

Cervantes's Laboratory: The Thought Experiment of "El curioso impertinente"

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IN *DON QUIJOTE* PART I, the interpolated tale of "El curioso impertinente" can be read as a prism with which to examine aspects of the stories of the characters who listen to the narration of the unraveling designs of Anselmo, Camila, and Lotario. Even studies of this novella that have focused mostly on an analysis of the work itself generally include remarks as to its "pertinence" to *Don Quijote*. David Arbesú Fernández, in his article "*Auctoritas y experiencia en 'El curioso impertinente,'*" also observes that "En lo que toda la crítica del 'Curioso' está de acuerdo, no obstante, es en que la novela trata de alguna manera sobre el conocimiento de la 'verdad'" (24). Nevertheless, the majority of critical attention dedicated to this novella demonstrates a concern as to whether Anselmo was "right" or "wrong" to test Camila; and since critics will generally say that he was wrong to do so, they often then discuss *why* he was wrong. As a result, the critical focus of interpretations of the novella shifts to moral rather than epistemological concerns. Even Arbesú Fernández's thesis as to the "correct" approach to truth and knowledge in the novella is dictated by this interpretive imperative: Anselmo was wrong to test Camila, and hence his method for approaching truth was the wrong one; meanwhile Lotario was correct in opposing the test of Camila, and hence his method for approach-

ing truth was the right one.¹ In summary, since scholars have made the assumption that to test Camila is “wrong,” they have not dedicated intensive analysis as to what is wrong with Anselmo’s test as a test in itself. Of course, in order to do so, one must clearly delineate what exactly it is Anselmo’s experiment is testing. It has occurred

1 Arbesú Fernández writes: “El castigo de Anselmo se explica entonces de una manera más convincente en el esquema medieval en el que la *autoritas* refleja la palabra divina y la figura del Dios, y la experiencia se contrapone representando el pecado” (32). By making curiosity a sin and connecting curiosity with experience (or Anselmo’s empirical agenda), Arbesú Fernández essentially implies that Lotario’s method—which would have prevented the sin—is the correct approach. It is also linked to the proper way of discerning truth as he then writes that “la verdad del ‘Curioso’ se parece sustancialmente a la verdad divina” (32). His definition of “truth” in Cervantes’s novella implies only truth by revelation, or, in other words, truth according to “authority,” which is Lotario’s methodology. Arbesú Fernández’s argument actually seeks to expand upon what seems to be a commonly shared belief in scholarly interpretations of “El curioso impertinente.” For example, in his article entitled “*El curioso impertinente*: Novela clave del *Quijote*,” Georges Güntert asserts that what the reader learns from the novella is that “el ser (la verdad del alma) no puede conocerse por medio de experiencias, se puede solamente *crear*” (1981 787). The inference held by critics such as Güntert in this case is that because, *in retrospect*, it was not a good idea for Anselmo to test Camila, that therefore the arguments that Lotario presented in the debate with Anselmo must somehow explain with certainty that such a test would be a fruitless endeavor because certain knowledge of the human soul cannot be gathered through experience. Yet, when we consider the actual points and nature of the arguments made by Lotario during the debate, we will also notice that Lotario never actually makes this case. Through pages of debate in which he draws many analogies, he does not actually mention the human soul and the degree to which knowledge can be obtained from it empirically. In other words, the preference for Lotario’s approach to truth” with respect to Camila’s virtue seems to be a retrospective assignment by critics who, understanding that the story has concluded tragically, seek to determine how that ending could have been prevented. These critics then assume that because Lotario wanted to prevent Anselmo from conducting his test, that Lotario’s arguments presented in the debate must somehow hold the key to the correct epistemological assessment of how Anselmo should have understood and accepted the truth and knowledge of Camila’s virtue. In a sense, too much credit is given to Lotario’s approach to truth and knowledge, not because of the way he argues his case, but simply on the basis that Anselmo’s approach is discredited in the pages of novella.

to me that a precise examination of this point has been thus far overlooked by scholars—even Lotario, when he counters Anselmo's arguments in the novella's famous debate, betrays a faulty understanding of the objective of Anselmo's test.

Building on the theme of "truth" in "El curioso impertinente," we should also consider Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce's description of an important intellectual preoccupation that is pervasive throughout Cervantes's works: "Cualquier lectura de las obras de Cervantes, por apresurada que sea, evidencia el interés absorbente que tenía para el novelista el tema de la verdad, y las formas del conocimiento para alcanzarla" (17). He later makes note of the three possible cognitive approaches to knowledge or truth: authority, experience, and reason.² With this consideration, we may see "El curioso impertinente" and its examination of truth as a prism for examining the methods used to assess present situations and for understanding basic assumptions about the different worldviews that we observe among the characters in *Don Quijote*. Reading *Don Quijote*, one may notice how different characters make sense of their world by delegating primary importance to one of three methodologies: (literary) formulas, rational deliberation, or the "indisputable" empirical evidence of the material world. One might think of Don Quijote, the Canon from Toledo, and Sancho Panza as respectively representing, at least to a significant degree, each of these three options. In my analysis of "El curioso impertinente," I will discuss how the novella explores these three methodologies and articulate the potential and the problems implicit in the reliance on each in the pursuit of knowledge and truth." For example, with respect to Anselmo's empiricist leanings, I will analyze how his method works, the assumptions such a method implies, and the various factors that complicate its realization. Readers and critics may casually assume that Anselmo's method is plagued by concerns of distinguishing "appearance from reality" or

2 In his analysis of objects in *Don Quijote* Part I, Avalle-Arce writes: "Esta proyección ideal de los objetos reales *bacia* y *yelmo* sintetiza armónicamente las realidades previas y sus apariencias y, dicho sea de paso, está por fuera de las posibilidades cognoscitivas de la autoridad, experiencia o razón" (38).

that we can assume *a priori* that empirical testing (for one reason or another) does not work with human beings. Yet while these generalizations may be true, the considerations of empiricism and its inherent problems in “El curioso impertinente” are far more complex. In fact, such casual generalizations betray a kind of retrospective assessment of Anselmo’s empirical project (an assessment that relies on the novella’s tragic conclusion) rather than a detailed account of the epistemological and methodological limitations that present themselves as the experiment unfolds.

Finally, Avallé-Arce also distinguishes another important tripartite in the interpretation of Cervantes’s works: truth, knowledge, and life.³ A review of critical studies of “El curioso impertinente” demonstrates that the general focus of interpretation has been on the third item listed—“life.” By this, I mean that scholars have interpreted the story in terms of the potential “lesson” that it offers as to how one should live in the world. Yet we might instead decide to take a step back from assuming such an overtly constructive and moralizing agenda on the part of Cervantes.⁴ In fact, I would argue

3 “Conocimiento y verdad aparecen en la obra cervantina indisolublemente unidos a un tercer término: vida. El problema es, pues, trino y uno. Porque Cervantes, para su bien o para su mal, no es ningún Montaigne, buscándole solución a los problemas que lo asaltan en el ensimismado aislamiento de la torre de su castillo” (17-8).

4 Leonardo Rossiello discusses another dimension of the novella’s possible exemplarity. In his article “Argumentación, convencimiento y persuasión en ‘El curioso impertinente’ de Cervantes,” he focuses the rhetorical aspects of the debate in the novella: the language, figures of speech, verb tenses, and the overall rhetorical structure of the exchange. Rossiello proposes to investigate the problems with Lotario’s arguments, which he considers a “fracaso retórico,” which “contribuye a justificar tanto el desenlace trágico de la historia como la justicia poética” (168). Rossiello’s reading of the novella is similar to Arbesú Fernández’s (discussed in footnote 1) in that both scholars suppose there to be a “moral of the story” that hinges on the relevance of the arguments that Lotario presents in the debate. The difference is that for Arbesú Fernández, Lotario’s methodology of approaching truth is the correct one, and the tragic end of the novella is the result of Anselmo’s disregard for Lotario’s arguments; meanwhile, Rossiello interprets the novella’s tragic ending as resulting from the ineffectiveness of Lotario’s rhetoric. These two readings represent two ways of reading Cervantes’s novella as a negative exemplum

that despite critics' attempts to find a single and overarching "moral of the story," Cervantes's novella simply resists such a clear-cut categorization. Instead, as "El curioso impertinente" is framed as fictional and is thus set off from the life of the characters in the novel in which it is included, it may prove fruitful to read the novella's contrived artificiality as signaling a thought experiment—an investigation into the methods of determining truth and knowledge—rather than as presenting yet another representation of life. In doing so, we also *do not need to assume* that Cervantes offers us a solution to the problems inherent when each of the three methods (authority, reason, and experience) are implemented in the context of life. In other words, it is unclear as to why we must assume that "El Curioso impertinente" is a "how-to" manual for life or, as Arbesú Fernández posits, an *auſtoritas*,⁵ and furthermore, it is also perhaps unreasonable to assume that the "urgencia inmediata de eſta riguroſa necesidad intelectual" that Avallé-Arce observes as Cervantes's search for truth is methodologically resolved in this novella (17). Ultimately, "El curioso impertinente" may pose revealing questions as to the possibility of using narration, and particularly, the novella as a way to study the relations between truth, knowledge, and life. I would argue, in fact, that though the story reaches a conclusion, the investigation as to the appropriate method for discerning truth and as to how we may understand the relations between truth, knowledge, and

(an example of what not to do). In this sense, both seem to agree that Lotario's approach to truth is correct (though, perhaps, poorly presented rhetorically).

5 Arbesú Fernández writes: "El hecho de que la novelita se lea de un manuscrito—y no sea fruto de las experiencias del narrador—permite a Cervantes un guiño sobre la temática del 'Curioso' en sí. La historia, como novela ejemplar, se convierte eſtrictamente en una *auſtoritas* como aquellas en boca de Lotario, aunque las palabras del cura al acabar la narración no deben quedar sin análisis" (28). The fact that the characters come across the novella in manuscript form does not serve as satisfactory evidence that it should be considered an *auſtoritas*: every written manuscript is certainly not an *auſtoritas*, and considering that, alongside the novella of "El curioso impertinente," the characters also discover a version of "Rinconete y Cortadillo," it is rather dubious to suggest that the trunk left behind in the inn by a certain stranger (perhaps Cervantes) contains a collection of *auſtoritates*.

life does not.

AUTHORITY AND THE APPROACH TO
TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO FORMULÆ

For the many pages in *Don Quijote* dedicated to its narration, Cervantes's novella receives remarkably little critical attention within the novel itself. It has proven to be a good story—although slightly inverisimilar because it is not reasonable to expect Anselmo and Camila, as husband and wife, to behave in such a fashion:

— Bien, dijo el cura —me parece esta novela; pero no me puedo persuadir que esto sea verdad; y si es fingido, fingió mal el autor, porque no se puede imaginar que haya marido tan necio, que quiera hacer tan costosa experiencia como Anselmo. Si este caso se pusiera entre un galán y una dama, pudiérase llevar; pero entre marido y mujer, algo tiene del imposible. (Cervantes, *Don Quijote* 371)

The commentary expressed here relates to a formulaic reading of the novella: the “married woman” and “married man” character types can be expected to behave only in certain established ways.⁶ That formulaic criticism is, by extension, related to how the priest understands reality: *he assumes that “El curioso impertinente” cannot be a true story because it is not verisimilar.* After all, his comments suggest that not

6 In his article “El lector defraudado,” Güntert makes a similar observation with respect to the interplay between the priest's understanding of reality and literary norms. Güntert explains some readers during this period prefer stories considered, or known to be, truthful, and these readers “se acercan a los libros con la convicción de poder encontrar, detrás del texto, algo real que haga de «referente» y garantice la credibilidad de aquél, pero, no se atreven a negar a la literatura el derecho de existir. A ésta le quedaría reservado el escape de verosimilitud, según argumentaban las poéticas de la época, sobre las que el Cura, así como más adelante el Canónico, dan muestras de haber meditado” (1986 271). In other words, the priest represents the type of reader “quien busca la verdad de la literatura en la conformidad de ésta con la realidad, más allá del texto, a medida que cree susstraerse a los engaños de la ficción” (271).

only should married women and men not behave like Camila and Anselmo in the literary world of a novella, but also that married couples in general do not act in that manner. The priest's interpretation of the inverisimilar aspects of "El curioso impertinente" is based on his belief that reality more or less adheres to literary formulas. His notions of verisimilitude dictate not just his æsthetic reading of the novella, but also his judgment as to whether or not it would *even be possible* for this story to have happened in reality. For the priest, the best way to interpret reality, and to determine what is possible and impossible in the "real world," is to see if the account—real or fictional—adheres to the descriptions of the world that authority has fashioned.

In reaction to the priest's comments, Arbesú Fernández has written that "El 'Curioso,' entonces, pasa de ser verdad *auçtorial* a mala ficción artística. Como libro *auçtorial* critica la 'costosa experiencia' de su protagonista, como historia de ficción es criticada por los personajes vivos de *Don Quijote*" (41). I question whether such a reading is possible. If, at the end, the novella can be categorized as bad fiction, how can it then also be an *auçtoritas*? It either presents something true *and* useful (as an *autoritas*) or it does not. In other words, either it is exemplary or it is not, and "exemplary" implies that it is moral (that it furnishes a "lesson" to be learned) and that it is verisimilar. To posit that authority is the correct cognitive means of approaching truth and knowledge implies that the sources used in this approach are truthful. If "El curioso impertinente" is considered not to be truthful, it cannot act as a source for truth—or serve, as an *auçtoritas*, in arguments invoking authority.

The method of using authority as the approach to dealing with truth and knowledge in "El curioso impertinente" has been more or less the chosen course of critics who have studied this novella. In order to discuss the method of using authority, however, I would first like to make clear that regardless of the authority chosen (from the Holy Scriptures to fanciful poetry), the procedure invoked is essentially the same. With this approach, we would first begin by assuming that there is a general, over-arching "moral of the story"

to be taken out of the novella. In doing so, we would then assume that the story presents us with an exemplary plot and is thus essentially crafted according to a conventional model or formula. The story, considered to be the realization of a stock exemplary model, is assumed to be composed of exemplary or stock characters that are placed into their pre-assigned positions within the model. As the priest's comments at the close of "El curioso impertinente" suggest, certain models require certain characters and preclude the existence of others. Remarking on the author's shortcomings, he asserts that "si este caso se pusiera entre un galán y una dama, pudiérase llevar; pero entre marido y mujer, algo tiene del imposible" (*DQ* 371).

The author of an exemplary tale essentially sets up and "runs" the literary model to demonstrate the predictable conclusion of a particular set-up of characters and relationships. I use the expression "run the model" because the mechanical realization of the upshot in a novella functions like an economic model in which one enters the correct numbers or equations into the system and then goes through the proper solving and simplifying methods in order to obtain results. If the reader of the exemplary tale assumes that there is a moral of the story and that the events of the story have been constructed (as a model) to present this moral, he or she will consequently try to determine which, of the various exemplary models, is realized in the story at hand. At this point, the reader will look to the end of the story and the fates of the characters, in order to determine what the moral of the story is and therefore which exemplary model has been represented in the tale. While the literary model is prescriptive and thus could be used to predict results in the story, the actual procedure inherent in this approach usually entails a retrospective interpretation that will clarify, once the reader sees how everything concludes, which model the story has illustrated. Both predictive and retrospective readings in this case necessarily assume both that the story is essentially the realization of a model and that the plot of the story is fully explained by an over-arching moral explanation that encompasses every major turn of event.

Probably the two most significant problems with this approach,

especially when it is applied to “El curioso impertinente,” are the interdependency of the various procedural steps outlined above and the fact that, in my opinion, it is not clear, *even at the end of the novella*, which literary formula can be said to encompass all of the events in the story. With respect to the procedural steps, we should note that determining which exemplary formula is at play in the novella depends on what the reader has seen to be the moral of the story; determining what the moral of the story is depends upon how the reader has decided to deal with the fates of the characters and how he or she has decided to assign blame and responsibility for what happens; yet if we consider how critics have interpreted the fates and the respective blame that corresponds to each character, we might note that these biases have been predetermined according to the exemplary model that they believe is represented in the novella. For example, as critics have often assumed that because there must only be *one true* formula, a correct interpretation of “El curioso impertinente” must more or less pass over or pardon Lotario and/or Camila’s behavior. It is as though we are not supposed to take seriously the description of Lotario as “el traidor amigo” (*DQ* 348).

In my opinion, there are actually three literary formulas, which are present in “El curioso impertinente,” and therefore there are three formulas that may be considered if we are to use authority as the means of interpreting the story. These exemplary formulas are popularly denoted as the *two friends*, the *faith in marriage*, and the *deceived husband* models. As it seems that most critics, consciously or not, gravitate toward the *faith in marriage* model, I will begin by analyzing that model and how it instructs us to read “El curioso impertinente.”⁷ In exemplary stories that represent this model (for example the story of Bernabo, Ambrogiuolo, and Ginevra in the ninth story of the second day in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*),

7 Antonio Barbagallo writes: “El tema principal del cuento no es, como se puede pensar en un primer momento, la Amistad, sino la fe dentro del matrimonio” (211). While Barbagallo is explicit in his choice of the literary formula relevant to “El curioso impertinente,” most critics’ interpretations of the novella involve a similar assumption.

the husband, usually due to some type of provocation, agrees to allow his wife's fidelity to be tested. Another man offers to participate in the test. He attempts to seduce the first man's wife. The wife is too chaste to be seduced. Somehow, the husband is exposed for having set up the test; he is then chastised for scheming against his wife. She, in turn, is praised for her steadfast virtue. According to this model, the wife is a model of virtue: the husband and the "other man" are both, to varying extents, morally culpable.

Certainly, "El curioso impertinente" does not conclude in the same way that the traditional *faith in marriage* exempla do, and so we cannot really read the story as a clear-cut representation of that model, which neatly assigns essentially all the blame to Anselmo. In the case of "El curioso impertinente," Camila fails the test, and the story ends tragically for all involved (Anselmo *and* Camila and Lotario). Which character, then, is to blame for all who, and all that is, suffered? Clearly, Anselmo, for the same reason that the husband is chastised when the wife passes the test, is to be blamed for what ensues when she does not. Lotario, as the other man or as "Anselmo's dear friend," while not necessarily the one to blame, is morally suspect as he does still seduce someone else's wife—*his best friend's wife*. Camila may or may not be the one to blame either, but while the traditional model certifies that the husband is wrong to set up the test, *the model does not imply* that the wife need not pass it.

The important question, therefore, in addressing this model's relevance to the story seems to be whether Anselmo's test and Camila's fall are causally related or simply correlated. From the story, we can only really see that given *an* opportunity (Anselmo's test), Camila fell. The fact that she did fall in the context of *this opportunity*, however, does not necessarily mean that it took the test for her to fall (that it had to be this opportunity—Anselmo's test—in specific). We know that something about the situation engendered by the test made her fall. The question, which may or may not ever be answered, is what? If Camila's love for Lotario is sincere, we should in fact assume that she would have fallen for him regardless. We might also note here that as soon as Anselmo and Camila were married, Lotario

decreased the extent to which he visited Anselmo in his house,⁸ and during the first stages of the test, Lotario refused to even speak to, or look at, Camila. Both of these points can be read as though to foreshadow the problems that may arise in terms of Lotario's presence in, and complication of, the marriage between Camila and Anselmo. On the other hand, if we think that Camila fell *because of the extensive advances* on the part of Lotario (which are put into motion because of the test) then we might suppose that *another opportunity* could present itself in the future—after all, she is not imprisoned like Leonora in “El celoso estremeño,” where even there against much greater odds, the opportunity to fall in love with another man presents itself. Finally, Lotario falls in love with Camila before she falls to his advances; yet, as far as we know, Anselmo did not consciously design the test such that Lotario would actually fall in love with Camila. Hence there is an important step between the set-up of the test and Camila's eventual fall. Antonio Barbagallo, who asserts that “El curioso impertinente” is a representation of the *faith in marriage* model,⁹ only blames Anselmo: “Los dos amantes huyen y el marido impertinente sufre las consecuencias de su impertinencia” (210). Such a reading seems to assume that only Anselmo suffers the consequences and that only Anselmo is to blame. Yet, if Camila only falls for Lotario as a result of the test, then Camila and Lotario's love is not sincere, and in that case the lovers would be morally at fault for betraying Anselmo in the name “love.” And since we see that Camila

8 “Los primeros días, como todos los de boda suelen ser alegres, continuó Lotario como solía la casa de su amigo Anselmo, procurando honralle, festejalle y regocijalle con todo aquello que a él le fue posible; pero acabadas las bodas y sossegada ya la frecuencia de las visitas y parabienes, comenzó Lotario a descuidarse con cuidado de las idas en casa de Anselmo, por parecerle a él—como es razón que parezca a todos los que fueren discretos—que no se han de visitar ni continuar las casas de los amigos casados de la misma manera que cuando eran solteros; porque, aunque la buena y verdadera amistad no puede ni debe de ser sospechosa en nada, con todo esto, es tan delicada la honra del casado, que parece que se puede ofender aun de los mismos hermanos, cuanto más de los amigos” (*DQ* 328).

9 Barbagallo writes, “El tema principal del cuento no es, como se puede pensar en un primer momento, la Amistad, sino la fe dentro del matrimonio” (211).

and Lotario do suffer consequences, we might at least concede that they are partly to blame for their miserable fates and the tragic ending of “El curioso impertinente.” After all, Camila and Lotario *choose* to play games with Anselmo as they secretly ridicule his ignorance of their “love.” Hence, Cervantes’s novella resists categorization as a *faith in marriage* novella just as it does not fit cleanly into one overarching moral or lesson that a man should not test his wife.

Now let us consider the relevance of the *deceived husband* model, which is definitely present in the novella, despite that fact that the husband in this case (Anselmo) more actively opens the door to his own deception than is traditionally seen in novellas categorized by this model.¹⁰ The *deceived husband* model entails the story of a married couple in which the wife takes a lover. Much of the narration is spent depicting the many ingenious ways in which the wife hides her lover from her husband, and in showing the mutual amusement on the part of wife and the lover over the husband’s ignorance—despite the countless “close calls” in which the two are nearly exposed. Regardless of how much the reader blames the husband for his often remarkable stupidity, *if the story ends in tragically*, the moral blame is usually placed on the wife (and again the lover is usually considered to be morally suspect).

In “El curioso impertinente,” Camila clearly deceives Anselmo, and she and Lotario find a seemingly continuous source of entertainment in this deception—until, of course, their exposure is imminent. The relevance of the *deceived husband* model to “El curioso impertinente” is actually highlighted by the priest’s comments after characters in the inn have finished listening to the story. The priest notes that “entre marido y mujer, algo tiene del imposible” (DQ 371). He does not limit his comments to how husbands act but

10 In his article, “Truth, Lies, and Representation: the Crux of ‘El curioso impertinente,’” Michael Gerli considers Cervantes’s novella in terms of the *deceived husband* model: “Cervantes in ‘El curioso’ actually explores the general problem of meaning and authenticity or how intentions may be assigned to things that intrinsically do not possess them, reflecting in the context of the traditional Italianate novella of the deceived husband the broader intellectual question of language’s ability to signify truth” (111).

includes an assessment as to the behavior of wives. Perhaps there is something inverisimilar not just in Anselmo's behavior but also in Camila's—and perhaps even in Lotario's as well. Barbagallo writes:

Guillén de Castro, en su adaptación dramática de *El curioso impertinente*, alteró los acontecimientos y el sentido de la obra, haciendo que los celos de Anselmo surgieran del hecho de que Camila había tenido relaciones amorosas con Lotario antes de casarse con Anselmo. Así los celos de Anselmo se justifican, y el adulterio de Camila con Lotario en cierta manera aparece más explicable. (215)

It is perhaps too easy to focus on the mystifying nature of Anselmo's behavior—his sudden, strange, and unrelenting curiosity, and his desire to test Camila. Perhaps we should reconsider whether we truly understand Camila's motivations. Barbagallo suggests that Camila “ingenuamente y sin maligna y traicionera premeditación cedió a las leyes naturales que se pueden aplicar a una mujer que casi seguramente no estaba enamorada locamente de su marido, aunque así lo creyera” (218). First of all, when we witness Camila's continuous and entertaining deception of her husband Anselmo, it is difficult to credit her with not the slightest tendency towards deceit and treachery.¹¹ But more importantly, Barbagallo's pardoning of Camila

11 Howard Mancing has interpreted “El curioso impertinente” by positing “Camila as the protagonist of the story” (9). He further underscores the agency of Camila by couching his argument in ideas developed by Joanne Frye: “It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Camila's taking charge of the story she narrates. As Joanne Frye states, ‘Once the female ‘I’ has spoken, the subversion is begun’ (50): ‘When the protagonist of the novel is made her own narrator, she thus achieves a very immediate kind of agency and a capacity to renew our notion of plot.’(56)” (16). Mancing then explains: “This is precisely what happens in Camila's case: she transforms herself from passive object to active agent; she takes control of her life and her story and in the process relegates to secondary status the men who quibble over abstract concepts” (16). I believe Mancing's observation is important in order to recognize the role of Camila as an active (and perhaps at some points *the* active) agent in the novella. At the same time, however, I find the idea of Camila's dramatic transformation to be somewhat questionable.

is based on an explanation that has no real grounds—no more, at least, than what would also be necessary to pardon *Anselmo*. If we can read Camila’s fall to Lotario as evidence of her not truly loving her husband (even though neither she, nor the reader, had evidence to suggest that), then we must also read Camila’s fall to Lotario as evidence that Anselmo did have reason to be suspicious—or *at least* curious—of Camila’s ability to be faithful (even though neither he, nor the reader, had evidence to suggest that). The logic is essentially the same. Camila’s fall must be read as predictable in order to pardon Camila as having no agency in the matter, but if Camila’s fall was predictable, Anselmo’s suspicions should be pardoned. Maybe Anselmo intuitively knew that Camila wasn’t madly in love with him and was therefore suspicious of her fidelity (why she was being faithful at the present time and whether she would be faithful in the future). Of course, the last statement is completely hypothetical; I mention it to assert the hypothetical nature of arguments like those made by Barbagallo or by William Clamurro, who claims that Lotario “soon breaks down the fortress of Camila’s resistance. And understandably so, since an authentic, committed love between Camila and Anselmo was the one thing not yet fully vitalized in the realm of their marriage” (384). But is not Anselmo’s curiosity impertinent *because* he was happily married and *had no reason to doubt*?

It is unclear whether Mancing interprets Camila’s “transformation” as a change in Camila or as simply a change in the narrative focus. I believe the latter is a more reasonable position. Before Camila took Lotario as her lover and before she was aware of the test that her husband had conceived, she had no reason to be the focus of the narrative or to assert her discursive presence. Furthermore, Camila’s discursive power and her cunning ability to manipulate language, truth, and appearances should not be explained by the fact that she took Lotario as a lover. In other words, it is one thing to consider Camila’s agency with respect to the events of the story (the reason as to why her voice becomes important), but it is quite another to assume that her ability to be an active agent is only possible because of the events of the story. While there is little narrative focus on Camila before she falls to Lotario, it seems rather odd to suggest that a powerful character such as Camila would only become that way because of Anselmo’s schemes. His schemes, in my opinion, only provide her with the opportunity to assert her agency within the main focus of the narrative.

Interpretations of “El curioso impertinente” that have included efforts to pardon Camila tend to resort to explanations that are not in the text. More often, critics leave out questions as to the morality Camila’s behavior—as though to disregard it means that it is not important to the moral of the story of the novella. Critics who do address her behavior seem to feel that somehow they must be able to explain it in a way that does not make her actions seem immoral. In my opinion, they do so because they seek to avoid addressing the *deceived husband* model in the novella: the *deceived husband* model would complicate a formulaic reading of the novella that singularly posits Anselmo and his curiosity as encompassing all explanations for actions taken in the story—not to mention the moral of the story.

The final model relevant to “El curioso impertinente” is the *two friends* model, and Barbagallo neatly summarizes the important elements of it: “En todos, la amistad es firmísima, en todos, los amigos se enamoran de la misma mujer, en todos, uno de ellos es condenado a muerte y el otro lo salva, y en todos hay muestras de grandes sacrificios en nombre y honor de la amistad” (208). Though it is essentially impossible to deny the presence of this model in Cervantes’s novella, many critics have chosen not to read the novella according to the moral of the story that this model conveys. The “lesson” of the *two friends* model is essentially that a man should choose his friend over the woman he loves, and in the end, everything will work out well. In his article asserting that “El curioso impertinente” is a rendition of the *faith in marriage* model, Barbagallo writes that “El tema principal del cuento no es, como se puede pensar en un primer momento, la Amistad, sino la fe dentro del matrimonio” (211). This statement betrays the idea that “El curioso impertinente” is either a story about *faith in marriage* or about *two friends*. The decision to consider the story as categorized by the *faith in marriage* model as opposed to the *two friends* model, however, relies entirely upon the interpretation that Anselmo is responsible for all the suffering that occurs in the novella—he is to blame, not his friend. Like the tendency to rule out a reading of the novella as a *deceived husband* exemplum because the critical consensus would have Camila’s be-

havior pardoned, the tendency not to read the novella according to the norms of the *two friends* model is also an attempt to excuse or pardon Lotario's behavior. Barbagallo's own remarks as to the correct behavior of the two friends in the *two friends* model exemplify why it is so important for the critics who would like to pardon Lotario's behavior to dismiss the model's relevance to the story. Barbagallo states: "Cervantes parece darse cuenta de que aquella llamada «amistad ideal» de los cuentos de los amigos no es tan ideal, ni siquiera verosímil. Sabe que el hombre enamorado nunca cedería la amada a su amigo, y si lo hiciera, el último llegado al triángulo, por ser el último llegado, y por ser verdaderamente amigo—si lo fuera—nunca aceptaría" (209). We should first recognize that Barbagallo, like the priest in *Don Quijote*, measures the degree of verisimilitude of a story according to the degree to which it is morally sound. This approach is quintessentially the procedure in which reality is measured according to authority: a good friend should—and therefore can be expected to—act a certain way. Yet if we consider the depiction of authority as relevant to good friends presented in the *two friends model*, Lotario's suffering at the end of "El curioso impertinente" is *exactly what he deserves*. Lotario, in fact, as Anselmo's "good friend," is more to blame for what has occurred than Anselmo: not only has Lotario agreed to participate in a scheme that he suspects will end badly for his friend and his friend's wife (if we take any of his arguments in the debate seriously), but he has also not given up his beloved to his friend—he has taken his friend's wife! Yet while critics seek to pardon or ignore Lotario's suspect behavior,¹² the narrator and even Lotario himself do

12 For example, Clamurro writes: "First, Lotario becomes yet another victim of Anselmo's madness, for Lotario's trumped-up story of how his approaches to Camila are rebuffed by her is destroyed by Anselmo's first act of voyeurism (409-10). Soon thereafter, Lotario himself is subtly corrupted or infected with a contingent derangement. For, after being caught in the lie of his non-performance, Lotario (now more thoroughly trapped in and contaminated by his friend's obsession) in fact falls in love with Camila" (383-4). Barbagallo writes: "Como ya sabemos, Anselmo mismo causa su triste fin, y aunque Cervantes se refiere a Lotario como «el traidor amigo» y hace hincapié en el hecho de que «Rindióse Camila: Camila se rindió», la culpa de todo recae sobre el insensato deseo de Anselmo"

not: Lotario chastises himself for being a bad friend, and the narrator calls him “el traidor amigo” (*DQ* 348). To read “El curioso impertinente” according to the *two friends* model, we would probably admit that Anselmo is not a very good friend either—after all, he does risk the honor of his best friend by involving him in a ridiculous scheme. Ultimately, the friendship is hardly ideal.

Camila's role in the story, however, is an interesting adaptation to the traditional *two friends* model. Typically, the woman in *two friends* exemplum is passive—with little persuasion, she accepts whichever friend has been assigned to her. Typically, however, she is not the only woman in the story. In fact, it seems that in order for the *two friends* exemplum to end happily—thus demonstrating the importance of placing the friend above the beloved—another woman (a double who is basically identical to the first) emerges to resolve the love-triangle. The lesson of putting friend before beloved would not be effectively conveyed unless both men remained friends at the end of the story—and both men were, or planned to be, married to *their* beloved. Cervantes's *two friends* narrative in *La Galatea* reaches a happy conclusion because, while Timbrio and Silerio both originally loved Nísida, Silerio ends up with Blanca, Nísida's sister. Mentioned in passing throughout the story, Blanca is a beautiful and virtuous maiden, but she is explicitly not the recipient of either Timbrio's or Silerio's love.¹³ As readers of a romance formula, however, we

(213). Barbagallo justifies how he has assigned blame by stating: “Son la belleza, las virtudes, y sobre todo la contemplación de Camila lo que abre el corazón de Lotario rindiéndolo impotente a todo intento de retroceder y de evitar el amor” (217). Finally, we see the same disregard for Lotario's responsibility in Avall-Arce's interpretation of the events of the novella: “Lotario, el encargado del experimento, rehúsa ser ecasillado por el frío apriorismo de Anselmo, con lo que se hace inevitable el adulterio final” (47-8).

13 At one point in his narration Silerio states: “Una cosa se me ha olvidado de deciros: que, en todo el tiempo que con Nísida y su hermana estuve hablando, jamás la menor hermana habló palabra, sino que, con un extraño silencio, estuvo siempre colgada de las mías. Y seos decir, señores, que, si callaba, no era por no saber hablar con toda discreción y donaire, porque en estas dos hermanas mostró Naturaleza todo lo que ella puede y vale; y, con todo esto, no sé si os diga holgara que me hubiera negado el cielo la ventura de haberlas conocido, especialmente

accept the happy ending, in which Silerio transfers his affections from Nísida to Blanca—even though Blanca was once the decoy for Silerio’s true love of Nísida.¹⁴ Of course, readers assume that Blanca loves Silerio—and that Nísida would be happy to have Timbrio or Silerio (though perhaps she might be considering that, other than their names, they are almost indistinguishable). Somehow readers will conclude that both friends end up married to *their* beloved because they will consider Blanca to be more or less Nísida. The happy ending of the *two friends* story in *La Galatea* rests on the fact that Timbrio and Silerio are essentially interchangeable and hence it does not really matter which one Nísida marries, and, furthermore, Blanca and Nísida are also more or less the same woman. The model essentially entails the presence of two dashing young men who are the best of friends and *two* beautiful women.

The complication that Cervantes presents with respect to Camila’s role in “El curioso impertinente” is two-fold. First of all, she is the one and only beautiful woman in the novella. When we read about the “other woman,” Clori, that Lotario later utilizes in his deception of Anselmo,¹⁵ we should *not* see it as a superfluous addi-

a Nísida, principio y fin de toda mi desdicha. Pero ¿qué puedo hacer si lo que los hados tienen ordenado no puede por discursos humanos estorbarse? Yo quise, quiero, y querré bien a Nísida...” (Cervantes, *La Galatea* 296). Silerio’s comments begin with a generous comparison of the two sisters, and he excuses Blanca in this case for not acting in the same way as Nísida; such remarks might serve to alert the reader to a possible harmonious solution to the love triangle. After seemingly equating the two, however, he distinguishes Nísida as his favorite “especialmente a Nísida,” and he concludes by asserting that fate or fortune, “los hados,” has bestowed his love, originally and forever, to Nísida.

¹⁴ When Timbrio confronts Silerio with the knowledge that the latter is in love with Nísida, Silerio explains that Timbrio has misunderstood the situation. Silerio then misleads Timbrio by convincing him that he, Silerio, is actually in love with Nísida’s sister, Blanca. Silerio is then able to recite a poem dedicated to “Blanca” because, as part of his work as a jester (a “truhán”), he had previously memorized a poem for another Blanca (299–300).

¹⁵ Lotario, in love with Camila, writes amorous verses to “Clori” even though the Lotario, Camila, and the reader know that the true addressee of Lotario’s love poetry is Camila. Clearly Lotario has invented Clori, and when Anselmo (who

tion to the story, brought in to mockingly dupe Anselmo, but instead as an ironic choice on the part of Cervantes, or on the part of Camila and Lotario—if we, as readers, choose to credit the two with rather sophisticated literary self-consciousness. Secondly, it seems that the critical consensus is somewhat unclear as to the extent to which to categorize Camila as an active agent in the story. Yet, if she were a passive character like Nísida, would she have betrayed her husband? Normally the two friends or random coincidences decide which of the two friends should have the woman that they both love. Does Anselmo, by setting up the test, decide that Lotario should have his wife? Yet can Anselmo really do this considering that Camila is married to him and therefore cannot really be with Lotario? Or does Camila decide that she would rather abandon her commitment to her husband by entering into relations with Lotario? On the one hand, she might have acted less cunningly and less amused by her and Lotario's schemes as they hid their relationship from Anselmo. She might also have realized that the choice was made for her before the story began—unlike Nísida or another of the beloveds in *two friends* narratives, she was already married to Anselmo. We should also recall that in the *two friends* exemplum in the eighth story on the tenth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Sophronia finds herself married, unwittingly, to Titus instead of to Gisippus (to whom she was engaged); nevertheless, Sophronia accepts her marriage vows—regardless of her own personal feelings. But, on the other hand, Camila might have fallen to Lotario because, as he argues, women are weak creatures and will essentially fall to whichever man pursues them. Ultimately, I believe, the story does not provide a conclusive answer.

claims that neither he nor Camila knows this woman) asks Lotario to recite some of his verses, Lotario makes explicit their generic nature: "Aunque la conociera... no encubriera yo nada; porque quando algún amante loa a su dama de hermosa y la nota de cruel, ningún oprobrio hace a su buen crédito" (*DQ* 348). Lotario can bare his soul through his poetry not because neither Camila nor Anselmo knows Clori but because, with these conventional amorous verses, it would be impossible to discern who Clori is or whether she even exists. Interestingly, Clori serves the purpose that Blanca originally served in the *two friends* narrative in *La Galatea*—though Clori does not actually exist.

What I have intended to demonstrate by interpreting “El curioso impertinente” according to the three obvious models which present themselves as important elements of the novella, is that it is difficult (impossible?) to assess, without *a priori* interpretive prejudice toward any character in specific, *which model* can be said to be *the model* that adequately characterizes the story. To read “El curioso impertinente” and to assume that it implies that authority is the best approach toward interpreting the world and toward seeking truth and knowledge implies a particular procedure that I outlined at the beginning of this section. It implies a clear distribution of blame—highlighted by a clear distribution of suffering witnessed at the end of the story—in order to demonstrate a singular effect of one wrong action or character flaw. It is one thing to say that several individual lessons can be gleaned from the story (do not test your wife, do not deceive your husband, do not deceive your friend and steal his wife), but the story itself does not punish only one character at the end, nor does it suggest that only one character is morally at fault. Arbesú Fernández has attempted to equate curiosity with sin in his assessment of Anselmo’s flaw;¹⁶ and whether or not one agrees with his argument, is there any question as to whether or not that adultery was officially considered a sin? The interpretive steps necessary to place moral blame on Anselmo are not even necessary when considering Camila and Lotario’s actions. To achieve the tragic end of “El curioso impertinente” all the above individual lessons (do not test your wife, do not deceive your husband, do not deceive your friend and steal his wife) were learned—or taught—the hard way. Anselmo’s curiosity might have set off a chain reaction, but the story, as it is written, clearly does not make Lotario and Camila passive characters moved at each moment by Anselmo’s mastermind.

Those who seek to interpret reality according to authority re-

16 Arbesú Fernández writes: “Igualando experiencia a pecado, pues, se explicaría el terrible fin de Anselmo ... El castigo de Anselmo se explica entonces de una manera más convincente en el esquema medieval en el que la *auñtoritas* refleja la palabra divina y la figura de Dios, y la experiencia se contrapone representando el pecado” (31-2).

quire an easily-traceable chain reaction. Then the story can be fitted into a particular model—or a particular model will inform the reader as to what type of chain reaction is at play—and hence what the tipping point of the chain reaction is. Authority prescribes the assumptions as to which actions are actions and which are reactions. My analysis of the three models demonstrates that it is not clear that there is one single tipping point or action by one of the three main characters that causes the fallout of the rest of the events in the story and marks the point when all the characters are seen to be reacting instead of acting. After all, with respect to the actual plot of the novella, the event that precipitates the story's final narrative unraveling is when Anselmo spies Leonela's lover escaping from her window. In the end, Camila, Lotario, and Anselmo all suffer, and they have all acted in morally suspect ways. The literary formula that a reader uses to interpret "El curioso impertinente" will depend on which character he or she chooses to blame—which wrong action he or she chooses as the tipping point. In this sense, Cervantes's novella may be read according to any of the three literary formulas—*faith in marriage, deceived husband, two friends*. Yet in each case, the reader is not accounting for, or is patently excusing, other aspects of the story. If one approaches truth and knowledge according to authority and the procedure that that choice implies, one is left with a partial or inconclusive—and hence insufficiently *authoritative*—interpretation of the reality of "El curioso impertinente." Consequently, we may conclude that, as a methodology for distinguishing truth in our interpretation of Cervantes's novella, authority is not the best critical tool for understanding how one approaches any definite, objective, or over-arching sense of truth and knowledge in the world of "El curioso impertinente."

Yet, scholars, and the priest in *Don Quijote*, are not the only advocates of authority in the context of the discussion of truth and knowledge as presented in Cervantes's novella. Arbesú Fernández has noted that "ocurre además que la historia del 'Curioso' responde perfectamente al esquema de un debate dialogado medieval en el que estos términos [*auctoritas* y *experiencia*] se contraponen" (24). He then

asserts that “La historia del ‘Curioso,’ no obstante, representaría una dualidad entre el afán de experimentación renacentista (Anselmo) y la búsqueda de conocimiento en las *auçtoritas* (Lotario)” (29). I believe that Arbesú Fernández is correct in assessing the two categorical sides, experience and authority, as represented in the novella’s great debate by Anselmo and Lotario respectively.¹⁷ On the other hand, while Arbesú

17 Mancing’s assessment of the novella involves emphasizing the similarity between Anselmo and Lotario’s methodologies, while contrasting both of these with that of Camila. Mancing cites Jerome Bruner in characterizing “the modes of epistemology available in human thought” (9), and asserts that they are “a good story” and a “well-formed argument” (10). He describes the logico-scientific well-formed argument in the following manner (citing Bruner in the process): “The ‘the paradigmatic or logico-scientific one, attempts to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation’ (12). It is this form—logic, argument, abstraction, theory—that has traditionally (at least since the days of the ancient Greeks) been privileged: human beings are reasoning entities (as opposed to brute animals, which are guided by instinct and sensation); the culminating and distinguishing cognitive achievement of *homo sapiens* is the ability to think logically, argue coherently, and convince by means of abstraction” (10). His description of a “well-formed argument,” which he attributes to the dominate modes of thought of both Anselmo and Lotario is not quite accurate, in my opinion, when it comes to addressing Anselmo’s epistemological leanings. In fact, Mancing never discusses the role of skepticism and empiricism, which do not fit neatly into the way that he has defined the “logico-scientific,” “well-formed argument” (10). It is true, as I will explain, that the “rational method” of approaching knowledge is defined by the ability to argue coherently and logically, and it is characterized by “intellectual inquiry” presented in “a conscious rhetorical structure” (12). Yet I do not believe that it necessarily entails the use of abstraction to the extent where the situation is stripped of any particulars and converted into an abstract mathematical proof. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate in my analysis of the debate, Anselmo and Lotario’s arguments are fundamentally different because of the characters’ distinct epistemological leanings. In fact, I believe that grouping Lotario and Anselmo together with respect to their epistemological leanings and approach to knowledge allows for the potential to misread the text, or assume that something is there that is not. For example, Mancing claims that “Anselmo argues back that although Lotario is logically correct, he is determined to carry the project out,” but I see no evidence of Anselmo’s concession that his friend’s argument is superior (12). Instead, as I will argue, Anselmo and Lotario talk past each other; their respective approaches to knowledge and to assessing the situation at hand are so distinct that neither character adequately responds to the points presented in the other’s arguments.

Fernández interprets the entire novella as wrestling between these two methodologies (authority and experience), I would argue that the debate itself—its outcome and its dynamic—constitutes the inclusion of the novella's third methodology, reason, which also constitutes the third cognitive approach to truth and knowledge that Avallé-Arce attributes to Cervantes's writing (see footnote 3).

REASON AND THE APPROACH TO TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH DEBATE

In order to consider the validity of the approach to truth and knowledge according to reason, it will be helpful to first articulate exactly what the methodological procedure of this approach is. If we consider the definition of *razón*, we find that it does not imply a strict methodological process in itself. Covarrubias' defines the word "razón" as the following: "Razón en otra significación, vale el concepto declarado por palabras. Tener uno razón en lo que dize es justificarse" (893). He then goes on to define "razonar" as "hablar concertadamente" (894). To consider how *razón* forms a methodology used in the pursuit of knowledge or truth in the context of "El curioso impertinente," we might then say that the debate more or less *is* the methodology. In this sense, the representatives for each side will present arguments or justifications for their respective opinions and respond to the arguments introduced by the other side. Whichever side poses arguments that are more persuasive—or not rebutted by the other side—will be considered the winner of the debate, the side that has best justified its stance, the side that has *razón*.

Recognizing that I agree with the critical consensus that has defined the arguments of the two sides of the debate (authority and experience), I believe it is difficult to discuss the place of reason as an approach to truth and knowledge in "El curioso impertinente" without including the arguments made in favor of empiricism and authority within the debate. As a result, I will discuss the problems that Lotario and the critics who praise his arguments have in articulating and fitting authority to the specific case study that the debate is meant to illuminate. I will then discuss the problems articulated

in Anselmo's manner of arguing on behalf of an empirical approach throughout the debate. I will then address the conclusion of the debate and its effectiveness in assessing knowledge and truth and in dealing with reality within the world of "El curioso impertinente." In other words, I will demonstrate how each side fails to make its case and then demonstrate how the praxis of a debate (or the rationalist method itself) is rejected as a proper approach to truth and knowledge in Cervantes's novella.

Lotario's objective in the debate is to persuade Anselmo to have faith in Camila's virtue rather than to initiate a test that will empirically demonstrate it. As Lotario represents the side of authority in the debate, one might notice that the evident general approach in his arguments is essentially a form of geometric reasoning—at least at first glance. Lotario's course involves searching for a universal rule and then applying it to the particular case of Anselmo's wavering faith. Lotario opens his rebuttal of Anselmo's call for empiricism with the following statement:

— Paréceme, ¡oh Anselmo!, que tienes tú ahora el ingenio como el que siempre tienen los moros, a los cuales no se les puede dar a entender el error de su secta con las acotaciones de la Santa Escritura, ni con razones que consistan en especulación del entendimiento, ni que vayan fundadas en artículos de fe, sino que les han de traer ejemplos palpables, fáciles, intelegibles, demostrativos, indubitables, con demostraciones matemáticas que no se pueden negar. (*DQ* 332)

The rationale behind his argument is as follows:

Rule: Everyone is supposed to have faith in the Holy Scriptures without seeking empirical or mathematical demonstrations justifying that faith.

ASSUMPTION: Anselmo is a member of the set of Everyone.

THEREFORE: Anselmo is supposed to have faith in the Holy Scriptures without seeking empirical or mathematical demon-

strations justifying that faith.

THEREFORE: Anselmo is supposed to have faith in Camila's virtue without seeking empirical or mathematical demonstrations justifying that faith.

When we see his argument outlined in this fashion, it is clear that something is a bit "off" in Lotario's process of logical deduction here. Lotario's introductory argument only follows logically if we stipulate another assumption: to interpret faith in Camila according to the rule that he has cited, we must posit, between steps two and three, that Camila is, or is a member of the set of, Holy Scriptures. Of course it would be difficult to argue for this equation, or to argue logically even on behalf of an analogy, $\text{Camila} \sim \text{Holy Scriptures}$, because Camila is not in any clear way a member of the set of Holy Scriptures: Camila is a wife, a human being (as considered from within the world of "El curioso impertinente") but not a Holy Scripture (a scripture, infallible, eternal, and unchanging). Lotario never cites a rule (such as one that might be written in Holy Scripture) that suggests that the analogy of faith in Holy Scripture \sim faith in Camila is apt.

We notice right away, then, that Lotario's process of presenting a rule and connecting it to the case at hand is plagued by the problem that whichever rule he mentions may not *necessarily* apply to the case—or imply, therefore, that Lotario's particular thesis is correct. Lotario may cite unquestionable authority, but what good is it if he links it so sloppily to the case of Anselmo's curiosity and desire to test Camila? His opening statements may be marked by some sort of *rhetorical* persuasiveness, but they are not *logically* persuasive. Furthermore, even his embellishment of the rule itself is not logically sound. Lotario claims that Anselmo seeks not just empirical evidence, but also the confirmation, by mathematical demonstration, of this evidence ("ejemplos palpables, fáciles, inteligibles, demostrativos, indubitables, con demostraciones matemáticas que no se pueden negar"). Yet it was precisely the divide between the mathematical derivation of natural laws and the results of empirical

study that characterized the initiatives of the early empiricists and set them apart from Galileo and others who would seek to combine these two approaches (Haydn 200). In his study entitled *The Counter Renaissance*, Hiram Haydn asserts: “it was their neglect of mathematics, their failure to recognize the necessity for the formulation of scientific natural *laws*, and their lack of method which recognized the importance of hypothesis and deduction, which proved fatal to the efforts of the Counter-Renaissance empiricists” (201).¹⁸ While Lotario might be correct in attempting to temper Anselmo’s relentless appeal to the empirical (as we will later consider the various problems with the early empiricists’ methods of study), his rhetoric combines fields of study yet to be brought together. His rhetoric is reminiscent of the pejorative connotations of the term: his arguments *might sound* forceful and convincing but they are logically

18 In *The Counter Renaissance*, Haydn devotes a chapter of summary and analysis to the rise of empiricism in the sixteenth century. Generally, the rise of empiricism can be understood as a reaction to Scholastic science in which the senses were so subordinate to the intellect so as to hardly factor into the study of things in the world (190). The rise in popularity of empiricism pertained to two groups of counter Renaissance thinkers: the “renovators” and the “innovators.” The “renovators” “turned to occult means of bringing to light the virtues hidden in nature, and particularly the alchemists who dreamed of renovating and restoring to nature her pristine vigor, lost since the Fall”; and the “innovators,” more in line with skeptical doubt than occult leanings simply “demanded the right to investigate ‘brute fact’ for themselves” (191). These groups were not mutually exclusive with respect to their adherents, though both emerged as a reaction to Scholasticism. The presentation of empiricism in “El curioso impertinente” is clearly along the lines of the “pure” or “radical” empiricism—the path of the “innovators.” Haydn explains that the beliefs of the “pure empiricists” date back to the late Middle Ages and the “followers of Ockham who moved on from his skeptical position to a scientific empiricism” (200). Haydn notes that the famous writers and philosophers of the counter Renaissance may be considered to be predominantly “pure empiricists”: “If they were ‘tainted’ with natural magic or astrology or one of various contemporary mystical or occult influences, [they] nevertheless followed with considerable fidelity, in some one department of knowledge, the pragmatic path of naturalistic empiricism” (197). As representatives of counter Renaissance empiricism across many fields of study, Haydn cites Vives, Telesio, Vesalius, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Bodin, Le Roy, and Montaigne (197).

unsound. As a methodological approach, they might, at best bring us closer to the *appearance of truth*—but not to truth itself.

While it would be easy to continue to undermine the relevance of many other analogies that Lotario draws throughout the debate, I will address only one more, which implicates additional problems inherent in Lotario's method of "authority." With this analogy Lotario compares Anselmo's scheme to test Camila and the schemes that hunters use to capture their prey:

Cuentan los naturales que el arminio es un animalejo que tiene una piel blanquísima, y que cuando quieren cazarle, los cazadores usan deste artificio: que, sabiendo las partes por donde suele pasar y acudir, las atajan con lodo, y después, ojeándole, le encaminan hacia aquel lugar, y así como el arminio llega al lodo, se está quedo y se deja prender y cautivar [...] La honesta y casta mujer es arminio, y es más que nieve blanca y limpia la virtud de la honestidad; y el que quisiere que no la pierda, antes la guarde y conserve, ha de usar de otro estilo diferente que con el arminio se tiene, porque no le han de poner delante el cieno de los regalos y servicios de los importunos amantes, porque quizá, y aun sin quizá, no tiene tanta virtud y fuerza natural que pueda por sí mesma atropellar y pasar por aquellos embarazos. (*DQ* 335-6)

The analogy implies what many scholars have implicitly accepted, that Camila ~ ermine.¹⁹ I believe such an assumption is rather naïve. In fact, Camila belongs to the set of Women, an ermine belongs to the set of Animals. Animals were not considered to have *rational souls*, and since animals lacked rational capabilities, men assumed that they could learn to manipulate them mechanically. Perhaps the jury was out, so to speak, as to just how in touch women (in com-

19 For example, Avalle-Arce writes: "Para su desgracia, Camila es muy de carne y hueso, y ante la encrucijada vital que le plantea su incauto marido su reacción será dictada, no por el cálculo de probabilidades, sino por la imprevisible autonomía de la mente humana" (47). In other words, Camila, "muy de carne y hueso," has the same lack of agency as an "arminio."

parison with men) were with their rational souls, but nevertheless, when we recall the categories of being relevant to the worldview of Cervantes's time, numbers of the set of Women are not simply Animals, which, it was believed and as the Lotario's quote infers, could be mechanically manipulated. It is also relevant to point out that accounts of the "naturales" are now being recognized a source of authority—a submission that I consider somewhat suspect. Who are these "naturales"? What constitutes their authority? Finally, while Avalle-Arce does note that Cervantes believed that experience could demonstrate truth, though only in an *a posteriori* manner,²⁰ the fact that Camila did fail the test (the fact that she did fall to Lotario's advances) does not prove, *a posteriori*, that the original analogy was apt.

As a final point of critique of Lotario's case—introduced with rhetoric reminiscent of a sermon and supported by his shoddy use of analogies—I would also argue that with his zest for rhetorical persuasion, Lotario fails to understand what exactly Anselmo even means to test. Anselmo had presented the test's objective as follows:

¿Qué mucho que esté recogida y temerosa la que no le dan ocasión para que se suelte, y la que sabe que tiene marido que, en cogiéndola en la primera desenvoltura, la ha de quitar la vida? Así que la que es buena por temor, o por falta de lugar, yo no la quiero tener en aquella estima en que tendré a la solicitada y perseguida, que salió con la corona del vencimiento. (*DQ* 330)

Lotario remarks that the test will serve no purpose:

Si [Camila] es tan buena como crees, impertinente cosa será hacer experiencia de la misma verdad, pues, después de hecha, se ha de quedar con la estimación que primero tenía. Así que es razón concluyente que el intentar las cosas de las cuales antes

20 Avalle-Arce writes: "La experiencia es válida como *elemento de juicio a posteriori* en la esfera de los acontecimientos humanos, que luego se podrá proyectar en el futuro con ciertos visos de probabilidad, eso sí, pero no es válida como forma cognoscitiva independiente" (24).

nos puede suceder daño que provecho es de juicios sin discurso y temerarios, y más cuando quieren intentar aquellas a que no son forzados ni compelidos, y que de muy lejos traen descubierto que el intentarlas es manifiesta locura. (333)

Yet, contrary to Lotario's understanding of the matter, a careful examination of Anselmo's plan (as cited above) demonstrates that his objective is not actually constructive: he does not seek to *increase* the estimation of Camila's virtue. In the first quote, Anselmo asserts that a woman might act in a virtuous way for reasons that are not in fact due to her virtue (e.g. her behavior might be due to fear). With this line of argumentation, Anselmo suggests that the test would be responsible for determining whether one or several other variables are truly the ones accountable for the perceived status quo. While it is possible that Camila is both virtuous and lacking in opportunity, the lack of opportunity in this situation serves as the variable that will determine her behavior regardless of whether or not she is virtuous—the inference is that the variable representing the lack of opportunity has the strongest correlation to the findings of a lack of dishonorable behavior. Anselmo is witness to Camila's virtuous conduct; his plan is to isolate for the variable of her virtue and to determine whether that alone is the primary or sufficient cause for her virtuous behavior. Nevertheless, Lotario assumes that were Camila to demonstrate virtue when tested, she would seem more virtuous to Anselmo, yet Anselmo is not interested in examining *the degree of virtue* that Camila may or may not have, but rather whether Camila *is or is not virtuous*. According to Anselmo's logic, if Camila resists, she is virtuous; if she fails, her previously virtuous behavior must have been caused by a factor other than her virtue.

We should now consider, on the whole, Lotario's general method of authority—his tendency to argue his points via analogies—in the context of its qualities and effectiveness as an approach to truth and knowledge. Let us consider two of Avallé-Arce's astute observations of "El curioso impertinente": "En el instante mismo en que el individuo deja de clavar su vista en la realidad actual, lo que observa no es

más la vida sino una abstracción, no se entiende ya con la circunstancia vital, sino con su concepto. Este peligro, que en Cervantes adquiere las proporciones casi de un pecado, se ve ilustrado profusamente en su obra” (46). Naturally, when one reads this quote, one thinks of Anselmo and his obsession with empiricism. As Avallé-Arce writes:

El gran crimen de Anselmo es el haber hecho una abstracción de la vida; la ha ignorado, o mejor dicho, la ha desnudado de todos sus aspectos problemáticos, y encara la cuestión vital de la honra de su mujer, Camila, como si fuese un acertijo de índole matemática. Anselmo se niega a aceptar la existencia de incógnitas en la vida, incógnitas que se resolverán, en la vida, de acuerdo con las circunstancias que las rodeen. Actúa, en cambio, llevado de un apriorismo de aplicación perfectamente legítima en la ciencia, pero de una inadecuación dramática en lo concerniente a la vida. (47)

While I will later attend to the problems inherent in Anselmo’s appeal to empiricism in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, I firmly believe that in the context of “El curioso impertinente,” Avallé-Arce’s critiques of Anselmo’s approach are just as relevant to Lotario’s. In truth, if one of the characters is not attentive to the specific, real-life aspects of Anselmo’s curiosity and Camila’s fidelity, it seems that that character is Lotario: with hardly any gesturing toward Camila, he concentrates his arguments on the purity of diamonds, the capture of beautiful white ermines, the skepticism of Moors, and all the while he dances around the actual objective of Anselmo’s test and side steps any specific assessment of Anselmo and Camila’s marriage (though he will speak about “Marriage”—as in, the relationship between Adam and Eve!). Furthermore, while Anselmo’s empirical method can be considered “scientific,” it is not—as early empiricism was not—mathematic. In fact, at least with his empiricism, Anselmo addresses the knowledge of Camila’s virtue as a matter of practical knowledge. Lotario’s method of authority actually implies that Camila can be thought of as an *idealized* (rather than a concrete)

entity, and that her virtue is *atemporal*, unchanging.^{21,22} If either character's discursive method is abstractly mathematic, I would suggest it is Lotario's use of authority, or the geometric approach, which implies that knowledge of Camila's virtue can be dealt with theoretically—through the application of axioms to the case of Camila and Anselmo.²³

21 For differences between methods of Theoretical and Practical knowledge see pages 26-28 of Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin's *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning*.

22 Güntert describes Lotario's method in a similar fashion: "Lotario acepta las creencias generales proponiendo, de Camila, una *lectura ejemplar*" (1986 278).

23 As we have seen with the analogy of testing Camila ~ hunting an ermine, Lotario does not always apply axioms to the specific situation, but instead adopts a kind of casuistry by applying another case to the case of Camila and Anselmo. Yet we have already discussed the problems inherent in applying this case to the particulars of the case of Camila and Anselmo. It is also worth pointing out that casuistry, as a discipline, is not employed to determine truth or correct knowledge about a given situation; as a result, this type of argument can be seen to run parallel to a search of the truth of, or the knowledge of, Camila's virtue. The argument of the casuist is only persuasive to suggest that testing Camila might not be a good idea; it does nothing to determine or demonstrate whether or not Camila is virtuous. Lotario makes a similar argument with the inapt analogy that testing Camila ~ testing a diamond, that the risk is that both will shatter:

Dime, Anselmo, si el cielo, o la suerte buena, te hubiera hecho señor y legítimo poseedor de un finísimo diamante, de cuya bondad y quilates estuviesen satisfechos cuantos lapidarios le vieses, y que todos a una voz y de común parecer dijese que llegaba en quilates, bondad y fineza a cuanto se podía extender la naturaleza de tal piedra, y tú mismo lo creyese así, sin saber otra cosa en contrario, ¿sería justo que te viniese en deseo de tomar aquel diamante, y ponerle entre un yunque y un martillo, y allí, a pura fuerza de golpes y brazos, probar si es tan duro y tan fino como dicen? Y más, si lo pusieses por obra; que, puesto caso que la piedra hiciese resistencia a tan necia prueba, no por eso se le añadiría más valor ni más fama; y si se rompiese, cosa que podría ser, ¿no se perdía todo? Sí, por cierto, dejando a su dueño en estimación de que todos le tengan por simple. (*DQ* 335)

From this argument, Avalle-Arce concludes: "Con estas palabras Lotario demuestra lo fútil, más aún, lo erróneo de entrometer la experiencia en materias vitales" (26). While Avalle-Arce might be correct in asserting that there is an

Unlike Lotario's discursive approach to presenting his case in the debate, Anselmo does not introduce a series of arguments that are idealized and atemporal and in which the order of those arguments may be changed without altering the case itself. Instead, Anselmo seeks to justify his stance (*tener razón*) by discussing his predicament as a matter of practical knowledge: knowledge relevant to a concrete and specific case that occurs within a specific period of time. As a result, Anselmo seeks to win the debate by essentially narrating, step by step, why he himself has become persuaded by the idea that empirical testing is the only possible approach of ascertaining proper knowledge of Camila's virtue.

Anselmo, therefore, is not solely an empiricist, and in fact he arrives at empiricism through the cultivation of the a skepticist approach to reality. As we will see, he represents a very typical trend of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century thought. He describes his initial curiosity in terms of an anxious and uncontrollable doubt: "No sé qué días a esta parte me fatiga y aprieta un deseo tan extraño y tan fuera del uso común de otros, que yo me maravillo de mí mismo, y me culpo y me riño a solas, y procuro callarlo y encubrirlo de mis propios pensamientos; y así me ha sido posible salir con este secreto como si de industria procurara decillo a todo el mundo" (*DQ* 330). Anselmo's tone is reflective of predicament described by the famous skeptic, Francisco Sánchez (1550–1623); in the aptly titled *Quod Nihil Scitur* (*That Nothing is Known*), Sánchez writes: "As it is, I am tortured incessantly by grief, in despair of being able to know anything completely" (233). Sánchez later provides justification for this skeptical anxiety: "For how am I to avoid doubt if I cannot grasp the natures of *things*, from which true scientific knowledge has to come? For it is easy to *see* a magnet, but what is its nature? Why does it attract iron? It *would* be scientific knowledge (*scientia*) if we were able to gain cognitive understanding (*cognition*) of this phenomenon" (285). Likewise, Anselmo sees that Camila is faithful to

inherent problem with testing "materias vitales," Lotario does not actually make that point, and, since a diamond is not a "materia vital" (and the analogy Camila ~ diamond is not sound), we therefore cannot properly conclude that he has.

him, but just by observing that fact, he is not able to understand why it is that she is faithful. In the debate in “El curioso impertinente,” Anselmo argues against the arguments of authority that Lotario presents. Likewise, Sánchez argues against the authority of the canonical treatises and of Scholastic demonstrations; instead, he appeals to a study of the facts as the best method for seeking truth:

For knowledge emerges from one who does not know yet is ready and eager to learn; all demonstration does is to point to the thing that has to be known; indeed, this is indicated by the very word ‘de-monstration’.... but I was stimulated by their remarks into preparing myself to examine any and every *thing*; and when I observed their contradictions and difficulties, in order to avoid falling into these myself I dismissed those authors and fled for refuge in the facts, with the intention of seeking in them a basis for judgment. (187)

Sánchez’s empirical turn, therefore, is couched as the only possible solution to his skeptical dilemma and rejection of the uncorroborated acceptance of authority. Similarly, Anselmo recognizes that Camila has been faithful, but he cannot simply accept that her choices reflect the power of her virtue:

Porque yo tengo para mí, ¡oh amigo!, que no es una mujer más buena de cuanto es o no es solicitada, y que aquella sola es fuerte que no se dobla a las promesas, a las dádivas, a las lágrimas y a las continuas importunidades de los solícitos amantes. Porque ¿qué hay que agradecer —decía él— que una mujer sea buena, si nadie le dice que sea mala? ¿Qué mucho que esté recogida y temerosa la que no le dan ocasión para que se suelte, y la que sabe que tiene marido que, en cogiéndola en la primera desenvoltura, la ha de quitar la vida? Así que la que es buena por temor, o por falta de lugar, yo no la quiero tener en aquella estima en que tendré a la solicitada y perseguida, que salió con la corona del vencimiento. (*DQ* 330)

We have already discussed Lotario's responses to Anselmo's empiricist claims, and on the whole Lotario's counter-arguments were irrelevant to Anselmo, and therefore ineffective as points of persuasion because they extracted the question of Camila's virtue from the particulars of the situation. Anselmo is looking for a "real time" solution to his doubts with respect to Camila, and his friend presents a lofty speech about many unrelated entities.

One of Lotario's faulty analogies, however, is relevant to Anselmo's own discursive method of justifying the test of Camila's virtue in real time. While we have considered the philosophical doctrines and ideas that support Anselmo's desire for confirmation through observation and the isolation and testing of individual variables, we have not considered the potential problems with these goals (though many proponents of these new methods were themselves aware of these obstacles). Lotario explains the technique that hunters use to capture ermines: knowing that the ermine avoids mud, they manipulate the movements of the ermine by throwing mud in its path (335-6) (this passage is quoted earlier). At first, it may appear quite contradictory to mention the example of the ermine as a valid argument. It is not: the analogy of Camila ~ ermine is faulty, and we certainly cannot make the *a posteriori* claim that the example was correct simply because Camila did fall to Lotario. The merit of Lotario's point with respect to the ermine is not that it is a conclusive analogy (as it is presented in the argument scheme of authority), but instead because it speaks to the question of process—to the particulars that may affect Anselmo's project that Anselmo himself has failed to take into account. Lotario alludes to a similar, though more general, line of reasoning in a feature of present-day quantum physics—the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle (HUP). This principle states that by measuring the momentum of an object, the scientist skews the measurement of that object's position, and consequently, as knowledge of momentum is required to predict position and vice versa, the experimenter's taking of measurements ultimately precludes ob-

jectivity in the calculations of his predictions.²⁴ The scientist cannot truly isolate for either variable because the intent to isolate for one variable entails false assumptions about the other—the one that should act as a neutral control. Sánchez's skepticism with respect to the ability to accurately measure and interpret empirical data is, while not conclusive in its determination like the HUP, at least an implicit allowance for the need to consider problems like those explained by the HUP. Sánchez proposes that it is impossible to gain true knowledge about any particular entity because true knowledge entails understanding the efficient cause of the entity, and in the search to establish the ultimate efficient cause, we are left with an infinite series of regressions.²⁵ Sánchez may then consequently assert that "one thing cannot be fully understood apart from all other things" (211). As a result, the experimenter will have to establish limits—or make assumptions—in order to begin to test any individual thing. Sánchez later writes: "It is inevitable that alteration in the arrangement of the external medium should cause the alteration in the images conveyed through it" (249). Similarly, if Camila's virtue is to be tested as Anselmo designs, it will be done by altering the medium or essentially creating an artificial environment—much like how the ermine's environment is altered according to the purposes of the hunters. While Anselmo attempts to isolate for the variable of Camila's virtue, any measurement or objective recognition of this virtue is precluded by the fact that while the test set up is necessary to empirically demonstrate her virtue, the test modifies her environ-

24 Greg Bothun writes: "In the *Quantum Mechanical world*, the idea that we can locate objects exactly breaks down. Let me state this idea more precisely. Suppose a particle has momentum p and position x . In a *Quantum Mechanical world*, I would not be able to measure p and x precisely. There would be an *uncertainty* associated with each measurement that I could never get rid of, even in a perfect experiment!... A consequence of the *Uncertainty Principle* is that if an object's position x is defined precisely, then the momentum of the object will be only weakly constrained, and *vice versa*. One cannot simultaneously find both the position and momentum of an object to arbitrary accuracy." <<http://zebu.uoregon.edu/~imamura/208/jan27/hup.html>>

25 See Sánchez's *That Nothing is Known*, pages 195–6.

ment. What Anselmo will in fact observe is Camila's *relative virtue*—the test does not measure the virtue she has in her ordinary reality, but rather the virtue she would have if she lived in Anselmo's alternate, experimental reality.

Lotario's analogy also implicitly questions Anselmo's true motives. Whether Lotario is conscious of the nuance of the comparison or not, Anselmo later proves to be exactly like the hunter in the example: he continues to reinforce and modify the experiment in order to test—but perhaps really to catch—Camila. In other words, the analogy suggests that Anselmo's role is essentially biased and antagonistic rather than neutrally skeptical and scientific. Lotario's comments seem to echo the observations of skeptics like Sánchez who believe that the observer, being a man, is himself fundamentally flawed, and, due to his many imperfections, lacks the ability to make accurate judgments with respect to the sensory data obtained in an experiment.²⁶ The implication that Anselmo, the designer and performer of the experiment, lacks objective neutrality only further supports the appropriate inclusion of Lotario's warnings which criticize Anselmo's blind faith in empirical study.²⁷

Anselmo never responds to the possible problems inherent in the design of his empirical test. In other words, Anselmo has yet to really consider *how he will actually conduct his experiment* so that he can really be sure that its results will not be contaminated by other factors. He has not thought through the design of his experiment

26 See Sánchez's *That Nothing is Known*, pages 238 and 283.

27 The initiatives of the early or "pure" empiricists that Haydn describes in *The Counter Renaissance* "failed to see that experience and observation were wholly dependable and accurate measuring rods only when supported by a scientific mathematical method (200). Nevertheless, Haydn cites Randall in order to emphasize the tempered implications that empirical study actually had in the quest for truth": "But the return to experience is not for the sake of certain proof: for throughout the seventeenth century it is almost impossible to find any natural scientist maintaining that a mere fact can prove any certain truth" (qtd. in Haydn 201-2). Unlike Anselmo, the early empiricists did not seek to *prove* anything for certain with their observations—they merely focused on the need to question traditional assumptions and the importance of gathering facts.

such that it will actually demonstrate truth and accurate knowledge. While Lotario fails to win the debate by justifying his stance via authority (because this line of reasoning deals with the idealized and atemporal rather than the situation of *Camila at this point in time*), Anselmo has also failed to justify the validity of empirical testing because he cannot follow through on the justification as to how his empirical project, conducted in time, will be accurately set up and performed.

In considering the entire debate of rational arguments and inferences presented to justify either the merit of empiricism or authority as the correct approach to knowledge and truth, it is perhaps surprising to discover that by the end of the debate, both sides seem to have abandoned their alliances to their respective methodologies. The justifications for authority and empiricism—or the praxis of the debate, the so-to-speak “rational method” for determining truth—all turn out to be vaguely irrelevant to how the debate is settled. Both Lotario and Anselmo turn to modes of thinking that reflect a process of *rationalization* rather than *reasoning*: unable to justify their stances according to arguments in favor of them, they both essentially construct cost-benefit analyses in order to decide not whether it would be epistemologically fruitful for Anselmo to test Camila's virtue, but whether Anselmo will or will not do it.

First Anselmo explains that if Lotario does not choose to take part in the test, he will have to find another man to fill the role:

Estás obligado a hacer esto por una razón sola; y es que, estando yo, como estoy, determinado de poner en plática esta prueba, no has tú de consentir que yo dé cuenta de mi desatino a otra persona, con que pondría en aventura el honor que tú procuras que no pierda; y cuando el tuyo no esté en el punto que debe en la intención de Camila en tanto que la solicitares, importa poco o nada, pues con brevedad, viendo en ella la entereza que esperamos, le podrás decir la pura verdad de nuestro artificio, con que volverá tu crédito al ser primero. Y pues tan poco aventuras y tanto contento me puedes dar aventurándote, no lo dejes de hacer, aunque

más inconvenientes se te pongan delante. (*DQ* 339)

Of course, it is easy to recognize the flaws in Anselmo's analysis: the entire projection hinges on Camila's resisting Lotario's advances, and one might infer (as does actually happen in the story) that the flipside of this projection would represent the worst possible outcome—a loss of honor and happiness to all. Furthermore, the idea that Lotario and Camila will be as happy as before the experiment rests on the assumption that Camila will not take offense to her husband's doubts with respect to her virtue and love for him.

Barbagallo has written that “si Lotario no hubiese existido, Anselmo no habría llamado a un desconocido para hacer la corte a su mujer” (211). Yet how can we possibly make that assumption when we consider that Anselmo is potentially crazy and Lotario never calls his friend's bluff? Anselmo has made a convincing case as to why the test's participant *should be* Lotario, but he certainly does not suggest that it *had to be* Lotario. Anselmo argues that the participant should be Lotario because, in that case, Anselmo thinks he will be able to maximize his benefit (the satisfaction of Camila choosing him over his best friend) and minimizing his risk. If Lotario decided not to participate, we do not know that for Anselmo the benefit of conducting the test (relieving his curiosity) would not have still outweighed a slightly higher risk (having a lesser-known entity court his wife). At the end of the debate, Lotario concedes:

Viendo Lotario la resoluta voluntad de Anselmo, y no sabiendo qué más ejemplos traerle ni qué más razones mostrarle para que no la siguiese, y viendo que le amenazaba que daría a otro cuenta de su mal deseo, por evitar mayor mal, determinó de contentarle y hacer lo que le pedía, con propósito e intención de guiar aquel negocio de modo que, sin alterar los pensamientos de Camila, quedase Anselmo satisfecho. (*DQ* 339)

The first sentence of the quote betrays the frustration of Lotario's attempts to use arguments of authority in considering the matter

and in arguing his case to Anselmo. Instead, Lotario begins this final process of deliberation by first considering “la resoluta voluntad de Anselmo,” and all of Lotario’s final points follow from this observation. Lotario also chooses what he sees as the risk-minimizing option: if he courts Camila, he will not let Camila be seduced by his advances, and he will keep the whole nasty affair secret (though ironically, he does not know what affair he will actually want to keep secret). Just as Anselmo’s cost-benefit analysis is faulty and incomplete, so is Lotario’s: if he is truly convinced by any of the arguments that he made in attempt to dissuade Anselmo from testing Camila, he would recognize the myopic nature of his decision to please Anselmo’s curiosity in the short term while subjecting his friend, himself, and Camila to broken marriage, strained friendship, and loss of honor to all in the long term.

The debate, set up as a rational *disputatio* between the merits of authority and empiricism as methods for approaching truth and knowledge, has become a mere contest of wills. As both Anselmo and Lotario present rational arguments to support their respective beliefs and desires, the debate as a whole demonstrates the subservience of reason to the will. The rational arguments—or points of justification—on each side both ignore the vitality of the situation: Lotario, speaking only of analogies derived from theoretical rules, fails to effectively connect his points to the situation at hand, and Anselmo, meanwhile, has yet to consider how he can be sure that his test will provide accurate results when implemented in the context of real time. Furthermore, as we witness the dynamics of the debate, we see how each side seems to talk past the other because neither agrees on the type of knowledge (theoretical or practical) relevant to the question of Camila’s virtue. In other words, not only can we observe that neither side has adequately justified its stance (neither side can be said to *tener razón*), but the actual set up of the debate—the interweaving of the arguments from both sides—essentially prohibits any progress toward establishing which side is right. The rational method, which posits that one will arrive at truth or proper knowledge through the discursive interchange of arguments meant

to justify one side or another, proves to be completely inadequate as a method for interpreting reality.

EMPIRICISM AND THE APPROACH TO TRUTH AND
“KNOWLEDGE” THROUGH TEST AND OBSERVATION

As Camila is a unique individual and not representative of a class of individuals, the experiment designed to test her virtue cannot be repeated and therefore must be conducted with particular detail given to the test’s controls. Anselmo, however, is not able to pre-establish all of the necessary controls from the outset, and he therefore finds himself testing the controls mid-experiment in order to be able to proceed with his initial plans. The most obvious example of this difficulty is that while Lotario agreed to play the role of Camila’s suitor, it is not clear what that responsibility actually entails or whether or not Lotario is playing the role as Anselmo designed it:

—¡Ah—dijo Anselmo—Lotario, Lotario, y cuán mal correspondes a lo que me debes y a lo mucho que de ti confío! Ahora te he estado mirando por el lugar que concede la entrada desta llave, y he visto que no has dicho palabra a Camila; por donde me doy a entender que aun las primeras le tienes por decir; y si esto es así, como sin duda lo es, ¿para qué me engañas, o por qué quieres quitarme con tu industria los medios que yo podría hallar para conseguir mi deseo? (342)

We may infer from Anselmo’s statements that he doubted Lotario’s ability to play the role to which he was assigned. Anselmo’s doubts with respect to Lotario consequently mirror his doubts with respect to Camila: he doubts their behavior when left to their own devices and so he must observe—in effect test—them both. At this early juncture, we are already alerted to the potential problems of the authenticity of the experiment—is Lotario a control in the test of Camila, or also an object to be tested? If Anselmo is testing the controls of his experiment, can he still be testing the initial object

of observation with the same degree of attention and objectivity?²⁸ Anselmo's test of his wife's fidelity is simultaneously conducted alongside the test of his friend's fidelity. In fact, at this point in the story it seems that Anselmo is more interested in his test of Lotario than in observing Camila.

Lotario, observed by Anselmo and converted into a new object of testing, serves as an interesting foil for examining the testing of Camila. In fact, in the tests of both Camila and Lotario, a problem of the nature of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle begins to figure as a fundamental hindrance of Anselmo's project. That Camila's natural choices might change when her natural environment is modified is, perhaps, strikingly predictable—as such an outcome was already forecast by Lotario in his debate with Anselmo. Yet, the observation of Lotario, who is now a primary object of study, is also affected by the problem of the nature of Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. When Anselmo confronts Lotario about his failure to effectively play the role of the suitor, Lotario may either engage Anselmo in a debate similar to the one presented at the beginning of the story or, as Lotario already conceded defeat in that instance, he may take Anselmo's desires to heart and actually delve into the real role of the suitor. Lotario, however, is not accustomed to making amorous advances (as we learn at the beginning of the story), and so, in fulfilling this new role, he must change his very nature. The experiment, therefore, does not test Lotario's courting of Camila, but the courtship of Camila by Lotario converted into an Anselmo-like character. Nevertheless, Lotario eventually does fall in love with Camila and entreats her with genuine amorous advances. In his role in Anselmo's test of Camila, Lotario is also tested, and like Camila, Lotario demonstrates or proves to have qualities that we may suppose might not have existed were the tests not conducted.

28 Sánchez observes the problem inherent this situation: "Knowledge is only of each individual thing, taken by itself, not of many things at once, just as a single act of seeing relates only to one particular object; for as it is not possible to focus perfectly on two objects at once, so too it is impossible to have complete understanding of two things at once" (190).

A further hindrance to the ascertainment of knowledge to be derived from Anselmo's test is the flipside of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle: the fact that at various stages of the experiment the observer is, in effect, changed by the observed. This second problem (of the observer changed by the observed) betrays a deeper epistemological concern as to whether the scientist can remain outside of, and unchanged by, his own experiment. In conducting the test of Camila alongside Anselmo, Lotario, like his friend, is cast as an observer of Camila. Yet when we see Lotario change from the man introduced as Lotario at the beginning of the story to Lotario, the lover of Camila, we should recognize that the pivotal moment of this change is due to Lotario's observation of Camila. In other words, though Lotario's character is modified as a result of being the object of observation of Anselmo on the whole (as previously discussed), the specific moment of his change occurs when he is in the role of the observer:

Mirábala Lotario en el lugar y espacio que había de hablarla, y consideraba cuán digna era de ser amada; y esta consideración comenzó poco a poco a dar asaltos a los respetos que a Anselmo tenía, y mil veces quiso ausentarse de la ciudad y irse donde jamás Anselmo le viese a él, ni él viese a Camila; mas ya le hacía impedimento y detenía el gusto que hallaba en mirarla. Hacía fuerza y peleaba consigo mismo por desechar y no sentir el contento que le llevaba a mirar a Camila. Culpábase a solas de su desatino; llamábase mal amigo, y aun mal cristiano; hacía discursos y comparaciones entre él y Anselmo, y todos paraban en decir que más había sido la locura y confianza de Anselmo que su poca fidelidad, y que si así tuviera disculpa para con Dios como para con los hombres de lo que pensaba hacer, que no temiera pena por su culpa. (*DQ* 344)

At the moment in which Lotario stops playing his role in the experiment and actually steps back to observe its subject, he becomes virtually the opposite of what he has proven to be thus far in the

story. He reasons with himself and even draws on the same types of arguments that he introduced in this attempts to dissuade Anselmo of his “locura,” and yet he is immune to his previous beliefs and becomes the bad friend, the bad Christian, in effect, the man who places his desire over his sense of honor. Lotario’s observation, as though made of an objective fact, that Camila “digna era de ser amada” is what causes Lotario’s personal feelings with respect to Camila to change—which, in turn, transform him into someone his previous self would scarcely recognize. The comparison with Anselmo that Lotario draws at this moment is also apt: both he and Anselmo have been driven beyond the boundaries of reason by Camila. Yet Camila *has not actually done anything* at this point to provoke the madness of either one; rather, the observation of Camila provoked both Anselmo’s “impertinent curiosity” and Lotario’s inappropriate, yet all-consuming desire.

When we recognize that the moment in which Lotario ceases to be Anselmo’s true friend and becomes, instead, Camila’s ardent suitor occurs while Lotario is the observer of Camila, we may therefore better understand why Camila falls in love with Lotario so soon afterwards. In an interesting play between observer and observed, we see Camila’s world transformed: “[Camila] habiendo visto en Lotario lo que jamás pensara, no sabía qué hacerse. Y, pareciéndole no ser cosa segura ni bien hecha darle ocasión ni lugar a que otra vez la hablase, determinó de enviar aquella mesma noche, como lo hizo, a un criado suyo con un billete a Anselmo” (344-5). Camila’s observation of Lotario’s transformation sparks a new sense of urgency for Anselmo to return. Like the ermine, it is as though she senses her entrapment and her eventual surrender.

When Anselmo eventually does arrive home to survey the progress of his experiment, as the observer, he also falls prey to the observed. In Anselmo’s case, this problem implies a more deep-seated epistemological issue. By the time Anselmo arrives home, his experiment has been effectively performed—Lotario has acted the role of Camila’s suitor, and she has dishonorably accepted his advances. Yet Anselmo, in the role of the scientist who conceived of, and developed

the experiment, is unable to accurately witness the results. As he is obsessed with seeing the evidence of his wife's fidelity or infidelity with his own eyes, he is forced to make judgments from what he sees before him—Camila and Lotario's deceptive and staged illusions.

The experiment is also plagued with concerns in the area that one might expect to be the only stable control in its realization: the supposedly "fixed" laboratory space of the house. While Anselmo feels the need to test Lotario, he never stops to think of any environmental modifications that his experiment might engender. Nevertheless, we witness a transformation of the space:

No pudo hacer otra cosa Camila sino rogar a Leonela no dijese nada de su hecho al que decía ser su amante, y que tratase sus cosas con secreto, porque no viniesen a noticia de Anselmo ni de Lotario. Leonela respondió que así lo haría; mas cumpliólo de manera, que hizo cierto el temor de Camila de que por ella había de perder su crédito. Porque la deshonestá y atrevida Leonela, después que vio que el proceder de su ama no era el que solía, atrevióse a entrar y poner dentro de casa a su amante, confiada que, aunque su señora le viese, no había de osar descubrielle; que este daño acarrearán, entre otros, los pecados de las señoras: que se hacen esclavas de sus mismas criadas, y se obligan a encubrirles sus deshonestidades y vilezas, como aconteció con Camila; que, aunque vio una y muchas veces que su Leonela estaba con su galán en un aposento de su casa, no sólo no la osaba reñir, mas dábale lugar a que lo encerrase, y quitábale todos los estorbos, para que no fuese visto de su marido. (351-2)

What is permitted in Camila and Anselmo's home is quite different now that Camila has failed Anselmo's test yet must hide that reality from him. In the new and unstable testing ground, the number and identity of the people in the home as well as basic assumptions about visitors and guests and their relationships with those in the home have all been subject to change as a result of Anselmo's project.

Yet, not only are the changes in the "laboratory space" a direct re-

sult of the performance of the experiment, but also, and more striking, those changes serve as the specific catalyst to the fall-out of the story, and eventually to Anselmo's final realizations about the nature and results of his experiment. When Lotario sees a young man leaving the house at dawn, the narrator explains: "Pensó Lotario que aquel hombre que había visto salir tan a deshora de casa de Anselmo no había entrado en ella por Leonela, ni aun se acordó si Leonela era en el mundo: sólo creyó que Camila, de la misma manera que había sido fácil y ligera con él, lo era para otro" (352). Drawing these conclusions, Lotario then goes straight to where Anselmo is sleeping; he wakes his friend and confesses to his successful seduction of Camila so that the two men will find a way to deal appropriately with her. Lotario sets up a new experiment: Anselmo is to pretend to leave for a few days while really hiding in his antechamber so that he may spy on Camila. After conversing with Anselmo, Lotario instantly regrets his hasty decision to confess his affair to his friend—it would have been better, he realizes, to have dealt with Camila without involving Anselmo. He confesses then to Camila, and Camila begins to plan how she will stage the results of Anselmo's second experiment.

Yet the evidence to be presented in Camila and Lotario's scene is not entirely false. Camila is able to stage a mock death scene without Lotario's previous understanding of her plans. Lotario doesn't act in a prepared role, he acts like himself—and so can respond to Camila's words in an impromptu and more genuine fashion. In fact Lotario cannot entirely assume a role because he is in doubt of Camila's intentions and plans: "Y diciendo estas razones, con una increíble fuerza y ligereza arremetió a Lotario con la daga desenvainada, con tales muestras de querer enclavársela en el pecho, que casi él estuvo en duda si aquellas demostraciones eran falsas o verdaderas, porque le fue forozoso valerse de su industria y de su fuerza para estorbar que Camila no le diese" (360). Anselmo, therefore, witnesses a scene that is somewhere in between a fully staged illusion and the reality of what is actually going on—just as Camila's words are in part truthful and in part deceitful. What Anselmo sees then, is an alternate reality that has been created by the experiment itself: in her

scene, Camila gives Anselmo both the truth of her feelings (she is indignant that Anselmo would suspect, and test, her faith), a deceptive description of her relationship with Lotario, and the exact evidence that she knows Anselmo hopes to obtain in order to feel his experiment has yielded conclusive results. Had Camila not fallen to Lotario, Anselmo might have continued the experiment and raised the stakes indefinitely, and so: “[Camila] tan vivamente fingía aquel extraño embuste y fealdad, que, por dalle color de verdad, la quiso matizar con su misma sangre” (360). In effect, the evidence that suggests that Camila’s virtue outweighs her estimation of her own life would be the definitive end to the experiment. The manifestation of this very idea is, however, an illusion (though one produced in part by the truth); and from it, Anselmo draws inaccurate conclusions (that she is a chaste heroine like Portia, Lucretia, or even a Christian martyr type). We should recognize, however, that his conclusions are not entirely wrong, as the evidence isn’t entirely deceitful: at the end of the story, Anselmo’s realization that he should not have tested Camila does, in part, come from what he witnesses her saying in this scene (Camila compares herself to martyrs and archetypical heroines, and Anselmo finally realizes that he was expecting Camila to perform miracles).

As this scene serves to reconcile Camila and Lotario and reestablish their joint deception of Anselmo, Leonela is again free to contaminate the testing environment for similar purposes as before. Finally, Anselmo, like Lotario, notices Leonela’s lover leaping out of the window of her room. He demands the truth, and Leonela implies that she has more interesting facts to relate to him. When Anselmo tells Camila that her maid has secrets to share, Camila immediately escapes, runs to Lotario’s home, and then is taken to a convent to await for him.²⁹ Anselmo awakes to find his home entirely empty and his

29 Gerli interprets this event as a question of chance: “Ironically, as through a glass darkly, the dénouement of ‘El curioso’ and the discovery of all the falsifications in it are set in motion not by Anselmo’s vehement labors to know and grasp the truth but by accident, by his fortuitous discovery of Leonela’s lover in her room one night” (119). Yet, as I have demonstrated, this discovery is not really fortuitous

best friend nowhere to be found. The fallout of Anselmo's experiment—his lack of understanding of what has happened—leads to his descent into anxious depression and despair. He only becomes resigned when he learns of Camila and Lotario's plights from a fellow citizen. In his final words, Anselmo writes: "porque no estaba ella [Camila] obligada a hacer milagros, ni yo tenía necesidad de querer que ella los hiciese; y pues yo fui el fabricante de mi deshonra, no hay para qué..." (*DQ* 370). Anselmo recognizes the arbitrary and antagonistic aspects of his experiment, though far too late.

Despite its remarkable narrative complexities and intrigue (which keep the reader in a state of dizzying anticipation), the story of "El curioso impertinente" dissolves in a peculiarly anticlimactic fashion. Furthermore, aside from the brief remarks made by the priest, the characters of *Don Quijote* don't seem to react to the novella at all. Where are the passionate outcries and reactions to this "tragedy"? I believe that the story does not receive or merit such remarks because there are no tragic heroes or heroines—and no truly innocent victims. As a genre, the novella does not favor the rich development of characters, and in "El curioso impertinente," it takes a good deal of personal projection and willful disregard of certain actions in order to interpret Anselmo, Lotario, or Camila sympathetically. The lack of discussion of Cervantes's novella in *Don Quijote* may also be due to the fact that the story has not taught us anything particularly unique or constructive: the lessons (do not test your wife, do not steal your best friend's wife, and do not cheat on your husband) are certainly not ground-breaking concepts in the evolving doctrines of morality, and the novella has sorted through the different cognitive approaches of interpreting reality (authority, reason, and experience) only to discredit all three. As each of the three possible approaches to truth and knowledge" is examined and rejected, the gap between

in some senses because it has been caused by Anselmo's experiment, which when put into effect, has altered the "laboratory" space of the house. As I have noted, Leonela's lover would never be in the house in the first place if, thanks to the impetus of Anselmo's test, Camila had not taken up with Lotario, and thus opened herself to exploitation and blackmail from Leonela.

the world and man's powers of understanding is increasingly pronounced. "El curioso impertinente" can thus be read as Cervantes's exemplum of un-exemplarity, and when we recognize the cold and calculated nature of the thought experiment constructed in "El curioso impertinente," we find ourselves submerged in probably the most nihilistic literary world that Cervantes ever presented.

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