

“Don Quixote’s Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy”

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Miguel Cervantes' classic novel "*Don Quixote*" is a wonderful tale about a man who abandons his normal life to pursue life as a knight. This new life is a product of his insanity and overwhelming imagination. None of the things that Don Quixote believes he sees exist in the real world, but only inside his mind. Imagination is what powers this novel. If "Don Quixote" were a machine, imagination would be the engine that pushes the novel from start to finish. Cervantes has a special idea for what imagination is and what it can do. But why should the readers care about imagination? Does it serve a purpose beyond entertaining us when we are bored of our normal, dull lives? If one can unlock the meaning of imagination, or the heart of "Don Quixote", then they will potentially find meaning in this extravagant novel. With the help of Pascal and William James, this essay will attempt to seek out what purpose Miguel Cervantes has assigned to imagination. This will reveal that Cervantes was not only thinking about imagination parallel to philosophers that came after him, but that he also personified these thoughts in his most famous character Don Quixote.

Before our investigation is started, we must address two questions; how is imagination defined by James and Pascal, and how is Don Quixote's madness affected by imagination. Imagination is what powers "Don Quixote"; if the knight did not have a strong imagination there would be no adventures at all in the novel. However, we need to have a definition of imagination since Cervantes does not explicitly provide us one in his novel. For the mean time, we will turn to other authors who have studied imagination to see if their views are present in Don Quixote. French philosopher Pascal described imagination as an "arrogant power, the enemy of reason, who likes to rule and dominate it." (Pascal). This definition is quite blunt, but it establishes a relationship between imagination and reason. This definition allows us to understand that

imagination and reason are faculties that are in opposition to each other. But this definition is also one dimensional, it does not account for the hallucinations that Don Quixote thinks he sees in his reality or how he has the power to come up with such thoughts and images. It paints imagination as something that is merely a nuisance to man. Another definition of imagination, one that is more open than Pascal's, is required if we are to arrive at Cervantes' definition. William James provides a definition that has more practical use than Pascal's. James defines imagination as "the names given to the faculty of reproducing copies of originals once felt." (James 169). He even takes a step further and divides imagination into two categories, productive and reproductive. Reproductive imagination is when we reproduce literal feelings or images that we have experienced. Productive imagination is when "elements from different originals are recombined so as to make new wholes." (James).

This definition is more applicable to the situation of Don Quixote. If John Locke is to be believed when he says that "the mind can frame unto itself no one new simple idea" (James 169), Don Quixote is not making up any of the adventures that he is going on by himself, but he is instead being inspired by the adventures that he has read and is attempting to either re-create these adventures or use them as inspiration for his own adventures. We also learn later on in the book that Don Quixote firmly believes that the golden age of Spain was when chivalry was prevalent and knights were able to go on epic adventures. This seems to match James' definition of imagination: Don Quixote is a man who believes that the golden age of Spain has passed and that it is his mission to recreate this golden age by becoming a knight and going on his own adventures. James also provides a classification for Don Quixote's imagination, we can classify it as "productive" because Don Quixote is constantly fusing different fictional tales in

his imagination. However, his imagination is not producing ideas, only imitations of ideas that Don Quixote has learned about. Therefore a proper classification for Don Quixote's would be "productively reproductively". But his overwhelming imagination also matches Pascal's definition of imagination as well. So the only question that remains is what is Cervantes' definition of imagination?

In order to find a Cervantian definition for imagination, it should be wise to view important events of Don Quixote through the lens of both Pascal and James. This will allow us to see what elements of each philosopher exist within the novel and how Cervantes has personified them not only in Don Quixote but in other characters as well. While Cervantes did write *Quixote* well before James and Pascal, that does not eliminate the possibility that he was thinking parallel to the philosophers. But another matter is at hand; understanding the relationship between Don Quixote's madness and imagination. The entire novel chronicles the adventures of the mad-man Don Quixote. But what does it actually mean for Don Quixote to be mad? The most important aspect of Don Quixote's madness is that he always believed that he is a knight who lives in his own fictional novel about chivalry. He believed that he is the hero of his generation, no one can tell the knight otherwise until the very end of the novel. This could easily be defined as Quixote being stubborn and not wanting to go back to his original life, but there is more to it. Don Quixote genuinely believes that his reality is one of a chivalrous novel. Whenever something bad happens to Don Quixote, he simply brushes it off as if it were all part of the plan or that he was destined to become injured or fall upon some bad luck. We can call this anomaly having faith in one's imagination. When someone has faith in an idea or a religion, it means that they will believe in that ideology without the need to possess any evidence that what they believe is real

and truthful. For Don Quixote, to have faith in his imagination would mean that he believes that the ideas he is recreating or producing in his head are the absolute truth and anything in reality that opposes these ideas are false. We know from James that imagination has the power to reproduce images, however Don Quixote believes that the reproductions exist in his reality.

From this conclusion we are able to see Don Quixote beyond being a “madman”, but we can now clearly see that he is a man who has extreme faith in his imagination. We now have all the pieces of information required to launch a serious investigation into “*Don Quixote*”. The next logical step is to view the story of Don Quixote through the lens of Pascal and James to see if their ideas are present within Cervantes’ novel.

French philosopher Blaise Pascal described imagination in an almost evil manner. He believed “it is that deceitful part in man, that mistress of error and falsity, the more deceptive that she is not always so; for she would be an infallible rule of truth, if she were an infallible rule of falsehood.” (Pascal). While the definition seems harsh, there is some truth to this definition that is represented in Don Quixote. Throughout the novel Don Quixote is constantly getting himself into trouble or harmed. His imagination constantly fools him into thinking that the “reproductions” of his fantasy exist in reality. This makes Quixote naive and gullible, a fatal flaw that leads to the knight's demise. Sancho Panza, on the other hand, is someone who can recognize that his imagination is trying to deceive him. Panza decides to join Quixote only because the knight promised Sancho an island to govern, but Panza is well aware that he will never become one. Here, in Cervantes’ novel, there is a character who represents what a person would be like if they only relied on their imagination: a person who rejects the truths of the real world and only entertains the baseless ideas that his imagination presents to him. Pascal’s

definition allows us to see that imagination and reason are in opposition the same way that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are in opposition.

However we must also consider James' definition of imagination as well; that imagination allows us to recreate experiences and images that we have already felt in real life. This definition gives us the psychological language to understand a more complex definition of imagination. What James achieves is that he goes beyond Pascal and claims that imagination is more than just an opponent to reason, but imagination allows us to reproduce memories or ideas as well as produce new ideas from previous ones. A character like Don Quixote allows us to combine these definitions and still come to the conclusion that imagination is in opposition to reality. While James uses kinder language than Pascal to describe the opposition, he acknowledges that the productions of imagination will not always be true. The decorated tale of Don Quixote and the windmills shows that productions of the imagination do not exist in reality, which makes them unreasonable. We can begin to see that Cervantes thought that imagination was in opposition to reason in a manner that is parallel to later philosophers. This exciting revelation allows us to examine further parts of the novel in more detail.

Let us begin by analyzing the when Don Quixote decides to reject reality and the adventures he has before befriending his squire Sancho Panza. In the words of Cervantes:

Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny rag and a greyhound for racing. An occasional stew, beef more often than lamb, hash most nights, eggs and abstinence on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, sometimes squab as a treat on Sunday - these consumed three-fourths of his income. The rest went for a light woolen tunic and velvet breeches and hose of the same material for feast days, while weekdays were honored with dun-colored cloth. (...) Our gentleman was approximately fifty years old; his complexion was weathered, his flesh scrawny, his face gaunt, and he was a very early riser and a great lover of the hunt. (Cervantes)

The introduction to “Don Quixote” describes the Quixote as a simple peasant who is longs for the return of the “Golden Age” of Spain. The lance and shield on his shelf represent the fantasy. This mean also means that he has read books about chivalry and knights before he becomes “Don Quixote”. Therefore he already has ideas of chivalry and knighthood in his head and has a desire to recreate the stories of knights and dragons. However, Cervantes leaves the reader practically marooned on an island of confusion only a few pages into his novel. The author describes how Don Quixote loses his mind, but he never reveals why Quixote is possessed with the urge to read practically every novel that is about chivalry. Here we will turn to our good friend William James to offer the marooned reader a raft of clarity, and this raft of clarity comes in the form of the “will” and the “wish”:

Desire, wish, will, are states of which everyone knows, and which no definition can make plainer. We desire to feel, to have, to do, all sorts of things which at the moment are not felt, had, or done. If with the desire there goes a sense that attainment is not possible, we simply *wish*; but if we believe that the end is in our power, we *will* that the desired feeling, having, or doing shall be real; and real it presently becomes, either immediately upon the willing or after certain preliminaries have been fulfilled. (James)

Don Quixote’s “wish” is for chivalry to return to Spain. But the golden years of Spain have sadly come and gone and the only accessible records of chivalry are novels. And by becoming obsessed with reading every novel about chivalry, Don Quixote has mistaken his wish for his will and believes that he is a knight. Don Quixote’s faith in imagination stems from this confusion. We can say that origin of Don Quixote’s madness comes from the scrambling of his will and wish. Not only is the knight being “productive” with his imagination by trying to fuse his reality with his imagination, but he is also “reproducing” the logic of chivalry. Or in less words; his imagination is productively reproducing the ideals taught in tales of chivalry into his reality. We know from Pascal that imagination is deceitful and Quixote is gullible, which means

his faith in his imagination gives him belief that what he is doing is right and just despite the fact that this type of logic is false and outdated.

A prime example that highlights this clash is in chapter four where he comes across a boy being whipped by a peasant:

“Senor Knight, this boy I’m punishing is one of my servants, and his job is to watch over a flock of sheep I keep in this area, and he’s so careless that I lose one everyday, and when I punish his carelessness, or villainy, he says I do it out of miserliness because I don’t want to pay him his wages, and by god and my immortal soul, he lies.”

“You dare to say ‘He lies’ in my presences, base varlet?” said Don Quixote. ‘By the sun that shines down on us, I am ready to run you through with this lance. Pay him now without another word; if you do not, by the God who rules us I shall exterminate and annihilate you here and now. Untie him immediately.” (Cervantes)

Don Quixote completely misreads the conversation and even disregards what the man says. Instead of using his reason to analyze this situation Quixote relies on his imagination to solve a problem that is none of his business. This example shows not only a conflict between imagination and reason, but also one between the will and this wish. Don Quixote wishes he could solve this as a knight and attempts to do so. This only leads to the servant being punished more. If Don Quixote had relied on his “will” he would have realized that the master of the servant was correct and he should move on with his day. Quixote’s imagination has lead him to believe that he should act as if he is in a novel, instead of realizing the truth of the situation, which backs Pascal’s claim that imagination is deceitful.

At this point in the essay, we can step back and see that the most concrete belief that is imagination and reason are in opposition in several ways. First of all, reason allows us to see the truth in things while imagination only lies to us. Secondly, imagination and reason could also be understood in terms like wish and will. James tells us that these are in opposition depending on if a goal is achievable. But we must not forget the possibility of a third opposition; one between

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Quixote has extreme faith in his imagination while Sancho Panza acts a sceptic to Quixote's wild beliefs. We will go into this matter later as it does not require our immediate attention. Our next adventure will be to examine one of the most vivid examples of imagination and reason clashing Don Quixote. For those not familiar with the text; Don Quixote is split into two halves, The first half details all of the quirky adventures that Quixote embarks on and finishes with Don Quixote being caged up and taken back to his home town. The second half of the book begins with Don Quixote coming across a strange discovery; all of the adventures that he had in the first book have been written down and published. This breaks the fourth wall of the novel, what the readers of the book have just read is now being presented to the knight. What makes this event peculiar is that it has only taken a short amount of time for Don Quixote to be escorted from the inn back to his house in La Mancha and so many people have already read the book. This gives other characters in the novel a gateway to interact with Don Quixote. Everyone in Spain is know aware that Don Quixote will believe practically anything that anyone tells him as long as the ideas are parallel with the ones of Don Quixote. In more explicit terms, characters in the novel, after reading the book, dress up as characters from Don Quixote's imagination. In the first half of the novel we witness that Quixote has hallucinations about the reproduced images in his head and tries to produce them in real life. But in the second half of the novel, the the reproductions actually exist in the real world. We will also see elements of James and Pascal in this transition. With Pascal, we will see how Cervantes rips off the mask of imagination to reveal what it's true nature is, but at the same time it will also become clear how Cervantes has a clear understanding of what "will" and "wish" are. In order to

fully see how these ideas exist for Cervantes we will shall examine events that highlight these issues.

In the first half of the book, Don Quixote tells Sancho Panza to deliver a letter to Dulcinea, but Sancho does not know who she is or if she exists so he lies to Don Quixote and tells him he did it. And now, to Sancho's dismay, Don Quixote wants to find his Dulcinea. They head into a village and begin their search for the most beautiful woman in the land. But since she does not exist, Sancho is quick on his feet and says that the first peasant girl on horseback they see is the woman who has captured Don Quixote's heart. The knight pursues and the peasant girl rejects and him and flees. The result is a very saddened Don Quixote:

Don Quixote was thoughtful as he went on his way, considering the awful trick the enchanters had played on him when they turned his lady Dulcinea into the ugly figure of the peasant girl, and he could not imagine what remedy he might have that would return her to her original state; these thoughts distracted him so much that, without realizing it, he dropped the reins, and Rocinante, sensing the freedom that had been given to him, stopped at every step to graze on the green grass that grew so abundantly in those fields(...) (Cervantes)

Dulcinea was more than a woman to Don Quixote, she was the lady whom he served, he slayed giants for her, and she symbolizes the spirit of his adventures, meaning that as long as she remained a beautiful woman he had a reason to go on quests. But now she is real and not at all what Don Quixote expected, so his spirit of adventure is damaged. Dulcinea, his one and only, has been cursed by the evil enchanter! But this evil enchanter did not turn Dulcinea from a beautiful princess to an average peasant, what it actually did was the opposite. We must not forget that Pascal portrayed imagination as a faculty that deceits man. This is the first time that we physically see Cervantes revealing some truth about imagination. In the first half of the book, Don Quixote believed everything his imagination provided for him and hardly ever felt pain or sadness when frolicking about. However, now that Cervantes has begun to show the ugly truth of

imagination. James also makes an appearance in this example. Not only is Cervantes showing Pascalian views of imagination, but the disenchantment of Dulcinea is a visual representation of the difference between “will” and “wish”. Don Quixote’s “wish” is to be in love with Dulcinea, but Dulcinea does not exist which cements the fact that it is a wish. In this scenario, where Quixote is presented with the truth the Dulcinea does not exist, he is unable to let go of his fantasy. Significantly, this event also signals the beginning of Don Quixote’s death.

In the first half of the book, Don Quixote had blind faith in his imagination and the world that his imagination created. People might have thought that he was crazy, but everything was great for Don Quixote. But now there are people who are aware of Don Quixote and his adventures and the images in his head. As we will see later on, several of the ‘imagination’ characters will cause harm to Don Quixote. These malicious characters personify the deceit of our imagination.

Around the same time as the run in with the faux Dulcinea, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza run into some actors dressed up as devils and angels and other fictional characters. After one of them harasses the knight and his squire, Don Quixote gets off of his horse and gets ready to fight them, the actors draw out some pebbles and are ready to stone Don Quixote. The knight then realizes that he is in a very sticky situation and decides that he would rather not be beaten senseless again and drops his weapons. This is a rare occurrence of Don Quixote thinking reasonably to prevent himself from getting harmed. Our brave knight is beginning to question his own imagination. It is as if the knight thought to himself “Do I really possess the strength to fight such a foe?” As stated before, this is not an image or experience being reproduced by his imagination, as James tells us, they are real which means that the pain he will feel is real. This

not only shows that Don Quixote is slowly acknowledging the dangers of the real world, but that the knight is also using the faculty which James labeled as “will”. Quixote is no longer thinking in the realm of the “wish”, but he is now beginning to think in the realm of the “will”, or things that can actually be achieved in reality. We must not celebrate any victory, dear reader. While we may see that Cervantes had ideas about what imagination is, we are still a distance away from finding a definition for imagination. Without a definition we are helpless in finding meaning to Quixote. Let our adventure continue.

One of the most confusing chapters in the book, for both Don Quixote and the reader, is when Don Quixote descends into a cave and has the most bizarre dream. He claims that he does not know what was real and what was a dream, but Sancho Panza says that he could see Don Quixote sleeping. This bizarre event sticks with Don Quixote and highlights his difficulty distinguishing what is real and what is happening in his head. For Cervantes, imagination gives us the power to recreate images or experiences in our mind, which is parallel to the thoughts of James. But we can trust Sancho Panza’s account of what really happened in the cave because Sancho Panza is not detached from reality. This momentarily brings us back to the opposition of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Events before the cave show us that Sancho Panza acts a voice of reason to Don Quixote. Whenever something goes wrong on their adventures Sancho always learns the lesson or is mortified by what has happened. This is because Sancho is aware of how deceitful imagination is from his own experience as well as witnessing the torment that Quixote experiences. But at this point the knight has already begun to doubt his own faith, so the consequence of this dream is that he really does not know what to believe any more. He really does want to have faith in his imagination, but everything up to this point has shown him that his

imagination only leads him to false hope and eventually pain. So why should he have any faith left in his imagination? This event gives us a very vivid example of reality and imagination clashing:

“That could be true, Sancho,’ replied Don Quixote, ‘but it is not, because what I have recounted I saw with my own eyes and touched with my own hands. (...) and as soon I saw them I recognized one of them as peerless Dulcinea of Toboso, and the other two as those same peasant girls who came with her, the ones we spoke to as we were leaving Toboso(...)”

When Sancho Panza heard his master say this, he thought he would lose his mind or die laughing; since he knew the truth about the feigned enchantments of Dulcinea, for he had been the enchanter and had invented the story(...) (Cervantes)

This is what really distinguishes the second half from the first, the latter half of the book shows that when characters use their imagination they have a way of connecting with Don Quixote. For example, close to the end of the book Don Quixote and Sancho Panza run into a mysterious figure known as “The Knight of Mirrors”. This knight challenges Don Quixote to a joust which ends with Don Quixote admitting defeat and returning to his old life. But what is important to take away from this event is that a normal person from the story has utilized their imagination to persuade Don Quixote to give up his knighthood. However, we also witness characters who use this an opportunity to harm Don Quixote. The characters known as the “Duke” and the “Duchess”. These people act as if they are royalty and pretend to have knowledge on how to cure Dulcinea. But the “cure” require Quixote and Panza to be physically torture for their own personal pleasure, although Panza is the main victim. One “cure” required Quixote and Panza to ride a wooden horse filled with firecrackers, only to have the Duke and Duchess detonate the horse while they are riding on it. Cervantes has personified the deceit of imagination as the Duke and the Duchess. They are malicious and only want to see Quixote act a fool for their own personal pleasure, but also no truth is discovered from Quixotes interaction

with them. This brings us back to the perception of Sancho Panza versus that of Quixote, for only Panza is sceptical of the intentions of the Duke and the Duchess. While Quixote still wants to believe that imagination is trustworthy and will lead him to Dulcinea. This is the end for Don Quixote.

As the story progresses, more characters from his imagination become real, forcing the knight to focus on reality and thus making him less cheerful and more melancholic. In the final stages of the book, Don Quixote is challenged to a joust against another knight, which he accepts and loses. This is the most damaging thing for Don Quixote's mental state; losing a joust ultimately means losing his honor, which is what a knight should never lose. After losing the joust, Don Quixote agrees to go back to La Mancha for one final adventure; becoming a shepherd with Sancho Panza and living a normal. Here we have witnessed the death of Don Quixote, he has done what he would have never done before; he has agreed to go back to his own life, the same life which caused him to go insane. He has, essentially, conceded that a life lived by imagination was fun, but now it is time to go back to normal life. Through the lens of James, this can be seen as Quixote accepting that the "will" is real and that his "wish" can never exist in reality. Several times before in the novel, many characters have tried to take Don Quixote back to La Mancha and cure him, but in the end it was his own imagination that cured him. The knight struggled to separate the real from the fictional, so when his "fantasies" became harmful or dangerous, the knight decides that the life of chivalry must be put on hold until further notice. We see that Pascal's definition of imagination working here as well; Don Quixote becomes partially upset with the fictional world that he has constructed and will go back to living as a farmer because he has slowly become aware of the deceit that imagination possesses. Don

Quixote is no longer a knight who lives his life through imagination, but is now man who wants to go back to using reason again. Sancho Panza's final plea to Don Quixote as he lay dying is to go back into the realm of imagination so that they can go on adventures again:

“Oh!” responded Sancho, weeping. “Don't die, Senor; your grace should take my advice and live for many years, because the greatest madness a man can commit in this life is to let himself die, just like that, without anybody killing him or any other hands ending his life except those of melancholy. Look, don't be lazy, but get up from that bed and let's go to the countryside dressed as shepherds, just like we arranged: maybe behind some bush we'll find Senora Dona Dulcinea disenchanted, as pretty as you please. If you're dying of sorrow over being defeated, blame me for that and say you were tripped because I didn't tighten Rocinante's cinches; besides, your grace must have seen in your books of chivalry that it's a very common thing for one knight to topple another, and for the one who's vanquished today to be the victor.”
(Cervantes)

Don Quixote died because reality eventually crashed his world of fantasy. He could no longer hide from the harsh truth of reason and the deceit of imagination in the second half of the book as he did in the first half.

It should be clear now that imagination and reason are in opposition in several ways, according to the events in Don Quixote. Pascal's definition of imagination appears to dominate Cervantes own beliefs, but we will soon see that James is not necessarily left out. From the previous analysis we see that both Pascal and Cervantes view imagination as a faculty of deceit that shelters man not only from reason but from the truth of reality. They also share the view that imagination and reality are in opposition to each other. For Pascal, reality is where facts exists and imagination leads us away from these facts. The first difference is that imagination is based off of past experiences, ideas, and images, while everything that occurs in reality is is happening in the present. Don Quixote wants to bring back the Golden Age of Spain, but chivalry has become outdated in the time in which Don Quixote lives. Imagination, according to James, is a

type of recollection of ideas or images that we have already experienced or have been exposed to:

“Fortunate the age and fortunate the times called golden by the ancients, and not because gold, which in this our age is so highly esteemed, could be found then with no effort, but because those who lived in that time did not know the two words *thine* and *mine*. In that blessed age all things were owned in common; no one, for his daily sustenance, needed to do more than lift his hand and pluck it from the sturdy oaks that so liberally invited him to share their sweet and flavoursome fruit.” (Cervantes)

This quote shows that prior to his insanity Don Quixote was already a lover of chivalry and knighthood, but also that his imagination is “productively reproducing” false images of what chivalry is, according to James. While it is highly unlikely that Don Quixote ever experienced chivalry first hand, we know from the introduction of the book that he has a sword and a shield, as well as a vast collection of books from that time period or books that are about chivalry. By isolating himself from reality he was able to immerse himself with just the ideologies of chivalrous writers. Again, this shows that Cervantes was thinking about imagination in a similar manner to how James wanted to treat it. But it has been a great amount of time since the ideas of chivalry were relevant in Spain and Don Quixote believes that he must bring back the golden age of Spain. However, the golden age that Don Quixote wants to bring back only exists in his imagination, his golden age is about made-up knights defeating giants and dragons for kings that have never existed. His “madness” tries to bring his wishes into reality, which ends up being an absurd task over all, if James is to be believed to be true.

And from this conclusion we can also see that imagination and reality cannot exist simultaneously within the text. In other words, whatever is created in the realm of Don Quixote’s imagination cannot exist in reality. James gives imagination the power to reproduce images in one’s mind, but not in reality. To prove this we will look at the famous example of Don Quixote

mistaking windmills for giants. What happens in this event is that Don Quixote tries to impose the images from his imagination into the real world, which is an impossible task in itself.

“Good fortune is guiding our affairs better than than we could have desired, for there you see, friend Sancho Panza, thirty or more enormous giants with whom I intend to do battle and whose lives I intend to take, and with spoils we shall begin to grow rich, for this is righteous warfare, and it is a great service to do God to remove so evil a breed from the face of the earth.”

“What giants?” said Sancho Panza

“Those you see over there,” replied his master, “with the long arms; sometimes they are almost two leagues long.”

“Look, your grace,” Sancho responded, “those things that appear over there aren’t giants but windmills, and what looks like their arms are the sails that are turned by the wind and make the grindstone move.”

“It seems clear to me,” replied Don Quixote, “that thou art not well versed in the matter of adventures: these are giants; and if thou art afraid, move aside and start to pray whilst I enter with them in fierce unequal combat.” (Cervantes)

It should be obvious from the text that Sancho Panza’s view of what is happening is correct; there are no giants, just windmills sitting peacefully. But Don Quixote’s imagination has “productively reproduced” an image of giants to replace the windmills, according to James. So when Don Quixote charges at the windmills the result is that he ends up crashing into them and getting himself hurt. No matter how hard he tries, the images and ideas that exist within Don Quixote’s imagination can never exist in reality. Cervantes has already painted a clear picture that imagination and reality are in opposition to each other and what really makes them clash with each other is that they cannot exist in the same place. However, if we stop here we will not be satisfied with our current findings. So far we have discovered that Pascal’s views on imagination are present in in *Don Quixote* and that Cervantes shares the belief that imagination and reality oppose each other. But this does not lead us to any definition or understanding about imagination or why imagination has lead Don Quixote to madness. And we are also beginning to see more of James’ idea line up with Cervantes. William James’ provided us with a definition for

imagination early on in the essay, but now we will return to him to unearth more terms and information that will guide us to a Cervantian definition. What James will supply us with is more ‘modern’ philosophical ideas that will lead us to our treasure.

We have already discussed how the terms “will” and “wish” are related to Don Quixote and imagination. It should be obvious that imagination, reason, will, and wish are all connected to each other, we can pair will and reason together and do the same with wish and imagination. From James we understand that anything we want to will into existence will happen. If a student looks at their calendar and sees that they have a final exam in a few weeks and desires to achieve a good result on their exam. There are a few possibilities for thoughts that the student might think to themselves, but there are two scenarios that are the most realistic; the student is either prepared to get a good grade or they are not prepared. If they realize that they want to get a good grade by studying for the exam, then they will will themselves to study for the exam and get a good grade. However, if the student decides that studying is too much effort for them to commit to, they may simply wish that their teacher will happen to be ill the day of the exam or forget that an exam is scheduled. The difference between the two is that the own scenario that can exist is that the student studies for the exam. The teacher may be sick on the day of the exam, but there is nothing the student can do to will this into reality.

Here we see the parallel between the terms, the will and reason are things that can only exist in reality and are true and factual, while the wish and the imagination can only exist within one’s mind and cannot exist in reality. Imagination and wish are also connected because they are both non-substantial in their existence. One can wish for many things and imagine all sorts of fantastic tales to tell, but none of these will become real unless there is actual potential for them

to be real. We shall return to the example of Don Quixote and the windmills. What actually exists are the windmills, these are real structures that exist in reality. Don Quixote wishes that they were giants and attempts to attack them. No matter how hard the knight tries his wish will remain a wish because there is no way that his wish is obtainable in reality. We can say that this event shows that Cervantes' acknowledges that will and wish are existing because of the details of the event. Don Quixote wishes that the windmills were giants, but his wish is unobtainable and when he tries to execute it he looks foolish and silly. Sancho Panza realizes that Don Quixote is in danger and tries to will himself to stop the knight from injuring himself. Despite his best protests, Don Quixote still tries to execute his wish. We can look past imagination and reason as just being in opposition to each other and see that what is really in opposition is the ability to will something in reality and the ability to recognize that something is a wish. The whole book echoes the belief of the will and the wish, but this event cements the idea can exist within the novel and that Cervantes is thinking about imagination beyond being a deceitful faculty of the mind. Our next step in the investigation to determine what Cervantes' definition of imagination is, we will need to reexamine Don Quixote's madness in respect to the will and the wish. Once we see how imagination has made Don Quixote mad, we will be able to gain a better understanding of what imagination is.

To begin this investigation we must revisit events across the entire novel, but our focus will be on these areas; the introduction to the story, the event where Don Quixote releases criminals, the event with the false Dulcinea, and Don Quixote's death. The introduction of the novel paints a pretty clear picture of Don Quixote's life as a farmer. Not only was he a farmer,

but he was a man who had admiration of chivalry based on the fact that he has a sword and shield as well as an extensive collection of books about chivalry and the golden age of Spain:

And so, let it be said that this aforementioned gentleman spent his time of leisure - which meant most of the year - reading books of chivalry with so much devotion and enthusiasm that he forgot almost completely about the hunt and even about the administration of his estate; and in his rash curiosity and folly he went so far as to sell acres of arable land in order to buy books of chivalry to read, and he brought as many of them as he could into his house; and he thought none was as fine as those composed by the worthy Feliciano de Silva, because the clarity of his prose and complexity of his language seemed to him more valuable than pearls, in particular when he read the declaration and missives of love(...) (Cervantes)

What this reveals is the beginning of Don Quixote ultimate desire or wish. He has become so obsessed with chivalry and medieval Spain that he wishes to become a knight who lives in the world of fantasy and chivalry. First of all it should be obvious that Don Quixote's desire matches James' wish. Don Quixote wants to live as a knight in one of his fictional tales, something which is not obtainable in reality, therefore he has a wish. There is a big difference between wishing to be a knight and Don Quixote's wish; if Don Quixote just wanted to be a knight he could try to be one, but realize that the times have changed and knights have no place in modern society. But since he wants to be a knight in an era that never existed, his wish is absolutely out of his reach. And thus the madness begins with Don Quixote trying to make his imagination exist in reality so he can fulfill his wish. Earlier in the essay, we discussed what it meant for Don Quixote to have faith in his imagination. But since studying James and his theories on the will and the wish it is evident that "faith in imagination" does not fulfill what we originally set out to accomplish. Through the lens of just Pascal we were able to see that to have faith in imagination means to have believe everything your imagination tells you. But we have also been peering through the lens of James we are unveiling that Cervantes idea of imagination goes beyond that of Pascal. Cervantes is not only thinking about imagination from a

philosophical standpoint, but he is also treating imagination from a psychological standpoint. Now we will “upgrade” old terms that were used to describe madness and imagination and focus on the language and ideas of James’. What he provides us is sufficient language and understanding to proceed in our investigation. And as we have seen before with definitions of wishes and imagination, it should be clear that it is impossible for anything from the imagination to exist in reality and that wishes can only exist in reality when their objectives can be achieved in real life. We will prove that this is Don Quixote’s madness by looking at different events throughout the novel. However, we will also be accomplishing more than finding the root of Don Quixote’s madness. For we shall see both the ideas of James’ exist within the novel and have more depth than the ideas of Pascal and how the philosophers will lead us to our elusive definition.

While on their adventures, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza run into a group of galley slaves travelling on the road. Don Quixote is very curious about this group of people and asks Sancho for clarification:

“This is a chain of galley slaves, people forced by the king to go to the galleys.”

“What do you mean, forced?” asked Don Quixote. “Is it possible that the king forces anyone?”

“I’m not saying that,” responded Sancho, “but these are people who, because of their crimes, have been condemned to serve the king in the galleys, by force.”

“In short,” replied Don Quixote, “for whatever reason, these people are being taken by force and not of their own free will.”

“That’s right,” said Sancho.

“Well, in that case,” said his master, “here it is fitting to put into practice my profession: to right wrongs and come to the aid and assistance of the wretched.”

“Your grace shouldn’t forget,” said Sancho, “that justice, which is the king himself, does not force or do wrong to such people, but sentences them as punishment for their crime.”

(Cervantes)

What this event shows is Don Quixote doing everything he can to make his wish exist in reality. Sancho Panza serves as Don Quixote's voice of reason because he is not pretending to be anything except himself and he recognizes the danger of the situation. In this instance, we see Sancho Panza explicitly telling Don Quixote that the galley slaves are imprisoned because they have committed a crime which results in their freedom being stripped away from them. However, we also see Don Quixote twisting Sancho's words to fit his own line of thinking. The knight only wants to hear things that will justify his quest to bring his imagination into reality. It is obvious that Don Quixote is wrong in this situation because his wish is for the galley slaves to be innocent and grateful that someone has come to free them. But the galley slaves see that there is an opportunity to be freed from their imprisonment by a foolish man. This is an example of someone using their wit and will to realize that their goal, being free, is obtainable in real life by tricking Don Quixote that they are innocent. They are able to convince Don Quixote to free them, and they reward Don Quixote by beating him up. After this we see a rare moment of reflection from Don Quixote.

"You are naturally a coward, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "but so that you will not say that I am stubborn and never do as you advise, on this occasion I want to take your advice and withdraw from the ferocity that frightens you so, but it must be on one condition: that never, in life or in death, are you to tell anyone that I withdrew and retreated from this danger out of fear, but only to satisfy your pleas, and if you say otherwise you will be lying, and from now on until then, and then until now, I shall deny it and say that you lie, and will lie every time you think or say it. And do not reply, for merely thinking that I am withdrawing and retreating from any danger, especially this one, which seems to carry with it some small shadow of fear, is enough to make me want to remain and wait here alone, not only for the Holy Brotherhood which you have mentioned and fear so much, but for the brothers of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the seven Maccabees, and Castor and Pollux, and all the brothers and brotherhoods that there are in the world." (Cervantes)

This brief monologue from Don Quixote shows us that knight acknowledges that he has done something wrong. He is briefly aware that his imagination has fooled him. However, while he did do the right thing by retreating from the violence, he refuses to recognize that it is his fault for the incident. Instead he blames Sancho Panza, despite the fact that he spoke reason to Don Quixote and advised him to not commit the act. The aggressive tone that Don Quixote uses towards Sancho shows that he is very determined to not accept any responsibility for this action. In his imagination, Don Quixote can do no wrong and to admit that he has committed a crime would be against his wish to be a knight living in a fictional world. In all the stories that he has read, there has not been an incident where a knight has done something wrong. All knights commit heroic, chivalrous acts. Both Pascal's and James' ideas of imagination are prevalent in this instance, as if they are almost working together. The "reproduction" of the idea that all knights are chivalrous is fueling his imagination to deceive him. The false ideas are plaguing the man's mind. This event also serves as an example that a wish cannot be completed in real life, only the goals that are obtainable in real life can be achieved by the will. The wish for Don Quixote is to be a noble knight from the novels that he has read and for those adventures to exist in real life but for the galley slaves their wish is to be free from enslavement. The whole book is an example of how Don Quixote's wish cannot be brought into reality, but for the galley slaves they are able to achieve their wish through their will to convince Don Quixote that they should be free'd. The will beats the wish in this scenario.

The next example that will be analyzed for evidence is the first time that we see Don Quixote begin to doubt his imagination. Let us return to when Don Quixote runs into a woman

that he believes to be the woman of his desire; Dulcinea of Toboso. However, the readers soon learn that Don Quixote's princess is in another tower.

“O princess and universal lady of Toboso! How can your magnanimous hear not soften at seeing the pillar and support of knight errantry on his knees in your sublimanl presence?”

Hearing which, another of the girls said”

“Hey, whoa, I'll tan your hide, you miserable donkey! Look at how the gentry are making fun of us country girls now, like we didn't know how to give as good as we get! You go on your way, and let us go on ours, if you want to stay healthy.”

“Stand up, Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “for i see that Fortune, not satisfied with my sorrows, has captured all the roads by which some might come to the wretched spirit that inhabits this flesh. And thou, O highest virtue that can be desired, summit of human courtesy, sole remedy for this afflicted heart that adoreth thee! The wicked enchanter who pursueth me hath placed clouds and cataracts over my eyes, so that for them alone but not for others he hath changed and transformed thy peerless beauty and countenance into the figure of a poor peasant, and if he hath not also turned mine into that of a monster abominable in thy sight, ceaseth not to regard me kindly and lovingly and see in this submission of mine as I kneel before thy deformed beauty, the humility with which my soul adoreth thee.” (Cervantes)

There is a lot to take away from this example. First of all, we know that Cervantes is beginning to reveal imagination for what it truly is. We also see a similar companionship between James and Pascal as we did in the previous example. Quixote's “reproduced” idea of Dulcinea is clouding his perception of what is actually in front of him. Poor Quixote is being fooled once more by his own imagination. But at the same time, Don Quixote is beginning to see past the vision of his imagination. He is not imagining Dulcinea to be a beautiful princess but he is seeing her for what she really is. This makes the enchanter that Don Quixote believes to be following him around his ability to perceive and accept reality as fact; put simply, the enchanter is Don Quixote's will to perceive reality as real and not imagination. Don Quixote's response to the peasant girls is that the enchanter has cursed both him and Dulcinea to be ugly monsters. What this really means is that Don Quixote's will has pushed ahead of his wish, which is to perceive Dulcinea (a fictional character) as a beautiful woman, and shown him reality and what

actually exists. Here we see that wish and will are in opposition to each other in a similar manner that imagination and reality are. We can also see that the second half of the book highlights Don Quixote's will and reasoning returning to him as he realizes that his wish cannot be achieved in reality.

This leads us to the conclusion of the novel; where Don Quixote loses a joust and must return to his hometown to resume his old life again. The title of the chapter reads "Which deals with the adventure that caused Don Quixote more sorrow than any others that had befallen him so far." (Cervantes p884) What occurs in this chapter is that Don Quixote runs into the Knight of the White Moon and he challenges Don Quixote to a duel, and if the White Moon Knight wins Don Quixote must return to a village and not leave for a whole year.

"Renowned knight and never sufficiently praised Don Quixote of La Mancha, I am the Knight of the White Moon, whose extraordinary deeds perhaps have come to your attention; I am here to do battle with you and to test the strength of your mighty arms, obliging you to recognize and confess that my lady, whoever she may be, is incomparably more beautiful than your Dulcinea of Toboso; and if you confess this truth clearly and plainly, you will save yourself from death, and save me the trouble of killing you; and if you do battle and I conquer you, I want no other satisfaction than that you abandon your arms, abstain from seeking adventures, and withdraw and retire to your home for a period of one year, where you must live without laying a hand on your sword, in peaceful tranquility and profitable serenity, for such is required for the increase of your fortune and the salvation of your soul; and if you should conquer me, my life will be at your mercy, and my arms and horse will be yours, as spoils, and the fame of my deeds will be added to yours. Consider what you should do, and respond immediately, for I have only this day to settle this matter." (Cervantes)

Naturally, Don Quixote accepts this challenge and goes toe to toe with the Knight of the White Moon. However, this is one fight that Don Quixote cannot win and he loses the duel with the opposing knight. But what is remarkable about this scene is that Don Quixote agrees to go back to his village and to take a "break" from his adventures. While he is staying in character with being a knight by accepting the result of his defeat, accepting to go back to his village to

resume his old life is something that Don Quixote would never do. What has happened to our beloved knight? The second half of the novel shows us the Don Quixote is doubts his imagination and wish, something that did not occur in the first half of the novel. We also see that in the second half of the novel Don Quixote begins to see reality for what it is and not reject the world he lives in. Why has this happened? One of the main events that causes Don Quixote to doubt his imagination is when he runs into “Dulcinea” who rejects him, this results in Don Quixote question what is actually real and what could just be wishes of his imagination. The second major incident is when Don Quixote falls asleep in a cave and has a frightening vivid dream about Dulcinea. Don Quixote emerges from the cave unsure of what to make of his bizarre experience, causing further doubt in his own imagination. This doubt allows reason to sneak through and let Don Quixote see his world to some degree. Don Quixote is still “mad” but he has more sense than previously, he acts more on his will than his wish. He is more aware that his imagination could be deceiving him. This statement should be taken lightly because Don Quixote’s goal of the second half of the book is not to bring back the golden age of Spain, but to make Dulcinea beautiful again. So he begins to act on his will to achieve this goal, although his desire may still be unachievable in reality his actions are reasonable to some extent. However, his statement is still valid to this essay because it shows that Don Quixote has some connection to reality. Up until this point, Don Quixote’s doubt about his imagination has been building up, so when he finally loses to the Knight of the White Moon his imagination begins to deteriorate until he accepts that he is no longer Don Quixote.

“This is the meadow where we encountered the beautiful shepherdesses and the gallant shepherd who wanted to restore and imitate pastoral Arcadias here, a thought as original as it is intelligent, and like them, if you think it is a good idea, I should like, O Sancho, for us to become shepherds, at least for the time I must be retired. I shall buy some sheep, and all the other things

needed for pastoral exercise, and my name will be *Shepher Quixotiz* and yours *Shepherd Pancino*, and we shall roam the mountains, the woods, and the meadows, singing here, lamenting there(...)" (Cervantes)

We see that the will and reason have pushed themselves back into Don Quixote's mind and made him realize that the only goal that he can achieve is to be a shepherd, which is what he was at the beginning of the book.

Now that we can see the James and Pascal are both relevant in Don Quixote, we must use our new knowledge to discover what is behind Don Quixote's madness in order to achieve a Cervantian definition for imagination. Using Pascal, we can see that Don Quixote has become a victim to his own imagination. He surrounds himself with books about knights and chivalry and this causes the man to believe the golden age of Spain was a time where chivalry was the law of the land and that he must bring back this golden age by becoming a knight and going on quests. This can be called "wish", using the terms from James, because it is an idea that could never be completed or obtained in reality. Don Quixote, however, decides that it is right for him to pursue his wish in reality by using his overwhelming imagination, since his will cannot be used. Madness, for Cervantes, is believing that a wish can be brought into reality and attempting to actually bring that wish into reality.

Now that we have an idea for Don Quixote's madness, we must use this information to seek a Cervantian definition for imagination. Since we have proven that James' and Pascal's definitions of imagination exist within Don Quixote we already have a sense of how Cervantes perceives imagination. For Cervantes, imagination is a tool of the human mind that gives us the ability to briefly leave our reality and succumb to the deceit of imagination. It gives us the brief moment to reject our reality and entertain a fantasy. These fantasies come in the form of "wishes", ideas or goals that could never be achieved in real life. We exercise our imagination by

imagining how we could fulfill our wishes in real life. However, we must always be cautious of our imagination, because this faculty could lead us to “dark fantasies”. For Cervantes, we must never get too caught up in our imagination, for it could fool us into thinking that our wishes exist in reality. That is the Cervantian definition for imagination.

And what is the Cervantian purpose to imagination? We must not look to Don Quixote for this definition because he is overwhelmed by his faith in imagination, he is too extreme of a case to look for an answer. We have seen that Quixote is not strong enough to accept the fact that his imagination could be lying to him. Instead we will turn to Don Quixote’s faithful squire Sancho Panza. Sancho Panza is a firm believer in separating the real from the fake in his life. Several times in the novel we see Sancho trying to talk sense into Don Quixote in order to prevent him from harm. Sancho Panza’s wish is to become a governor of a small island, which is his motive for joining the knight on his adventures. Don Quixote promises Sancho that he will eventually have an island, but as the novel progresses we see that Sancho becomes more sceptical of the promise that was made to him. But nevertheless Sancho Panza sticks around and assists Don Quixote whenever he needs to. Don Quixote’s relationship with Sancho Panza can be seen as a metaphor for our relationship with imagination. Don Quixote represents our imagination in its purest form, free from the rules of reality, while Sancho Panza represents a normal person who is wary of what their imagination may lead them to think. If we let our imagination run wild, nothing would be achieved because wishes are not actual goals to be achieved, they are thoughts that are constructed to distract us and prevent us from accepting our reality. So what do we do with imagination? We must be like Sancho, or in other words; it is not wrong to use our imagination to entertain our fantasies, but we must always stay rooted in reality

to achieve the real life goals that are in front of us. Imagination should be used to entertain wishes, not to pursue them in real life.

But why should we be like Sancho Panza? What is it about Quixote's bumbling companion that makes him Cervantes' golden standard for imagination use? Let us take a brief investigation into the character of Sancho Panza to dig out the golden quality of his that Cervantes' cherishes. The first of Sancho's treasures is that he always tries to bring Don Quixote back to reality when he is out adventuring. He is constantly trying to sort fiction from fact in the novel, which makes him a bit of a sceptic. Sancho Panza, like us, has a wish that he would love to fulfill; Sancho Panza wants nothing more than to be governor of a small insula. However, the only man who can offer him the opportunity to fulfill this wish is Don Quixote. However, despite being rather gullible, Sancho Panza always reminds Don Quixote about his promise of delivering him the insula. And here we find the second valuable treasure of Sancho Panza, he never fully gives up on his imagination. Panza knows that Don Quixote is the most unlikely person to make him governor of any sort of land, but he remains his squire throughout the whole novel. Even at his deathbed Sancho pleads with Quixote to not die and tries to free him from the jaws of death with fantastic ideas for adventures. Taken as a whole, Sancho represents someone who is loyal to the reality that they live in, but is happy to entertain any wish as long as they stay in the realm of imagination.

Conclusion

Thus we have reached the conclusion of this thesis; that by understanding imagination we can see that Cervantes wants his readers to be cautious to their imagination. One must be like the noble squire Sancho Panza. While he does try to have fun with his imagination, he never

loses sight of what is real and what is false. And for a brief moment Sancho Panza gets his wish of becoming a governor of a small island. But even then he is not overwhelmed by the responsibility and rules with his own ideas. The true treasure of Don Quixote is not only learning the purpose of imagination, but also revealing the complex ideas that Cervantes was working into his novel. We witnessed how he was able to come up with a concept of imagination that made the beliefs of Pascal and James, two completely different philosophers that came after him, compatible and work together masterfully. Not only does Cervantes want us to see the opposition between reason and imagination, and how imagination has the power to deceive you, but the Spaniard also wanted his readers to think about their wishes and how they could partially achieve them through use of their imagination.

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