

A Fascinating, though Flawed, Cultural Journey through *Quijote* II¹

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LAYNA RANZ'S CLEVERLY-TITLED STUDY of the cultural background of two episodes and four (or five) major themes of *Don Quijote*, Part II is a little bit like a painting whose individual parts may be well-painted but which has competing foci of interest rather than one central figure. The author's principal cultural themes—money and melancholy—are preceded by a theoretical prologue and framed by analyses of the *Bodas de Camacho* (Chapter 1) and *Ricote* (Chapter 4) episodes, in the course of which he discusses as well the themes of *industria*, *interés*, and the *morisco* question, respectively. But despite the book's title, and despite the inclusion in each chapter of a final section called "La eficacia del fracaso" (I, II, III, and IV), this work appears to have no over-all unifying concept.

Drawing heavily on the works and approaches of other critics, particularly those of Anthony Close, Agustín Redondo, Carroll Johnson, Steven Hutchinson, and James Iffland, Layna Ranz appears to admit (33) that his goal was not so much to devise a revolutionary new approach to *Quijote* studies as to modify or expand on previous work, using his own lexicographical studies to elucidate the Cervantine text, investigating what meanings words, expressions, and cultural concepts had in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain, in order to truly understand what Cervantes meant. Like those excellent critics on whom he draws, and like David Quint (*Cervantes's Novel of Modern Times*), he is part of a recent trend in Cervantine scholarship to link *Don Quijote* (especially Part II) to the social context

1 Francisco Layna Ranz. *La eficacia del fracaso: Representaciones culturales en la Segunda Parte del Quijote*. Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2005. 441 pp. ISBN: 84-86547-77-6.

of economic changes at the start of the Early Modern Age (by the way, a term Layna Ranz rejects).

Much influenced by the work of Anthony Close, several of whose post-Romantic Approach articles he cites at length, Layna Ranz begins his book with a brief survey of what he considers to be the two major theoretical approaches to *Quijote* studies in the last 100 years. For him Cervantine criticism can be divided into a conservative, "humanistic," philological branch, the modern successors of Clemencín, Menéndez Pelayo, and Rudolph Schevill, and a "vanguard theory," whose harbingers were Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Madariaga, and Maeztu, which seeks to find in the text reasonable facsimiles of recent philosophical and cultural theory. He considers Américo Castro and Paul Julian Smith, apparently each in his way a member of the second group, the two twentieth-century *cervantistas* who have attracted the greatest reactions.

From this survey of critics/scholars Layna Ranz jumps without much transition into a commentary on the character don Quijote's distrust of his own historian Cide Hamete. Evidently Layna Ranz wishes to equate Cide Hamete with theoretical critics, or as he states more explicitly, don Quijote's distrust of his ostensible "author" leads us into the realm of theory, as does the work's simultaneous existence as several texts—the written and published Book I, the Book II which don Quijote is living, and the spurious Avellaneda sequel—and as does the work's own internal discussion of the role of printing. Layna Ranz's mention of printing is the first appearance of the economic theme which he develops in Chapters 1 and 2. He next presents the theme of melancholy, which will constitute his third chapter, outlines the work, and makes a vague reference to these themes as a cultural climate in which failure is a background to the don Quijote story. A unifying theme of either melancholy or failure could have been carried through the entire work, but is not.

Though he does not make it explicit in his prologue, Layna Ranz's purpose in the rest of the book is apparently to look at philosophical and cultural writings more or less immediately preceding or contemporary with Cervantes himself in order to illuminate what meaning the concepts of *industria*, *interés*, money, melancholy, and the *morisco* question had for Cervantes and his contemporaries, and hence elucidate the text of Part II.

In the somewhat rambling and digressive fashion and chatty tone which is to characterize most of his book, Layna Ranz takes up in his first

chapter don Quijote's change of heart and favor in the *Bodas de Camacho* episode. First Quijote supports Camacho, but then defends Basilio—despite Basilio's lies. Exploring as an anticipation of Basilio's victory the episode's introduction of the theme of art versus nature in the student fight which begins Cide Hamete's account, the critic states that Basilio's triumph at the wedding is an example of *arte*, which includes *ingenio*, *destreza*, and *discreción*, and is a perfection of the gifts of Nature. Basilio's success through trickery is further foreshadowed by the double- and even triple-entendre words his student friends use to describe him. Layna Ranz's thorough lexicographical study of these expressions is perhaps the strongest part of this chapter. For Layna Ranz the narrator's and don Quijote's sympathies for Basilio rather than the worthy Camacho may reside in social snobbery against wealthy peasants, apparently ignoring the sympathetic portrayal of Dorotea and her quite probably exemplary parents in Part I. Even more important, he tells us, is Quijote's belief that "all's fair in love and war" and his admiration for *virtud* in the sense in which Huarte de San Juan used the word. In a modern development, human conduct is now determined by circumstance, and don Quijote himself is now influenced by experience rather than by chivalric ideology—an insightful remark, and a transformation not lost on previous critics such as Gilman, Avallé-Arce, Mancing, and others. But could this episode be merely another example of how in non-chivalric circumstances, as Williamson notes, don Quijote does not attempt to transform reality?

Basilio's pursuit of his self-interest—a quest he shares with nearly all the other characters of the novel—finds its support in the writings of Sebastián de Horozco; such a pursuit also explains Sancho's shift of allegiance to Camacho when confronted by the sumptuous wedding feast. *Interés* is even excused by moralists as superior to quietist inaction, and is frequently related to self-knowledge, although it is sometimes condemned by other moralists like Saavedra Fajardo and Suárez de Figueroa as inimical to the public good. Even don Quijote will be guided by self-interest when he pays Sancho for the *azotes* to "disenchant" Dulcinea. And not only is don Quijote aware of the "author's" desire for gain in publishing Part I, but in his encounter with the Barcelona printer toward the end of Part II he learns that a wish for profit has led an author (though Layna Ranz writes *impresor*, I believe mistakenly) to deal directly with a printer, rather than a bookseller.

Two fairly substantial digressions—one on the reasons for the decline in fiction in late sixteenth-century Spain (81) and one very lengthy aside on the theme of *ira* (96 ff.)—detract from the chapter's unity and seem only

marginally related to the other topics treated. Layna Ranz closes his chapter with his first *Eficacia del fracaso* section, in which he states that one can't deduce Cervantes' religious beliefs from don Quijote's actions because the result of all of don Quijote's actions is failure. Failure is a constant in Part II and Quijote is ever conscious of his failure, and no longer sure of the value of what he is doing. There is an ethical dimension to don Quijote's defeat; in a society in the throes of change, don Quijote is noticing a dissonance between the world of *libros de caballerías* and the world of his experience. Inexplicably, he then gives brief summaries of the *Eficacia del fracaso* sections in his subsequent three chapters. Why here instead of in the prologue?

Chapter Two, *El dinero*, traces the history of classical and Christian Europe's attitudes toward money, *industria*, and commercial activity in general. Layna Ranz cites Quevedo as a representative of the traditional, conservatively Christian distrust of activities paid for with money and for his belief in the superiority of inherited over earned riches. The view of capitalism as a powerful enemy of the aristocracy's self-interest originated, the author advises us, in the medieval (Christian) scorn for money and in Christian attitudes in favor of voluntary poverty, detachment from material things, renunciation, and humility. He cites medieval thinkers like Peter Damien, John of Salisbury, and St. Bernard, as well as canon law, which saw buying and selling as a source of sin. Layna Ranz asks at what point there occurred a change in attitude and notes that although he can add nothing new to the debate concerning that change, he will relate it to Cervantes' works.

Against a backdrop of seventeenth-century Castilian decadence, and a rhythm of life imposed by economic collapse, money plays an essential role in *Don Quijote*, in which it is disturbing, necessary, and scarce. Not unlike Quevedo, don Quijote abominates its use, but his many confrontations with monetary demands alter his relation to the economy. In the end, don Quijote does not protest the Barcelona author's contention that fame is useless unless accompanied by monetary profit (II, 62).

In order to detail the changes in economic outlook, Layna Ranz next outlines the history of Spanish mercantilism and the ideas of the Salamanca scholastic school of economic theory. There was a transformation of the belief, for example, that coins have value in themselves to a more modern recognition of money as a sign. Scholastic doctors strove, not always successfully, to reconcile mercantile activities with Christian morality, while mercantilists tried to reform the national mentality, legitimizing the charging of interest, for example. Layna Ranz pays particular attention

to the ideas of the political and economic theorist Sancho de Moncada (*Restauración política de España*, 1619, too late, of course, to have influenced Cervantes at all). Moncada wished to repair the economy through a ban on imports and a thorough analysis of cause and effect, the sure principles of political economy: a scientific approach without ethical considerations. In this, he was in line with contemporary economic thinking in the rest of Europe. Other theorists, like Baltasar de Collazo (*Coloquios*, 1568) believed that commerce could be used in a Christian way and hence be both honorable and beneficial. The digressions here are sometimes quite lengthy and not always relevant to *Don Quijote*—Moncada's idea that the prince himself should be a governmental expert, for instance, or Tacitism (an anti-Machiavellian though "realistic" approach to politics which posited a moral base), or Padre Mariana's defense of tyrannicide.

For Layna Ranz, don Quijote himself has an archaic economic mentality, somewhat "corrected" by the modern world, a conclusion rather like Anthony Close's, whose article on Sancho's salary he cites. In Part II, according to Layna Ranz, don Quijote has become interested in matters of the Republic, and after the enchanted Dulcinea of the Cueva de Montesinos asks him for six *reales* he doesn't have, Quijote will pay for all the damages he causes. The author's discussion of Quijote's use of money leads us to one of the two major Quixotic themes in this chapter, the question of Sancho's salary. For Layna Ranz, Quijote exhibits a feudal posture in presence of money because of an anachronism caused by his mental illness. His distrust of money comes from a bad interpretation of his books, but will be suppressed with the appearance of vital matters not in his books. Sancho, however, is always on the lookout for money; his aspiration is for a good mercantile operation with big profits so that he can buy a title, live off his rents and leave his social group—a desire condemned by seventeenth-century mercantilists. Layna Ranz summarizes in detail the conflict between Quijote, who believes that Sancho should serve "a mercedes" (a concept he discusses in slightly different terms than does Close), like the squires of the *libros de caballerías*, while Sancho believes he should have a salary. Layna Ranz, unlike Close, believes that the whole question is moot, and that the arguments presented show a lack of *decorum* or inconsistency between what the character don Quijote says and what he does—as Sancho's salary had been specified in Quijote's will before the third *salida*, though he otherwise adds little to a question that had been discussed more succinctly by Close.

Throughout Part II money instills uncertainty in Quijote's ideology, lit-

tle by little wearing away his convictions, a point also made by Close. Layna Ranz adds that this crisis increases throughout Part II, as Quijote is compelled to pay for the blows which Sancho supposedly inflicts upon himself to disenchant Dulcinea.

Layna Ranz's second major Quixotic theme in this chapter concerns money, poverty, and the military. Following his usual procedure, he treats the deterioration of Spanish arms in the seventeenth-century through quotations from Cervantes' near-contemporaries—in this case Mateo Alemán and Suárez de Figueroa—on the role of *privados*' self-interest, inadequate pay for soldiers, their recruitment from the lowest rungs of society, and the nobility's abandonment of its traditional military leadership in this decline. The same complaints appear in *Don Quijote*. In the middle of Layna Ranz's discussion of military themes, he digresses on the poverty of the *hidalgo* class, on don Quijote's consciousness of his own poverty in Part II as a sign that much of his former identity remains, and on the economic poverty of even the upper nobility, exemplified by the Duke and Duchess's need to accept the help of a wealthy farmer, and by the money they waste on entertainments. After analyzing the satire of arms in the *rebuzno* episode and the significance of Vicente de la Roca, Layna Ranz discusses the evolution of don Quijote's ideas on how soldiers should be compensated. As poverty permeates the framework of the character, he says, Quijote admits that there are cases, like the modern military, in which monetary wealth has a value he denies to (medieval) chivalry.

Eficacia del fracaso II discusses the return of don Quijote and Sancho to their village and analyzes what could be meant by Sancho's statement that don Quijote has "conquered" himself. Again, taking off from a Saavedra Fajardo passage, and again following his usual procedure, the author traces rather chaotically the history of the concepts of self-knowledge and self-conquest in Plato, in St. Augustine, who christianized them, as well as in Seneca, Diogenes, and Erasmus. For Catholics victory over self depended on reason and on freeing oneself from human attachments; it was aided by suffering, disillusionment, and self-denial. Thanks to the Jesuits, it came to be linked with the idea of self-governance. But for all the research, and despite noting that don Quijote's enemies are no longer exclusively external but interior, in the end Layna Ranz, though agreeing that don Quijote has turned inward, does not decide in this chapter exactly how he has conquered himself.

Layna Ranz's third chapter traces both the early and the contemporary

history of melancholy as a theological and philosophical concept, relying heavily on the studies of Roger Bartra. Apparently Cervantes' contemporaries had two conflicting ideas about melancholy, both with much earlier roots. The negative view, championed by both the Jesuits and the Dominicans, among others, had its roots in Cicero, the Bible, and especially in Medieval teachings on sloth (*acedia*), and in the Counterreformation distrust of mental prayer, mysticism, *alumbrados*, and anything else that smacked of an overly-individualistic religious impulse. It exalted instead an activist yet obedient Catholicism. This view was reflected in the writings of Fray Luis de Granada, Francisco de Vitoria, Gracián, and Pérez de Valdivia, among others.

The more positive view, championed by the Florentine Academy, saw melancholics as superior beings, born under the sign of Saturn and, even if "ill" or "sinful," destined for possible greatness. This idea drew on the writings of St. Augustine, both the real one and the character created by Petrarch in his *Secretum*, Petrarch himself, and St. Thomas. Layna Ranz then includes a fairly standard analysis of the theory of the humors, with the usual characterization of don Quijote as both choleric and melancholic, i.e., governed by both yellow and black bile, and with the usual references to Huarte de San Juan. Of more interest is his summary of Ficino's ideas on the correspondence between the humors and the planets, and his relationship of the physiological explanation to the Platonic concept of the World Soul, a relationship in which Layna Ranz sees the origin of modern subjectivity and the creation of the *yo*. Ficino's theories are extremely interesting and could possibly have been enlightening for an analysis of don Quijote's character—if Layna Ranz had attempted such an analysis. That he does not do so, nor explains clearly what Ficino's relevance is to *Don Quijote*, is a typical example of the disconnect among the three parts of each chapter—the theoretical writings, the *Quijote* analysis, and the *Eficacia del fracaso*. In any event, according to the author, Cervantes' contemporaries would have considered don Quijote's melancholy the result of his diet.

Taking a slightly different approach to the question of don Quijote's "sanity" than did Anthony Close, whom he cites ("Cómo se debe remunerar a un escudero"), and who saw don Quijote's cognitive vacillation and stopping short of total lucidity as necessary for the work's novelistic development, Layna Ranz denies that Quijote's increasing recognition of reality for what it is, beginning with his second return, and his increasing prudence in Part II are signs of a growing mental health at all. His arguments are

somewhat questionable. He seems to believe that don Quijote's evolution is the result of melancholy. For him, melancholy is incompatible with any evolution toward sanity. Although he admits that Quijote no longer always sees the world in terms of a rigid chivalric model, that the knight's own consciousness now decides the veracity of situations, that for Quijote truth is no longer universally agreed-upon but an individual conviction, and though Quijote has begun to take responsibility for his own actions, those are not characteristics of sanity. Layna Ranz's Quijote only becomes sane at all when he becomes completely sane just before death; for him there is only a rapid transformation and no transition.

In the *Eficacia del fracaso III* Layna Ranz once again takes up the question of self-conquest broached in *Eficacia II*, and mixes that topic with more discussion of prudence, melancholy and the impossibility of Quijote's increasing sanity. Here he summarizes more critical views on don Quijote's supposed self-conquest, particularly Américo Castro's and Joaquín Casaldueiro's. And here, rather than in his preceding discussion of Quixotic sanity, he takes issue with Williamson's assertion (*The Half-Way House of Fiction*, 97) that don Quijote's victory over self represents a recovery of judgment through self-questioning, apparently mistranslating the English word *judgment*, which does not necessarily mean "sanity," because he is otherwise in complete agreement with Williamson that Quijote does not become sane until the end—an agreement that is not clear in Layna Ranz's text. Without further explanation he alleges that self-questioning doesn't help one stop being what one is.

Unlike don Quijote, Sancho does not evolve but just becomes more like himself, and in conformity with his state in life, after having tried to change it. Though Layna Ranz claims to agree with John J. Allen's assertion that there are inherent contradictions in don Quijote's character depending on the particular passage, for him Quijote remains himself with an added nuance of prudence, again seen in his distinction between bravery and temerity in the *rebuzno* episode. For example, rather than accepting responsibility for his final defeat, he blames Rocinante. In my opinion, one might, however, see the fleeing of bullets and the reluctance to blame enchanters as acts of sanity. At the very least, Layna Ranz could point out how prudence is or is not related to sanity, and why Quijote's increasing foresight and investigation before acting, as well as a reliance on his own experience are not characteristics of an increased lucidity. Layna Ranz ends this *Eficacia* section with a marginally-related consideration of how the existence of

multiple “Quijotes” (Avellaneda’s, Cide Hamete’s representation in Part I, etc.) create a dispersion of the character’s identity.

Chapter Four treats the Ricote episode against the background of the *morisco* problem in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Spain and the 1609 expulsion. Layna Ranz’s analysis of how the expulsion convulsed Spanish society and generated religious, political, and economic polemic, as well as his analysis of the background of Spanish attitudes toward *moriscos*, gives this chapter something in common with the structure of the previous three, despite its emphasis on an actual historical event rather than merely a cultural attitude. Pinpointing Cervantes’ own attitude toward the expulsion is apparently not easy, but in the Ricote episode he gives a fictional voice, at least, to two of the expelled *moriscos*, Ricote himself and his daughter Ana Félix. For Layna Ranz, Ricote illustrates the reason for the expulsion policy, however cruel, whereas Ana Félix, as a sincere Christian, is an exception, and she claims her own exceptionality. The critic discusses the “*morisco* question” in terms of lack of assimilation, attitude toward money (always negative), folkloric themes like the *tesoro de duendes* (mostly a reprint from a previous article), Spanish concern about the baptized Catholic children of expelled *moriscos*, and worries about *morisco* necromancy and false professions of Christianity. Sancho, although solicited to help by Ricote in exchange for enough money to lift him and his family out of poverty, refuses, showing that his is a Christian poverty and that he is a good Spaniard.

While the pardon which don Antonio and the Viceroy seek for Ana Félix and Ricote would have been impossible at the time, that is irrelevant, since all of *Don Quijote* is impossible, as Layna Ranz points out in some detail, and such a solution would represent an ideal. The solution’s verisimilitude is heightened because historically, it seems, “hidden” *moriscos* were not uncommon, but it was common in the corrupt court of Philip III that crimes could be pardoned in return for money. In addition, Ricote’s money has been purified through his ransom of Gaspar Gregorio. The analysis of the Ricote episode closes with a survey of some of the political and economic reasoning behind the expulsion, citing Pedro de Valencia.

Eficacia del fracaso IV appears to have no particular relation to the other themes of Chapter Four. After a digression on the Hegelian hero, and an observation that the idea of personal identity changed fundamentally from the external construction of the Middle Ages to the interiority of the Renaissance, the author declares that there are three distinct moments when don Quijote “enunciates” himself. While, according to Layna, these three stages do not con-

stitute character development, they clearly do. In stage 1 Quijote is ruled by convictions extracted from texts. By the end of Book I he is less convinced, the result of his reflection on the consequences of the unforeseen. In stage 2 Quijote's own narration has constructed his personal identity. He now realizes that he is an anachronism, and his failures have made him responsible in that he can foresee the effects of his actions. He now has a memory of his own chivalric past, which he constantly reconstructs. That he begins to pay for damages means that he knows he could have acted otherwise and that his error can't be explained by solutions from books. In stage 3, confronted with the existence of the other "Quijote," though asserting the other's falsity, he has doubts about his own identity and must defend himself as the agent of his own action. Álvaro Tarfe's appearance "proves" that the false Quijote also has a real existence. A deep uneasiness concerning his own identity oppresses don Quijote's soul when he returns to his village for the last time, with a list of failures behind him. That failure, evidently, is what the Romantic sensibility celebrated in *Don Quijote*.

The insightful remarks concerning Quijote's identity are representative of a number of *Eficacia del fracaso's* strengths, which appear at irregular intervals throughout this uneven book. Many of Layna Ranz's cultural investigations, in particular, are thorough, intelligent, and useful in establishing the intellectual context for the Quixotic themes he analyzes. At times, however, the cultural investigations appear to become ends in themselves, as when he cites Gracián, who was 14 when Cervantes died, on the distinction between *genio* and *ingenio* (211), or Padre Feijóo [sic] on the will to dominate (105). In any event, anachronistic or not, they often seem insufficiently integrated to the text of the *Quijote* itself. His discussion of Sancho de Moncada's theories of mercantilism (141, 151 ff.), for instance, while interesting, and despite the author's protestations, seems a bit cut off from the question of Sancho's salary, which follows, and which it ostensibly illuminates. This internal lack of unity is symptomatic, perhaps, of the book's position somewhere in between a collection of articles on related themes and an integrated book. Otherwise, why, in a book titled *La eficacia del fracaso*, would the theme of failure occupy separate, only marginally-related sections at the end of each chapter?

Such problems may reflect an overly-hasty composition, as may some difficulties of style and logic repeated throughout the text. Layna Ranz indulges in sentence fragments to the point that they become a mannerism, and appears to be overly fond of "straw-man" arguments. Who, for example, gives a "*mala prensa*" to lexicographical studies? (33) Is Anthony Close indeed a lone, brave

voice against over-reliance on theory in *cervantista* circles? (12) Are philology and theory really so incompatible in recent years? (14) The author's frequent use of lengthy bulleted lists smacks of the classroom PowerPoint presentation or a Blackboard lecture.

Although in general the book is stronger on substantive critical issues, the author has some rather problematic ideas about what constitutes character development. He includes many examples of what could very well be considered an evolution of character: don Quijote's beginning to foresee the results of his actions based on past experience and more appreciation for moral complexity (41), his increasing melancholy (254, 262), his awareness of his own poverty (271), of his own imprudence (274), and his increasingly prudent conduct (278), his increasingly situational morality (282), his awareness of his own anachronism (374), his acceptance of responsibility, at least occasionally (375), his increasing doubts (377)—and yet Layna Ranz denies that don Quijote truly evolved.

This denial is particularly vexing with regard to the question of don Quijote's sanity. For Layna Ranz, Quijote is not at all sane until his final transformation just before death. While he shares this belief with such eminent *cervantistas* as Edwin Williamson and Anthony Close, among others, it appears to be based on the false premise that sanity is an either-or proposition, rather than a point on a continuum. Neither in *Don Quijote* nor in life is anyone ever completely sane (with the possible exception of Diego de Miranda), and both Volumes I and II are full of characters with their own manias: Marcela, Grisóstomo, the second innkeeper, Cardenio, the cousin/guide to the Cueva de Montesinos, the Duke and Duchess, the *rebusnadores*, etc. In addition, Layna Ranz's own evidence belies his assertion that don Quijote does not evolve toward an increasing sanity, as he documents example after example of a more rational behavior and outlook—even with regard to chivalry. While for the author melancholy and sanity appear to be mutually exclusive (18, 254), his examples of increasing melancholy seem to result in Quijote's seeing things as they are (254)—certainly a characteristic of sanity. Don Quijote's inquietude regarding Dulcinea when he goes to visit her (258) could very well reveal a rational doubt concerning her "real" existence. His increasing "*conducta prudente*" (263, 278) could also reveal increasing sanity, as could his increasing sense of responsibility (265), his consciousness of pursuing a chimera (326) and of his own anachronism (365). In addition, he is the only character to notice the time discrepancy in the rapid appearance of the printed Part I (372), and he increasingly notices not only things as they are (385) but that his own actions are not

turning out well (387). In short, even using Layna Ranz's own evidence, I am not convinced that character development must be completely linear to constitute an evolution, nor that sanity has to be complete to constitute improvement in mental health.

But despite my occasional critical disagreement on some points, as a whole the book is substantively solid, particularly in its examination of the philosophical, theological, economic, and cultural traditions which formed the context of Part II of *Don Quijote*. There are the makings of a very good book here, if only Layna Ranz had taken the time to integrate his cultural investigations better into his discussions of the text of the *Quijote*, to think a bit more clearly, and to create a more unified text. In the end, the publisher who printed this book without insisting that the author give it at least one more thorough editing bears some of the responsibility for its shortcomings.

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