Response to Essays in *Cosmos + Taxis* on *Don Quijote de la Mancha*

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It's an honor to have moved the editors of *Cosmos + Taxis* to invite such creative and eminent scholars to contribute to a volume on liberty in *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605/15). I've been asked to pen a few words about each essay, offering my impressions of their arguments and their more salient points. I've also tried to locate those ideas that best challenge my own. We all have biases. Mine are legion. When I write, I fancy I'm articulating significant patterns. In the end, however, we all know it's only through dialogue that we manage a coordinated response to the often-dubious production of human knowledge. Such is the first modern novel's greatest legacy according to everyone from Mikhail Bakhtin to Harold Bloom. Or, if we prefer the symbolism of Miguel de Cervantes or Jorge Luis Borges: only dialogue can free us from our respective labyrinths. Related to Friedrich Hayek's vision of the pretentiousness of the global knowledge required for a planned economy is the blinding nature of isolated knowledge. If we don't check our ideas against others, our individual mistakes will consume us, eventually robbing us of our ability to change course and navigate what's before us (see Javier Cercas's *El punto ciego*, 2016).

(1) "DON QUIXOTE AND THE BOURGEOIS VIRTUES"

The personal approach by Nikolai Wenzel reminds us that we gain insight by assessing our most intimate reactions to great literature (see Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 1980). A novel might have an agenda, but if it can't move its readers, any objectives harbored by its author will flounder. Keeping this in mind is an antidote to the academic tendency to reduce literature to a set of camouflaged thesis statements. Wenzel's piece models this remedy.

For instance, when Wenzel confesses to "suffering through the long, dense, repetitive, sometimes boring novel" in order to unearth its "gems of wisdom, historical insight, and humor," he signals the dilemma of contemporary education. We earn the lesson of intellectual humility by working through our incomprehension. But we sacrifice this personal skill and its public good when we opt for five-minute presentations on some website over the slow burn of a big book. Likewise, we gain perspective on our personal and social problems by attending to the complexity of the past. But this takes time, effort, and willpower—i.e., luxuries we lose when we live in the here and now.

Wenzel also indicates relations between the personal and historical trajectories on display in *Don Quijote*; and then he universalizes them. As we age, we experience uncertainty and frustration regarding our places in society.

We end up "old hippies" who "linger" between the past and the present. This tension underwrites a sense that society itself is unmoored, but "this is not a new theme in literature." Indeed, generations prior to Cervantes's masterpiece, Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina* (c.1499) and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza's *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (c.1554) epitomized the early modern paradigm of an aristocracy giving in to unruly servants and serfs.

Wenzel rightly pushes back against the overdetermined aspects of my book, insisting that *Don Quijote* leaves serious questions unanswered. For example, is the marriage contract an individual or social decision? That institution's success might hinge on how we think about it. And can noble virtues be acquired or must they be inherited? Wenzel asserts that "the mere asking of the question in 1605 Spain was itself an act of bourgeois rebellion." The absence of Viedma's entrepreneurial brother in "The Captive's Tale" (DQ 1.39–41) now strikes me as a problem that still haunts our own world. A businessman's absence also justifies Wenzel's use of a set of bourgeois virtues to evaluate Cervantes's achievement. From a more overtly political point of view, I most welcomed his precise clarification of Bastiat's vision in 1864 of Don Quijote as an aristocratic menace and Sancho Panza as "the voice of classical liberal economics and liberty." Wedding economic and psychological perspectives, Wenzel also points out that readers enamored of the hidalgo tend not to see that the novel displays both negative and positive "externalities of honor." Similarly, Sancho flits between being a wise judge and a rent-seeker. These are just a few of the ways in which Wenzel's economic vantage reifies what many readers take for granted.

(2) "STRANGE BEDFELLOWS"

Echoing the bounty of Wenzel's reading, David Harper and Félix Muñoz show again why more economists must discuss literature and why more literature specialists must discuss economics. Their essay reminded me of the affinity between Austrian economic theory and novels, which is their shared insistence on the organic complexity of life. I was struck too by the implication that the persistent codependence of economic and moral modes of thinking somehow echoes the simultaneous evolution of group rights and individual rights in the sixteenth century. In other words, the religious and communal sensibilities expressed by Bartolomé de Las Casas and the princely self-interest and dastardly pragmatism advanced by Niccolò Machiavelli have always competed for our attention. We are social individuals, both then and now.

Harper and Muñoz deftly explore the complex social foundations and awkward intellectual implications of what happens when "public-spirited moralists" ("Baptists") and "vested interest groups" ("Bootleggers") form political coalitions. The irony is that all societies do this to some degree. Our only consolation is that recognizing these often-sinister arrangements allows us to evaluate them. We can then decide whether to attend to them or move on to other issues.

As a philological sidebar, this essay's reference to Bartholomew of Lucca, who cites Augustine to describe prostitution as a "sewer in a palace," clarifies Sempronio's phrase "¡Qué imperfición, qué aluañares debaxo de templos pintados!" in Rojas's *La Celestina*. This is one of many details by which Harper and Muñoz unveil the novel form as an exercise in political and economic realism. But they achieve far more than that. They've homed in on one of the most persistent themes in the genre's early evolution. Rojas, Mendoza, and Cervantes wrote against the rise of religious orthodoxy in Renaissance Spain. Indicating this rise, brothels were transformed from sinecures for loyal vassals into diabolical manifestations of moral decay. Such ruptures in social values always disclose hypocrisy, and Harper and Muñoz show how in the later stages of its regulation in Spain prostitution became a matter of cooperation between brothels and a Church that railed against them while also collecting rents as the owner of their premises. This explains why prostitution is a running metaphor for the satirists of Inquisitorial Spain. It also shows that both purity and duplicity are amplified by politics and religious schisms.

As a version of this thesis, we might imagine sixteenth-century Inquisitors and *converso* swineherds participating in a conspiracy to increase the consumption of ham. If you've ever tasted *jamón ibérico*, you'll forgive the treacheries of each group. Harper and Muñoz's analysis of the politics of prostitution is just as savory. However, since Cervantes makes the deceptions and exploitations of whoring analogous to the actions of government officials in texts like *El coloquio de los perros* or *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, I found Harper and Muñoz's concerns for the intentionality problem and the sin of prolepsis to be needless ingredients in their work.

Indeed, complex thinking about how political power and economic interests interact is the source of an irony that has driven novels from Apuleius to Cervantes to Bolaño. This irony signals how the world really works. Towards that end, Harper and Muñoz apply the precision of economics. They show how morality and regulation in concert are protectionist and will lower costs for certain market participants. Adding another layer of realism, solutions to social problems have consequences unforeseen by most of us. The result can be a situation that's even more corrupt or costly than the original problem. In this case, the Habsburg monarchy (much like modern politicians) pandered to all parties. A combination of strict laws and weak enforcement allowed them to satisfy both moralizing Jesuits and more traditional rent-seeking minions.

From yet another perspective, realism about incentives and behaviors clarifies the nature of debates over the issue of prostitution within the Church itself. Dominicans (following Aquinas) and Jesuits (following Augustine) locked horns over the social costs and benefits of the oldest profession. At what point do we tolerate for the sake of the public good something we deem immoral? At what point does a necessary evil become too evil to be necessary? In the context of such questions, Maritornes represents a special kind of proto-feminist victim. She is perhaps the true Dulcinea. Her ambivalent presence calls for realistic thinking if we want to understand her motives and the deeper meaning of her role at Palomeque's otherwise respectable inn.

(3) "MIGUEL DE CERVANTES AND JUAN DE MARIANA"

Francisco Cabrillo's level-headed assessment of the parallels between the inventor of the modern novel and one of the greatest and most combative of the late scholastics is a tight presentation of how they are mutually informative, including the contrast between their respective personalities: "Cervantes's was adventurous and restless, while Mariana's was much calmer." The economic decline that marked the turn of the seventeenth century looms large as a factor motivating both the first modern novel and the late scholastics. Among the issues related to that economic decline, monetary policy was heavily debated at the time. Same as it ever was. If you make enough war, you're bound to cause a bout of inflation. Cabrillo underscores that from Philip II to John Maynard Keynes, paying for wars with devalued currencies is among the oldest tricks of government.

Cabrillo's is also a refreshingly balanced view of Mariana. Mariana was not an intellectual theorist but, rather, a synthesizer and a powerful voice of political dissent. On the other hand, even at his most controversial, he was pragmatic not dogmatic. For example, in the same treatise that was burned across Europe for its defense of regicide, Mariana endorsed a monarchy's hereditary succession as the best way to avoid "serious alterations and turbulent storms." This contrasts, by the way, with Thomas Jefferson's radical quip that he liked "a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the atmosphere" (Letter to Abigail Adams, 22 February 1787). Also pragmatic, when Mariana defended religious unity, Cabrillo notes that he deployed a "utilitarian" argument along the lines of Adam Smith's case for shared moral sentiment as the basis for civil society. And if vehemently in favour of commerce, Mariana was also mildly mercantilist. Regarding this ambivalence, Cabrillo does well to observe that the Aragonese liberal reformer Joaquín Costa echoed some of Mariana's ideas when arguing for the modernization of Spain after the Spanish-American War.

Finally, although it sounds prosaic, it's essential to recognize that Mariana argued for low taxes and small government. He knew government doesn't produce wealth and is only adept at wasting it. Likewise, he knew inflation harms prosperity by reducing the efficiency of markets and trade, and so there are few policies so pernicious to society as government spending and its reliance on monetary devaluation to pay for it. Voicing these criticisms, Mariana's treatise on the infamous billon coins of Philip III and the Duke of Lerma was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books for nearly two centuries. (I had no idea it was for so long.) His brief arrest and the attempt to put him on trial indicate royal anxiety about his views. Cabrillo's conclusion signals the tragic relevance of both Mariana's treatises and Cervantes's novels with respect to problems faced everywhere today: "the most worrying thing is that many of them have still not been solved."

(4) "ANOTHER READING OF *DON QUIXOTE*"

Nayeli Riano's contribution exhibits further skepticism regarding the reduction of great literature to thesis statements. Hers is the most philosophically dense of these essays. Almost as an aside, in her third footnote, she spies one of the principal blind spots I had while writing my book. She observes—too politely, I think—that my summation of Unamuno's sense of Cervantes's novel is "not quite correct." Unamuno is reactionary, mystical, and nationalistic; whereas Ortega is modern, rational, and European. In my haste, I subsumed them both under the rubric of modern analogues for Cervantes's quest for national reform. But they aren't the same. Unamuno's efforts to relate the hidalgo to Saint Ignatius of Loyola embody the distinction. While reading Riano's essay, I also looked again at Unamuno's famous drawing of Don Quijote nailed to a tree with Sancho sitting sadly at his side. What about that lance? It looks like Unamuno's *Don Quijote crucificado* might be Longinus. This makes sense; Imperial Spain was sacrificed around 1898. So, I can personally attest that Riano's presentations of Ortega's and Unamuno's views, as well as María Zambrano's dialectical combination of them, are rewarding.

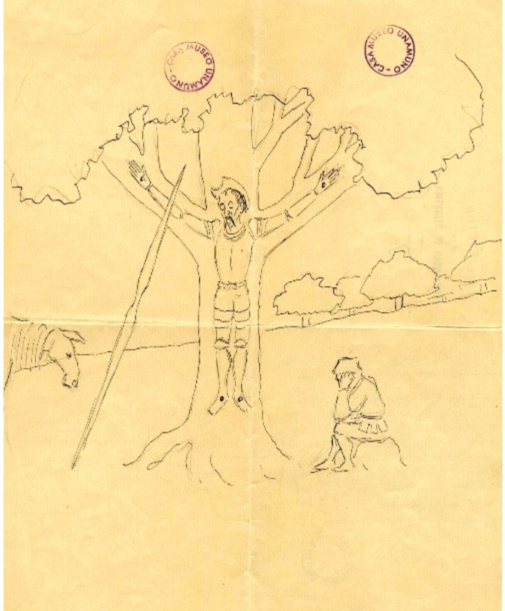


Fig. 1: Miguel de Unamuno, *Don Quijote crucificado* (c.1904)

Ultimately, Riano's piece is a reassessment of the intentionality problem. As proofs of his Erasmian agenda, I remain perhaps too convinced by the "exemplary" tactics of Renaissance fiction and that cryptic, anti-inquisitorial self-portrait by Cervantes in DQ 2.62. I'm also more inclined than Riano to think certain readers who have interpreted the novel before us can be useful. But she reminds us that good fiction is more a matter of art than ideological campaign. I especially liked her distinction between the English tradition of thinking about liberty as a function of "political principles" and the Spanish view of liberty as deriving from a set of "literary and philosophical ideals." This contrast complements my own reading of Tocqueville's modern coupling of *The Federalist Papers* and *Don Quijote* in his epic *Democracy in America*.

(5) "MARGINS OF FREEDOM"

I marvel at Frederick de Armas's musings about how the topic of freedom distributes itself among the Latin *sententiae* of *Don Quijote*'s first Prologue. He shows how my own work barely scratches the surface of what is there. On a personal level, I owe Frederick more than he can ever know. The wisdom of nineteenth-century novels flows like "underground rivers" through this man. His Caribbean and Iberian ancestors would be proud. Regarding the novel itself—whether Cervantes's *sententiae* are thinly veiled or overtly twisted—Frederick reveals its playful thievery as a textual game for the ages. But is this the work of a self-conscious author? Or does it result from the unstable nature of language itself? For example, I tried to use Aesop to help locate Cervantes's meaning, but de Armas reminds us we don't know whether there ever was any such "ugly and deformed slave who gained his freedom and achieved great fame through his stories."

We do know from the *Colloquy of the Dogs* that Cervantes had Aesop in mind around 1605 (see Thomas Jefferson, Query VI). De Armas supplies the crowning detail that the fable "Of the Wolf and the Dog" is the source of that Latin phrase about the worthlessness of gold versus liberty which I highlighted in *Don Quijote*'s first Prologue. There's a modern irony to this system. It suggests that in a free society there can be no complaint by those who feel themselves unjustly rejected by the status quo. On the one hand, freedom is its own reward; on the other hand, no status is free. In this light, de Armas and I practically embody each other's opportunity costs. But there's no horror in this. Today, I'm not so convinced I'll die in the woods; nor do I think Frederick is resigned to Chicago. Besides, we meet at the fence, as it were, or the shore, precisely where we're most useful to each other. A post-colonialist might object, but Frederick always teaches me more than I can him. Even so, I suspect that without ignorant people like me around, he'd be like a colonel without a pen pal.

How has this happened? Simple. We speak the same language(s). Thus, de Armas can wade into the field of political theory—a field I'd like to think I know better than he does but don't—and ask exactly its most important question: "What are the margins of freedom?" He knows—he's older and wiser than me—that just as an economist would say there's no price equilibrium in a marketplace, so there's no political equilibrium in a free society. Such a society is always on the move, always groping about for answers to those "deeply urgent questions" that distinguish wolves from dogs. Moreover, none of us can claim to be all one or the other, even though an aversion to canine slavery (Archilochus and Aesop) is not quite the same thing as an aversion to lupine death (Horace). De Armas's analysis suggests—counterintuitively, it seems—that the first fear drives city states and republics and the second, empires. Does this mean an empire is potentially freer and more egalitarian than a republic? I'll have to watch the *Star Wars* saga again with this in mind, and reread *The Federalist Papers* while I'm at it.

As another example of my need for de Armas's skepticism, this time on a philological level, I'd never considered Leo Spitzer to be an idealist reader of Cervantes. I'd always taken his seminal linguistic analysis of the novel's irony as dismissive of grander schemes. I'll have to rethink Spitzer's point, or else consider that a literary critic is a human being whose opinions change over time. Or does Spitzer's ambivalence imply that Aesop and Horace played the same game? As de Armas notes, Horace fought for the Roman Republic, but his patron helped fold him back into the Roman Empire. Though de Armas doesn't say so outright, there are echoes of the eternal lessons of Northrop Frye here. Winter always implies spring, and vice versa. Perhaps a republic is always potentially an empire, and vice versa (see *Federalist* 10).

The fifth and final misdirection among the *sententiae* in question is the melancholiest. The vacillation between Ovid and Cato in favor of the prior suggests that silence, anonymity, and exile are the downsides of empire. There are intimations of Tocqueville's critique of democracy inhabiting Ovid's idea that whereas security allows friendships to flourish, "if your life becomes clouded you will be alone." One's "desire for more open conversations" often confronts a giant wave of conformity, especially if one's empire is a hyper-democracy in which two rival parties demand juvenile agreement in lieu of freedom of thought and expression. And so, like Cervantes, de Armas leans into melancholy as the outcome of philosophical enquiry. Saturn, that "planet of esoteric knowledge," is also that "most malefic of celestial bodies." And Saturn is an apt sign for freethinkers who cannot be heard because we are devoured by everyone else's bourgeois satisfaction (see Buñuel's *Menjant garotes*, 1930). A melancholy paradox: when conformity and consumerism displace a people's desire to know, converse, and create, then we've attained maximum freedom and maximum solitude at the same time. At which point, a self-respecting tiger returns to the jungle and a self-respecting cat tends to her garden (see Quiroga, "Juan Darién," 1920 and Voltaire, *Candide,* 1759).

(6) "CERVANTES'S LIBERAL COMEDY"

Brian Brewer presents classical liberalism as an echo of an ethical shift in early modern comedy. The genre moved beyond temporary, grotesque subversions of social hierarchies followed by their often-sadistic restorations, and it began to approach the idea of empathy for marginal characters who were once no more than sources of laughter. Accordingly, what made Cervantes a precursor to eighteenth-century liberal thinkers was his willingness "to invest fundamentally comic characters with a particularity and dignity that his contemporaries typically denied them." Brewer extends the work of such Cervantes scholars as Anthony Close or Laura Gorfkle in order to more fully embrace the modern ideological implication that granting humanity to peripheral people is the essence of social progress. Against the overly technical, economic, and political emphasis of my book as well as the contributions to this volume, Brewer's refreshing point is that literature can improve society by being *literature*—i.e., by showing us that other people are as human as we are, and vice versa.

Brewer pushes beyond an essentially Bakhtinian vision of the modern novel as a combination of high and low elements. He does this by offering examples of how Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are more than stock comedic characters. The old lunatic and the simpleton undergo scatological humiliations, yes, and they invade each other's realms and switch social roles. But what distinguishes Cervantes's humor is that it highlights the convoluted reasoning of individuals who want to repress facts that run counter to their preferences. Don Quijote and Sancho justify their childish and clichéd (mis)readings of reality by way of some very complex mental gymnastics. These must remind us of the cognitive dissonance we all deploy when defending our views come hell or high water. Rather than the medieval slapstick associated with "The Three Stooges," Cervantes pens an anticipation of the tortuous, neurotic musings of *Seinfeld*.

According to Brewer, liberalism acknowledges human fallibility by grasping our complex intellectual efforts to distract ourselves and others from said fallibility. What strikes me about this idea is how it applies to liberalism itself. How naïve are those of us who presume to share this school of thought? Recently, at a rather fancy awards dinner held by an association of Spanish liberals at the Casino de Madrid, the scandalously incomprehensible Gallegan anarcho-capitalist Miguel Anxo Bastos was understood by some present to have complained about what he called "liberalismo de canapé." He seemed to refer to that intellectually satiated form of liberalism which clings to insights about markets and politics while washing its hands of activism. It's easy to decry from afar the manifold fallacies of communists and fascists.

I hope Brewer can laugh about it, but Deirdre McCloskey and Peter Boettke strike me as case studies in how liberal theorists spend a lot of time describing a social order which still decays with unsettling frequency into tyranny, poverty, and death. Nor can I exempt myself from the habit. Indeed, I'd have attended that fancy dinner in Madrid, except that after having made my reservation I was denied a payment option. Thus, I was turned away at the top of the stairs of the Casino de Madrid like a wedding crasher. I downed another Coke Zero in the lobby before limping back to my hotel. At least a friend took a photo of me with the great Javier Milei.

Classical liberals like to think we have superior ideals and that we perceive more than most people do the unintended consequences of political and economic interventionism. But we lack realism about the human animal, and so we tend to disregard the fight to be free. The reason I prefer Niccolò Machiavelli, Alexis de Tocqueville, Carl Schmitt, or René Girard is not because they're exemplary people but, rather, because they offer accurate theories and communicate the fact that moral and social virtues are nice but ultimately insufficient. Modern history is riddled with examples of nations in which liberalism failed: Russia, Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, Germany, etc. To observe that such societies lacked liberal principles is mastery of the obvious. The real questions are why and what should be done about it? Thomas Sowell says there are only trade-offs. A slightly more agonizing way of putting this is that all societies require sacrifices. But it's worse than that. The spontaneous order of a liberal society can spontaneously self-destruct. Likewise, though many of us might think of them as happy and humane, there are serious costs to ideas like open borders and elections overseen by the United Nations.

Is literature a tool in this regard? A civilizing mechanism for peaceful coexistence? Brewer suggests so. Perhaps encounters between different people are precisely how what makes us liberal, open-minded human beings emerges. The lowest-ranked nobleman and his peasant neighbor in Baroque Spain, or a member of the middle class and an immigrant in the modern West, must converge, argue, and laugh to get past dehumanizing stereotypes. But this won't be devoid of strife. Conversations between Don Quijote and Sancho are often exercises in justifying points of view that fail to bridge the chasm between them. Other times they devolve into physical aggression. No doubt Brewer would note that these struggles are more complicated than a cream pie to the face. Whereas the rest of the authors here demonstrate the genius of Cervantes's novel, I suspect Brewer hits most on the genius of Cervantes the novelist.

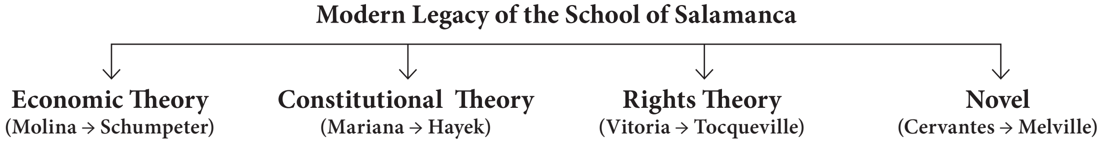
(7) "TOCQUEVILLE'S CERVANTINE FEDERALISM"

As for my own contribution, it's a final epilogue to my meditations on the relation between liberalism and *Don Quijote*, meditations I now close. Along with Brewer's, I hope my piece eases Riano's and Cabrillo's reservations about the degree to which we can consider Cervantes a liberal. Tocqueville, I think, shows us another way around the problem. The parallels and points of contact among the ideas of the School of Salamanca and those of the American Founders, as well as the geopolitical division of the New World between Anglo and Hispanic cultures, have transformed his novel into a liberal manifesto regardless of Cervantes's intentions. Too many important thinkers and actors in the modern West have signaled *Don Quijote* as a book focused on big issues that concerned them and which still concern us today. Arguing that those readers bequeathed to us an oversimplification of the novel is to risk our own form of hubris.

Recognizing Tocqueville's enormous debts to Cervantes brings the greatest political theorist of modern democracy into view as an important missing link between early modern Spain and the Atlantic region that spawned classical liberalism in the nineteenth century. Tocqueville reveals *Don Quijote* as the nadir of an aristocratic conception of liberty which coincided with the dawn of the authoritarian state. But he also signals the need for liberty's resurrection and its renewed defense for the proper practice of democratic federalism. Liberty mobilizes the negative rights of regions and individuals as bulwarks against the massive power of the modern nation state.

The essence of liberalism, as best I can figure, is an attempt at social coordination through triangulation. This involves the constant demolition of monadic, linear thinking, a demolition that occurs when we acknowledge the complexity, contingency, and coarseness of human life. Recent controversies over free speech are not new. The past's complexities have always been erased to make way for utopian programs. Liberal triangulation simply offers a way to grasp the emergence of the modern individual by way of her negational and hence self-affirming conflicts with myriad groups and authorities. The latter can range from a marauding group of Catalan nationalists to the stifling inflationist welfare state of Argentina.

For too many reasons to list here, I also think it's high time to expand the legacy of Salamanca to include something most students of Spanish literature intuit but do not articulate sufficiently. The economic and political thought of Salamanca is indelibly tied to the modern history of the novel form, which for its part is a major (not a marginal) factor in the evolution of liberalism. A proper understanding of the scope of Cervantes's achievement allows us to formulate a bigger picture of these relations and their impact on many fields of cultural production. Here's a simplified view:



Why is this graphic important? It reveals what Borges infers in his famous essay entitled “Nuestro pobre individualismo” (1944). The project of protecting the individual can never be finished in a democracy, just as the endless quest for an ideal checked by reality is the essence of the novel form. The Salamancans were mostly theologians and thus rather imposing political and economic theorists, but it’s arguably the satirical by-product of their school, i.e., the novels of Rojas, Mendoza, and Cervantes, that have most sustained their ideas while also managing to restrain their totalitarian potential. Novels remind us that a contested dialogical process is not just sufficient but *necessary* for useful economic and political ideas to exist in the first place. It is only by way of insisting on dialogue that such fields as economics or politics can lay claim to scientific status.

The novel’s role is to keep totalitarian confidence from creeping into any social system, including systems arranged by proper attention to commercial and legal realism. Mario Vargas Llosa and Javier Cercas have both dwelt on this idea, which is perhaps more obvious in the Hispanic world. Tocqueville saw it too. Constitutions are not novels. Constitutions establish society’s rules. No doubt respect for the rules and procedures for changing them are critical. Novels play a different role by laying the grounds for everything else. They show us how to play our respective parts in that game previously delimited by the rules. Novels apply a living and breathing code, what Hayek might call “social subsidiarity,” such that we’re not constantly appealing to authorities to intervene and solve problems that we ought to learn to work out on our own and in far more innovative ways than could ever occur to some government pinhead.

The Austrian and Salamancan schools are often referred to as “causal realist economics.” Now we can see how great literature allies itself with economics against Marxism. Literature can provide additional insight, not just into suffering but also into a complex web of human motives and a range of consequences of human actions, as well as factors like individual choice, risk tolerance, uncertainty, and time preference. Similarly, serious novels are disruptive and anti-ideological rather than monological, moralizing, and activist. Novels are realistic whenever they offer greater insight than the stock materialist fantasies of revolutionaries. I hope my book offers readers ways to reclaim the novel as a reflection on life and a warning about the downsides of politicizing morality. I imagine this view as one opposed to the predetermined grievance orthodoxy that handicaps so much modern fiction, especially in the United States, where a novel is now practically *de rigueur* a matter of whining about oppression in the freest nation on Earth.

Only late in life, after reading a range of classical liberal thinkers, did I come to appreciate the complexity of the Salamancan and Austrian schools and their significance for understanding the evolution of Western Civilization. Methodologically speaking, accessing and demonstrating the existence of these schools to readers in the Western hemisphere is still difficult because much of its textual legacy remains locked away in Latin and German. But translations will appear soon enough. More importantly, the term “school” is a problem since it gathers under a static rubric a range of works by authors who had no such unity in mind. Nevertheless, until recently, a school also implied ongoing *debate* in search of the truth, even if that truth was understood to remain elusive. And there has never been any way to have that without permitting differences of opinion among a school’s members. Indeed, *diversity, changeability, and fallibility of thought* are the true and evidently quixotic essence of freedom. This is why the liberation of the human mind is affirmed in the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. And this is also why its defense can never be taken for granted.

Thanks to all the contributors and readers for their time and patience. Godspeed!

ECG, Miami, FL (7/4/23)