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IVAN TURGENEV

HAMLET AND DON QUIXOTE*

(Translated from the Russian by MOSHE SPIEGEL)

The first edition of Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* and the first part of Cervantes' novel *Don Quixote* appeared in the same year, at the very beginning of the seventeenth century.

This concurrence seems momentous. The proximity of time in this instance induces a consideration of a whole series of events. "He who would comprehend a poet," Goethe maintained, "must enter that poet's environment." And though one who is not a poet himself has no right to demand, he can nevertheless hope that his

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audience will accompany him on his wanderings—will share his tour of exploration.

Some of my views may perchance be puzzling in their uniqueness. But the poetic masterpieces created by the genius of superior minds, and endowed with an eternal vitality, have this peculiarity as well: that one's conceptions of them, as of life in general, may differ greatly from one another's, may even be diametrically opposed, yet at the same time be valid.

Much comment on *Hamlet* has already come forth, and much more is still to come. What varied conclusions have already been reached by the numerous scholars, who have scrutinized this character, as unfathomable as an unplumbed well! *Don Quixote*, on the other hand, because of the idiosyncrasy of its purpose and the truly admirable lucidity of a narrative that seems permeated by the Southern Sun, does not permit of such a diversity of critical reaction.

It is unfortunate, however, that our conception of *Don Quixote* should be equivocal; only too often we substitute the name of Don Quixote for a jester; the term *quixotism* carries the connotation of idealistic twaddle; whereas in reality one ought to discern Quixotism as an archetype of self-sacrifice, even though Don Quixote himself has been portrayed as a ludicrous figure.

As we have already noted, the simultaneous appearance of the two masterpieces gives cause for reflection. In these two types, it seems to me, are embodied two contrasting basic tendencies, the two poles of the human axis about which they revolve. All men, to my mind, conform to one type or the other; one to that of Hamlet, another to that of Don Quixote—though it is true, no doubt, that in our era the Hamlets are far more common; still, the Don Quixotes are by no means hard to find.

Let me illustrate: All men live (consciously or otherwise) by virtue of certain principles, certain ideals—in a word, by virtue of what they deem true, beautiful, good, and so on. Many take their ideals intact from specific, historically sanctioned institutions. They thrive by conforming their lives to the vision it offers. Sometimes, driven by passion or contingency, such a man may stray, but he neither ponders nor doubts. Others, on the contrary, examine such deals, sound their very depth. However that may be, I can hardly go wrong in declaring that with people in general the basic ideal, the groundwork of life, is to be found either within ourselves or in some external object. In other words, for each one of us either

his own ego is of cardinal importance, or something else ranks higher than ego.

In rebuttal, I may be told that in actuality there is no such trenchant demarcation between one's own "I" and the adjacent something which he honors still more; that a person may harbor both ends, heeding now this, now the other; that they may even shade into one another. But then I did not wish to suggest that variation and contradiction are not perfectly possible in human nature. I simply intended to indicate the two polar attitudes of man toward the ideal. I shall now attempt to set forth how, as I see it, the two attitudes are intrinsic to the types I have mentioned.

We will start with Don Quixote. What does Don Quixote symbolize? Let us not be hasty in examining him; we must beware of superficiality. Let us not see in Don Quixote merely the figure of the knight designed to satirize the tales of medieval chivalry. It is now generally recognized that the significance of this individuality has been amended by the author himself. In the second part of Cervantes' work, Don Quixote is no longer the same character as in the first, no longer the comical and ridiculed buffoon, hounded by unrelenting blows; he has become the delightful peer of dukes and duchesses, the erudite mentor of the governor's bodyguard.

Let us therefore seek the core of the matter. To repeat: What does Don Quixote typify? Faith, first of all, a belief in something eternal, indestructible—in a truth that is beyond the comprehension of the individual human being, which is to be achieved only through the medium of self-abnegation and undeviating worship.

Don Quixote is entirely permeated by an attachment to his ideal for which he is ready to endure untold misery, even to sacrifice his own life, if need be. His own life he esteems only insofar as it can serve his ideal, which is to institute justice and truth on earth. It may be said that his deranged imagination draws upon the fantastic world of chivalric romance for his concept. Granted—and granted that this constitutes the comic side of Don Quixote. But his ideal itself remains undefiled and intact. To live for oneself, to be concerned with one's own ego—this Don Quixote would regard as a disgrace. He exists (if one may put it so) outside himself; he lives for others, for his brethren, in the hope of neutralizing evil and to outwitting those sinister figures—sorcerers and giants—whom he regards as the enemies of mankind.

There is no vestige of egotism in him; his own self concerns him least of all, he completely personifies self-sacrifice—and please note

what this term implies! He does not probe or question; he believes, forever undismayed. Hence, he is undaunted, uncomplaining, satisfied with meagre rations and happy garments. What cares he for exuberance? It never even enters his mind! Serene at heart, he is in spirit superior and valiant; his touching piety does not curb his liberty. Though not arrogant, he does not distrust himself, nor his vocation, nor even his physical capacity. His will is a will of iron, and unswerving. The continuous striving toward one and the same goal has fixed the unvarying tenor of his thoughts, his intellect takes on a one-sided uniformity. Hardly a scholar, he regards knowledge as superfluous. What would it avail him to know everything? But one thing he knows, the main thing: he is aware of the why and wherefore of his existence, and this is the cornerstone of all erudition.

Don Quixote may at times resemble a total maniac, since he often overlooks the plainest objects when they are directly in front of his eyes; the most obvious things unmistakable to anyone, vanish before his eyes, melting like wax in the fire of his knightly fervor; he actually sees living Moors in wooden puppets, and a host of knights in a drove of rams; at other times he shows the limits of his mental scope, by appearing incapable of sharing in trifling amusement, incapable of easy participation. He is like an ancient, firmly anchored tree, its roots thrust into the deep layers of the soil, from which it is unable to move, in his inability to alter his convictions or to shift from one subject to another.

The massiveness of Don Quixote's moral structure (it must not be forgotten that this distracted knight errant is the most moral creature on earth) imparts a particular gravity and stateliness to whatever he may say or do. In a word, his ethical character gives an uprightness to his whole figure despite the preposterous situations and the humiliations into which he is incessantly tumbling. Don Quixote is an enthusiast, radiant with his devotion to an idea.

What, then, does Hamlet represent? Above all, analysis, scrutiny, egotism—and consequently disbelief. He lives wholly for himself, and even an egotist cannot muster faith in himself alone; one *believes* only in that which is outside or above oneself. But Hamlet's *I*, in which he has no faith, is still precious to him. This is the ultimate position to which he invariably reverts, because his soul does not spy in the world beyond itself anything to which it can adhere. He is a skeptic, yet always he is in a stir about himself; he

is forever agitated, in regard not to his duty to the state of his own inward affairs.

Doubting everything, Hamlet pitilessly includes his own self in those doubts; he is too thoughtful, too fair-minded to be contented with what he finds within himself. Self-conscious, aware of his own weakness, he knows how restricted his powers are. But his self-consciousness itself is a force; emanating from it is the irony that is precisely the antithesis of Don Quixote's enthusiasm.

Hamlet inveighs against himself readily, magnifies his own shortcomings, spies upon himself, is mindful of his minutest defects, despises himself—and at the same time, apparently, he thrives on this disdain. He distrusts himself and yet is deeply solicitous about himself; does not know what he is after, nor why he lives at all, and still firmly adheres to life.

In the second scene of the first act, he exclaims:

Oh, that this too too sullied flesh would melt
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

But he will not surrender this flat and unprofitable life. He has brooded over suicide long before his father's ghost appears, with the gruesome message that yields a crushing blow to his already emasculated will—yet venture on self-murder he does not. His attachment to life is indicated in this very meditation on ending it. What eighteen year old is not acquainted with some such feeling?

“When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul!”

Let us not be too exacting with Hamlet. He suffers and his suffering is more valetudinary, excruciating and intense than that of Don Quixote. The latter is belabored by rough shepherds and by convicts whom he himself has set free. Hamlet's wounds, on the other hand, are self-inflicted; the blade with which he vexes and torments himself is the double-edged sword of analysis.

Don Quixote, it must be acknowledged, really is ridiculous. His is the most comical likeness that any poet ever depicted. That his name has passed into the language as a scornful nickname, even among Russian peasantry, our own ears bear witness. One merely has to allude to his name to evoke an emaciated figure; haunched,

gaunt, in tattered attire, wierdly patched, astride a cadaverous crowbait, the spavined wind-fed Rosinants—a creature evoking pity tinged with ridicule.

Yes, Don Quixote is inconsistent. But our laughter tends somehow toward reconciliation to absolution, to fortitude. And if the maxim “What you laugh at now you may one day venerate” be true, then it may be added, “Whomever you have scoffed at, you have thereby forgiven, are even on the point of loving.”

Not so with Hamlet. His appearance is attractive. His melancholy, his pale countenance (though in truth he is not gaunt but portly, as his mother observes, “He’s fat”), his black velvet garb, the feather in his hat, his courtly manners, the poetic turn of his speech, the constant sense of superiority to others, together with his caustic mockery of his own self—all of this fascinates us, attracts us. Everybody wishes to be regarded as a Hamlet, nobody as a Don Quixote, “Hamlet Baratinsky”—thus does Pushkin address his friend and contemporary. No one would ever consider sneering at Hamlet, and therein is his sentence: it is all but impossible to love him. Only those of Horatio’s caliber can attach themselves to a Hamlet. I shall return to this point later. All will sympathize with him, it is evident, since nearly all identify in him characteristics of their own; but to love him, I reiterate, is impossible, because he himself cannot love anyone.

Let us extend our comparison. Hamlet is the son of a king whom a brother has assassinated in order to usurp his throne. Hamlet’s father emerges from the grave, from “sulphurous and tormenting flames,” to enjoin Hamlet to avenge the fratricide. But the son vacillates, equivocates, consoles himself with self-reproach, and although he eventually kills his stepfather, he does so only incidentally. Here is a deep psychological ambiguity for which even profound critics have had the audacity to rebuke Shakespeare! But Don Quixote, a poor man, without social connections, old and solitary, attempts single-handed to uproot all evil and to deliver the persecuted throughout the world, whoever they may be.

And what if his first endeavor to deliver innocence from tyranny produces only redouble misery for that innocence! (I refer to the scene where Don Quixote rescues an apprentice from a pummeling by his master. Where the liberator withdraws, the enraged artisan inflicts a tenfold punishment on the boy). Neither does it matter that in assaulting the windmills, believing them to be menacing giants, he is also demolishing useful objects. The comic vein on

these episodes must not divert our attention from the intrinsic meaning latent within them. Since when has it been ordained that he who is about to sacrifice himself should first of all weigh and measure each of the probable consequences his act may bring about? One so attentive to the details would be incapable of the sacrifice.

Such an experience could never befall a Hamlet; armed with his astute, all-comprehending mind, he commits no such crude blunders. Oh, no! He would never crusade against windmills; and were they giants in actuality, he would likewise stay away from them. It would never occur to Hamlet to hold out a barber's basin while he strove to convince everyone that it was in truth the magic helmet of Membrin. I presume even that if truth incarnate were to arise before Hamlet, he would remain skeptical of its authenticity. Who knows but that he would challenge it, saying perhaps that there is no truth, just as there are no giants?

We laugh at Don Quixote. But, my dear sirs, who of us can positively affirm with certainty that he will always and under all circumstances know the difference between a brass wash basin and an enchanted golden helmet? Let everyone conscientiously examine his convictions, past and present, and let him then determine how far he may be certain of knowing one from the other. For the real importance, it seems to me, lies in the persistence of the conviction itself; and as for the outcome that is in the hands of fate. It alone can reveal whether we have waged war against spectres of real enemies, just as it does the effectiveness of our weapons. Our purpose is to arm ourselves and fight.

Noteworthy also is the relation of the mob, of the so-called human race, to Hamlet and Don Quixote. In Hamlet it is Polonius and in *Don Quixote* it is Sancho Panza who represents this mass.

Polonius is an active, practical, worldly-wise old man, although he is also bigoted and garrulous. He is a good administrator and a model father. This can be noted in the manner in which he admonishes his son Laertes preparatory to his going abroad. Polonius considers Hamlet not a monomaniac so much as a reckless child. If Hamlet were not the son of a king, Polonius would have sneered at his frivolity and his ineptness in carrying out his ideas. Take, for instance, the characteristic scene between Hamlet and Polonius in the third act. Hamlet in turn is inclined to sneer at the old man, and this incident substantiates our conjecture. Permit me to quote it to you:

Polonius: My Lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud, that't almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

Hamlet: Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius: It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet: Or like a whale?

Polonius: Very like a whale.

Hamlet: Then I will come to my mother, by and by.

Is it not apparent from this scene that Polonius is both a courtier who is obliged to please the prince and an adult who would not oppose the whims of a deranged and fickle boy? Polonius does not in the least take Hamlet for granted, and in this he is right. Since he lacks insight, he of course errs when he attributes Hamlet's unreasonable notions to being in love with Ophelia; but in other respects he fathoms Hamlet's nature quite correctly. The Hamlets on the whole are really nugatory to the people; they impart nothing, they can lead nowhere, for they themselves are astray. How can one uncertain of his ground guide others? Besides, the Hamlets loathe the populace. When one does not respect himself, how can he revere anyone else? Of what value are the masses to such an individual? Is any pothe about them worth the effort? Furthermore, Hamlet is an aristocrat—not only by right of birth but also by reason of his nature.

Sancho Panza, however, is another sort. He laughs at Don Quixote, realizing that the latter is a madman; still, on three consecutive occasions he forsakes his home and his wife and daughter to accompany this lunatic, to endure all manner of privations, and yet to remain devoted unto death. He has faith in Don Quixote, he is actually proud of him; and during his master's last moments he kneels by his bedside, weeping with emotion. This devotion and zeal cannot be accounted for by Sancho Panza's having expected any sort of remuneration. He has too much common sense to be deluded; he knows perfectly well that aside from discomfort and an occasional drubbing there will be no tangible compensation. One has to probe deeper for the source of his attachment. The cause lies in the pre-eminent tendency of the masses to follow blindly and whole heartedly (though unfortunately they are also conversant with negative emotional factors); it comes from their capacity for enthusiasm, from that ignoring of personal benefits, which a poor man tosses out as he does his crust of bread. This is the universal

and historic behavior of the masses! They generally conclude by following in complete faith those whom they originally despised, whom they pelted with stones and otherwise tormented. The vanguard, however, undaunted by neither reaction, are driven onward undeviatingly, by their inward vision, fixed upon the nebulous distance, now rising, now falling, until the goal is at last attained. And indeed, only he who is impelled by the dictates of the heart arrives at his destination. "*Les grandes pensees viennent du coeur*," said Vovenaque. But the Hamlets find nothing, invent nothing and leave no trace, but the vestiges of their own personality—no sign of any lasting influence. They do not love or believe; ergo, what can they find? Even in chemistry (not to speak of organic nature) two ingredients must combine in order to produce a third; but the Hamlets are forever alone, apprehensive about themselves and therefore sterile.

One may interpolate: "What of Ophelia? Doesn't Hamlet love her?" Let me touch on this, and incidentally on Don Quixote's Dulcinea, as well. The attitudes of these two types toward women are also significant. Don Quixote loves an imaginary, nonexistent Dulcinea and is ready to give his life for her. Recall the words which he spoke to his conqueror while the latter stood over him with unsheathed sword. "Stab me, Sir Knight, but let not my languor detract from the fame and glory of my Dulcinea; I still maintain that she is the perfection of beauty on earth."

Don Quixote loves ideally, chastely—so ideally that he does not discover that the object of his passion does not exist; so chastely that when his Dulcinea appears before him in the guise of a coarse and filthy peasant woman, he doubts his own eyesight and supposes her transformed by evil sorcerers.

During my life's wanderings I, too, have encountered individuals who gave up their lives for nonexistent Dulcineas, or for some crude, other loathsome object, that became for them the incarnation of their ideal, and those whose metamorphosis they likewise ascribed to evil contingencies, circumstances, and persons—I nearly said, evil forces. I have witnessed this, and when those types shall have vanished from the world, then let the book of history be closed; there will remain in it nothing worth reading.

There is no wantonness whatsoever in Don Quixote. All his thoughts are modest and innocent; and deep in his heart there is in fact not much hope of his ever uniting with Dulcinea; indeed, he fears such a meeting!

As for Hamlet, can he actually love? Is it possible that his ironic creator, the most profound of all critics of the human soul, has indeed resolved to endow this egotist, this skeptic, with the power to love—him who has absorbed so much of the corrosive poison of self-analysis? Shakespeare did not contradict himself in this wise, and the curious reader can easily convince himself that this Hamlet—who is sensual and even sybaritic—does not love, but merely pretends, and that, too, ineffectually. It is noteworthy that the courtier Rosencrantz smiles when Hamlet remarks that he is weary of women, Shakespeare himself testifies to this love-trait. In the first scene of the third act, Hamlet declares to Ophelia:

Hamlet: I did love you once.

Ophelia: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet: You should not have believed me. I loved you not.

And when Hamlet pronounces the last phrase, he is much nearer the truth than he can quite admit. His feelings for Ophelia, who is virtuous, even saintly, are either cynical (I note the dubious implication when in the mouse-trap scene he begs to be allowed to lie in her lap), or hyperbolic (as in the scene with her brother Laertes, when Hamlet leaps into Ophelia's grave, asserting trite phrases, "Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum. Let them throw millions of acres on us!").

All his relations with Ophelia are for him only a form of being engrossed in himself. When he exclaims,

Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered

here again are echoed only the deep consciousness of his helplessness, of his own weakness, his incapacity to love. He is overwhelmed before her virtuous chastity.

But let us dwell no longer on the shady aspect of the Hamlet type, which provoke discussion because they are so readily grasped. Let us acknowledge the positive element in him, the part that endures. In Hamlet is embodied the creed of negation, that same creed which another great poet has portrayed in the shape of Mephistopheles, depriving him of everything purely human. Hamlet is the counterpart of Mephistopheles, plus the living circle of human personality. Therefore his doctrine of negation is not, like that of Mephistopheles, an evil force, but on the contrary, is aimed against evil. Hamlet's spirit of negation is skeptical of the good, but it is

indubitably certain of the existence of evil, and militates against it constantly. The good he mistrusts, somehow or other; he has misgivings about the genuineness of the truth it contains; and when he assails the good it is because he surmises it to be camouflage, under whose guise evil and sham—his old enemies—are concealed. Hamlet does not laugh with the demoniacal, icy laughter of Mephistopheles; his bitter smile is permeated with a touching sorrow that betrays his agony, and this fact reconciles us to him. His skepticism has in it the strain of indifference, and hence his significance and merit; good and evil, truth and falsehood, the beautiful and the repulsive are not blended into one fortuitous mute and blunt nondescript. Hamlet's skepticism is unceasingly at war with falsehood and lying; thus, while disbelieving the possibility of truth's realization now or ever, he becomes one of the chief vindicators of a truth which he himself does not fully accept.

But in the spirit of negation there is, just as there is in fire, a destructive force; and how can one confine this force within given limits, or say where it should halt, when what it destroys, is so often inextricable from what one would preserve? That is where we frequently perceive the tragic side of human life; wherever thinking precedes action, there is a divorce between thought and will, which tend more and more to be isolated from each other.

And thus the native hue of a resolution
Is sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought,

as Shakespeare says through Hamlet. And so, on the one hand there are the Hamlets—meditative, scrupulous, often all-discerning, yet at the same time ineffective and condemned to inaction, and on the other hand the half-frantic Don Quixotes, who aid and urge forward the human race solely because they behold and know only one thing—a thing as likely as not, does not even exist in the form they imagine. A question reluctantly comes up: Must one actually be demented to believe there is such a thing as truth? Or is it possible that the mind loses all its force as soon as it is in control of itself?

It would be useless digression to attempt to solve these problems even superficially. Suffice it to remark that in this dichotomy, in the above-mentioned dualism, we must recognize a law basic to all human life. That life consists in reality of perpetual reconciliation of two perpetually contending forces, two unremittingly opposites.

If it were not for the risk of overwhelming my listeners with philosophical nomenclature, I would venture to say that the Hamlets are the expression of that tendency in the dynamics of nature for every living being to behave as though it were the centre of creation, regarding all else as a thing made solely for its own sake. Thus, the midge that alighted on the forehead of Alexander the Great feasted on his blood with the complete self-assurance of a being entitled to do just that. And thus Hamlet, though he treats himself with disdain (an attitude beyond the scope of the midge, which has not evolved to a comparable degree of intelligence) also sees himself as creation's centre and all else in the universe as converging on him.

Without this tendency—without the force of egotism—the natural world could not function, any more than it could without that equally potent force, the innate tendency toward altruism, according to whose law all that matters is to exist entirely for others. This principle, this drive toward devotion and self-immolation, seen in a comic light, is symbolized by the Don Quixotes of this earth.

These two forces of immobility and motion, conservatism and progress, are the fundamental levers of all existing matter. They are implicit in the burgeoning of the meanest flower that blows; they are the key that will unlock the secrets of evolution, and that give insight into the process whereby the most virile nations have evolved. But let us not dwell on such conjectures, which in any case are beyond the scope of our theme.

As everyone knows, *Hamlet* is generally considered the most popular of Shakespeare's works. This tragedy belongs to those masterpieces that fill a theatre whenever they are performed. The phenomenon is understandable when we consider the current widespread tendency toward self-consciousness, meditation, and self-doubt. But apart from the exquisiteness with which this work abounds, being perhaps the most striking product of the modern spirit, one cannot but wonder at the intellect of the author—himself to some extent the prototype of his own Hamlet—which, through the unbridled force of creative genius, gave this archetype for succeeding generations to study.

The spirit that created this paragon is the spirit of a Northern man, reflective and analytical, a brooding and bewildered spirit, lacking in either harmony or Southern exuberance, incapable of chiseled classical elegance but producing a deeper effect through its very diversity and eccentricity. From the depths of his soul he

has wrested the Hamlet type, and evinced by this very procedure that in the sphere of poetry, as in other aspects of human life, he towers above his species because he understands it so thoroughly.

The person of Don Quixote reflects the spirit of the Southerner, genial, buoyant, modest, sensitive—one who does not delve into life's riddles, who has no conception of the tidal extent of life, or reflects all its isolated phenomena. Here I cannot refrain from a comparison of Shakespeare and Cervantes, or at least from emphasizing those aspects wherein they differ and wherein they agree.

How can one draw a comparison? some one may demand. Shakespeare—a colossus, a demigod! True enough. But neither is Cervantes a midget beside the titan who created *King Lear*: he is no dwarf but a normal, full-grown man, and a man is privileged to stand upright even in the presence of a demigod. There can be no doubt that Shakespeare, endowed with an opulent and puissant imagination, with the radiance of a masterful poetic gift and an incomparable intellect, is a giant beside Cervantes—and not beside him. But mark this: you will not find in Cervantes' novel any labored humor, or simulated illustrations, or affected dialogue; neither will you encounter in his works the beheadings, the plucked out eyes, the rivers of gore, the deliberately steeled atrocities, which were the savage inheritance of the Middle Ages, the barbarism that only gradually retreated from the rigid Northern nature. And it should be borne in mind that Cervantes like Shakespeare, lived at the time of St. Bartholomew's Eve, that even for many years thereafter heretics continued to be burned at the stake, while the flow of blood persisted (who knows whether it will ever be staunchd?). The Middle Ages are depicted in *Don Quixote* in the guise of provincial poetry, and through the winsome portraiture of those romances which Cervantes so gaily ridiculed, and to which he later on added the chivalric romance of *Persiles* and *Sigismunda*.

Shakespeare takes his design from everything in heaven and earth; nothing is denied him, nothing escapes his penetrating gaze; he plucks up his subject matter with an invincible commanding sweep of an eagle pouncing upon its prey. Cervantes, on the other hand, presents his character to the reader tenderly, quietly, as a father would his children, he garners only from what is near him but that is also where he is at home. Before the invincible spirit of the English poet everything that is human seems to yield, whereas the wealth of Cervantes is derived solely from his own

heart—a heart that is warm, genial and rich with experience yet not become callous. Not in vain was Cervantes imprisoned for seven long years, since during that time, as he himself relates, he acquired the discipline of patience. The range of his mastery is narrower than Shakespeare's, but within that range is reflected all that is common to human nature. Cervantes does not dazzle with lightning idioms; he does not stun with the fervor of his zeal; his poetry is in no way akin to Shakespeare's, which is at times a turbulent sea, but is, rather, a deep flowing tranquility through scenes; and the reader, drawn in and encompassed by its translucent waters, willingly drifts with the current, enjoying its truly epic charm.

The imagination sees a further symbolism in that these two contemporaneous poets died on precisely the same day—April 26, 1616. Cervantes was probably unaware that a "Shakespeare" existed; but during the last three years of his life the tragedian may well have read the far-famed novel, which by then existed in an English version, in the seclusion of his Stratford abode. It would be a scene worthy of the brush of an artist-philosopher; Shakespeare reading *Don Quixote*! Blessed are those countries that give us such men, teachers of their fellowmen and of the generations to follow! For the unfading laurels that crown the memory of the man of genius likewise adorn the land of his birth.

In conclusion, permit me to supplement this brief essay with a few scattered observations. An English lord, a connoisseur in such matters once in my presence referred to Don Quixote as the perfect gentleman. And indeed he may well be called that. If simplicity and unobtrusive behavior are the criterion of a gentleman, then Don Quixote well deserves the title. He is an authentic *hidalgo*, and he remains so even when the fun-loving servants of the prince lather his face over-much. The simplicity of his deportment is due to his selflessness, as I might best phrase it, and not to self-glorification. Don Quixote is not forever preoccupied, and since he respects himself as well as others, it never enters his mind to behave in a supercilious manner. But Hamlet, for all his courtly etiquette, appears to have—if you'll pardon the French expression—*Ayet des airs de parvenue*: he is a showoff and a mocker. To compensate for this flaw, he is endowed with an original vigor of expression, such as only a reflective and dynamic personality can boast—and which in a Don Quixote is something altogether inadmissible. The depth and astuteness of Hamlet's power of analysis, together with his versatile schooling (one must not forget that he

studied at the University of Wittenberg), have produced in him an exceptional taste. He is a good critic; his counsel to the actors is surprisingly apt and discreet; his esthetic sense is as conspicuous in him as is the sense of duty in Don Quixote.

Don Quixote honors all established institutions, religions, monarchs and princes, at the same time feeling free himself and respecting the freedom of others. Hamlet, on the contrary, reprimands kings and courtiers, but is himself bigoted and tyrannical.

Don Quixote is almost illiterate; Hamlet in all probability keeps a diary. Though unlearned as Don Quixote is, he has settled opinion about government affairs and public administration; Hamlet cannot spare the time, nor does he wish to dabble in such things.

Cervantes has been severely criticized for having buffeted Don Quixote with so many blows. I have already noted that in the second part of the novel he is hardly belabored at all. Now I wish to add that without such drubbings the children who, as it is, swallow all the descriptions of his journeys, would not take to him so readily, and even for us adults, were he to escape all the pummelings, he would not emerge in his true perspective, but would seem cold and remote—and that would run counter to his nature.

I have just repeated that in the second part he is no longer physically persecuted—except that toward the end of the novel, after Don Quixote's complete defeat at the hands of the Knight of the White Moon, after the masked student, after the relinquishing of his knighthood, and just before his death, a drove of swine charge and trample him. I once heard Cervantes rebuked for his rehashing of the old witticisms of the first part. But one must remember that here, too, the poet was governed by the instinct of his genius: this sordid episode holds a deep significance. The Don Quixotes of the world always have to go through with being trampled by swine, and it must happen in their last days. This is the final ransom they pay to fate, to human apathy and misunderstanding. . . . This is the slap dealt by the Pharisee. Then they are ready to die. They have come through the fires of purgatory, then have achieved immortality—that now opens its portals to receive them.

Hamlet is sometimes ruthless. Recall the fate he prepares for the two courtiers the king has despatched to England, read his oration on Polonius, whom he himself has assassinated. To us this is an additional reflection of the Middle Ages which have only recently receded from our view. Then again, we are obliged to see in Don Quixote also an inclination to half-conscious self-delusion; an incli-

nation always conforming to the enthusiast's imagination. His description of what he witnessed in the cave of Montesinos was patently contrived by himself, and did not at all mislead the astute plebeian Sancho Panza.

Furthermore, Hamlet grumbles in discouragement over trifles, whenever he is thwarted; while Don Quixote, beaten by galley slaves until he is hardly able to move, is not deterred in his hope of ultimate triumph. A story of a similar vein has it that for years Fourier went daily in expectation of meeting a certain Englishman with whom he was pleading through the newspapers to give him a million francs in support of his plans—and who, as can be easily surmised, never appeared. This is absurd, of course. But it occurs to me that ancient peoples commonly believed their gods to be jealous, to be always demanding something, and that during reverses they were wont to make amends by voluntary sacrifices such as Poly-crates' flinging the ring into the sea. Therefore, might we not infer that what appears farcial in the actions and character of those bent on performing a signal service to mankind, is but a tribute offered to placate the angered gods? Without this mirth-provoking, eccentric vanguard, progress would be unthinkable and the reflective Hamlets would have nothing to philosophize about.

To repeat: the Don Quixotes invent; the Hamlets exploit what has been invented. Someone may ask, how can the Hamlets exploit anything when they doubt everything and believe no one? My reply is that nature administers our earth so adroitly as to permit neither thoroughgoing Hamlets nor full-fledged Don Quixotes. These are simply extreme expressions of the two opposite tendencies. Life steers toward one or the other of these extremes, but never reaches either of them. It is well to remember that, just as the principle of analysis, of scrutinizing and probing into everything, is extended in *Hamlet* to the limit of tragedy, so in *Don Quixote* enthusiasm is stamped to the opposite order of comedy. In reality one seldom meets with either unalloyed comedy or utter tragedy.

We esteem Hamlet a good deal more because of Horatio's devotion to him. The latter type of personality is frequently encountered in our midst and enhances our prestige. In Horatio we have the type of the adherent, the disciple in the supreme sense of the word. He has a resolute and undeviating character, a quick heart and rather limited logic; he is conscious of all his imperfections and therefore unassuming—a rare occurrence in people of this category. He thirsts for knowledge, is eager to learn, and therefore idolizes

the astute Hamlet; he becomes devoted to him heart and soul, without asking anything in return. He submits to the dictates of Hamlet not as to those of a prince, but rather as to those of a far-sighted chieftain. One of the momentous services that the Hamlets render can be ascribed to their contribution toward the maturity of such individuals as Horatio—who welcome the need of meditation, nurturing it in their glorious hearts, and disseminating it throughout the world. The words in which Hamlet honors Horatio's sterling worth add dignity to himself. In them he sets forth an exalted concept of man, of his high possibilities which no skeptical animus can shake. He addresses Horatio:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts,
As I do thee.

The upright skeptic invariably respects the staunch believer, the Stoic. When the ancient world disintegrated—and thus in every comparable epoch—people of the highest rank took refuge in Stoicism, as the only means of sustaining human dignity in a time of crisis. The skeptics who were impotent to face death, to embark for “the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns,” reverted to Epicureanism. This phenomenon is as pathetic as it is well known.

Both Hamlet and Don Quixote end their lives in a moving way; still, what a contrast even in this finale: Hamlet's last words are impressive. He grows quiet, resigns himself to fate, bids Horatio farewell and declares from his deathbed in favor of the young prince Fortinbras, the heir-apparent who has not desecrated his right to succession. But his gaze is no longer directed ahead.

“The rest is silence,” says the expiring skeptic as he is about to be hushed forever.

Don Quixote's death inspire one's soul with a certain terseness. Right then and there everyone recognizes and fully esteems this

character. When by way of consolation Don Quixote's former footman speaks of their intended journey into knight errantry, the moribund knight replies:

No, it is all over now, and I beg
everyone's pardon; I am no more Don
Quixote, I am once more simply Alonzo,
or Alonzo el Bueno, as I was nicknamed.

This work is a striking one. The mere reference to this nickname for the first and last time leaves an indelible impression on the reader. Yes, this single phrase still has significance in the face of death. Everything shall pass, everything vanish—rank, power, genius—everything shall crumble to dust. . . .

All the grandeur of the earth
Like to smoke dissipates—

But good deeds shall not dissipate in smoke; they are more enduring than the most radiant beauty:

'All things shall pass,' saith the
Apostle, 'Love alone shall abide.'

There is nothing to add. I shall consider myself fortunate if by an indication of the two fundamental directions of the human spirit, which I have spoken of before you, I have aroused certain thoughts within you—thoughts which perhaps may not agree with mine. I shall deem myself fortunate if I have, even approximately, fulfilled the task I have set myself, and have not wearied your kind attention.