

Quixote's Pilgrimage to Beauty as a Message for the Present

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*...it is the privilege and charm of **beauty** to win the **heart**...*

*And as it is the privilege and charm of **beauty** to win the **heart**
and secure good-will...*

*O Lady of **Beauty**, strength and support of my faint **heart**, it is
time for thee to turn the eyes of thy greatness
on this thy captive knight on the brink of so mighty an adventure.*

(Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*)

Abstract:

The article expands the existing literary interpretations of Cervantes' Don Quixote (interpretation of the character as a symbol and as the first existential hero of world literature), adding a philosophical-anthropological (especially phenomenological) and theological interpretation. The text deals with the aesthetic, ethical, and religious reflection on the character of Don Quixote through the prism of a new 'reading' of the novel and its protagonist in the spirit of the Catholic line of interpretation and the phenomenon of beauty. The interpretation of Don Quixote as a knight, saint, and fool is focused on the perspective of realising his 'via pulchritudinis' (path of beauty). As a pilgrim looking for Beauty, he is sought especially through the application of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of beauty. The author arrives at the concept of Don Quixote as a knight of beauty, whose love for Dulcinea is an analogy of the soul's relationship with God, the source of all harmony and beauty. The text provides an argument supporting this interpretation. It shows the beauty of a life transformed by love and freedom, creating a bridge to transcendence. Don Quixote becomes a real patron of the Catholic literary heritage, and the author of the article recommends 'reading' it through the lens of beautifulness.

Keywords:

Don Quixote, Catholicism, phenomenology, transcendentals, beauty, theology of beauty, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Dulcinea, via pulchritudinis (way of beauty)

The living force of the Western tradition is represented by Christian Platonism, of which the central element is beauty. A person is born to strive for good, to know the truth, and to consider everything through the prism of beauty, which brings a person to God. It is a conception of man and the cosmos ordered by beauty and moving towards beauty. The understanding of human life as a pilgrimage leading to beauty and the essential convertibility of truth, goodness, and beauty into beauty becomes the fundamental vanishing point of our search for the character of Don Quixote and his message for 21st century man. The importance of re-establishing beauty as transcendental and the concept of Beauty as a path to Truth open up space for philosophical and theological discussions on the deepening awareness of the kinship of philosophy, religion, and art.

J. M. Wilson's study *The Visions of the Soul: Truth, Goodness and Beauty in the Western Tradition* (2017) and M. J. McGrath's study *Don Quixote and Catholicism* (2020) provided the theoretical background for a new reading of Cervantes' famous novel *Don Quixote* through the prism of the character of Don Quixote as a pilgrim in the process of searching for Beauty. The basic coordinates for the philosophical-anthropological and theological interpretation of the character of Don Quixote and for its aesthetic and ethical reflection can be found in the legacy of philosophers of Thomistic inspiration – the Catholic philosopher J. Maritain (1882-1973) and the Catholic theologian, the theologian of beauty, H. U. von Balthasar (1905-1988). Literary interpretations are focused on the symbolic and existential interpretation of the main character (M. de Unamuno, S. Kierkegaard, V. Černý) and on its phenomenological interpretation (M. Heidegger, J. Ortega y Gasset, A. Mickūnas).

For the person of the information society of the 21st century, preferring instrumental and utilitarian values, beauty is no longer what it used to be. All of the superficial and instant understanding of things is stripped of the beauty that magnetises and re-attracts. Beauty is lost in subjective and meaningless perception, barely resembling its former existence as a transcendental entity at the level of goodness and truth. Thanks to Christianity, the relational transcendental entities (ontological truth, goodness, and beauty) retain their continuous position, but beauty is considered the least graspable and thus rather marginal. Beauty needs to be restored; it must return to its place of honour not only in Christian theology. In the 20th century, this task was taken up by Hans Urs von Balthasar, who made beauty the first transcendental entity. This challenge became our inspiration for reflecting on the character of Don Quixote from a completely new perspective: from the point of view of interpreting his journey towards Beauty.

Theology and Literature

Art expresses and embodies the World, answering fundamental philosophical and religious questions. It encourages a thirst for God; it can convey a message. Great works of art appear in human history as an inexplicable miracle. Interest in the philosophical and religious dimension of literature resulted in the presentation of themes of Christian theology through great works of world literature. Literature and theology converge here, even though they represent different approaches to truth. In the case of literature this approach is mediated imaginatively, and in theology it is directly revealed in Scripture. Theological reading of literature becomes a part of theological anthropology.¹

The value of autonomous literary texts for theology and the Church was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council: literature and the arts are also, in their own way, of great importance to the life of the Church. They strive to make known the proper nature of man, his problems, and his

1 Jan Hojda, 'Teologická četba literatury – cesta víry k člověku', *Communio, Teologie a umění* 73, no. 4 (2014): 61–69.

experiences in trying to know and perfect both himself and the world. They have much to do with revealing man's place in history and in the world: with illustrating the miseries and joys, the needs and strengths of man and with foreshadowing a better life for him. Thus, they are able to elevate human life, expressed in multi-fold forms according to various times and regions (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965).² Pope John Paul II preached the need to rediscover the value of beauty and works of art in the Catholic Church. According to V. Blažek Iňová, the Pope's *Letter to Artists* (1999) began to write a completely new chapter in the relationship between the church and art.³

The theologians Romano Guardini (1885–1968) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) were significantly inspired by the hermeneutics of great literary works. Among Czech theologians, let us mention, for example, Karel Vrána (1925–2004) and Tomáš Špidlík (1919–2010). Christian literature is seen as an integral part of the evangelisation process.

Theology of Beauty

Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis have all spoken about the path of beauty (via pulchritudinis) and its use in preaching the gospel. At the end of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Paul VI addressed a document under the title *Message* (1965) to artists: 'This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair.' (*Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 1965).⁴ Pope John Paul II calls artists to "Beauty" that saves' (*Letter to Artists*, 1999).⁵ *Via pulchritudinis* is the title of the final document of the 2006 Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture.⁶ In this document, Pope Benedict XVI identifies the path of beauty as a privileged path for evangelisation and dialogue. In his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis refers to Pope Benedict XVI's sentence about the path of beauty as an important part of evangelisation: 'Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.'⁷ Pope Paul VI in 1965 defined artists as people 'who are captivated by beauty and work for it', Pope John Paul II in 1999 called artists 'genius creators of beauty', Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 defined them as 'guardians of beauty', and Pope Francis in 2020 called them 'those through whom we understand the beauty of the Gospel'.⁸

The phenomenon of beauty has been present in the history of the world since the very beginning of creation. Beauty in art represents man's spiritual journey to God. According to Tomáš Špidlík, art that creates beauty can play the role of unifying all human knowledge.⁹ Literature can play a special role in guiding us directly to the acceptance of beauty.

2 Cf. 'Some More Urgent Duties of Christians in Regard to Culture', *Gaudium et Spes*, part II, chapter II, article 62 (1965) cited 27th May 2022, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

3 Veronika Blažek Iňová, *V úžasu před Boží krásou (Vztah Božího zjevení a lidské zkušenosti krásy jako výzva pro náboženskou edukaci)* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2021), 121.

4 Paul VI, *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, I, 305. Message addressed to artists by Pope Paul VI in the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 8th December 1965, I, 305.

5 Zdeněk Ambrož Eminger and Jan Pavel II., *Teologie a kultura*, 'List papeže Jana Pavla II. umělcům', article 4 (4.4. 1999) (Svitavy: Trinitas, 2008), 107.

6 *The 'Via Pulchritudinis': Privileged Pathway for Evangelisation and Dialogue*, concluding document of the plenary assembly 2006, cited 27th May 2022, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_20060327_plenary-assembly_final-document_en.html.

7 Papež František, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apoštolská exhortace a hlásání evangelia v současném světě* (Praha: Paulínky, 2014), article 167 (106–107).

8 Papež František, *Skrze umělce chápeme krásu evangelia*, Proglas.cz, cited 27th May 2022, <https://zpravy.proglas.cz/udalosti/papez-frantisek-skrze-umelce-chapeme-krasu-evangelia/>.

9 Tomáš Špidlík, 'Umění sjednotí svět', in *Sborník Katolické teologické fakulty*, volume VII., (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2005), 365.

One of the most convincing contemporary interpretations of the metaphysics of art and beauty is found in Maritain's philosophy of art and beauty. Jacques Maritain gave a modern interpretation of the idea of St Thomas Aquinas on beauty as species (form) and lumen (glow). In his work *Umění a scholastika* (*Art and Scholasticism*), he defines beauty as 'the splendor of the form on the proportioned parts of matter...a flashing of intelligence on a matter intelligibly arranged. The intelligence delights in the beautiful because in the beautiful it finds itself again and recognizes itself, and makes contact with its own light.'¹⁰ According to J. Maritain, to define beauty as the radiance of form means to define it at as the radiance of mystery at the same time. 'Every union whatsoever among beings proceeds from the divine beauty.'¹¹ Beauty in his conception acquires a fully existential dimension as a reality given to the senses, as an attraction of the mind to the perception of being and truth, and finally to an understanding of beauty as the principle of organisation of all reality as a whole.¹² J. Maritain states that 'the beautiful is essentially delightful. This is why, of its very nature and precisely as beautiful, it stirs desire and produces love, whereas the true as such only illumines.'¹³

Maritain's interpretation of the ideas of St Thomas Aquinas is followed by Hans Urs von Balthasar. In his theological aesthetics, he uses the terms 'form' (Gestalt) and 'radiance' or 'brightness' (Glanz) and makes beauty the first transcendental, the first among equals.¹⁴ His aim was to develop Christian theology in the light of the third transcendental: 'to complete the visibility of truth and goodness through beauty.'¹⁵ In his work *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* Balthasar states:

As the last transcendental beauty guards and seals the others: no truth or good is eternal without the radiance of the grace of that which is freely given. Also Christianity, which under the influence of modernity subscribed to mere truth (faith as a system of correct propositions) or mere goodness (faith as the most useful and beneficial for the subject), would be thrown down from its own heights. But when the saints based their own being on God's beauty, they were always protectors of beauty.¹⁶

In Balthasar's work, beauty represents 'the first and last word of theology'.¹⁷ According to Tomáš Ulrich, as a 'theologian of the glory of God', Balthasar seeks to reunite theology and beauty ('theologian of beauty'). Using the trinitarian origin of Christ's kenosis (Christ's incarnation and crucifixion) he wants to point out the drama of man, creation and redemption given by the immeasurable generosity of God – a drama staged in the theatre of the world since eternity.¹⁸ For Balthasar, the supreme archetypal beauty is the fact that God appears in history and became man. For him, the objectifying measure of the perception of Divine splendour was the unique and unrepeatable fact of the revelation of the glory of God in Jesus Christ. From this centre, beauty radiates from

10 Jacques Maritain, *Umění a scholastika* (Olomouc: Knihovna Filosofické revue, 1933), p. 28.

11 Ibid., 32–33.

12 James Matthew Wilson, *The Visions of the Soal: Truth, Goodness and Beauty in the Western Tradition* (New York, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 176.

13 Maritain, *Umění a scholastika*, 30.

14 Tomáš Ulrich, 'Pulchrum, bonum, verum v díle Hanse Urse von Balthasara' (Ph.D., Masarykova univerzita, 2017), 7.

15 Tomáš Ulrich, 'Místo filozofie v díle Hanse Urse von Balthasara k 110. výročí jeho narození', *Studia Philosophica* 62, no. 1 (2015): 131.

16 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, Bd III/1, (Einsiedeln, 1988), 39.

17 Stephan van Erp, *The Art of Theology. Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics and the Foundation of Faith* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 55.

18 Elio Guerriero, *Hans Urs von Balthasar. Eine monographie*, (1. Aufl.) (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1993), 10–13.

the beginning (alpha) to the end (omega) – the Son of God is the aesthetic model of all beauty.¹⁹ Balthasar's theological aesthetics brings a theologically informed phenomenology of the work of art. This phenomenological approach resonates with Balthasar's leading analogy between Christ (as the highest form) and the work of art. Heidegger's fundamental questioning about the origin of the work of art is ontologically and Christologically answered by Balthasar through his concept of form. This concept fundamentally surpasses Heidegger's philosophy of being and gives aesthetics an irreplaceable role within metaphysics. He bases his philosophy of the meaning of being on the metaphysics of the transcendental experience of *Herrlichkeit*, because Being and the appearance of Being constitute unity and truth.²⁰ For man, the meaning of his existence partially opens up in the experience of *Herrlichkeit*, in the experience of encountering overflowing Being, with Love. Tomáš Ulrich refers to Balthasar's remarkable philosophy as the 'philosophy of the beauty of being', which combines the aesthetic and theological levels.

Balthasar defines his theological aesthetics as finding the relationship between form and brightness. The form suggests that beauty also has its material principle, while the brightness of beauty is an expression of God's mystery.²¹ Shape, likeness, figure became the cornerstone of Balthasar's philosophical-aesthetic-theological work. This is because the shape, the figure can be bypassed and viewed from all possible sides – each time differently, but it is still the same object.²² Balthasar argues for the 'inseparability of form' in every act of knowledge and goes on to argue that every element of life is to be 'subject to the form of man'. He illustrates his larger purpose by saying that 'being a Christian is just a form', so we see the identity between the meaning and integrity of life and its form. A poor life will lack form precisely because it lacks being and ontological goodness.²³ Balthasar's theology was saturated with literature. He called for literary texts to be understood holistically and placed within the larger theodramatic context of the drama between heaven and earth.²⁴ Balthasar deals with the character of Don Quixote in his work *Herrlichkeit (The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, Volume V – The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age)* in the chapter Folly and Glory. His conception of Don Quixote as a knight of Christ, a holy fool, does not represent a novelty in existing lines of interpretation. However, he integrates the figure of the knight firmly and permanently into the Roman Catholic perspective of research on theological-philosophical aesthetics. Don Quixote becomes the true patron of the Catholic literary heritage, which Balthasar recommends reading through the lens of the beautiful.²⁵

Don Quixote as a Son of Catholic Spain

The novel *Don Quixote* is primarily a religious work, elaborated in Cervantes' style of irony, satire and literary multiperspectivism. Faith pervades the work as it did in Spain at that time, and the Christian perspective of the work is completely unquestionable. The character of Don Quixote is inseparable from the teachings of the Catholic Church. Franco Riva calls Quixote 'a very Christian son of a very Catholic Spain'.²⁶ In agreement with Balthasar, he considers Don Quixote to be

19 Ulrich, 'Pulchrum, bonum, verum v dile Hanse Urse von Balthasara', 35.

20 Ibid., 146.

21 Blažek Iňová, *V úžasu před Boží krásou*, 162.

22 Ulrich, *Místo filozofie v dile Hanse Urse von Balthasara k 110. výročí jeho narození*, 129.

23 Ibid., 131.

24 Edward T. Oakes SJ and David Moss (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221.

25 Eric J. Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote: From Hidalgo to Priest* (Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 212.

26 Franco Riva, 'Fame, Etica, Utopia: Icone Del Don Chisciotte', *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 109, no. 2 (2017), 349.

the most complete character of all the characters in Christian literature.²⁷ The moment Alonso Quijano accepts the identity of Don Quixote, his journey to deep self-awareness in God begins. There has been the unprecedented interest in the novel and its main character among writers, philosophers, theologians, and literary critics practically from the time of the first publication of the work until now. It has resulted in two basic lines of interpretation – Erasmus and Catholic readings of the novel (in addition to the rather marginal atheistic and crypto-Judaistic interpretation). In one of the most recent studies, *Don Quixote and Catholicism* (2020), Michael J. McGrath notes the prevailing interpretation in the context of the spiritual legacy of Erasmus of Rotterdam and his work (Carlos Fuentes, Américo Castro, Marcel Bataillon, Alban Forcione, Henry Higuera, etc.).²⁸ The author sees in the novel a great Catholic work, inseparable from the teachings of the Catholic Church and firmly reflecting the principles of Catholic theology. As a true Renaissance Catholic, Cervantes engaged in religious issues, but Erasmus's influence cannot be ruled out (especially in his efforts to internalise the faith). Still, according to McGrath, his faith remains consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church, and the work is a product of Counter-Reformation spirituality, reflecting the diversity of early modern Catholicism. His criticism of the clergy is an evocation of the critical voice of St Teresa of Ávila and is addressed to a small percentage of the clergy.²⁹ Cervantes satirises external Church ceremonies, and rejects Church hypocrites, dogmatism, and pomp.³⁰ However, his satirical intent and irony are combined with a deep respect for Catholicism and its teachings. McGrath's list of authors interpreting the work in the light of the Catholic faith (Helmut Hatzfeld, José Antonio López Calle, Ken Colston, Joseph Ricapito, Sean Fitzpatrick, S. Muñoz Iglesias, Miguel de Unamuno, Maria Zambrano) is enriched by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ortega y Gasset, to whom we also refer in the following text.

Each reader defines his understanding of himself in the way he reads the novel and perceives the character of Don Quixote. Cervantes leaves interpretation to the reader's perception of subjective reality. He masterfully breaks up the reader's perspectives, making the polyphony of the novel resound – with many voices, many truths that are nothing more than subjective opinions. The only constant in the relationship between the main protagonist of the novel, Don Quixote, and his servant and friend Sancho Panza, from the beginning to the end of the novel, is Catholicism. Catholicism is set from the beginning as the baseline of their developing relationship.³¹ Both are men of faith who constantly entrust their lives and destiny to God's protection. Quixote is a hero of the indomitable power of Christian optimism. At the end of the novel, he turns to the fullness of philosophically understood Catholic realism. This is also illustrated by Quixote's desire to die in the manner prescribed by the Catholic Church (confession of sins and reception of the Body of Christ before death).³²

The foundation of the novel's catholicity is Cervantes' targeted defence of individual freedom, which is interwoven throughout the work and, together with the phenomenon of love, represents the main themes of the novel. The direction of Quixote's pilgrimage looking for beauty is determined by love and freedom. All the characters in the novel are tested by their own measure of freedom and love. The search for truth becomes the search for God. The author purposefully

27 Riva, 'Fame, Etica, Utopia: Icone Del Don Chisciotte', 356.

28 Michael J. McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2020), 3.

29 Helena Zbudilová, *Hledání (nejen) španělské identity (Reflexe přínosu Miguela de Unamuna a svaté Terezie od Ježíše pro filozofii života a filozofii náboženství v období globalizace)* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2016).

30 Václav Černý, *Tvorba a osobnost II* (Cervantes a jeho don Quijote) (Praha: Odeon, 1993), 27.

31 McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism*, 65.

32 Joseph Pearce, 'Don Quixote in a Nutshell', *Crisis magazine* (A Voice for the Faithful Catholic Laity), updated 1st January 2022, cited 28th May 2022, <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2022/don-quixote-in-a-nutshell>.

shakes the reader's ideas about truth and Christianity when he incorporates them into the context of concepts such as reason, madness, chivalry. Catholicism inspired Cervantes' world in many ways, central to both his life and his imaginative narrative. The originality and truth of this work of art was expressed by Elie Faure in the following words: 'He who knew Cervantes could not know Don Quixote, but he who knows Don Quixote (who knows God's work) knows Cervantes (knows God too).'³³

The Aesthetics of Don Quixote's Character

Over the centuries, Don Quixote has been interpreted: classically, romantically, realistically, Freudianistically, theologically, existentially, postmodernly. This novel is truly the first modern and postmodern novel. As Jiří Peňáz states, it is modern in its depiction of man and his destiny, and postmodern in his way of telling the story, his openness, contextuality, authorial playfulness. There is always something to discover, interpret, have fun with, and marvel at.³⁴ Literary interpretations follow the understanding of Don Quixote as a hero, saint, or fool. Next to the symbolic and existential interpretation (M. de Unamuno, S. Kierkegaard, V. Černý and others), understanding the character of Don Quixote as the first existential hero of world literature, a phenomenological interpretation appears (M. Heidegger, H. U. von Balthasar, J. Ortega y Gasset, A. Mickūnas, R.L. Milles and others). The phenomenological approach provides a particularly suitable point of view for examining the meaning of Don Quixote, since depicting the nature and functioning of the characters' consciousness is one of the main purposes of Cervantes' original novelistic style, shaping the character as a unique individual who is neither an archetype, nor a typified character or a caricature.³⁵ According to J. Ortega y Gasset, the phenomenological correlation of the perceiver and what is perceived ('I am me and my circumstances') is fully realised in Cervantes' novel. Ortega y Gasset understands Cervantes' style as a phenomenological return to experience.³⁶ Don Quixote arouses in the reader an emotional response – an aesthetic feeling and an intellectual response – an aesthetic judgment, typical for seeing the beautiful. The character expresses the qualities of his soul, which is characterised by the harmony of a noble, good, and free life, rich in ideals. It is a human life embodied in a form. The artistic beauty of Don Quixote is the splendour of knightly values in practice.³⁷

Don Quixote as a Knight Errant, a Holy Knight

A hero was born the moment he decided to go on an adventure. Alonzo Quijano believed in the possibility of love, goodness, and truth with absolute faith and set out to realise them. He left his home to gain true salvation. He becomes a knight, and he acquires a new identity when, in a creative gesture, he chooses his new name – Don Quixote.³⁸ As an avid reader of chivalric novels, he confuses reality with literary fiction, finding in the texts of these books a gateway to a world

33 Elie Faure, *Dějiny umění V. – Duch tvarů* (Praha: Aventinum, 1928), 157.

34 Jiří Peňáz, 'Cervantes s rukou v nebi: 400 let', *Lidové noviny*, 27th April 2016, cited 28th May 2022, <https://www.pressreader.com/czech-republic/lidove-noviny/20160427/281694023968292>.

35 Katarína Korbová, 'Don Quijote a Sancho Panza', in *Svět Dona Quijota*, ed. Jaroslava Marešová et al. (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2018), 159.

36 José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditace o Quijotovi* (Brno: Host, 2007), 25.

37 Agustín Basave Fernández del Valle, 'Filosofía del Quijote. Un estudio de antropología axiológica', Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, cited 28th May 2022, <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/filosofia-del-quijote-un-estudio-de-antropologia-axiologica-0/html/>.

38 Katarína Korbová, 'Don Quijote a Sancho Panza', 160.

of endless possibilities. His life becomes living literature. According to M. Foucault, his journey becomes a search for analogies between novels of chivalry and the world.³⁹

Cervantes incorporates all of the Christian meaning of the books of chivalry into the novel. Don Quixote is the embodiment of the suprapersonal moral law based on the Ten Commandments and the values and virtues of the chivalric code. The greatest virtue of a knight is his will which finds its expression in action and moral heroism manifested in particular by moral purity and nobility. Quixote's gospel of chivalry means showing good to everyone and evil to no one. He is a true knight who holds his spear in the service of goodness, truth, and beauty. His 'I know who I am'⁴⁰ shows an act of freedom, as the protagonist himself knows who he is and determines who he should become. Before his death, returning to the original identity of Alonso Quijano (this time called the Good One), he rejects chivalric novels, but not the idea of chivalry. According to V. Černý, Cervantes, as the creator of Don Quixote, preserves everything that was noble and poetic in this idea – the search for truth, the thought of self-sacrifice to truth and love, bravery, honesty, chastity of feelings.⁴¹ He developed it into a new ideal, capable of living for ages and lasting even into the 21st century.

For Don Quixote, chivalry is a profession of faith, and going through heroism makes his life noble and deep, even mystical. According to Johan Huizinga, religion cannot be separated from chivalry: 'The conception of chivalry as a sublime form of secular life might be defined as an aesthetic ideal assuming the appearance of an ethical ideal.'⁴² Santiago Madrigal, who also calls chivalry a religion, addresses this topic in his study *Lo Religioso en El Quijote* (2016).⁴³ Cervantes transfers Dante's theological values (the *Divine Comedy* as a Catholic vision of divine harmony) into knightly aesthetics and morality. Because Quixote has become a knight errant, based on the code of chivalry, he says: 'I am brave, polite, liberal, gracious, generous, courteous, daring, gentle, patient, and able to endure travails, imprisonment, and enchantments.'⁴⁴ His life as a knight errant teaches him that truth is not independent of God. The words 'I know who I am' take on a completely different meaning at the end of the novel. The books of chivalry were his bible, his holy scriptures. At the end of his life, he regrets that he did not devote his life to reading books about the lives and deeds of saints, which are the light of the soul, and he fully accepts his relationship with God.

The Christian myth is clearly looming behind the character of Don Quixote. The Christological aspect of the work is absolutely crucial for H. U. von Balthasar. The Christological dimension of the novel is also emphasised by a number of other authors, such as Sean Fitzpatrick and Ken Colston.⁴⁵ In the mocked purity of Don Quixote, there is an Ecce Homo, a kind of reflection of Christ even in a poor caricature. Don Quixote has been associated with the figure of Christ since the 18th century. In his study *The Sanctification of Don Quixote* (1991), Erich J. Ziolkowski, in addition to the religious dimension of the mythical legacy of this literary figure in world literature, also focuses on his theological significance. Quixote's struggle to maintain faith in his chivalrous fantasy in the face of reality and reason mirrors the man of today struggling to maintain faith in

39 Michel Foucault, *Dějiny šílenství: Hledání historických kořenů pojmu duševní choroby* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 1993), 56–71.

40 Miguel de Cervantes, *Důmyslný rytíř Don Quijote de la Mancha*, part one, chap.V (Praha: KMa, 2005), 55.

41 Černý, *Tvorba a osobnost II*, 25.

42 McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism*, 50.

43 Santiago Madrigal, 'Lo Religioso en El Quijote: El Cristianismo Católico del Caballero Andante', *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 91, no. 358 (2016): 451–456.

44 Harry Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 140.

45 McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism*, 56.

God despite secularism and scepticism.⁴⁶ Ziolkowski shows how, in the course of the Enlightenment, the image of Christ became demythologised and humanised, while the image of Don Quixote became mythologised and idealised. The author emphasises the novel's 'sanchification' of Don Quixote and the epistemological significance associated with it: from 'believing is seeing' to 'seeing is believing'.⁴⁷

In his supposed madness, Quixote adopts not only the identity of a knight but also that of a saint. He acts as a redeemer because he sees in human sinners the inner goodness and potential of what they can be. So he is not just a knight errant fighting on the plains of Spain, but also on a spiritual plane thanks to his 'illuminating' imagination.⁴⁸ Quixote himself feels that he is a knight of earth, not heaven. He recognises that there is a higher chivalry than his own. It is the mystical chivalry of a humble monk. Miguel de Unamuno identified a correlation between Quixote and St Ignatius of Loyola. In his work *Vida*, he compares Don Quixote with the Spanish national saints, the Marian knight Ignatius of Loyola and the mystic St John of the Cross.⁴⁹ Here, Unamuno translates the proposal of evangelisation through literature – he labels the novel 'The Gospel of Don Quixote'. He used the novel and its character to create his own philosophy – quixoticism. Quixoticism represents the cultivation of the soul by an axiomatic space that shapes human lives across epochs. Quixote becomes the patron saint of cultural reflection.⁵⁰

Don Quixote is a knight-errant and a Christian, a Catholic who understands his pilgrimage through the 'narrow path of chivalry' as a meritorious path. As a knight of Christ who realises the Christian ideal, he sees in it his own meaning of life. External detachment from chivalry leads Don Quixote to a higher knowledge of himself. That leads to a certain sanctity, which he finds at his death as Alonso Quijano – the good one. At the end of the novel, he redeems his wounded idealism with trust in God and dies a man loved by his family and friends. It is on his deathbed, when he returns to the identity of Alonso Quijano, that he becomes a Christian saint. In the end, it is his kind nature and kind treatment of others, not his heroic deeds, that give him true honour and glory. While Renaissance literary heroes usually fight primarily for themselves, Quixote sacrifices himself for the sake of others. His motive is to live and die for others. The goal of his sacrifice is freedom, justice, and peace on earth: the return of the Golden Age. He is of the lineage of saints, ascetics, and martyrs: a man of ideas.⁵¹

Don Quixote as a Mad-dreamer, a Holy Fool

In his novel, Cervantes used the phenomenon of madness as a literary device; the duality 'mad-sane' accompanies the reader of the novel at every step. Quixote is a fool in the manner of a Renaissance jester, a poetic fool, a good fool, driven mad by excessive reading of novels of chivalry. His madness is literary madness. This character with a grotesquely tragicomic body acts, fights for ideals, wants to restore the lost traditional values of the Golden Age. He is the very embodiment of the contradiction between the absolute ideal and reality.⁵² It expands the ideal

46 Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote*, 14.

47 Ibid., 20.

48 Brittany Guzman, 'Don Quixote: Sainly Knight', *The Imaginative Conservative*, updated 15th January 2022, cited 28th May 2022, <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2022/01/don-quixote-sainly-knight-cervantes-brittany-guzman.html>.

49 Helena Zbudilová, 'Eticko-náboženský apel Unamunova quijotismu', *Caritas et Veritas* 2, no. 2 (2012): 38, <https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2012.015>.

50 Magdalena Barbaruk, *The Long Shadow of Don Quixote* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), 30–33.

51 Tomáš Vitek, *Don Quijote mezi Cervantesem a Rabelaisem* (Brno: Host, 1997), 21.

52 Václav Černý, *Studie o španělské literatuře* (Praha: Cherm, 2008), 385.

and its space into a world living in the space-time horizon. The journey is the space of his folly, the home is the space of sanity. Quixote is completely imbued with affection for his ideal. He is a deranged dreamer, representing the wisdom of the heart, not the head, preferring the folly of passion to the prudence of indifferent men. The manifestations of his insanity consist mainly in his inability to distinguish the real world from the literary world.⁵³

Quixote's name entered the language as a contemptuous nickname, evoking pity tinged with mockery. Quixote's ridiculousness functionally turns into an aesthetic part of the work's structure, as much as the knight's feeling is genuine and ardent. Quixote's folly keeps repeating 'Woe to you who are lukewarm'. As Václav Černý states, 'the important thing is not to know the truth, but to be the truth: that is, to vouch for your own piece of knowledge of the truth.'⁵⁴ Don Quixote lifts the hearts of readers, redeemed by his noble folly. Sometimes it seems that both Don Quixote and Sancho are aware of their folly or their game. Play, unlike foolishness, is a voluntary activity. Quixote then represents the metaphysical actor, willing to risk ridicule just to keep idealism alive. Madness is then his sacrifice for our emptiness and desolation, for our loss of imagination and ideals.

While dying, Don Quixote comes to his senses. The end of Quixote's illusion, his spiritual and bodily death, is heralded by the experience gained in Montesino's cave. Here he experiences the height of his chivalry and at the same time watches the disintegration of his ideal.⁵⁵ Doubts arise in him about knighthood errant and the value of his ideal. If in the first part of the work he is a comical and ridiculous fool, in the second part he appears as a wise fool, a fool and a wise man at the same time.

The Fool represents one of the archetypal characters of Christian literature. The folly of the consciously willed cross brings forth the character of the holy fool who is shipwrecked in a nihilistic, atheistic, and materialistic world: a famous Christian fool who perceives the highest reality in the lowest. Quixote devoted himself to the wisdom of divine love, which is folly in the eyes of this world. Balthasar deals with the character of Don Quixote in his *Theological Aesthetics* in the chapter *Folly and Glory*, where he addresses Symeon of Emesa, the first fool for Christ, and Jacopon da Todi (nicknamed James the Fool) and places Cervantes alongside other authors who use the figure of the fool in their work – for example, Wolfram of Eschenbach, Erasmus of Rotterdam, H. J. C. von Grimmelshausen, F. D. Dostoevsky.⁵⁶ Balthasar viewed Don Quixote as a holy fool associated with a religious paradox.⁵⁷ According to Balthasar, the true fool always has a certain spark of ignorance, of unwanted sanctity. He is, as if unprotected, open to the spiritual sky, an essentially transcending person. Since antiquity, according to Balthasar, simplicity has been surrounded by nobility, whether understood as wisdom (in comparison to science) or as folly (in comparison to wisdom). This folly became for Balthasar a new form of tragedy that partially preserves the dimension of transcendental beauty and can help introspective humanity find the lost transcendental dimension. According to him, from the Middle Ages to the present day, the distinct character of the fool, the jester, who is close to us, touches us, and literally moves us to action, can be clearly

53 Anna Laviana Ludvíková, 'Větrné mlýny, stáda ovcí, měchy vína a valchové sloupy', in *Svět Dona Quijota*, ed. Jaroslava Marešová et al. (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2018), 259.

54 Černý, *Tvorba a osobnost II*, kap. Don Quijote a quijotismus, 441.

55 Barbora Vrátilová, 'Montesinova jeskyně', in *Svět Dona Quijota*, ed. Jaroslava Marešová et al. (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2018), 306.

56 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik, Ästhetik der Transzendentalen Vernunft, Narrentum und Herrlichkeit*, Bd. III/1, (Einsiedeln, 1988), 517–28.

57 Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote*, 212.

perceived in literature.⁵⁸ Balthasar's fool imitates Christ's receptivity to the Father by defying the world's expectations. Regarding the theological-philosophical aesthetics of the character of Don Quixote, Balthasar states:

Quixote's madness is the closing of the gap between the 'ideal' of God's salvation in Christ and the 'reality' of the earthly, world-changing work of Christ. The chasm that Don Quixote sees as already bridged in his 'naïve' faith and well-intentioned actions opens up, making his fate and failure ridiculously obvious to everyone. Don Quixote thus becomes the true patron of the Catholic will to action and one of the Catholic scholars who are neglected for their dogmatism, which can only be understood as Catholic through humor.⁵⁹

Don Quixote, as the image of the saint-fool devoted to Christ, in his wanderings is primarily the one who follows Christ himself and becomes his image.

Don Quixote as a Knight of Beauty, a Messenger of Ideals

The novel opens up a new world that offers the reader beauty and grandeur. Beauty here is not only of an aesthetic order, but above all metaphysical, full of grace, 'beauty that saves the world'.⁶⁰ It is beauty that ennobles a person and brings them to God. Cervantes' strategy of irony in the novel involves changes in the field of perception from an aesthetic dimension to an ethical one. It begins with an aesthetic admiration for chivalric books, where after reading them repeatedly, the protagonist decides to 'live' their texts. Thus, aesthetic admiration led Quixote to ethical awareness and resulted in an awareness of Truth. The ethical ideal of Quixote's chivalry encompasses a wider world than that of chivalry of Celtic-Germanic origin. Quixote is about establishing justice as the norm in a world plagued by evil and injustice. According to S. Kierkegaard, all three stages of human existence can be documented through the example of the character of Don Quixote. Don Quixote exists in the aesthetic stage, when his life is determined by the horizon of reason and oriented towards achieving fame and glory. By identifying with the ideal of chivalry and service to people, he realises his being in the ethical stage. The religious stage of existence means the self-sacrifice of one's egoistic Self to God and the fulfilment of God's mission of restoring the Golden Age.⁶¹

Don Quixote appropriates the archetype of the hero of chivalric novels, so that the process of demythologisation finally takes place – the archetype dissolves and Quixote returns to his true identity of Alonzo Quijano – the good one.⁶² The knight is in search of God, and a definitive aspect of that search is his relationship with Dulcinea. The cult of Dulcinea is one of the most important parts of the knight's spiritual journey.⁶³ The next sub-chapter entitled 'Dulcinea as an ideal of beauty and a reflection of heaven' will be devoted to this phenomenon.

Don Quixote found ideals in books, in the cultural products of his time. He subordinated everything to his idea, that is, to become a knight errant. He follows an ideal that does not conflict

58 Ulrich, 'Pulchrum, bonum, verum v dile Hanse Urse von Balthasara', 82.

59 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Aesthetik*, Bd. III/1, 517–518.

60 Barbaruk, *The Long Shadow of Don Quixote*, 212.

61 Eric Ziolkowski, 'Søren Kierkegaard, The Quixote, and the Plunging Guadalquivir or Guadiana', *Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter*, no. 53 (2008): 18–26.

62 Bernardo Enrique Flores Ortega, 'El simbolismo del viaje, la nostalgia por la Edad de Oro y otros mitos en Don Quijote de la Mancha', *Dikaosyne* 11, no. 20 (2008): 163.

63 McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism*, 36.

with traditional Christianity, but is a cultural expression rather than a universal truth. Quixote is a man of ideas, a determined fighter for an ideal who gives himself completely to his ideal. He lives fully only for this ideal that has completely filled his mind and excited his heart. He insists unconditionally on the ideal of love, goodness, and truth, and refuses any compromise.⁶⁴ He still carries these purest ideals within himself, and we feel something noble about his actions. By his action, he defends the value of the act, the merit of the sacrifice, the belief in the ideal, and in the final victory of justice. He totally personifies self-sacrifice. He values his own life only if it can serve his ideal. His logic is not pure logic, but ethics. It does not deal with reality, but with values.⁶⁵ Don Quixote longs for the meaning of life and beauty, two things that he says the world lacks. He hopes to bring order to the chaotic world by restoring the chivalric code of the Knights Errant. The voice of Beauty helps him open to the light of Truth. And it helps him grasp the meaning of pain.

Quixote's world-shaping folly is the 'idealism of the good'.⁶⁶ The ridiculous character in the first chapters, causing the reader to smile, gradually captivates with his purity and nobility. Mockery would fail to evoke the aesthetic feeling and intellectual love inherent in the good and the beautiful. Quixote's madness rests on three main pillars – justice, freedom, and beauty.⁶⁷

Michel Foucault calls Don Quixote 'the hero of the Same' in *Words and Things*. He is a font that wanders the world in search of the reality which he is meant to be. He is a copy of the characters and his adventure is meant to be an analogy. However, this principle of imitation is constantly breaking down. Subjective thinking, where a sign is a sign of a thing, a word representative of the 'external world', falls with the advent of the modern age.⁶⁸ M. Foucault adds to this: '...language no longer bears an immediate resemblance to the things it names...'.⁶⁹ And among them Don Quixote wanders alone. He is perhaps the supreme believer in the intimate unity between the signifier and the signified. The novel announces the end of the game between resemblance and signs. In the words of Petr Chvojka, 'Cervantes in the novel, by overturning the established ratio of signifier and signified, exposes the flimsiness of the entire principle of signification, undermines the foundations of existing epistemological premises and moves the pillar of the entire world'.⁷⁰

Don Quixote thirsts for beauty and has a mad desire to meet beauty and become more beautiful through this encounter. He observes reality through the eyes of his imagination and adapts reality to his ideas. He tries to prove that human life can be as beautiful and fulfilling as the novels of chivalry. He embarks on an adventure for beauty, driving through the Spanish countryside in search of the beautiful because it is unknown in advance, always surprising. He proves the strength of his desire for beauty the most in his adventure with lions, when he becomes the Lion Knight. On his way, he reconquers the natural and social 'world' and gives it new meanings. His journey thus becomes a ceremony full of miracles, miraculous transformations. The novel offers us a pure struggle to extract beauty from complete chaos, a struggle to poetise reality.⁷¹

According to M. Heidegger, Don Quixote is a real poet-hero who literally takes on his shoulders

64 Černý, *Studie o španělské literatuře*, 383.

65 José María Callejas Berdonés, 'Persona y ética en El Quijote', (PhD diss. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2003), 5.

66 Fernando Pérez-Borbujo, *Tres miradas sobre el Quijote. Unamuno-Ortega-Zambrano* (Barcelona: Herder 2010), 74.

67 Barbaruk, *The Long Shadow of Don Quixote*, 49.

68 Petr Chvojka, 'Don Quijote jako parodie reprezentace', in *Jazyky reprezentace 2*, ed. David Skalický et al. (Praha: Akropolis, 2014), 68–69.

69 Michel Foucault, *Slová a věci; archeológia humanitných vied* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2000), 63.

70 Chvojka, 'Don Quijote jako parodie reprezentace', 70.

71 Felipe Daniel Montero, 'The Quijote Sub Specie Aeternitatis: The Philosophical Significance of the Spanish Golden Age', Author Archives, updated 8th August 2019, cited 28th May 2022, <https://bluelabyrinths.com/2019/08/08/the-quixote-sub-specie-aeternitatis-the-philosophical-significance-of-the-spanish-golden-age/>.

the basic struggle that is the essence of a work of art.⁷² Traveling through Spain, he poetises reality while simultaneously inhabiting and creating the world in which he fights. By naming people and things essentially, he embraces and joins them as the embodiment of beauty. He transforms the everyday reality of life, making it bright and beautiful. He has the ability to see inner beauty and see wholeness in what is separated. He sees beauty that is hidden from others. By 'painting' beauty on the low and undesirable, he 'unpaints' its worthlessness and ugliness. Even when man's image is painted over with an earthly image (contaminated with dirt and earthly deposits), the image of God remains in him forever and can shine brightly again. With the power of his love and the magic wand of his tongue, Quixote transforms everything ugly and grotesque into beautiful and graceful. He contemplates everything in beauty. By assigning value to people and things, they change their identity – Aldonza becomes Dulcinea, the barber's bowl becomes Mambrino's helmet, etc. His polite behaviour towards the innkeeper, prostitutes, and others results in them being polite as well. Characters are given redemption, for example, fallen women are called perfect. Quixote postulates a poetic model and not a material existence; he does not imitate things as they are, but as they should be. He suffers numerous defeats, but comes out of them with dignity because he refuses to give up the ideal image of things and people. He sees in them what they 'could become'.⁷³

Don Quixote creates goodness and beauty, he participates as a creator in God's plan. What he touches is miraculously transformed. He modifies the world with his ideal projection and miraculously transforms it with the power of illusion. Quixote has the ability to transform reality by adapting it to an idea and achieves an even greater degree of sublimation through love. He imitates the movement of divine love. He sees things and people as true and therefore beautiful, and by his efforts to uncover and fulfil their beauty, he becomes a participant in their drama of earthly existence.⁷⁴ At the same time, his purity is projected into the characters and thereby purifies them. It awakens human hearts to glimpse beauty. Beauty makes his life authentic and radiant. Even before death, Quixote does not cease to desire beauty. He strives again for the most beautiful thing – a holy death. For Quixote, as a man of faith, beauty transcends aesthetics and finds its archetype in God.

Don Quixote corresponds to the concept of a 'beautiful person' – he embodies innocence, faith, enthusiasm, passion, suffering, nobility, idealism, and poetic imagination. His beauty is in the beauty of his soul; his world is a world of beauty and love. He sees with the eyes of the heart and good will, not through reason. He fascinates us with his purity – he is chaste, loving the truth, just, suffering. He believes in pure, essential, platonic, romantic love, and this belief elevates him above the other characters in the novel. He is convinced of the harmony, beauty, and goodness of nature, and he proves God with the beauty of his life. He feels his message: 'I know who I am and who I may be, if I choose.' His existential sense is connected to people, time, and the world. He represents the ideal of piety, humanity, justice, and lived solidarity. Beauty comes at a high price, and that price is a sense of freedom.⁷⁵ At the same time, Quixote carries within himself a dimension of nobility that seeks spiritual nobility, fights against lowliness with creative activity, overcomes the sphere of the mundane. According to M. Heidegger, the grandeur of human presence is dedicated to the power of being and expresses its truth. Don Quixote transcends his Dasein as a hidalgo.

72 Martin Heidegger, *Původ uměleckého díla* (Praha, OIKOYMENH 2016), 44.

73 Slochower, *Mythopoesis- Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics*, 147.

74 Jacob Terneus, 'Chasing Lions: Don Quixote in Pursuit of the Beautiful', *The Imaginative Conservative*, updated 29th November 2017, cited 28th May 2022, <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2019/06/chasing-lions-don-quixote-beautiful-jacob-terneus-timeless.html>.

75 Tomáš Špidlík and Marko I. Rupnik, *Nové cesty pastorální teologie: Krása jako východisko* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2008), 588.

The sublime power of human 'dwelling' is born from the surrender of being, when truth, beauty, love are born from the spiritual heart.

Dulcinea as the Ideal of Beauty and the Reflection of Heaven

We have taken the liberty of borrowing the title of this subsection from the text of one of Tomáš Špidlík's homilies.⁷⁶ The reader's interpretation of the novel depends on the interpretation of Dulcinea. The interpretation of Dulcinea's role in Don Quixote's pilgrimage is essential to understanding the novel. Dulcinea is the pretext for Quixote's adventures, the driving force of the story. She is the soul of his journey, providing him with the necessary strength for his heroic journey through life.⁷⁷ She represents the love ideal, the ideal of life, and the meaning of Quixote's existence. She is a creation of Quixote's imagination, that is, 'a creation of a creation'. Alonzo Quijano created Don Quixote and through his will and faith he transformed the simple country girl named Aldonza into a noble princess and the mistress of his heart. Quixote longs for fame, but he knows that he must subordinate it to a specific higher principle, and therefore he assigns to the maidservant Aldonza Lorenzo, with whom he was in love for a while, all the attributes of a lady whom he will serve devotedly.⁷⁸ Dulcinea is an image, a dream, an idea of love, who carries such a power of illusion that she is able to transform the world of Don Quixote. By creating Dulcinea as a pure ideal of love, Don Quixote purifies the ideals of chivalry. This purification Cervantes expresses through the gradual disappearance of Dulcinea, which is completed in the second part of the novel, where Don Quixote claims that he does not know Dulcinea, he has never seen her, and that he loves her only because of her reputation and honour.⁷⁹ Since Romanticism, the conception of Dulcinea as the embodiment of Quixote's idealism and nobility has emerged; this approach finds its expression, for example, in the concept of the Spanish writers Generation 98. Don Quixote's relationship with Dulcinea is a process in which Don Quixote's spirit is purified. It is the embodiment of the spiritual search of man and also of the Spanish soul.⁸⁰

Dulcinea is the embodiment of beauty in the world, the incarnation of its ideal. She is the ideal and symbol of beauty and at the same time the ideal of the Renaissance woman: a paradigm of nobility, harmony, goodness, virtue, and intelligence. The key section where Quixote describes his ideal of beauty is chapter XIII of the first part of the novel. The description of the beauty of Lady Dulcinea of Tobosa is based on the literary traditions of Renaissance literature:⁸¹ '...her hairs are gold, her forehead Elysian fields, her eyebrows rainbows, her eyes suns, her cheeks roses, her lips coral, her teeth pearls, her neck alabaster, her bosom marble, her hands ivory, her fairness snow...'⁸² Quixote created the character of Dulcinea based on reading novels of chivalry. If in the first part we learn about her external appearance, in the second part her qualities are the focus: '...dignified without haughtiness, tender and yet modest, gracious from courtesy and courteous from good breeding, and lastly, of exalted lineage...'⁸³ The name Dulcinea, 'sweet', illustrates the character

76 Tomáš Špidlík, 'Don Quijote a jeho Dulcinea, homilie ke 4. neděli v mezidobí, Radio Vaticana, updated 29th January 2010, cited 28th May 2022, <https://www.radiovaticana.cz/clanek.php?id=12361>.

77 Tereza Vítková, 'Hlavní téma: láska a svoboda', in *Svět Dona Quijota*, ed. Jaroslava Marešová et al. (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2018), 64.

78 Vítková, 'Hlavní téma: láska a svoboda', 63.

79 Javier S. Herrero, 'Dulcinea and her Critics', *Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, updated 2nd January 1982, cited 28th May 2022, 25, <https://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/articles82/herrero.htm>.

80 Herrero, 'Dulcinea and her Critics', 24.

81 Adéla Vyskočilová, 'Ženské postavy', in *Svět Dona Quijota*, ed. Jaroslava Marešová a kol. (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Karolinum, 2018), 169.

82 Cervantes, *Důmyslný rytíř Don Quijote de la Mancha*, I. part, chapter XIII, 96.

83 Ibid., II. part, chapter XXXII, 554.

attributed to a person inhabiting the ideal environment of the Golden Age. The adjective 'sweet' has long been associated with Jesus and the Virgin Mary in Spain.⁸⁴ The association of Dulcinea of Tobos (a bear as part of the carnival celebrations) is a carnivalesque inversion of the noble lady's name. The Dulcinea family is not connected to the powerful Spanish families; it lacks ancestors. In contrast to Dante's Beatrice, who is connected purely with the spiritual dimension of courtly love and represents the heavenly ideal, Dulcinea represents worldly concepts – she is both imaginary and corporeal, the way she 'should be on earth'.⁸⁵ The relationship between Quixote and Dulcinea bears Neoplatonic features, for it only has a spiritual dimension. In the words of V. Černý, 'Quixote loves love more than a woman, his love is freed from the weight of matter and senses. He gives himself completely to her and asks her to give him strength and joy, though he does not ask her to give herself to him.'⁸⁶ The character of Dulcinea is emphasised more in the second part of the novel in connection with the motif of her enchantment and disenchantment. In the rare moments when Quixote sees Dulcinea with the eyes of reason, she becomes Aldonza.⁸⁷ Dulcinea becomes a projection of Quixote's faith. His love for Dulcinea is an analogy of the relationship of the soul to God, based on analogies between the books of chivalry, the Bible, and Christian tradition. According to H. Stachower, Dulcinea represents Quixote's Platonic guide or entelechy.⁸⁸ As a knight errant, Don Quixote is in search of God (trying to find him in action), and the defining aspect of this search is his relationship with Dulcinea. The concept of Dulcinea as the embodiment of Quixote's exalted religiosity is given, for example, by Miguel de Unamuno and Menéndez Pidal: Don Quixote had loved Aldonza with unrevealed passion for twelve years; but suddenly he is born to a new faith, to the search for *eterno nombre y fama* [fame and glory]. The symbol of eternal glory is Dulcinea, the creation of Don Quixote's faith. Such faith, as the root of Man's search for eternity, is a religious one. Don Quixote's *yo vivo y respiro en ella* is the equivalent of St Paul's 'Christ lives in me'.⁸⁹ Quixote is aware of God's presence in his life, his journey leads to the fulfilment of the Christian faith, and the events of his life lead him to the fulfilment of his relationship with God.

Through Quixote's love for Dulcinea, the relationship of Quixote's soul to God is shown. Dulcinea, adored by Don Quixote, becomes a religious icon.⁹⁰ Quixote's love for her is a love of beauty, primarily directed to God as the source of all harmony and beauty. The pinnacle of beauty is glimpsed in Christ's humanity: 'Whoever sees me sees the Father' (John 14:9). Quixote's love for Dulcinea becomes a form of *caritas* – 'the love of God'. According to M. de Unamuno, Quixote's dormant consciousness is awakened by Dulcinea, that divine in the human soul, and this belief in the ideal is for him the source of total and absolute freedom, which is an affirmation of his self.⁹¹ Two forces accompany Quixote on his journey through life – the 'being weighed down by the earth' embodied by Sancho and the 'ethereal essence' represented by Dulcinea.⁹² Dulcinea represents a mystical reality. She inspires Don Quixote to look at material reality through the lens of his relationship

84 Marco Aurelio Ramírez Vivas, 'Dulcinea, poética de amor en el Quijote', *Revista de la Dirección General de Cultura y Extensión de la Universidad de Los Andes*, no. 64 (2007): 32.

85 Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics*, 140.

86 Černý, *Tvorba a osobnost II*, 443.

87 Vyskočilová, 'Ženské postavy', 173.

88 Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics*, 139; cf. Miguel de Unamuno, *La vida de don Quijote y Sancho* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), 284 and cf. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Un aspecto en la elaboración del *Quijote*, in *Mis páginas preferidas: Temas literarios* (Madrid: Gredos, 1957), 222–269.

89 McGrath, *Don Quixote and Catholicism*, 106.

90 Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote*, 195.

91 José Luis Abellán, 'Exil, literatura, filozofia (Španielsky exil 1939)', *Filozofia* 55, no. 2 (2000): 89.

92 Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote*, 208.

to her. Dulcinea's beauty is captured by the chaos of this world. The heart must be awakened to glimpse her beauty. Dulcinea symbolises the love and freedom of every person. Cervantes' novel sounds like a unique opus about love and freedom. It speaks about love as a source of hope and about hope as a source of freedom.

Via Pulchritudinis – Beauty Will Save the World

The opening quotes from Cervantes' *Don Quixote* refer to the heart as the centre of the human being. Quixote is a man of the heart who wanders. The direction of his pilgrimage looking for beauty is shown by love (beautiful, good, and true) and freedom as the basic themes of the novel – the only truths about which the author has no doubts. Quixote opens his heart and will to receive what is freely guaranteed to him through grace. It is his heart from which he draws all knowledge. As an eternal seeker of beauty, being similar to it, he becomes a beautiful person, a guardian of beauty, and a harbinger of hope. With his life, he testifies to the beauty of a life transformed by love and freedom, creating a bridge to transcendence.

The novel brings immense aesthetic, ethical, and intellectual pleasure to readers, speaking into their hearts. If the reader allows himself to be fully carried away by reading this jewel of Christian literature, which is a permanent, although still not fully appreciated, part of the cultural heritage of humanity, he opens up to his own depths and sets in motion the dynamism of inner transformation. The work is not the last novel of chivalry, but the first novel about Man and the general drama of human existence.⁹³ The work confronts the great questions of existence, the fundamental themes from which the meaning of life emerges. It gains religious validity and turns into a deep journey of inner reflection and spirituality. It is an invitation to a new vision of beauty. A spring of crystal-clear water flows through its text, in which the thirst for knowledge and hope can be quenched. The heart can be awakened to see beauty.

The elaboration of the topic of the article has been mainly based on the intellectual legacy of the authors J. M. Wilson and H. U. von Balthasar, who speak alike about the basic transmissibility of truth, goodness, and beauty into beauty. The true and the good must find their synthesis in the beautiful. According to Balthasar, in a world without beauty, even goodness loses its appeal. For those who do not understand the message of beauty, the testimony of being will also remain impossible:

Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past – whether he admits it or not – can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love. So the path of beauty leads us to understand the Whole in the fraction, the Infinite in the finite, God in the history of mankind.⁹⁴

There is a need to restore respect for beauty in order to reach people's hearts. The mind seeks, but the heart finds.

This world needs beauty so that it does not fall into despair and hopelessness. We are called towards beauty. And art helps to take the path of beauty, the Christian 'via pulchritudinis', in order to meet God. As a pilgrim through the world and history, man walks towards infinite Beauty.

93 Vítková, 'Hlavní téma: láska a svoboda', 63 (54–68).

94 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 18.

And every action he performs reveals God's beauty in the world. As Marko I. Rupnik states, 'A life that is inspired by love and engaged in love is a redeemed life that endures'.⁹⁵ This is the beauty that will save the world. Experiencing transcendental beauty, God's glory (Herrlichkeit), leads to the understanding that unconditional Love reigns over everything purposeful in this world.⁹⁶ Cervantes' theological-aesthetic thinking, embracing the theme of God's glory through the figure of Don Quixote, also brings such a link. Restoring beauty to its place in life, Quixote gives readers the key to the gate of Love.

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95 Tomáš Špidlík and Marko I. Rupnik, *Nové cesty pastorální teologie: Krása jako východisko*, 587.

96 Elio Guerriero, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: Eine Monographie* (1. Aufl.) (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1993), 368–369.