

The Function of Skepticism in *Part I of Don Quijote*

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THE AIM OF THIS essay is to clarify one of the functions of skepticism in *Part I of Don Quijote*. More specifically, even though there are many studies about the presence of skepticism in the writings of Cervantes,¹ there is one aspect of that philosophy that has not received all the attention it deserves: the way in which it gives thematic continuity and structure to the novel. As we shall see, Cervantes took deliberate advantage of skeptical philosophy to create a contrast between *the story* of Don Quijote and *the character* “Don Quijote.” On the one hand, Don Quijote’s dogmatism drives him from one adventure to the next, which gives continuity to the narration, and on the other, *the story* of Don Quijote is presented as being un-dogmatic. This structural contrast works best in a culture where skeptical doctrine is well-known and influential, which is the case of Europe when the book was written.²

1 See for example, Maureen Ihrle (1982), Alban K. Forcione (1982), Juan Bautista Avall-Arce (1975), Américo Castro (1925) and José Antonio Maravall (1991).

2 For the re-discovery of Sextus Empiricus’s works during the Renaissance see C. Schmitt (1983) and R. Popkin (1964). The strong influence of skepticism during the Golden Age can be appreciated by considering Maureen Ihrle’s work. Before she applies skepticism to Cervantes, she explains in the first chapter its enormous popularity. She begins with a brief but accurate account of the extent and sense in which Sextus Empiricus, Juan Luis Vives, Francisco Sánchez and Pedro de Valencia are skeptics, and then Ihrle concludes as follows:

These three scholars, Vives, Sánchez and Valencia are, as Menendez y Pelayo noted, the key representatives of the critical orientation of sixteenth-century peninsular thought. But Skepticism does appear, less directly, sometimes less intelligently, in numerous other philosophical expositions. Fox Morcillo (1526?-1560), Gomez Pereira (1500-1558), and Francisco Valles (1524-1592) typify Skeptical manifestations on this level. (24)

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Skepticism rejects authority as a valid mechanism to obtain truth. Argumentation and direct observation ought to be used instead. The reason why authority is rejected in favor of argumentation and observation is because the former represents the most anti-skeptical attitude one can take: dogmatism (believing that something is true only because an authority says that it is true).³ If we keep this in mind, then the structural

After that conclusion Ihrie moves on to explain the “extremely popular” views of Juan Huarte de San Juan, also a skeptic (25), and mentions briefly Erasmism, “the key intellectual-philosophical current in sixteenth-century Spain” (25). This current shares with the skeptic the “strong aversion to useless speculation” (26). Finally, to give stronger support to her claim that skepticism played an important influential role in the literature of the time, Ihrie explains how it influenced the writings of Quevedo (26). In short, according to Ihrie, Cervantes’s skeptical tendencies are typical during his time.

3 In the current age the connection between skeptic methodology and gaining empirical knowledge is almost unavoidable. For instance, that connection is present in Popperian falsificationism, which is one of the most influential explanations for scientific discovery: According to falsificationism an acceptable conclusion in science is a conclusion that an experiment has *failed* to prove that it is false, and consequently the hypothesis can be accepted as true for the time being because it can no longer be reasonably doubted (Karl Popper, 1991, 106-111). Steven Hawking in *The Illustrated a Brief History of Time* uses falsificationism to justify his scientific endeavors: After mentioning Karl Popper, he writes: “Each time new experiments are observed to agree with predictions the theory survives, and our confidence in it increases” (1996, 17). However, it is necessary to point out that historically, skepticism was conceived as a method to produce a happy life (that is, it was a moral theory). The skeptic’s position can be better appreciated if we read one of the most famous skeptics of all time, Sextus Empiricus:

The person who says that wealth, perhaps, is good and poverty bad, if he does not have wealth is disturbed in two ways, both because he does not have the good, and because he busies himself over the acquisition of it; but when he acquires it, he is punished in three ways, because he is elated beyond measure, because he busies himself with a view to the wealth’s remaining with him, and because he agonizes and is afraid of its loss. But the person who ranks wealth neither among the things by nature good nor among the things by nature bad, but utters the expression ‘not more,’ is neither disturbed in the absence of this nor elated at its presence, but in either case remains undisturbed. So that as regards the things thought by opinion to be good and bad, and the choices and avoidances of these things, he remains perfectly happy. (1997, 25)

To obtain the happy life the skeptic argues against all the other major positions of his time. For example, Sextus Empiricus begins by specifying the targets of his arguments:

All those philosophers who seem to proceed by methodical exposition of basic principles – and most conspicuously of all, those of the Old Academy and the Peripatetics, and also the Stoics— are accustomed to make a division, saying that, of existing things, some are good, some bad, and some in between, which they call indifferent. (3)

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contrast between the skeptical *story* and Don Quijote's dogmatic *character* can be appreciated more easily.

SKEPTICISM AND THE STORY OF DON QUIJOTE

The prologue contains an explanation of the problem facing the author: he is unsure what the “antiguo legislador que llaman vulgo” (13) will say about him and his book because of several reasons: the book has no erudition; it does not quote from Aristotle nor Plato; it does not appeal to Aquinas nor the holy scripture; it does not have a list of authors that ends with Xenofonte, or Zolio or Zerxius (13); and it does not have at the beginning poetry written by important people such as “duques, marqueses, condes, obispos, damas o poetas celeberrimos” (14). In short, the author is worried about the reception of the book by the “vulgo” because it lacks authority. Then we are told the solution. A friend who is unknown (and therefore lacks authority) proposes the following: invent the sonnets and claim that they were written by important people (for example, “Preste Juan” (15)); use the quotes that you already know and are easy to remember and place them strategically throughout the book, making sure that they have authority (“Horacio”, “Escritura Divina”, “Catón” (15-16)); with respect to the annotations, include them using the same strategy, citing even more authorities such as “Ovidio . . . Homero . . . Virgilio . . . Julio César . . . Plutarco . . . León Hebreo” (17); with respect to the list of authors, take it from another book and put it at the end of the book so that it gives “de improviso autoridad al libro” (18).

In addition to the solution, the friend explains why the book needs no authority: “este vuestro libro no tiene necesidad de ninguna cosa de aquellas que vos decís que le falta, porque todo él es una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías, de quien nunca se acordó Aristóteles, ni dijo nada San Basilio, ni alcanzó Cicerón” (18).

Later on, to avoid long subjects, he will merely use the expression “dogmatism” to refer to all of them at once: “... and other things, connected with the dogmatists’ pedantry, tend to be said against such definitions” (8).

All the experts who have studied skepticism before the Enlightenment recognize the basic connection between that philosophy and the production of a happy life, such as for example, Peter Lom (2001), Marcelo de Araujo (2003) and John C. Laursen (1992).

Finally, the reason stating why the work was written contains an explicit reference against authority: “esta vuestra escritura no mira a más que a deshacer la autoridad y cabida que en el mundo y en el vulgo tienen los libros de caballerías...” (18).⁴

The constant undermining of and preoccupation with authority continues in Chapter Nine. In that chapter we learn that we do not know when the story of Don Quijote was written because it could be old or not. It could be ancient because most of it was missing, and this unfortunate event is explained using time, who is “devorador y consumidor de todas las cosas” (100), but it could also be modern because a partial manuscript was found next to texts that were written recently, such as for example “*Desengaño de cellos y Ninfas y Pastores de Henares*” (101). We do not know its provenance either, because the one selling it is a boy in the street. We do not speak the original language of the found manuscript because it is in Arabic (101-2).⁵ Furthermore, the person claiming authorship is an Arabic historian named Cide Hamete Benengeli: “*Historia de Don Quijote de la Mancha, escrita por Cide Hamete Benengeli, historiador*

4 Carmen Escudero’s view indicates indirectly that Cervantes’s technique of not following the friend’s recommendations but merely reporting them, produces a skeptical attitude on the reader: “En lugar de ofrecer un resultado, un prólogo perfecto (en el sentido de ya concluso), Cervantes ofrece el proceso mismo de la confección de ese prólogo, e intenta hacer al lector confidente de sus dudas, con lo que el destinatario quedará definitivamente implicado en la obra al sentirse incluso colaborador de ella” (184). Fajardo’s view also points to skepticism: “The first author does not say that he undertook to follow his friend’s advice but that his friend’s words left an imprint in him... Thus, he adopts his friend’s statement as worthy of imitation because it has been voided of authoritative context” (11). One of the basis of skepticism is to embrace doubt (Escudero) and reject authority (Fajardo) as a method of discovery, and therefore their conclusions are consistent with skepticism. For example, Francisco Sánchez was a well known skeptic during the period, and he writes in the prologue to *Que nada se sabe*: “Tú, lector desconocido, quienquiera que seas, con tal que tuvieres la misma condición y temperamento que yo; tú, que dudaste muchas veces, en lo secreto de tu alma, sobre la naturaleza de las cosas, ven ahora a dudar conmigo; ejercitemos juntos nuestros ingenios y facultades; séanos a los dos libre el juicio, pero no irracional” (1923, xvii). He also writes: “Tampoco me pidas autoridades ni falsos acatamientos a la opinión ajena” (xx).

5 Caroll Johnson has shown that “of the eighteen Castilian romances of chivalry published between 1508 and 1589, thirteen purport to have been written originally in Greek, and one each in Latin, English, an unspecified foreign language, and Arabic” (2007, 180). Therefore, the story of don Quijote is consistent with this aspect of the tradition; however, Caroll Johnson’s finding does not change the notion that the readers of the story of Don Quijote do not understand Arabic. We do not read the “original” (Arabic), but a “translation” (Castilian).

arábigo"(102), and the authority of this historian is undermined because the text specifies that all Arabs are liars: "su autor [es] arábigo, siendo muy propio de los de aquella nación ser mentirosos" (103).⁶ Finally, we do not know who translated it from Arabic to Castilian because the translator is another unknown Arab (another liar, according to the text): "La suerte me deparó [un Morisco aljamiado]" (102) and "roguéle me volviese aquellos cartapacios . . . en lengua castellana;" therefore, when the text says that "la traducción, comenzaba desta manera" (104), we have been led to believe that we are reading a text written by an Arab historian, and we are told that Arabs are liars. This unreliable text is then translated by a Morisco, and we don't know if it is truly a faithful translation. We are also led to believe that we do not know its provenance, because the one selling it is a boy in the street. Finally, we don't know if the text is ancient or modern, but later we learn it must be modern given the dates in the text. In short, we are led to believe that the text has no authority whatsoever.

The rejection of authority is therefore present in four key elements of the text: (1) it is associated with the explicit justification of the text (i.e., to undermine the authority of the Romances of Chivalry); (2) it is used to construct the greater part of the prologue by way of mocking the authorities; (3) the text says of itself that it does not need any authority; (4) and finally, given the information in Chapter Nine, the text does not have authority. To sum up, Cervantes took such great care in making sure that *the story* of Don Quijote does not depend on authority, that even his attack against the authority of the Romances of Chivalry comes from a text that *does not* have authority (or so we are led to believe).

This attitude is consistent with skeptical doctrine. We need to recall that Sextus Empiricus argued against the authorities of his time calling them "dogmatics", and that his works were rediscovered and influential during the Renaissance. For Sextus Empiricus, truth is obtained by way of argument and direct observation, and not because the one who said

6 The authority of Cide Hamete is undermined by two additional factors which may not be as immediately obvious as the one mentioned in the main body of the text: no one knows what else he has written, and as mentioned by Martín de Riquer in his edition of *Don Quijote* (2002), the name is invented, common and ironic: "Nombre inventado, pero en auténtico árabe e irónico: *cide*, señor, *Hamete*, el nombre árabe Hamid, y *Benengeli*, aberrenjenado. Hamete era un nombre muy corriente entre moriscos" (102, n.11).

it has authority. For example, his influence can be found in the work of Francisco Sánchez, a skeptic of the period who also rejects authority in favor of argumentation and observation:

Tampoco me pidas autoridades ni falsos acatamientos a la opinión ajena, porque ello más bien sería indicio de ánimo servil e indocto que de un espíritu libre y amante de la verdad. Yo sólo seguiré con la razón a sola la naturaleza [that is, observation]. *La autoridad manda creer; la razón demuestra las cosas; aquella es apta para la fe; ésta para la ciencia.* (1923, xx)

This basic skeptical attitude is maintained in *Part I*: the truth about Don Quijote, and by association the truth about the Romances of Chivalry, will depend on *the Story* of Don Quijote, and not on the authority of anyone.

Many critics have pointed out that the text is highly unstable in terms of its truth-value. For example, Howard Mancing's analysis demonstrates the complexities that arise:⁷

When he first discovers the manuscript he laments that the author is Arabic “siendo muy propio de los de aquella nacion ser mentirosos” (I, 9, 102). Then, after noting that historians should be “puntuales, verdaderos y no nada apasionados” –essentially the qualities praised in Cide Hamete— he eschews responsibility for any error in the story: “y si algo bueno en ella faltare, para mí tengo que fue por culpa del galgo de su autor (p. 103).” (1981, 66)

It should be noted that this strong destabilization is consistent with the skeptical tradition: according to skepticism what ought to be done is to *suspend judgment*,⁸ And that is precisely what the destabilizing ele-

7 See also, for example, Thomas A. Lathrop, “Cide Hamete Benengeli y su manuscrito,” *Cervantes, su obra y su mundo*. Madrid: Edi-6, 1981: 693-98, and James A. Parr, *Don Quixote: an Anatomy of Subversive Discourse*. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1988.

8 Maureen Ihrrie explains: “the skeptic feels the only reasonable solution to the dilemma [about the truth or falsehood of claims] is to suspend judgment on all matters and live undog-

ments in the story accomplish: given that it is difficult if not impossible to ascertain the truth or the falsehood of the story based on authority, the reader is forced to reject authority as a valid principle of argumentation. This entails in turn that the only thing left is *the story itself*. Regardless of whether the story has authority or not, we have no alternative but to *read about Don Quijote*. This is important from the perspective of skepticism because if we simply read the story, then we will *observe* Don Quijote as the story unfolds. In other words, no appeal to authority is needed because the only thing the reader has to do is to *read* the story.

It should be noted that in this analysis the relationship between *Part I* and authority has been discussed from a very limited perspective: the perspective of skepticism as a method to establish truth. If, however, we expand the use of authority to include other uses, then the relationship becomes more complex.

Literary critics tend to view the question of authority from the perspective of mimesis and literary models. For example, Frederick de Armas associates the giant Goliath, who is mentioned in the prologue, with several traditions, or models:

Although Eduardo Urbina (1987) and Agustín Redondo (1998) rightly search for models of Cervantine imitation in the chivalric romances, the prologue of *Don Quixote* makes it clear that there are other traditions of giants, the biblical and the classical. (2006, 43)⁹

Carolyn A. Nadeau explores the women mentioned in the prologue in order to illuminate the kind of imitation used most frequently by

matically, in accord with the customs and laws one perceives but without making any judgment as to their absolute truth or falsehood" (1982, 14).

9 Frederick de Armas also writes the following: "An innkeeper is compared to Cacus in the second chapter of Part I, while the size of Goliath is discussed in the first chapter of Part II using the bible as authority." (2006, 43). The giant Cacus is not being used as a means towards establishing the truth of the story, but as a comparison. On the other hand, even though the existence of Goliath is supported with an appeal to authority, that use is in *Part II*, and therefore it falls outside of the parameters of this study. I suspect strongly that the relationship between authority and skepticism changes in *Part II*, but that change cannot be covered here.

Cervantes.¹⁰ As a final example, Michael McGaha argues that the imitation of models found in *Don Quijote* can be interpreted as an attempt to surpass Virgil: “Cervantes’ primary intention in *Don Quixote* . . . was to imitate and improve upon Virgil’s *Aeneid*” (1980, 34).

This general emphasis on authority as it relates to imitation is well justified because it is consistent with one of the ways in which authority was viewed during the Renaissance and the Golden Age. For example, Ángel García Galiano writes:

La admiración por los clásicos es a la vez una necesidad de elevar la Antigua poética romance a las más altas cotas de genialidad estética. La imitación, por lo tanto, se convierte, aparte de una doctrina preceptiva y estética, en una técnica sistematizada y rigurosa. (1992, 449)

García Galiano also points out that the attitude towards the classics is not only imitative because it is often joined with an attempt to obtain innovation, or invention. The goal is not merely to copy what the classics did, but to improve their works. García Galiano quotes Vilanova as follows to explain this important aspect:

La doctrina de la imitación renacentista no se limita en modo alguno a un remedo ideal de los modelos clásicos, sino que consiste en una reelaboración consciente de temas e ideas de la antigüedad grecolatina, cuando no en una sistemática apropiación de las fórmulas estilísticas y de los recursos retóricos de los poetas clásicos y modernos, muchas veces convertidos en tópicos por la tradición renacentista. (449)

Furthermore, this attitude towards authority can be traced back to earlier times. Jacqueline T. Miller begins by quoting a remark made by Bernard of Chartres, “the twelfth-century humanist and educator” (1986,

10 For example, after comparing the ways in which Guevara, Ovid and Virgil make use of authority when it comes to imitation, Carolyn A. Nadeau concludes that “although Cervantes’s imitation differs greatly from Guevara’s imitations of sources, Cervantes does share similarities with Ovid and Virgil, because at times he, like Ovid, subtly incorporates his models into narrative and, like Virgil, at times dismisses them” (2002, 133).

9): “we are as dwarfs perched upon the shoulders of giants” (9), and then she explains:

This is neither a wholesale advocacy of reverence for the ancient author nor a wholesale dismissal of the contemporary author. It attempts to acknowledge the value of the ancients and the reliance of the moderns upon them, and simultaneously to recognize the value of the moderns and the contributions their greater vision may make. The remark grants the importance of studying the ancients, but not at the cost of ignoring the achievements possible by the moderns. (11)

Therefore, when we consider what the critics have said as exemplified by Frederick de Armas, Carolyn A. Nadeau and Michael McGaha, and when we add to their views the general attitude towards imitation as explained by García Galiano and Jackeline T. Miller, it becomes clear that Cervantes *did not* reject authority in *Part I* when it comes to imitation/improvement.¹¹

However, the theory of imitation is not the only concern with authority during the Golden Age and the Renaissance: equally important is the role of authority in arguments that purport to establish truth.¹² For example, the rejection of authority is at the heart of the newly discovered and very influential skeptical texts of Sextus Empiricus. It is also a constant theme in all the writers of the Renaissance and the Golden Age that exhibit skeptical tendencies, such as for example Montaigne, Erasmus, Vives and Francisco Sánchez.¹³ The rejection of authority in favor of di-

11 As further support, *Part I* offers explicitly a theory of the value of literature that depends at least in part on imitating authority. The discussion between the priest and the *canónigo* points to the notion that art is worthy when it is imitative to some extent and in some way: “son más dignos de reprehensión los que hasta aquí han compuesto semejantes libros sin tener advertencia a ningún buen discurso, ni al arte y reglas por donde pudieran guiarse y hacerse famosos, como lo son en verso y prosa los dos príncipes de la poesía griega y latina” (48, 505).

12 For the sake of accuracy it should be noted that the explanation in the main body does not entail that the critics ignore the relation between truth and authority. My claim is weaker: the general emphasis and main concern *tends to be* the relation between imitation/improvement and authority.

13 For more information about the skeptical tendencies of the mentioned authors, see for example Maureen Ihrie (1982, 11-18).

rect observation is one of the forces driving the establishment of the empirical sciences. The preoccupation with the role of authority in matters of truth comes to the forefront in the conference of Valladolid, when the orthodoxy (i.e., truth) of Erasmus's writings was scrutinized:

Los frailes pasaban en revista los principales puntos de dogma y disciplina: la Trinidad, la divinidad de Cristo, la divinidad del Espíritu Santo, la inquisición de la herejía, los sacramentos . . ., la autoridad de la Escritura, la teología dogmática, la autoridad de los Santos Padres, el culto de la Virgen, la autoridad de los Papas y concilios, las ceremonias, los ayunos y abstinencias, el celibato, la escolástica, las indulgencias, el culto de los santos . . ., el derecho de propiedad de los bienes temporales, el libre albedrío, las penas del infierno, y bajo cada uno de esos capítulos [los frailes] representaban textos sospechosos entresacados de la obra de Erasmo. (1939, 289)

Out of the twenty themes discussed, six are directly related to authority.¹⁴ This shows that imitation is not the only way in which authority was important during Cervantes's time: equally important is the role we ascribe to authority in matters of belief, truth, and persuasion.¹⁵ Therefore, in the same way that the text makes clear that Cervantes accepted author-

14 In matters of religious doctrine a further distinction can be made between "textual authority" and "theological auctoritas." However, in the context of this investigation that distinction is unnecessary. The goal is to show that there was a concern with authority in matters of argumentation and truth, and the quoted passage exemplifies that concern without further distinctions.

15 The importance of authority during the period can be appreciated in the works of Peter Ramus (1515-1572). He was a teacher of Rhetoric in the University of Paris, the most important center of scholasticism, and consequently, the place where authority was revered the most. He dedicated his life to attack relentlessly scholastic methodology: "[Ramus's] books had the effrontery not only to condemn the argumentative methods in use in the University of Paris since at least the twelfth century but also to argue for replacing them with Ramus's way" (Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, editors, 1990, 557). Today he is considered one of the most important figures in the history of modern Rhetoric.

Ramus chose three main targets: Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. He chose them because all three authors had enormous influence in the teaching of Rhetoric throughout Europe (they had authority). In *Argument in Rhetoric against Quintilian* he begins with this statement after a polite introduction: "I have a single argument, a single subject matter, that the arts of dialectic and rhetoric have been confused by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. I have previously argued

ity when it comes to imitation (and improvement), the same text also makes clear that *the truth of the story* of don Quijote is presented as not depending on any authority. I find that one of the greatest achievements of the book is precisely this complex relation: on the one hand authority is rejected as a valid principle of argumentation, but on the other it is not rejected when it comes to literary models.

A question becomes unavoidable: *Part I* is literature, not philosophy, and therefore, why would a book that is non-philosophical be so concerned with authority in matters of argumentation?

The first explanation that comes to mind is by itself insufficient: a *topos* of the times is that a book should teach while producing delight (*deleitar enseñando*); therefore, if a book should teach, then it seems that a preoccupation with authority is in order because the teaching method may depend on authority, or it may not. Furthermore, this *topos* is found

against Aristotle and Cicero" (563). Then he argues relentlessly against Quintilian. He first explains Quintilian's position by quoting him:

I teach [Quintilian] says, 'that the orator cannot be perfect unless he is a good man. Consequently I demand from him not only outstanding skill in speaking but all the virtuous qualities of character.' This is the type of orator that Quintilian constructs for us. Afterwards in the twelfth book where he defines him in similar terms as a good man skilled in speaking well, he identifies those virtuous qualities of character as justice, courage, self-control, prudence, likewise knowledge of the whole of philosophy and of law, a thorough acquaintance with history, and many other attributes worthy of praise. (565)

It is clear from the quoted passage that according to Quintilian the orator has authority because he must be perfect. This is confirmed when we consider the way in which Ramus quotes Quintilian: "An evil man cannot have leisure to devote to rhetoric" he says. Or again, "The greatest part of rhetoric concerns goodness and justice" (568), and "Virtue's authority prevails in persuasion" (568).

Ramus's attack against Quintilian explains indirectly why authority had such an enormous appeal. If, to begin with, only those that are perfect speak well according to Quintilian, then they have *total* authority because they are perfect in everyway. It should be noted that despite of Ramus's best efforts, the connection between perfection and authority was still strong up to the Enlightenment. It should be noted as well that Ramus's arguments exhibit a strong skeptical component. His skepticism comes to the forefront when he asks a rhetorical question about Cicero: "There is yet another point in respect to the authority of Cicero: Do we wish the authority of any man in a debate concerning an art to be superior to the truth of the case" (574)? Obviously, for Ramus the answer is no: an authority is right when he or she believes the truth, but the authority cannot be right simply because he or she is the authority.

when the *Canónigo* explains to the Priest why he has never been able to finish reading any Romance of Chivalry:

Este género de escritura y composición cae debajo de aquél de las fábulas que llaman milesias, que son cuentos disparatados, que atienden solamente a deleitar, y no a enseñar: al contrario de lo que hacen las fábulas apólogas, que deleitan y enseñan juntamente. (47, 501-2)

However, the notion that a book should teach and produce delight is not sufficient to answer the question at hand because many other books of the period make the same claim, and most of them do not contain a strong rejection of authority in matters of argumentation.

A better answer is to say that the book is *not only* literature, but also a serious attempt to establish truth; in other words, the book is also philosophical in the sense that it has taken upon itself a task that is normally associated with philosophy: the illumination of truth and the banishment of falsehood. The story of Don Quijote is similar to philosophy in the sense that it presents the reader with a series of reasons to establish *the truth* that the Romances of Chivalry have no authority.

If the book is read taking into account its similarities with philosophy (without for that reason negating its literary character), then the question of authority as it relates to argumentation becomes unavoidable: after all, the aim of the book under this philosophical perspective is to *convince* the reader that Chivalric Romances have no authority, and therefore a stance towards authority as a valid form of argumentation becomes necessary. The text reveals the author's choice: it is rejected in matters of persuasion and truth, or, using other words, the text depends on skeptical methodology (argumentation and direct observation).

The complex relation with authority found in the text can therefore be explained if we maintain that the book is, at the same time, a serious attempt to do the best kind of literature according to the standards of the time (imitation and invention), an also a serious attempt to obtain a result that is normally reserved for philosophy (it is *true* that the Romances of Chivalry have no authority). Furthermore, in order to avoid oversimplifying the issue, it should be acknowledged that the two attitudes to-

wards authority contained in the text influence each other, making a web of relations that adds more complexity. However, those complexities must be put aside because in this investigation the skeptical aspects of the book take precedence. This emphasis should not be taken to imply the absurdity that the literary aspects of the text are less important.

To sum up, even though my analysis depends on a very limited perspective, the following conclusion applies within the parameters of the investigation: The strategy used by Cervantes to construct the story of don Quijote is consistent with the skeptical tradition in three important ways: first, there is a deliberate effort to present the story as being as non-dogmatic as possible; second, the destabilization thus created is consistent with skeptical doctrine because it forces the reader to suspend judgment about the authority of the story; third, given that the reader cannot make positive judgments of that kind, he or she has no choice but to *observe* Don Quijote.

Some critics, such as for example E. T. Aylward (1999) and Ruth El Saffar (1974), have explained the main differences between the genres of the Romance and the Novel. Aylward concludes that the novel “is the preferred fictional form of skeptics and doubters” (1999, 17). My analysis shows that Cervantes took the skeptical tendencies of the novel a step further: *the Story* of Don Quijote is constructed in part by taking *deliberate advantage* of some important skeptical themes in matters of argumentation.

SKEPTICISM AND THE STANDARD OBJECTION AGAINST THE ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY

If we emphasize the argumentative aspects of the text (without for that reason negating that the book is literature), then the function of skepticism in *the Story* of Don Quijote can be better appreciated if we take into account the standard objection against the Romances of Chivalry. The most common objection during the Renaissance and the Golden Age is not only that they contain all kinds of falsehoods, but also that those falsehoods are *harmful* to one’s character. More precisely, the objection does not state that those books are false and harmful, but that they are harmful *because* they are false. One does not have to go far to see this

strong connection between falsehood and harm. For example, in his introduction to *Don Quijote*, Martín de Riquer offers a long list of “autores graves” that argue against the Romances of Chivalry because their falsehoods produce harm (2002, xxxvi – xxxviii). The list begins in the year 1522 with Juan de Molina, and ends with Fray Luis de la Cerda in 1599. Fray Agustín Salucio holds in the year 1559 the following view:

... ningún español que haya tenido ingenio lo ha tenido en tan poco que lo haya empleado en semejantes frasquerías; y así, los que se han aplicado a esas composturas de cosas fabulosas, en prosa o verso, han sido parleros y vanos idiotas sin ninguna noticia ni lección de buenos autores ni de buenas letras; todo es mentir de ventaja, sin orden ni tiento, ni lenguaje, y sin estilo, sin saber guardar el decoro ni aun al bajo el argumento que tratan. (1959, 144-5)

Therefore, according to Fray Agustín Salucio, writing those romances is a form of lying (“todo es mentir de ventaja”), and at the same time that activity is the cause of a long list of vices: (1) “vano idiota”; (2) “parlero”; (3) lack of decorum; (4) bad language and bad style; (5) unable to benefit from education, and finally (6) it devalues “ingenio”.¹⁶

The same connection between falsehood and harm is found almost by the end of the story of *Don Quijote*. The *Canónigo* is trying to explain to the knight his error. He first explains the harm caused by books that contain falsehoods, and then he finishes his lesson explaining to *Don Quijote* why he should read *true* books:

¡Ea, señor don Quijote, duélase de sí mismo, y redúzgase al gremio de la discreción, y sepa usar de la mucha que el cielo fue servido de darle, empleando el felicísimo talento de su ingenio en otra lectura que redunde en aprovechamiento de su conciencia y en aumento de su hon-

16 For more information on the standard objection against the Romances of Chivalry see the essay written by Edward Glasser (1966). He takes into account the works of many Renaissance authors to explain some variants of the same objection. He specifies that reading Romances of Chivalry causes great harm (“resultaría un grave daño moral” (394)), but if the books are true (the holy scripts), then they are beneficial to the soul (“serían recompensados con lucros espirituales” (394)).

ra! Y si todavía, llevado de su natural inclinación, quisiere leer libros de hazañas y de caballerías, lea en la Sacra Escritura el *de los Jueces* [y otros libros verdaderos]; que allí hallará verdades grandiosas y hechos tan verdaderos como valientes, cuya lección de sus valerosos hechos puede entretener, enseñar, deleitar y admirar a los más altos ingenios que los leyeren. Ésta sí será lectura digna del buen entendimiento de vuestra merced, señor don Quijote mío, de la cual saldrá erudito en la historia, enamorado de la virtud, enseñado en la bondad, mejorado en las costumbres, valiente sin temeridad, osado sin cobardía, y todo esto, para honra de Dios, provecho suyo y fama de la Mancha, do, según he sabido, trae vuestra merced su principio y origen. (49, 516)

The *Canónigo's* explanation is consistent with *the* most important tenet of the skeptical tradition: it is *impossible* to obtain a happy life when the soul is under the influence of false beliefs. To put it simply, Don Quijote and the readers of the Romances of Chivalry are being harmed because the books they read are false. The connection between *Part I* and skepticism is deliberate because the harm of those books is presented as being in *direct proportion* to the level of dogmatism of the person reading them: as we shall see below by way of example, the more dogmatic one is, the more harmful they become. The explicit goal of *Part I* is therefore consistent with the skeptical tradition of avoiding the harm caused by falsehoods, and therefore, if we take that purpose seriously, then the connection with skepticism is double. Not only did Cervantes write *a story* that relies on skeptical structural elements, but also the aim of that story is consistent with skeptical doctrine.

SKEPTICISM, THE VENTERO AND DON QUIJOTE

The arguments advanced by the *Ventero* and Don Quijote can be used as a summary and further illustration of the skeptical elements in *the story* of Don Quijote. The *Ventero* appeals to authority as follows:

Bueno es que quiera darme vuestra merced a entender que todo aquello que estos buenos libros dicen sea disparates y mentiras, estando impresos con licencia de los señores del Consejo Real como si ellos

fueran gente que habían de dejar imprimir tanta mentira junta y tantas batallas y tantos encantamientos que quitan el juicio! (343)

Later in the book, Don Quijote makes the same appeal, and this time the appeal is not limited to the *Consejo Real*: it includes the kings (in plural):

Los libros que están impresos con licencia de los reyes y con aprobación de aquellos a quien se remitieron, y que con gusto general son leídos y celebrados de los grandes y de los chicos, de los pobres y de los ricos, de los letrados e ignorantes, de los plebeyos y caballeros, finalmente, de todo género de personas de cualquier estado y condición que sean, ¿habían de ser mentira, y más llevando tanta apariencia de verdad . . .? (521)

To change the minds of people such as the *Ventero* or Don Quijote will not be easy: as a matter of fact, within the story neither is convinced that the Romances of Chivalry are false or harmful. What happens instead is that those who tried to convince them give up hope. Therefore, the views of the *Ventero* and Don Quijote are not there because they are supposed to change their minds, but because they show that an appeal to authority can be used to defend the view that the Romances of Chivalry *are true, and therefore not harmful*, during the Golden Age.¹⁷ This shows that accomplishing the explicit goal of *Part I* as it is stated in the prologue is not an idle exercise.¹⁸

According to the prologue, the targeted audience is the people in the real world that enjoy reading Romances of Chivalry.¹⁹ It is therefore sig-

17 The arguments advanced by Don Quijote and the *Ventero* may also be interpreted ironically. If that is the case, then the irony leads to the conclusion that the Romances of Chivalry cannot distinguish the true from the false; therefore, either way, the result is the same: the authority of the Chivalric Romances is still undermined.

18 More specifically, the popularity of the Romances of Chivalry was waning when Cervantes wrote *Part I*, and yet, it remains true that it was difficult to change the minds of those who *still thought* that the genre had authority.

19 The meaning of "audience" in this investigation assumes the theory proposed by Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor in their essay "The Integrating Perspective: An Audience-Response Model for Writing" (1979, 247-71). Paraphrasing their view, authors and speakers can direct their words to a real audience, an audience that exists in the world out there.

nificant that Don Quijote's appeal to authority is found almost by the end of the book. At that point in the lecture the reader has an advantage: he or she has read *the story* of Don Quijote almost in its entirety. Furthermore, the information that the reader has obtained about Don Quijote is *non-dogmatic*, precisely because *the story* of Don Quijote is presented as not depending on any authority. At the same time, given the destabilizing elements of the text, the reader was forced *to suspend judgment*, which means that his or her judgment about Don Quijote will be grounded on what he or she has *observed* about the knight while reading his story. When the reader finally encounters Don Quijote's argument he has enough information to conclude that his argument, and by implication the *Ventero's* argument, is a form of dogmatism. Chivalric Romances have no authority even if they are approved by the kings and the *Consejo Real*. They cannot have authority because the reader has observed that their falsehoods are the direct cause of the protagonist's ridiculous behavior. By implication, the *Ventero's* argument cannot be convincing either because Don Quijote, who is being harmed by those books, uses the same argument. Furthermore, the harm that those books cause to the gentleman from La Mancha and to the *Ventero* is directly proportional to their level of dogmatism: it causes more harm to Don Quijote because he *lives* in that world, and less harm to the *Ventero* because at least he acknowledges that one can no longer be an errant knight: "bien veo que ahora no se usa lo que se usaba en aquel tiempo" (32, 344).

To sum up, the positions advanced by both characters are shown to be unconvincing especially because they are non-skeptical arguments, and their lack of persuasion is linked to their level of dogmatism. Cervantes's reliance on skepticism is therefore not only deliberate, but also quite effective. By definition and methodology, the worse enemy of dogmatism is skepticism.

DON QUIJOTE'S DOGMATISM WITH RESPECT TO THE ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY

We have seen how *the story* of Don Quijote is constructed in part by taking advantage of skeptical themes. We have seen as well that the explicit purpose as it is stated in the prologue of *Part I* is consistent with skeptical

aims. The exact opposite occurs in relation to Don Quijote: he embodies the most extreme form of dogmatism. The purpose of this section is to show that Don Quijote's violations of skeptical doctrine constitute an important structural device that gives thematic continuity to don Quijote's adventures throughout *Part I*.

To begin with, we need to keep in mind that Don Quijote's illness is described by Francisco Sánchez. As pointed out by Maruén Ihrie (1982), he was a skeptic that maintained that too much lecture and not enough interaction with the world will cause damage to the mind:

By dint of reading and rereading, and explaining clearly and consistently what we read, our most precious years pass us by: we lie buried in mountains of paper, attentive only to men and their deeds, our backs toward living Nature. Thus, many times, by virtue of wanting to fit all knowledge inside us, we turn ourselves into fools. (31)

At the same time, Maureen Ihrie also quotes Cervantes's description of Don Quijote's mental condition:

. . . . In short, our gentleman became so immersed in his reading that he spent whole nights, from sundown to sunup and his days from dawn to dusk in poring over his books, until, finally, from so little sleeping and so much reading, his brain dried up and he went completely out of his mind. (Ihrie, 30, and *Don Quijote*, I, 1)

Therefore, Don Quijote's madness is caused by his manner of reading, a manner that violates the recommendations of the skeptic.

Furtmermore, the nature of his illness is explained quite precisely in *Part I*, as follows: "y asentósele de tal modo en la imaginación que era verdad toda aquella máquina de aquellas sonadas soñadas invenciones que leía, que para él no había otra historia más cierta en el mundo" (I, 35). In other words, Don Quijote's condition is a form of extreme dogmatism. This dogmatic attitude is the contrary of what the skeptical tradition recommends. For example, even though Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*

first appeared in 1620, it can be used to illustrate Don Quijote's violation of skeptical doctrine:

And with regard to authority, it shows a feeble mind to grant so much to authors and yet deny time his rights, who is the author of authors, nay rather of all authority. For rightly is truth called the daughter of time, not of authority. It is no wonder therefore if those enchantments of antiquity and authority and consent have so bound up men's powers that they have been made impotent (like persons bewitched) to accompany with the nature of things. (1969, 120-1)

According to the tradition we are taking into account, the feebleness of Don Quijote's mind results from his dogmatism. He is "bewitched" because for him, the Romances of Chivalry have total authority. The kind of bewitchment he suffers is explained accurately and concisely by Scott Paul Gordon, who takes advantage of the ideas of Francis Bacon:

Don Quixote embodies an *unpurged* mind. If Bacon likens a proper intellect, one capable of discovering the "nature of things," to a fair sheet of paper with no writing on it," then Quixote's mind is disabled from finding the "nature of things" because it *already* has "writing on it." Don Quixote's mind has been inscribed by the romances he has consumed, and his perceptual problems . . . confirm Bacon's theory that the fictions inside our heads control not only our response to what we see but also what we see itself. (2006, 20)²⁰

The best way to appreciate the extent of his bewitchment and also the harm that it causes him is by illustrating it with an example. Don Quijote tries to improve his *morrión simple* as follows:

de cartones hizo a modo de media celada, que, encajada con el morrión, hacían apariencia de celada entera. Es verdad que para probar si era fuerte y podía estar al riesgo de una cuchillada, sacó su espada y le

20 For further support, see Maureen Ihrle (1982, 30-53). She offers an illuminating and detailed explanation of Don Quijote's dogmatism in *Part I*.

dió dos golpes, y con el primero y en un punto deshizo lo que había hecho en una semana; . . . y para asegurarse de este peligro, la tornó a hacer de nuevo, poniéndole unas barras de hierro por de dentro, que él quedó satisfecho de su fortaleza, y sin querer hacer nueva experiencia della, la dispúto y tuvo por celada finísima de encaje. (1, 37-38).

At first it may appear that Don Quijote is un-dogmatic because even though his choice of material is questionable (card-board), he is willing to test his work. However, he decides not to test the *celada* a second time. He has proof in front of him that one cannot make a *celada entera* out of a *morrión simple* with card-board, because he himself has destroyed it with the first strike of his sword, and yet, undaunted by this evidence, he reconstructs it adding some iron. Without testing it further, he concludes that it is a “celada finísima de encaje.” This shows that his dogmatism is extreme not only because he believes something that is obviously false, but also because he ignores the evidence in front of him: a *morrión* with card-board and iron bars is not a *celada* “finísima.”²¹

Part I continues by letting us know the consequences of Don Quijote’s false belief. His first battle is in the *venta* where he is armed a knight, and because he wins, the *celada/morrión* survives intact. However, he loses ignominiously his next battle against a “mozo de mulas” (4, 62), and even though he is not beaten on the head (his attacker concentrates on “las costillas” (62)), later on we are informed that the object in question was of such poor construction that it did not survive this indirect attack: “la visera, que ya estaba hecha pedazos” (5, 65). Furthermore, when he returns beaten to his village he once again repairs “su rota celada lo mayor que pudo” (7, 86), which reinforces his dogmatism because he now has direct proof that his card board construction, even with the iron reinforcements, is not up to the task.

21 For a contrary view about the *celada* see José Ángel Ascunce Arrieta. This critic holds that Don Quijote’s attempt to make a *celada* out of a *morrión simple* shows that he is not as crazy as might be supposed (2005, 21-22). I agree with him in a limited sense: Don Quijote is quite intelligent, and in that sense he is not crazy because his actions serve a deliberate purpose. However, he is also a dogmatic; therefore, if we judge his illness with respect to his intelligence, then he is not (as) crazy, but if we judge his mental condition with respect to his dogmatism, then he is crazy (according to the skeptical tradition).

His adventures continue with a concentration of attacks against his face: the battle with the *Vizcaíno* costs him the *celada* once again, and also “la mitad de la oreja” (9, 104). When he is with Maritornes, the arriero “descargó tan terrible puñada sobre las estrechas quijadas del enamorado caballero, que le bañó toda la boca en sangre” (16, 161). The sheep herders destroy “tres o cuatro dientes de la boca” (18, 179). Finally, Sancho vomits on his face (18, 180). The fact that some of those injuries are inflicted when his head is unprotected reinforces his dogmatism because those injuries show that his protection is the same as not wearing any protection.

All of this harm to his head wins him his new name, “*el Caballero de la Triste Figura*” (19, 189), which is given to him by Sancho when the squire notices that Don Quijote’s face looks terrible: “le he estado mirando un rato ... y verdaderamente tiene vuestra merced la más mala figura, de poco acá, que jamás he visto, y debelo de haber causado, o ya el cansancio deste combate, o ya la falta de las muelas y dientes” (189). Once again Don Quijote ignores the evidence, and instead he uses his dogmatism to explain the provenance of his new name: “no es eso –respondió don Quijote–; sino que el sabio a cuyo cargo debe de estar el escribir la historia de mis hazañas, le habrá parecido que será bien que yo tome algún nombre apelativo, como lo tomaban todos los caballeros pasados” (189). Don Quijote’s dogmatism is astounding: losing teeth is very painful and disfiguring, and yet he does not pay attention to the evidence provided by that pain and disfigurement.

Don Quijote’s dogmatism as it applies to his protection continues with the *yelmo de Mambrino*. The continuation of the same dogmatic theme is made clear when we keep in mind that Don Quijote mentions the magical object right after he discovers that his *celada* has been destroyed by the *Vizcaíno* (see 10, 109). Given the constant beatings he has received on the head, it is not surprising that he would want the protection of a *yelmo*. The problem is not that he seeks to be protected, but the manner in which he tries to obtain that protection.²²

22 Martin de Riquer (2003) also explains the sequence of events that lead from the *celada* to the *yelmo*. However, his explanation is not as detailed as the one provided here. Also, Riquer’s aim is to discuss the weapons used by Don Quijote, and therefore he does not make a strong connection between Don Quijote’s weapons and his dogmatism.

Don Quijote sees “un hombre a caballo, que traía en la cabeza una cosa que relumbraba como si fuera de oro” (21, 206). This is clearly not sufficient to conclude that what he sees is the *yelmo*, but Don Quijote has made up his mind even though Sancho insists that he is wrong. Don Quijote says so twice: “trae en la cabeza puesto el yelmo de Mambrino” (206), and “pues ese es el yelmo de Mambrino” (206). The falsehood of his belief becomes evident in his next great battle: The *bacía* he wears not only fails to protect him, but it is actually used to beat him: “le quitó la bacía de la cabeza, y dióle con ella tres o cuatro golpes en las espaldas y otros tantos en la tierra, con que la hizo pedazos” (22, 228).

Don Quijote’s dogmatism with respect to the *yelmo* is reinforced when, instead of accepting the truth that the *yelmo* is not a *yelmo*, he explains the evidence away using an argument that shows, according to him, that the *yelmo* is a *yelmo* that *appears* to be a *bacía*:

—¿Sabes qué imagino, Sancho? Que esta famosa pieza deste encantado yelmo por algún extraño accidente, debió de venir a manos de quien no supo conocer ni estimar su valor, y, sin saber lo que hacía, viéndola de oro purísimo, debió de fundir la otra mitad para aprovecharse del precio, y de la otra mitad hizo esta que parece bacía de barbero, como tú dices. Pero sea lo que fuere; que para mí que la conozco no hace al caso su transmutación; que yo la aderezaré en el primer lugar donde haya herrero, y de suerte, que no le haga ventaja, ni aun le llegue, la que hizo y forjó el dios de las herrerías para el dios de las batallas; y en este entretanto la traeré como pudiere, que más vale algo que no nada; cuanto más, que bien será bastante para defenderme de alguna pedrada. (21, 208)

Don Quijote’s argument begs the question: aside from the fact that the *bacía* is not made of pure gold, the only way his argument can be used to establish that the object in question is a *yelmo* is by assuming that it is, and only then it follows that it is a *yelmo* that appears to be a *bacía*. As a matter of fact, the argument begs the question so obviously that it brings attention to Don Quijote’s dogmatism. It is a *terrible* argument. Furthermore, the connection between the harm to his head, which began

with his failed attempt to make a *celada*, and his attempt to obtain better protection with the *yelmo* is reinforced: he wishes to have the *yelmo* because “será bastante para defenderme de alguna pedrada.” The fact that latter on the *yelmo* not only fails him, but it is actually used to beat him shows one more time the falsehood of his dogmatic beliefs: one cannot use a *bacia* to protect one-self from stones thrown to the face.

Several critics have pointed out that the *yelmo* is one of the most important devices used by Cervantes to give structure to the novel.²³ However, when we consider the issue from the perspective of his dogmatism, we discover that this device does not start with the *yelmo per se*: it begins with Quijote’s attempt to make a *celada* “finísima” out of a *morrión simple* (which is dogmatically obtained), and it then continues with the *yelmo* (which is obtained just as dogmatically). The thematic connection is there because in both cases, the protection for his head is inadequate, and it is precisely the inadequacy of the *celada* what prompts him to seek the *yelmo*.

In fact, the thematic thread begins even before the ill-fated construction of the *celada*: Two of his possible surnames are “Quijada” or “Quesada”. The name “Quijada” brings attention to the feature on his head that will be unprotected the most throughout his adventures: his chin. The name “Quesada” brings attention to the state of his dogmatic feeble mind, a mind which is made of cheese. The opinions of Frederick de Armas and Agustín Redondo add strength to this interpretation. The latter critic takes into account that “quesada” is similar to cheese, and then he maintains that cheese is a sign of Don Quijote’s madness (1998, 215-6). The former critic makes a strong connection between the name “Quijada” and the chin of the emperor Charles V. In both cases the chin is viewed as “a sign of determination” (2006, 119). Later on de Armas will also add that “although [the knight] is constantly defeated, his determination [his chin] leads him from one battle to the next” (120). Therefore, the chin brings attention to the knight’s inability to change his mind, *even though he is constantly defeated*. In other words, his *unprotected* chin brings attention to his dogmatism.

²³ See, for example, Michael McGaha (1981), Manuel Durán (1995) and Peter N. Dunn (1996).

The dogmatic thread that unites the sequence discussed here (*Quijada/Quesada*; *morrión simple*; *celada* “finísima”; *bacía/yelmo*) culminates in the famous discussion in Chapter 45 about the nature of the object in question: is it a *yelmo*, a *bacía*, or as Sancho maintains, both? This episode has produced an enormous amount of criticism. A common theme is to say that the episode is a discussion of the changing nature of reality. For example, José-Ángel Ascunce Arrieta first maintains that the theme of “life is dream” “refleja la conciencia de desorientación y perplejidad que ofrece el hombre barroco” (1994, 100), and then he finishes the paragraph with a discussion of the *baciyelmo*:

Todas las realidades se manifiestan como claroscuros, o, según la terminología del propio Cervantes, como “baciyelmos”, donde una rodela puede ser a un mismo tiempo bacía o yelmo según circunstancias o intereses de quienes las valoran o las hagan operativas. La propia expresión de “vida como sueño” representa un claroscuro con los tonos semánticos más encontrados que imaginarse pueda. (100)

Américo Castro maintains that the *baciyelmo* represents the notion that reality changes, depending on the perspective of the observer:

El *Quijote* se funda en el supuesto de que el objeto de los propósitos y actividades del hombre poseen una realidad cambiante y sin seguro asidero: parece esto, pero puede ser quien sabe qué. Ya lo vimos antes con la ocasión del yelmo-bacía-baciyelmo. El observador y lo observado no coinciden, por lo común, en un vértice válido para otros observadores. (1966, 301)

Furthermore, some critics, as pointed out by Edward Dudley, see this changing reality as “símbolo del poder transformador” of the hero-knight (1972, 360), while others, such as Michael McGaha, take a more negative view and maintain that the episode is a sign of Don Quijote’s madness (1981, 746). At the same time George Güntert, without denying that other readings are valid, takes another direction and concludes that the

entire episode is there most of all to show that “la capacidad persuasiva del héroe logr[a] su fin solo a medias”(51):

Lo cierto es que las disputas en torno al bacín-yelmo reflejan la perplejidad de los restantes personajes ante la veridicción del héroe; y analógicamente reacciona el lector al discurso heroicómico que le propone la obra. En el simulacro del “medio yelmo” se manifiesta, pues, la tensión inherente al proceso de veridicción que suscita, en los destinatarios, reacciones dispares. (1993, 51)

It is difficult to take sides in a debate of such proportions;²⁴ however, if we look at the episode from the perspective of Don Quijote’s dogmatism, then the discussion about the object that he wears on his head can be interpreted as the culmination of the dogmatic thread that began with his name.

The episode starts in Chapter 44 when the unfortunate barber appears. The barber maintains that it is a *bacia*, Don Quijote that it is a *yelmo*, and Sancho that it is both, a *baciyelmo*. Let us put Sancho’s opinion aside for the moment.

The discussion takes place because the other barber (the one from the Don Quijote’s village) wants to ridicule of Don Quijote’s *false* belief-system: “Nuestro barbero, que a todo estaba presente, como tenía bien conocido el humor de don Quijote, quiso esforzar su desatino y llevar adelante la burla, para que todos riesen” (45, 478-9). In other words, the episode is there ostensibly to mock Don Quijote’s dogmatism.

Then the participants take sides: those who know about Don Quijote’s condition agree with the second barber because they too want to have a good time at the knight’s expense. This group includes the priest, as well as “Cardenio, don Fernando y sus camaradas” (479). It is crucial to realize that the members of this group are important, powerful people

24 The possibilities offered by the critics are staggering. Just to offer three more examples, Peter N. Dunn sees the episode as an indication that “reality is constituted . . . through the action of discourse as power.” (1996, 126). Cesáreo Banderas sees it as an attempt to “encubrir la violencia” in the text (1975, 170). Manuel Durán sees the episode from the point of view of “perspectivism” (1995, 29) in order to conclude that the entire novel can be seen as Don Quijote’s “attempt to transform reality into a sign” (30).

according to the standard of the time, and that consequently they have *authority* because of who they are in the social scale. More specifically, the priest has the authority of the church, and Don Fernando and Cardenio have authority because of their noble up-bringing and blood. The only powerful character excluded explicitly from this group is the “oidor,” and that is because he is preoccupied with the “negocio de don Luis” (479). According to this group, the only reason why the object in question is a *yelmo* is because they agree ostensibly with Don Quijote:

[The barber from the knight’s village says] . . . este, aunque es yelmo, no es yelmo entero.

—No por cierto—dijo Don Quijote—porque le falta la mitad que es la barbera.

—Así es—dijo el cura, que ya había entendido la intención de su amigo el barbero.

Y lo mismo confirmó Cardenio, don Fernando y sus camaradas. (479)

Therefore, the object is deemed to be a *yelmo* because Don Quijote says so. This is a clear appeal to the knight’s authority in matters of argumentation. Just as importantly, those who agree (ostensibly) with the knight *have authority* because of who they are in the social scale (Don Fernando, Cardenio and the priest).

The episode continues with two objections against that group’s mode of argumentation. The one who advances the objections is the unfortunate barber: he holds that if the *bacia* is a *yelmo* because those with authority (“gente honrada” (45, 479)) says so, then this should cause admiration in a University, and furthermore, if what they say is true, then it is also true that his *albarda* is a *jaez*:

—¡Válame Dios! —dijo a esta sazón el barbero burlado—. ¿Que es posible que tanta gente honrada diga que ésta no es bacía, sino yelmo? Cosa parece esta que puede poner en admiración a toda una

Universidad, por discreta que sea. Basta: si es que ésta bacía es yelmo, también debe ser ésta albarda jaez de caballo.... (45, 479).

To sum up, so far in the discussion we have an ostensible appeal to authority made by characters that have authority (the priest, Don Fernando, Cardenio, etc.), and then two objections against that kind of appeal advanced by someone who has no authority.

The episode continues when Don Quijote's respond to the *second* objection advanced by the barber: "A mi albarda me parece . . . pero ya he dicho que en eso no me entremeto" (479). The full effect of Don Quijote's answer can only be appreciated if we go back to the beginning of the episode, which is when Don Quijote explained why he has no opinion about the *albarda* (even though it *appears to him* to be one):

En lo de la albarda no me entremeto; que lo que en ello sabré decir es que mi escudero Sancho me pidió licencia para quitar los jaeces del caballo deste vencido cobarde; y con ellos adornar el suyo; yo se la dí, y él los tomó, y de haberse convertido de jaez en albarda, no sabré dar otra razón si no es la ordinaria: que como esas transformaciones se ven en los sucesos de la caballería. (44, 477)

Therefore, Don Quijote's response to the unfortunate barber is justified with an appeal to the "sucesos de la caballería", which brings attention to his dogmatism. Furthermore, his dogmatism is extreme because Don Quijote thinks that it is normal to make that kind of an appeal: it is, as he says, a "razón . . . ordinaria". At the same time, just about all the information he believes to be true happens to be false: the animal in question is not a horse but a donkey, the object that Sancho took from the vanquished barber is not a *jaez* but an *albarda* (see 21, 209-10), and finally, to top it all, Don Quijote believes that the object changed "de jaez en albarda" because of some kind of wizardry, which again, it is false. In short, Don Quijote's answer to the unfortunate barber is dogmatically justified and completely false.

Authority as a means to establish truth is then discredited further when Don Fernando not only agrees (ostensibly) a second time with

don Quijote to ridicule him: “el señor don Quijote ha dicho muy bien hoy” (45, 480), but also when he tries to provide another proof that relies, once again, on authority: he takes a secret ballot to ascertain (by means of authority) whether or not Don Quijote is right. This appeal to authority is discredited further because Don Fernando only asks the opinion of those who have authority (see 480), and therefore, it is not even a fair test.

The pernicious effects of using authority to establish truth is then brought to bear when the unfortunate barber capitulates:

No la tenga yo en el cielo –dijo el sobrebarbero– si todas vuestras mercedes no se engañan, y que así parezca mi ánima ante Dios como ella me parece a mi albarda, y no jaez; pero allá van leyes ..., etcétera [the complete saying, as explained by Riquer is “allá van leyes, do quieren reyes.”] (45, 481, n. 10).

This is a capitulation because *for the barber* what counts to establish truth is no longer what he sees with his own eyes, but the authority of the powerful (the kings, according to the complete saying). This capitulation is then shown to be absurd when the text makes explicit that the words of the barber are as humorous as the words of Don Quijote: “no menos causaban risa las necedades que decía el barbero que los disparates de don Quijote” (45, 481).

To sum up, so far in the episode we have a relentless attack against authority in matters of argumentation: Don Quijote’s belief system is mocked because it is dogmatic and false; the unfortunate barber has advanced two powerful objections against authority, neither of which has been answered adequately (as a matter of fact, the first one is dropped); those who want to ridicule Don Quijote’s dogmatism do so by being ostensibly as dogmatic as Don Quijote, and what they sustain is therefore equally false. To top it all, the pernicious effects of authority in matters of truth are brought to bear when the barber changes his mind, despite of his own powerful objections and despite of the evidence.

Then the conversation changes drastically: the one who speaks is one of the servants of Don Luis:

Si ya no es que esto sea burla pensada, no me puedo persuadir que hombres de tan buen entendimiento como son, o parecen, todos los que aquí están, se atrevan a decir y afirmar que ésta no es bacía, ni aquella albarda; mas como veo que lo afirman y lo dicen, me doy a entender que no carece de misterio el porfiar una cosa tan contraria de lo que nos muestra la misma verdad y la misma experiencia; porque ¡voto a tal!—y arrojóle redondo—que no me den a mi a entender cuantos hoy viven en el mundo al revés de que ésta no sea bacía de barbero y ésta albarda de asno. (45, 481)

The one speaking has *no authority* because he is a servant. Furthermore, his argument does not rely on an appeal to the authority of anyone, but on “la misma verdad y la misma experiencia.” It should be noted that this represents a typical skeptical attitude: truth is to be established by way of argumentation and observation, not authority.

Then, just before the fight starts because Don Quijote loses his temper, one of the *cuadrilleros* (someone without authority when several nobles and a priest are present) reinforces the skeptical position by once again stating that truth is to be established using direct observation: “Tan albarda es como mi padre; y el que otra cosa ha dicho o dijere debe de estar hecho uva [borracho]” (45, 481). In the episode, therefore, there is a strong opposition between two modes of argumentation: dogmatism versus skepticism.

Therefore, if we read the episode from the perspective of Don Quijote’s dogmatism exclusively, then we reach the conclusion that the discussion about the object in question is there to illustrate that truth should be established by means of observation and argumentation, and not by means of authority. In other words, the episode is there to illustrate that Don Quijote’s dogmatism is absurd. This conclusion receives additional support when we keep in mind that the group that sided with Don Quijote did not really side with him; On the contrary, they wanted to ridicule him all along, and therefore they knew that with respect to the Romances of Chivalry, an appeal to authority can only produce false results. Furthermore, before they leave the priest pays the unfortunate

barber for the *bacia* (46, 486), and this indicates that the priest always knew that the object was not a *yelmo*. Finally, all the damage done by Don Quijote in the *venta* was paid by “Don Fernando” (46, 487), which again, indicates that his appeal to authority was not a real attempt to establish truth, but a means to ridicule Don Quijote’s feeble mind.

But what about Sancho? He maintains that the object in question is a *baciyelmo*. It should be kept in mind that Sancho accepts that the object is a *yelmo* because his master says so, and therefore that part of his belief depends on the authority provided by Don Quijote. At the same time, Sancho thinks that the object is a *bacia* because he cannot deny what he sees with his own eyes, and therefore he is also adopting a skeptical attitude that relies on direct observation. The result of using both epistemic strategies at the same time makes him unable to decide one way or the other, and therefore he concludes that the object is a *baciyelmo*; therefore, Sancho’s belief may be interpreted in two mutually supportive ways: first, it is an indication that one cannot be a skeptic and a dogmatic at the same time to establish truth because nothing is resolved; second, Sancho states his position at the beginning of the episode, and therefore the *baciyelmo* may be interpreted as an introduction of the theme that will be discussed in the episode: is the object a *bacia* or a *yelmo*? The answer to this question depends on the epistemic stance taken by the participants: if the person speaking is a dogmatic, just like don Quijote, then he or she will accept the *ridiculous* and *false* belief that it is a *yelmo*, and if the person speaking is a skeptic, then he or she will believe the *obvious truth* that it is a *bacia*.

The perspective I have used to analyze the episode of the *baciyelmo* is very limited: it focuses on Don Quijote’s dogmatism. I acknowledge that the episode may be interpreted in different and even mutually exclusive ways, depending on the point of departure. For example, if we look at the episode from the perspective of baroque disillusionment, then it may be concluded that in the episode reality itself changes (this is Acunze-Arrieta’s conclusion, as quoted above); if we approach the text from a phenomenological perspective, then it may be concluded that the formation of reality depends on observation (this is Castro’s conclusion); and if we focus instead on the participants, then the episode may be viewed

as proof that Don Quijote's power of persuasion is not complete (this is Güntert's conclusion). There are many perspectives that can be taken, and each one reveals an important aspect of the episode. Here I have focused on Don Quijote's dogmatism for two reasons: using his dogmatism as the point of departure is well supported by the text (after all, the explicit reason why the episode is there is that some of the participants wanted to ridicule the knight's false belief system), and more importantly, if we focus on Don Quijote's dogmatism, then the discussion about the *bacia/yelmo/baciyelmo* can be seen as the culmination of the dogmatic theme that began with his two possible names and that gave thematic continuity to his adventures. It is the culmination of that thread not only because the episode ridicules Don Quijote's *dogmatic* belief that the object in question is a *yelmo*, but also because an alternative is being offered explicitly: Don Quijote's epistemic illness would be cured if he relied on direct observation and argumentation (skepticism). For example, instead of believing, as he stated previously, that the *yelmo* is a *yelmo* that *appears* to be a *bacia*, or instead of not having an opinion about the *albarda* even though it *appears* to him to be one, he should believe, quite simply, that the *bacia* is a *bacia* because it appears to be one, and the *albarda* is an *albarda* for the same reason. If he could establish truth based on arguments that rely on observation, then the Romances of Chivalry would have no authority for him, and therefore they would cease to cause him harm. In other words, if he were able to establish truth by taking as his guide the way in which the *bacia* and the *albarda* *appear* to him, then his head would not be made of cheese (Quesada) and therefore his chin would not be unprotected (Quijada).

Don Quijote's anti-skeptical attitude towards his own person comes at a heavy price. Instead of believing his painful experiences, his dogmatism gets in the way and does not permit him to discover the truth. We could therefore say that when it comes to his own protection, don Quijote is harmed by his own dogmatic stance. It should be noted as well that his dogmatism is of epic proportions: given the evidence that Don Quijote has, which is provided mainly by constant beatings to the head, it is hard to believe that he does not *conclude* that his head is injured because it lacks adequate protection. Instead of blaming the obvious, the

extent of Don Quijote's dogmatism is revealed when he explains his injuries by blaming a jealous wizard on repeated occasions.

Don Quijote's dogmatism is the exact opposite of the un-dogmatic stance used to construct his story. This contrast serves an important purpose: it makes Don Quijote's dogmatism and the harm it causes to himself much easier to identify, and at the same time, it makes the story of don Quijote appear even more un-dogmatic. This combination shows Cervantes's mastery of skepticism: he took advantage of that philosophy not only to write a skeptical story, but within that story, he also created the most famous anti-skeptic in literature.

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