighted of all that was said.

The first is that movement within the intelligible order and then movement between the intelligible and the visible orders are dependent on the assumptions<sup>11</sup> we make, and then transcend, in our investigation and apprehension of ideas. The movements are descents from assumptions to conclusions, and ascents from assumptions to a beginning or principle that transcends assumption, to a point where the investigation is conducted and progresses through ideas alone. This final movement through ideas alone is “that by which the reason itself lays hold of by the power of dialectics.”<sup>12</sup>

Second, Socrates talked about the offspring of the idea of the Good and not the idea itself. And he likened this offspring to the Sun. Thus, the idea of the Good is like the sun in that it sheds light on things and allows us to see things. This means two things: (1) That before we have the idea of the Good we move about blindly – we are completely and utterly dependent on the assumptions we make about things. (2)

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11. This is the term used by Shorey for *hypothesis*. In this instance Bloom transliterates the Greek term. The full entry for the term in *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (1889) is:

- I. That which is placed under, a foundation, hypothesis, supposition. Lat. *Assumptio*, Plato.
- II. That which is laid down as a rule of action, a principle, Xenophon, Demosthenes, etc.: generally, a purpose, plan, design, Plato.
- III. A cause, pretext, Plutarch.

12. This is Shorey’s translation. His translation of *logos* at this point includes a footnote that states, “λόγος here suggests both the objective personified argument and the subjective faculty” (see note g, volume II, page 113 of his translation at 511B). It will soon become evident why I prefer this translation. Bloom translates this fragment as “that which argument itself grasps with the power of dialectic” (see page 191 of his translation at 511B).

Second, it seems possible to say that if there is light then there is Good: the good precedes the light not just in majesty but also in time.

In contrast to the power of dialectics, Socrates says:

“[A]ll the other arts are directed to human opinions and desires, or to generation and composition, or to the care of what is grown or put together. And as for the rest, those that we said do lay hold of something of what is – geometry and the arts following on it – we observe that they do dream about what is; but they haven’t the capacity to see it in full awakesness so long as they use hypotheses and, leaving them untouched, are unable to give an account of them. When the beginning is what one doesn’t know, and the end and what comes in between are woven out of what isn’t known, what contrivance is there for turning such an agreement into knowledge?”<sup>13</sup>

What is important to understand at this point is that if there is a conspiracy whose influence extended over expanses of place and time, it is possible that (1) the censor to outsmart is not necessarily the political authority, (2) there is a parallel dream world of opinions that does not seem to obey the movements of dialectical investigation or move with more certainty, beyond its initial assumption(s), and consequently (3) everything has a philosophical and a doxophilist or non-philosophical perspectives or interpretations.

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13. *Republic*, 533B-533C. Bloom translation, page 212.

It is then possible to mark a beginning here and make the assumption that all this discussion of the Good can be applied to the different ways we read and interpret Plato and the texts that talk to and about him. And the most immediate consequence of setting in motion this assumption is to keep in mind and separate whenever possible that, in everything they read, those who love wisdom look for and see light in “the things that are always the same in all respects,” and those who love opinions look for and see light in “the many beliefs of the many about what’s fair and about the other things [that] roll around somewhere between not-being and being purely and simply.”<sup>14</sup>

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14. Bloom translation, page 160. Shorey’s translates this passage, “the many conventions of the many about the fair and honourable and other things [that] are tumbled about in the mid-region between that which is not and that which is in the true and absolute sense” (volume I, page 533).

My concern now is with the term *nomima*, which means “usages, customs” according to the Ridell-Scott dictionary cited above, and is a form of *nomimos*, which means “conformable to custom, usage, or law, customary, prescriptive, established, lawful, rightful,” translated by Bloom as “beliefs,” and by Shorey as “conventions.” Bloom does clarify in an endnote that the term he translates comes from *nomos*, which is according to the Ridell-Scott dictionary, “anything assigned, a usage, custom, law, ordinance,” but does not explain how “belief” is equivalent to this instance of the term and his understanding that, “here popular, unsure opinion is identified with the opinion supported by civil society” (note 41, page 461).

This is important to point out because of the subsequent terms used by Socrates to define each of the four affections with which the soul examines the four sections of (his division of) the visible and intelligible orders, at the end of Book 6. According to Bloom, they are intellection, thought, trust, and imagination (page 192 of his translation at 511D-511E). According to Shorey, they are intellection or reason, understanding, belief, and picture-thinking or conjecture (volume II, page 117 of his translation). The terms in Greek are *noesin*, *dianoian*, *pistin*, and *eikasian*. Some of the meanings of *pistin* are, “trust in others, faith, faith or belief in one, generally, persuasion of a thing, confidence, assurance, pledge of good faith, warrant, guarantee, and in a commercial sense, credit, trust.” Bloom ever so subtly in this instance tries to give a negative connotation to popular opinions when he suggests that a convention is a belief and that the affection or power to examine the belief is trust. The dialogue overall does seem to express a negative opinion of what the many believe in but I do not think it is necessary to narrow the meaning of terms when there is the smallest possibility that it is unwarranted. Simply put, and as my list of the kinds of censors suggests, it is possible that there is a distinction between what Bloom calls the opinions agreed to and supported by civil society and the opinions of doxophilists.

*Some Thoughts on a Common Object of Medieval Philosophy and Literature*

Earlier in chapter 1 it was suggested that *Don Quixote* was Cervantes' comedic representation of the effects of the rule of philosophy, that his inspiration came from an image of nature that is the creation of a human being that was not a poet, and that in addressing all human beings there were necessarily three possible interpretations to the book as a whole, and therefore to the stories individually – the natural, the poetic and the philosophical.<sup>15</sup> The uses of certain poetic elements now need to be discussed in order that may shed light on the significance of this interpretation.

Another consequence of setting in motion the assumption that there is a kind of writing of books “sealed with seven seals”<sup>16</sup> that secretly refers to and discusses Plato's idea of the Good and the education that leads to this idea is to consider, in simplified version, the arrangement and content of these writings as allegories of a metaphor, that is, as symbolic stories (education) introducing a foreign term (the Good).

It is important to caution the reader at this point that this consideration is best explained by way of examples, without getting into historical accounts of sources that may distract us from our purpose or veil the poetic elements that need to be always and right before our eyes. On the one hand, there is the question of understanding the thought of an author of the past exactly as he or she understood him or herself. And

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15. See pages 16-29 above.

16. Leo Strauss, “The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*,” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1988), page 60.

in this respect it is almost a law of universal application that the more history we know about a writing – the more historical our understanding of it – the less we understand and therefore esteem the author. In *The Allegory of Love*, for example, a book whose aim is to teach the reader how to rediscover the merits of Edmund Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, it took Lewis 111 pages to explain that a medieval 'allegory of love' is a poetic instrument used to tell a married woman about the story or development of the sentiment of love inside the writer's (or poet's) soul. Lewis had to first dismantle our modern approach to allegorical interpretation, which is almost incomparable to the medieval approach because, most importantly, we have 'internalized' or abstracted all of the passions and the conflict between the virtues and vices inside the soul – the term is *psychomachia* in Greek and *bellum intestinum* in Latin. And yet what Lewis was trying to convey is not completely lost, for while we may feel more intelligent discussing love in psychoanalytic terms of ego, superego and id, or according to the anthropological understanding of the savage rituals of our ancestors, we also know how infinitely more delightful it is to see before our eyes, in thoughtful depictions of vivid and familiar images from nature, a sentiment like love! And then he had to dismantle our historical understanding of courtly love and its relationship to the Christian religion, which is colored by our more modern idea of romantic love – a sentiment based on an impossible (unfortunate) love and a system that, because the object of love is innocent, looks up to Christian religious dogma: courtly love is a sentiment based on a forbidden (adulterous) love for a married woman and a system that, because the object of love is sinful, parodies and therefore rivals the Christian religious dogma.<sup>17</sup>

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Another example of how history can be a curious obstacle to understanding a work of art is an anecdote told by the novelist Milan Kundera about his father. The father, a musician, had been somewhere listening to the radio or phonograph with friends, all musicians, too, and melomaniacs, when the chords of a famous symphony – Beethoven’s *Ninth* – was immediately recognized by all. The friends asked the father, “What music is that?” The father, after long reflection replied, “That resembles the music of Beethoven.” Everybody laughed: his father had not recognized the *Ninth Symphony*! They asked, “Are you sure?” His father said, “Yes, it’s the music of Beethoven from the last period.” They asked, “How do you know it’s from the last period?” Then his father directed their attention to a certain harmonic relation that a younger Beethoven would not have ever been able to use. Kundera ends the anecdote by commenting,

“The anecdote is certainly no more than a malicious invention, but it illustrates well that which is the conscience of historical continuity, one of the signs by which is distinguished the man that belongs to the civilization that is (or had been) ours. Everything takes, before our eyes, the allure of a history, it appears like a suite more or less logical of events, attitudes, works.”<sup>18</sup>

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17. C.S. Lewis, “Courtly Love” and “Allegory,” in *The Allegory of Love* (1961), pages 1-111.

18. Milan Kundera, “Première partie: Conscience de la continuité,” in *Le rideau: essai en sept parties*, (2005). The whole anecdote and the quote are from pages 15-16. The translation is mine (there is for now no English translation of this book). The original in French is:

“L’anecdote n’est certainement qu’une invention malicieuse, mais elle illustre bien ce qu’est la conscience de la continuité historique, l’un des signes par lesquels se distingue l’homme appartenant à la civilisation qui est (ou était) la nôtre. Tout prenait, à nos yeux, l’allure d’une histoire, apparaissait comme une suite plus ou moins logique d’événements, d’attitudes, d’œuvres.”

On the other hand, one thing is to consult the expert authority to be aware of the vehicles of invention for a writer and another is to try to reconstruct the philosophical training or formal education of the same writer: while the former is an exercise that brings forth palpable information that can be used for allegorical and metaphorical interpretation, the latter is an exercise in futility. That is, one thing is to be aware that *Don Quixote*'s most important vehicles for Cervantes' invention are, for example, the Spanish and Italian epics *Amadis de Gaul* and *Orlando Furioso* and *Orlando Innamorato*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*, the anonymous picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and even the apocryphal *Don Quixote* by Avellaneda, for some of the adventures in the second part. And we know these sources because Cervantes acknowledges in the novel his indebtedness to the stories and techniques of these and other writers. We consult the experts only in order to get an idea of the possibilities and where to begin. To expect or demand more from expert second-hand accounts may make us disposed to *an immoderate admiration for erudition* and therefore vulnerable to the forces of traditional authority. However, to read widely then ultimately means to become acquainted first-hand with all sources of invention simply, and then with the sources of the writer in question in particular.

Another thing is to try to reconstruct the extent of Cervantes' acquaintance with Plato and Aristotle or Neoplatonic or Aristotelian philosophy, or even to speculate whether there was access to these commentaries in Spain and Italy during Cervantes' lifetime. First, Cervantes explicitly denies in his prologue to the first part of *Don Quixote* any pretensions to knowledge or serious use of philosophical

commentaries. Second, it is not uncommon in the study of poetry and literature to assume that the world according to Plato and Aristotle – the world that is the result of the harmonization of the opinions of Plato and Aristotle – was the accepted or tacit model used by poets until modern times, and therefore it is not uncommon to assume that these philosophers have been present in one form or another in poetic works.<sup>19</sup> And third, speaking in terms of the nature of things, even if we are certain that the poet does not have a specific theoretical or practical experience, we also know that he or she has a special and acute sensibility to and is inspired by everything that surrounds him or her.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, for example, just because Cervantes was a self-educated soldier and poet who denies any pretensions to wisdom and takes more pride in his practical life experiences does not mean we can easily accept expert but second-hand accounts of his possible reading habits or the status of philosophy in Europe in medieval times and the days of knight-errantry novels or in Spain during his lifetime.

That *Don Quixote* is a comedy makes acceptance of expert opinion even more difficult, for according to theory comedy is less a truthful than an undignified or vulgar – and therefore false – representation of human character, one that appeals to lowly passions like envy, jealousy and vanity, which the expert, thinker, scholar or philosopher, soberly discusses because ‘comedy exists’ but not because he or she could be aroused or moved by its despicable qualities and tricks. So when Cervantes repeatedly states throughout *Don Quixote* that he does not stray once from the truth

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19. Cf. Lewis’ *Allegory of Love* (1961), pages 45-46.

20. See Plato, *Ion*, 537C-542B.

the expert cannot realize how serious Cervantes is about the significance of his account. To the modern philosopher Henri Bergson the only laughable quality of the thinker or intellectual is his or her absentmindedness. If Cervantes is read carefully it is possible to see that Bergson's considerations on laughter are just the tip of the iceberg. It is therefore necessary to separate the expert's prejudiced reasons for the ageless and popular success of a work like Cervantes' *Don Quixote* from his or her detailed knowledge of the different manifestations of the object of his or her study. If it is a question of understanding the allegory then our investigation must go on only until we find its most exacting definition.

Generally, according to Lewis' definition, which is the most exacting and therefore most useful to our investigation, an allegory is a way to represent "what is immaterial in picturable terms" – an "equivalence between the immaterial and the material" – and it can be of two kinds, (1) that which begins with an immaterial fact like the passions we experience, and then visibles are invented to express the immaterial fact, and (2) that which "is almost the opposite of allegory...[That is,] if our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world."<sup>21</sup>

Lewis made the distinction between the fictitious world that results from the attempt to express immaterial facts and the real world that results from the attempt to express the invisible because for him the former is the object proper of the poetic allegory and the latter is the object of, for lack of a better name, the political

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21. C.S. Lewis, "Allegory," in *The Allegory of Love* (1961) pages 44-45. Incidentally, the term used by Socrates in the *Republic* is not *allégoria* but *huponoiia*, in Book 2 at 378D, which literally means, "hidden thought."

allegory.<sup>22</sup> The former results in poetry because the writer uses the allegory to express a sentiment – that is, the tool is used according to its craft – and the latter results in something else that is not poetry because the writer uses the allegory to express something that is not the object of poetry. The poetic allegory has its hidden thoughts but these thoughts are also sentimental. Lewis wanted to make his readers aware of the instances in medieval literature where a poetic work is hijacked and used for other reasons he did not identify.<sup>23</sup>

Here, the distinction is presented in order to take it one step further and suggest that first and foremost, a writer who wishes to successfully pass off a poetic for a philosophic work and vice-versa – to imitate in writing the invisibility power Gyges got with the turn of his magical ring – could invert *the effects* of the poetic and philosophic allegories and at the same time fulfill this *expert expectation* of the distinction between the proper and improper use of an allegory. The writer's allegory should be able to have both poetic and philosophic interpretations: it should have sentimental baggage and philosophical significance. To give an oversimplified example for the sake of clarity: if a medieval Gyges states that his or her work is

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22. Lewis calls it sacramental or symbolic allegory, and he identifies its origin in classical antiquity.

23. For example, the poet's use and elaboration of the image of Narcissus admiring his reflection on the surface of the fountain in the first part of *The Romance of the Rose* is interpreted by Lewis as a way for the poet to indicate to his beloved that at that precise moment he was looking into her eyes – the fountain was the 'well of love' and her eyes were two crystal stones at the bottom of the fountain (Ibid., "*The Romance of the Rose*," pages 128-129). This is one of the examples he uses to distinguish the first and second parts of this romance, written by two different authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, respectively, with two very different intentions, the first an allegory of love and the second, according to the translator Frances Hogan's introduction, a thinly disguised harangue against the mendicant orders involved in disputes with the secular masters at the University of Paris (*Romance of the Rose* (1994), page xvii).

Incidentally, the apocryphal *Don Quixote* by Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda is not only one of these hijacked works but also a response to Cervantes' first part, written most probably by a university scholar. In this continuation of the novel Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are the victims of many cruel pranks by university students.

philosophical then this means that on the surface the work will appear to be a dialectical discussion about the preeminence of philosophy or religion but it will actually have the *moral effect* of a sentimental story, and if he or she states that the work is poetic then this means that on the surface it will appear to be a sentimental love or epic story but it will actually have the *dialectical effect* of a philosophical discussion.

That the expectation of the expert in literature, and not the expert in political philosophy, is the standard to outsmart should be quite evident: while everybody, especially the expert, no matter what his or her field of expertise is, looks up to philosophy, the expert in political philosophy looks down on all crafts and especially the poetic craft, an attitude that leads him or her to neglect the serious reading of poetry, which consequently makes him or her an easier victim to the spells and charms of poetry. It is true that, generally speaking, to neglect the reading of philosophy is more common than to neglect the reading of poetry, and that this neglect has its own disadvantages – Don Quixote, who only read poetry and knight-errantry novels, was prone to anger – but what is at issue here is the difference between the literal-mindedness of the reader of philosophy and the reader of poetry. It is like the difference in curing prodigality and miserliness Aristotle talks about in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:<sup>24</sup> just as it is easier to curb the spending of the extravagant than to encourage the spending of the miser, it is much easier to wake up from a dream or fantasy world and be realistic, if only for the sake of physical survival, than to exercise the imagination when it has been stunted to remain always and safely within

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24. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 4.1119b22-4.1122a9.

the concrete and logical or at most inspired by allegories crafted with the driest and coldest of feelings.

The character of Sancho Panza, who is, according to the interpretation put forth earlier, the comedic personification of the effects of the philosophic education, is the perfect illustration of this principle taken to its most ridiculous extreme. Even though Sancho greatly improves his imaginative powers with the influence of Don Quixote, he cannot in the end let go of the concrete and calculating, and all his conceited delusions and the trouble he gets into are due to his neglect of poetry. Indeed, Sancho does not know how to read books – which could be interpreted to actually mean that he does not know how to decipher books – and yet thinks himself capable enough to rule any government on the planet. The more we read into the details the more we see Cervantes take this attitude to its humiliating conclusion: at the beginning of the novel, Don Quixote persuaded Sancho to be his squire by promising to reward his squirely services with the government of an island, the usual reward to loyal and courageous squires in knight-errantry novels. Sancho relentlessly complained to Don Quixote about this unfulfilled promise until in the second part of the novel the duke who tricked them both so many times took the opportunity to play yet another prank on Sancho and offered him the government of one of his townships, which he misrepresented as an island. Incidentally, the name of the duke's island is Barataria, which would literally be “Cheaparia” or “Handoutaria,” “Cheaparium” or “Handoutarium,” “Cheapopolis” or “Handoutopolis,” or even a combination of the two meanings to be “Cheaphandoutopolis” in English,<sup>25</sup> that according to Cervantes

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implied Sancho's true merits or the price Sancho actually paid for getting the government. This name is a far cry from "Callipolis," the name Socrates gives the city in the *Republic*. Even though there were many blatant signs of foul play, which Sancho could see but was simply unable to interpret or make sense of their meaning, he never suspected that he was the victim of the duke's elaborate ruse.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, by adding the loud and shameless tone of comedy to the inversion of the effects of the two allegories, the most humiliating revealed truth of *Don Quixote* is not only the philosophical reader's personal physical inability to read and interpret what is right before his or her eyes – a physical inability that is the result of the moral corrosives that are years of unchecked extreme arrogance, vanity and self-satisfaction – but also the embarrassing implication that he or she is the subject of the worst kind of slander, the one where everybody, without any compassion, talks about the subject's dirtiest, pettiest secret without his or her knowledge, where everybody knows about (and perpetuates) this moral blindness except him or her. And the character of Don Quixote, the personification of the effects of the poetic education, shows us the poetic reader's over-inflated and over-active imagination's inability – a physical inability that is the result of years of fantasizing and dreaming unchecked by coherent discourse, deliberation and reason – to grasp that the impoverished world of ideas portrayed by philosophical allegories is but an impostor of the nature that had been once destined to inspire him or her.

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25. "Barato," according to the Real Academia de España's 17th century *Diccionario de Autoridades*, is "cheap," the lower price paid for something worth more, and to "dar barato" is the gratuity or handout the winner of a card game gives to whomever he wishes.

26. The story of Sancho's government is told intermittently between chapters 41 and 53 of the second part of *Don Quixote*.



And still Cervantes' shameless mockery is not the worst sort of slanderous revenges. This is the state of things in the writings in the Christian world, where the safe-keeping of philosophy was the responsibility of the different religious orders that controlled the universities, and thus the world in which poetic works became the only place where this most private of teachings or slander could be openly expressed. It is in this context that the foolish loves of Amadis and Orlando – the former, the personification of the poet's education and talents, and the latter the personification of the slandered philosopher's plight – must be interpreted.

At this point, one may already be able to anticipate the implications of this discussion against Strauss' observation on the difference between the status of philosophy in the Christian and Islamic-Jewish worlds:

“The official recognition of philosophy in the Christian world doubtless had its drawbacks. That recognition was bought at the price of the imposition of strict ecclesiastical supervision. The precarious position of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world, on the other hand, guaranteed, or necessitated, its private character, and therewith a higher degree of inner freedom. The situation of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world resembles in this respect its situation in classical Greece. It has often been said that the Greek city was a totalitarian social order: it comprised and regulated, not only political and legal matters proper, but morality, religion, tragedy, and comedy as well. There was, however, one activity which was, in fact and in theory, essentially and radically private, transpolitical, and transsocial:

philosophy. The philosophic schools were founded, not by authorities civil or ecclesiastical, but by men without authority, by private men. In this respect, I said, the situation of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world resembles the Greek situation rather than the situation in Christian Europe. This fact was recognized by the Islamic-Jewish philosophers themselves: elaborating on a remark of Aristotle, they speak of the philosophic life as a radically private life: they compare it to the life of a hermit.<sup>27</sup>

What could be worse than adding the loud and shameless tone of comedy to the inversion of the effects of the two allegories? First, the safeguard of the allegorical inversions guarantees the more openly “philosophy” can be discussed in an unsuspecting setting. If we translate what Strauss is saying about the private character of philosophy in the Islamic-Jewish world to the use of allegories, it means that there are no philosophical texts or treatises proper or simply where to discuss philosophy: the whole discussion of philosophy occurs in religious or poetic texts. And we can thus speak of the following generalities:

- (1) Generally, we study the attitude of the political regime towards philosophy in order to know whether the regime is friendly or unfriendly to philosophy.
  - (a) If the political regime is friendly towards philosophy then it means that philosophical works are subject to public scrutiny or supervision, and thus we must look for the private discussion of philosophy in poetic works.

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27. Leo Strauss, “How to Begin to Study Medieval Philosophy,” in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (1989), page 223.

- (b) If the political regime is unfriendly towards philosophy then it means that there is no genuine public discussion of philosophy, and thus we must look in all creative works for the private discussion of philosophy. This may mean that alternatively or in addition to this investigation:
- (2) We study the dominant or prevailing religion of the political regime and the attitude of this religion towards philosophy.
- (a) If the religion is friendly towards philosophy then we look for the private discussion of philosophy in poetic works. However, when the political regime and/or its religion or moral code is friendly to philosophy, it also follows that what is explicitly discussed in philosophical and religious texts – the dialectical training – is to be interpreted and used for that one part of the educational objectives.<sup>28</sup>
- (b) If the religion is unfriendly towards philosophy then we look for the private discussion of philosophy in all creative works. This may mean that alternatively or in addition to this investigation:
- (3) Generally, within poetic works we look at the themes of love and war, and we look for the private discussion of philosophy in the conflictive elements of each of these themes. And thus, it is important to know that:
- (a) Love can be fortunate or unfortunate (according to the rules that make up the system of love, whatever true love may be for the public and private individuals of the political regime), and virtuous or vicious (according to the religion or whatever dictates the standard of the moral code of the

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28. The educations in Justice and Reason mentioned below.

political regime, including the positive or human-made laws). In the case of knight-errantry novels, for example, there is:

- i. Courtly love that is between a knight and the wife or mistress of another knight or feudal lord or even a giant or wizard (Amadis' brother, Galaor, seduced many women in general, and many mistresses in particular), and
- ii. Courtly love between unequals as in the case of the love of Amadis and Oriana, the daughter of a king and queen (at first Amadis did not know that he was the son of a king and queen), and the case of Orlando's unrequited love for the Muslim princess Angelica (not only was Orlando already married but also a Christian).

(b) War can be domestic or foreign, defensive (for the survival or preservation of the political regime) or offensive (for the conquest or the exportation of the way of life and moral code of the political regime). In the case of knight-errantry novels, for example, there is:

- (i) Civil war in the sense that the king's knights compete and scheme against each other (as in the case of the original Orlando epic, the French *Chanson de Roland*), and in the sense that there is war among the Christian kings (in the case of the *Amadis* there is, for example, among others, a conflict between the Emperors of Greece and Rome), and there is

- (ii) Foreign war in the sense that there is conflict between religions (as in the case of the two Italian Orlando epics there is the conflict between ‘the cross and the crescent’), and in the sense that there is war between human beings and giants, and between human beings and wizards, and even between giants and wizards.

This means, for example, that usually what students of Islamic and Jewish medieval political philosophy do is read a work like the *Guide for the Perplexed*, a religious book composed in the form of a long-distance correspondence between a teacher and a student who did not finish his studies before moving away, as if they were trying to find a needle in a haystack: they see it as a long, babbling discussion of religious matters interrupted by the fateful drop of a term here and there. And what is called ‘the technique of careful reading’ is a kind of resistance struggle to be awake during the reading of religious babble for that one lucky, fleeting moment when the term quickly flashes by and reassures the reader that the writer is really interested in philosophy and not religion.

This attitude of reading on the look out for flashes of wisdom serves a moral purpose, hinted at in the beginning of the discussion of allegories, but what is being suggested now is something more: when Plato designed his plan he gave each reader a key, a piece to the puzzle, according to his or her talents and moral character, that would light his or her way through the labyrinth of his ideas. The key he gave the poetic soul was a complete education in Justice and to the philosophic soul he gave a

complete education in Reason. That when Aristotle came along, he decided that he was going to leave Plato's distribution of keys alone but to increase the size of the labyrinth by discovering (or inventing) the method of deduction and introducing the systematic study of metaphysics. That is, he built a labyrinth around Plato's labyrinth. And that when Alfarabi came along, he not only changed the distribution of keys but also built a formidable wall around the two labyrinths: he composed philosophical allegories that would further arrest both sentimental and intellectual development. And yet, when read under the correct assumptions, his works most openly discuss the writing methods of Plato and Aristotle. That is, he built an almost unbreakable and unscalable wall around Plato and Aristotle's two labyrinths, which could then as if by magic instantly disappear and with it these two labyrinths to show the heart of the matter. The *Selected Aphorisms*, for example, are a collection of maxims that superficially seem to be disorganized, cut up little pieces of knowledge from Plato and Aristotle's works sloppily pasted together into a collage of sorts made by a kindergartener, but if given the right direction, the reader can understand that it is a coherent and organized account of the way and kinds of lies Plato and Aristotle tell. Another example, *The Attainment of Happiness*, the introduction to *The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, a very obscure and incoherent text superficially, with the right direction becomes a very clear account of the way to identify, decipher and then write so as to teach the ascent to the Ideas. It is the very science of metaphysics Alfarabi complains does not exist at the end of the *Philosophy of Aristotle*. Still, without the keys his works are like those impenetrable medieval fortresses built over steep cliffs.

## *La Pièce de Résistance*

To repeat what was said in the beginning of the chapter: it is important to try to see every element of this investigation from the perspective that takes into consideration the demands or constraints of secrecy. Therefore, we must take a step back and state that once the allegory or the writing's outermost protection is in place the next question is how to give it the desired permeability. We suggest here that the metaphor is the element that makes this kind of writing vulnerable to the desired interpretation. A metaphor, and this time we refer to Aristotle's definition, is the introduction or imposition of a foreign term in the discourse, and it comes up in the *Poetics* as one of the kinds of significant or meaningful names or nouns, and in the *Rhetoric* as one of the tools to make a speech brilliant, exotic and set 'before the eyes.'

The most obvious and immediate image that comes to mind is that if the text is like a fortress then the metaphor is, from the perspective of the reader, like the spy of an invading army, and from the perspective of the writer, like the gatekeeper who watches over the fortress at night to make sure only friends get inside. This image continues inside: once the reader is inside then there is the question of getting inside the castle and ultimately having access to the king.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Part of the idea comes from an image elaborated by Maimonides at the end of the *Guide for the Perplexed* (III.51). And part of the idea comes from Garci-Rodríguez de Montalvo's image, in *Amadis de Gaula*, of Apolidón's castle in the Firm Island (Insula Firme), whose government was given to Amadis as a prize after he broke the spell on the arch and the king and queen's chamber, which could only be broken by a knight who surpassed Apolidón in bounty (bondad). Apolidón had cast the spell before he left the government of the island to his sons and returned to Greece, and mandated that whoever broke the spell was the destined and rightful lord of the island. After this adventure Amadis was known as the Greek Knight.

Because it is a question of the initial vulnerability of the writing, the interest is not in the metaphor as the introduction of an idea foreign to the logic and purpose of the discourse but as the ability to transform certain subtle traits or habits into visibles. This means that the most important thing a writing of this nature must be able to do to convey vulnerability is to demonstrate affection without the usual signs of passionate love. To this effect the writer must, for example, demonstrate:

- (1) The reliability that would give him or her more freedom to gratify the reader; that he or she has self-control;
- (2) That he or she is not interested in the opinions of others and boasting;
- (3) That the things they do together could never be the subject of gossip;
- (4) That he or she is loyal and not jealous;
- (5) That he or she is not interested in the exchange of favors or taking note of who gives more or less;
- (6) That he or she has regard for their present enjoyment and future advantage;
- (7) That he or she does not get upset over small things and in big things releases anger slowly, forgiving unintentional offenses and trying to prevent intentional ones;
- (8) That he or she does not praise the reader for the sake of flattery but of merit;



(9) That he or she is a firm friend to those who are worthy of love and those who are needy of love, modest and tell no tales, and are able to reward his or her friendship, and who would share possessions even in old age.<sup>30</sup>

Some questions that may help begin to visualize this process are:

- (1) How does one demonstrate love without the usual signs?
- (2) How would a writer get into the reader's heart?
- (3) How does one put a whisper before the eyes?
- (4) How would a writer make him or herself briefly visible?
- (5) How would one show approval or disapproval of an opinion?
- (6) How does a writer make the reader feel lucky?
- (7) How would one distinguish one's constant, loyal love from the passionate, fickle kind?

Because this moral education on friendship should go unnoticed, examples of it are difficult to describe. They are the kind of thing that comes to light after long reflection about the reasons why we like to read a certain writer or feel that he or she speaks to us or feel improvement by what we have read. Nevertheless, one good example is from Aristotle: it could be said that while no one who is familiar with Aristotle's works would deny that he is a wonderful, dedicated and patient teacher, he is also a constant and loyal friend – he is all of the things listed above. That is, there is a difference between the sentiments of the teacher and the friend. It is well known

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30. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230E-234C.

that in the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he makes a big deal about how important it is to be loyal to the truth and that this is what compels him to take issue with Plato's doctrine of ideas, and then he drops the subject: he does not take issue with Plato. Later in the book he states that it is impossible to love artificial things in the same way we love other human beings. These two statements by Aristotle are wide apart and there is nothing in the text that would move the reader to connect them, but if they are put together then it is possible to speculate that in dropping the argument with Plato, Aristotle was showing where his loyalties really stood. Then the issue is to think about what happened in between these two statements. This is not an isolated incident: Plato is always present in Aristotle's works: he always has something to clarify about what Plato meant to say in his dialogues. What is important to understand from this example is that contradictions or accidents in the text are not simply memory or intelligence markers – like those flashes of wisdom we alluded to earlier – but also indications of sentiment.

Another good example is Cervantes' inconsistencies in the account of Dorotea and Cardenio's actions in chapter 36 of the first part of *Don Quixote*, which happen at the inn during all the events interpreted earlier in this dissertation. We know from the story that in the end Dorotea was coupled with Fernando, and Cardenio with Luscinda. Now, if Fernando is the personification of he who is destined for philosophy (that is, he who is to be favored by Fortune), Cardenio is the personification of he who is to be destined for poetry (that is, he who is to be shunned by Fortune), Dorotea is the personification of Reason and Luscinda the personification of Justice, then the overarching story as told by Cervantes is exactly the story told or

agreement made by Plato. And the ‘inconsistencies’ in the telling of the story – Cardenio’s double discovery and Dorotea’s double fainting – are Cervantes’ ways of telling the reader where he stands on how he believes the coupling should actually be. In this case, he is trying to tell us two things: first, that by going through all the elaborate detailed designs of his story he respects Plato’s education, account and manner of communication, and second, that the one shunned by Fortune should perhaps get the education in Reason and not (only) the education in Justice.

This kind of metaphor should be set in the writing so that on close inspection it is recognized and understood by the reader much like the way Orlando learned of Angelica’s lover in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. The poem is a continuation of *Orlando Innamorato* (“Orlando in love”) by Boiardo, where he sees for the first time, instantly falls in love with and follows Angelica, a Muslim princess, who does not correspond Orlando’s love, preferring instead to send him, every time Orlando finally catches up with her, on impossible, dangerous tasks. In Ariosto’s second part Orlando goes mad when, during his search for the Saracen Mandricard, he came to a forest, slowed down to rest, and taking a closer look at the barks of trees noticed that they were inscribed in Angelica’s handwriting with her name and that of her lover Medor:

“He saw ‘Angelica’ and ‘Medor’ in a hundred places, united by a hundred love-knots. The letters were so many nails with which Love pierced and wounded his heart. He searched in his mind for any number of excuses to reject what he could not

help believing; he tried to persuade himself that it was some other Angelica who had written her name on the bark.”<sup>31</sup>

Orlando did not give up hope until he met a herdsman who told him the story of the two lovers and how he had helped them, and then showed him the bracelet Angelica had left as a token of gratitude for the herdsman’s hospitality.

Again, the important thing to keep in mind in this kind of investigation is not the brilliant effect or vividness of the metaphor – this is why C.S. Lewis’ recommendations were not to the point here<sup>32</sup> – but rather the subtle way to achieve a constant, loyal attitude towards friendship, which would give just the right permeability to loyal, constant friends who would prove worthy of the treasures inside the fortress. Because of its subtlety the metaphor could be divided in parts that are separated by great distances of intermediate discourses and ideas that may or may not help recognize and understand the metaphorical effect.

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31. Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, Canto 23.102, prose translation by Guido Waldman, page 280.

32. For the serious study of metaphors Lewis recommends the reading of Dante.

Conclusion: Timing and Philosophy: Learning by Accident and the Importance of the Beautiful in Writing that Teaches

“Nothing much...can ever happen if the “stern” and the “meek” fall into two mutually exclusive classes. And never forget that this is their *natural* condition. The man who combines both characters – the knight – is a work not of nature but of art; of that art which has human beings, instead of canvas or marble, for its medium.

C.S. Lewis, “The Necessity of Chivalry” (1940)

The writer who intends to transmit and preserve Plato’s tradition is faced with a daunting task. Especially in the beginning, to philosophize is to resolutely confront perplexity about the world we live in and ourselves. And the student who decides to read philosophy should be considered in principle a person who has decided to openly share this resolution with others. On the one hand, the beginning is awkward not only because it is difficult for the student to articulate this perplexity but also because the student is unaware of and therefore is not receptive to the language and method of philosophical discourse. To quantify possession of knowledge is complicated. Hard work does not seem to pay. On the other hand, while the most serious and profound education of a human being is self-knowledge, which ultimately permits of no outside influence from writers or teachers in general, as Plutarch reminds us, progress manifests itself to the person alone through unmistakable and indisputable signs.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, the true signs of progress in philosophy may not clearly manifest

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1. Plutarch, *How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue*, 76B-76C.

themselves to the student at all or for many years to come. This becomes evident if we take a superficial look at the 11 signs Plutarch discusses in his treatise on how to measure progress in virtue, referred to above:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) To be able to reason without mishap;
- (2) To have an irrational yearning, like hunger or thirst, for philosophy;
- (3) To effectively be able to dissipate depression and dismay in the face of perplexity;
- (4) Gentleness in the face of criticisms from friends and foes;
- (5) To change from a discourse that is ostentatious and artificial to one that is concerned with character and feeling;
- (6) To learn from any source, not only from what is heard but also from what is seen and done;
- (7) To refrain from displaying our successes, or favors or kindnesses to others;
- (8) To be able to assume responsibility for our errors;
- (9) To abate the emotions;
- (10) To be able to emulate and be loyal to what is admirable, in good and bad times; and
- (11) To no longer believe that any of our actions is unimportant.

However, this list makes clear that the actions of a philosophy teacher should then aim for goals that go beyond the actual moment the student converses with him or her –that is, reads his or her book – to be realized either at a later time or that once

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2. These signs have been oversimplified for the sake of brevity. Plutarch explains all of them in detail and provides for each many examples from philosophy, history and poetry.

realized can only be perceived by the student. Indeed, there are many philosophical treatises, from which to draw examples, written in the form of teacher-student correspondence, prefaced with intentions to influence the student's thoughts and actions long after their physical separation. Plutarch's treatise on how to listen to lectures is a letter addressed to a student who has come of age and is thus free from Plutarch's control.<sup>3</sup> And Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* is perhaps the most famous example of this kind of treatise.

Thus, the writer's actions are like seeds planted in certain, fertile soil, in the hope of good weather, and they are of three sorts: (1) For the clear reception of the language, methods and images of the philosophers; (2) For the commitment of time to develop solid, constant reading and study habits; and (3) For the inspiration of the feeling of awe.

In order to make a student receptive to the language, methods and images of the philosophers, the writer first shifts his or her attention from a concern with what and how others do things to a concern with what and how he or she feels and acts, that is, the writer shifts the focus of his or her mind's vision toward him or herself. The purpose of this movement toward the self is to silence the mind and the senses so that the complete body may become a fine receptacle of thoughts much like the powerful antennas astrophysicists have devised to listen for signs of extraterrestrial life. This is done in two ways: (1) by quickly eliminating any prejudice that may exist against the situation or doctrine being studied, and (2) by making the student serene. Chapter 3.15 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is an excellent guide on how to eliminate prejudice, but

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3. *On Listening to Lectures*, 37C-37D.

what is most important to sum up from it and keep in mind is that the prejudice must be addressed before proceeding to anything else. An example, from Aristotle's chapter, of an argument that eliminates prejudice is to attack calumny, showing how it alters judgment without paying enough attention to the facts.

To make students serene, careful attention is paid to the way the student moves and talks, and his or her moods and physical appearance, sometimes openly letting him or her know he or she is being observed and judged, sometimes not. A comment pregnant with human understanding in the form of a lightning flash-like gesture is enough to convey observation without disrupting the reading. It is important to show sensibility to anything that may reveal the individual student's emotions: that is, who is witty or quiet, confident or shy (especially whether he or she blushes or not), moody or well-mannered, melancholy or fun-loving, experienced or inexperienced, hard-working or lazy, physically strong or weak (especially in the voice but also in the way he or she uses all of his or her sensory organs), male or female, arrogant or humble, distracted or attentive, realistic or lofty, transparent or disguised, who has neat or disheveled physical appearance, and who has a solid or poor education. All extremes are then indiscriminately tempered by their opposites: although at one level the teaching is particularized, no student is singled out or overly praised or encouraged to remain the same.

Because the purpose of constant reading and study habits is to inspire affection for philosophy, the only way for a writer to encourage students to commit time to develop this constancy is to draw attention to him or herself in novel ways, much like flirting and teasing are used in the preambles of love to test the attentiveness or



inattentiveness between the lovers. Like the beloved who is flirting, the writer gives students the impression that everything that happens in the book depends on his or her mood, whether the mood is well-founded or capricious, or whether it is before or after something is said or done. And like the lover who is teasing, the writer tricks or sets up obstacles that are evidently harmless but a bit ridiculous in order to encourage folly. Good examples of this are Socrates' first interrogation in the *Lysis*, how Maimonides conceals and then reveals himself in the *Guide for the Perplexed*, and Aristotle's discussion of the use of laughter in chapter 3.14 of the *Rhetoric*. However, all of this must be carried out as surreptitiously as the lover in Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus*.

The purpose of inspiring the feeling of awe is to make learning by accident possible. What is called here learning by accident is something similar to what happens in a story by Antiphanes that Plutarch relates when he discusses the change in discourse that takes place when there is progress in virtue (number five on the list of signs above), and which must be quoted in its entirety:

“Antiphanes said humorously that in a certain city words congealed with the cold the moment they were spoken, and later, as they thawed out, people heard in the summer what they had said to one another in the winter; it was the same way, he asserted, with what was said by Plato to men still in their youth; not until long afterwards, if ever, did most of them come to perceive the meaning, when they had become old men. And this is the general experience with philosophy as a whole until the

judgment acquires a healthy stability, and begins to find itself in accord with principles productive of character and breadth of mind, and to look for the kind of discourse whose footprints, in the words of Aesop, are turned toward us rather than away from us.”<sup>4</sup>

Because there is such a long interval of time between the conversations and the actual understanding of the meaning of the conversations, the student experiences the feeling that he or she has learned as if by accident or great luck. The more the student perseveres in the study of philosophy, the more he or she will experience these lucky moments, and will thus tend to be in awe and faithful like the pious<sup>5</sup> because of what they perceive to be their special relationship to philosophy.

The possibility of learning by accident is effected through great or extraordinary deeds. Great deeds are anything that shows that the writer devotes excessive time and effort to the writing, as well as concern with benevolence, justice and magnanimity. Extraordinary deeds come about when the writer accustoms the student to certain writing expressions and habits, practiced everywhere with quasi-religious fervor, and then breaks them at opportune moments. In short, the purpose of these deeds is to make the impossible appear possible, almost to the point where the students question the authority or sanity of the writer. Perhaps no one is more outspoken and thus a better guide to these kinds of deeds and how to use them than Machiavelli.

Given these circumstances, it is evident that to increase as much as is humanly possible the probability of making a connection with a student separated by great

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4. Plutarch, *How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue*, 79A-B. Translation by Frank Cole Babbitt in *Moralia* (2005), volume I, page 421.

5. Aristotle commends this characteristic of the lucky. See *Rhetoric*, 2.15.1391a33-1391b4.

distance and time depends on precise and thorough preparation. Part of this preparation has to be guided by the writer's use of the beautiful, and part of it depends on the writer's use of his or her discursive abilities. However difficult it may seem on first impression, it could be said that Plato's dialogues between Socrates and Hippias address, from the perspective of the teacher, and therefore quite clearly, two aspects of this preparation.

The two Platonic dialogues between Socrates and Hippias have been chosen because of their subjects and because of all the dialogues they come closest to conversations between equals, that is, between two teachers, and thus are most suited to our audience and the perspective discussed heretofore. And unlike what happens in the *Euthydemus*, *Parmenides*, *Protagoras*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Timaeus*, Socrates seems to actually teach something to Hippias, and not, as Socrates claims usually happens, the other way around. This is not to say that theiraporeutic conclusions are unimportant or markedly different from otheraporeutic dialogues, but to note that in each of these dialogues there is a change in Hippias almost as visible as Thrasymachus' blushing at the beginning of the *Republic*. And this perception of change, again, is most suited to our chosen perspective as one of those opportunities where Plato seems to be placing before us a finely polished mirror, much like the ones Plutarch talks about,<sup>6</sup> that reflects images of the emotions we go through and the live transformation of our character when we are actively progressing in our learning.

But before examining in what way the dialogues are useful to writers, they need to be brought to life, much like we attempted to do earlier in chapter 2 with Plato's

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6. Plutarch, *How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue*, 85B.

*Apology*, and Plutarch's treatise on how to listen to lectures is most helpful in this process.

Much like Aristotle proceeds in his treatise *On the Soul*, in which he reduces the animal soul to the nutritive part and the sense of touch, its two life-essential components, and from this go on to explain what is the substance of animal in his *Parva Naturalia*, it could be said that there are at least two steps to bringing to life a Platonic dialogue: (1) To strip off from them anything that has to do with style, leaving only the contents or bare text, that is, to remove its form and theatrical performance, or what is the same, to strip off anything that stirs our feelings or plays on our emotions; and (2) To particularize the bare text according to intention, that is, to read the text as a tool for a specific purpose.

The reason for this is to be what Plutarch calls "keen and heartless critics" as to the utility and truth of the speeches, the two things that constitute the life-essential components of anything that we hear or read.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that experience or speed of apprehension plays a part in this process: literally, the quicker and subtler the learner, the lesser and more appropriate the kind of problems posed to the text, and the sooner the teaching of the dialogue becomes evident.<sup>8</sup> A good example that parallels Plutarch's suggestions for the right kind of attitude and posing of questions to be aimed at when confronting a speaker in the Hippias dialogues is Socrates' question, and the way he waited until after Hippias' public speech on Homer to raise it in private, in the Hippias Minor: Socrates missed most of the lecture because he

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7. *On How to Listen to Lectures*, 41A-41B.

8. *Ibid.* 42E-44A, and 47C-47E.

could not understand why Hippias could so confidently assert that between Achilles and Odysseus, Achilles was the better man according to Homer.<sup>9</sup>

The most difficult task to carry out in the beginning is to eliminate any prejudice we may have against or in favor of the situation or doctrine discussed. In the case of the character of Hippias, for example, the problem is not so much the quality of his performance in these two most likely fictitious dialogues, but our impression of how Socrates distinguished himself from the sophists and their approach to education in the *Apology*: again, because for the student of Plato it is like a court transcript of the trial of Socrates, the *Apology*, recommending itself as a writing that seems less likely to have been tampered with by Plato's imagination, is of higher dignity than the *Hippias Major* and *Hippias Minor*. However, whatever we may think of sophists and their share in making the Athenians hostile toward Socrates, Socrates has an advantage over Hippias that needs to be removed.

Another difficulty along these same lines is to overcome the suspicion aroused by the ridiculous character and language of the conversation between Socrates and Hippias, because it is a deep-rooted prejudice that is encouraged throughout the dialogues but more consequentially in the *Republic*.

This tendency to prioritize must also be checked when the bare text is particularized. While it may be admitted that in a general comparison the person who uses things is superior to the person who crafts them and the person who imitates them,<sup>10</sup> this comparison is no longer relevant when it comes to particulars. The

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9. See especially Plutarch, *ibid.* 43D, and *Hippias Minor*, 364B, and 364D-364E.

10. See *Republic*, 601D-602A.

carpenter, for example, is and should be less concerned with the form of the bed than with the quality of the wood of the bed. Similarly, in the case of the Hippias dialogues – and because our purpose here is to sharpen our view of the perspective of the writer – the discussion of the beautiful in the *Hippias Major*, and the discussion of whether and why Achilles or Odysseus is the better man in the *Hippias Minor*, should not distract us from, respectively, the discussions of what makes or not the parts of a speech beautiful, and, when it comes to text interpretation, in what way feigning a defect voluntarily is superior to feigning it involuntarily.

If, on the one hand, the dialogues are to indeed be one of those useful finely polished mirrors mentioned earlier, and we faithfully, and without fear of getting personal with Plato,<sup>11</sup> pursue what is in the interest of the writer in preparation for a successful connection with a student – that is, to know how to use the beautiful and improve our discursive abilities – and, on the other hand, apply the principles discussed above to strip down the dialogues to their life-essential components, then the following useful truth comes forth from the Hippias dialogues:

For all the vulgarity of his dress and demeanor, Hippias seems to be quite successful in acquiring external goods, traveling around the world carrying out embassies, and convincing people that he knows many things.<sup>12</sup> His self-conceit has a limit: out of respect for the dead, he will not say unkind things about the ancient sages, who did not develop the techniques that allow him to make knowledge more accessible to a larger number of people, and thus were unable to profit financially

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11. See Plutarch, *ibid.* 43D-43F.

12. Plato, *Hippias Major*, 281A-281C, 282D-282E, and *Hippias Minor*, 368B-368E.

from their knowledge.<sup>13</sup> His interest in teaching is not entirely lucre: he makes it a point to go to Sparta – where he is popular but also where foreign teachers are forbidden to instruct the young – to deliver public speeches free of charge; he is willing to use his good memory to learn anything that is of interest to his audience; and although somewhat impatient with hair-splitting arguments,<sup>14</sup> he is willing to talk to anyone privately and answer any questions.<sup>15</sup> He is even good at producing all sorts of poetry, metalwork, leatherwork and weaving and making his own clothes.<sup>16</sup>

But above all things we learn from the *Hippias Major* that Hippias successfully managed to deliver a public speech in Sparta on the possible beautiful occupations that would make a person famous, were they to be taken up in youth.<sup>17</sup> That is, he has managed to circumvent the Spartan law forbidding the foreign instruction of the young. And, much like the flimsy disguise Socrates used to conceal himself before Hippias,<sup>18</sup> all he had to do was to preface his speech by saying that it was a report of the advice given by Nestor to Neoptolemus after Troy, that is, all he had to do was to put the speech in the form of a genealogy of heroes and men, a form his Spartan audience was fond of.<sup>19</sup>

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13. *Hippias Major*, 281C-282A.

14. See the quote on page 132, below.

15. *Hippias Major*, 284C, 285E, 288D, 289E, 290E, 293A, 301B-301C, and *Hippias Minor*, 363C and 364C.

16. *Hippias Minor*, 368B-368E.

17. *Hippias Major*, 286A.

18. *Ibid.* 298B.

19. *Ibid.* 285D-285E, and 286A-286B. The other form of speech enjoyed by the Spartans is the histories of the foundation of ancient cities.

Similarly, we learn from the *Hippias Minor* that for the most part it could be said that Homer thought Achilles was better than Odysseus by simply pointing to the way he represented their characters in speech – Achilles as a simple and honest person, and Odysseus as an astute person and liar – without getting into a discussion of the importance and particulars of their actions.<sup>20</sup>

This is the teaching of the Hippias dialogues, that is, that in order to make a foreign speech beautiful according to whatever the prevailing laws and accepted customs may be, all we need to do is put it in a form our audience likes, and in order to safeguard the teachings of the speech it is enough to envelop it in the appropriate character.

For the quick and experienced, there is no need to go into further details or further along in the dialogues. But, to quote from Plutarch's treatise:

“Just as those who drink, after they have quenched their thirst, begin then to observe the ornamentation of the drinking-cups and to turn them about, so the young man, when he is well replenished with doctrines and has some respite, may be allowed to inspect the style to see whether it contains anything elegant and exquisite.”<sup>21</sup>

So, in the same spirit, let us briefly mention a few more things about these two teachings. In relation to the use of the beautiful, the *Hippias Major* presents six

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20. *Hippias Minor*, 364E-365A.

21. *On Listening to Lectures*, 42D. Frank Cole Babbitt translation, page 229.



definitions, three put forth by Hippias and three put forth by Socrates, and who and who would not agree to each of them:

(1) (Put forth by Hippias:) A beautiful girl: everyone but the craftsmen and the gods would agree with this definition.<sup>22</sup>

(2) (Put forth by Hippias:) Gold, or according to Socrates' later reformulation, 'what is appropriate to each thing:' everyone but the craftsmen, painters and sculptors, would agree with this definition.<sup>23</sup>

(3) (Put forth by Hippias:) For a man to be rich, in health, honored by the Greeks, and to get to old age after honorably burying his own parents and in turn be buried well and magnificently by his own descendants: although long-winded according to Socrates, he points out that only some but the gods and heroes would agree with this definition.<sup>24</sup>

(4) (Put forth by Socrates:) The useful: Hippias agrees wholeheartedly with this definition. Here Hippias points out politics as a good example of uses of this definition, while Socrates points out wisdom as a counterargument to the definition.<sup>25</sup>

(5) (Put forth by Socrates:) The advantageous or beneficial: again, Hippias agrees with this definition with enthusiasm.<sup>26</sup>

(6) (Put forth by Socrates as a modification of Hippias' first definition:)

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22. Ibid. 287E, and 289A-289C.

23. Ibid. 289E-291C, and Socrates later returns to it at 293D-294E.

24. Ibid. 291D-291E, 292C.

25. Ibid. 295A-296D.

26. Ibid. 296D-297C.

beneficial pleasure, or that which awakens desire only through the most innocent of senses, sight and hearing: after a long discussion Hippias finally agrees with Socrates.<sup>27</sup>

When Socrates refutes the final definition, Hippias makes the following remark:

“But Socrates, really, what do you think of all that? It’s flakings and clippings of speeches, as I told you before, divided up small. But here’s what is fine and worth a lot more: to be able to present a speech well and finely, in court or council or any other authority to whom you give the speech, to convince them and go home carrying not the smallest but the greatest of prizes, the successful defense of yourself, your property, and friends. One should stick to that. He should give up and abandon all that small-talking, so he won’t be thought a complete fool for applying himself, as he is now, to babbling nonsense.”<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the dialogue we are taught to put together our speeches either by putting together the pieces and clippings of the different definitions of the beautiful left by Socrates, or by looking to victory alone, as Hippias suggests. And nothing prevents us from combining both approaches, that is, from either combining an outer form that will be considered beautiful by the authority, together with the clippings of

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27. Ibid. 297D-303D.

28. Ibid. 304A-304B. Translation by Paul Woodruff, in *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*, pages 78-79.

definitions that are sensitive to the diversity of opinions, and are thus persuasive to specific audiences, interspersed or arranged within the outer, more impressive form; or from combining an outer form that is the product of the clippings and pieces of leftover definitions and will be considered ugly and chaotic by the authority, together with the more impressive form within the outside chaos. Everything depends on the particulars of the situation and the immediate teaching and writing objectives, and we would do well to follow the principles of Plutarch's definition of a beautiful speech:

“In every piece of work, beauty is achieved through the congruence of numerous factors, so to speak, brought into union under the rule of a certain due proportion and harmony, whereas ugliness is ready to spring into being if only a single chance element be omitted or added out of place.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, there is one more lesson from the *Hippias Minor*. When discussing the different senses of the term ‘false’ in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle brings up this dialogue briefly at the end.<sup>30</sup> According to him, the reasoning of the *Hippias Minor* is fallacious because it interprets as ‘false’ those who are capable of saying false things, and not those who make false speeches in order to say false things. In addition to this, he says that the reasoning that those who are voluntarily false are better is the result of a false induction, that is, that those who limp voluntarily are better than those who

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29. Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures*, 45C-45D. Babbitt translation, page 243.

30. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ.29.1025a3-12.

limp involuntarily, because it interprets ‘to limp’ as ‘to imitate the one who limps,’ when in fact whoever was voluntarily limp would be worse, and that this is the case in all moral actions.

And thus, to summarize the lesson, just as there is more to the design and organization of a beautiful speech than its outward form, there are situations where it is necessary to not only envelop the teaching of the writing within a particular character, but also sometimes within voluntarily defective reasoning or within reasoning that seems involuntarily defective, that betray themselves to the different students after some thought.

Any volunteers?

THE END.

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