THE PROBLEM OF IMMORTALITY IN THE

PHILOSOPHY OF UNAMUNO

by

William Harry Schlottman

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

Houston, Texas
May, 1956
TO

F R E D A
CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.............................. 1

CHAPTER II
UNAMUNO'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION.......... 15

CHAPTER III
UNAMUNO'S CONTENTIONS IN THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE..... 23

CHAPTER IV
UNAMUNO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL
("I") AND THE UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS.............. 34

CHAPTER V
ETHICAL AND POLITICAL THEORIES OF UNAMUNO....... 52

CHAPTER VI
UNAMUNO IN PERSPECTIVE................................. 69

BIBLIOGRAPHY.................................................. 80
"The end of History and Humanity is man, each man, each individual. *Homo sum, ergo cogito; cogito ut sim* Michael de Unamuno. (I am a man, therefore, I think; I think as Michael de Unamuno.) The individual is the end of the Universe. ...We Spaniards feel this very strongly."
CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Spain is a country of universal individuality and individual universality. In truth, a Spaniard is a Spaniard only to those who are not Spanish; with impetuous individuality, a native of Spain will say (depending upon which side of the mountains he is from) that he is Basque or Galician or Catalan or Andalusian.

In the north is the Basque, a man with primitive instincts and an obstinate character who is determined to preserve his language and traditions. The opposite of the Basque is the Galician of the west; he is gay, affable and quite like the Irish Celt. To the east is the Catalan, a person who believes in thrift, progress and shrewd business. The Castillian lives in the center of Spain on an arid plateau where there are "nueve meses de invierno y tres de infierno--nine months of winter and three of hell." In the south is the Andalusian, a descendant of the Moors who made Spain the "fairest jewel in the crown of the Prophet."  

Despite the diverse provinciality of Spain, there is a permeating national spirit which can be called Castillian. In Castile,

---

"Nature does not ... recreate the spirit. Rather it detaches us from the low earth and enfolds us in the pure naked unvarying sky. ... Man is not lost in it so much as diminished by it, and in its immense drought he is made aware of the aridity of his own soul."

This is Castile, the mother earth (madre tierra) of the popular realism of Sancho Panza and of the formal idealism of Don Quixote, two spirits existing side by side, yet never absorbing one into the other. "The Castilian spirit is either ironic or tragic, sometimes both at once, but it never arrives at a fusion of the irony and the austere tragedy of the human drama."

This dual character of Spain is a curious one. On the one hand, there is the ultra realism of "the man of flesh and bone," a concrete being, a whole person. The man of Spain is so impassioned with living, that he has not taken the time or had the interest to establish leading philosophical traditions of western thought. The emphasis in Spain has never been upon philosophical schools and movements, but upon individual self-expression. Most Spaniards would readily admit that, "Other peoples ... have left institutions ... we have left souls."

The Spanish man of flesh and bone is also a being of dreams and imagination. He wonders and he aspires. He is a mystic; he is a kinsman of Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross, and Loyola.

2 Ibid., p. 37.
At the same time that his body craves physical nourishment and satisfaction, there is a soul within which cries for spiritual eternity and infinity. This soul of the Spaniard has an unquenchable desire for living, and a deep dread and obsession of death. The soul and body demand life, not apart from one another but jointly, each feeling the effects of the other, but demanding a total, perpetuating existence.

The poetic and philosophic embodiment of the vital spirit of Spain is observed in, and demonstrated by Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo. For an intimate acquaintance with him, one could not do better than to catch a quick glance with the writer Salvador de Madariaga:

A tall, broad-shouldered, bony man, with high cheeks, a beak-like nose, pointed gray beard, and a complexion the colour of the red hematites on which Bilbao, his native town, is built, ... and in the deep sockets under the high aggressive forehead prolonged by short iron-gray hair, two eyes like gimlets eagerly watching the world through spectacles which seem to be purposely pointed at the object like microscopes; a fighting expression, but of noble fighting, above the prizes of the passing world, the contempt for which is shown in a peculiar attire whose blackness invades even that little triangle of white which worldly men leave on their breast for the necklace of frivolity and the decorations of vanity, and, blinding it, leaves but the thinnest rim of white collar to emphasize, rather than relieve, the priestly effect of the whole. Such is Don Miguel de Unamuno.¹

Unamuno was born on April 20, 1864, in Bilbao, Spain. Although his was a middle class Basque family, Unamuno was greatly influenced by the culture of Castile since Castilian had become the language of political and social life in Bilbao. Despite

¹ Salvador de Madariaga, "Introductory Essay," The Tragic Sense of Life by Miguel de Unamuno, p. x.
the acquired culture of Castile, Unamuno grew up in the Basque area of regional isolationism, save that his own Bilbao was in active contact with the modern industrial and governmental trends of Europe.

Bilbao's mid-nineteenth century tendency toward "liberalism and reform," "Europeanization" and progress raised the suspicions of the major political party of Spain - the Carlists or Traditionalists. Defending absolute monarchy, Church power as demonstrated during the Inquisition and feudalism, the Carlists besieged the town of the young Unamuno in an attempt to rout liberals and 'atheists.' Bilbao's precarious position occasioned a series of attacks and liberations by both Carlist and Constitutional parties. The tension and strife of these two parties, ambiguous yet 'opposing' and warring militant factions, perplexed the young Miguel. He, his family, his Bilbao were involved in physical destruction and psychological, social, and ideological dissension. These surrounding calamities plus the later defeat of the "invincible Spain" in the Cuban War were to be decisive factors in Unamuno's thought. They called attention to the true heritage and contribution of Spain to her men and to modern civilization.

At 16, Unamuno left Bilbao and went to Madrid; here he began to pursue with fervor his academic career in philosophy and in languages. As he continued his intellectual education, he exhibited an independence and an individualism that was to
characterize the core of his entire life and the text of his literary works. Reading the new Protestant theologians, he was led to question his traditional Latin Catholicism. He was repelled by the hyper-nationalism of the Basques. He refused to join the "intellectual"—student-scholar parties that pledged support to either a bombastic liberalism or a stifled loyalism. Unamuno did not avoid conflict, but he did strive to orientate himself to a possible synthetic cultural-political and personal position. This attempt of Unamuno shows the influence of Hegel upon a young, active mind that was sensitively aware of opposing forces within itself. Above all, Hegel taught the young Spaniard to beware of static, formal truths, and to seek dynamic solutions which manifest themselves through the use of contradictions.

Although his academic studies in Madrid provided an unparalleled intellectual stimulus, Unamuno always felt as though he was a spiritual stranger in the Spanish metropolis. "His spirit never became acclimated to the atmosphere of the capital and the years which he spent there were rendered unhappy by his sense of isolation and homesickness, preoccupations with ill health, intellectual strain and acute spiritual crises."¹

Unamuno graduated from the university after four years of rigorous study and academic achievement; it was here that he developed his remarkable mastery of languages, and an unquenchable

¹ Flitch, G.S. Crawford, "Introduction" to Essays and Soliloquies by Miguel de Unamuno, p. 5.
desire for reading, scholastic abilities that were to win him international acclaim. Leaving the capital of Spain, Unamuno made his residence in Bilbao; here he married, began his extensive writing, taught a few private classes, lectured, and devoted himself passionately to learning to read in as many languages as possible. Unamuno's life at this stage is relatively obscure; little information remains of his public or private existence. Some of his restlessness and vacillation during this period is witnessed in his late essay Concerning the Pure-Blooded Ones (En torno al castigliano) which was written in Salamanca, and published in 1895. In this work he expresses some of the inner tensions and contradictions that were to characterize the great bulk of his writings. The despondent Unamuno explained his dilemma thus: "Unamuno is a self-torturer. He spends his life struggling to be what he is not, and failing."^2

In 1891, the chair of Greek at the University of Salamanca was offered to him. Vocationally, this was a turning point in his career, for now the iconoclast Unamuno had something that he had long desired. The chair of Greek represented financial security for his family, and academic prestige. This new climate—Salamanca "and the spirit of Castile,"—captivated the young men, causing him to burst forward with heretofore unexperienced
literary creativity which expressed itself in voluminous publications of prose and poetry. Salesmasca was to awaken within him a spirit that would epitomize the universal strength and soul of Spain symbolized in "the man of flesh and bone."

In 1898, during Unamuno's career in Salamanca, Spain received one of its most serious shocks since the Spanish Armada—the United States of America defeated Spain in the Cuban War. This was a disastrous and humiliating blow to an empire that for hundreds of years had been predominant in the international political, economic, and military scheme of things. The crisis caused a reorientation in the governmental tactics of Spain, and a reevaluation of the real purpose of life for Unamuno. Speaking as a protegé of the European Enlightenment, the poet-philosopher had advised his country's educational institutions to reciprocate with other European universities in the interest of scientific research and progress. He had demanded that the youth of Spain apply themselves tenaciously to all branches of knowledge so as to reach higher and higher intellectual levels. But the advent of the war had caused "a sleep which laid bare the dignity of the humble man in contrast with the duplicity of the intellectual." Unamuno then reversed his earlier position of progress, and "devoted his energy to stressing the supremacy of man over society, of human destiny over human perfectibility." Spain was

2. Ibid., p. 1007.
menaced by internal as well as external crises, by a financial and political collapse, and by a national loss of morale.

Unamuno came dramatically upon the scene, like a Jeremiah "crying in the wilderness." The answer to the malady of Spain, he declared, lay not in the affirmation or denial of the liberal party or of the conservative party, in the instigation of a dynamic international trade program or in retreat into restricted isolationism. Before Spain could again become a world power, she must experience a spiritual renaissance. Spain had an eternal tradition as well as a mission. Its realization lay deep in the minds of its people; this intrinsic contribution had been partially developed and nourished reciprocally by and with countries all over the world, for basically the inner aspirations and realizations of mankind were of one accord, whether Spanish or European. As Unamuno is said to have remarked, "the eternal Spanish tradition which, being eternal, is human rather than Spanish, must be sought by us in the living present, not in the dead past." Unamuno did not disregard entirely the contribution of the past; on the contrary, he saw an aspect in yesterday's Spain that needed to be realized as a living precedent for the present and which should serve as a guide for the future. The spiritual heritage of the Spain of the past was personified in the character of Don Quixote.

Unamuno's pleas for the New Spain to find itself within the

---

1 Barea, Unamuno, p. 17.
Old Spain, identified some of his ideas with the "generation of '98," a group of writers who arose in answer to the crisis of the Cuban War of 1898.

Soon after this episode, Unamuno was appointed Rector of the University of Salamanca; but this position was short lived, for his extensive publications, which reflected his piercing observations and vehement condemnations, would not be toned down either for the sake of academic propriety or governmental expectations. He denounced corruption, immorality, injustice, anything that prostituted and stifled the spirit of men. Unamuno gave an honest appraisal of himself when he said, "All round the ring... sit the spectators. They applaud or hiss. Put down in the arena, there I fight alone, face to face with the bull."

Unamuno's most humiliating involvement in political vindication came in the early twenties. This was the period of Spain's history when General Miguel Primo de Rivera became dictator and head of a Military Directory. The new regime, in an effort to stifle all opposition, forbade freedom of speech and set about to revamp completely the normal process of civil writ, trial, and judgment. One of the first decrees of the new Directory was to order the deportation of Miguel de Unamuno for publishing and teaching doctrines contrary to the defense and sustained security of the "true" Spain.

1 Other outstanding "98ers were Pío Baroja, Ramón del Valle-Inclán and Azorín, Arturo Pérez, "A Quarter Century of Spanish Writing," Books Abroad, XXVII, No. 2, (Spring, 1953), p. 119.

2 Unamuno, Introduction, Essays and Soliloquies, p. 17.
In February, 1924, Unamuno was escorted to Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands. For his journey, he packed a few clothes, and slipped two books into his pocket—the Greek New Testament and Leopardi's poems.

The event of his exile attracted much international attention; Rivera was made to realize that his arrogant action in dealing with the ex-Rector of Salamanca had resulted in the elevation of the latter's prestige and the damage of his own.

Five months after his exile on Fuerteventura, Unamuno was rescued from his "bare island" and taken to France. Here in the cities of Paris and Hendaye he remained until the fall of Rivera's dictatorship in 1930. The year after his return to Salamanca, he was re-elected as rector of the University of Salamanca; in 1934, the university made him rector for life.

The years from 1931 to 1936 were active years in the history of Spain, and in the life of Unamuno. He was a member of political movements and an opponent of political movements; he criticized Rightists, Leftists, Marxists and the Europeanizers. Like his idol Don Quixote, he attacked the windmills within and without his person.

Unamuno found little consolation in his being sent to the island Fuerteventura. He notes some of his embitterment when he writes: "I am writing these lines, today the 6th of June, 1924, in this island Fuerteventura, an island that is propitious to cold thinking and to a laying bare of the soul, even as this perchéd land is bare, bare even to the bone. Here I have been confined now for nearly three months, no reason for my confinement having been given other than the arbitrary mandate of the military power that is dechristianizing and debasing my native country." (Unamuno, Author's Preface, Essays & Soliloquies, p. v.)
The spirited Unamuno during this period of his career declared himself to be in favor of General Franco and the new Spanish Civil War. He wanted Franco to revive the Spain of old, the Spain of eternal life. Unamuno soon withdrew his blessings from Franco when he discovered the latter to be more in the tradition of another General, Primo de Rivera, than of the true spirit of Spain.

There was one particular occasion in Unamuno's relation with Franco that brought out in dynamic fashion something which the old philosopher had advocated all his life. It may be related in some detail, because it seems to reflect the spirit of Unamuno. He was invited to speak at one of Franco's nationalistic rallies; it would help the latter's prestige to have people know that he, Franco, was supported by the intelligentsia which Unamuno represented. The 72 year old sage of Spain refused to address the party meeting, but condescended to attend. Pressing military operations prohibited Franco's attendance, so Carmen, his wife, acted as hostess to their dignitary, Unamuno. As the philosopher did not wish to be on the platform, Carmen sat at his side in the audience.

During the course of the speech-making, one zealot leaped forth from the platform, "The Basques are anything but Spaniards; they don't even know our language!"

Unamuno stood and replied, "As you all know, I am Basque. But I have also had the pleasure of teaching some of the most distinguished inhabitants of Madrid the Spanish language."
Immediately, a friend of Franco's, a General Millan Astray, alias "The Madman," leaped to his feet, glared at Unamuno with his one eye, waved his one arm, clenching his pistol, and bellowed forth, "Down with intelligence!"

Keeping his majestic calm, Unamuno said in his piercing prophetic fashion, "Ye will conquer but not convince!"

"Long live death," replied Astray and pointed the gun at Unamuno. But "The Madman" hesitated; a woman had gotten between Unamuno and the general. The woman was Carmen. She glared at Astray, then turned and hurried Unamuno out of the auditorium, always managing to stand between the philosopher and the mad general.

Not long afterward, the great Spanish philosopher and essayist had died—"of a heart broken by his apprehension over the future of Spain."

Unamuno's growing contempt for Franco's regime was indicative of his repulsion against any reform, scheme or doctrine which sought to direct men along the paths of quantitative progress, be it social, political, ecclesiastic or economic. Such action inevitably carries the seeds of its own destruction.

Unamuno had had ideal hopes for Spain. Here was not to be the destiny of European systematic progress which was a prelude to chaos. Spain's mission was a mission of agony or conflict within the individual. Spain was the spirit of Don Quixote de la Mancha; her duty was to bring the modern world to acknowledge and to honor the truth in tension, the conflicting core of existence, the demand of the living for life.

Systems, policies, and plans, be they of petty politicians or profound philosophers, they may conquer, but they will never convince.

Unamuno died during New Year's Eve of January 1, 1937; he was the victim of a cerebral stroke, or perhaps it would be better to say, he was the victim of death. Whether it was because of the approach of death or because he sensed the failure of Spain's spiritual mission (perhaps it was both), Unamuno wrote some pitifully despondent poetry just a few months prior to his fatal illness:

The hours of waiting are empty; there is no value in the days that pass; horror is curdling in my cold, closed, broken heart. Disillusionment has melted away; it used to be that my disillusionment was nourishment for my heart. What tomorrow will bring...I have lost the desire...I do not know...

If this poem contained the whole of Unamuno's philosophy, there would be little reason to rank him with the leaders of


Hora de espera, vacío;
se van pasando los días
sin valor,
Y va consumiendo en el pecho,
frío, cerrado y deshecho,
el terror.
Se ha derretido el engaño
fallamento me fue enteado!
¡pobre fe...
Lo que me ha de serme mañana
...sólo me ha perdido la pena...
no lo sé...!
contemporary creative expression. But, considered in the context of his whole life, we see the poem as an honest expression of one who never ceased to be "a man of flesh and bone," a true poet whose potency lay in his passion for life.

This spirit of an existential, agonizing virility which is in and of each individual man's soul demands that one and one's dilemma be eternally perpetuated. This desire and the feeling of unfulfillment constitutes his "tragic sense of life."
CHAPTER II
UNAMUNO'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

Before we attempt a detailed investigation of the philosophy of Unamuno, it is well to consider the broad scope of his writings. A warning, cited from his Tragic Sense of Life, may save us from the error of premature and too abstract formulation of his position.

I know there will always be some dissatisfied reader, educated in some formism or other, who will say: 'This man comes to no conclusion, he oscillates,... he is full of contradictions—I can't label him. What is he?' Just this—one who affirms contraries, a man of contradiction and strife, as Jeremiah said of himself; one who says one thing with his heart and the contrary with his head, and for whom this conflict is the very stuff of life. And that is as clear as the water that flows from the melted snow upon the mountain tops.

The above quotation gives evidence that examination of the philosophy of Unamuno is of precarious undertaking. The man prides himself on his contradictions and paradoxes. Yet, as he says, "The only clear thought is transmissible thought....To every writer it has happened more than once that he has realized the absurdity or obscurity of his own thought only after he has seen it in print."

1 Unamuno, "The Practical Problem," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 263.
What is the most evident reality to Unamuno?—He answers: Man. To the poet-philosopher, this word "man" has no general categorical reference, like the terms "human" or "humility." He means men in the most intimate sense, the "real" existing individual, "The man of flesh and bone; the man who is born, suffers, and dies—above all, who dies; the man who eats and drinks and plays and sleeps and thinks and wills; the man who is seen and heard; the brother, the real brother." Most of the investigations of philosophy are pursued in an historical manner, wherein one examines ideas as they grow, develop and interrelate in a certain scheme or consistent, coherent formulation. The authors of philosophical systems, as far as their "inner biography" is concerned, are usually ranked as secondary, as compared in importance to their major theses. This, in the eyes of Unamuno, is unfortunate, because our interpretation of existence, our philosophical comprehension of the world originates from our feeling or sentiment regarding life itself.

"And life, like everything affective, has roots in subconsciousness, perhaps in unconsciousness." All men by nature feel, more than they "desire to know." For Unamuno, as well as for

---

2 Ibid., p. 2.
3 Ibid., p. 3.
Goethe's Faust, "Feeling is all in all: the Name in sound and
smoke,..."

If man is not essentially a rational animal but a feeling
individual, what primarily does he feel? Unamuno answers, him¬
sel£; that is, his own individual consciousness. To Unamuno,
this self-consciousness of man is brought about through the reve¬
lation of pain and suffering. For example, some men are unaware
that there are certain digestive processes within the stomach
until ulcers appear; then, pain reminds them of their "forgotten
stomach" and of their physical network of muscles and nerves.

In addition to physical pain, man has a more distinctive
agoniethrough which he becomes acutely aware that he is a
physical being, but more. This finds expression in the conscious
struggle of one who yearns for all, for eternity and infinity,
yet feels an inability and incompleteness of attainment. Intel¬
lectually, man has no assurance of eternal perpetuation and pro¬
gressive immortality; he does not recall any existence preceding
his birth, and cannot intelligently hypothesize an existence
for the "hereafter." Man in this condition is in a state of
despair, for he assumes that when he dies there will be only
negation, nothingness. In opposition to the intellect is the
will of man which demands his perpetuation, even more—his

---

1 Goethe, Faust, Part I, Scene XVI, trans. F. Cary Taylor (New York:
2 Agony is used in the context of the Greek word agonie, meaning
struggle.
individual, eternal perpetuation. So, men is viewed in conflict as his intellect convinces him of his finitude, and his feeling wills eternal continuation. The spiritual agony, between the "Is there?" and "Is there not?" constitutes the tragic sense of life.

Men's fight against despair, as he longs not to die, the craving of his individual self to exist infinitely and immortally in its own particular being and unique essence, is the "effective basis of all knowledge and the personal inward starting-point of all human philosophy, wrought by a man and for men." Unamuno's doctrine of will asserts that there is never knowledge for knowledge's sake, or even feeling for feeling's sake, for all of man's activity is undertaken so that he, the breathing, feeling, thinking being, may live, now and forever.

At the same time that man is lured by life and living he is dragged by death and nothingness. These opposite tensions, perpetuation and annihilation, are imposed by man upon the objects with which he deals. He, the real man, anthropomorphizes his own tragic sense of life; he personifies everything with which he comes in contact—animals, trees, buildings—all; the human individual fears that they, like him, are but "temporary" objects whose ultimate end is possible nothingness. Men pity these objects for this reason, and soon grow to love them. This love

Unamuno, "The Starting Point," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 36.
of all wherein men feel the possibility of mutual annihilation and negation, reemphasizes his own consciousness and his "at one" consciousness for all in all. From this, the end of flesh and blood demands a Universal Consciousness in which all consciousness "lives and moves and has its being." Man's relation to Universal Consciousness or God is a reciprocal one wherein each suffers and is mutually benefited by the other's conscious suffering and love. Unamuno thinks of God as being "subjectivity objectified or personality universalized."

It has been mentioned that Unamuno's doctrine is a doctrine of feeling or will. Although he "breaks the chain of the rational," he does not desire to be totally irrational. "The absolutely, the irrevocably irrational, is inexpressible, is intransmissible. But not the contra-rational." Although it may be impossible to rationalize the irrational, one can rationalize the contra-rational and this is done by one's attempt to interpret the contra-rational.

Since only the rational is intelligible, ... and since the absurd, being devoid of sense, is condemned to be incommunicable, you will find that whenever we succeed in giving expression and intelligibility to anything apparently irrational or absurd we invariably resolve it into something rational, even though it be into the negation of that which we affirm.

1 Acts 17:28.
2 Unamuno, "From God to God," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 165.
3 Unamuno, "In the Depths of the Abyss," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 178.
4 Ibid.
In pressing Unamuno for an epistemological answer to the questions: "What is truth?" and "How do we know?"; it is well to remember that one is dealing with a poet-philosopher whose definitions are as elusive as they are vital and free.

Unamuno, like Pilate, asks "What is truth?"; but the difference in the two men is that the former does not wash his hands of the matter. Unamuno asks further:

"Is truth in reason, or above reason, or beneath reason, or outside of reason, in some way or another? Is only the rational true?"

Is it not possible that there is a reality which, because of its very essence, cannot be reached by reason, and moreover, because of this very essence, it is in opposition to reason? How can one ascertain such a reality if the process of rationality alone possesses the key to knowledge?

Men's desire for life and living says that that is true which spurs a person on toward self-existence, that is, toward self-preservation and self-perpetuation. "The true bread may be that which satisfies our hunger, because it satisfies it."

1 "Yes, we can imagine it (immortality) as an eternal rejuvenescence, as an eternal growth of ourselves, and as a journeying towards God, towards the Universal Consciousness, without ever an arrival, we can imagine it so... (sic.) But who shall put fetters upon the imagination, once it has broken the chain of the rational?" (Unamuno, "In the Depths of the Abyss," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 123).


3 Ibid.
So it is, that in searching for an interpretation of truth—the very living essence, one must let Unamuno transport us into the realms of an imagination not entirely void of reason, but based on feeling. Concerning the real and ultimate truth, that is "independent of ourselves, beyond the reach of our logic and of our heart—of this truth who knows aught?"

If one tries to get at Unamuno's definition of truth by calling it "the very living essence" or "life itself," how are we to define life? This is "a far more tragic question than what is truth.

For if truth cannot be defined since it is truth itself that does the defining, neither can we define life." Life should be realized rather than defined. The supreme manifestation of life is seen in an agonizing, conflicting, struggle.

I can never tire of reiterating that what binds men most to each other is their discords. And what unites a man most with himself, what makes the intimate unity of our lives, is our inner discords, the innate contradictions of our discords. We finally make peace with ourselves, like Don Quixote, only to die.

This thought of death, the agonizing doubt as to one's final destiny is the basis for Unamuno's ethics. It should be

---

1 Unamuno, "In the Depths of the Sycam," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 131.
3 Ibid., p. 23.
remembered that to the contra-rationalist any particular formulation of ethics rests, like philosophical doctrines themselves, on an a posteriori justification for our conduct and actions to ourselves and to others. Our conduct is the best proof of our moral desires; as Pascal would take holy water so as to make himself believe, so Unamuno would not morally so as to merit eternity. Evil is the opposite to this; it is a pessimism that assumes that all is doomed to annihilation. It is not evil to consider and struggle against the void of nothingness, but it is evil to accept it. The origin of evil is in the cessation of perpetuating activity—exemplified in the inertia of matter and the sloth of spirit. Good is everything that sustains our desire to eternalize ourselves, and evil is that which conspires to suppress our active consciousness.

The subjective suffering of a man of flesh and bone realizing himself in the agony of consciousness, as he is pulled between the poles of intellect and will, death and life—this, "the very stuff of life," is the essential philosophical implication in Unamuno's conviction.
CHAPTER III
UNAMUNO'S CONTENTIONS IN
THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

In examining Unamuno's treatment of the problem of knowledge, it is important to distinguish between the love of knowledge itself and the practical or vital pursuit of it: "between the eagerness to taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and the necessity of knowing for the sake of living." 1 The latter, knowing for the sake of living, gives us direct knowledge. This "unconscious knowledge (alae.)" is experienced both by men and animals, but what distinguishes us from animals is reflective knowledge, "knowing that we know." 3 Reflective knowledge only comes into active operation after the satisfaction of our knowing for the sake of living, which is performed primarily in the interest of self or personal preservation.

Knowing for the sake of existing is basically an empirical investigation and response. Men's life is dependent upon his senses; the loss of sight, hearing, etc. accentuates the risks with which he is constantly confronted in his environment. These risks may be minimized in men's social state, in his community and cultural living; "some see, hear, touch, and smell for others." 4

---

1 Unamuno, "The Starting-Point," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 21.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 23.
Society, to Unamuno, is essentially another sense, the sense of community—"the true common sense."

Man is a living member of society and not a completely isolated individual. Yet, society owes its sustaining existence to man's instinct of perpetuation, the basic drive of the individual. "From this instinct, or rather from society, springs reason." That is to say, Unamuno explains reason, "reflex and reflective knowledge," which is the distinguishing mark of man, as a product of social relationships. Reason itself has, as its origin, language; most reflection is the articulation of thought, which came out of a need for the communication of our individual thought to that of our neighbors. Thinking is "inward language," which originates in "the outward"; therefore, "reason is social and common."

If we raise questions about "the outward" stuff from which thinking has its beginning, Unamuno's answer may suggest some Kantian influence. "In its etymological signification to exist is to be outside of ourselves, outside of our mind: ex-sistere." But though we should recognize this actual extra-mental existence, we can cognize only that which is experienced. We may ask, but we cannot answer. What is the mode of this matter of knowledge which comes to us from without? We cannot comprehend this mode, for to do so is "to clothe matter with form, and

---

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 25.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Unamuno, "From God to God," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 182.
hence we cannot know the formless as formless. To do so would be tantamount to inventing chaos with order." So, Unamuno, like Kant, was non-committal regarding the "thing-in-itself."

Unlike Kant, however, he implied that rational concepts were societal phenomena rather than innate categories or principles of the mind. Still, regardless of emphasis, it is man that attributes order to the world. As the hero Augusto in Unamuno's unique novel Mist (Niebla) says, "the world is a kaleidoscope. It's man that puts logic into it."

Unamuno's interpretation of the process of knowing is again exhibited when he says, "the senses themselves are simplifying apparatus which eliminate from objective reality everything that it is not necessary to know in order to utilize objects for the purpose of preserving life." Few people would deny the possibility that many aspects of reality remain untapped and unknown to us. Furthermore, could it be that some of these elements are unknowable because we do not need them to preserve our vital individual existence? Unamuno rejects not only the metaphysical pretensions of reason but also its claim to supply real vital knowledge of any sort. Rationalistic epistemology is self-defeating. "A terrible thing is intelligence." Intelligence leads to death and destruction. "The living, the absolutely unstable, the absolutely individual, is, strictly, unintelligible."

---

1 Unamuno, "From God to God," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 182.
2 Unamuno, "The Starting Point," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 34.
4 Ibid.
Mere syntax and logic lends itself to reductionistic formulae whereby everything is conceived of as identities and genera. That is, "each representation ...(has) no more than one single and self-same content in whatever place, time, or relation it may occur to us." All life is dynamic; observe something twice at two different moments, and you will see that it never remains the same. The intellect's goal is identity, something is dead. The living eludes the mind; mere intellectualization "seeks to conceal the flowing stream in blocks of ice; it seeks to arrest it." Furthermore, "In order to understand anything it is necessary to kill it, to lay it out rigid in the mind."

Is this criticism altogether unwarranted? We are reminded of Whitehead's comment concerning "the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete. It is an example of...the 'Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.'" Unamuno's interpretation of life as a dynamic perpetuating reality for every aspect of existence is reminiscent of the energetic forcefulness found in the philosophies of Leibniz, Bergson, Whitehead and James. But Unamuno's emphasis is unique; more as a poet, than as an epistemologist, he demands eternal individual existence and is contemptuous of any empty conceptual schemes that would impede his struggle

---

1 Unamuno, "The Rationalistic Dissolution," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 90.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
and his search. Even concerning his own written explanations, he states:

My own thoughts, tumultuous and agitated in the innermost recesses of my soul, once they are torn from their roots in the heart, poured out onto this paper and there fixed in unalterable shape, are already only the corpses of thoughts.¹

Truth, to Unamuno, is something which is lived, more than it is something which is comprehended. To illustrate his point, he quotes the conclusion of Plato's Parmenides, that "the one is and is not, and both itself and others, in relation to themselves and one another, are and are not, and appear to be and appear not to be."² That which is vital is irrational, and that which is rational is anti-vital, because reason is basically skeptical.

Before continuing an exposition of Unamuno's epistemology, it is well that we note that he is involved in a particular contradiction that perennially plagues all irrationalists and philosophers of flux. These people rightfully condemn rationalistic conceptualizations which divorce themselves from the flow of existence, yet, such critics always give universal validity to their own particular philosophical propositions. Unamuno ascertains that all reality is constantly undergoing change, but one aspect of reality (which, perhaps, is better interpreted by him as reality itself)—the demand of the individual for his

¹ Unamuno, "The Rationalist Dissolution," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 90.
² Ibid.
perpetuating existence—is something that has and will continue to persist.

Unamuno believes that reason is utilized for the purpose of relation, but that which is related is essentially irrational. He concedes that "Mathematics is the only perfect science, inasmuch as it adds, substracts, multiplies, and divides numbers, but not real and substantial things, inasmuch as it is the most formal of the sciences." Asks the poet Unamuno, "Who can extract the cube root of an ash-tree?"

It should not be intimated that reason and logic are abandoned by Unamuno, for they are regarded instrumentally. As has been mentioned previously, they are necessary for communication, and are indispensable to thought and perception. Our thinking is conversing with ourselves, and speech is a social manifestation.

1 Ibid., p. 91.
2 Ibid. The contemporary philosopher Ernst Cassirer puts it thus: "From a merely theoretical point of view we may subscribe to the words of Kant that mathematics is the 'pride of human reason.' But for this triumph of scientific reason we have to pay a very high price. Science means abstraction, and abstraction is always an impoverishment of reality. The forms of things as they are described in scientific concepts tend more and more to become mere formulae. ...It would seem as though reality were not only accessible to our scientific abstractions but exhaustible by them. But as soon as we approach the field of art this proves to be an illusion. For the aspects of things are innumerable, and they vary from one moment to another. Any attempt to comprehend them within a simple formula would be in vain. (Ernst Cassirer, "Art," An Essay on Man (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1953), p. 185.)
Furthermore, Unamuno would ask, is it not possible that reason and logic may possess a certain content, a certain power which is subtle and untranslatable? Because man thinks only by way of logic, he has sought to make it subservient to his conscious or unconscious desires. The principal desire that he had caused logic to serve is the powerful desire for immortality.

All rational arguments for our immortality are simple advocacy and sophistry. Advocacy uses logic to defend its thesis, whereas scientific methodology uses the factual data presented by reality so as to reach a certain conclusion. Unamuno believes that, "Advocacy always supposes a petitio princiuii, and its arguments are ad probandum. And theology that pretends to be rational is nothing but advocacy."

Theology has its origin in dogma, and dogma signifies a decree, which is manifest in legislative authority seen as law. The "juridical concept is the starting-point of theology." The scientific-rational spirit is sceptical or investigative, but theology is essentially dogmatic. Applying dogma or authority to some practical necessities has called forth the skepticism of doubt. Theology (or advocacy) may distrust reason, but not so investigating science, which moves along with tested hypotheses. Science teaches doubt, but not so advocacy which "neither doubts

2 Ibid.
nor believes that it does not know."

One should believe in something not because it is necessarily solved, but because truth forms a sort of Tertullian happiness which Unamuno interprets as "I believe because it is a thing consoling to me: ...credo quia absurdum ... (should be interpreted) credo quia consolans." Reason is more preoccupied with proving the existence of truth, whether we are comforted or not. Unamuno believes that it is not the "detached scientific investigators, those who know how to doubt, but the fanatics of rationalism," who speak of faith with such gross brutality. These people not only deny the possibility of an immortal existence, but are most contemptuous of those who do believe in it and those who wish that such an after-life might exist.

Those rationalists who are not anti-theological strive to convince men that there are pregnant motives for existing, even though such consolations will be resolved at the end of an historical cycle of eternal recurrence, or some similar dissolution of human consciousness. Humanistic motives for living and working are produced by "the affective and emotional hollowness of rationalism and of its stupendous hypocrisy... (which is) bent on sacrificing sincerity to veracity, and sworn not to confess that reason is a dissolvent and disconsolatory

1 Ibid., p. 93.
2 Ibid., p. 94.
3 Ibid., p. 95.
power."

As has been shown in preceding statements, Unamuno has more respect for the factual process of science than for the strict conceptionalism of rationalism. Still, he finds the epistemology of science to be limiting. He always looks for something behind science, "endeavouring to get beyond its fetishical relativity, I was led to the Ignorabimus position, I realized that science had always irked me." In place of science, Unamuno would put wisdom. Is wisdom opposed to science? "And I (Unamuno), following my arbitrary method, guided by the passion of my spirit, by my innate aversions and my innate attractions reply: Yes, science robs men of wisdom and usually converts them into phantom beings loaded up with facts."

Although Unamuno is rather consistent in denying the standards for knowledge that are explicitly and implicitly represented in dogmatism and rationalism, he is more tolerant of the scientific process and pragmatic methodology. Regarding the latter, Unamuno might give Dewey an unconventional "twist" and say that a thing is true if it causes man to struggle for his immortality. Observe

---

1 Unamuno, "The Rationalistic Dissolution," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 96. Alongside this quotation, we may add Unamuno's remark that, "the physical eunuch does not feel the need of reproducing himself carnally, in the body, and neither does the spiritual eunuch feel the hunger for self-perpetuation." (Unamuno, "The Rationalistic Dissolution," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 101).


3 Ibid.
Unamuno's commentary in his *The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho*:

Not the intelligence, but the will makes our world...all is true and all is false in this world. All is truth in so far as it feeds generous longings and bears fruitful works; all is falsehood that smothers noble impulses and aborts sterile monsters. By their fruits ye shall know them, men and things. Every creed that leads to living works is a true creed, as that one is false that conducts to seeds of death. Life is the criterion of truth; logic is but the criterion of reason. If my faith leads me to create life or increase it, what further proof of my faith would you have?...Truth is that which, by causing us to act this way or that way, makes us accomplish our purpose.1

The eclectic Unamuno not only uses pragmatism to show that the will and not intelligence constitutes the world, but he also draws upon rationalistic idealism to discredit the supremacy of reason as an epistemological realization. To him, the final triumph of reason, the analytical, is to cause one to doubt reason's own validity. In the end, the concepts of truth and necessity become invalid, because reason destroys their absolute and immediate relevance. Both truth and necessity are relative concepts. A true perception is not in contradiction with the system of our perceptions. With Bradley and Bosanquet, Unamuno believes that, "truth is coherence."2 Regarding one's system as a whole, because our knowledge is limited to it (we cannot know "the thing-in-itself."), it cannot be said that such a systematized aggregate is true or false. As has been mentioned earlier, it is not exceedingly foreign to assume that the universe, existent


In itself, beyond man's consciousness of it, is something other than what it appears to be, "although this is a supposition that has no meaning for reason." As far as necessity is defined, "we mean...that which is, and in so far as it is, for in another more transcendental sense, what absolute necessity, logical and independent of the fact that the universe exists, is there that there should be a universe or anything else at all?" To Unamuno, such absolute relativism is the ultimate triumph of sterile ratiocination.

Feeling is unsuccessful in its conversion of consolation into truth, and reason is unsuccessful in converting truth into consolation. When reason goes beyond the very concepts of truth and reality, it finds itself in the midst of scepticism. "In this abyss the scepticism of the reason encounters the despair of the heart, and this encounter leads to the discovery of a basis...for consolation to build on." Here is the glorious torment of the Tragic Sense of Life.

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 105.
3 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV
UNAMUNO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE
INDIVIDUAL ("I") AND THE UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Descartes' famous first principle, Cogito ergo sum, could be reversed by Unamuno to read Sum ergo cogito. To the Spanish philosopher, Man is before man thinks. Unamuno is concerned with the whole man as an existing person, and not merely as a thinking being. It is "I, you, reader of mine, the other man yonder, all of us who walk solidly on the earth. And this concrete man, this man of flesh and bone, is at once the subject and the supreme object of all philosophy, whether certain self-styled philosophers like it or not." This subjective existential realization characterizes the beginning of Unamuno's major philosophical work The Tragic Sense of Life. It has a certain relation to the distinction made by Bergson in Creative Evolution:

"The existence of which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own, for of every other object we have notions which may be considered external and superficial, whereas, of ourselves, our perception is internal and profound." Unamuno could well say with William James that "There is but one indefectibly certain truth, and that is...the truth that the present phenomenon of consciousness exists." Furthermore,

1 Unamuno, "The Man of Flesh and Bone," The Tragic Sense of Life, pp. 1-2
In the words of Schopenhauer "the Investigator...is himself rooted in (the)...world; he finds himself in it as an individual..."

Every man needs to be reminded that he is. Kierkegaard stated it thus:

Two ways, in general, are open for an existing individual: Either he can do his utmost to forget that he is an existing individual, by which he becomes a comic figure, since existence has the remarkable trait of compelling an existing individual to exist whether he wills it or not... Or he can concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that he is an existing individual. It is from this side, in the first instance, that objection must be made to modern philosophy; not that it has a mistaken presupposition, but that it has a comic presupposition, occasioned by its having forgotten, in a sort of world-historical absent-mindedness, what it seems to be a human being. Not indeed, what it means to be a human being in general; for this is the sort of thing that one might even induce a speculative philosopher to agree to; but what it means that you and I are human beings, each one for himself.²

What makes a person a real living being and a unique individual, (and not a generalized piece of humanity), is a principle of unity and a principle of continuity. The principle of unity is manifested in space, illustrated by the body itself, and secondly, in action and intention. For example, in running, both legs are used to thrust the body forward; one line does not go forward and the other backward. Unamuno believes that in each


minute of our life, purpose is exhibited, and to this purpose "the synergy of our actions is directed." Even though a person can change his purpose, it remains that "a man is no much the more a man the more unitary his action." 2

Concerning the principle of continuity in time, it appears to Unamuno that the I, the person he is now, derives, "by a continuous series of states of consciousness, from him who was in my body twenty years ago." Unfortunately at this point, Unamuno does not tell us how the real man of unitary action can also be the real man of conflict and division. Predominant in his philosophy is a split of the self, between reason and will, intellect and feeling. Individual personality is based on memory, as the collective personality of a culture is based on tradition. "We live in memory and by memory." In his elaboration upon memory, he sacrifices consistent philosophical exposition and injects the statement that "our spiritual life is at bottom simply the effort of our memory to persist, to transform itself into hope, the effort of our past to transform itself into our future." 5

Every man seeks to preserve his own personality. One changes his mode of thinking or of feeling only in so far as he is able

1 Unamuno, "The Man of Flesh and Bone," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 8.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 9. (The religious implications of this assertion will be brought out in subsequent chapters.)
6 Ibid.
to adjust the change into the unity of his spirit and to partici-
pate in its continuity. In integrating itself with the whole of
man's being, change becomes interwoven with a person's memories.
This is not to say that one's individual mode of being ever
reaches a stable harmony which is incapable of change. Every
man can change, "but the change must take place within his
continuity."

Man's concern for his own individuality is not a static
undertaking; it involves a projection of his present self-preser-
vation toward an infinite self-perpetuation. To begin with, it
is impossible for us to think of ourselves as non-existent, for
"no effort is capable of enabling consciousness to realize ab-
solute unconsciousness, its own annihilation." In fact, says
Unamuno, "The world is made for consciousness, for each conscious-
ness."

The individual consciousness is not content just with
this world, this visible universe which "is like a cramped cell,
against the bars of which my soul beats its wings in vain. Its
lack of air stifles me. More, more, and always more!" Unamuno
wants not only to be his individual self, but he wants to be
others as well, without relinquishing his self. He craves to
project himself upon all, into infinity and eternity. "Not to

1 Ibid., p. 10.
2 Unamuno, "The Hunger of Immortality," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 38
be all and forever is as if not to be—at least, let me be my whole self, and be so for ever and ever. And to be the whole of myself is to be everybody else (sia). Either all or nothing!"

Although man can become aware or conscious of himself, for example, though the physical pain of one of his organs, or by way of the torments of sexual passions—he really grips his most profound personal agony when he projects himself upon the scope of infinity. This demand for eternity involves his whole self; man's reason denies such an illogical existence, but his will cries out that living be, and that it be forever. This is truly the tragic sense of life; it is an insatiable desire to embrace all, conflicting with a recognition that there is a lack, or possible void.

If at the death of the body which sustains me, and which I call mine to distinguish it from the self that is I, my consciousness returns to the absolute unconsciousness from which it sprang, and if a like fate befalls all my brothers in humanity, then is our toil-worn human race nothing but a fictitious procession of phantoms, going from nothingness to nothingness. ...If we all die utterly, wherefore does everything exist?...It is the Therefore that corrodes the marrow of the soul; it is the sensation of that anguish which gives us the love of hope."


2 Attention should be called to another contradictory point in the philosophy of Unamuno. He notes his view that it is impossible for a person to think of himself as non-existent, as absolutely unconscious. Here in the above quotation is an extra empirical presupposition of absolute unconsciousness. In trying to find some justification for this paradox, we could assume that common sense tells a man that he had no existence prior to his physical birth, but it is impossible for a men actually to think of himself as non-existent.

Men, in confronting living now and forever, submit themselves to one of three positions. Some follow the demand of the will and repent the existence of immortality glibly, with unquestioning complacency; theirs is a state of resignation. The opposite of this, is the attitude of those who deny the feeling of the heart, the demand for life everlasting. These people are, to Unamuno, the hyper-rationalists who assert that there is no remembrance of an existence preceding our physical birth, so what intelligent proof is there that there should be one after death? Such personalities are individuals of despair; they deny what Goethe's storm and stress character Werther felt when he said: "hemmed in by our poverty...our soul pants for the draught that is beyond its reach."

Unamuno's position is a synthesis of these two attitudes. He wants resignation in despair, or despair in resignation. He, like Hamlet, chooses the edge of the precarious precipice—between being and not being. Unamuno wants to face his predicament squarely and honestly; the entangled turbulence of the self which is involved both in assurance—resignation, and in negation—despair, forces men to confront life in an agonizing activity of hope and of pain.


2 To illustrate some of the passionate and penetrating impact of Unamuno's expositions on the tragic sense of life, we turn to his Don Quixote and Sancho and wonder if ever person has not had "one of those moments when the soul is blown about by a sudden gust from the wings of the angel of mystery. A moment of anguish. For there
At this point, one may ask how Unamuno passes from the recognition of the living I—to a world that is "your own

...times when, unsuspecting, we are suddenly seized, we know not how nor whence, by a vivid sense of our mortality, which takes us without warning and quite unprepared. Then most absorbed in the cares and duties of life, or engrossed and self-forgetful on some festal occasion or engaged in a pleasant chat, suddenly it seems that death is floating over me. Not death,...a supreme anguish. And this anguish, tearing us violently from our perception of appearances, with a single, stunning swoop, dashes us away—to recover into an awareness of the substance of things.

"All creation is something we are some day to lose, and in some way to lose us. For what else is it to vanish from the world but the world vanishing from us?...Fancy yourself without vision, hearing, the sense of touch, the ability to perceive anything. Try it. Perhaps you will evoke and bring upon yourself that anguish which visits us when least expected,..."But while in this anguish, this exquisite agony of spiritual suffocation, when ideas elude and slip away from you, you rise by some convulsive effort of grief and seize them again, and with them seize upon the substance of things. And you see that the world is your own creation, not your reflection, as the German said. By a supreme effort of agony you lay hold on the truth, which is not, far from it, a reflection of the universe in your mind, but its home in your heart. Spiritual agony is the door to substantial truth. Suffer, in order that you may believe; and believe, in order that you may live. Facing all the negations of logic, which governs the apparent relations of things, stands the affirmation of cardeal, which rules their substantial values. Though your head tells you that someday your consciousness will flicker and go out, your heart, startled and lighted up by a vast dismay, will teach you that there is a world in which reason is not the guide. The truth is that which makes one live, not what makes one think." (Unamuno, The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho, pp. 251-253.)

The above term cardeal refers to verdicts of the heart, which guide the sea of feeling, the man who becomes discontented with mere logic and the conclusions of reason. This was Pascal's commitment when he wrote "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know; one is aware of this in a thousand ways." (Pascal, Oeuvres de Blaise Pascal, ed. Leon Franchvieg (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1904), XIII, p. 201.)
creation, a world in which reason is not the guide." The key to this dramatic amplification is love, "the most tragic thing in the world and in life...Love seeks with fury, through the medium of the beloved, something beyond, and since it finds it not, it desairs."

Love is neither a concept nor a volition; but it is realized as desire, as feeling; "it is something carnal in spirit itself." 

"Sexual love is the generative type of every other love." Every form of life gives evidence that through love one seeks to perpetuate himself, and in so doing becomes aware that he must die, that he must submit himself to others.

Within the essence of love there is something tragically destructive especially in its most primitive animal form exhibited in that impelling instinct that forces male and female to mix themselves in conjugation. The same drive or impulse that unites two bodies "as one flesh" disjoins their souls. It is not uncommon that a male and a female both hate and love one another at the same time, with equal intensity, as they envisage as "they contend with one another,...for a third life, which as yet is without life."

Unamuno maintains that whether lovers are conscious of it or not, they are perpetuating the "suffering flesh,..."(end)

---

2 Ibid., pp. 132-133.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
death. ...In the depth of love, there is a depth of eternal despair, out of which spring hope and consolation." From primitive love, "the animal origin of human society," comes "spiritual and sorrowful love." This latter expression of love is vividly illustrated, for example, when two lovers lose the first child of their flesh. "To love is to pity; and if bodies are united by pleasure, souls are united by pain." 3

Pity is the basis of human spiritual love, the love which is conscious of itself, "the love that is not purely animal, of the love, in a word, of a rational person." 4

As it grows, love pities everything with which it comes in contact. Its development is actualized in a person who, first, undergoes piercing introspection, and discovers his own emptiness, his very nothingness; such a man, feeling the lack of his infinity and eternity, becomes possessed with a sorrowful love and a whole-hearted pity for himself. This is no ordinary egotism,

1 Ibid., p. 134.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 135.
for in sensing the futility of his own self, he pities all men, all like individual sufferers—who together are doomed to despondency and negation.

But love, in its dynamic action of pity, does not stop with men and living things; it personalizes all that with which it comes in contact. An individual's pity and love for every object, animate and inanimate, "grows in proportion as we discover in them the likenesses which they have with ourselves. Or,... it is love itself, which of itself tends to grow, that reveals these resemblances to us." Our consciousness is projected upon all objects alike, and this consciousness is consciousness of death and of suffering.

When vital love becomes an emaciating force which embraces and personalizes everything with which it comes in contact, then love discovers the Universe, the total All, which "is also a Person possessing a Consciousness, a Consciousness which in its turn suffers, pities, and loves, and therefore is consciousness." 2

The Universal Consciousness is what Unamuno calls God. The soul pities God, and senses that it too is pitied by Him; the soul loves God and senses that it too is loved by Him, for the soul finds consolation for its misery within the infinite misery, "which, in eternalizing itself and infinifying itself,

---

1 1914, p. 139.
2 Unamuno, "Love, Suffering, Pity and Personality," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 139.
is the supreme happiness itself."

An obvious question here is—how do you correlate the coordinate yet paradoxical states of "infinite misery" and "supreme happiness itself"? Unamuno offers no definitive elaboration. But, seeking some justification for his position, one sees that both an individual consciousness and Universal Consciousness anticipate not only incompleteness, but, also, nothingness. In this state of "agony" between being and non-being, one finds suffering to be a two edged sword. It only threatens consciousness, but it gives consciousness momentum. Here we find no absorption of consciousness, or an "arrival" of consciousness into a state of final, culminated fruition. Consciousness is continually being challenged by the void; aspirations for infinity and its feeling of not-yetness gives consciousness a dynamic connotation. Herein do both the individual consciousness of our soul and the all or Universal Consciousness realize a certain unique selfhood, "the supreme happiness itself." 2

God, as the infinite Consciousness of the Universe, is "taken captive by matter and struggling to free himself from it." 3

---

1 Unamuno, "Love, Suffering, Pity and Personality," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 139.
2 Further elaboration upon the relation of evil or negation to consciousness will be given in the following chapter on ethics and politics.
3 Ibid., p.139-140. This quotation seems to say that matter is an impediment to God, threatening His Divine Perfection and Realization. The mystic Jacob Boehme and the Gnostics would side with Unamuno in proclaiming that the material world is a flaw in the cosmic makeup. It is a thing corrupt, evil, wrathful, and antagonistic to God and to man's fulfillment of his highest spiritual values; yet, conversely, matter is also good to Unamuno in that it keeps
Man personalizes the total All to redeem himself from Nothingness, being baffled by the mystery of mysteries—suffering.

But, by suffering, man is made to realize his distinct self-consciousness. This comes about in an "act of collision" wherein man senses his individual limitations. A person’s consciousness is the consciousness of his individual limitations. This observation is reminiscent of Eduard von Hartmann who believed that "only when the radiating will meets with a resistance by which it is checked or broken can it lead to objective manifestation of existence, to the subjective phenomenon of consciousness."

Realizing and not pitying ourselves as human beings, makes us project ourselves onto the total All, giving it an anthropomorphic personalization by way of the common bond of suffering. Man is not satisfied, as a conscious being, to stand alone in the Universe, or to exist as an objective phenomenon. Man wants to sustain his vital, passional subjectivity by attributing life, and personality, to the All, the whole universe. William James sensed this when he said: "The universe is no longer a mere It... but a Thou." Philosophy, and particularly theology give evidence

---

2 James, The Will to Believe, p. 27.
to the route sense of the subjective personalization of man.
Says Unamuno, "In order to realize (this)..." wish... (men) has 
1 discovered God and substance... (which) continually reappear 
in his thought cloaked in different disguises." As a conscious 
being, one feels that he exists, (which, to Unamuno, is different 
from knowing that we exist) and wishes to realize the existence 
of everything else. Man wants each individual in the total All 
to be a specific "I." Each unique personalization would have 
in common with the Whole Universe its consciousness; this 
consciousness would not be determined by the Universal Conscious-
ness, or God, but would partake reciprocally and con-jointly with 
it. Unamuno comes close to Leibniz's cosmology of the unique 
when the latter says "each Monad is a living mirror of the 
Universe, according to its point of view." In Unamuno's hierarchy 
of consciousness, one could imply that a thing is conscious to 
the degree that it becomes aware of itself, through its limita-
tion and suffering. Such an individual realization of conscious-
ness is manifested and projected by the vehicles of pity, love,

As was intimated in the former chapter, Unamuno does not have a 
natural metaphysical system. He believes that no one can ascer-
tain what a substance is. "For the notion of substance is a 
non-phenomenal category. It is a noun and belongs properly 
to the unknowable—that is... according to the sense in which 
it is understood. But in its transcendental sense it is some-
thing really unknowable and strictly irrational," Unamuno, 
"The Rationalistic Dissolution," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 86.

2 Unamuno, "Love, Suffering, Pity and Personality," The Tragic 
Sense of Life, p. 146.

3 Leibniz, "Excerpta from a letter to Benedict de Montaigne," 
Leibniz Selections, ed. Philip E. Neeper, tr. by George Montgomery 
and a demand for a perpetuating eternal existence. Spinoza had written, "Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its being." But, for Unamuno, Consciousness wants to perpetuate itself rather than merely to persevere in its being. Josiah Royce expressed this tension when he said, "This individual thirst for infinity...this is my personality." The will, as an amplified version of self-preservation and self-perpetuation, actualizes itself in the individual's impulse to be everything and everyone without ceasing to be itself. This is somewhat of a hyper-personalized anthropomorphic pantheism. This inner force is God in us "who works in us because He suffers in us." 3

An individual's desire to make the world his own, is not without its conflict and tension. Says Unamuno, "I wish to make the world mine...to make it myself, and the world tries to make me its, to make me it; I strive to personalize it and it strives to depersonalize me." As man is engaged in this tragic conflict, he utilizes his "enemy-world" so that he can dominate it and in like fashion, the world uses the individual so that it may dominate him. This is vividly illustrated through the processes of communication and creativity. "Whatever I say, write or do, it is only with the world's help that I can say, write or


do it; and thus the world at once depersonalizes my saying, writing, and doing and makes them its own, and I appear to be different from what I am." The divine force through the individual and through the world appears to be working at cross-purposes with itself. This clash of the prime force or consciousness reflects a curious inconsistency, but it does not hamper the assertions of irrationalist Unamuno, who holds that through this conflict and mutual attempt at domination, something creative and communicable results.

Unamuno persists in holding that our "likeness" with the totality of existence, our sympathy, leads us to discover the divine will towards consciousness that persists in all things. "It moves and activates the most minute living creatures;... perhaps, (even) the very cells of our own bodily organism,..." Acting collectively, the cells of a man's body maintain, by their activity, his consciousness, his soul. If a person was fully conscious, the consciousness of all the cells in his body, that is of all that occurs in the composite whole of his self as a bodily organism, he would sense the universe performing within (himself), and "perhaps the painful sense of (his)... limitedness would disappear."

At every moment obscure consciousnesses, elementary souls,

1 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 149.
"are born and die within us, and their birth and death constitute our life....their sudden and violent death constitutes our pain. And in like manner, in the heart of God consciousnesses are born and die—but do they die?—and their births and deaths constitute His life."

If a Universal and Supreme Consciousness exists, "I am an idea in it; and is it possible for any idea in this Supreme Consciousness to be completely blotted out?" Unamuno claims that when he is dead, God will not forget him, for "to be remembered by God, to have my consciousness sustained by the Supreme Consciousness, is not that, perhaps, to be?"

If God made the Universe, in like manner, man's soul has made his body, to the extent that "it has been made by it—if, indeed, there be a soul."

Through love and pity, we are reminded that the Universe is human and personal; and in it, we see our Father, "of whose flesh we are flesh."

Saying that God is forever producing things is equivalent to saying that things are forever producing God, for do we not get our belief in a personal and spiritual God from the belief in our own individual personality and spirituality? That is, increased consciousness is a reciprocal undertaking between

---

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Universal Consciousness and Individual Consciousnesses. Because men think of God as suffering, pitying, and loving with all individual consciousnesses, he comes to believe in a personal and spiritual God, a being who is derived from our own individual personality and spirituality. Our consciousness connotes God's consciousness as a person. Regarding the transcendence of God, Unamuno says "because we desire ardently that our consciousness shall live and be independently of the body, we believe that the divine person lives and exists independently of the universe, that his state of consciousness is ad extra (etc.)."

Man's faith in God is based on the need of attributing finality to existence, so as to make it answer to a purpose. An important key to the Universal Consciousness theory of Unamuno is expressed when he says: "We need God, not in order to understand the why, but in order to feel and sustain the ultimate wherefore, to give a meaning to the Universe." 3

1 This doctrine of an ever-conscious, ever-producing God, who becomes a personal and spiritual being, presents a confusing problem. Unamuno would not admit that there is a logical or consistent reason for such an assumption. His justification for a personal Deity is viewed primarily as a demand of the will, a demand for self-perpetuation.

2 Unamuno, "Love, Suffering, Pity and Personality," The Tragic of Life, p. 150

3 Ibid., p. 152. In direct contrast to Unamuno's position concerning the necessary existence of God for the sake of the "wherefore," is Dr. KaaTaggart and his atheistic idealism. He insists that just because he does believe in a society of eternal values, he sees no ground or need for assuming the existence of God. Says KaaTaggart, there is "only one reason why we should not believe in his (God's) existence—namely, that there is no reason why we
Unamuno goes a step beyond Voltaire, who said, "If God did not exist, he would have to be invented." To the Spaniard, "to believe in God is...to create Him, although He first creates us." God is the One who in us is constantly creating Himself.

Man has created God to redeem the Universe from the abyss of negation; "all that is not consciousness and eternal consciousness, conscious of its eternity and eternally conscious, is nothing more than appearance." Consciousness is the substantial reality; it lives, desires, suffers, pities, loves. God guarantees consciousness "not in order to think existence, but in order to live it; not in order to know the why and how of it, but in order to feel the wherefore of it. Love is a contradiction if there is no God."

---

4. Ibid., p. 155.
CHAPTER V
ETHICAL AND POLITICAL THEORIES
OF UNAMUNO

Dynanism, which has eternal, immortal significance, is the very essence of the ethics of Unamuno. Good is viewed as an infinite perpetuation and perspective; evil is defined as sloth and inertia. Such an attitude is reminiscent of Whitehead when he said "Evil is the brute motive force of fragmentary purpose, disregarding the eternal vision."  

In stating the general characteristics and import of good and evil, we should never forget that, primarily, Unamuno's

---

1 The energetic forcefulness of Unamuno's ethics can be compared to that of Carlyle when the latter wrote: "I...say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World...Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might." Thomas Carlyle, "The Everlasting Yea," Sarton Resartus, The Complete Works of Thomas Carlyle (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1910?), p. 149.

ethical reflections are concerned with the individual person. They actively involve the eternal and immortal destiny of every man of flesh and bone. To give the moral life a more personal meaning, he postulates a four-way personality of man:

I am going at it by a different route from the American celebrator (sic), Oliver Wendell Holmes. I am going to say that in addition to the person one is to God (if indeed one is anyone to God), and to the person one is to others, and to the person one thinks one is, there is the person one would like to be. And this last, the person one would like to be, is the creator within one, in one's heart, and the person that is truly real.

Verily, God will reward or punish a man by making him for all eternity what he has tried to be.

The place of Deity in the moral striving of Unemuno is confusing, as the above quotation illustrates; in the beginning, he wonders as to man's personal relation to God, but at the end of the statement, we see God as a Righteous Judge according to man through eternity the destiny towards which he has strived.

Browning expressed this idea in Reubil Ben Ezra when he wrote:

Strive, and hold cheap the strain;,
Learn, nor account the pain; ... cruel life succeed in that it seems to fail: What I aspired to be, and can not, comforts me: ... All I could never be, All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.


The literary liberties, and the poetic paradoxes in Unamuno's discussion of God do not allow us to make a clear-cut transition or differentiation between a transcendent and an immanent being. Yet as the former chapter on metaphysics shows, Unamuno rather predominantly thinks of God as an immanent Consciousness, than as a transcendent Power.

Man's relation to moral creative striving and to God is conceived in Theologia rather than in Calvinistic terms. Unamuno says that if man has faith and believes in God, and if his spiritual recognition and response is joined with a life of pious purity and morality, then what makes this man good is not, primarily believing in God, but the very activity of being good, which, "thanks to God," causes men to believe in Him. "Goodness is the best source of spiritual clear-sightedness." Unamuno does not believe that a man is born into the world with a soul. In The Agony of Christianity he says explicitly that a man dies with a soul if "he has forged it for himself."

Also, it may be mentioned that Unamuno is not greatly preoccupied with the problem of sin, especially as it is interpreted in the Calvinistic sense. For Calvin, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. For Unamuno, man's first concern is his own immortal destiny—and not his innate sinfulness.

In approaching the ethical problem of suffering, Unamuno turns to his concept of the Universal Consciousness. In recalling

1 Unamuno, "The Starting-Point," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 27.

this aforementioned doctrine, one sees that each individual "I" desires to identify the Universe in relation to, and within himself. Such a relationship involves not only reciprocal love between man and God, but reciprocal suffering. "Just as I suffer in being He, He also suffers in being I, and in being each one of us." The supreme example of this divine suffering is Christ's passion.

At this point we should indicate briefly Unamuno's conception of Christianity. In his work *The Agony of Christianity*, he defines it thus: "a value belonging to the universal spirit which has its roots in the most intimate recesses of man as an individual." At the heart of these "most intimate recesses" is the desire and demand to perpetuate one's self immortally and eternally. That is the goal of Christianity and its universal and individual problem. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in Unamuno's eyes, gives infinite relevance and existence to the individual man "of flesh and bone."

---

1 For further elaboration of this idea, cf. our Chapter IV, pp. 37, 38, 43, 44, 46, 47.


3 Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, p. 15. Ernst Cassirer makes some vital pertinent criticism along these lines. To him, myth and religion do not need proof for the fact of immortality, but for the fact of death. "Myth and primitive religion never admit these proofs. They emphatically deny the very possibility of death. In a certain sense the whole of mythical thought may be interpreted as a constant and obstinate negation of the phenomenon of death." Cassirer, "Myth and Religion," *An Essay on Man*, pp. 111-112.
A question arises here: In what way does God suffer both as Universal Consciousness and as Jesus Christ? A key to Unamuno's teaching can be found, perhaps in a chaotic interpretation, of God suffering because of being bound by matter. Spirit discovers that it is limited by the matter in which it is forced to live and attain consciousness of itself. Unless there is matter, there is no spirit, but "matter makes spirit suffer by limiting it....Suffering is...the barrier which unconsciousness, matter, sets up against consciousness, spirit; it is the resistance to will, the limit which the visible universe imposes upon God."

Matter is not thought of as evil, because it is tangible, but because it is only tangible, because it is unconscious, and therefore, negative. The man of flesh and bone rebels against his physical decomposition and the cessation of his self-awareness. His will demands that his individuality be perpetuated immortally and eternally. The frustration of this basic drive is evil, "The origin of evil...is...the inertia of matter, and, as applied to the things of the spirit, sloth." Good, on the contrary, is "Consciousness, the craving for more, more, always, more, hunger of eternity and thirst of infinity, appetite for God..."—aspirations never satisfied.

1 See preceding chapter IV, p. 44 of this thesis.
2 Unamuno, "Faith, Hope, and Charity," The Ironic Sense of Life, p. 212.
3 Ibid., p. 51.
4 Ibid., p. 213.
5 Ibid.
Does the above reflection point to a genuine ethical system? If evil is explained away in metaphysical poetry, can there be value, true moral-spiritual life realization? That is, if evil is required in order that consciousness might realize itself, that is, if evil is a necessary means to good, is it really and ultimately evil? The questions are left unanswered. Furthermore, which one will win out, evil or good, inertia or consciousness, is not always the point of emphasis in Unamuno. He writes both factors eternally in conflict, so that he may be forever cognizant of his self—and this to Unamuno is good and desirable.

"My soul...longs ever to approach and never to arrive, it longs for a never-ending longing, for an eternal hope which is eternally renewed but never wholly fulfilled." Such an attitude reminds us of Lessing, who wrote, "Did the Almighty holding in his right hand Truth, and in his left Search after Truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer,—in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request Search after Truth."  

Unamuno emphasizes in his interpretation of the moral life the spiritual assertion of self-perpetuation over the pull of matter as unconscious inertia. But his justification for this emphasis reminds us of Pascal's wager or William James' will-to-believe. We must believe in eternal life so that our present living may be endurable, so that it may have meaning; we must

---

1 Unamuno, "Religion, the Mythology of the Beyond and the Apostasias," *The Tragic Sense of Life*, p. 256.
believe in the immortality of the good, or consciousness, so that we may preserve our individuality united with (but not absorbed into) all other consciousnesses, the Universal Consciousness, God. It is obvious that Unamuno's explanation here does not follow a consistent line of rationality and coherence. The necessary conclusions to his line of reasoning is not as obvious to some as it is to Unamuno; but one should never forget that he expresses himself more with the poetry of the "cardic," rather than with the philosophy of logic. "We must never believe in that other life, perhaps, in order that we may deserve it, in order that we may obtain it, for it may be that he neither deserves it nor will obtain it who does not passionately desire it above reason and, if need be, against reason."

1 Unamuno's elaboration on evil is the paradox of paradoxes. He quotes Goethe's Faust, saying that "All that has achieved existence deserves to be destroyed." This is pessimistic evil to the Spaniard. Evil is not "that other pessimism that consists in lamenting what it fears to be true and struggling against this fear—namely, that everything is doomed to annihilation in the end." Unamuno holds that "everything that exists deserves to be exalted and eternalized, even though no such fate is in store for it...everything deserves to be eternalized...even evil itself, for that which we call evil would (then)...lose its temporal nature." Unamuno, "The Practical Problem," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 264.

2 Unamuno, "Religion, the Mythology of the Beyond and the Apocalypse," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 258.
Will the good prevail? Begin with the heart that it be so, make the "leap of faith," will-to-believe," and your life will be far more fruitful than if you had accepted negation and acquiescence. Do not say with Santayana that life is a series of little victories on a road that leads to ultimate defeat, but make your first defiantly in the face of a possible abyss, and cling to the Unamunian categorical imperative of "Live your life so that your annihilation would be an injustice."

There is paradox in Unamuno's saying first, that he desires a life of continual "not-yet-reality" and struggle, and, second, that he wants to believe that good and immortality will continue to exist. But, as if these points were not puzzling enough, Unamuno adds that ethical doctrines are merely our sentiments about our conduct, our apologies for what we do: "the means we seek in order to explain and justify to others, and to ourselves our own mode of action." Does this remind one of Hume's statement that morality is determined by sentiment? It defines virtue to be "whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation."

1. Pascal
2. James
Unamuno insistently emphasizes this note of personal preference in his doctrine of the will as a demand for self-perpetuation.

He asserts pragmatically that conduct, or practice "is the proof of doctrine, theory." "It is not faith that creates martyrs but martyrs who create faith." To realize the import of such an assertion, one should keep in mind Pascal's famous advice on how to become a Christian; perform the outward signs, "take holy water, and have masses said; belief will come and stupefy your scruples,—sela vous sera croire et vous empêchera." The end of morality, in the opinion of Unamuno, is to give personal purpose to universal existence. This can be achieved or approached only by adopting this purpose insistently or even defiantly as a program of action.

What are the obligations of a man to society and to government? A man's first duty is to give himself exceedingly to people so that he will receive himself in return from them.

Furthermore, says Unamuno, we must make of our vocational position an obligation; we must live so that we may become irreplaceable in it. Our purpose is not to seek a particular calling that we consider to be the most appropriate for ourselves, but, regardless of some of the circumstances, to make a calling of that

---

2 Ibid.
3 James, The Will To Believe, p. 6.
vocation in which we seem to find ourselves. Such a position
reminds one of Thomas Carlyle when he said "Do the Duty which
lies nearest thee," which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy
second Duty will already have become clearer...here, in this
poor...despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here
or nowhere is thy Ideal; work it out therefrom; and working,
believe, live, be free."

Unamuno calls the vocation question the "most deep-seated
of social problems, that which is at the root of all the others."? The
matter is not primarily one of determining the distribution
of wealth, or of determining labor's products; nor is it merely
a question of aptitude, for in his opinion a man is made rather
than born into his vocation. The tragedy of most occupations
is that the soul of man is sacrificed for the sake of mere
existence or livelihood; most workmen are aware, not only of a
certain vocational uselessness, but of a "social perversity,"
of their very work—which someday may destroy future generations
as well as the worker himself. A man should put himself into
his immediate job and make it something comparable to a religious
vocation.

Incentive for one's moral devotion to his work is hindered
by both labor unions and employers alike. Each of these strive

1 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 148.
3 1911.
to dominate one another by the use of wages and political control. They ignore the personal pride and expression that a worker needs to realize himself in his vocational endeavor. Generally a man at his job finds himself in one of these three positions or levels of existence: first, economic (working so as to earn a livelihood). Although a man here wants most of all to get by, he does respect the decency of society and strives and seeks to afford himself enough time to consider his destiny and possible immortality. Second, aesthetic (working for the sake of beauty). In this occupational position, one aspires toward individual recognition as a laborer who works with an object for art's sake. Third, religious (working so as to reflect our desire for immortality). "To work at our ordinary civil occupation, with eyes fixed on God, for the love of God, which is equivalent to crying for the love of our eternalization, 1 is to make of this work a work of religion." Vocation has dynamic proportions provided that we like Christ "take up our cross," the cross of our calling, be it civil or religious, and look towards God "striving to make each act of this calling a true prayer." 2

By making one's vocations a religious experience, man not only becomes an indispensable creative laborer in his society, whom people admire and trust, but he actively "imposes" himself upon his neighbors. He says, with Jesus, "He who does not lose

1 Eternalization is here, again, a key word. One works so as to make himself irreplaceable, and so as to make his annihilation an injustice.


3 Ibid., p. 277.
his life shall not find it," but, before one gives himself to others, he must first dominate them in an act of love. What is this love? Recalling our former chapter on "I and the Universal Consciousness," loving my neighbor means wanting him to be another I like myself, and reciprocally, that I may be he. With this "ethic of mutual imposition" Unamuno believes that such activity obliterates "the division between him and me, to suppress the evil." Here, again we view evil as a paradox in the philosophy of Unamuno. To suppress the division between men is essential for social harmony and reciprocity—but to what extent in a vocational-civic ethic can this be practiced before the individual consciousness is absorbed into a predominantly social consciousness? If Unamuno has a persistent doctrine or demand for individual consciousness and immortality, can he label that which separates men from man evil? Unamuno does not answer these questions. It is doubtful that he would agree altogether with a man like Schopenhauer, who wrote that "the absence of all egoistic motives is...the criterion of an action of moral value."

Unamuno continually gives religious relevance to human collectivity. Although his explanations for such an attitude are devoid of logical consistency and coherence, he firmly

1 Ibid., p. 279.
believes that society, which originates in man himself, is a manifestation of the Universal Consciousness or God: "The feeling of solidarity originates in myself; since I am a society, I feel the need of making myself master of human society; since I am a social product, I must socialize myself, and from myself I proceed to God—who is I projected to the All—and from God to each of my neighbors." 1 As man's instinct of preservation, exemplified in hunger, is the basis or foundation of the human individual, in like manner his instinct of perpetuation, exemplified in love, is the root of human society.

But, is not man capable of exploiting his fellow men in a social relationship? What about war? Unamuno's response may be shocking to some; to him, war contains far more of the humane than does peace. "War is the school of fraternity and the bond of love; it is war that has brought peoples into touch with one another, by mutual aggression and collision, and has been the cause of their knowing and loving one another." 2 Unamuno candidly comments that civilization began when man subjected another to his will and by forcing him to do the labor of two people, he could thereby devote more time to contemplation and to setting his slave upon works of luxury. "Not without reason was Athene the goddess of war and wisdom." 3

---

1 Unamuno, "The Practical Problem," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 279.
2 Ibid., pp. 277-280.
3 Ibid., p. 280.
Unamuno's aggressive ethic of self-imposition, the significance that he gives to war and the heroic hint at a certain Nietzschean strain in his thought. Of course, the German advocate of the Will-to-Power would violently disagree with Unamuno in regard to the basic importance of love, immortality, and God.

In facing the tragedy of life, the cruelty and injustice that has perennially haunted men, Unamuno asserts that "the evil of suffering is cured by more suffering, by higher suffering." He regards this "higher suffering" as the epitome of life; it is the agonizing conflict between negated acquiescence and dynamic perpetuation. But surely it is dubious that all men in agony and suffering can or should justify their predicament with a sort of thanksgiving for realization of the self. Should such instances necessitate optimistic expectancy of individual consciousneses in an immortal existence? Could not a man in pain violently resent his self in agony and in the web of individual striving assert pessimistically that he is caught up within the "Wheel of Existence?" Dutisme Buddha could address some very pertinent questions to Miguel de Unamuno.

In considering the social-political ethics of Unamuno, we find him somewhat akin to Rousseau. For the most part, the disagreeable turmoil of civilization is due to the corrupt social system rather than to the perversity of individual men, yet "the

Ibid., p. 283.
fact that guilt is collective must not actuate me to throw mine
upon the shoulders of others, but rather to take upon myself
the burden of the guilt of others, the guilt of all men."

Each person makes himself responsible for the whole of mankind
in such an awareness, a man sees that the intensity of the fault
is not something that can be externally measured, but that it
is determined by one's consciousness of a situation or event. The
basic wrong in an evil action is that it pollutes a man's intention,"that in knowingly doing wrong a man is predisposed to go on
doing it, that it blurs the conscience." Evil makes the con-
science, both in its moral and psychical sense, heavy, dull, and
blurred. Here we recall the basic theme of Unamuno: Good is
that which enlightens and enlarges consciousness; evil is that
which diminishes and confuses consciousness.

At this point we would do well to recapitulate three
interpretations of evil that seem to be predominant in Unamuno's
ethical stipulations. First, evil is said to be identified with
sloth, inertia, the void; it is an attempt to negate the indi-
vidual consciousness which demands dynamic self-perpetuation.
Secondly, evil is that which blurs consciousness. It obstructs
the eternal and immortal vision; it nullifies individual per-
spective in its inactivity. Thirdly, and quite paradoxically,
evil is that which becomes good because it never ceases to be

1 Ibid., p. 290.
2 Ibid., p. 291.
evil (Chapter V, pp. 7-8). That is, it is a "necessary" element in existence that keeps men from completely becoming absorbed into his society (Chapter V, p. 13), as he is involved in the social ethics of self-imposition. But, more than this, evil is also good because it makes each individual consciousness aware of itself.

Waldo Frank states that Unamuno is the "strongest moralist of our day. Helle and Shaw have thin voices besides this well-sized uproar." A major reason for such opinions is that Unamuno is always responsive to many social situations that professional moralists tend to ignore. The stigma of poverty is an example of this. His commentary on this problem is penetrating. He believes that physical privation is not as devastating as the inner loss of pride and forcefulness. "Poverty is not the lack of material resources, but the state of mind engendered by the lack." 2

Poverty, observes Unamuno, is one of the chief drives of contemporary man; the fear of being destitute, rather than an insatiable desire for wealth is what drives men to material "progress" and financial "success." Some of the most deplorable aspects of poverty are the beneficent philanthropies which sometimes "capitalize" on the poor. Too often this sort of charity is a double-edged sword; in regard to some people's giving,

1 Waldo Frank, Virgin Spain (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1926), p. 263.
2 Unamuno, The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho, p. 221.
Unamuno candidly remarks, "One would think they were trying to suppress the poor, not their poverty."

Although Unamuno uses words, phrases, and some form of order and coherence in the exposition of his ethics, he claims that virtue "like religion, like the longing never to die—all these are...the fruit of passion." What is this "passion"?

He answers, "I fear that if I were to arrive at a definition of it, I should cease to feel it and to possess it." Passion resembles suffering, "and like suffering it creates its object. It is easier for the fire to find something to burn than for something combustible to find the fire."

1 Ibid., p. 223.
2 Unamuno, "The Practical Problem," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 222.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
CHAPTER VI
UNAMUNO IN PERSPECTIVE

Unamuno is not a "first-rate philosopher," if we use as standards for our appraisal a thinker's systematic mastery and rational coherence. Yet, even the most critical reader of his works can scarcely ignore the power and the intensity of his passionate dialectic. Here is Miguel de Unamuno, a man of flesh and bone, who is caught up in the tragic sense of life. He is in open defiance of anyone who would assert with Spinoza that "a free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a meditation upon death, but upon life." 1 With incomparable vehemence Unamuno demands for himself, and for everyone else abiding reality, a dynamic, immortal consciousness. Death, void, negation, inertia, cessation of the "I", there are anathemas to him. Tennyson expressed the plea of Unamuno when he declared:

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd...

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall...
to all,...

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.2

1 Spinoza, "Of Human Bondage, or Of the "Lickness of the Affects;" The Ethic, Fourth Part, Prop. LXVII, p. 346.

2 Tennyson, In Memoriam, LIV.
This message has distinct historical significance, historical in that it is a man's active involvement in the course of living and not merely a neutral observation of the course of events. Unamuno's main concern is more with the destiny of the individual historian than with the course of universal history. Furthermore, he does not believe in (mere factual and impersonal) history—but in the substance of history... in the living and eternal tradition... found only in the present, not in the past, which is dead forever and buried in dead things. This is the existential emphasis in Unamuno. Beyond this primary intention of a demand for living and indestructible personality, there is a concern here with the social environment in which Unamuno lived. He reflects and also resists the course of a general epoch in Western Civilization, and more explicitly a particular period of Spanish national development. Unamuno's plea was aroused by his immediate Spanish reflections and became emphatic and expensive as they were directed against Western culture. He discovered that the Spanish infection was but a localized symptom of a malignant tumor that was eating into the heart of Western Civilization. To illustrate this, we noted that the defeat of Spain in the Cuban War had caused Unamuno and other champions of Spanish Culture to question their former position on "the progress of Spain." The quantitative greatness of an empire or

---

the advancement of a rationalistic culture seemed to have little ultimate significance; "kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall"—to what end? What is the thing that matters most? The answer to this question, was not to be found in either scientific facts, rationalistic conceptualization or theological dogma, but in the demand of the will in every existing, conscious individual.

Although Unamuno admired the anti-dogmatic attitude of scientific methodology, he grew impatient and wondered what lay behind our general laws and particular facts.

Among modern philosophers, Hegel held a great fascination for Unamuno, especially during his early studies at the University of Madrid. The Spaniard saw particular significance in the idealistic theory of opposites, of thesis and antithesis, which to him reflected a definite tension and insight into contradictions. But Hegel's tight rationalistic system left no room for the feelings of the heart and the demands of the will. His man was not a "real man" of passion and spiritual conflict, but rationalized and abstract.

Unamuno was reared in the Roman Catholic tradition, but in later life he denied dogmatism and idealistic theology; he respected the irrational Spanish mystics like John of the Cross and Saint Teresa far more than he did the pseudo-Aristotelian

---

A hypothetical Unamuno dialectic could possibly be expressed so: Consciousness (I-seln) comes into spontaneous contact with unconsciousness (Non-seln), and from this tragic conflict emerges self-awareness and a demand for self-perfection (the synthesis, becoming).
Saint Thomas Aquinas. To the Spanish poet-philosopher, religion was relevant only as the actualization and the guarantee of man's basic drive, the will, and its perpetuating existence. Some critics call Unamuno the only Spanish mystic whose "ears are closed to the voice of authority," and "the most religious of the nonbelievers of his generation." He himself says that his religion "is to seek truth in life and life in truth."

What can Unamuno say to an age of Science, an age of rationalistic enlightenment, or to an age of faith? He would say nothing to a hypothetical "age," but he would warn individual members of such an epoch not to forget themselves. This plea, we may note again, could place Unamuno within the camp of the contemporary existentialists. The Jesuit existentialist Hunter Guthrie represents a certain Unamunian spirit when he states that "the history of Western philosophy presents a striking phenomenon;...from the time of Plato and Aristotle, men have exercised...ingenuity in fashioning a philosophy of essence." That is, "essential man (never existential man) has been studied, analyzed, dissected, and afterwards reconstructed in the domain of thought." A "real man," a desiring, suffering, living person has been treated as a somewhat pretentious "ideal men." To Guthrie "most of the conclusions of the history of

philosophy** refer to a type of men-being that is actually non-existent. "These conclusions, placed beside living on tumultuous reality, presented the curious but futile spectacle of a portrait of men taking the place of men himself. It only lacks life." The connotations that Unamuno gives to the word "life" constitutes a unique contribution to contemporary philosophic and poetic expression. Despite the fact that he is often contradictory and paradoxical, his works manifest a certain tragic consistency. He never abandons his one, all-consuming desire for the immortality of each individual soul. In this, there is no uncertain, vague, romantic realism, but a decisive and unwavering insistence.

Unamuno is consistent in what he considers to be basic in his philosophy, but not in the methodology that he uses to arrive at his major conclusion. In surges of enthusiasm which betray intensity of feeling, the poet-philosopher sacrifices clarity of judgment and even yields to obscurantism in order to gain energy in his expositions. It is a common criticism that "to word-music," Spanish writers often sacrifice "fitness and exactness of expression, verisimilitude and common sense."

Unamuno was unmoved by criticisms regarding his verbosity and loose style. In fact, concerning the most philosophic of


his works, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, he states that it was a collection of essays, "a kind of improvisation upon notes collected during a number of years, and in writing each essay I have not had before me any of those that preceded it." And so the book is "full of inward contradictions...like life and like me myself."

Unamuno never wrote for his own amusement or for the enjoyment of his readers. He said that he believed with Turgenev that all good writers had something on their mind, they had an axe to grind. Unamuno sharpened his axe in poetry, prose, newspaper articles and philosophy. Contemporary critics in literature, who are advocates of the Hemingway school of realistic description, would find Unamuno's works entirely too bare of details. But it is for a purpose that the Spaniard strips his drama to their essentials; his emphasis is always centered on their interaction and intensity of the passions and ideas of his characters. He wants to become intimately one with them in their acquiescence and in their aspirations.

During most of his literary and philosophical career, Unamuno believed that Spain had a spiritual mission to the world, a mission to preach "agonizing" immortality, personified in "the tragedy of the soul of Don Quixote, as the expression of a conflict between what the world is as scientific reason shows it to be, and what we wish that it might be, as our religious faith

Unamuno, "Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragi-Comedy," *The Tragic Sense of Life*, p. 297.
affirms it to be." This dual conflicting relationship,—
the negation of matter and the perpetuation of spirit,—was
symbolized by Spain. Unamuno declared furthermore that this
agonizing turmoil was latent within every individual living
self.

At no time did Unamuno pretend to resolve the tragic sense
of life. His gospel is directed to every age which assumes that
it has a "contained solution," whether it be in the form of
scientism, idealism, or dogmatism. Do you want a definitive
crystallization? He answers, "Go to the shop next door; I
do not sell bread; I sell yeast."^2

What is most outstanding in Unamuno? We are bound to repeat:
It is his intense, passionate craving for individual immortality.
Although he was strongly influenced by philosophers of the will
such as Schopenhauer and E. von Hartmann, his thesis has a
certain unique and provocative content. Such doctrines as "the
will-to-live" and "self-preservation" are transformed into "the
will to possess infinity eternally, and "self-perpetuation."

1
Unamuno, "Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragi-Comedy,"
The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 321.
2
Martin Nozick, "Unamuno and His God," South Atlantic Quarterly,
IL (July, 1950), p. 335. Did Unamuno realize eventually that
"man cannot live on yeast alone"? Perhaps it was Unamuno's un-
mitigated faith in this leaven and hope for his Spain that contribu-
ted to the despondent last years of his life. (See our
Chapter I, pp. 10-14).

Our earlier criticism of Unamuno showed that he lacked a proper consistency and rigor in the formulation and in the explanation of his philosophical position. An additional objection comes from those who think that he was an emotionalist who took delight in cleverly discrediting rationality and science. This is a misconception. Unamuno's very preparation and "formulation" of his irrationalistic philosophy of the will involved more than naive intuitionism or mysticism. The rector of the University of Salamanca was regarded as one of the outstanding scholars of Europe. His criticisms of rationalism and science were not intended to be arrogant special pleading. For him there is always a desire for something beyond logical coherence and factual ascertainment. His interest in this area is, in his judgement, a matter of putting first things first. Eternal existence always precedes the speculation of essence. This is the existential emphasis in Unamuno. He wants life and existence now and forever, for each individual; he repents and pities those who are content just to be impersonal observers of some conceptualized or hypostatized reality.

Half way through this twentieth century, there is a growing concern for the meaning of life and for the meaning of death.

Our modern epoch, within a short period of time, has become

1 The word formulation is placed in quotation marks because Unamuno does not actually strive for philosophical systematization. If there is any disciplined order or form in his writings, it is not his main purpose to achieve it.
highly complicated and integrated, providing for our disposal
e tremendous potential either for good or for evil. Despite
"miracle" drugs and "bigger and better" luxury items for
modern "living," contemporary men are painfully aware of his
possible annihilation in the event of atomic war.

Over three decades ago, Unamuno wrote: "Unhappy those...
countries in which men do not continually think of death and in
which the guiding principle of life is not the thought that
we shall all one day have to lose it." Today, men and nations
are aware of the probability of individual and cultural
extermination. Humanity is a tangled web of uncertainty.

Within each of us are two incompatible factions which
continually compete for ascendancy. Look deep and see—anxiety
and acquiescence, rebelliousness and resignation, hope and
apathy, faith and futility. Ours is truly the tragic sense of
life.

Unamuno, like us, was a man of flesh and bone who fought
against the void, yet who doubted eternal existence. His
doubt was derived from a love of truth, a love which was personal
and not dependent upon the testimony of another.

Like the determined individualist Jacob, Unamuno earnestly
sought the continuation of his name, that is, the preservation
and perpetuation of his unique, personal existence. To realize

---

this, he had to face "squarely" something divine, something that
seemed eternal and everlasting. Like Jacob, Unamuno was
blessed because of his persistence and single-hearted devotion;
but, with the blessings of Jacob and Unamuno came an affliction,
a tribute to the arrogance of integrity. Jacob's hip reminded
him of his venture; Unamuno's wound was his sense of despairing
doubt, a chronically tragic irritant.

And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled
with him until the breaking of the day. When the man
saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he
touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob's thigh
was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then ...
(the Angel of the Lord) said, "Let me go, for the
day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not
let you go, unless you bless me." And he said to
him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then
he said, "Your name shall no more be called
Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God
and with men and have prevailed."

Undoubtedly, Jacob and Unamuno had much in common, but
there was one aspect of their respective spiritual dilemmas
that set the Hebrew patriarch apart from the Spanish poet-
philosopher. The key to this is seen in the last words of
the above quotation, "You have striven with God and with
men and have prevailed."

Jacob felt that he had assurance of his destiny; Unamuno
felt that any such conclusive certainty was not only unattainable,
but unnecessary. The tragic sense of life, the thought that

"when you die, you rot" was to Unamuno a vital part of man's innermost speculations. Only by spiritual pain and conflict, which give birth to striving, can man be aware of himself—a distinct individual, "the end of the Universe."

I hope, reader, that some time while our tragedy is still playing, in some interval between the acts, we shall meet again. And we shall recognize one another. And forgive me if I have troubled you more than was needful and inevitable, more than I intended to do when I took up my pen proposing to distract you for a while from your distractions. And may God deny you peace, but give you glory!

---

Unamuno, "Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragic-Comedy," The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 320.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Works by Unamuno


Unamuno, Miguel de. The Agony of Christianity. Translated by Pierre Loving. New York: Payson and Clarke Ltd., 1928


II. Writings about Unamuno


Moore, Sydney H. "Miguel de Unamuno," The Hibbert Journal, XXXV (October 1936-July 1937)


Olmstead, W. W. "A Modern Spanish Mystic," The Nation, XXXIV (February 1, 1912).


Portillo, Luis. "Unamuno's Last Lecture," Horizon, Edited by Cyril Connolly, XIV, No. 24 (December, 1941).


III. Other works used in the writing of this thesis.


The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version.
