

***Don Quijote* and Moral Theology: What a Knight and His Squire Can Teach Us About Christian Living**

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Moral theology, also known as the science of freedom, focuses on human actions as predicated by free will and shaped by natural reason and divine faith. These actions are directed toward a supernatural destiny and do not concern themselves with immediate ends that humans may pursue as a goal for the immediate future. The supernatural component of moral theology is beyond what reason can conceive, and it recognizes the necessary role of God's grace to accomplish through human actions what human will is not capable of achieving. God's revelation of Himself through His Son provides the meaning of life and the context with which human actions seek to attain virtue and to avoid sin.

Moral theology in Cervantes' day, however, was less concerned with the manner in which human actions emulated the life of Jesus. While the attainment of virtue was a constitutive element of moral theology, the focus was placed more heavily on ways to avoid mortal sins, and the Council of Trent reaffirmed the obligation of all Catholics to confess mortal sins, which is a sin that satisfies three criteria: it is grave in nature; the person who commits the sin is aware of its seriousness; and the person willingly commits the sin in spite of the recognition of its offensive nature.¹ Post-Tridentine seminarians focused specifically on two areas related to moral theology: how to hear confessions and how to cultivate a Christian conscience according to which the people whom they minister to would live their lives.

Christopher Columbus' arrival to the New World was the impetus for the strong presence of moral theology in sixteenth-century Spain. The moral dilemmas faced by the Spanish explorers in the New World represented a new theological challenge for Renaissance Spaniards. Unlike the *moriscos* who remained in Spain after the end of the Reconquest, the natives of the New World were open to conversion. The manner in which the natives underwent conversion, however, raised the ire of Catholic clergy, especially, among many others, the Dominican theologians Francisco de Vitoria, O.P. (1483-1546) and Francisco de Montesinos, O.P. (1475-1540), who, in a homily from 1511, said, "Tell me; by what right or justice do you hold these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude."² Vitoria, however, was perhaps more responsible for the prominent place of moral theology in sixteenth-century Spain than any other theologian. As a professor of theology at the University of Salamanca, Vitoria was well known because of his lectures on moral theology and its place in politics, economics, and international law: "If, as we have shown, public power is founded upon natural law, and if natural law acknowledges God as its only author, then it is evident that public power is from God, and cannot be over-ridden by conditions imposed by men or by any positive law [...]"³ The systematization of moral theology, which Juan Azor's manual *Instituciones morales* (1600) expounds upon, began to

¹ <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct06.html>.

² Bartolomé de las Casas, *History of the Indies III*, 4-5. Quoted in Lasheras, S.J. 31.

³ Vitoria 10. Vitoria was also the author of treatises that defended the human dignity of the natives of the New World, namely *De Indis* and *De iure belli*. He expressed his sentiments about the mistreatment of the Indians in a letter to his friend Miguel de Arcos, who was also a Dominican priest: "In truth . . . [the Indians] are men, and our neighbours . . . [.] I cannot see how to excuse these conquistadors of utter impiety and tyranny; nor can I see what great service they do to His Majesty by ruining his vassals. Even if I badly wanted the archbishopric of Toledo which is just now vacant and they offered it to me on condition that I signed or swore to the innocence of these

develop in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This process deemphasized a moral theology of virtue in favor of a moral theology of obligations, the guiding principal of which was the Ten Commandments. The popularity of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (1265-1274) and the proliferation of degrees of moral theology based on many different approaches, such as nominalism and probabilism, convoluted the basic concept and practice of moral theology. Aquinas' monumental treatise, however, appealed to a disparate audience because of its system of ethics, which, in part, is founded on the belief that a human act is judged as good or bad based on its end, or motive.

In order to gain insight into what Don Quijote and Sancho Panza can teach us about Christian living, it is helpful to focus first on the end of the novel. Don Quijote is on his deathbed, where he evaluates the life he has lived. Our knight expresses regret that he did not dedicate his life to reading books about the lives of saints, proclaiming "ya soy enemigo de Amadís de Gaula y de toda la infinita caterva de su linaje; ya me son odiosas todas las historias profanas del andante caballería; ya conozco mi necedad y el peligro en que me pusieron haberlas leído; ya, por misericordia de Dios, escarmentando en cabeza propia, las abomino" (II, 74, 634).⁴ Then, Don Quijote, at this point known as Alonso Quijano el Bueno, a name by which he dubs himself, asks everyone to leave his room, except for the priest, who hears the knight's confession, and, presumably, gives him the Body of Christ, which, in this case is known as *viaticum*, administered to a person who is near death as food for the journey that passes from this life into the next. Alonso Quijano's desire to die in the way prescribed by the Catholic Church and his preoccupation with his legacy as "the Good," reflect his moral values. It is not only Don Quijote, however, who manifests this concern. Sancho Panza, too, both in his words and in his actions, illustrates his belief in God and obedience to Catholic doctrine throughout the novel. In my analysis of the words and deeds of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, I examine their actions according to the condition of the moral act, the physical and moral order, subjective and objective reality, and the principle of double effect.⁵

According to traditional Catholic teaching, the three criteria by which an act is judged morally good are object, end, and circumstances. The object of an act is what a person chooses to do. The end is the motive of the act, or, in other words, why a person does the act. The circumstances refer to the external conditions of the act; for example, when, where or how a person acts. In order for a human act to be considered good, its object, end, and circumstances must prove to be good. If even one of the three criteria does not meet this requirement, the act is considered evil. The object and end of a morally good act are based on free will. Philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) asserts that the soul of each person consists of actions and passions, both of which form the foundation of free will:

But the will is by its nature free in such a way that it can never be constrained; and of the two sorts of thoughts I have distinguished in the soul, of which the first are its actions—namely its volitions—and the others its passions—taking this word in its most general sense, which comprises all sorts of perceptions—the former are absolutely in its power and can only indirectly be altered by the body, whereas the latter depend absolutely on the actions that produce them and can only indirectly be altered by the soul,

Peruvian adventurers, I would certainly not dare do so. Sooner my tongue and hand wither than say or write a thing so inhuman, so alien to all Christian feeling!" (Salas, Jr. 341)

⁴ All citations from *Don Quijote* are from John Jay Allen's edition of the novel.

⁵ These categories are from Dailey, S.J. 105.

except when [the soul] is itself is their cause. And the whole action of the soul consists in this: merely by willing something, it makes the little gland to which it is closely joined move in the way required to produce the effect corresponding to this volition. (41)

Free will, however, is much more than, in the words of philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), “a power of acting or of not acting, according to the determination of the will” (72). St. Thomas Aquinas, in addition to other medieval Aristotelians, bases his concept of free will on the relationship between human nature and God. St. Thomas believes that all humans are created in the image of God, and, therefore, each person is born with a will that is inherently directed toward a goal of goodness. Since this impulse is pre-determined, free will, according to St. Thomas, is determined how a person chooses to achieve goodness. Furthermore, he believes that free will is a cognitive and an appetitive power:

The proper act of free-will is choice: for we say that we have a free-will because we can take one thing while refusing another; and this is to choose. Therefore we must consider the nature of free-will, by considering the nature of choice. Now two things concur in choice: one on the part of the cognitive power, the other on the part of the appetitive power. On the part of the cognitive power, counsel is required, by which we judge one thing to be preferred to another: and on the part of the appetitive power, it is required that the appetite should accept the judgment of counsel. Therefore Aristotle (*Ethic.* vi, 2) leaves it in doubt whether choice belongs principally to the appetitive or the cognitive power: since he says that choice is either “an appetitive intellect or an intellectual appetite.” But (*Ethic.* iii, 3) he inclines to its being an intellectual appetite when he describes choice as “a desire proceeding from counsel.” And the reason of this is because the proper object of choice is the means to the end: and this, as such, is in the nature of that good which is called useful: wherefore since good, as such, is the object of the appetite, it follows that choice is principally an act of the appetitive power. And thus free-will is an appetitive power. (762)

A person’s ability to utilize his or her cognitive and appetitive powers to make choices, however, may be affected by outside circumstances or agents. A person who is addicted to drugs or to alcohol, for example, no longer possesses the ability to judge for himself or herself if the desire of the appetitive power is good or not. In this case, the appetitive power overtakes the cognitive power, and the person finds himself or herself controlled by the need for drugs or alcohol, regardless of the consequences. The object and end of Don Quijote’s behavior, i.e. the knight’s ability to utilize his cognitive and appetitive powers, is mitigated at times by his fanciful belief that he is one of the heroes from his books of chivalry. Consequently, Don Quijote’s adventures do not always represent morally good acts.

Three episodes in Part I of *Don Quijote* illustrate the condition of the moral act. In Chapter 4, the knight encounters Andrés and his master Juan Haldudo. After speaking with Andrés and Juan, Don Quijote determines that Andrés, whom the knight describes as defenseless, is a victim and should be set free. Once Don Quijote convinces Juan Haldudo to release Andrés and to pay the young boy what he owes him, Don Quijote leaves, convinced that he has had a successful first adventure.

A second episode that illustrates the condition of the moral act is from Part I, Chapter 22, when Don Quijote encounters Ginés de Pasamonte and the other galley slaves. Once again, Don Quijote must decide how to act when faced with a situation in which there appears to be injustice at hand. After listening to the galley slaves explain the reason for their punishment, Don Quijote launches into a lengthy speech in which he concludes, “porque me parece duro caso hacer

esclavos a los que Dios y naturaleza hizo libres” (314). Then, Don Quijote attacks the guards, and the galley slaves escape.

The third episode that illustrates the condition of the moral act is Don Quijote’s encounter with the priests who escort the body of a knight to Segovia for burial in Part I, Chapter 31. After the priests inform Don Quijote that they cannot stop to explain what they are doing, the knight, offended by what he perceives as a lack of respect, becomes angry and knocks one of the priests off of his horse, breaking the man’s leg. When Don Quijote learns the nature of the priests’ procession, he asks the priest to forgive him and to inform the other priests of his repentance for his actions.

Based on the criteria of the condition of the moral act, Don Quijote’s actions with Andrés can be considered a moral act because it is expected of anyone to help someone who cannot help himself or herself, and, in addition, Don Quijote’s intentions are certainly good. While it is plausible to argue that Andrés deserves the punishment he receives, I believe it is also reasonable to conclude that the crime does not fit the punishment, especially the degree to which Juan Haldudo beats the boy. Of course, in spite of the moral goodness of the act, the outcome is not what Don Quijote intended it to be. When Andrés reappears in Part I, Chapter 31, Andrés informs the knight that Juan Haldudo, after Don Quijote left Andrés alone with his master, tied him to the tree again and gave him more lashes than he had done before Don Quijote’s arrival. This negative consequence, however, does not necessarily violate the criteria of the condition of the moral act, although I am sure Andrés would disagree.

The episode with the galley slaves, however, is different. While it is true that Don Quijote intends for his act to be one of goodness, his desire and subsequent actions to set the galley slaves free are not in accord with the standards of good and right conduct. Don Quijote’s failure to recognize that the galley slaves are criminals does not excuse his actions. The knight believes that he is acting accordingly, however, because his interpretation of justice is superior to the law’s definition of justice: “Todo lo cual se me representa a mí ahora en la memoria, de manera que me está diciendo, persuadiendo y aun forzando, que muestre con vosotros el efecto para que el cielo me arrojó al mundo, y me hizo profesar en él la orden de caballería que profeso, y el voto que en ella hice de favorecer a los menesterosos y opresos de los mayores” (I, 22, 314).

Don Quijote’s encounter with the priests is more complicated. While the object and end of the act are morally good, the circumstances, particularly how Don Quijote acts, are certainly not good. Don Quijote’s anger supersedes his ability to reason, and, therefore, the consequence is an unjust and immoral act:

For spiritedness seems to hear reason in some way, but to mishear it [...] So spiritedness, because of its heated and swift nature, hears something, and though it does not hear an order, it sets off after revenge. For speech or imagination has made clear that there is a hubristic insult or slight; and spiritedness, as if it inferred from a syllogism that one ought to wage war against such a thing, immediately becomes harsh. But as for desire, if reason or sense perception merely says that something is pleasant, it sets off after enjoyment. As a result, spiritedness follows reason in a way, but desire does not. Desire, then, is more shameful. For someone who lacks self-restraint when it comes to spiritedness is in a way conquered by reason, whereas the other person is conquered by desire and not by reason.⁶

Don Quijote appears to regain his ability to reason when he asks for forgiveness, but the violence he displays against the priests, especially the one who suffers a broken leg, denotes an evil act. In

⁶ Aristotle 147.

Part II, Chapter 16, however, Don Quijote displays his ability to control his anger, albeit righteous in his mind, when he describes his battle with the Knight of the Mirrors:

—Todo es artificio y traza—respondió don Quijote—de los malignos magos que me persiguen, los cuales, anteviendo que yo había de quedar vencedor en la contienda, se previnieron de que el caballero vencido mostrase el rostro de mi amigo el bachiller, porque la amistad que le tengo se pusiese entre los filos de mi espada y el rigor de mi brazo, y templase la justa ira de mi corazón, y desta manera quedase con vida el que con embelecocos y falsías procuraba quitarme la mía. (153)

In this episode, Don Quijote illustrates Seneca's belief that reason is the strongest faculty that a person possesses: "We have no need for other weapons; it is enough that nature has equipped us with reason. What she has given us is firm, enduring, accommodating, with no double edge to be turned on its owner. Reason by itself is enough not merely for foresight but for action. Indeed, what could be stupider than for reason to seek protection in bad temper, for something that is stable, trustworthy and sound to seek protection in something that is unsteady, untrustworthy and sick" (35)? Furthermore, Guillermo Serés points out that wrath, which Don Quijote displays in the episode with the priests, and reason, which the knight illustrates when he does not attack the Knight of the Mirrors, are two constitutive elements a person needs to control his or her free will:

Este camino nos llevaría a uno de los lugares comunes más importantes del Humanismo: la ira, aliada con la razón o con la prudencia, para enfrentarse a la fortuna. En otras palabras: la defensa de la capacidad individual, poniendo en juego todas las facultades, virtudes y *virtutes* "humanas" (teologales, cardinales y *naturales* u "orgánicas," entre ellas, la "irascible"), para hacer frente a lo indeterminado; o aun en otras: la defensa del libre albedrío, que, arropado con una actuación virtuosa y provisto de los medios necesarios, no debe temer ningún embate de la fortuna; incluso debe negar su existencia. (47-8)

In other words, Don Quijote is able to utilize his cognitive power to control his appetitive power, because Don Quijote does not kill the Knight of the Mirrors, reasoning, in his unique way, that his enemies gave the Knight of the Mirrors the physical features of Don Quijote's friend: "[...] como yo confieso y creo que vos, aunque parecéis el bachiller Sansón Carrasco, no lo sois, sino otro que le parece, y que en su figura aquí me le han puesto mis enemigos, para que detenga y temple el ímpetu de mi cólera, y para que use blandamente de la gloria del vencimiento" (II, 14, 147).

The physical and moral order refers to human acts that shape a person's world based on his or her actions. An act cannot be judged to be moral solely on the result of a physical action. In addition, it must follow the moral order, which addresses specifically the will of the person who commits the act. While it was common knowledge that the human soul consists of memory, will, and intellect, Alonso López Pinciano's (El Pinciano) treatise *Philosophía antigua poética* (1596), which addresses Aristotle's assertion that the soul is composed of faculties (memory, will, and intellect), must have influenced Cervantes' literary *corpus* as well. John G. Weiger believes that the "triad" of memory, will, and intellect "underlies much of Cervantes' portrayal of the human struggle for self-realization" (139). Which of the three faculties is dominant, however, is open to debate. St. Augustine compared the three components of the human soul to the triune God: "Since these three, the memory, the understanding, and the will are, therefore, not three lives but one life, not three minds, but one mind, it follows that they are certainly not three substances, but one substance [...] Therefore, these three are one in that they are one life,

one mind, and one essence” (311). St. Thomas Aquinas, however, believed that there exists a hierarchy:

Will or appetite is the faculty by which the soul or vital force moves toward that which the intellect conceives as good. Thomas, following Aristotle, defines the good as “that which is desirable.” Beauty is a form of the good; it is that which pleases when seen. Why does it please? Through the proportion and harmony of parts in an organized whole. Intellect is subject to will in so far as desire can determine the direction of thought; but will is subject to the intellect in so far as our desires are determined by the way we conceive things [...]; “the good as understood moves the will.” Freedom lies not really in the will, which is “necessarily moved” by the understanding of the matter presented by the intellect, but in the judgment (*arbitrium*); therefore freedom varies directly with knowledge, reason, wisdom, with the capacity of the intellect to present a true picture of the situation to the will; only the wise are truly free. Intelligence is not only the best and highest, it is also the most powerful, of the faculties of the soul [...] “The proper operation of man is to understand.”⁷

While Don Quijote’s and Sancho Panza’s actions may not be viewed as moral in every instance, if morality is judged by the physical order, i.e., the result of the action, both the knight and his squire seek to grow closer to God through their actions. The exception in Don Quijote’s case is his encounter with the priest in Part I, Chapter 31. The knight exhibits here an imbalance of faculties in which his intellect, or understanding, is superseded by his desire for personal glory and fame. In Part II, Chapter 16, however, Don Quijote’s faculties of memory, understanding, and will function equally, and, consequently, he is able to recognize the face of his friend Sansón Carrasco.

Don Quijote’s and Sancho Panza’s actions embody the two ways in which the Christian moral life is measured. The sacred dimension is based upon the dignity of the human person and includes the following beliefs: 1. an obligation to uphold the dignity of a human person; 2. human dignity does not depend on human achievement, but it is a gift of divine love; and 3. people must attribute this same dignity, esteem, and value to each other. A Christian perspective on the dignity of a human person is centered upon the Bible, which recognizes that all people are truly human and created in the image of God.⁸ The truly human person possesses a moral perspective that is fully integrated into the spirituality of Christian living and values the sanctity of life. Respect for the sacred value of life cultivates an appreciation for the presence of God in every human being and promotes the creation of social relationships:

[...] the moral life becomes largely the matter of promoting positive human relationships which allow the full potential of one’s own and another’s gifts to flourish. With its

⁷ Durant 102.

⁸ The Second Vatican Council addressed what it means to be truly human in *Gaudium et spes*, its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: “The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Impelled by that faith, it tries to discern in the events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with humans of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or of the purpose of God. For faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human.” In *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II also addresses the personalist theme of the relationship that exists between the truly human person and God: “It is essential that we be convinced of the priority of the ethical over the technical, of the primacy of the person over things, of the superiority of the spirit over matter. The cause of the human person will only be served if knowledge is joined to conscience. Men and women of science will truly aid humanity only if they preserve “the sense of the transcendence of the human person over the world and of God over the human person.” (Dulles 14).

attention to relationships and responsibility, our renewed moral theology is much more socially conscious than the individualistic morality of the manuals.⁹

The social dimension of a moral life refers to the relational nature of human beings, and this dimension is based upon the belief that God shares His love for us through Jesus, who represents "God's self-gift to the world."¹⁰ One of German theologian Karl Rahner's characteristics that define the truly human is solidarity. While each person is unique by virtue of the special and particular gifts bestowed by God, no one is isolated from society. People depend upon other people; consequently, no one is completely in control of his or her life. Mankind's dependence upon each other has a direct effect upon social justice.¹¹ A society that does not have as its foundation respect for the dignity of a human person is destined to commit social sin, which, according to Gula, "articulates how social structures can shape our existence for the worse" (116).

Don Quijote's actions, especially in Part I, illustrate, for the most part, the sacred and social dimensions of the Christian life. In addition, however, the knight reveals explicitly his belief that his actions are not independent of God's presence in his life. In Part II, Chapter 8, for example, Don Quijote, not only views these actions and sacrifices as a means to becoming a famous knight, but, in addition, they allow him and Sancho to personify Christian morality, and, specifically, its sacred and social dimensions:

Hemos de matar en los gigantes a la soberbia; a la envidia, en la generosidad y buen pecho; a la ira, en el reposado continente y quietud del ánimo; a la gula y al sueño, en el poco comer que comemos y en el mucho velar que velamos; a la lujuria y lascivia, en la lealtad que guardamos a las que hemos hecho señoras de nuestros pensamientos; a la pereza, con andar por todas las partes del mundo, buscando las ocasiones que nos puedan hacer y hagan, sobre cristianos, famosos caballeros. Ves aquí, Sancho, los medios por donde se alcanzan los extremos de alabanzas que consigo trae la buena fama. (II, 8, 93-4)

A specific example of Don Quijote's use of free will to act in a way that illustrates both physical and moral order is from Part II, Chapter 29. When the miller questions the knight about the castle from which Don Quijote hopes to free a prisoner, the knight attributes the miller's ignorance to the actions of an enchanter, who made the castle disappear. Don Quijote, frustrated with his conversation with the miller, turns to God for the answer, realizing his own human limitations:

Y en esta aventura se deben de haber encontrado dos valientes encantadores, y el uno estorba lo que el otro intenta: el uno me deparó el barco, y el otro dio conmigo al través. Dios lo remedie; que todo este mundo es máquinas y trazas, contrarias unas de otras. Yo no puedo más. (II, 29, 279)

In Part I, Chapter 13, when the knight is questioned by one of the shepherds who accompanies him to Grisóstomo's funeral about the role of God as a motivating influence of his actions, Don Quijote informs the shepherd that he does indeed offer up his actions to God: "Y no se ha de entender por eso que han de dejar de encomendarse a Dios; que tiempo y lugar les queda para hacerlo en el discurso de la obra" (212).

⁹ Gula, S.S. 30.

¹⁰ Overberg, S.J. 13.

¹¹ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses the relationship between respect for the human person and social justice: "Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy. If it does not respect them, authority can rely only on force or violence to obtain obedience from its subjects." (469)

Sancho displays the qualities of the Christian moral life, and specifically its sacred and social dimensions, when he adjudicates the three cases brought before him as Governor of Barataria in Part II, Chapter 45. The guiding principles with which Sancho resolves the disagreements between the peasant and the tailor, the two old men, and the woman and the rich cattleman are based on the squire's belief in God and respect for the dignity of others: "De donde se podía colegir que los que gobiernan, aunque sean unos tontos, tal vez los encamina Dios en sus juicios [...]" (401). In each of the cases, Sancho resolves the conflict in the most fair and equitable manner.¹² The appearance of the word *God* nine times during the course of the three cases reminds the reader of those Christian principles upon which Sancho bases his decisions. Furthermore, when the narrator announces the end of Sancho's governorship, he does so by making a reference to the eternal life that will come after the present life: "Sola la vida humana corre a su fin ligera más que el [viento], sin esperar renovarse si no es en la otra, que no tiene términos que la limiten. Esto dice Cide Hamete, filósofo mahomético; porque esto de entender la ligereza e inestabilidad de la vida presente, y de la duración de la eterna que se espera, muchos sin lumbre de fe, sino con la luz natural, lo han entendido; pero aquí nuestro autor lo dice por la presteza con que se acabó, se consumió, se deshizo, se fue como en sombra y humo el gobierno de Sancho" (II, 53, 469).

Sancho, in Part I, Chapter 25, also echoes Don Quijote's dependence on God in his response to Don Quijote's defense of Cardenio's assertion that two characters from *Amadís of Gaul*, Master Elisabat and Queen Madáisma, are lovers:

—Ni yo lo digo ni lo pienso—respondió Sancho—; allá se lo hayan; con su pan se lo coman. Si fueron amancebados o no, a Dios habrán dado la cuenta. De mis viñas vengo, no sé nada; no soy amigo de saber vidas ajenas; que el que compra y miente, en su bolsa lo siente. Cuanto más, que desnudo nací, desnudo me hallo: ni pierdo ni gano; más que lo fuesen, ¿qué me va a mí? Y muchos piensan que hay tocinos y no hay estacas. Mas ¿quién puede poner puertas al campo? Cuanto más, que de Dios dijeron. (342)

In a similar way to the condition of the moral act, the physical and moral order must be in accord with right conduct and directed toward goodness. Furthermore, however, the physical nature contributes to those actions that enable a person to realize his or her nature as a being created in the image of God. The moral order, on the other hand, by virtue of the decisions a person makes, provides a person with the opportunities to shape his or her own existence. The many references

¹² In the case between the two old men, one man borrows 10 *escudos* from his friend but does not pay him back. When Sancho asks the man to swear that he returned the money, the man hands his cane to the other man and swears that he did indeed return the money. Sancho realizes that the 10 *escudos* in gold, however, are in the cane that belongs to the man who swears that he returned the money. Of course, when the man is in possession of his cane again, he does not make the same oath. Sancho decrees that the 10 *escudos* be paid to the man who made the loan. Sancho resolves the case between the woman and the rich cattleman, whom the woman accuses of inappropriate sexual advances. Sancho orders the man to give the woman 20 *ducados* and instructs the woman to leave. Then, the Governor asks the man to follow the woman and wrestle the money away from her. Moments later, the two return, and it is evident that the woman is stronger than the man. Sancho finds in favor of the man, telling the woman: "—Hermana mía, si el mismo aliento y valor que habéis mostrado para defender esta bolsa le mostrádes, y aun la mitad menos, para defender vuestro cuerpo, las fuerzas de Hércules no os hicieran fuerza. Andad con Dios, y mucho de enhoramala, y no paréis en toda esta ínsula ni en seis leguas a la redonda, so pena de doscientos azotes. ¡Andad luego digo, churrillera, desvergonzada y embaidora" (II, 45, 404)! The conflict between the peasant and the tailor, however, is unique. While Sancho decides that neither should benefit from the decision, the squire mandates that the cloth material that is the source of the disagreement should not be discarded: "Paréceme que en este pleito no ha de haber largas dilaciones, sino juzgar luego a juicio de buen varón, y así, yo doy por sentencia que el sastre pierda las hechuras, y el labrador el paño, y las caperuzas se lleven a los presos de la cárcel, y no haya más" (II, 45, 399-400).

that Don Quijote and, especially, Sancho Panza make to the existence and role of God in their lives indicate that their behavior is based on the physical and moral order.

A necessary component of the good life from the Christian perspective is a conscience that seeks to discover the truth in all individual and social moral dilemmas.¹³ Moral theologian Timothy O'Connell outlines three dimensions of conscience in his book *Principles for a Catholic Morality*. The first dimension is recognition of the value to do good that each person possesses. People know they should do what is right and avoid what is wrong. The desire to do what is right reflects the value that people place upon this choice. The second dimension is based upon the search for truth vis-à-vis sources that offer wisdom and guidance; the Bible, the Church, and Sacred Tradition are three examples of reliable sources. The third dimension of conscience is the decision that a person makes. Respect for the dignity of a human person and the search for truth require that a person participate in the first two dimensions before he or she reaches the stage at which a concrete course of action is decided upon. According to the Christian perspective, a person who follows the three dimensions must be sincere, but even more important is his or her desire to discover what is correct about the dilemma. Consequently, what a person feels like doing is irrelevant, because, in the end, his or her sincerity to discover the truth and desire to take the correct course of action should dictate the decision. A person's conscience should proceed in a manner that integrates his or her understanding of the human experience into a moral judgment that determines what is right and wrong about a dilemma. In other words, the Christian moral conscience embodies a commitment to do what is right. Both Sacred Scripture and Jesus point to a person's heart as the source of all important decisions.

The question of subjective morality, however, is a complex one, especially when the subject is Don Quijote. Subjective morality may be defined based on three criteria: doing what one thinks is right and in the way one thinks is right; forming a strictly personal norm of moral action to cope with a particular and personal need; and a norm of action based on what the persons thinks it should be before he or she can accept it. Subjective morality has the potential to influence a decision that leads to immoral acts when the person does not consider the well-being of the people affected by the decision. A person's decision to commit violent acts against another person because of religious differences is an example of subjective morality. If we were to look at Don Quijote's many adventures, especially the more physical ones that take place in Part I, an argument can be made that the knight is a victim of subjective morality, because fame and glory inspire him.

If we consider the objective moral dimension of Don Quijote's behavior, however, we understand his actions in a different way. Objective morality refers to a human act that is independent of a person's subjective disposition. In other words, it is the relationship between what a person does and the moral order. For a Christian, this moral order emanates from God, and, therefore, objective reality is guided by a Christian perspective. In other words, Don Quijote's actions can be viewed, objectively, as intrinsically good, which is a constitutive element of Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics:

A good will is good because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended end, but good just by its willing, i.e. in itself, and considered by

¹³ The Second Vatican Council describes the essence of conscience as a gift from God that directs a person to do what is right and to shun what is wrong: "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For a man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it will be judged."

itself, it is to be esteemed beyond compare much higher than anything that could ever be brought about by it in favour of some inclination, and indeed, if you will, the sum of all inclinations. Even if by some particular disfavour of fate, or by the scanty endowment of a stepmotherly nature, this will should entirely lack the capacity to carry through its purpose; if despite its greatest striving it should still accomplish nothing, and only the good were to remain (not, of course, as a mere wish, but as the summoning of all means that are within our control); then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has its full worth in itself.

In spite of Don Quijote's desire to emulate the knights about whom he has read in his books of chivalry and achieve fame and glory while doing so, he expresses his belief that heavenly glory is greater because it is not fleeting. In Part II, Chapter 8, during his discourse about how different people achieved fame, Don Quijote tells Sancho:

Todas estas y otras grandes y diferentes hazañas son, fueron y serán obras de la fama, que los mortales desean como premios y parte de la inmortalidad que sus famosos hechos merecen, puesto que los cristianos, católicos y andantes caballeros más habemos de atender a la gloria de los siglos venideros, que es eterna en las regiones etéreas y celestes, que a la vanidad de la fama que en este presente y acabable siglo se alcanza; la cual fama, por mucho que dure, en fin se ha de acabar con el mismo mundo, que tiene su fin señalado. Así, ¡oh Sancho!, que nuestras obras no han de salir del límite que nos tiene puesto la religión cristiana, que profesamos. (93)

Don Quijote's desire for glory in heaven is what motivates him, and Cervantes reminds his reader of the knight's desire at the end of the novel when Alonso Quijano prepares himself for death by requesting that a priest hear his confession and give him the Body of Christ. Don Quijote's actions are based on what he believes is right in order to fulfill a personal need, i.e. subjective morality, but at the same time, these actions are in accord with right conduct according to the Law of God.

Earlier in this essay, I defined a moral act as satisfying three criteria: object, end, and circumstances. A legitimate question to ask is, however, can the knight's actions really be considered morally right if we consider the harm he inflicts on other characters? The principle of "double effect" may be helpful in answering this question.

According to the principle of "double effect," an act may be considered good even though there may be an evil or bad consequence. In order for this principle to apply to an act, however, the act must meet four conditions: the act must be good, or at least morally neutral; the evil consequence must not be the motivating factor of the act; the good consequence must not be the result of the evil consequence; and the intended good consequence must equal or outweigh the evil consequence. A caveat to keep in mind with respect to the principle of "double effect" is the argument of proportionate reason, which St. Thomas Aquinas cites in his explanation of self-defense: "And yet, though proceeding from a good intention, an act may be rendered unlawful, if it be out of proportion to the end [...] Wherefore if a man, in self-defense, uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful" (2675). Don Quijote's aim is, for the most part, as I will explain, not to inflict pain unless in the service of a moral act. His actions are predicated on his belief that, as a knight, he has a duty to help those who cannot help themselves. Whether Don Quijote's actions result in harm to himself, such as the adventure with the flocks of sheep that the knight believes are charging armies in Part I, Chapter 18, or to others, such as the adventure of the galley slaves in Part I, Chapter 22, the intention of his acts, or many of them, are in proportion to their end. Since Don Quijote's moral compass is not independent of God's Natural

Law, which St. Thomas Aquinas defines as “nothing else than the rational creature’s participation in the eternal law” (1823), his actions, when in proportion to the end, are moral in nature.

Don Quijote is also, however, the author of actions that may not be viewed as moral based on the principle of “double effect.” In Part I, Chapter 52, the knight attacks the goatherd, who suspects, upon seeing Don Quijote, that he “debe de tener vacíos los aposentos de la cabeza” (653). Don Quijote’s attack of the goatherd is not reasonable, and it certainly is not proportional. The knight’s behavior in this episode, in addition to his attack on the priest in Part I, Chapter 31, may be described as “*porfía in malam partem*.”¹⁴ The knight errant who embarks on the third sally after a period of time at home, where he is able to convalesce and to reflect on his earlier adventures, exhibits a better balance between *ira* and *razón*, albeit not perfect by any means, culminating in his deathbed condemnation of books of chivalry: “Ya conozco sus disparates y sus embelecios, y no me pesa sino que este desengaño ha llegado tan tarde, que no me deja tiempo para hacer alguna recompensa, leyendo otros que sean luz del alma” (II, 74, 633). Don Quijote’s treatment of the goatherd reminds the reader that while the knight’s actions may be considered moral and his motives admirable, he is not beyond moral reproach, a fact he alludes to on his deathbed. Furthermore, this example of the knight’s humanity may also remind the reader of his or her own shortcomings.

Literary critic Harry Levin once wrote, “In the long run, the impact of any book is the sum of its various readings; and when these differ from the author’s purposes, they reveal the readers’ special concerns” (233). The enduring legacy of Cervantes’ masterpiece is not due to the fulfillment of the knight’s aspirations to make his world a better place. The genius of the novel is its ability to speak to each one of us in a personal, yet equally profound, way. For a Christian, for example, whose “special concerns” are his or her relationship with God and how to discover His presence through the holiness of everyday life, Don Quijote reminds us that our lives are not necessarily about the success we have, but, rather, what motivates us to act the way we do and how we incorporate in our daily lives the love and grace that God has bestowed on each one of us. As the examples of the galley slaves and the goatherd illustrate, Don Quijote is not a paragon of Christianity. Don Quijote’s efforts to sustain his anachronistic chivalric identity are analogous to the Christian’s struggle with his or her faith. The compassionate reader experiences personally Don Quijote’s idealistic endeavors and suffers along with him when our knight fails all too often. Terry Eagleton, commenting on theorist Wolfgang Iser’s reception theory, reminds us that the act of reading is not a passive endeavor: “The whole point of reading, for a critic like Iser, is that it brings us into deeper self-consciousness, catalyzes a more critical view of our own identities. It is as though what we have been ‘reading’, in working our way through a book, is ourselves” (79). The reader of *Don Quijote* may find himself or herself rooting for the knight to succeed because, in one way or another, he is all of us as we discover who we are and the different ways, personally, professionally, and spiritually, we can make a difference in the lives of many people.

¹⁴ Cortijo Ocaña 527. Cortijo describes Marcela’s actions as “*porfía in bonam partem*” and those of Grisóstomo as “*porfía in malam partem*.”

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