

The Life of Don Quijote and Sancho (Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho)

The grave of Don Quijote

By Miguel de Unamuno

You ask me, good friend, if I know how to unleash some sort of delirium, vertigo, or madness, on these poor, orderly and tranquil masses that are born to eat, sleep, reproduce, and die. Isn't there some way, you say, to bring back the outbreak of The Flagellants, or of the Convulsionaries? You are talking to me about the end of the world.

Like you, I often feel nostalgia for the Middle Ages; like you, I would like to live during the seizures of the Millennium. If we were able to create the belief that in a given day, for instance the second of May of 1908, the centennial of the shout of Independence would end forever in Spain; since on that day we would be divided like sheep, I think the third of May of 1908 would be the greatest day in our history, the start of a new life.

That would be misery, a complete misery. Nothing would matter to anyone. And when someone tries to secretly stir up this or that problem, or question, they attribute it either to a transaction, or a desire for notoriety, the wish to be conspicuous.

Here they no longer realize the madness. They even say, and believe, that the madman is mad because he doesn't use reason. The use of reason, or the lack of reason, is already a fact for those unfortunates. If our Don Quijote were to come back to life and return to Spain, they would be trying to find a second intention for his noble deeds. If someone denounces an abuse, searches for justice, or deprecates vulgarity, they ask these slaves: what do you expect to accomplish with that? What are you trying to do? Sometimes they say, and believe, that he does it so they will fill his mouth with gold; other times it is because of callous feelings and base passions of someone who wants revenge, or who feels envy; then they say he does it for proud vanity, only to call attention so people will talk about him; or he does it just to amuse himself and spend the time, as though it's a game. It's a great shame that so few people choose the same games.

Pay attention and think about it. When met with an act of generosity, of heroism, or of madness, all those stupid windbags, priests, and grovelers of today think of nothing more than to ask themselves: why would I do that? And when they think they have found the reason for the act—no matter whether it's what they think it is—they say to themselves: Bah!, I did it for this or that reason. Whenever something has a reason for existing, and they know it, the thing loses its value. That's the way they use logic; their filthy logic.

They say to understand is to forgive. And those unfortunates need to understand in order to forgive the one who humiliates them, the one who, with acts or words, throws their misery in their face, without saying anything.

They have come to the point of stupidly asking themselves why God made the world and have told themselves: for His glory! And then they have been as smug and satisfied, as if these fools know everything about what the glory of God is.

Things are done first, and the reason for them comes afterward. When I am given a new idea, any idea, about anything, it will tell me afterward what it's good for.

Sometime when I plan a new project, something which I think needs to be done, there never fails to be someone who will ask me: and what next? For questions like that, the only reply is another question. So when they ask "and what next?" the only thing you can do is ask, "and before that?"

There is no real future; there is never a future. What they call the future is one of the greatest lies. The true future is today. What will become of us tomorrow? There is no tomorrow! What will become of us today, now? That is the only question.

And as for today, all those unfortunates are very satisfied because today they exist, and for them existing is enough. Existence, a pure and naked existence, fills their entire soul. They don't feel that there is anything more than existing.

But do they exist? Do they really exist? I don't think so; because if they existed, if they truly existed, they would suffer by existing, and they would not be happy with it. If they really and truly existed in time and in space, they would suffer by not being part of what is eternal, and what is infinite. And this suffering, this passion, which is nothing more than the passion of God in us, God who suffers by feeling caught in our finiteness and in our temporality, and this divine suffering would make them break all the fragile chains of logic they use to try and link their feeble memories, and their feeble hope, the illusions of the past, with the illusions of the future.

Why do they do that? Did Sancho ever ask Don Quijote why he did the things he did?

And, returning to where we were, to your questions and your preoccupations, what collective madness could we imbue in these unfortunate masses? What nonsense?

You yourself got close to the solution in one of those letters in which you asked me so many questions. In it you asked me: Don't you think a new crusade could be started?

Well, yes; I think one could start a holy crusade of going to redeem the grave of Don Quijote from the power of the windbags, priests, grovelers, dukes, and cannons that they have filled it with. I believe one can try to start the holy crusade of going to rescue the grave of the Caballero of Madness from the power of the lords of reason.

Of course they will try to defend their takeover and try to prove, with many carefully stated reasons, why the custody of the grave is their responsibility. They are guarding it so the Caballero cannot be resurrected.

The only way to respond to this idea is with insults, stones, angry shouts, or the thrust of a lance. You can't reason with them; if you try to reason with their reasons, you fail.

If they ask you, as they are accustomed to, with what right are you trying to reclaim the grave, don't answer them. Tell them they will find that out later. That may be when neither you nor they are living, at least in this world of appearances.

And this crusade has a great advantage for the other holy crusades from which a new life dawned on this world. Those ardent crusaders knew where the grave of Christ was, or at least where they said it was, but they don't know where the grave of Don Quijote is. It will be necessary to struggle, and make an effort to find it.

More than once your quixotic madness has made you talk to me about quixotism, as if it were a new religion. And to that, I want to say to you that if this new religion you are thinking about were to materialize, it would have two special priorities. One is that we are not sure if its founder, its prophet, Don Quijote—not Cervantes, of course—was a real man of flesh and bone, but instead we suspect that he was just fiction.

It is the lack of courage that causes this: the lack of courage to confront the ridiculous. Ridicule is the weapon used by all those disgusting windbags, grovelers, priests, clergymen, and dukes who keep hiding the grave of the Caballero of Madness. A Caballero who made people laugh but never told a joke. His soul was too great to let him make jokes. He made people laugh with his seriousness.

So, friend, start by being Pedro the Hermit and call for people to join you and the rest of us, to go and find the grave whose location we don't know. The crusade itself will reveal the sacred place to us.

Then, when the crusade sets off in its march, a new star will appear in the sky, a star that only the crusaders can see, a star that is bright and sonorous, that will sing a new song on that long night. And the star will start to move when the crusaders start to move, and when they have achieved their crusade, or when all have succumbed—which may be the only way to achieve their goal—the star will fall from the sky, and the grave will be in the place where it falls. The grave is where the crusade dies.

And there where the grave is is a cradle and a nest, and from there the bright and sonorous star will begin to rise, on its way to heaven.

And don't ask me anymore, dear friend. When you ask me to speak of these things, you make me remove them from the depths of my soul, afflicted by the coarseness that greets me from all sides and forces me, pained by the acts of cowardliness that engulf us, and make me lift from the roots of my distressed soul these false visions, the illogical concepts, and the things whose meaning I don't know, and care even less about trying to find out.

"What does all that mean?" you've asked me many times. And I can only say to you, "How should I know?"

No, my good friend, no! I have told you that with many of these ideas from my spirit not even I know what they mean, or at least I'm the one who doesn't know. There is someone inside me who gives them to me, and tells them to me. I obey him and don't try to look inside to see his face or ask his name. I only know that if I were to see his face, or if he told me his name, I would die so that he could live.

I'm ashamed for sometimes having invented false things or fictional characters in order to put in their mouth something I didn't dare put in mine, and make them say as a joke something I take very seriously.

You know me, and you know how very much I hate to purposefully look for paradoxes and peculiarities, no matter what some fools think. And you and I, my good friend, my only real friend, have often talked about what madness is, and we have commented on the idea of Kierkegaard that the one who is mad is the one who's alone. And we have agreed

that any madness, whatever it is, ceases to be that when it is part of an entire population, or perhaps of an entire generation. When a hallucination is collective it becomes popular, it becomes social, and it is no longer a hallucination and is converted into reality, into something that is outside of those who share it. And you and I agree that it is necessary to apply to the groups, to the people, and especially to our Spanish people, the madness of any one of its members who is mad, truly mad, and not just playing games. Mad, and not stupid.

And you and I, good friend, have been shocked by what here they call fanaticism, and for our misfortune, is actually not. No, nothing that is regulated, moderated, controlled, or directed by windbags, priests, grovelers, clergymen, or dukes, is fanaticism. Nothing that follows a system with logical rules, nothing that has a program, nothing that has been planned for a methodical speech tomorrow, can be fanaticism.

Once, don't you remember?, we saw eight or ten boys join together and follow one of them who said, "let's go do something atrocious!" And that is what you and I wanted, for people to get together shouting, "let's do something atrocious," and then set off. And if some windbag, some groveler, some priest, some clergyman, or some duke were to stop them and say to them: "Hey, boys, that's good, I see that you are filled with heroism and holy indignation; I'll go with you, but before we do something atrocious, before we go, don't you think we ought to come to an agreement about what atrocious thing we are going to do? What atrocious thing is it going to be?" And if I asked one of those boys to stop so I could tell him something like that, and he did, they probably would knock him down and walk over him, trampling him, and the heroic atrocious act would begin.

My friend, don't you think that there are many solitary souls whose heart wants some sort of atrocious thing, something that they crave? So go and see if you can assemble them to form a group and start them moving—and I will accompany you—to recover the grave of Don Quijote that, thanks to God, we don't know where it is. But the bright, sonorous star will show us.

Sometimes when you are feeling low you ask me if it can't be that when we are passing through fields and lands we are just walking in circles around the same place. That is when the star will be settled and silent above our heads, and the grave in us. And then the star will fall, but it will fall to become part of our soul. And our soul will be converted into light and will be merged with that bright sonorous star, and it will rise up brighter than ever, transformed into a sun, a sun with a lasting melody that lights up the sky of the rediscovered country.

So let's get started then. And keep in mind that in the sacred group of crusaders there are no windbags, grovelers, priests, clergymen or dukes, disguised as Sancho. Don't worry if they ask you things; what you should do is send them away, and when they ask you about the itinerary of the march, or when they talk about their plan or lean over and whisper in your ear suspiciously, asking you to tell you where the grave is, tell them to follow the star. And then do what the Caballero did: deal with the problem that's in front of you. Do what is now, do what is here.

Let's start moving. Where are you going? The star will tell you: to the grave! What are we going to do on the way? What? fight! And how do we fight?

What? Do you run into someone who lies? Shout in his face, "that's a lie," and move on. If you meet someone who is saying foolish things that people listen to with their mouths open, shout at them: "fools!" and move on. Always move on!

Someone you know who wants to be a crusader asks me: "is that how you remove a lie, or a theft, or some great foolishness?" Who has denied that? The most miserable of all the miseries, the most repulsive and sickening act of cowardice, is to say that nothing is accomplished by denouncing a robber because others will continue to rob, that nothing is gained by calling a fool a fool to his face, because nothing in the world will make them be less foolish.

Yes, you must repeat it once, and a thousand times: so that once, just once, when you get rid completely, and permanently, of a single trickster, you will have ended the trick once and for all.

So let's move on! And be sure to remove from the sacred group all those who worry about the path they're going to follow, and the pattern, and the rhythm. Above all, you have to get rid of all those who care about things like rhythm. They will convert your crusade into a dance team, and the progress into a dance. Get rid of them. Let them go somewhere else and sing to the crowds.

Those who try to convert the crusade into a dance team call themselves, and others among them, poets. They aren't. They're something else. They're only looking for the

grave out of curiosity, to see what is like, maybe in search of a new adventure, and have fun on the way. Out with them!

They are the ones who with their indulgence of gypsies help maintain the cowardice, the lies, and all the miseries that crush us. When they talk about freedom, they only think about one thing, about getting hold of someone else's wife. With them it is all about lust, and even with ideas, important ideas, they still fall in love lustfully. They are incapable of getting married with the grand and pure idea of creating a family; all they do is pile up ideas. They get them from loved ones perhaps even less than from one night companions. Out with them!

If on the way someone wants to pick a little flower by the side of the road, pick it, but do it quickly without slowing down, and keep following the group whose leader never takes his eye off the bright and sonorous star. And if he puts the little flower on the breastplate over his armor, not so he can see it but so others can, get rid of him! Let him go with the flower in his buttonhole, and dance somewhere else.

So my friend, if you want to fulfill your mission and serve your country, it is necessary that you don't show approval of the emotional boys who only see the universe through the eyes of their sweetheart, or something even worse. Shout at them, and make your words strident and harsh, so they will understand.

The group should stop only at night, in a forest, or in the shelter of a mountain. There they can set up their tents so that the crusaders can wash their feet, eat things their wives have prepared for them, give them a kiss, and go to sleep and resume the march the next day. And if someone should die, leave them at the side of the road, shrouded in their armor at the mercy of crows. Leave it to the dead to take care of the dead.

During the march if someone tries to play a flute, or a drum, or a flageolet, or a guitar, or anything else, destroy the instrument and kick them out of the group, because what they do will keep the others from hearing the song of the star. And besides, it's because the one who does that doesn't hear it. And anyone who doesn't hear the song of the sky should not go in search of the grave of the Caballero.

Those dancer types will talk to you about poetry. Don't listen to them. One who tries to play music under the sky without listening to the music of the spheres does not deserve to hear it. He doesn't realize the abysmal poetry of fanaticism, or the immense poetry of vacant temples with no lights, with no gold, with no images, with no parlors, with no aromas, and with nothing that can be considered art. Four smooth walls and a ceiling of boards; an ordinary patio.

Remove from the group all the dancers with flutes. Get rid of them before they leave you for a plate of kidney beans. They are indulgent, cynical philosophers, good boys who know it all, and forgive everything. They have no scruples about selling themselves. Since they live in two worlds, they can keep their freedom in the other, and enslave themselves in this one. They are just lazy aesthetes.

Some time ago it was said that hunger and love are the two basic concerns of human life: of poor human life, of earthly life. The dancers only dance for hunger or for love; the hunger for flesh, and the love of flesh. Cast them out of your group so that out there in a field they can get their fill of dancing while one plays the flute, another gives light taps, and another sings to a plate of kidney beans, or the thighs of his temporary lover. And there they can invent new pirouettes, new movements of the feet, and new melodies for the flutes.

And if someone comes to you and says he knows how to build bridges and that you may need his knowledge if you have to cross a river, out with him! You can pass through rivers by wading through them, or swimming through them, even if half of the crusaders drown. Let the engineer build his bridges somewhere else where they are really needed. When you look for the grave, faith can be the bridge.

So, my good friend, if you want to support your calling properly, be wary of art, and of science, or at least what they call art and science and are only poor imitations of true art and science. Let your faith be enough. Your faith will be your art, and your science.

I have been doubtful more than once of whether you can fulfill your mission when I noticed the poor care you take when you write letters. More than a few times they have corrections, alterations, or words crossed out. It's not a gust of wind that makes things clear. More than once your letters have degenerated into literature, into that disgusting literature related to the slavery of all miseries. The slavers know very well that while the slave sings about freedom he is consoled and doesn't think about breaking his chains.

But other times I recover my faith and find hope in you that I feel is there in spite of your stumbling, impromptu, and cacophonous words, when I hear your trembling voice.

There are times when it can be said that they are not part of any specific language. So let each one make their own translation.

Try to live in a constant passionate vertigo, controlled by any passion. Only those who are impassioned carry out things that are truly lasting and productive. When you hear someone insist that something is perfect, no matter what that stupid word refers to, get away from him, especially if he is an artist. In the same way that the most stupid man is the one who never in his life has done or said something foolish, the least poetic artist, or the most antipoetic—among the artists there are plenty who are antipoetic—is the impeccable artist who is decorated with a crown of laurel by those impeccable dancers who are a pain in the butt.

My dear friend, you are consumed by an incessant fever, a thirst for bottomless oceans with no shores, a hunger for universes, and a longing for eternity. You are suffering from the use of reason. And you don't know what you want. And now, now you want to visit the grave of the Caballero of Madness and breakdown in tears, be consumed by a fever, die of a thirst for bottomless oceans, a hunger for universes, and a longing for eternity.

Start off by yourself alone. All the other loners will walk by your side, even if you don't see them. Each of you will go by himself, but together you will form a sacred battalion, a battalion of the sacred and unquenchable crusade.

My good friend, you don't realize how all the loners, without knowing each other, without seeing each other face to face, without knowing each other's names, will march together, giving each other mutual assistance. The others who are not loners will speak to each other, shake hands, give themselves mutual congratulations, praise each other, then denigrating themselves and the ones by their side as they talk to themselves, as they flee from the grave.

You do not belong to that group, but to the battalion of free crusaders. Why do you listen to the rest of the group to hear what the others in it are crowing about? No, my friend, no! When you pass by the others, cover your ears, say your word, and keep traveling on your way to the grave. And let that word pulsate with your thirst, your hunger, your longing, and your love.

If you feel like you live because of them, live *for* them. But then, my poor friend, you will have died.

I remember that distressing letter you wrote to me when you were about to give up and reject the idea of joining the crusade. I saw then how much your solitude was weighing on you, the solitude that ought to be your solace and your strength.

You had come to the most terrible, the most desolate; you were at the edge of the precipice of your downfall: you had begun to doubt your solitude and had started believing in companionship. You said to me: "Wasn't it a mere conjecture, the result of pride, of petulance, and perhaps madness, for me think that I was by myself? Because once I calm down I see that I am accompanied, and I receive cordial handshakes, helpful voices, words of sympathy, and all kinds of signs that I am not alone, not by any means." Then you went on from there. And I saw that you felt deceived and lost, and I saw you running away from the grave.

No, don't be deceived by the effects of your fever, by the agony of your thirst, by the anguish of your hunger; you are alone, totally alone. The bites you feel are not only bites, they are also kisses. Those who applaud you also hiss at you; they want to stop those who are marching toward the grave. Cover your ears. And above all, cure yourself of the terrible impression that, no matter how much you try to get rid of it, it still comes back to you with the stubbornness of a fly: cure yourself of wanting to appear like the others. Only care about how you appear to God, about the idea that God has of you.

You are alone, much more alone than you realize, and even so you are on the way toward the absolute, the complete, the true solitude. The absolute, the complete, the true solitude consists in not even being with yourself. And you will never be completely and absolutely alone until you relinquish yourself at the edge of the grave: Holy Solitude!

I said all this to my friend, and he responded to me in a long letter filled with great uncertainty, with these words:

"Everything you have told me is good; but don't you think that instead of going to search for the grave of Don Quijote and save it from windbags, priests, grovelers, clergymen, and dukes, we should search instead for the grave of God and save it from believers and unbelievers, atheists and deists, who occupy it, and wait there, and shout with great desperation and tears, asking God to come and rescue them from nothingness?"

PART ONE

Chapter XXXI

About the interesting conversations that took place between Don Quijote and Sancho his squire, and other events

Now those interesting conversations between Don Quijote and Sancho were about the latter's encounter with Dulcinea. When Sancho said he saw her "winnowing two bushels of wheat in the yard of her house," Don Quijote responded: "Well you know that the grains of wheat that touched by her hands were grains of pearls." And when Sancho said it was poor quality wheat, Don Quijote said, "well I can assure you that, sifted by her hands, it was of very high quality, without any doubt." Sancho added that when she had received the letter, she asked him to put it on a sack, that she couldn't read it until she finished what she was doing, to which Don Quijote responded, "A discrete lady; that must be so she could read it slowly, and enjoy it." Sancho added that Dulcinea smelled masculine and Don Quijote responded: "But can't it be that you must have had a cold, or you must have smelled yourself? Because I know very well how that rose among thorns, that lily of the valley, that beautiful amber, smells." Then Sancho said that Dulcinea, not knowing how to read or write, tore the letter to pieces "so that no one would know her secrets," because what he had told her about his master was enough, telling him that she wanted to see his master and she would set out on the road from Toboso. When Sancho told his master that before she said goodbye she hadn't given him a golden jewel, only a piece of bread and cheese, handed to him over the fence of her yard, Don Quijote said: "she is very generous, and if she didn't give you a golden jewel it must be that she didn't have one with her; and as the saying goes, whatever is useful is always good, even if it comes late. I will see her, and all will be fine."

I would like to ask the reader to reread this admirable dialogue so they can recognize the intimate essence of quixotism with regard to the matter of knowledge. To the lies of Sancho, pretending things according to the norms of ordinary life, Don Quijote responded with the highest truths of faith that were fundamental and profound.

It is not intelligence, but will, that fashions the world for us, and the old scholastic aphorism "nihil volitum quin praecognitum" (nothing is wanted without knowing about it previously), must be corrected with "nihil cognitum quin praevolitum," (nothing is known without having previously wanted it).

In this treacherous world
nothing is true, or a lie;
all depends on the color of the
glass through which you see it,

as our poet, Campoamor said. And saying that in this world all is true and all is a lie also must be corrected. Everything is true insofar as it creates generous desires and fosters effective works; everything is a lie insofar as it stifles noble impulses and aborts infertile monsters. You will know things, and men, by their fruits. All beliefs that lead to works of life are true beliefs, and lies are those that lead to works of death. Life is the criterion of truth, and not logical conformity, which is only the result of reason. If my faith leads me to create or enlarge life, why do you want proof of my faith? When mathematics kill, mathematics are a lie. If, traveling while you are dying of thirst, you see a vision of what we call water and you rush to it and drink, quenching your thirst which revives you, that was a true vision, and the water, the water of truth. Truth is that which, leading us to do something one way or the other, would make our result correspond to our purpose.

One of those who devote themselves to what is called philosophy would say that in that chat with Sancho, Don Quijote confirmed the already well known doctrine of the relativity of knowledge. Of course everything is relative, but isn't relativity itself also relative? And playing with concepts, or perhaps also playing with words, it might be said that everything is absolute, absolute in itself however relative in its relation to other things. In this this play on words all logic fails when it is not based on faith and does not search at will for its ultimate purpose. The logic of Sancho was purely verbal, like the logic of scholasticism; it was based on the supposition that we all want to say the same thing when we use the same words, and Don Quijote knew that with the same words we only say opposite things, and with opposite words the same thing. Thanks to which we

are able to converse and understand each other. If, when he says something, my neighbor understands the same thing that I understand, his words would not enrich my spirit, nor would my words enrich his. If my neighbor is another me, why do I want him? For me, one self is enough, and even too much.

Grains of wheat are either gold or white, depending on the hands that touch them, dear Don Quijote, and are not able to settle in yours. And what Don Quijote was most certain about was that if Dulcinea smells masculine to men like Sancho, it is because they have a cold and only smell themselves. Those for whom the world only smells like substance smell themselves; those who only see fleeting phenomena are looking at themselves and do not see themselves profoundly. It's not by gazing through the heavens at the movement of the stars that we are going to discover you, our Lord God, who blessed Don Quijote with madness; it is when we contemplate the flow of loving desires as they roll across the foundation of our heart.

So, friend Sancho, the bread and cheese that Dulcinea gave you over the top of the fence have converted you into a jewel of eternity. You are living with that bread and cheese, and you will live as long as that remains in the memories of men, and even much longer. Through that bread and cheese with which you thought you lied, you will enjoy lasting truth. Wanting to lie, you told the truth.

Master and squire continued conversing, and in the course of their conversation Sancho insisted once again that Don Quijote should marry the princess; and when he refused he said "and how badly wounded you are by that empty mind!" For Sancho, the madness of his master centered only on rejecting value for glory, and that's the way all Sanchos are; they consider sane the madman who, with his madness, prospers in comfort and good luck, and they consider mad the sensible whose sensibility impedes him from gaining wealth. Sancho wanted to love and serve God "any way he could," but pure love was not something that fit in him.

PART TWO

Chapter LVIII

That tells how frequently Don Quijote had so many adventures that did not tend to relate, one with the other.

"When Don Quijote saw he was out in the open, free and unaffected by the demands of Altisidora, he was in his center, and his spirits renewed his ability to carry on again with the matter of his acts of chivalry. And, turning to Sancho, he said: 'freedom, Sancho, is one of the most precious gifts the centuries have given us...' and with all that follows.

Yes, now you are now free of jokes and taunts, you are free of dukes and damsels and lackeys; now you are free of the shame of appearing poor. One understands very well that 'during one of those seasoned banquets and those drinks of snow' you would seem to be 'caught between bouts of hunger.' You were right when you said: 'lucky is the one to whom heaven gave a slice of bread without being obligated to thank anyone other than heaven itself.' And who is that?

"Those and other arguments happened between master and squire," and Don Quijote's heart was still filled with the aftertaste of his servitude in the home of dukes, and the memory of his loneliness and his poverty when he met a dozen workers who were carrying some pictures and carvings for the altarpiece of his village. Don Quijote asked them courteously to let him see the pictures, and they showed him those of Saint George, Saint Martin, Saint James Matamoros, and Saint Paul, the knights errant of Christianity who fought for what was divine. And after looking at them, Don Quijote said: "What I have seen here is a good omen, brothers, because these saints and knights believed what I believe, which is the use of arms; except that they were saints and fought for what was divine, and I fight for what is human. They conquered heaven with the use of their arms, because heaven lacks strength, and up until now I don't know what I conquer with my efforts; but if my Dulcinea del Toboso were free of the things she suffers, enhancing my good fortune and establishing justice for me, it could be that my steps would follow the best path I have."

A very profound passage! Here the temporary madness of Don Quijote melts into the eternal sane goodness of the honorable Alonso the Good; and maybe there is no other passage in the sad stage of his life that reveals a deeper sorrow in his heart. Here Don

Quijote understands and enters into the wisdom of the Good Alonso el Quijano, going deeply into himself, and becoming a child once again, learns (according to the words of Teresa de Jesus, Vida, XII, II) that one will never abandon his own knowledge, and there is never a soul so great that it doesn't sometimes have to return to its life as a child and suckle." Yes, here Don Quijote returns to his spiritual childhood, a childhood whose memory is the foundation of our soul, since it is the child that we all carry within us who will have to save us some day. One must become as innocent as this child to enter the kingdom of heaven. Here Don Quijote feels in his mind, and in his heart, those remote years of his youth that are never mentioned in the story of his history, all those mysterious years in which, still free of the charm of books of chivalry where on quiet afternoons he had peacefully encountered the calmness of the gentle Mancha.

And, poor Caballero, in the dregs of your disenchantment, wasn't there a memory of that pretty Aldonza who you longed for for twelve years without having seen her more than four times? "If Dulcinea could only escape the things she suffers from..." you said, my poor Don Quijote; meanwhile, inside of him Alonso Quijano was thinking: oh, if thanks to my madness, the impossible could be possible, if Aldonza, led by compassion and charmed by the madness of my heroic deeds, were to come and erase my shame, the shame of a poor hidalgo advanced in age and burning with love, and then "increasing my joy and improving my judgment," my steps would lead toward a life of blessed love! Oh, my dear Aldonza, you could have led me to a better path than the one I have followed! But... now it's too late! I met you very late in my life! Oh, the mysteries of time! With you I would have been a hero, but a hero without madness; with you, my heroic deeds would have evolved into deeds of another sort, of another outreach; with you, instead of those jokes, fertile plots would have opened in the fields of my country!

And now, leaving Alonso el Bueno we return to Don Quijote to hear the caballero, engaged in the heroic enterprise of righting the wrongs of the world in order to achieve mercy for those of name and fame, to hear him admit that he doesn't know what he is achieving with his deeds, and see him turn his gaze at the salvation of his soul and the conquest of heaven, that requires strength.

"What does a man gain if he wins the whole world and loses his soul? Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul," says the gospel, (Mat., XVI, 26.)

These words of discouragement in Don Quijote's work, this descent to the wisdom of Alonso Quijano el Bueno is what makes his spiritual brotherhood most similar to the mystics of his own country of Spain, and to those souls longing for the dry plains where they live, and the calm sky under which they suffer. At the same time they are the complaint of the soul, when it finds itself alone.

But why struggle? Why all that? The anger he feels every day is enough. Why try to correct the wrongs of the world? The world we carry within ourselves is our dream, as it is also our life; as we cleanse ourselves, we cleanse it. A clear look clarifies what it sees. Chaste ears refine what they hear. And the bad intention of an act, is it because of the one who commits it, or the person who judges it? The horrible evil of a Cain, or of a Judas, could that not be a sign of the evil of those who have talked about their legends? Isn't our own evil what makes us able recognize the evil of our brother?... Those of pure heart see God in everything, and they forgive everything in his name. The intentions of others are beyond our influence, and only in the intention is there evil.

And most important, what are you looking for in your heroic acts? Righting wrongs for the love of justice, to receive lasting fame for righting them? The truth, poor mortals, is that we don't know what we achieve because of our deeds. The adventure improves us, justice prepares us, and we correct our steps with a better path than the one we follow, with another path that is not one of vainglory.

Look for fame and glory! Segismundo, the brother of Don Quijote said that:

*Who, loses a divine glory
because of human vainglory?
What previous act was not a dream?
Who has had great happiness and
hasn't said to themselves, when
he goes back and remembers it, that
it was a dream without any doubt?
So if that is part of my disillusion,
if I know that it is the lovely warm
flame that converts into ashes whatever*

*the wind blows, that is when
we reach the eternal, which is the
deceptive fame where neither the
happy memories dwell, or great
things of the past rest.*

(Life is a Dream, III, 10)

We reach for the eternal, and that way our adventure gets better and our judgment is improved so that we turn our steps toward a better path and set out to conquer heaven, which has great power,

*deceptive fame where neither the
happy memories dwell, or great
things of the past rest.*

And that was long before the Segismundo of Calderon, the serious Jorge Manrique, when he sang of the death of his father, Don Rodrigo, the Grand Master of Sandiago, told us about the three lives: the life of flesh, the life of man, and the life of the soul...

The encounter of Don Quijote with the four images of the knights errant of the divine was an abysmal passage filled with great melancholy! The Caballero considered it a good omen, in fact the omen of his eventual conversion and death. Soon, his adventure improved and, his judgment prepared, his steps would be directed to the best path, the path to death.

An abysmal passage! And who among those of us who want to follow Don Quijote hasn't experienced something similar? The sad aftereffect of triumph is disappointment. No, it wasn't that. What you did or said wouldn't deserve the applause they gave you. And you go home and find yourself alone, and then, still with your clothes on, you fall in bed and let your imagination wander through empty space. You don't stop on anything, nor does your imagination fix on anything; you are filled with great dismay. No, it wasn't that. You didn't want to do what you did, you didn't want to say what you said; they applauded you for something that wasn't yours. And your wife arrives full of love and, seeing you lying down like that, she asks you what's wrong, what happened, why are you worried?; and you say to her sharply, "leave me in peace!" And you are still upset. And while those who criticize you say you are drunk with success, in fact you are sad, very sad, dejected, totally dejected. You have become disgusted with yourself; and you can't go back, you can't go back in time and say to those who went to listen to you: "all this is a lie; I don't even know what I can say; here we are deceived; I am going to make a spectacle of myself; then, we are going to go home to see if our fortune is better and our judgment has improved."

The reader will surely realize that I have written these lines caught under a feeling of dejection. And that's the way it is. It's already night and this afternoon I spoke in public and I still hear the sad sound of those applauses ringing in my ears. And I also hear the criticisms, and I say to myself: they're right! They are right: it was a circus performance; they're right: I am converting myself into a comedian, a historian, a professional lecturer, and even my sincerity, the sincerity I have bragged about so much, has been converting me into a rhetorical cliché. Wouldn't it be better if I would stay home for a while and be quiet and wait? But could I do that? Could I resist tomorrow? Isn't it also cowardice to run away? Aren't I doing some good to someone with my words, even though it makes me feel discouraged and upset? That voice tells me: shut up, historian! Is it the voice of an angel of God, or is it the voice of a tempting devil? Oh my God, You know that I offer you the applauses as well as the criticism. You know that I don't know where this is taking me. You know that if there are those who think badly of me, I think I am worse than they do. You, Lord, know the truth. Just You. Please, Lord, improve my good fortune and also prepare my judgment to see if I can direct my steps to a better path than the one I am following!

Like Don Quijote, I don't know what I am accomplishing with my efforts. And Don Quijote had to say it in one of those moments when his soul is shaken by the wind from the flapping wings of the angel of mystery; in a moment of anguish. Because there are times when, without knowing why, or from where it comes, we are suddenly overcome when we least expect it, and are least prepared for it, by the thought of our morality... All at once it seems like death is hanging over me. Not death, but something worse, a

feeling of great humiliation and distress. And this distress, pulling us away from our apparent knowledge, takes us unexpectedly to the fundamental knowledge of things.

And in this distress, in this severe anguish of spiritual emptiness when ideas drain out of you, in order to recover them you will rise in a hurried flight to recapture them with your fundamental knowledge. And you will see that the world is your creation, and not your representation, as Schopenhauer said. By means of this great feeling of distress you will conquer the truth that is not the reflection of the Universe in your mind, but its place in your heart. The distress of the spirit is the doorway to fundamental truth. Suffer so that you believe, and as you believe you live. Before all the negations of “logic” that rule the apparent relation of things, appears an affirmation of the science of the heart that rules their substantial foundation. Although your mind tells you that someday your consciousness will melt, and your heart, awakened and enlightened by a great distress, will show you there is a world that is not ruled by reason. It is the truth that makes one live, not what makes one think.

At the sight of the images Don Quijote suffered a flash of dismay. Since he had never felt something like this, it would be a superhuman, and inhuman pattern that was impossible for everyday men. And how much would they suffer if Christ himself, overwhelmed by sadness in the olive grove, asked his Father if He could save him from the bitter cup of sorrow? For a moment Don Quijote felt doubt, but this one, his beloved, already loved him in turn, and because of that she was like his mother, as the truly beloved always is for the lover. There are men who don't realize the depth of love his wife feels for him until, in a moment of distress, he hears a heartrending “Oh, my son!” as she comes to hug him maternally. All of a woman's love, if it is true and endearing, is motherly. The woman adopts the one she loves. And so Dulcinea is already the spiritual mother, not just the lady of the thoughts, of Don Quijote and, although he had sometimes thought about the possibility that he was not her son, you will see that she recaptures him with a loving capture. Like when a calf runs away and the cow who feels her udder overloaded, fills the air that separates them with her sweet moo. You will see how she stops him, and recaptures him, with her sweet voice.

And after all this was said, master and squire went on happily, chatting cheerfully until they left the road and entered a forest when, “unexpectedly and without thinking about it, Don Quijote found himself tangled in a net of green threads stretched out between the trees.” And it was because they were put there by some beautiful maidens and illustrious young boys who, disguised as shepherds and shepherdesses, had created a new pastoral Arcadia where they could pass through it reciting eclogues of Garcilaso and Camoens. They knew who Don Quijote was, and they asked him to stop with them which he did, and while he was with them he had something to eat. And to show his thanks for their hospitality, he offered them what he could, which was to say that those ladies disguised and shepherdesses were the most beautiful and most courteous damsels there were in the world, with the exception of the peerless Dulcinea de Toboso, who was the beloved lady of his heart...

Don Quijote entered the road and, once there, he made his challenge. And here the reader will repeat what has been said many times in the course of this extraordinary story; and it is: what does the truth of a proposal have to do with the proposer's courage and the strength of his arm? Just because the challenger wins a fight, does what he is saying have to be more truthful than that of the one who is challenged?

I have told you, reader, that it is the martyrs who create faith, rather than the faith that creates martyrs. And faith creates truth.

Since it is a product of faith, the truth between a joke and a game is a feeling that, because of the water and the wind, is always inside the self,

said by Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar in a well-known novel,

as the King was advised, in front of those he was judging, before they were ten years old.

It is true, I repeat; everything we intend to do affects the result of our action and, therefore, it is the action that produces truth. So forget about logic. And, why is it men do something and use it to fulfill their purposes if it is not increasing their worth? People think something is true if it wins by the strength of the spirit and the arm of the one who supports it, and believing it is true, they keep doing it if it makes them produce a good

result. Therefore, the hands lend weight to the tongue, and it was with profound truth that Pero Vermuez said to Ferrando, the child of Carrion, in those famous lines:

*In front of everyone, including mio Cid, you heard them praise you
For killing the Moor, and for finishing the heroic deed;
All believed you, but none knew the truth.
And you were handsome, but badly dressed.
A tongue without hands, as you dare to speak.*
(*Poem of the Cid*, 3324-3328)

And it continued bothering him that he fled from the lion, which embarrassed the Cid, because of which he was then worth less—*but you're worth less today* (3334)—and then he abandoned his wife, the daughter of the Cid, and,

Because of all you spoiled, you were worth less (3344)

he finished exclaiming:

I will be truthful to all that I have said. (3357)

All believed Fernando, but it was because they didn't know the truth; that he was handsome, "but badly dressed." A tongue without hands, how did you dare to speak?

There is undoubtedly still some educated clown that will come and tell me I confuse logical truth with moral truth, as well as a mistake with a lie, and that there can be someone who is led to do something by an obvious illusion and succeeds, no matter what their purpose is. To which I would say that then the illusion is the most truthful truth, and that there is nothing more logical than morality. And I will be true to everything I have said. And that's enough.

Don Quijote entered the road and stood there. He launched his challenge, and that was when a herd of bulls and steers came and knocked him down, and trampled on him. That's what happens when you challenge people in order to defend a truth; bulls and steers, and even oxen come, and trample you.

End of "The Life of Don Quijote and Sancho"