

“¿Qué es filosofar?’ A Dog’s-Eve View”

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I begin with two questions, at once straightforward and odd: what does it mean to philosophize, and what on earth does it mean from a dog’s point of view? Cipión answers the question about as plainly and directly as anyone might hope, by deriving the meaning of the word from its etymology: philosophy is the love of knowledge, he says—it is the combination of *filos* and *sofía*; accordingly, the philosopher is the lover of knowledge: *filósofo*, *amador de la ciencia*.¹ The context for the discussion in “El Coloquio de los perros” is this: Cipión has just told Berganza that he has spoken so well (*con razones que consisten en buena verdad y buen entendimiento*) that he himself might pass for a philosopher. So, somewhere in between the pursuit of knowledge and speaking soundly and with good sense we get an idea of what these dogs think philosophy is.

But as is typically the case with Cervantes, we ought not to take everything we read at face value. In particular, we need to situate these definitions of philosophy within the rest of this text, which is in turn set inside “El casamiento engañoso.” A key question is what Cervantes means by having two dogs raise the question about philosophy, in this situation. In hounding these issues (pardon the pun), I want to continue a line of thinking about Cervantes’ involvement with questions of social and political philosophy that has tangentially engaged a number of critics over the years.² Many things have been said and written about the “Casamiento” and the “Coloquio,” but not, I think, anything that sufficiently explains the relationship between this pair of texts as social criticism, or as reflections of Christian humanism, and their relationship to secular political thought, and in particular to communitarianism and republicanism. One prong of my argument is that there is a gap between the relatively abstract definition of philosophy offered by the dogs (“the pursuit of knowledge”) and its civic purpose; that gap is exposed in

various ways, not least important among which is the contrast between philosophy and its shadowy twin, cynicism, which is another name for the kind of backbiting slander that the dogs call *murmuración*. A second prong of my argument is that questions of truth involve questions of value and virtue and that these, in turn, form the groundwork for the highest of the political virtues, justice. A third and crucial prong of what I have to say here addresses the question of how we can rely in the pursuit of truth and justice on things that, while perhaps not false, are not necessarily true—fictions, fables, dreams, and the like.

I begin with the question of dreams. It is worth remembering that the “Coloquio” is presented as the transcription of a conversation that the Ensign Campuzano claims he overheard during the last night of his stay in the Hospital de la Resurrección, where he had been taking various cures for the syphilis that he contracted during the course of his deceitful marriage. The “Coloquio” is a written text that he hands over to the Licenciado Peralta to read—much in the same way that the tale of the “Curioso Impertinente” is a written text that is read in Part I of Don Quijote. But the status of the “Coloquio” is quite different from that of the “Curioso Impertinente.” Set aside the fact that the one is read silently and the other out loud and to a group, the pretense of the “Coloquio” is that nobody in the story knows whether it is the story of a dream, the account of something miraculous that really happened, or a fable-like fiction. Not surprisingly, the convalescing Ensign, still quite weak, elects the least probable of these options, declaring with all assurance—perhaps only to get a meal from Peralta--that he really did hear these two dogs speak and that the entire episode must have been a miracle. Notwithstanding his perhaps surprising willingness to believe in miracles, we know that he is a kind of arch-deceiver, having fooled the woman who set out to trick him into a marriage in order to get his money and

possessions, by trying to get hers; we also know that, shrewd as he may have been, he was not quite shrewd enough. His deceptive tactics have done him little good, since what he got for all his cunning was a case of syphilis, and for its cure a miserable stay in the hospital. Has he indeed benefitted from the promise of the hospital of the Resurrection? When the “Coloquio” begins, at the end of his hospital stay, the reader would have little reason to be confident in anything he says. Perhaps the better question would be whether we can put any stock in what the dogs have to say. It would be ironic indeed if they somehow turned out to be better guides to the truth than the humans in the story.

If we take the hints that are offered both at the beginning of the “Coloquio” and then toward the end, then we do know that the Ensign may have been dreaming this tale, or pretending it was a dream. Pretense or not, this detail links the “Coloquio” to a long tradition of thinking according to which dreams, while clearly not real, were on another level regarded as a potential source of the truth; they could be interpreted so to gain insights about the world in much the same way that visions and other signs--including omens, auguries, and prognostications based on astral alignments--could. All such signs required reading and interpretation in order to be understood and applied. That is of course just what Basilio tries to do in La Vida es sueño, and does unsuccessfully, of course, by compromising Segismundo’s freedom. As Calderón makes quite apparent, restricting Segismundo’s free will has consequences that extend into the moral and the political realms. Basilio puts prognostication rather than prudence at the heart of politics.

Of course, Cervantes also stands on the edge of a current of skeptical disbelief with respect to the tradition that took dreams as valid signs. The visions that Don Quijote believes he saw while asleep in the Cave of Montesinos are ultimately sources of tremendous ambiguity,

which is only intensified when he consults Maese Pedro's prophesying monkey about them. Many interpreters of the Quijote have taken the episode of the Cave of Montesinos as one of the first moments when grave doubts begin to erode Don Quijote's confidence in his own mission. That may well be true; certainly Cervantes finds himself at, and also positions *us* at, a turning point regarding the status of dreams: on the one hand there are signifying dreams, which if read properly, could be valid sources of the truth, while on the other hand dreams have a status that is roughly equivalent to that of fictions. One of the questions that a text like the "Coloquio" raises is whether fictions or dreams--or in this case the fiction of a dream--can in fact do philosophical work, work in pursuit of *ciencia* or truth, if that is philosophy's aim--and if so how.

I don't want to take to overplay the philosophical question about dreams, but I do want to draw attention to one of the most prominent examples behind this tradition because of some of the direct connections it has with the "Coloquio." The key text at issue is the section of Cicero's *De Republica* known as the *Somnium Scipionis*, "Scipio's Dream." This text circulated widely as an independent work throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period thanks largely to Macrobius' early 5th century "Comentaries" on it, which offered extensive elaborations of the meaning of each passage of Cicero's text. Yet another set of commentaries was offered by Luis Vives, first published in 1520, re-published in the following year, and then refined and published again posthumously in 1544. Vives prefaces his commentary with a long discussion that includes an analysis of the debate about dreams and a critique of the questionable efforts of some physicians to interpret them, of "numerous physicians who would produce conclusions about people's health from oracles delivered in dreams... [C]onsidering how indiscriminately all the dreams were guzzled up by their clients, you would be amazed at the chaotic condition in which the seers poured these dreams out for consumption; incoherent, false, preposterous, and yet on

occasion dreams more reliable than what we see and touch in broad daylight when we are wide awake.”³ In fact, some dreams are literal confirmations of what we know is true (“Recall the dog who dreamed he was being beaten with clubs, and it was true,” p. 23). The question is how to tell true dreams from false ones. Vives also cites the famous passage from the *Odyssey*, in which Penelope distinguishes between the gates of ivory and the gates of horn. “Those that emerge through the [gate] of sawn ivory / heat our hopes, bearing futile messages; / But those that come through the doors of burnished horn / Tell the truth to any mortal who might see them.”⁴

Cervantes almost certainly had the *Somnium Scipionis* in mind when crafting the Cave of Montesinos and Clavileño episodes in the *Quijote*; but several key points bear on the “Coloquio” as well. Along with the question of the reliability of dreams are the political questions that lie at the heart of Cicero’s text. The first is Cicero’s conception of justice as the supreme good among human beings, the foundation of all civic virtue: “nothing that occurs on earth,” he writes, “is more gratifying to that supreme God who rules the whole universe than the establishment of associations and federations of men bound together by principles of justice, which are called commonwealths.”⁵ The second is a conception of virtue as anchored in the temporal and political worlds but as also reaching beyond them, so that “all those who have saved, aided, or enlarged the commonwealth have a definite place marked off in the heavens where they may enjoy a blessed existence forever... Cherish justice and your obligation to duty...; this is your passport into the heavens” (pp. 71-2, translation modified from “sky”). Finally, there is the question of gossip, which is a well-known, central concern of the “Coloquio.” The *Somnium* presents a particularly interesting genealogy of the cause of gossip: its source lies in an error of perspective that begins when we fail to understand the true nature of virtue and instead

concentrate narrowly on the shortcomings of those immediately around us; consequently, the temptation to gossip can be reduced by a shift of focus: “if you look upwards and contemplate the eternal goal and abode, you will no longer give heed to the gossip of the common herd, nor look for your reward in human things. Let Virtue, as fitting, draw you with her own attractions to the true glory; and let others say what they please about you, for they will talk in any event” (p. 76). The idea is that a concentration on the immediate world, including on the pursuit of our own pleasures and worrying what others may say about us, will undermine the achievement of true virtue, so that (and I quote from the very last lines of the text) “the souls of those who have surrendered themselves to bodily pleasures, becoming their slaves, and who in response to sensual passions have flouted the laws of gods and of men, slip out of their bodies at death and hover close to the earth, and return to this region only after long ages of torment” (p. 77).

Macrobius’ “Commentaries” clearly understands the overarching thrust of *Scipio’s Dream* as political. He argues that the young Scipio Africanus, who in the dream listens to advice from his deceased grandfather, “belongs to that group of men who both mold their lives according to the precepts of philosophy and support their commonwealths with deeds of valor” (p. 245). Macrobius elaborates on these issues in ways that make particularly clear the relationship between the social virtues and politics: “Man has political virtues because he is a social animal. By these virtues men devote themselves to their commonwealths, protect cities, revere parents, and cherish; by these they direct the welfare of the citizens, and by these they safeguard their allies with anxious forethought and bind them with the liberality of their justice... To have political prudence one must direct all his thoughts and actions by the standard of reason” (p. 122). To these are added the political virtues of courage, temperance, and justice: “from justice comes uprightness, friendship, harmony, sense of duty, piety, love, and human sympathy.

By these virtues the good man is first made lord of himself and then ruler of the state, and is just and prudent in his regard for human welfare” (p.122). Macrobius’ gloss of what Cicero means by “commonwealth” is especially instructive; a commonwealth, and likewise a republic, is not any sort of association whatsoever, but one built on the principles of right and of justice: “there have been bands of slaves and gladiators that might be called associations and federations, but they were not bound together by principles of right. The name ‘just’ can only be applied to that group of men which in its entirety consists in obedience to the laws” (p. 124).

I will say more about the task of “reading” the dream of the dogs’ conversation in light of these political considerations shortly. But first I want to note that what distinguishes the Ensign’s dream from others, including the *Somnium Scipionis*, is that it is also a form of work. As far as Cervantes is concerned, in this text at least, it is not enough simply to speak rationally about justice and virtue; the *buenas razones y entendimiento* of the philosopher are not sufficient. An individual must also be in a position to practice justice and virtue. The Ensign’s dream is part of the preparatory “work” that he has to undertake in order to do this; before all else, he has to cure himself of the disease he contracted in the course of his involvement in the deceitful marriage--in other words, rehabilitate himself-- if he is to re-join society, as he indeed begins to do in conversation with his friend Peralta, with whom he plans also to share a meal. If his plan is to deceive Peralta, then there is every reason to doubt his good faith in this work.

Notwithstanding, part of this labor involves a physical cure—the sweating, the dietary regimen of eating raisins and almonds, and so on. But this physical work has spiritual overtones as well. It entails the labor of moral rehabilitation. It is not for nothing that the hospital Cervantes chose for his cure is named after the Resurrection, since what necessarily precedes the Resurrection is suffering. The Licenciado refers to his meal with the Ensign as a kind of penance, meaning on

one level that the provisions he offers are so meager that the meal will be like fasting, but implying on another level that the Ensign's suffering is not quite done.

Moreover, which is worse in the case of the Ensign, the illness or the cure, would be hard to say. When we meet him at the very beginning of "El casamiento engañoso" Campuzano is emaciated and weak, barely able to walk—hardly a man who has been restored to full, good health by his hospital stay. He walks as if he were one of the "living dead": "como alguna mala visión," is how he appears to his friend Peralta (p. 221). This remark is consistent with the view that he is in need of a spiritual cure whose effects have yet to be seen. In fact, he himself suggests that the physical "dolores" he has suffered are matched by those of his soul—except that for the latter there may well be no relief at all ("que los [dolores] del cuerpo, para entretenerlos, me cuestan cuarenta sudores, y los del alma no hallo remedio para aliviarlos siquiera," p. 222). If he *is* to find his spiritual health restored it will require passing through a kind of Hell—through a nightmarish underworld of darkness that includes some very strange and unnatural things, including visions of witches and of dogs that talk, and talk about philosophy no less! As Cipión says to Berganza, "este nuestro hablar tan de improvise cae debajo del número de aquellas cosas que llaman portentos, los cuales, cuando se muestran y parecen, tiene averiguado la experiencia que alguna calamidad grande amenaza a las gentes" (p. 243); "mires que eres un animal que carece de razón, y si ahora muestras tener alguna, ya hemos averiguado entre los dos ser cosa sobrenatural y jamás vista" (p. 255).

There are numerous textual clues to support the hypothesis of a narrative that runs parallel to stories of descent into the underworld. Alban Forcione's book on the "Casamiento" and the "Coloquio," Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness, makes that point abundantly clear.⁶ What I would add is that Cervantes' interest in questions of Christian virtue is ultimately

social and political in nature. We know that a passage through the underworld is part of the work that the Ensign has to do if he is to have any hope of purging himself of his deceitful tactics and commence a life lived honestly and truthfully, as a virtuous member of society. But in fact it is more than just the deceitful marriage that needs rectification; it is also his military career that must have been a sham. Remember that his marriage was based on a series of false decorations and adornments, which is to say upon a military career that must itself have been false, at least in the decorations it earned him, or rather didn't. (We should remember that an ensign was a standard-bearer.) The Ensign needs to redeem himself from this life and to pass into a new one, lived more truthfully, and potentially in more honest service to the *república*.

What may seem strange and surprising is that this process moves forward—if it does at all--through the Colloquy of the Dogs: I say “if at all,” because the process of the Ensign's rehabilitation is not finished, which is to say that he has yet to be reincorporated into the society out of which the commonwealth is formed. (Similarly the text of the “Coloquio” operates on the pretense that it is itself unfinished, that there is one more night's story to tell.) Indeed, it is not clear that the Ensign either feigns to misunderstand or really does misunderstand the meaning of what he has written down. If the latter is true, then he is less self-conscious than the dogs themselves, who clearly recognize that there must be something dream-like about their experience. (Remember that Berganza concludes that they must be dreaming, adding, in Segismundo-like fashion, that this should not preclude them from enjoying the gift of speech for as long as it may last: “de lo que has dicho vengo a pensar que todo lo que hasta aquí hemos pasado y lo que estamos pasando es un sueño, y que somos perros; pero no por esto dejemos de gozar de este bien del habla que tenemos y de la excelencia tan grande de tener discurso humano todo el tiempo que pudiéremos,” p. 306). And indeed there is no guarantee that their ability to

speak, and to speak well, will last at all. At one point Berganza remembers how, when he went to beg alms with his master at the home of the Corregidor, he tried to speak but in fact barked so loudly that he ended up getting whacked in the ribs with a copper pot and driven from the room.

There is of course an established literary tradition in which animals talk, and that is the fable. There are references to Aesop, both in the “Casamiento” and in the “Coloquio.”⁷ The Licenciado nonetheless thinks that fables are absurd, and that believing a story about talking dogs would be like thinking we were back in “el tiempo de Maricastaña, cuando hablaban las calabazas, o el de Isopo, cuando departía la gallina con la zorra y unos animals con otros” (p. 237). As is typical with Cervantes, however, the “Coloquio” goes the fable one better by reflecting on its own implausibility, as the dogs themselves do when they marvel at the fact that they have been inexplicably endowed with the capacity for rational discourse. As Berganza says to his canine friend, “óigote hablar, y sé que te hablo, y no puedo creerlo, por parecerme que el hablar nosotros pasa de los términos de naturaleza” (p. 241). If the fable as a genre was meant to make a pithy moral point by means of an allegory based on animals, then what is the point of a fable that recognizes the implausibility of such a thing as talking animals? We stand on the precipice of a form of disbelief that avoids falling off the cliff only because its own self-consciousness supports it. As further evidence of this, we find embedded within Berganza’s narrative yet another unbelievable story--one designed to explain how he himself came to be a dog. He tells of his genesis by the witchcraft of Montiel, a protégé of the even more famous witch Camacha, as related to him by Cañizares. If this origin story is true, then Berganza is in fact a “rational being” under a spell; it is said that the condition of his “disenchantment” requires turning the world of appearances and of power upside-down. This is a condition that may never be met:

Volverán en su forma verdadera

Cuando vieren con presta diligencia

Derribar los soberbios levantados

Y alzar los humildes abatidos

Por poderosa mano para hacerlo. (p. 294)

The first transformation of Berganza that awaits this reversal is described as a form of *tropelía*, which Corominas glosses with examples from the period as “juegos de manos, magia, engaño (1604), or as “burla, juegos de palabras” (1611); the *tropelista* was also a *prestidigitador*. Too bad that his disenchantment is not as easy as one of the transformations of The Golden Ass, “que consistía en sólo comer una rosa. Pero este tuyo,” says Cañizares, “va fundado en acciones ajenas, y no en tu diligencia. Lo que has de hacer, hijo, es encomendarte a Dios allá en tu corazón, y espera que éstas, que no quiero llamarlas profecías, sino adivinanzas, han de suceder presto y prósperamente” (p. 295).

The “Coloquio” is on another level a picaresque tale, which takes the form of an autobiography whose purpose includes a healthy dose of social criticism. (Here we might recall that it bears significant affinities with the picaresque Life of Aesop, a Greek novel dating to the second century C.E.) The function of social criticism is supported, but its philosophical purpose is also endangered, by its association with Cynic philosophy. That there is some relationship between Cervantes’s dogs and Cynic philosophy has been known since at least Menéndez y Pelayo; Cervantes’ other connections with cynicism has been taken up by critics including Antonio Oliver, E. C. Riley, and Alban Forcione.⁸ We know that the etymology of the word

“cynic” likely derives from “dog,” and we know moreover that Cervantes’ dogs resemble Cynics in their tendency toward *murmuración*. They themselves are wary of it: “¿Al murmurar llamas filosofar? ¡Allí va ello! Canoniza, Berganza, a maldita plaga de la murmuración, y dale el nombre que quisieres, que ella dará a nosotros el de cínicos” (p. 268). (Its counterpart is the empty piety that Berganza labels “predicar,” p. 258).

It was Diogenes Laertius’ Lives of the Philosophers that gave the most enduring account of Cynical philosophy in his description of the life of his namesake, Diogenes of Sinope. Part of the role of the Cynic was to stand up to power and to expose the false pretenses of the mighty. There is a famous anecdote in which Alexander the Great walks in front of the Cynic Diogenes and proclaims “I am Alexander the Great,” to which Diogenes replies, “You are blocking the sun.” The quip is meant to say both that Alexander was blocking the nice warm sunshine and should move so that Diogenes could enjoy it, and that Alexander is no match for the real sun, no matter how great and powerful he may envision himself to be. The remark is also the most famous example of Cynic parrhesia, a kind of “free speaking” that was aimed equally at political power and at the conventions of court flattery, at the puffery of orators, and at the idle chatter of ordinary citizens all alike. Moreover, free speech could be not just empty but injurious in its unguardedness. No wonder Cervantes’ dogs are especially concerned to watch what they say. “Vete a la lengua, que en ella consisten los mayores daños de la humana vida” (p. 248). “no es buena la murmuración, aunque haga reír a muchos, si mata a uno” (p. 251). “Advierte, Berganza, no sea la tentación del demonio esa gana de filosofar que dices que te ha venido; porque no tiene la murmuración mayor velo para paliar y encubrir su maldad disoluta que darse a entender el murmurador que todo cuanto dice son sentencias de filósofos y que el decir mal es reprehensión y el descubrir los defectos ajenos buen celo. Y no hay vida de ningún murmurante

que, si la consideras y escudriñas, no la halles llena de vicios y de insolencias. Y debajo de saber esto, filosofea ahora cuanto quisieres” (p. 267). There is a basis for this in Lucian’s “Life of Demonax” (who was his teacher), in which it is said that Demonax, the Cynic, speaks with both “wit and sting.”⁹

The tradition of Cynical philosophy was transmitted as much by images as by texts. The Cynic is typically pictured in one of several ways.¹⁰ There is the figure crouched in a barrel or *pithos*, leading the most humble and self-contained sort of life imaginable. (fig. 1) Some images of Alexander standing before Diogenes picture the Cynic just this way. (fig. 2) The barrel is a fitting abode for a philosopher who imagines himself as having affinities with a dog, and sometimes the dog stand there beside him; in any case, the *pithos* typically lies on the ground, so that the Cynic’s insights come from below. Why? The Cynic sees the world from its underside. The reasoning is that it would be foolhardy to try to produce a critique of power by claiming to stand on some higher or more powerful ground. It is in fact the low-lying dog’s position--and not the distanced view of the angelic eye--from which the Cynic claims to speak the truth about things. It may also be the position from which the truth can be seen and spoken without the distorting influence of power.

A second set of images shows a lone figure carrying a lamp, either in the marketplace, or against an empty background. (fig. 3) According to the textual tradition, corroborated by these images, the Cynic carried a lantern, searching in broad daylight “for one good man.” That search was no doubt in vain. Cervantes’ dogs carry a lantern, albeit in the dark, since in this world it seems that darkness may illuminate the truth. And while Berganza does in fact find one good man, Mahudes, he does not find more than one. (It remains to be seen whether Campuzano will increase the ranks of “good men” or not.) The additional point to be made is that the dogs,

Cipión and Berganza, are themselves better than most of the human beings they encounter. Cynics were named after dogs, but Cervantes wants to suggest that dogs—or at any rate *these* dogs—may be better than Cynics, as long as they can resist the temptation to lapse into ungenerous and socially destructive slander. Among their specifically canine virtues that humans might do well to practice are fidelity, friendship, gratitude, and the ability to remember things well. In their own view, dogs are also among the most intelligent members of the animal kingdom: “después del elefante, el perro tiene el primer lugar de parecer que tiene entendimiento; luego, el caballo, y el último, la simia” (p. 243). The difference, of course, is that these dogs also *speak*; as Cipión says to his companion, “confesarás que ni has visto ni oído decir jamás que haya hablado ningún elefante, perro, caballo o mona” (p. 243).

The dogs don't begin in cynicism or social criticism, though they seem necessarily to be led there. On the contrary, they begin by reflecting rather systematically, in almost Aristotelian fashion, on the difference between humans and animals and then, of course, trying to fit themselves into that picture. Within an Aristotelian framework, one of the categorical marks of the human is language—language as rational discourse. Indeed, the *ratio* in *rational* covers both speech and reason. But insofar as they speak at all, the dogs suggest that the classical distinctions between beings established by Aristotle and his Medieval followers could not hold. These two dogs seem by their very power of speech to contravene the Aristotelian distinction that separates human from non-human beings. They are an anomaly, and fully recognize themselves to be such. Were they not so self-aware we might be tempted to write them off altogether. They are better understood as figures for whom categorical philosophical distinctions do not apply in any standard way. In fact, they move quickly down a dialogic path that is hardly Aristotelian at all. In this they have an affinity with one of Cynicism's deepest orientations.

Ancient Cynicism saw itself as a critical alternative to mainstream philosophy, especially where “mainstream” philosophy had come to fix and codify the views of figures like Plato and Aristotle. The Renaissance humanist tradition tried to recover the dialogic nature of philosophy but, long before the humanists it was the ancient Cynics who strove to oppose the alliance of philosophy and power that seemed to emerge out of the process that turned open-ended philosophical dialogue into a canonical set of beliefs, the pursuit of essences, or a search for the foundations of knowledge and truth. Indeed, the Cynic was sometimes referred to as a “Socrates gone mad.” For the Cynic, the purpose of philosophy was not to *establish* anything, and certainly not to establish anything *for all time*, but rather to tear down the assumptions, beliefs, and practices of the established world. Not surprisingly, Cynicism was also intent upon questioning what it meant to be human by contravening the assumptions underlying the institutions of human society. Diogenes “performed the dog to protest definitions of man grounded in religion, sociability, respectability, and political allegiance” (Shea, p. 16).

There are dangers associated with Cynicism, some of which are reflected in the tendency to a destructive form of criticism that barely rises above the level of gossip. Cynicism can be ad hoc, unargued, unsubstantiated, ungenerous, anti-social, and lacking in the kind of self-reflection that undergirds philosophical irony. But criticism that resembles *murmuración* was at one level exactly what the genre of the picaresque offered in its critical view of the social world. And Berganza’s life is on one level exactly that of a *pícaro*, passing from master to master, barely scraping by, hoping for something better, but mostly seeking some way out of an unbearable situation. But the ancient Cynics went much farther than this in their brash and disrespectful flouting of the most basic social norms. Cynicism was as much a practice and a way of life as a form of philosophy. The Cynics were famously unwashed, known for urinating and having sex

in public places, and for living a life of sometimes misanthropic independence. This leads me to remark on a further set of images most closely associated with the Cynic philosopher: the figure who stands, with a dog at his side, wearing sandals and a shabby cloak, or nothing at all, whose beard is uncombed and streaked with grey, and whose hair is long and unkempt.

As one recent commentator wrote, “The cynic’s seeming disregard for humanity is strengthened by his lack of regard for his fellow human beings. Diogenes was famous for insulting his contemporaries in terms that verged on the misanthropic...” He aimed “to shock his contemporaries into seeing that what they think of as human or humane is not worthy of the name.”¹¹ “As a philanthropist and a moralist, [the Cynic] sits with dignity alongside Socrates in the pantheon of wise philosophers. [But] Hounding him like a dark double is the image of the scoundrel Cynic, without principles or morals. Rude, obscene, and disruptive, he tramples carelessly on all that humanity deems precious, scorning in his self-proclaimed freedom the dignity of human life” (Shea, p. 20).

Among the ironies of the “Coloquio” is the fact that Cipi3n and Berganza shed light on truth under the cover of darkness. In their case, speaking the truth invariably involves revealing some kind of fraud at the heart of social relations. In the slaughterhouse, the butchers and everyone around them steal some of the choicest cuts of meat: “todos cuantos en 3l trabajan, desde el menor hasta el mayor, es gente ancha de conciencia, desalmada, sin temer al Rey ni a su justicia; los m3s, amancebados; son aves de rapiña carniceras; mati3nense ellos y sus amigos de lo que hurtan” (pp. 245-6). The episode with the shepherd proves the proverb of the wolf in sheep’s clothing all too literally. Berganza describes how, to his shock and dismay, “vi que los pastores eran los lobos y que despedazaban el ganado los mismos que le hab3an de guardar” (p. 256). The wealthy merchants of Seville use their children as an opportunity to flaunt their

success. There are police officers whose lady friends are women of ill repute. Within Berganza's story of witchcraft and shape-shifting we have a dog who is called "wise" as he performs circus tricks for a group of spectators who are in turn referred to as the *senado valeroso* (pp. 289). One has to believe that Cervantes intended to resurrect the double meaning that turns this term back into a pun.

The point is that all these social situations are devious, duplicitous, or patently false. The Ensign's false relations with doña Estefanía would fit easily among them, but so too would the false military honors on which his relations with her were based. The the question of false social relations goes to the heart of the possibility of establishing a set of genuine political relations which, I have been hinting, is central to these stories in relation to Cervantes' larger investment in political thought. They offer something like a pre-political critique of social relations, but one that also understands itself as thinking about the necessary ingredients for a healthy and whole political realm. To see the consequences of these falsehoods for the political realm we have only to look at the example of the Ensign himself, whose fancy chains, hatbands, and other adornments—"toda aquella balumba y aparato" (p. 233)—were all a bunch of fakery. We should not forget that as he leaves the hospital, he is forced to lean on his sword as a cane.

So it seems that there are in fact two ways to destroy the social fabric, and with it, the possibility of establishing a healthy commonwealth. One is the way of the deceitful marriage and of all the similar deceits that the dogs talk about in their dialogue. Another is by talking about these things in a way that falls into backbiting, slander, and criticism of the destructive sort. But are there any *constructive* options, or at any rate *non-destructive* ones? One answer might lead us to consider what the dogs call "philosophy"—seeking what is true and speaking about it well, and rationally—"con razones que consisten en buena verdad y buen

entendimiento.” The dogs nearly do this, insofar as they are careful to avoid slander and various kinds of rhetorical excess. But Cervantes speaks through fictions, and indeed through fictions embedded within fictions, including the fiction of these dogs in dialogue. And that, I would suggest, is not simply an entertaining option that he happens to elect (though it is of course entertaining), but is a strategy that *any* writer might wish to pursue in a world so deeply riddled with untruths. Simply calling things by their name, telling things “as they are,” is *not* an option in a world so fundamentally false. Indeed, speaking the naked truth would be possible only when the conditions for it are in place, i.e. “Cuando vieren con presta diligencia / Derribar los soberbios levantados / Y alzar los humildes abatidos / Por poderosa mano para hacerlo.” Then, when the false, “inverted world” is itself turned upside down, and Berganza is changed back into a human being, that there would be no more “tropelías.” And then, we might imagine, fiction itself would be beside the point.

NOTES

¹ Novelas ejemplares, III, ed. Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce (Madrid: Castalia, 1987), p. 270.

² See Anthony J. Cascardi, Cervantes, Literature, and the Discourse of Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

³ Vives, Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Scipionis (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio), trans. Edward V. George (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, Kroeger Books, 1989), p. 23.

⁴ Vives includes both the Greek (Odyssey) and Latin (Aeneid) versions of the passage (pp. 32-3).

⁵ Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 71. Passages from the Somnium Scipionis, such as this one, are cited as they appear within the Commentary.

⁶ Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁷ See Paul Carranza, “Cipiión, Berganza, and the Asopic Tradition,” Cervantes, 23 (2003), pp. 141-63.

⁸ See Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Orígenes de la novella, (Madrid: N.B.A.E., 1907), pp. lxxii, lxxviii. These other critics deal principally with “El Licenciado Vidriera”: Antonio Oliver, “La filosofía en ‘El Licenciado Vidriera,’” Anales Cervantinos, 4 (1954), 225-38; E. C. Riley, “Cervantes and the Cynics,” Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, 53 (1976), 189-99; and Alban Forcione, Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness.

⁹ The Works of Lucian of Samosata (U.S.A.: Forgotten Books, 2007), p. 385.

¹⁰ For a thorough discussion of these image traditions, see Diskin Clay, “Picturing Diogenes,” in The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy, ed. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 366-87.

¹¹ Louisa Shea, The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 17.