

## The Nominalist Exaltation and Deconstruction of Freedom and Personhood in *Don Quijote*

Christopher Rziha  
(University of Notre Dame)

Generally recognized as the peak of Baroque Spanish literature and the first novel of the modern West, *Don Quijote* continues to profoundly shape contemporary literature and its conception and expression of the human experience. Among the plethora of themes presented in this massive work, the question of human freedom, its definition, its limits, its relationship to society, and its importance to the concept of personhood is discussed over and over. In fact, Luis Rosales goes so far as to declare that “la libertad es, justamente, el eje mismo del pensamiento cervantino” (33), and Mario Vargas Llosa adds: “in addition to being a novel about fiction, *Don Quijote* is also a song to freedom” (129). In a country characterized by the counterreformation and its emphasis on merit, the decline of the Spanish empire, and the colonization of the Americas, the debate over how to define free will and its relationship the human person was a fundamental question in Spanish Baroque society. However, despite its centrality to the life of Cervantes and to his most famous work, little attempt has been made to define exactly *what type* of free will his novel presents. That is, few critics have attempted to relate the concept of free will in *Don Quijote* to the philosophical and theological systems of thought present in Baroque Spain during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a lack of scholarship that this study seeks to address. Through an analysis of various sections of *Don Quijote*, including the episode of the galley slaves, the tale of Marcela and Grisóstomo, and the issue of the all-powerful enchanters, this presentation will argue that the understandings of both free will and personhood presented in *Don Quijote* are essentially informed by a nominalist worldview.

Before beginning an analysis of free will and the human person in *Don Quijote*, it is important to review the philosophical-theological worldview known as nominalism as it was present in Spain during the time of Cervantes. This paper does not propose to make any sort of holistic, authoritative claim regarding nominalism as a whole. Rather, it merely seeks to summarize the general tenants of nominalism that are relevant for its analysis of *Don Quijote*, describing them in light of Early Modern Spanish culture. In doing so, it will highlight four points: the nominalist conception of God and his relationship to humanity, nominalism’s denial of universals, the importance placed on freedom for both God and the human person, and the definition of freedom within the nominalist tradition. To begin, nominalism grounded its claims first and foremost in the radical, undefinable, all-powerful freedom of God. In his analysis of the thought of William of Ockham, often considered the father of nominalism, Michael Gillespie declares: “God is free in the fullest sense, that is, free even from his previous decisions. He can thus overturn anything he has established, interrupt any chain of causes, or create the world again from the beginning if he wants to” (qtd. in Hernandez, 23). God’s absolute freedom is directly understood in light of his omnipotence. According to Servais Pinckaers, “God was for Ockham the absolute realization of freedom, because of his omnipotence. God was subject to no law, not even the moral law. His free will was the sole cause and origin of the moral law” (252). In other words, God, as the supreme being and creator of the natural law, cannot be said to be subject to that same law from a metaphysical or moral standpoint. This assertion indirectly leads directly to our second observation: a denial of universals. Pinckaers notes that “according to nominalism, only individual entities exist. They are unique in their singular existence. Universals are simply

convenient labels, having no reality in themselves and only nominal value” (242), and Rosilie Hernandez adds:

What Ockham argues is that nature is neither a reflection of nor analogous to God. Consequently, no universals, no similitudes, and no predictable design can be drawn [...] that would allow us to approximate an understanding of his transcendence. God— in his absolute omnipotence— is not constrained by any universal or singular name, concept, or final cause. [...] God is by his nature exempt from any obligation to any logic, past or future. (28-30)

The denial of universals and the affirmation of existential individuality implies the exaltation of the individual’s freedom as well, be that individual human or divine. In other words, the inexistence of universal essences and absolute values implies that every individual is no more than their own singular existence, and as a result, he or she is able to fashion their own ‘being’ to a certain extent through their actions. In the words of Bernardo Teuber, “el hombre es el animal más capacitado porque él mismo puede suplir sus carencias y decidir lo que quiere ser. el ser humano se manifiesta, así como incontestable soberano del universo, como un sujeto pleno que no es nada más ni nada menos que el resultado de su libre albedrío” (265). For Ockham, just as freedom may be spoken of as the central characteristic that defines and maintains God’s omnipotence, so freedom is also a key element of the rational, personal being that we call human. Thus, within the nominalist worldview “the essential note of personality is independence, and that the human person’s dignity lies in the power to act at any given moment in the way he chooses” (Pinckaers 337-38). This quotation introduces the final, and most important, element of nominalism this study wishes to address: its understanding of freedom. Pinckaers notes that:

For Ockham, freedom meant essentially the power to choose between contraries, independently of all other causes except freedom, or the will itself – whence the term *freedom of indifference*. ‘What I mean by freedom is the power I have to produce various effects, indifferently and in a contingent manner, in such a way that I can either cause and effect or not cause it without any change being produced outside the power’ (*Quodl.* I, q 16). (242)

In other words, the nominalist understanding of freedom is the ability to choose, without any restriction whatsoever, the option that one most desires. It is a freedom of an absolute and radical type: a free will of evasion that increases when the individual escapes from under the rules and expectations of a group or society. According to Pinckaers, this understanding of freedom is fundamental to nominalism. He states:

The original tenet of the system, which affected all the rest, was the concept of the freedom of indifference, or freedom’s definition as a purely voluntary choice between contraries. Freedom became a kind of absolute action, implying the rupture, the dissolution, of all bonds between the will and whatever was external to it, at the very root of action. Ockham defined both God and man in light of this freedom. (252)

In this sense, the nominalist conception of free will can be understood in contrast to the Thomist expression of freedom and its relationship to human happiness or fulfillment. J. Rziha notes that whereas for Aquinas, freedom is defined as the ability to fulfill one's natural inclinations, the nominalist idea of freedom "lies solely in the will [...] humans [...] are most free when they can do anything they want [...] this freedom is most perfect when there is no force outside the will influencing humans" (167). Freedom in the nominalist sense cannot mean the ability to act according to one's nature, because, properly speaking, said nature does not exist.

While very little scholarship exists on the presence of a nominalist worldview in *Don Quijote*, each of the aforementioned themes which are central to nominalism – an all-powerful, radically free God, an individualistic, self-determining person, the denial of universal natures (and their knowability), and an understanding of freedom as evasion from outside influence – have all been identified as central elements to Cervantes' famous novel. Along with the already cited passage from his work *Cervantes y la Libertad*, Luis Rosales goes on to declare that "el origen de la locura de Don Quijote tal vez escribe en su manera de comprender la libertad" (52), and Eric Clifford Graf argues that "*Don Quijote* can be read as an anatomy of liberty" (6). In other words, for both Rosales and Graf, freedom is the central theme of *Don Quijote*, from which proceeds the action of the story and the characterization of its persons. Regarding the presence of individualism in *Don Quijote* and its relation to freedom, Gonzalez Echeverria notes that "Don Quixote is about the freedom of the individual to choose and to create according to what he perceives and feels as being the true and the real" (26), and Hernandez describes the characterization of God in the novel as omniscient, willful, and inscrutable (45).<sup>1</sup> Finally, concerning the denial of universals and the self-fashioning of the person, Vargas Llosa notes that freedom in *Don Quijote* "is individual and requires a minimum level of prosperity. He who is poor and depends upon charity to survive is never entirely free" (129). Likewise, Rosales declares that "la conciencia del personaje cervantino le lleva a auto ni terminarse libremente y que esta autodeterminación es, ante todo y sobre todo, una conciencia de libertad [...] lo que permite la autodeterminación de Don Quijote no es el conocimiento de su propia naturaleza [...] es, justamente, su conciencia de libertad" (1129). This definition of a human person who is characterized solely by his individual liberty instead of by his possession of some sort of universal human nature or essence is an obvious reflection of the nominalist worldview, a worldview that, perhaps unsurprisingly, was especially prevalent in Spain by the early 1600s.<sup>2</sup> While nominalism was only one of several philosophical-theological systems present in Europe during the Middle Ages and beyond, Pinckaers notes that its neither its impact nor its massive influence on modern philosophy and culture have been fully appreciated:

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hernandez, "in the world of Don Quixote, God— omniscient and willful, and exempted from any logic or design— recedes to the background, making it possible for each character to impose order or make sense of the world in her or his own exceptional manner and responding to her or his own needs, values, idiosyncrasies, obscured traumas, and corresponding desires" (28).

<sup>2</sup> The presence of nominalism as a philosophical background to *Don Quijote* and the other works of Cervantes has been documented. Girón-Negrón has studied the presence of the nominalist movement in Spain during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and concludes that nominalism was clearly present in Spain during the Siglo de Oro. For example, he declares that: "The first chair of nominalist theology [at Salamanca] was subsidized in 1509. A year later, fray Alonso de Cordoba, who had studied and taught at the Sorbonne, begins to teach logic 'in viam nominalium'" (12). Likewise, Creel notes that "the nominalist view —i.e., that our means of formulating truths are mere names or vocal utterances without any corresponding realities— assigns much greater scope and value to the free human will and creative imagination, which explains the prestige that theory enjoyed in Cervantes's day as an element in the philosophy of nominalism" (36).

The comparison I am about to make is perhaps bold, but it is easily verifiable. With Ockham we witness the first atomic explosion of the modern era. The atom he split was obviously not physical but psychic. It was the nadir of the human soul, with its faculties, which was broken apart by a new concept of freedom. This produced successive aftershocks, which destroyed the unity of theology and Western thought. With Ockham, freedom, by means of the claim to radical autonomy that defined it, was separated from all that was foreign to it: reason, sensibility, natural inclinations, and all external factors. Further separations followed: freedom was separated from nature, law, and grace; moral doctrine from mysticism; reason from faith; the individual from society. (242)

In other words, nominalism was especially relevant to the emergence of modern culture throughout Europe, including in Spain. In fact, an exaltation of free will, a denial of humanity's ability to have essential knowledge of reality, and a focus on the omnipotence of God combined in Early Modern Spanish culture to form what is widely recognized as 'Baroque tension,' defined by Gabriel Gonzalez as "la dualidad desde diferentes puntos de vista: físico-espiritual, cuerpo-espíritu, sensual-divino, sentidos-nada, belleza-muerte, temporal-eterno, sueño-vida. La afirmación simultánea de ambos elementos constituye más que un 'hombre barroco' una actitud barroca" (72).<sup>3</sup> Bryant Creel has noted that Cervantes was undoubtedly influenced by the nominalists, whose teachings were very much in vogue in sixteenth-century Spain (36), and Graf has recognized the parallels between modern conceptions of freedom and those found in *Don Quijote*, stating: "Cervantes anticipated, and often influenced, the ways in which subsequent generations of classical liberals approached these same categories of liberty" (6).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, few scholars have actually analyzed the seemingly obvious connection between nominalism and the central themes of *Don Quijote*. One exception to this lack in scholarship is Rosilie Hernandez, who declares:

I would propose that one might better understand the relationship between the universal and the particular in Cervantes's novel by turning to theological nominalism [...] The

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Elliot recognizes this Baroque spirit in Cervantes, stating: "somehow Cervantes magically held the balance between optimism and pessimism, enthusiasm and irony, but he illustrates what was to be the most striking characteristic of 17th century literary and artistic production -that deep cleavage between the two worlds of the spirit and the flesh, which coexist and yet are forever separate. This constant dualism between the spirit and the flesh, between dream and the reality, belonged very much to 17th century European civilization as a whole, but it seems to have attained an intensity in Spain that it really achieved elsewhere" (315). Likewise, Américo Castro notes that "las radicales fracturas del alma española en el siglo 17 hicieron posible la concepción del *Quijote*, con lo cual la situación conflictiva, sacar a luz en estas páginas, adquiere dimensión positiva y esplendente" (207).

<sup>4</sup> Graf even goes so far as to identify commonalities between Cervantes' novel and "the early modern group of late-scholastic Iberians collectively known as the School of Salamanca" (10), which would have included the nominalist school already referenced by Creel and Girón-Negrón. In addition, he points out "the range of intellectual bridges that exist between the late scholasticism of early modern Spain and the classical liberalism of Northern Europe and North America" (10). Although Graf never mentions nominalism by name, he does note that Cervantes is in many ways proto-Protestant (or at the very least similar to Erasmus in thought) in the religious attitudes he espouses throughout *Don Quijote* (11, 13). While this article does not seek to make any claims about Cervantes himself, it is nonetheless interesting to note the parallels between Graf, who connects Protestantism, modern liberalism, liberty, and *Don Quijote*, and Pinckaers, who recognizes the influence that nominalism had on Protestantism as a whole, stating: "[Catholic] moral teaching in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was strongly under the influence of nominalism [...] We find a similar influence at work in Protestantism [...] Lutheran mistrust of all positive use of law may be explained by a voluntarist and nominalist conception of law, which denied all harmonious relations among freedom, grace, and law" (290-91).

advantage that nominalism offers as a point of reference when reading *Don Quixote* is that it, more than any other theological tradition, focuses on the unique and arbitrary relationship that humans hold with the universal and the divine. (27)

Although her contribution is extremely valuable, Hernandez makes no effort to analyze the very concept recognized as the central theme of both nominalism and *Don Quijote*: free will. In other words, where Hernandez has left off – and where this article seeks to continue- is in an examination of *Don Quijote's* understanding of freedom and its relation to the individual.

To understand the expression of free will in *Don Quijote*, it is beneficial to start with one of first sections of the work that directly touches on the idea of individual liberty: the episode of the galley slaves, presented in chapters 22 and 23 of the first part, in which Don Quijote's opinions on the importance and function of free will are clearly expressed. Thus, this episode can serve as a useful base for a further analysis of the concept of free will in the novel. The episode begins with a conversation between Sancho Panza and his master:

Sancho Panza [...] dijo: “ésta es cadena de galeotes: gente forzada del rey, que va a las galeras.” “¿cómo gente forzada?” preguntó don Quijote. “¿Es posible que el rey haga fuerza a ninguna gente?” “No digo eso,” respondió Sancho, “sino que es gente que por sus delitos va condenada a servir al rey en las galeras, de por fuerza.” “En resolución,” dijo don Quijote, [...] “van de por fuerza y no de su voluntad [...] pues de esa manera.. aquí encaja la ejecución de mi oficio: desfacer fuerzas y socorrer y acudir a los miserables.” (Cervantes 180)

Before continuing, it is worth noting that for Don Quijote, the office of knight errant is essentially related to freedom, and specifically to the freedom of every individual. Thus, according to John Weiger, “what is significant [about this episode] is that Don Quijote does not abstractly defend the principle of freedom: he insists that he be able to inquire of each one of them, individually, the cause of his misfortune” (11) and, after hearing and completely misinterpreting the stories of the galley slaves, he insists that they be freed, declaring: “quiero rogar a estos señores guardianes y comisario sean servidos de desataros y dejaros ir en paz... porque me parece duro caso hacer esclavos a los que Dios y naturaleza hizo libres” (Cervantes 188). In other words, for Don Quijote, despite the crimes these men have committed, it is a greater injustice for them to lose their freedom. According to José Antonio Maravall:

What is important to us here is to recognize the individual force struggling against difficulties of fortune. Man is free, and nothing can be an inseparable obstacle. Thus *Don Quixote* affirms the central thesis of the counterreformation, in defense of which Erasmus too had taken the side of the church by arguing against Luther [...] Because we are free to do as we wish, merit is possible, for what each individual does may be imputed to him and to him alone. The unavoidable freedom of the human person, that colossal force of individuality, is consequently the great means by which one can reach, through one's own efforts, the highest level. (70-71)

Don Quijote is ready to break the law to free the galley slaves, because in his opinion, free will is the most fundamental element of the human being; thus, there is no greater injustice than to lose it. In addition, the protagonist's misinterpretations of the galley slaves' words due to their double

meanings alludes to his nominalist worldview as well. Leo Spitzer has recognized the presence and importance of linguistic perspectivism in *Don Quijote*. For Spitzer:

El perspectivismo lingüístico de Cervantes se halla reflejado en su concepción de la trama y de los personajes; y de la misma manera que, por medio de la polionomiasia y la polietimología, hace Cervantes aparecer distinto el mundo de las palabras a sus distintos personajes, mientras él personalmente puede tener su propio punto de vista, como creador, sobre los nombres, así también contempla la historia que nos va narrando desde su propia y personal posición panorámica. (No pagination)

If universal natures do not exist (or if knowledge of them is impossible), then each individual's oral and written descriptions of reality will differ based on how reality appears to them; thus, linguistic perspectivism operates in accord with the assumptions of nominalism. Hernandez supports such an observation, declaring that within a nominalist framework:

Language is ultimately a ruse that humans employ in order to make sense or to secure something where there is nothing. It is in this manner that we repress the reality of sweeping contingency in a world created by a God whose power and will are necessarily without limits and whose grace is only tenuously ensured by the hope that he will sustain his creation and not contradict himself. When understood from within the bounds of theological nominalism, Don Quixote's prolific use of the chivalric (and many other literary forms) as a mode of language and as a conceptual and ethical framework can be identified as a way for this singular individual to make sense of— and adjudicate— -intelligible categories in a context where the assurances of universal realism and divine design have abandoned the scene; again, what is fundamental to a nominalist understanding of human and divine existence is not that God is dead but rather that God cannot be held by or tied to any limits (self-imposed or consequential), predetermined design, or unchangeable form. (35)

In other words, the linguistic perspectivism that Spitzer identifies in *Don Quijote* can be seen as another attempt by the novel's characters to actualize and define themselves in a world of crumbling external referents. Such individual self-fashioning is in accord with Don Quijote's own understanding of the human experience manifested in this episode, and this mindset clearly sets the freedom of each individual in conflict with the will of the other, whoever that other may be. In this regard, Vargas Llosa notes that Don Quijote's "idea of freedom [...] anticipates in some respects the anarchist thinkers of two centuries later" (130). This 'anarchist,' or competitive, idea of liberty can be seen in Don Quijote's own clash with the king's guards in the first place, as well as in the response of the galley slaves after Don Quijote has freed them:

Y llamando a todos los galeotes, que andaban alborotados y habían despojado al comisario hasta dejarle en cueros, se le pusieron todos a la redonda para ver lo que les mandaba, y así les dijo: "De gente bien nacida es agradecer los beneficios que reciben, y uno de los pecados que más a Dios ofende es la ingratitud [...] luego os pongáis en camino y vais a la ciudad del Toboso y allí os presentéis ante la señora Dulcinea del Toboso y le digáis que su caballero, el de la Triste Figura, se le envía a encomendar, y le contéis punto por punto todos los que ha tenido esta famosa aventura hasta ponerlos en la

deseada libertad; y, hecho esto, os podréis ir donde quisiéredes, a la buena ventura.” Respondió por todos Ginés de Pasamonte y dijo: “Lo que vuestra merced nos manda, señor y libertador nuestro, es imposible de toda imposibilidad cumplirlo, porque no podemos ir juntos por los caminos, sino solos y divididos, y cada uno por su parte, procurando meterse en las entrañas de la tierra, por no ser hallado de la Santa Hermandad, que sin duda alguna ha de salir en nuestra busca.” (Cervantes 189)

When Don Quijote asks that the newly freed galley slaves present themselves in service to his lady, Dulcinea del Toboso, admitting as he does so that this petition is an affront to their liberty, they attack him and his squire before scattering, each going their own way: “repartiendo entre sí los demás despojos de la batalla, se fueron cada uno por su parte, con más cuidado de escaparse de la Hermandad que tenían que de cargarse de la cadena e ir a presentarse ante la señora Dulcinea del Toboso” (Cervantes 190). Thus, for the galley slaves as well as for Don Quijote, freedom is recognized as far greater a value than any sort of obligation that may be owed due to justice or gratitude. This exaltation of individual freedom above all else is clearly in accord with a nominalist worldview.

However, a nominalist understanding of free will is not limited to the character and actions of Don Quijote and the adventures he shares with Sancho Panza. The various interpolated stories throughout the novel also present the same conception of freedom, and perhaps none does so more clearly than the tale of Marcela and Grisóstomo. This episode recounts the tragic story of the suicide of Grisóstomo, who kills himself after falling hopelessly in love with Marcela, a beautiful but fiercely independent shepherdess who refuses every attempt of her numerous suitors to woo her. According to Echeverría in his book *Love and the Law in Cervantes*, “the Marcela and Grisóstomo story is of special significance because it is the first [interpolated tale of the novel] and sets the tone for all the others” (78). Thus, Cervantes’ treatment of the question of free will in this tale deserves special attention, especially since, as Graf notes, “evaluating different types and degrees of liberty is precisely the point in many of the novel’s episodes” (4).<sup>5</sup> In addition, it is worth pointing out that the pastoral genre of the Marcela- Grisóstomo story is significant as well. Antonio Maravall notes that: “literature... on pastoral life [was] the focus of a moral restoration [...] Cervantes used the *topos* as part of a golden picture of ideal social intercourse because in his day it was the image, projected into a nonexistent time, of a utopia of evasion” (138). In other words, this episode can in a certain sense be interpreted as presenting a sort of ideal version of the essence of human liberty. That this ideal is nominalist in character can be seen in the actions and words of the two main characters: Marcela and Grisóstomo. Firstly, Grisóstomo, who commits suicide (Neuschafer 30), does so to escape his unrequited love for Marcela, a love that he refers to as a sort of slavery, as it dominates his free will.<sup>6</sup> For example,

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to note here that while Graf mentions various types of liberty in *Don Quijote*, he is referring to different manifestations of freedom, such as feminist liberty, the liberty of slaves, religious liberty, and economic liberty. On the other hand, I am seeking to identify and analyze a single philosophical or metaphysical conception of freedom that would undergird the different types of liberty Graf mentions (e.g. a nominalist feminism, a nominalist freedom of religion, etc.). Thus, in this regard the aims of this article and Graf’s *Anatomy of Liberty in ‘Don Quijote de la Mancha’* are in fact different and not necessarily in conflict.

<sup>6</sup> Echeverría notes further that “There has been debate in criticism about whether Grisóstomo committed suicide or just died of love. To me it seems beyond dispute that he killed himself. The words used to refer to his actions are clear. The very verb ‘desesperarse’—normally ‘to become desperate’—is often used in the Golden Age as a euphemism for suicide, and there are unequivocal allusions in Grisóstomo’s poem to killing himself. There may be reticence on the part of Cervantes to state straightforwardly that Grisóstomo was a suicide because it was not easy

in the “Canción de Grisóstomo,” he declares: “Yo muero, en fin; y por que nunca espere / buen suceso en la muerte, ni en la vida [...] / es más libre el alma más rendida a la de amor antigua tiranía [...] / y con esta opinión, y un duro lazo, / acelerando el miserable plazo [...] / ofrezco a los vientos cuerpo y alma” (Cervantes 109). Grisóstomo’s attitude when faced with his own death is clear: in his mind, the individual that commits suicide has more freedom than the soul made captive by an unrequited love. In other words, for him, “lo fatal está implícito en el poder de eros” (Macht de Vera 9). This suicide, condemned both then and now by the Catholic Church, manifests the radical free will of nominalism in that it rebels against all social, moral, and ecclesial norms and laws of its time. According to Elvira Macht de Vera: “la aceptación del suicidio implica, cuando menos, una actitud individual, autónoma, de suma libertad frente al dogma” (11); that is, the act of suicide is in one sense the most individualistic of all actions. By committing suicide, Grisóstomo upholds his free will as the only ‘existential’ value of his being, thereby putting it (and himself) in conflict with the wills of both divine and human society. At the same time, he deconstructs the literary utopia of the pastoral genre, therefore rejecting any sort of exterior definition of the ideal life, which would, in itself, signify the acceptance of certain absolute values. According to Hernandez:

In the fictional world created by Cervantes, the issue is not simply how characters successfully or pathetically fashion their selfhoods but rather how they, as their nominalist God, privilege their will as the organizing force of their existence, placing the deployment of their individual desires and singular perspectives over any consideration for external design or forms. Both structurally and thematically, *Don Quijote* is a text in which the potential and problematic effects of the individual as an independent agent is given its full due. (32)

The effects of a radically nominalist free will are taken to the extreme in the case of Grisóstomo, who represents an understanding of liberty that is ‘super-rational,’ and, as a result, fatal.

However, perhaps the most obvious example of a nominalist conception of liberty in this episode is found in Marcela. Antonio Maravall notes that pastoral life was traditionally associated with freedom and escape, and Marcela personifies just such an association.<sup>7</sup> As a perfect and beautiful shepherdess, she represents the ideal of unburdened living. Upon arriving at Grisóstomo’s funeral, she defends her decision to marry neither him nor any other of her suitors, declaring: “yo nací libra, y para poder vivir libre escogí la soledad de los campos” (Cervantes 114). Freedom, then is once again what fundamentally motivates the actions of this character. Macht de Vera recognizes the role of Marcela as an embodiment of freedom as well, stating: “Marcela es pura independencia sin más amor que el de la naturaleza hacia la cual tiende en apartada soledad y comunión consigo misma [...] Esta libertad de Marcela [...] postul[a...] afirmaciones individualistas” (16), and adds that “Marcela no escoge la libertad; nació libre. Es la libertad misma” (17). In other words, Marcela represents the essence of liberty, and is thus an *essentially* free being. In this sense, she manifests “un mundo de evasión en donde el hombre

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then to speak freely of what was and continues to be a mortal sin—the devil’s sin—particularly in the frivolous pastoral context of this story. But a suicide it is, I believe, which heightens the drama and raises the stakes of Grisóstomo’s venture. Besides, a suicide is also very much in keeping with Grisóstomo’s Faustian side, a suicide being the ultimate effort to acquire knowledge of the absolute, though at a very high cost” (82).

<sup>7</sup> According to Antonio Maravall, “In praising the isolation of rural dwellings Guevara maintains that those who retire there ‘will discover that they never knew what life was until after they retreat.’ That life is truly free: ‘there is no other life like it in the world, to arise freely and go where you want and do what you should’” (139).



puede vivir cristianamente, libre y feliz” (Rosales 985). By identifying her existence and her happiness with freedom of evasion, Marcela reveals that her understanding of free will is clearly nominalist and, as a result, especially individualist. According to Lee-Ann Laffey:

Through her words and deeds, Marcela presents herself as a free spirit who rejects the ways in which society, by imposing its end goal of marriage, [and] her male suitors, by worshipping her beauty [...] have tried to squelch her independence and freedom. Marcela objects to the chivalric and the pastoral as well as any other view that attempts to limit her choices in life. She embodies the ideals of female liberty [...] By fleeing the world that oppresses her to enter a new ‘uncivilized,’ ‘uncultivated’ [...] woods, Marcela liberates herself from man's world and the systems he has designed to run it. She opens up new possibilities for her own life by refusing to be inscribed by any male dominated system that binds her, whether it be chivalric, pastoral, or carry any other name. (533)

For Marcela, freedom is defined precisely as the absence of any sort of external influence on her person; in fact, she even complains about the oppression of having been born beautiful and therefore appealing in the eyes of her many suitors, declaring: “yo no escogí la hermosura que tengo, que, tal cual es, el cielo me la dio de gracia, sin yo pedilla ni escogella” (Cervantes 115). In Marcela’s worldview, freedom is possible only through the rejection of any type of social life, because such life naturally implies rules and expectations that would limit her free will. Thus, she exclaims: “tengo libre condición y no gusto de sujetarme. Ni quiero ni aborrezco a nadie” (Cervantes 116). For Marcela, any type of submission, be it marital, social, or familial, is a manner of depriving her of her freedom and therefore of her very self.<sup>8</sup> To summarize, the understanding of free will presented in the episode of Marcela and Gristóstomo is clearly nominalist in character.

In the two aforementioned examples, the figures of Don Quijote, the galley slaves, Gristóstomo, and Marcela represent a nominalist version of free will that basically constitutes their ‘existence.’ As has already been noted as well, this understanding of free will implies a worldview of wills-in-conflict.<sup>9</sup> Hernandez explains this aspect in the following manner: “as a result in the nominalist onto-theological scheme the logic of universals was replaced by the logic of radical individuality, resulting in a proliferation of singular perspectives through which each human being must per force construct his or her worldview” (29). The ‘forced construction’ of this individualist cosmovision is fashioned through one’s free will. In other words, freedom in the nominalist sense is a free will of evasion or indifference precisely because the influence of the wills, customs, and ideas of others can impose themselves on the desires of the individual. In a conflict of human wills, or in a conflict between humanity and the forces of nature, it is possible for the individual to occasionally be successful, imposing their own will upon the other’s desires. However, if the other happens to be God or some other

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<sup>8</sup> Echeverria supports this observation, declaring: “As Hart and Rendall have written: ‘Marcela rejects not merely Grisóstomo’s suit but the very institution of marriage [...] She believes that freedom is incompatible with marriage because marriage implies the subordination of wife to husband. But to reject marriage also means rejecting society itself: seventeenth-century Spain made no real provision for a single woman, one who refuses either to marry or to become a nun (the latter is, of course, the bride of Christ)’” (86).

<sup>9</sup> Graf supports this observation in regard to the Marcela-Grisóstomo episode, noting that Marcela is the first “major liberated female figure in *Don Quijote*” and that her name refers to the Roman god of war (65). Thus, Marcela’s *nominalist* (name-based) identity is founded upon conflict, individuality, and liberty.

powerful being -such as a king, duke, or wizard- the free will of an individual such as Don Quijote is inevitably doomed to failure. Thus, according to Hernandez, “in *Don Quixote* Cervantes drives nominalist humanism to its limits. When there is only the will and no fixed meaning or absolute values, one has little chance to fashion a virtuous selfhood, to secure a meaningful life beyond contingency and *locura*” (44). The ruin of the freedom of the individual due to ‘omnipotent’ beings in *Don Quijote* can especially be seen in the section of the book that takes place in the palace of the Duke and Duchess, but this theme is present throughout the novel through the figures of the enchanters. To begin, in many of the episodes that take place within the home of the Duke and Duchess, despite what he may think, Don Quijote is only under the illusion that he is acting freely (when in reality he is not). His decisions, actions, and reactions do not correspond to reality, but to the deceptive world put on display by the Duke and his servants. Therefore, Hernandez declares:

Don Quixote’s willed knight-errantry and his fluctuation between madness and sanity, between one perspective and another, can be seen as fully consistent with a nominalist position. In the world of Don Quixote, God— omniscient and willful, and exempted from any logic or design— recedes to the background, making it possible for each character to impose order or make sense of the world in her or his own exceptional manner and responding to her or his own needs, values, idiosyncrasies, obscured traumas, and corresponding desires. This is most evident in part II, where Don Quixote forges on despite the many ways in which others impose their own singular wills on his own, as well as on his narrative, ordering his world in unpredictable ways. The Duke and the Duchess are a prime example, introducing themselves into Don Quixote’s knight-errantry, injecting it with their own perspectives, framing values, and desires, the performance an idle and corrupted noble selfhood that Cervantes seems not to hold dear but which, nonetheless, competes with and offers an alternative model for an analysis of the conjunction of radical individuality, will, perspectivism, and moral virtue. (33-34)

The influence of the Duke and Don Quijote’s own lack of free will can be seen, for example, in chapters 48, 52, and 66 of the second part, which recount the story of Doña Rodriguez, her daughter, the lacky Torsilos, and Don Quijote. To begin, in chapter 48, after the conversation between Doña Rodriguez and Don Quijote, the narrator declares that:

Con un gran golpe abrieron las puertas [...] luego sintió la pobre dueña que la asían de la garganta [...] y que otra persona con mucha presteza [...] le alzaba las faldas, y [...] comenzó a dar tantos azotes, que era una compasión [...] Y aunque Don Quijote se la tenía, no se meneaba del lecho [...] y estabase quedo y callando, y aun temiendo no viniese por él la tanda y tunda azotesca. Y no fue vano su temor, porque [...] acudieron a Don Quijote [...] Le pellizcaron tan a menudo t yan reciamente, que no pudo dejar de defenderse y puñadas. (Cervantes 790)

In this passage, it is obvious that Don Quijote possesses neither the ability to defend himself nor the capacity to defend Doña Rodriguez. The same frustration of Don Quijote’s free will continues in chapter 52. Doña Rodriguez formally asks for his help to resolve the dilemma of her dishonored daughter (Cervantes 815), and Don Quijote responds: “que yo tomo a mi cargo el remedio de vuestra hija [...] y así con licencia del duque mi señor, yo me partiré luego en busca

dese desalmado mancebo, y la hallaré y le desafiare y la mataré cada y cuando que se escusare de cumplir la prometida palabra” (Cervantes 815). However, despite his intention to help the *dueña*, Don Quijote is unable to do so because the Duke deceives him, ordering Tosilos the lacky to secretly take the place of the young noble who had dishonored Doña Rodriguez’s daughter (Cervantes 838). In other words, even if Don Quijote would have successfully defeated his rival ‘caballero,’ it would not have helped Doña Rodriguez and her daughter according to the social norms of the time, because the trickery of the Duke and Duchess made it impossible for Don Quijote to engage in combat with the real culprit. Likewise, even when Tosilos imposes his own will upon the situation, declaring “soy temeroso de mi conciencia.... Y así digo que yo me doy por vencido y que quiero casarme luego con aquella señora” (Cervantes 840), and as a result inverting the deceitful intentions of the Duke and Duchess, the episode still does not achieve a happy ending. As the reader later learns in chapter 66 through the words of Tosilos himself:

Tan lacayo Tosilos entré en la estacada como Tosilos lacayo salí della. Yo pensé casarme sin pelear, por haberme parecido bien la moza. Pero [...] el duque mi señor me hizo dar cien palos por a ver contravenido a las ordenanzas que me tenía dadas antes de entrar en la batalla, y todo ha parado en que la muchacha es ya monja, y doña Rodriguez se ha vuelto a Castilla. (Cervantes 906)

In other words, Tosilos, like Don Quijote, does not have the necessary power to successfully fight against the will of the Duke. Thus, both the lacky and the knight errant fail in their designs and see their freedom stifled as a result. Additionally, a second frustration of Don Quijote’s free will due to the plans of the Duke and Duchess can be seen in chapter 35 of the second part of the work, in which the *embuste* of ‘la Dulcinea encantada’ and Merlin is narrated. According to Merlin, who represents both the Duke and the various enchanters and sorcerers across the novel (that is, all ‘omnipotent’ powers except God), the only manner in which Dulcinea can be disenchanting is that “Sancho, tu escudero / se dé tres mil azotes y trecientos” (Cervantes 715), and these lashes must be “por su voluntad y no por fuerza” (Cervantes 716). In other words, Don Quijote is unable to free Dulcinea from her enchantment or even contribute in any manner, because everything depends on the free will of another: in this case, Sancho Panza.

In the episodes of *Don Quijote* that take place in the home of the Duke and Duchess, the notion of wills-in-conflict is clearly emphasized. However, the Duke is only one manifestation of the various all-powerful figures that appear throughout the novel and seem to continually frustrate the liberty of Don Quijote. The most obvious examples of these powers are the enchanters: the secret enemies of Don Quijote against which he generally has no remedy. To a certain extent, all the supreme powers of the work, be they enchanters, dukes, priests, or knights, symbolize a nominalist conception of God and his unlimited freedom over his creation. That is, in a nominalist world of wills-in-conflict, God always wins, just like the enchanters in *Don Quijote*. This can be seen, for example, in chapter 49 of the first part, when Don Quijote is in the cage behind the ox-cart, and his neighbors, the Priest and the Barber, are taking him home. Speaking with Sancho about the possibility of leaving the cage, Don Quijote declares that “yo sé y tengo para mí que voy encantado, y esto me basta para la seguridad de mi conciencia, que la formaría muy grande si yo pensase que no estaba encantado y me dejase estar en esta jaula” (Cervantes 435), and later on he also exclaims: “cuanto más que el que está encantado, como yo, no tiene libertad para hacer de su persona lo que quisiere” (Cervantes 435-36). For Don Quijote, enchanters are able to act against him with impunity, and he is rarely able to do anything in

response. Steve Wagschal has noted a connection between the enchanters of *Don Quijote* and Descartes' idea of an evil and deceitful God.<sup>10</sup> According to Wagschal:

Could the evil enchanter have altered Descartes's mind to make him believe that three plus two are five when in fact they might add up to four? Is it possible that a deceiver has simply planted such an erroneous idea in his mind? How would he know if this were the case? Since there must be an enchanter or something like an enchanter in Part II of *Don Quixote*, the reader can then speculate on what the enchanter has done. For instance, while Don Quixote is not troubled at all by this, the reader may wonder (i.e., doubt) whether the enchanter has implanted ideas in Don Quixote's mind [...] While Descartes is ultimately able to dispel his skeptical worries about the *mauvais génie* and claim secure knowledge about the Actual World, the same is not true for the reader or for Don Quixote. (150-51)

In other words, for Don Quijote, the existence of all-powerful enchanters essentially means that any part of *his* reality, be it physical, ethical, or metaphysical, *could have changed* in appearance. Thus, he cannot be certain that he has knowledge of any sort of universal essence upon which a true understanding of the world could be constructed.<sup>11</sup> As a result, he believes that the fake Dulcinea 'invented' by Sancho at the beginning of the second part of the novel really is his lady fair under a spell, and he likewise does not doubt that Sancho can see her in her original beauty, because the appearance of reality can be different for every individual. This Quixotic cosmovision is clearly nominalist, and at the same time obviously reflects the dualistic tendencies of Baroque Spanish culture in general, as Antonio Maravall notes:

There is a double transformation of reality in the *Quijote*: (1) that which causes the protagonist to suffer the effects of not perceiving things as they really and truly are; (2) that other transformation, much more profound, which he carries out in order to create the conditions of reality necessary to enable him to realize his heroic action. The former on many occasions causes Don Quixote to have doubts about reality. That incertitude is the shifting ground upon which the people of the baroque stood so unsteadily [...] the theme of the false appearance of reality, the deception of the senses which external objects can cause us. (117-18)

This combination of uncertainty and individualism noted by Maravall readily aligns itself not only with a nominalist worldview, but also with the personality of Don Quijote and the most

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<sup>10</sup> Wagschal is not the only critic who has identified a link between Cervantes, Descartes, and modernity. For example, Ángel Gabilondo declares: "Cervantes y Descartes nacieron en el siglo 16 y murieron en el 17, del mismo modo que todos nosotros hemos nacido en el siglo 20 y moriremos en el siglo 21, y estas cosas unen mucho [...] con ellos se vertebraba el nacimiento de un mundo, El Mundo moderno, cuyos argumentos decisivos son el sujeto como base y fundamento de la verdad y del pensamiento y la consideración de este como representación punto la obsesión por la certeza y la seguridad se concretan en la escrupulosidad de no aceptar por verdadero sino aquello que se ofrezca con claridad y distinción" (139).

<sup>11</sup> According to Maravall: "But at this point let us know that what we can properly call transmutation of reality in Don Quixote should not be thought of as having been produced by enchantment. Don Quixote never believes that through the work of enchanters, certain objects can come to be other than what they are. The power of enchanters is limited strictly to the external aspect of the world which we behold; it cannot change the essence" (123).

notable traits of Spanish society during the time of Cervantes.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it can be argued that the Baroque worldview of Don Quijote is, in effect, a nominalist understanding of reality. This is affirmed by Don Quijote's own words when he exclaims: "la libertad [...] es uno de los más preciosos dones que a los hombres dieron los cielos. Con ella no pueden igualarse los tesoros que encierra la tierra ni el mar encubre. Por la libertad, así como por la hora, se puede y debe aventurar a vida. Y por el contrario, el cautiverio es el mayor mal que puede venir a los hombre" (Cervantes 847).<sup>13</sup> In other words, "Don Quijote representa la libertad moral extrema y absoluta" (Rosales 369). Rosales defines the concept of free will as it is presented in Cervantes' works in the following manner: "la libertad significa aquella facultad por la que el hombre... puede y debe creárselo el mismo [...] el valor de su propio ser depende de la mayor o menor fuerza que tenga el hombre para autoformarse" (1120). This definition is especially nominalist, and it is nearly identical to the definition of freedom that can be inferred from Don Quijote's own words and actions. In sum, it can be said that a nominalist freedom of indifference is central to the character of Don Quijote. Thus, the protagonist's failure in Barcelona and his subsequent loss of the liberty to exercise the office of knight errant literally destroys him, because it robs him of the central element of his existence: his free will. It is worth noting that the narrator declares that Don Quijote's death comes about as a result of "la melancolía que le causaba el verse vencido, o ya por la disposición del cielo" (Cervantes 938); in other words, Don Quijote dies specifically due to his lack of freedom or because of the imposition of a more powerful will than his own, such as that of God. In Hernandez's words:

Quijano/Quixote embodies the degradation of humanist nominalist singularity: the self is an emptied sign, vexed by the lack of any sure referent or universal design to anchor a person, motivated by her or his moral and creative will, yet unable to fashion a new self that could overcome the contingency and arbitrariness left behind by an inscrutable God. Given these conditions Alonso Quijano can only return home to die. (45)

In sum, both Don Quijote the character and *Don Quijote* the novel personify a nominalist understanding of free will, an understanding that exalts but ultimately destroys the individual.

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<sup>12</sup> Jordi García recognizes the character of Don Quijote as a pre-modern type in a world that has not yet embraced modernity, stating: "desde la modernidad la versión del mundo perdió el anclaje de lo absoluto, pero no mientras vivió Cervantes. Por eso prefigura la conciencia moderna encarnándola en un personaje en quien la lucidez y la locura conviven inextricablemente una con otra. La ficción empieza con *El Quijote* hacer esa "arma de destrucción masiva" de ideas monolíticas o presupuestos absolutos [...] porque activa la percepción de la simultaneidad de verdades inconciliables una verdades contradictorias y esencialmente destinadas a exponer a los hombres a la condición de una desprotección feliz y liberadora, sospechosos toros de ser en alguna medida héroes y orates, sabios y ridículos" (423).

<sup>13</sup> While J.S. Hoerger argues that Don Quijote initially understands freedom not as evasion from domination but (in a more Aristotelian-Thomist sense) as a fulfillment of one's nature, he nonetheless admits that ultimately, "Don Quijote, who had once sung the praise of the absence of 'mine' and 'thine' [in an ideal society], is now championing the cause of ownership" (789), and likewise adds: "by the end of the novel, Alonso Quixano abandons the understanding of freedom with which he began" (796). I agree with Hoerger's conclusion in general, but I would add that while Don Quijote's understanding of liberty no doubt evolves throughout the novel, even his initial understanding of a 'Golden Age' freedom involves a certain amount of evasion from reality in order to be fulfilled. In other words, in one sense the only way for Don Quijote to fulfill his 'nature' as knight errant is to depart from the true nature of his reality as Alonso Quixano. In this sense, I would argue that even his initial understanding of freedom, while perhaps paying lip service to the Greco-Thomist idea of fulfilling one's nature, is much more nominalist than anything else.

In conclusion, freedom is a central theme in *Don Quijote*, and thus it is of the utmost importance to identify exactly what type of free will Cervantes presents in a work that has been recognized both as the first modern novel and as the embodiment of Baroque Spanish literature. As this paper has shown, the idea of freedom manifested in *Don Quijote* is essentially nominalist in character. This freedom is revealed to be the fundamental element of the human person, and without their free will, the individual is diminished, and eventually, destroyed. In addition, this liberty must be understood in relation to the individual, and as a result is often placed in conflict with the wills of other more powerful beings. Freedom as it is presented in *Don Quijote*, therefore, is at least partially founded upon the idea of conflict, and it is this conflict that animates much of the action of the novel. This struggle between individuals is founded on their existential differences; due to the denial of universal natures and their knowability, any external, communal, or ‘absolute’ referents -be they linguistic, physical, or metaphysical- slowly fade away. In his celebrated work *El espejo enterrado*, Carlos Fuentes declares: “dos valores contrastantes, dos esferas de la realidad [...] Es por ello que [...] Don Quijote y Sancho Panza retienen una tal validez en su contraste y una atracción tan universal en su figuración. En ellos, el dilema de España es reconocible por todos los hombres y en todos los tiempos [...] Todos quisiéramos significar más de lo que somos” (203), and he adds: “Don Quijote habla el lenguaje del absoluto abstracto. Sancho Panza, el lenguaje de la congregación relativa. Los dos personajes dejan de entenderse entre sí, y la novela moderna nace cuando sus protagonistas dejan de hablar el mismo idioma” (188). In these passages Fuentes affirms the observation of Pinckaers: that the advent of nominalism marked perhaps the most fundamental moment in the beginning of modern thought. In describing *Don Quijote* in nominalist terms, Fuentes upholds the work’s status as the first novel of the modern West, a novel grounded in a worldview that preached a freedom of indifference above all else. This Quixotic conception of freedom is one that exalts the individual person and their self-determination; however, as the case of Don Quijote shows, it ultimately brings about their fragmentation and destruction. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do justice to the plethora of ways in which the freedom of the individual is affirmed or negated in a novel of such length and importance within the confines of this article. However, the author hopes that the reader has gained a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of both free will and nominalism to the plot, characters, and construction of *Don Quijote*, and that such an awareness will bring about a recognition of the need for a more profound analysis of the manners in which freedom is understood and expressed in the literature of Baroque Spain in general.

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