The Death of Don Quixote

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Introduction.

To try to do justice to Don Quixote is something like tilting at a windmill: however bold or well-meaning the attempt, the result is all too likely to be a broken head on one side and an unaffected giant on the other. In spite of that I venture on this lecture; it must be that I have been enchanted, both by the book, and by the things my fellow readers have taught me about it. Robert Bart and Joe Sachs are the readers who first come to mind, and I will be grateful if I should even partly succeed in following their examples. Then, too, perhaps I am in love with an imaginary notion of Friday Night Lectures and Question Periods as occasions when the whole community gathers to think and learn together. And since this comes closest to happening when tutors lecture on program books, I feel bound to do what I can toward the establishment of such a Golden Age.

I.

The lecture is called "The Death of Don Quixote" because I want to think about the end of the book. Quixote's deathbed renunciation of knight-errantry and books of chivalry seems to call a great deal into question. Certainly it makes one wonder what the true character of Part One may be. For that had seemed to be a praise of Don Quixote and of that faith of a knight-errant by which he swears. I hope to find that Part One and Part Two belong together and that Quixote's beginning and his end are part of one and the same story, though they seem so hard to reconcile. To do that I will have to spend more time on his life than on his death, and on Part One than on Part Two. For it is what I think Part One teaches that I cannot bear to see disavowed at the end of Part Two.

The overwhelming character of the first part of the book, written ten years earlier than the second, is that of a vindication of Don Quixote. He is vindicated against the charge that he is merely an eccentric, or an amusing madman, by the showing that his madness is divine and that it is indispensable for true happiness. The simplest way to say this is that his madness is revealed to be faith, and that faith in turn is revealed to have a much greater scope than commonly supposed. It seems to me that I must persuade you to share this view of Part One with me. As evidence that Cervantes built Part Two upon just such an understanding of Part One as I propose, I offer the following exchange, from chapter III of the second part. Sancho, Quixote, and the bachelor Sanson Carrasco are discussing Part One and the reception it has had.

"One of the blemishes they find in this history," said the bachelor, "is that the author has inserted in it a novel called 'The Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity' -- not that it is bad or badly told, but that it is out of place and has nothing to do with the history of his worship, Don Quixote."

"I'll bet," said Sancho, "that the son of a dog has made a pretty kettle of fish of everything."

"Now I am sure," said Don Quixote, "that the author of my story is no sage, but some ignorant prater who set himself blindly and aimlessly to write it down and let it turn out anyhow, like Orbaneja, the painter of Ubeda, who, when they asked him what he was painting, used to answer: 'Whatever it turns out.' Sometimes he would paint a cock in such a way and so little like one that it was necessary to write beside it, in Gothic characters 'This is a cock.' And so it must be with my history, which will need a commentary to be understood."

This reply of Quixote's seems itself to be a kind of commentary, in which Cervantes ironically asks those critics who praise so much in Part

One but find the inserted novel irrelevant, if they suppose the book was written at random, or if they require to have its different parts labelled for them. For the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity has everything to do with the story of Don Quixote. It is the negative of which his own story is the positive.

The Tale concerns a man who wants to be certain that his wife is the jewel she seems. He cannot be content unless he knows that she has withstood every possible temptation. He coerces his best friend to attempt to seduce her, while he himself stays away from home for weeks on end to leave a clear field. Every report of her continued fidelity only makes him suspect that his friend is not trying hard enough, and insist that he redouble his efforts. At last the friend truly falls in love with the woman he has been pretending to woo, and she with him. The test ends by destroying both the marriage and the friendship, not to mention the spouses and the friend. The husband is named Anselmo, to remind us of a theologian who sought to prove something he could have been content to believe. His mistake is to think of his wife as a jewel, that is, as a thing with a fixed set of attributes, independent of circumstances. Diamonds are harder than glass wherever they are and however they are treated. But human beings who are mistrusted can become mistrustful and even untrustworthy; not because they are inherently so, but because they do not know how they are inherently and perhaps cannot know, but can only believe. How they are depends a great deal on how they believe they are; and that in turn depends in part on how others believe they are. When Anselmo decides to experimentally test his wife's love for him, he treats her as though she would be the same person whether he loved and supported her or coldly kept himself away. But the marriage ceremony that made them "one

flesh" was wiser. She is not a wife at all except in relation to a husband, and the kind of wife she will be can never be independent of the kind of husband he turns out to be.

It is Quixote's wisdom to know that by having faith in himself he may become worthy of that faith, and that by having faith in others he may transform them likewise. Before the end of the first chapter he has learned, at the cost of a week's work on a pasteboard helmet, that to test a thing means to find out what will destroy it by in fact destroying it. "It troubled him to see with what ease he had broken the helmet in pieces, so to protect it from such an accident, he remade it and fenced the inside with a few bars of iron in such a manner that he felt assured of its strength, and without caring to make a second trial, he held it to be a most excellent helmet." The insight beneath the humor in these lines is one of the keynotes of Part One. To doubt is to suspect that something is less than it appears, and to wish to limit it or to destroy its pretensions. To have faith is to believe that things are more than they appear, and to wish to see them pass beyond their apparent limitations. Faith affirms and embraces, while doubt stands apart and denies. It is because he knows this that Quixote is asleep when Cardenio and Dorotea are listening to the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity. They need to hear it: he already understands.

It is hard, when reading Quixote's remarks about the painter, not to think of the cock whose crowing signalled to Peter that he had denied his connection to Jesus three times. Was Peter to think, "I am like that rooster, throwing out my chest and boasting that I would not forsake my friend even if I should die for it, then showing the heart of a chicken when it came to the test."? Was the cock-crow a kind of label Peter was given to read on himself: "This is a cock."? Such an interpretation may seem fanciful

or strained, but let me follow it a little further. Two elements in the story of Peter seem especially important: first, that he followed the arrested Christ, incognito as he supposed, "to see what the end would be" says Matthew; second, that although Jesus had predicted his denials scarcely eight hours earlier, he nevertheless could be utterly oblivious of that prophecy and thus of what he was really doing in lying those three separate times. It is as though he is a sleepwalker who must be awakened by the cock-crow to the knowledge of who he is and what he is doing. But the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity is precisely the tale of a man who denies his wife and watches incognito, to see what the end will be; and so too the tales of Cardenio and of Dorotea are tales of people who fail to act at a critical moment from lack of faith. Their desire to see the end from a safe incognito becomes a denial of their connection to another person.

The power that these stories have for us comes from our recognition that we too are sleepwalkers. We break our promises without even noticing that we are doing so; we doubt and deny and test; like a rooster we boast and then run away. As Pascal says, we seem incapable of thinking more than one thought at a time. The stories, like cock-crows, awaken us to who we are and what we are doing. Perhaps they help us to think more than one thought at a time. I suspect that the two thoughts which Cervantes wants his readers to think together are the same two that Pascal has in mind: God and the world. A Christian is to be in the world but not of it, so that everything he sees should have both a worldly and a divine character. But most of those who profess to follow Christ rarely if ever seem to see or do anything of a divine character. Like Peter in the High Priest's courtyard, we accept the worldly meanings of things and do what we think we must to survive while we wait to see what the end will be.

The stories of Cardenio and Dorotea each contain a place where lack of faith apparently destroys something precious, just as it actually does in the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity.. And in both stories we may be reminded of Peter. Cardenio is hiding behind the curtains in the room where his love, Luscinda, is to be compelled to marry his treacherous friend. Only a few moments earlier she has told him she has a dagger and will die sooner than marry anyone but him. He has replied that he has a sword to defend her life or to kill himself if fortune is against them. Here is how Cardenio tells what happened next:

> The parish priest came in, and having taken each by the hand, asked: 'Do you, Lady Luscinda, take Lord Don Fernando, here present, for your lawful husband as our Holy Mother the Church commands?' I thrust my head and neck out of the tapestry and with attentive ears and troubled soul listened for Luscinda's reply, expecting from it the sentence of death or a fresh lease on life. If one had only dared at that moment to come out and cry: 'Luscinda! Luscinda! Beware what thou dost! Consider what thou owest me! Remember thou art mine and cannot be another's! Take warning that this 'I do' means instant death for me! [. . .] The priest stood waiting a long time before Luscinda gave her answer, and when I thought she would take out the dagger to stab herself or raise her voice to utter one word of truth for my good, I heard her say in a faint and languishing voice: 'I do.'

It is plain that Cardenio was waiting for Luscinda while Luscinda was waiting for Cardenio. There is a kind of anti-marriage taking place between them. Each had proclaimed to the other a readiness to be tested, just as Peter to Jesus, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And each seems to turn the situation into a test of the other. Cardenio's story makes clear that he was ready to watch Luscinda stab herself as proof of her faithfulness to him. She might die and perhaps he would then have to kill himself, but at least he would have certainty. This seems like madness indeed.

The mad premise from which this mad conclusion follows is that what Luscinda does is entirely independent of what Cardenio does. He takes the priest's question as the opportunity to see if Luscinda truly loves him, as though she will now reveal her soul as an unchanging essence, a thing in itself. But surely if he had rushed out to help her she would have welcomed and acknowledged him whole-heartedly, whereas by hesitating he makes her hesitate. If he had shown his faith in her she would have been worthy of it, and only because he did not is he left feeling betrayed. Does he understand this? We first encounter him as the unrequited lover driven to a maddened exile in the mountains by his fair enemy's cruelty -- a role Quixote is bent on playing himself. But while Quixote somehow knows he is playing, and even knows for the sake of what, Cardenio is genuinely in anguish. He has lost what he cared for most and he suspects that he is himself to blame. He doesn't know why he goes on living. He must recognize himself in the story of Dorotea and again in the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity in order first to set about seeking Luscinda and Fernando, then to know what to do when they are found.

The restoration of faith, or the escape from doubt and unbelief is accomplished by stories. Quixote's faith in himself and others begins as a faith in stories. He began his adventures because of all the reading he had done. I want to say that he came to recognize himself in those books -- not himself as Alonso Quixano, a fifty-year-old reader, but himself as someone not only capable of deep love for beauty and virtue and glory but also capable of acts that could show such love. I think this amounts to faith. He has learned what those things are that he loves, admires, and

longs for above all else, and he <u>believes</u> he can have them. More than that, he believes he is meant to have them. This makes him a paradoxical combination: a warrior-hero who is a Christian. If that is what we mean by the word "knight", then Quixote is as much of a knight as it is possible to be.

Achilles, that paradigm of heroes, does not need to read books to discover his heart's desire, nor does he need faith to believe himself worthy of it. His mother is a goddess and from his early youth he has heard the promise of eternal glory and felt in himself the power that makes him the best of warriors. His heart's desire is to be a god, but since he knows he cannot have that he is resolved at all costs to settle for nothing less; that is, to show with everything that is in him that he is the equal of the gods, even if by some external necessity he must die and they may not. Of course he has heard stories of heroes, and, I presume, recognized himself in them: he is singing a tale of heroes when the ambassadors come to ask him back to the war. But he has known himself in others ways from the start. It is that unshakeable self-knowledge and that insistence to be taken at his own valuation of himself in spite of Fate, the gods, or anybody else, that makes a hero. To have such convictions about oneself and the strength to make them felt by the world is very rare.

Don Quixote has the convictions without the strength, and even the convictions are not his birthright. They are arrived at by reading stories. Somehow he comes to recognize his heart's desire in those stories, or to know that indeed he <u>has</u> a heart's desire; and further he comes to believe he is meant to achieve his heart's desire. Now this is some thing like a Christian conversion. From a book or books one at some point feels called to acknowledge and seek one's heart's desire, which is revealed to be the

love of God. Somehow simultaneous with this discovery comes the belief that one may gain one's desire, whatever one's weakness, age, or past acts may be; the belief that one is meant to receive one's desire.

The above describes Quixote except that he was not called primarily by the Bible and that his desire is not primarily the love of God, or at least that he has not acknowledged it to be. He thinks that it is glory and virtue and the love of Dulcinea. It is hard to say whether the stories of knights-errant have blessed him or cursed him. On the one hand he has a heart's desire and he is pursuing it with all his might. This is surely a blessing, at least insofar as one finds comfort in fame. On the other hand it is the wrong desire for one with so little beauty, youth, or strength. On the first hand, again, though, the virtue he seeks is mostly Christian virtue, even as the love of Dulcinea may be a kind of practice or substitute for the love of God. Moreover, the strength to act in the conviction that he is meant to have his heart's desire, what is that but faith? Even if he were utterly mistaken as to his true heart's desire, what Christian however devout could claim to know, really know, what it is he desires under the name "God"? It is the belief that we may be granted our deepest desire, more than the knowledge of what it is, that constitutes faith.

If this is so, and if I may be allowed to return to Cardenio and Dorotea again, then neither of them has much faith when we first meet them in the mountains of the Sierra Morena. What can stories do for them? Dorotea has given up most of her hopes of finding Don Fernando, who had seduced and abandoned her, and says she seeks a place to live alone until she dies. This is more or less what Cardenio wants as well. Both say that their situations are beyond cure. Yet after they have recognized one another and heard one

another's stories they take heart and begin to hope and even to act. How does this happen?

As Dorotea speaks, Cardenio learns that he left the wedding too soon; that when Luscinda swooned and the note in her clothes was read, it revealed her conviction that Cardenio was her true husband and her intention to kill herself at the end of the wedding. He hearns that Don Fernando has fled and Luscinda has disappeared. These are good reasons to begin hoping again, but equally important is the way the news comes. He sees that by acting as though Luscinda had failed a test and as though this was the last word about her, he had nearly abandoned her to her death, since Don Fernando had tried to kill her with her own dagger when he heard the letter read. He learns that her 'I do' was not the last word, and that none of our intended tests can produce such a thing as certainty about another human being. I think he comes to see his own life as a story whose end he cannot know in advance, though that is precisely what he so recently thought he could do. He even sees that the story may yet have a happy ending, as he says to Dorotea:

> If your story is true . . . as I am confident it is, it may be that Heaven has in store for us a fairer issue from our disaster than we expect. For since Luscinda is mine and cannot marry Don Fernando, as she has openly declared, and as he is yours, we may yet hope that Heaven will restore us what is our own, for it yet exists and is not alienated or destroyed. Since we have this consolation then, which is not based on far-distant hopes or extravagant fancies, I implore you, lady, to pluck up fresh courage as I intend to do, and let us both mold our thoughts to the expectation of better fortune, for I swear on the word of a Christian gentleman that I will not forsake you until I see you Don Fernando's wife, and if I fail to convince him by my arguments to acknowledge all he owes you, then I will use my gentleman's privilege and challenge him for the wrong he has done you. And I shall not remember the injuries he has done me, but leave them to Heaven to avenge while I devote my energies to avenging yours on earth.

This is a beautiful and remarkable speech. One need only substitute the word "knight-errant" for the phrase "Christian gentleman" to hear it as the

very sort of speech Don Quixote frequently makes. Part of the reason Cardenio makes the speech is surely that he, like Quixote, can recognize a damsel in distress, and that his soul, like Quixote's, has been stirred by stories in which a noble knight unselfishly devotes himself to righting a wrong done to someone else. Dorotea's story has allowed him to see himself as only a part of a larger story; and in his wish to see her story end happily he can lose his single-minded obsession with his own. In the course of the speech we seem to see him changing. He begins by naming himself, "I am that unhappy Cardenio whom, as you said yourself, Luscinda declared to be her husband," but then his unhappiness cannot be laid at her door. He now sees this and fully accepts the blame: "I am he who witnessed Don Fernando's outrages and waited to hear that 'I do' with which Luscinda declared herself his wife. I am he who did not have the courage to see the end of her fainting fit or what became of the letter than was found in her bosom . . . ."

One of the ways in which Cardenio now names himself is as one who needs and hopes for the help of Heaven. Whereas before he took Luscinda's "I do" for the sign that he had been "abandoned by Heaven", in this speech he speaks of Heaven three times as something he hopes and trusts in. By the end of the speech he is not a victim of fate but a Christian gentleman. Here, too, the line between Cardenio's return to sanity and Quixote's madness grows very fine. If Cardenio is indeed, as he professes, a Christian gentleman, then the love of God must be his true goal. Yet what he wants from Heaven is apparently love and marriage with Luscinda. But perhaps marriage may be a kind of practice of the love of God; perhaps that is why it is called a sacrament; and perhaps the important thing for a Christian is to have a heart's desire and to believe it is meant to be fulfilled, not to know for

certain exactly what that desire is of.

There is one more line in Cardenio's speech I want to talk about. He says, "Since we have this consolation, then, which is not based on far-distant hopes or extravagant fancies, I implore you, lady, to pluck up fresh courage. . . ." etc. The consolation he means is that the marriage between Fernando and Luscinda has not been consummated; but it is the far-distant hopes and extravagant fancies that interest me. Presumably his only consolations up to meeting Dorotea have seemed merely extravagant fancies. Yet some hopes he must have had, for he has not killed himself as he said he had intended to do. And if his mad hopes have preserved him for this good news, how mad after all were they? Both he and Dorotea have behaved like characters in stories they have read. If Dorotea could have read Shakespeare, we would say that in disguising herself as a man and going off to the forests she is imitating Rosalind in As You Like It, but surely there are such characters in the chivalric romances we know she has read. There is a glimmer of faith even in running to the mountains with the extravagant fancy that somehow things might not be entirely hopeless. Neither Cardenio nor Dorotea, for all their protestations, ever seems fully resigned to losing love. If they were, they should have ended their lives or begun new ones. But they have placed themselves in a kind of limbo between an old life they can't see how to fix and a new one they don't know how to imagine. They are like the character of comedy who says, "O Time! thou must untangle this, not I,/It is too hard a knot for me to untie." Their mustardseed of faith in Time's or Heaven's power to untie knots ends by moving the mountain, or rather untying the knot of Fernando's and Luscinda's marriage, and we who read the story of the untangling with such delight and give over our imaginations to the storybook figures of Cardenio and Dorotea, are left to wonder why we think

Quixote is crazy for loving his books and wishing to live according to them.

There is a line in Chapter 23 of Part Two which sheds light on this. William O'Grady first drew my attention to it in a lecture he gave on King Lear while he taught at ~~this~~ the Santa Fe campus. Quixote has emerged from his descent into the underground cave of Montesinos and has told of the enchanted knights and ladies he met there, including Dulcinea.

> "Holy God!" shouted Sancho at this point, "Is it possible that such things can happen in the world and that enchanters and enchantments can have the power to change the good of my master into such crazy folly? O master, master, for God's sake, mind yourself, consider your honor and give no credit to this empty balderdash that has destroyed your senses."
> "You talk this way, Sancho, because you love me," said Don Quixote, "and because you are inexperienced in the affairs of the world. Everything that presents points of difficulty appears to you impossible."

Don Quixote's own experience in the affairs of the world has come almost exclusively from books. And we too, whether we read much or little, have formed our notions about what is impossible and what is only very difficult but after all still entirely possible, in accordance with stories we have heard and believed. The world is so large and its range of possibilities so great that if we were to judge it only by our own experience we could never begin. We all rely on enchanters to help us know what kind of a place the world is. If one does not read much and with one's heart, one is in danger of succumbing to whatever enchanter's tales may happen to rule whatever Age of Lead one may live in. Cardenio and Dorotea have heard and believed stories that suggest that almost anything is possible if one's love and faith are strong enough, and that itself has given them the strength to wait until the possibility of deliverance becomes real. We should not be in a hurry to call impossible those things that are merely very difficult.

There is much to say about Dorotea's story, but it will have to wait for the Question Period. I am eager to come to the Second Part.

II.

The question I ask about Part Two is: How may we understand Quixote's deathbed renunciation of his knight-errantry? If we were content that he had suffered from a simple madness, then no such question would arise. But if we have seen the wisdom of his madness in Part One, that is to say the way in which our own happiness may depend on our faith in uncertain things like stories or other human beings, then we are puzzled to hear him speak of the "detestable books of knight-errantry."

It is worth noting that even on his deathbed he does not renounce books. Speaking about the romances of chivalry he goes on, "Now I see their folly and fraud, and my sole regret is that the discovery comes too late to allow me to amend my ways by reading others that would enlighten my soul." What might those others be? There may be a clue in his further words to his friends, "I now abhor all profane stories of knight-errantry, for I know only too well, through Heaven's mercy and through my own personal experience, the great danger of reading them." Are there, in addition to profane stories of knights-errant, other, sacred stories, better for enlightening our souls, and less dangerous? Surely these would be the stories of the Bible? Why are they *more* enlightening and less dangerous?

There may be an inverse relation between the Bible and the profane stories of knights-errant. The Bible implicitly claims that it is a true history, but clearly calls to be interpreted. We interpret it by treating its narration of events as if put together by a writer of fiction who intended to show not what <u>did</u> happen, but what sorts of things <u>can</u> happen. What kind of a

being is God? What kinds of things are humans capable of? The profane stories, on the other hand, begin by claiming to be fiction, not history, but much of Quixote's delight in them has come from his readiness to forget that they are fiction and to treat them as simply true. It is a component of every reader's pleasure that the characters in a story sometimes seem to live and that the world of the story becomes as real as our own. For Quixote that world became more real, so that he both looked for and found in his own life not only the meanings of the stories he had read, but the very details of their imaginary worlds, from castles to giants to enchanted helmets of gold.

The sacred stories more clearly point beyond themselves; they declare that they are a means, while the profane stories are in greater danger of being taken for ends in themselves. Quixote has not altogether misused the profane stories, for he has sought to live their meanings, not merely to dwell among their details; but a kind of entrapment among their details seems to have been the price he paid for his ability to give life to their meanings. The greater danger for us is that we should become entrapped in the stories we read without ever living forth their meanings at all. Yet if they did not invite us into a world with its own reality, and we did not accept that invitation, how could we ever learn or live by the truths they teach?

Let me return to Quixote's deathbed. Referring again to the profane stories of knight-errantry he says:

> Those foolish tales, that up to now have been my bane, may with Heaven's help turn to my advantage at my death. Dear friends. I feel that I am rapidly sinking; therefore let us put aside all jesting. I want a priest to hear my confession, and a notary to draw up my will. At such a moment a man must not deceive his soul; therefore I beg you to send for the notary while the priest hears my confession.

If there comes a moment when we must not deceive our souls, are there other moments at which on the contrary we not only may but must? If our true heart's desire is God, must some of us nevertheless sometimes believe it is something else, the love of one other person, say, or glory, in order to begin to have faith, or to transform ourselves? Must not even those who acknowledge God as their deepest desire deceive their souls sometimes that they know the path to God, in order to take any steps at all?

If this is so, if all the stories we tell ourselves are means and not ends, then it might be easier to become undeceived about stories patently false than about all the everyday stories full of worldly wisdom, whose details divert and entrap us nearly all the time. His friends want to call Quixote back to life at any cost: they invoke him by his old name and his old love. He sees, as perhaps one only sees at extraordinary moments, that all of these things were only means to an end that does not lie in ordinary life, or indeed in life at all. "Do not look for this year's birds in last year's nests," he says. To be Don Quixote, to love Dulcinea, all of that was a nest, a way for a soul to have a home in the world. But it was not a permanent home, nor should it ever have been taken for one. To the soul that must not be deceived as it leaves last year's nest, the nest's pretensions to having been a permanent home may seem detestable.

In Luke's Gospel (14:26) Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple." Yet the one seeking Jesus cannot cease to be the one who <u>has</u> that father and mother, that wife and those children. If he has never loved them very well he will have all the harder time wishing to love in such a way that his love for his family would look like

hate by comparison.

It is only because he has truly been Don Quixote that Alonso Quixano is able to renounce his life as Quixote. And the narrator seems to insist on this by continuing to refer to him as Don Quixote even after his renunciation and right up to the very end. "The notary, who was present, said that he had never read of any knight who ever died in his bed so peacefully and like a good Christian as Don Quixote." Although his renunciation is true and profound, he remains, while he is in this life, the son of his own deeds, Don Quixote. This shows most clearly in his bequest to Sancho:

> I give and bequeath to Sancho Panza, whom in my madness I made my squire, whatever money he has of mine in his possession; and whereas there are accounts and reckonings to be settled between us for what he has received and disbursed, my will and pleasure is that he should not be required to furnish any account of such sums, and whatever may remain due to me, which must be but little, be enjoyed by him as my free gift, and may he prosper with it. And as when I was mad he was through my means made governor of an island, I would now, in my right senses, give him the government of a kingdom, were it in my power, for his honesty and his faithfulness deserve it.

His love for Sancho, and his faith in him shine on, although this love and faith would not exist without the two men having been knight-errant and squire together.

Can Quixote affirm the effect when he renounces the cause? Of course his knight-errantry did not really cause Sancho's honesty and faithfulness, but it gave Sancho a chance to show them. It gave both of them a chance to respect and love one another. That love for one another is an end which endures when the means to it have been left behind. Part Two has shown from the beginning that the artifice of his knight-errantry must be recognized for the means that it is and be left behind or it will trap and defeat Quixote. His captivity in the castle of the Duke and Duchess is the clearest example of how he is trapped, but there are many: in Chapter 11 he withdraws from a

battle offered by a troupe of actors who are travelling in costume, among whom are the Devil, the Emperor, Death, the Angel, a soldier, Cupid and a Fool. The Fool frightens Rozinante so that she runs off and throws Quixote, then he steals Sancho's ass and falls off of it in imitation of Quixote's fall. This is surely an omen. Although these pranks begin while Quixote is talking to that member of the troupe officially playing the role of the devil, both Sancho, Quixote and the narrator refer to the Fool as the devil thereafter. There is something devilish in actors who do not put off their roles, even as there is in the desire to see anyone confined to one role. Quixote has been mocked by an image of himself, for he too has not seen that he must put off his role if he is really to travel anywhere new. He is finally defeated in Chapter 64 and sent home by that reflected image of himself, the Knight of the Moon. But this is a fortunate defeat since it leads to Quixote's final triumph over his role, his renunciation.

Even this may be understood best by the light from that irrelevant insertion, the Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity, with its associated stories. I said a moment ago that there was something devilish in wanting to see anyone confined forever to one role. That is the desire of the doubter and the tester. They wish to know, really know once and for all who or what somebody else is; then they will have him, perhaps as the devil has the damned soul. Faith is unwilling to confine or limit people that way, for it recognizes that to do so is to wish them dead. Yet the faith Don Quixote had, required that he make a role for himself, too. We cannot escape our need for roles: they are largely how we know ourselves and one another. But we may hope to escape confinement by any particular role..

I spoke earlier of the Hero who insists that he knows just who he is. Perhaps that was too schematic. It may be what Dante means by putting the

Greek Heroes in Hell. But Achilles is greatest of all when he lets go of who he thought he was and becomes one human among others.

Can we never know ourselves, then? Is every apparent recognition of ourselves only conditional on the role we are now playing, or will play next? The love between Quixote and Sancho remains, even when they are no longer knight and squire. But in this they do not differ from one another. If we seek to know ourselves as unique, we are distracted by a role.

Dostoyevsky, the only novelist who compares with Cervantes, has a striking form of this insight in The Brothers Karamazov: "All are capable of all." It comes out most clearly in the assertion that there is no act that anyone can commit, however wicked and vile, that might not be committed by every other in the same situation. This means that my customary ways of knowing myself are completely mistaken. I am prone to define myself by negation and exclusion, saying in my mind, "I may not be entirely happy with myself, but at least I know I am not like so and so, and I don't do the kinds of things that that one does." But I might just as well do those very things. I cannot know that I wouldn't. There is no indelible mark on my soul by which I can distinguish it even from a murderer's, nor, as Don Quixote would point out, is there any mark on the murderer's soul to distinguish it from a saint's. "All comparison is odious," says he.

The price I pay for my spurious self-knowledge is my separation from the people I have distinguished myself from, murderers and saints, and nearly everybody in between. It is also my separation from my own deepest possibilities of growing and changing. If it is God who has made us, then only He may know our limitations. We pretend to be equal with Him when we claim to know ourselves. What do we look like when we renounce that claim? We

look like fools; we look like one who "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself and took the form of a servant"; we look like Don Quixote.