

Brad Nelson

Concordia University, Montreal

Free Will and Theatricality: Calderón's *La vida es sueño*

Recent work on the relationship between free will and knowledge by historians of science has produced new interpretations of the relationship between conflicting versions of free will and the emergence of mathematical astronomy as a legitimate field of scientific inquiry. Specifically, the work of scholars such as Rivka Feldhay, James Lattis, Andrea Battistini, and William A. Wallace, among others, delineates the political, academic, and ecclesiastical fields of symbolic activity within which an emergent notion of free will, espoused primarily by the Jesuits working at the Collegio Romano, confronts the traditional, scholastic definition of free will maintained primarily by the Dominicans. One of the central problems produced by mathematicians and astronomers such as Christopher Clavius and Galileo concerns the status of God's knowledge with respect to human activity. In short, it becomes possible to consider God's knowledge of man's future actions as "hypothetical," at least in the minute temporal space before these actions are carried out. This possibility carries great implications for artistic spheres of activity, in particular the theater. The goal of this paper is to situate Calderón's *La vida es sueño* within these debates and attempt to define the epistemological and ontological outlines of theatrical knowledge according to these emerging developments in the history of science.