THE TRAGEDY OF MAN: A STUDY
OF THE EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF
MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

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INTRODUCTION

The world today continues to pay tribute to the memory of one of Spain's greatest sons, a man among men, a thinker among thinkers, a seeker after God who feared not, and neither did he cease to act, to write and to speak freely, though it might cost him his life. This manly man, this original thinker is Miguel de Unamuno who has been widely proclaimed as the father of twentieth century existentialism. Yet Unamuno was a man of many contradictions both in his life and in his philosophy, and his role in the philosophical development is equally hard to evaluate. A recent review in The New York Times said of him: "No figure in modern literature has been more personal than Miguel de Unamuno, and yet there is no personality more difficult to define and assess. He himself disliked easy classifications: he was a philosopher and poet, a novelist and teacher, an essayist and political prophet."  

Don Miguel was not a man to echo the philosophies of others. On the contrary, he showed a characteristic independence of mind. Addressing an audience some years after Miguel had completed his studies at the University of Salamanca, one of his professors praised him in the following terms: "And guided by his lucky star, he struck out along unchartered paths, anticipating by several decades the existentialism of Heidegger and Jaspers." It was extremely doubtful that Unamuno had perchance come across something by Kierkegaard and so been introduced to his ideas before he had devised his own prior to 1900.

His professor, Professor Morayta, testifies to his independence of thought, and it would seem more probable that any similarity in Miguel's and Kierkegaard's ideas at that time was merely coincidental. He seems to suggest that Heidegger and Jaspers read Unamuno later, and thus Unamuno could have been the father of modern existentialism. Although this is purely conjecture, it is not at all illogical. The irrefutable fact stands that Unamuno was an independent existentialist thinker who had discovered in Kierkegaard a soul not unlike his own.

Regardless of whether or not Unamuno was the father of modern existentialism, he was an existentialist who devised a truly humanistic philosophy, the effects of which have relevance to modern philosophic thought. Humanism, an intellectual and cultural movement which arose during the Renaissance period of Western Europe, was the result of a revival of interest in the study of classical Greek and Latin literature and culture. It was characterized by an emphasis on human interests, the purely human qualities of man as man, and tended to exclude any regard for the Divine. Humanism essentially aims to render man more human and causes him to participate in all that can enrich him both in nature and in history. Being generally an anthropocentric problem, it principally seeks to discover what it is to be man. Although there is evidence of a humanism which springs from religious and transcendental sources, the humanism of Unamuno is an atheistic humanism, one which seeks to dismiss God as irrelevant, superfluous.

In light of the existential movement which appears to be becoming increasingly influential in twentieth century philosophy, it is the

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4Rudd, loc. cit.
purpose of this author to examine and evaluate the humanistic philosophy of a man who is not just a typical existentialist, but is probably one of the originators of modern existential thought. This is the philosophy of the Spanish humanist, Miguel de Unamuno. This work will be written particularly from the viewpoint of showing how the thread of humanism, which can be readily observed throughout the life and works of Unamuno, binds him up in the preoccupation of individual, human existence.

His humanism is best depicted in his principal work of philosophy, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (The Tragic Sense of Life): "I am the centre of my universe, the centre of the universe, and in my supreme anguish I cry 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' (Matthew xvi. 26)." His humanistic tendency can further be accounted for in his statement that "our sense of the world of objective reality is necessarily subjective, human, anthropomorphic." And concerning the God-Idea, he was of the opinion that God is superfluous for he had not found the hypothesis of God necessary in order to construct his scheme of the origin of the universe. Unamuno, therefore, believed that in no way whatever does the idea of God help us to understand better the existence, essence and finality of the universe. This tenet is a necessary prerequisite for establishing a humanistic philosophy.

But aside from his staunch attitude against a theocentric universe Unamuno is a man of contradiction—he wants to believe in God. This is the tragedy of his life, and if this struggle could be depicted in art, he would look somewhat like the character portrayed in Raphael's powerful

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6Ibid., p. 123.
7Ibid., p. 164.
and intriguing painting of the "Mass of Bolsena" in the Vatican. This is the terrible tragedy where an unbelieving priest, or a priest who thought he did not believe, eye to eye with a kneeling Pope, watches in fascination as the Host begins to bleed in his hand. 8

Also, the intellectual climate itself in which he lived and breathed was that of existential contradiction which included incertitude, discord, doubt, and agony, all of which is in short "the tragic sense of life." To Unamuno this "tragic sense of life" carries with it the whole conception of life itself and of the universe, a whole philosophy more or less formulated, more or less conscious. And in this sense this philosophy may be possessed, and is possessed not only by individual men but by whole peoples. This then is the central theme of his Tragic Sense of Life, the theme of existential conflict and agony which constantly plagues him throughout his long, "agonious" life. Throughout this work the humanistic element of Unamuno's philosophy will be continually recurring while Don Miguel gives "glimpses of deep mystery of man's soul and conscience" in his existentialist literature. 9

Following this resume of Miguel de Unamuno's philosophy and its significance in modern existentialist thought will be a brief summary of his life and literary works. Thereupon, the chief tenets of his humanistic philosophy will be examined and the work will be concluded with an apropos evaluation of Unamunian existential philosophy.

9Unamuno y Jugo, Three Exemplary Novels, p. 27.
CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO Y JUGO

Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo was born on September 29, 1864, in Bilbao, the capital of the Basque Province of Biscay in Spain. His father was a merchant and a native of the town of Vergara, and his mother was a quiet, religious woman, a native and resident of Balboa. 1

Miguel received his elementary education from Don Higinio's colegio and began his secondary education at the local Instituto Vizcaino. Here it was in his fourteenth year and during the fourth year of his bachillerato, which corresponds to the senior year of high school in the United States, that Miguel began to literally unfold. From the reminiscences of his childhood and youth comes his first novel, Paz en la guerra (Peace in War), which presents a clear picture of the adolescent Miguel. 2

In 1880 he entered the University of Madrid to study philosophy and the humanities. In 1891 he obtained a professorship in Greek Language and Literature at the University of Salamanca in that medieval city by the same name where Unamuno began his teaching career. Unamuno had taught only Greek during his first years at the University.

In January of 1891 Miguel married his childhood girl friend and constant companion, Concha Lizarraga Echenarro. They began their homelife together on the Calle de la Cruz in the Unamuno home where she bore him nine children, six of whom are living today.

2Ibid., p. 36.
By royal decree of the Queen Mother of Spain dated October 26, 1900, he had been named rector of the University of Salamanca. General dissatisfaction with the administration of the former rector was hinted as the reason for the change in command. After Unamuno's first faculty meeting there was no doubt in anyone's mind as to who was in charge of the University (for he was a man determined to run matters his way, and his way only). Besides his new rectoral duties, Unamuno had acquired the chair of comparative philology in Latin and Spanish and his hands were definitely full.

In 1914 Unamuno was relieved of his position as rector because he had publicly favored the cause of the Allies against Germany. An article in the paper revealed that Unamuno had supported a measure sufficient to automatically eliminate him from representing his university in the senate. The passage of this measure ruled out Don Miguel and focused the attention on a Don Luis Maldonado for the position as Rector of the University of Salamanca, but the article expressed hope that Don Miguel might continue to occupy a seat in the senate in order to continue his educational campaign in that highest government body in Spain. The whole question of the University's senatorial representative stirred up a hornet's nest in Salamanca until he was subsequently elected Vice-Rector of the University a short time later.

Unamuno was exiled to Puertoventura, one of the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa in 1924 because of his violent opposition to the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. The specific reasons

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3Ibid., p. 166.
for the exile of Don Miguel de Unamuno are stated by one of his recent biographers, Bernardo Villarrazo: "His speech in Valladolid and another at the Society El Sitio of Bilbao, together with the publication of a letter of his (against the Rivera regime) not written for publication were the immediate causes of his exile on the Island of Fuerteventura. On the 21st of February, 1924, when the dictatorship had been in power only five months, he was notified of the exile order." 5

After five long months of exile on windswept Fuerteventura he was pardoned and managed to flee to France. By September of the same year he was in Paris where he spent six years before returning to his homeland. Paris was the heart of that great nation which he had often scorned. But after realizing that he owed his liberation to France, he wrote to a close friend in a different key: "...my liberation, thanks to the generosity of the noble French nation, which here in Paris is giving me my freedom and dignity..." 6 Here in Paris despair and the death-wish laid hold of him, and for the first time in his years of literary production he was unable to write. Even though he had been pardoned he chose to remain in voluntary exile despite the fact that he was separated from his wife and children.

Finally Unamuno could not stand it any longer, so he took flight from Paris, the world where he felt alien and alone. He left for the border town of his beloved Basque country that offered him a natural refuge. In August of 1925 he arrived at the French border town of Hendaye. 7 Immediately following the resignation of Primo de Rivera, Unamuno re-entered Spain after six long years, on February 10, 1930.

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5Tbid., p. 223.
6Tbid., p. 231.
7Tbid., p. 242.
He declined the nomination for presidency of the new Republic in Spain and was subsequently reinstated in his chair at the University of Salamanca. In April, 1931, the Spanish Republic was proclaimed and Don Miguel was officially exonerated by being elected a member of the Cortes Constituyentes but soon after he began to look upon the Spanish Republic with the same suspicion and scepticism that he felt for the Rivera regime and the interim military dictatorship. Because he was by nature a-political, he felt that all the regimes had betrayed the soul and spirit of Spain.

Just prior to the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, Spain rendered Miguel de Unamuno her late honors: Lifetime Rector of the University, Perpetual Mayor of Salamanca, First Citizen of Honor and candidate for the Nobel Prize for literature. And then the Franco-inspired civil war broke out in a fury which probably came as no surprise to Unamuno who lived through this cruel and bloody slaughter in semi-seclusion in his official mansion in Salamanca under government guarantee.

Once again he was alone, beyond all frontiers and horizons, a victim of a "sickness unto death." Unamuno died of heart failure on December 31, 1936, in his quiet office. He used to say that it was his hope and desire to live to the age of ninety, but he was only seventy-two when death called him.

In appearance he was a stalwart old gentleman who always wore what he called his "civil uniform: a dark blue suit, a solid-fronted black vest that fitted closely up around his white collar.

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9Rudd, op. cit., p. 288.
10Unamuno y Jugo, loc. cit.
thus eliminating the need of a tie. His often worn black felt hat, if not on his head, was hastily stuffed in a pocket. He never wore an overcoat, not even when it snowed, and it snows in Salamanca.

The black hair and beard of his youth eventually changed to iron-grey. A long, slightly curved nose portrayed an owl-like expression of his black eyes which seemed to watch suspiciously from their deep sockets through and around the edges of a pair of spectacles. The secret of Unamuno in all its intensity and combative nature, his agonizing doubts and his abiding faith were revealed in those eyes. Their intense gaze into mystery was, to quote one of his biographers, "the steel axis round which his spirit revolved in desperation, the one fire under his passions and the inspiration of his whole work and life." 12

He has been described by such varying adjectives as "admirable," "original," "genial," "rare," "extravagant," and "paradoxical." Don Miguel's appearance left the impression of strangeness, and this strangeness was of a priestly nature, of one who wishes to be identified as dedicated to a sacerdotal calling, not the formality of Catholic clergy, but rather the ecclesiastical air of an English clergyman or a Welsh divine. 13

Unamuno was primarily a non-conformist, a spiritual rebel in the tradition of great heretics. He was a searcher for a truth which was not rational but of that living sort which man finds within himself. Don Miguel was indeed "a man of struggle, struggling with himself, with his people, and against his people, a hostile man, a man of civil war, a leader without a party, a solitary man, exiled,

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11 Rudd, 92; cit., p. 8.
12 Ibid., p. 95.
13 Ibid., p. 94.
savage, a voice in the wilderness, provocative, vain, deceitful, paradoxical, irreconcilable, sworn enemy of the 'no-thing' who is drawn and devoured by it, torn between life and death, at once killed and revived, invincible and ever vanquished.¹⁴ However, one adjective should be modified, "enganoso," for Unamuno was not "deceitful" but was rather deceiving.

He was a typical intellectual of his time in Spain. He is related to that group of thinkers who, following the romantic impulse, revolted against reason in the name of life: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Bergson, the irrationalists, pragmatists and vitalists—intellectuals all of them.¹⁵ Unamuno's generation, the generation of '96 in Spain, asserted itself by the intensity with which it felt national discord. It was composed of artists and poets highly subjective according to the literary climate of the time. Each one expressed in his own way the dismal feeling of a fatherland in perpetual crisis and endeavored to solve the crisis for the future. Together they produced the highest form of literature to evolve from Spain since the Golden Age. Unamuno, more than any of the others, continued to identify himself with Spain's tragic problem, and by wrestling with the conflicts of a whole nation, he came to wrestle with the essential problems of life, death and human existence.¹⁶ This was the man, Miguel de Unamuno.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 128.
¹⁶Ibid., pp. 22-23.
Although Unamuno never considered himself a philosopher, scorning the latter as simply a mechanical systematizer of the ideas of a real thinker, on the request of many of his followers, he did attempt to provide in writing an orderly presentation of his thought, and this task of organizing a systematic philosophy, therefore, must have been extremely painful to him. But his works were so varied that one might ask whether Unamuno was an essayist, a novelist, a poet or a philosopher. The question has been asked in as many ways as there are Unamunian critics, but they all agree that he was a man who lived, felt and expressed man’s overwhelming desire for immortality and so lived that it would be injustice if immortal life were not to exist.

Don Miguel was a writer whose philosophy was based on struggle, a man of contradiction and paradoxes, and an existentialist who thirsted after immortality. All of his writings may be considered religious and were written either as answers to demands or are spontaneous outpourings of his deeply religious nature.

The role of a writer, according to Unamuno, was best defined when he stated that “el mérito supremo del escritor era hacer pensar a sus lectores...” (the supreme merit of a writer is to make his readers think). And this role he performed best as a novelist where all his philosophical tenets are vividly animated. He tried to do for the novel what Strindberg and Ibsen had been doing for drama which is to convert his philosophy into an intimate revelation of psychological...

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1. Rudd, op. cit., p. 192.
conflicts outside of any time or place, and is principally concerned with the human substance shown in its "naked struggle with agony." He seems to always treat the abnormal as if it were absolutely normal.

His fame throughout Spain, Latin America and France was exceedingly great, and his influence in the Spanish-speaking countries had been enormous during his lifetime. In England the interest of devoted friends had made his principal novels and essays well-known in exact and excellent translations. Also, in Italy and Portugal he was widely considered not just a Spanish writer, but a spokesman for Catholic tradition in Spain.

Miguel de Unamuno, a brilliant man with inquisitive and suspicious eyes who wrote novels, plays and poems, has been considered with Ortega y Gasset as Spain's most influential philosopher, a philosopher of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself. He philosophizes, not with reason alone, but rather with the will, the feelings, with the flesh and with the bones, with the whole soul and the whole body. It is Unamuno the man who philosophizes.

In *The Tragic Sense of Life* he attempts to define his mission when he says: "...the truth is that my work is to shatter everyone's faith, faith in affirmation, faith in negation, and faith in indifferent abstention, and this is so because I have faith in faith; and so it is my mission to wage war against all those who live resigned, be it to Catholicism, to rationalism, or to agnosticism."

It is commonplace that the chief influences on Unamuno's mind and temperament evolved from the Golden Age. These influences were of the

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ascetics, mystics and contemplatives of the 16th century, and the 17th century Don Quixote. 7 Unamuno suggests that we should not look for the hero of Spanish thought in any actual flesh and bone philosopher, but rather in a creation of fiction who is more real than all the philosophers—Cervantes' Don Quixote. We read in *The Tragic Sense of Life* of a certain comically tragic figure, a figure in which we can see the profoundly tragic sense of the human comedy—the figure of Our Lord Don Quixote, the Spanish Christ in whom is enshrined the immortal soul of his people. Perhaps the passion and death of Don Quixote is the passion and death of the Spanish people, their death and resurrection. Unamuno claims that there is undoubtedly a Quixotesque philosophy, even a Quixotic metaphysics, logic, ethics and religion, in a sense a "Spanish-Catholic-Quixotic religiosity." 8 This fictitious creation of Cervantes, this Don Quixote made a tremendous impression on Unamuno and his philosophy.

The philosophy of Unamuno, therefore, is the science of the tragedy of life, a reflection on the tragic sense of it. A philosophy with its inevitable, internal contradictions and antimonies is what he has attempted to create in his works. The reader must not overlook the fact that he has been "operating upon himself." His philosophy thereby partakes of the nature of self-surgery, the process of self-reflection. 9

Unamuno was then a religious thinker, novelist and poet, the best in Spain since its Golden Age. 10 And critics many times have indicated

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10Elguera, loc. cit.
that his *Tragic Sense of Life* is one of the works that inspired the existential movement in Europe after World War II. This work made him one of the foremost existentialist writers before the term gained wide currency. Unamuno has presented his ideas in a quasi-philosophical form, his own ideas of life, the role of God and man's struggle between reason and faith, a faith founded on love in order to create for himself a soul. And in *The Tragic Sense of Life* Unamuno has evolved his life's basic philosophy which forms the nucleus of his magnum opus: constant struggle is the "clash that produces life."

This struggle is based on the premise of man's maddening thirst for immortality.

By Unamuno's own standards his *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* is one of his most "Catholic" works, for as he states, Catholicism differs from Protestantism because it stresses immortalization over and above justification. Yet according to the Catholic Church this work is one of his less Christian. The Church is equally faithful in its efforts to defame Unamuno's memory and discourage the reading of his works; in 1940, Cardinal Play Deniel saw that the "Index of Forbidden Books" included *The Tragic Sense of Life.*

Don Miguel's *La agonía del cristianismo* (*The Agony of Christianity*) was written while he was in exile in Paris, in 1925. This book is the famous and paradoxical confession of his faith in his furious struggle to be a Christian. In his "agon" which is nearly synonymous with existential despair, Unamuno was convinced that reason was powerless to penetrate the mysteries of faith. Still he thirsted for immortality and

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resurrection of the soul. The central theme of this work is one of his most frequently quoted Gospel sayings: "I do believe; Lord help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:23). This best expresses the nature of Unamuno's terrible "agonic" doubt and his simultaneous fervent "will to believe." 14

The appearance of *The Agony of Christianity* caused a general outcry of criticism and vituperation from the Spanish clergy. The lack of understanding and downright ignorance of some of these protestors are epitomized in one priest who objected that Christianity was not on its death-bed and subsequently called Unamuno a crass heretic. 15 Despite what misunderstanding might have taken place and how ill-founded this criticism was, his *Agony of Christianity* was also placed on the "Index of Forbidden Books" in Spain.

As a novelist, Miguel de Unamuno demonstrated his philosophy through the characterization of his philosophical tenets. The *Three Exemplary Novels* are highly representative of Unamuno's conception of the tragic character and what a novel should be. Their conciseness compared to his other works of fiction provides the reader with a sharper view of his power to concentrate the assertiveness of human personality with its inner contradictions and conflicts. The novel was to Unamuno chiefly a medium of expression for a philosophy which could not be systematized.

The stories included in his *Three Exemplary Novels* are typical of Unamuno. Their common elements are: 1) each has a central character or "agonist" endowed with a strong will and bound to subdue or destroy anyone who interferes or opposes him; 2) these "agonists" are always deficient in all moral and social conventionalism; and 3) the customary

detailed treatment of atmosphere in space and time is almost entirely absent.  

One of Don Miguel's most revealing novels is the penetrating
San Manuel, Bueno Martir or Saint Emmanuel the Good, Martyr. This is
a short story in which the religious dilemma of the author himself is
revealed. It is the dramatic presentation of the same struggle between
belief and unbelief focused in a humble village priest who comforts his
people by inspiring them with a faith he cannot share. This, however,
should not be taken as a definitive statement of Unamuno's conclusion
on faith for, as he states concerning those who doubt, "many only dream
that they doubt..."  

Having presented an account of Unamunian philosophy in general, for
the sake of demonstration and elaboration, the basic tenets of his
philosophy will be presented in the following chapters which will further
emphasize the humanistic element in Unamuno's existentialist thought.

16 Unamuno y Jugo, The Agony of Christianity, p. 27.  
17 Rudd, op. cit., p. 234.
CHAPTER III
MAN OF FLESH AND BONE

"I, a gentleman! Alejandro Gomez! Never! I am only a man, but I am a real man." 1 This quotation from one of Unamuno’s most revealing novels entitled "Nothing Less Than a Man" depicts the "real" element which he constantly emphasizes in all his works. Unamuno is wont to depict man more as a sentient and volitive animal than as a rational one. In the first chapter of his Tragic Sense of Life he characterizes the object of his inquiry as the man who is born, suffers, and dies (especially dies), the one who eats, drinks, plays, sleeps, thinks and wills. 2

It is not life in the general or abstract sense, but the life of each individual, each concrete man of flesh and bone who is the subject and supreme object of all his philosophy. This man and his struggle against death or his sorrow over death is his only interest.

Unamuno clearly relates in his Tragic Sense of Life that "the end of man is to create science, to catalogue the Universe so that it may be handed back to God in order...And at the end of all, the human race will fall exhausted at the foot of a pile of libraries (whole woods raised to the ground to provide the paper that is stored away in them), museums, machines, factories in order to bequeath them to whom? For God will surely not accept them." 3 What a tragedy for the man of flesh and bone!

He has used visceral images as an effective way to present his version of the concrete man of flesh and blood. This version bears an unmistakable likeness to the man who in our day is often labeled existential. The most passionate and pervasive function of fleshly images is to express the

1Unamuno y Jugo, Three Exemplary Novels, p. 189.
craving for immortality. Implicit here is a kind of mysticism of the flesh, an unformulated belief or hope that death cannot quench the desire to live which is so deeply rooted in the flesh that his fleshly images sustain a continual revolt against immortality.\(^4\)

States Unamuno: "...history...finds its perfection and complete effectivity only in the individual; the end of history and humanity is man..."\(^5\) Humanism?

Unamuno's beginning as well as his end is the "self," or to use the impressive Spanish pronoun, "el Yo." Only the individual counts, but the individual as a complete and concrete human being, the man of flesh and blood and not simply the concept of the individual. This is the axis around which all of Unamuno's philosophy relates. But this concept of the self, "este terrible Yo," did it not sever Unamuno from his fellow man? Because he was conscious that it might make him the "prisoner of himself," he quickly decided that it was precisely this principle which united him with all men. He thereby established the principle that the self or the man of flesh and bone is the one experience which all human beings share.\(^6\)

It is the aim of the man of flesh and blood to go beyond himself, to make himself irreplaceable, to give himself to others that he may receive himself back again. Don Miguel exemplifies this in the life of a shoemaker:

\[\text{Here you have a shoemaker who lives by making shoes. There is a high moral perfection in this business of shoemaking and that is for the shoemaker to aspire to become for his fellow-townsmen the one and only shoemaker, indispensable and irreplaceable, the shoemaker who looks after their footgear so well that they feel a definite loss when he dies...and they will feel that he ought not to have died.}\]^7

\[^4\text{Predmore, op. cit., pp. 600-605.}\]
\[^5\text{Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 299.}\]
\[^6\text{Masur, op. cit., p. 150.}\]
\[^7\text{Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 262-266.}\]
Unamuno realized that man does not live alone and is not the only irreplaceable "self," that he must also be a member of society. The compassion and love man feels for himself is vital and superabundant, and consequently overflows upon others, and from this excess of self-compassion man comes to have compassion for others. 8

Still everything relates to the egoistic "self" concept and as a result the Spanish philosopher is compelled to use the pronoun "Yo" to excess. "I, I, I, always I!" some reader will exclaim, "and just who are you?" To this he replies: "For the universe, nothing; for myself, everything." 9 "My family begins with me. I made myself." 10 Again his humanistic thoughts dominate his philosophy.

Don Miguel claims that what all the objectivists do not see is that when a man affirms this "I," his personal consciousness, he also affirms man, man concrete and real; he affirms the true humanism, the humanism of man, and in affirming this man of flesh and blood he affirms "consciousness." All this tragic fight of man to save himself, to preserve his ego, this immortal craving for immortality, all this is simply a fight for consciousness. 11

But the reader might ask of what importance this affirmation of consciousness has for the man of flesh and blood—a well-founded question to which Unamuno replies: "If there is a Supreme Consciousness, I am an idea of it, and is it possible for any idea in this Supreme Consciousness to be completely blotted out? After I have died, God will continue remembering me, and to be remembered by God, to have my consciousness sustained by the Supreme Consciousness, is not this my very 'to be,' my existence

9Ibid., p. 30.
10Unamuno y Jugo, Three Exemplary Novels, p. 165.
11Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 32.
immortalized?" And the greatest joy for man is to be more man, that is, more God, and that man is more God the more consciousness he has. Consciousness, the constant craving for more, hunger of eternity, and thirst for infinity, appetite for God—these are never satisfied. Each consciousness seeks to be itself, it seeks to be God.\(^3\)

And in the same way he believes that the universe possesses a certain consciousness like man himself because its action towards man is a human action. Unamuno describes this phenomenon as "a formless mass; it appears to be a kind of animal; I only see two eyes, eyes which gaze at me with a human gaze; and I hear it breathing. I conclude that in this formless mass there is a consciousness."\(^4\)

The sense of making ourselves irreplaceable, of not meriting death ought to impel us to endeavor to stamp others with our seal, to perpetuate ourselves in them by dominating them, to leave on all things the imperishable impress of our signature. In a sense this means to become all things in our consciousness in order that we might be remembered by God and merit immortality. We aim at being all by our "enfermedad"\(^5\) (sickness), our consciousness, because this is the only way of escaping from being nothing through death.

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\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 194.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 211.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 195.

CHAPTER IV

MAN’S IMMORTALITY

To the metaphysico-anthropological question "What is Man?" Unamuno answers: "Hunger for immortality." ¹ He says he cannot be persuaded that once man enters this life and, either in his youth or for some other brief period of time, cherished the belief in the immortality of the soul will ever find peace without it. For Unamuno it is either an "all or nothing" proposition as he writes in his Tragic Sense of Life: "If I am not all and for ever, it is as though I were nothing. At least to be my whole self and to be it for ever after! And being whole myself, all the others are so too. Either all or nothing." ²

Subsequently, his rule of life is to act so that in your own judgment of others you may merit eternity; act so that you may not merit death but rather survive and be eternalized.

There are, according to Unamuno, several possibilities of immortality, two of which are the immortality of the flesh and that of the spirit. Writing of these two he asked: "By which one will we be saved?" In reply he stated: "At bottom, what we long for is a prolongation of this life, this life and no other, this immortality of the flesh and suffering. The majority of suicides would not take their lives had they the assurance that they would never die on this earth." ³ For Unamuno if the other life is anything, it must be a continuation of this one. "Thy kingdom come" to us, so Christ taught us to pray, not "May we come to Thy kingdom." ⁴ Still we need to believe in that other life in order that we

²Unamuno y Jugo, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. xi.
⁴Ibid., p. 277.
may live this life, endure it, and give it meaning and finality. Unamuno makes one further deduction: if "everything insofar as it is in itself endeavors to persist in its own being, then this endeavor of the thing man is to be man for ever (through the immortality of the flesh), and Christianity alone, with its crucial doctrine of the resurrection of the body can satisfy it." What a paradox, what a tragedy for man!

Life, then, for this man was one prolonged struggle—it was agony, a struggle against death and also against truth, against the truth of death. For him, "initium sapientiae est timor mortis." Always at the beginning of wisdom is a fear.

Beginning in his childhood and increasing throughout his lifetime, the idea of death was the dominant preoccupation of Unamuno. Sometimes he would try to imagine death as nothing, which filled him with such terror that, as he once wrote, all the torments of hell seemed preferable to "la nada" (nothing). As he expressed it, death transforms everything into nothing. It is the supreme contradiction of life—life's greatest paradox.

Don Miguel confessed in his *Tragic Sense of Life*, painful though it was, that in the days of his childhood, descriptions of the tortures of hell, however atrocious, never made him tremble, for nothingness was much more terrifying. For Unamuno it is better to live in pain than to cease to be in peace. The truth was that "I could not believe in this atrocity of Hell, of an eternity of punishment...."

The salvation of man therefore becomes the center of Unamuno's emotions and thoughts, a salvation not so much from sin as from death.

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5Ibid., p. 9.
6Ibid., p. 116.
He asserts that the greater part of those who seek death at their own hand are moved to such an action by love. It is this supreme love or longing for life, the longing to prolong and perpetuate life that urges them to death once they are persuaded of the vanity of this longing.

Unamuno seemed always to be watching life as if attempting to penetrate its mystery, not in the least in a spirit of detached research, but in order to extract from its silence the answer to the question of questions: Shall I survive physical death? This is in a sense the principal preoccupation of all his works. 10

One of the most startling characteristics of Miguel de Unamuno was his strong urge to immortality. It was not toward immortality only, the mere idea of eternal spirituality, but toward eternal carnality, a peculiar lust to live on in "flesh and bone." 11 In The Agony of Christianity the author makes reference to this perpetual carnality in the man "who is alive in others, who lives in history, desires to live also in the flesh by finding roots for the immortality of the soul in the resurrection of the flesh. 12

This eternal carnality has as its first principle generative, sexual love. In love and by love we seek to perpetuate ourselves. To live is to give oneself, to perpetuate oneself and to give oneself is to die. For Unamuno, the supreme delight of begetting is perhaps nothing but a foretaste of death, the eradication of our own vital essence. In effect, the delight of sexual love, the genetic spasm, is a sensation of resurrection, of renewing our life in another as a compensation for our own death; for only in others can we renew our life

11 Unamuno y Jugo, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. xi.
"Materialism you say? Materialism?" cries Unamuno, "Without a doubt. But either our spirit is likewise some kind of matter or it is nothing. I dread the idea of having to tear myself away from my flesh; I dread still more the idea of having to tear myself away from everything sensible and material...Yes, perhaps this merits the name of materialism." 14

Why was Unamuno moved so consistently to express the soul in images of living flesh? We might conjecture that it was because a disembodied spirit or faculty could not satisfy his need for a material soul in which to believe; and here we could cite four tentative answers:
1) Unamuno needed a substantial soul in which to believe; 2) he thought that spirit and flesh could not be separated; 3) he could not abide by the prospect of casting off his mortal flesh; and 4) he suspected that immortality resided in the propagation of the flesh or nowhere at all. 15 Unamuno could not depict existential humanism better than is evidenced in his theory of eternal carnality of the man of flesh and bone.

In Unamunian philosophy, maternity is not merely the center of woman's nature, but is also related to the immortality of the flesh. He exaggerates this feminine characteristic of maternity in every female character depicted in his novels. To judge by Unamuno's insistence on the maternal aspect of woman's relation to man, it is one of his most cherished. And it is sufficiently clear that the maternal images in his writing represent compassion and consolation. For in Unamuno's view, compassion is the root of mother love: "Y en la mujer todo amor es maternal." There

13 Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, pp. 139-140.
14 Ibid., p. 62.
15Predmore, op. cit. pp. 591-600.
is a tendency for his fictional women to give maternal comfort to their men. How often the tender cry "hijo mio" (my son) is heard in his stories and novels. 16

Often, the child and mother image are conjoined. It is obvious that the yearning to return to childhood and mother is for Unamuno but a metaphorical way of expressing the desire to return to the untroubled religious faith usually associated with childhood. This explains the Biblical injunction to become as little children: "Hay que hacerse como ninos para entrar en el reino de los cielos." 17

Assuming his principle of eternal carnality and the means to carry it out, maternity, Miguel's immortality of the flesh is complete.

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16 Ibid., pp. 595-596.
17 Ibid., p. 597.
CHAPTS V
THE AGONY OF MAN

Christ shed His blood not only on the cross, but "His sweat fell to the ground like thick drops of blood" during His agony on the Mount of Olives. And these drops resembling drops of blood were the seeds of agony, the seeds of the agony of Christianity. And there Christ sighed "Not my will, but Thy will be done!" (Luke 22:42) "Oh Christ, our Christ, why hast Thou forsaken us?" Unamuno cries out in desperation. ¹ This is the conclusion to Unamuno's most "agonious" work, The Agony of Christianity.

There is no doubt that Unamuno was possessed, haunted and tortured by the idea of God and the problem of Christianity. The agony which Christianity suffered in the soul of Unamuno consisted largely in the disheartening conviction that reason could not penetrate to the heart of the mysteries of faith and of the supernatural, while simultaneously there persisted in his soul the hunger and thirst for the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body. The agony of Christianity is reduced then for Unamuno to a hopeless and frustrating dialectic of faith versus reason. ²

By agony, Unamuno means, basically, struggle. The life of a person in agony is one continuous struggle. He is forced to struggle in uncertainty and at the same time to seek after truth. This means that he is forced to live in tragic "agony." This struggle is against both life and death, and this, he says, is the meaning of Saint Teresa's ejaculatory prayer: "I am dying because I cannot die." ³

² Ibid., pp. xxvii-xxviii.
³ Ibid., pp. 6-7.
Agony, for the Spanish philosopher, is struggle. And Christ came amongst us to bring agony, not peace, for He told us so Himself: "Do not imagine that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come to bring a sword, not peace. I have come to set man apart from his father, and the daughter from her mother, and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law; a man's enemies shall be the people of his own house..." (Matthew 10:34-37) 

"But what about peace?" Unamuno asks validly "...the fact is that this peace can grow only out of war just as war can be won only in peace." This, precisely, is his agony.

"Terrible tragic are our crucifixes, our Spanish Christs. They are indicative of a Christ not dead, but in agony. A Christ already dead, already returned to earth, already at peace, a Christ dead and buried by others who are themselves dead; that is the Christ of the Holy Sepulchre, Christ lying in his tomb; but a Christ whom one adores on the Cross is a Christ who cries out: 'Consummatum est!' And it is to this Christ, the Christ who exclaims 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' to whom believers in agony pay homage." With his anthropomorphic view of God, this all too human Christ, Unamuno exemplifies his agonic struggle for immortality.

The triumph of agony, therefore, is death, and this kind of death is for him eternal life. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." We are condemned to live in agony.

Unamuno seems to believe that every position of permanent agreement or harmony between reason and life, between philosophy and religion, is impossible. And the tragic and agonizing history of human or personal
thought is simply the history of a struggle between reason and life—reason bent on rationalizing life and forcing it to submit to the inevitable (to mortality), and life bent on vitalizing reason and forcing it to serve as a support for its own vital desires. And this is the history of philosophy, inseparable from the history of religion. The most tragic problem of philosophy, for our Spaniard, is to reconcile intellectual necessities with the necessities of the heart and will.

Rational truth and life, then, stand in opposition to one another, and human reason not only fails to prove rationally that the soul is immortal, but it proves rather that the individual consciousness cannot persist after the death of the physical organism. So it is always found that reason confronts our longing for personal immortality and contradicts it. And the truth is that reason is the enemy of life.

But life searches for the weak point in reason and finds it in skepticism. Unamuno is emphatic on this point: "Those who put thought above feeling, I should say reason above faith (life), die comically while those die tragically (a martyr's death) who put faith above reason. For the mockers are those who die comically, and God laughs at their comic ending while the nobler part, the part of tragedy, is theirs who endured the mockery." He repeated so many times in his last years: "Lo extremo es lo real y que la palabra es la vida." (The ultimate is the real and the word for it is "life").

But the real paradox here for Unamunian philosophy is that faith, life, can only sustain itself by leaning upon reason which renders it transmissible (from the "self" to the "other"), and it is none the less

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8 Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 123.
9 Ibid., pp. 100-113.
10 Ibid., p. 303.
true that reason can only sustain itself by leaning upon faith, upon life. This paradox he never solves but rather attempts to show that life or faith is superior to reason. We live in this inner contradiction and thus in agony.

So reason and science has destroyed the ground where faith is born and grows. As a result, man is bound to live in doubt, vital existential doubt. This is the basis of what Unamuno refers to as "the tragic sense of life." 12 For living is one thing and knowing is another and there is such an opposition between the two that everything vital is anti-rational and everything rational is anti-vital. Reason attacks, and faith, which does not feel itself secure without reason, has to come to terms with it, and hence come those tragic contradictions inherent in life. Unamuno paradoxically claims that the heart also has its reasons: "Reasons of the heart! loves of the head! intellectual delight! delicious intellecction!—tragedy, tragedy, tragedy!" 13

The tragedy of Christ, the Divine tragedy, is the tragedy of the cross, claims Unamuno. And Pilate, the skeptic, by making a mockery of it, sought to convert it into a comedy by conceiving the farcial idea of the king with the reed and the crown of thorns, and cried "Behold the man!" But the people, the seekers after tragedy, more human than Pilate shouted "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" This comic, irrational tragedy is the tragedy of suffering caused by ridicule and contempt. So goes Unamuno's thinking. 14

In The Tragic Sense of Life, Unamuno posits the undeniable

12Unamuno y Jugo, Three Exemplary Novels, p. 25.
14Ibid., p. 302.
"feeling of God" which we sometimes experience. And this feeling (mark it well for all that is tragic in it as the foundation of the whole tragic sense of life for Don Miguel), this feeling is one of hunger for God, of the lack of God. To believe in God then would be to wish that there be a God, to be unable to live without Him. 15

Again Unamuno quotes the Gospel as evidence for his tragic sense of life: "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief." 16 Contradiction? Of course. According to him we only live in and by contradictions since life is tragedy and this tragedy is perpetual struggle without even the hope of victory. Life in the Unamunian sense is a contradiction.

Life for Unamuno was hopeless and frustrating because of its contradictory nature, the dialectic of faith versus reason which led to despair. Unamuno saw this despair as a necessary evil, and in this "fear and trembling," this despair, he was seeking the only way out of the dilemma that was left open to man: Tertulian's "credo quia absursum," belief in what is absurd. 17 In this paradoxical faith, Unamuno tried to picture God as a projection of his own self, magnified to infinity. He had to create a humanistic concept of God; it was his only alternative.

Accordingly, the limits within which the human reason operates are the limits of rationality. Beyond these limits is the irrational, the consolation for contradiction by reason, the locus of the absurd which is based upon the absolute uncertainty which leads to despair. 18 But despair is the master of impossibilities, of uncertainties because it is despair and despair alone which begets heroic hope, absurd hope, mad hope.

15 Ibid., p. 171.
16 Ibid., p. 32.
18 Unamuno y Jugo, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 113.
So man must believe in the absurd only because it is consoling to him, for there is no way of conceiving the beatific vision and God that is free from contradictions. Nevertheless, says Unamuno, we must long for it no matter how irrational it may be, long for it in all its absurdity.
CHAPTER VI
HIS CONCEPT OF GOD

God is the hub around which Unamunian philosophy is centered. Because of his thirst for immortality and desire to be God through consciousness (he could never desire to actually become another, to give up his “self”), Unamuno cannot exclude a consideration of the Divine, but neither does he believe that we can achieve any degree of Divinity through the immortality of the soul. Therefore, he is forced to bring God down to our level and thereby create a human God. For him, this is the only kind of God he was able to conceive. It was not with his head, but with his heart that he claimed the existence of a God, and his God exists solely as the guarantor of immortality. By humanizing God, he omits the Divine as such and this is one of the most powerful demonstrations of the humanistic element in Unamuno’s existential philosophy.

Miguel de Unamuno’s personal feeling for God is as important as his account of the existence of God in his philosophical works which do not often reflect his personal conflict and struggle to believe in God in real life. In one of his more widely-read novels, St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, which is the story of an unbelieving priest or a priest who thought he did not believe, Unamuno reveals his most inner feelings in regard to his constant struggle to believe in God, and it is the best approximation of his life-long agony. The scene is the confession of the fictitious character, Saint Emmanuel, to one of his followers that his priestly duties have all been in vain because belief
in the immortality of the soul and in God are themselves in vain:

I am put here to give life to the souls of my charges, to make them happy, to make them dream they are immortal, and not to destroy them...Let them live. That is what the Church does, it lets them live. As for true religion, all religions are true as long as they give spiritual life to the people who profess them, as long as they console them for having been born only to die. And for each people the truest religion is their own, the religion that made them.

And mind? Mine consists only in consoling myself by consoling others, even though the consolation I give them is never mine. 1

In another section of the same novel, his leading character, Saint Emmanuel, asserts that God's kingdom is not of the other world, the world of the spiritual: "The other is here. Two kingdoms exist in this world. Or rather, the other world...ah, I don't really know what I'm saying." 2

Here again the great paradox of Unamuno's life is evident—the struggle to believe in God and immortality.

In Unamuno's chief philosophical work, The Tragic Sense of Life, he claims that the belief in a personal and spiritual God is based on the belief of our own consciousness—we feel God to be consciousness, that is, a person. And God is simply the Love that springs from universal suffering and becomes consciousness. He is the eternal and infinite consciousness of the universe. Consciousness taken captive by matter and struggling to free Himself from it. We personalize God in order to save ourselves from nothingness. 3

For him, then, the Lord God is also engaged in this struggle for eternal glory and survival. Even for God, not to struggle for immortality is not to be alive. Unamuno is constantly possessed by the desire "to be, is to be for ever, to be without ending! thirst of being! thirst of being more! hunger of God! thirst of love eternalizing and eternal! to be for ever!"

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1Unamuno y Jugo, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 238.
2Ibid., p. 246.
As regards the origin of God, Unamuno states clearly that God arose from the human consciousness of His people as a result of man's sense of Divinity. Subsequently, reason (philosophy) took possession of this God and attempted to define and convert Him into an idea. Thus the God of feeling, the Divinity felt as a unique person and consciousness eternal to us, was converted into the idea of God, rational God.

It is the furious longing to give finality to the universe, to make it conscious and personal, that has led us to believe in God, to wish that God may exist, to create God in a word. "To create Him, yes!," Unamuno emphatically states. "This saying ought not to scandalize even the most devout theist. For to believe in God, is in a certain sense, to create Him, although He first creates us." 6

It is evident that throughout Unamuno's discourse on God, He is an eternal, infinite Creator of man as well as a human, finite product of man's creative intellect or rather feelings. This clearly reflects the paradox of Unamuno's desire to believe in an infinite, personal God. In final analysis, for Unamuno, God is both—an infinite God, the Supreme Consciousness, revealed to us through our feelings and imagination. It is this which prompts him to believe in the living God.

To believe in God, Unamuno persistently reiterates, is above all to feel in your heart a hunger for God, a hunger for divinity, to sense His absence, to wish that God may exist. For "wicked man hath said in his heart 'There is no God,'" and this is the truth, Unamuno exclaims, for in his head the righteous man may say to himself "God does not exist."

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4 Ibid., p. 55.
5 Ibid., p. 163.
6 Ibid., p. 159.
but only the wicked man can say it with his heart. And the God of the heart, the God Who is felt, is the consciousness of the universe, a God universal and personal and altogether different from the God of the head, the God of Reason. 7

Unamuno, in a letter dated 1904, developed the central theme for The Tragic Sense of Life: "I believe in God as I believe in my friends because I feel the breath of His affection, I feel His invisible and intangible hand drawing me, leading me, grasping me because I possess an inner consciousness of a particular providence and of a universal mind that marks out for me the course of my own destiny." 8 He concludes to his anthropomorphic God because he has a personal experience of God, because he feels Him working and living within him.

To show his disdain for any rational approach to God, Unamuno draws the conclusion that this logical, rational God, the God Who is reached by St. Thomas' five ways, is nothing but an idea of God, a dead thing; the traditional and much debated proofs of God’s existence are for Don Miguel, at bottom, merely a vain attempt to determine His essence, and Unamuno was an existentialist interested only in the fact of God's "to be." So in his thinking, the traditional five approaches to the existence of God all refer to this God-Idea and hence prove nothing, or rather, they prove nothing more than the existence of the idea of God.

The basic premise of Unamuno's refutation of the five ways is found in the conclusion he drew to a sentence he once read and commented on: "God is the great X placed over the ultimate barrier of human knowledge; in the measure in which science advances, the barrier recedes." And he

7Ibid., p. 163.
8Ibid., pp. 194-195.
wrote in the margin: "On this side of the barrier, everything is explained without Him; on the further side, nothing is explained either with Him or without Him; God therefore is superfluous." 

The fundamental error of Unamuno is his refutations reverts back to his conclusion "God is superfluous." This is a typical error of a humanist. It assumes that the existence of God depends on the knowledge of man, or on how much we can explain of God and the universe with our limited human intellect. If we are unable to account for the causality of things in the universe either with or without God, He is unnecessary. This theme is characteristic of all Unamuno's refutations. In his Tragic Sense of Life, Unamuno considers Thomas' proofs of God from order, contingency and causality, and also the essentialists proof from universal consent.

Unamuno's refutation of the proof from order is typical:

The traditional analogy of the watch and the watchmaker is inapplicable to a Being absolute, infinite and eternal. It is, moreover, only another way of explaining nothing. For to say that the world is as it is and not otherwise because God made it so, while at the same time we do not know for what reason He made it so, is to say nothing. And if we knew for what reason God made it so, then God is superfluous and the reason itself suffices.

Therefore, not by way of reason, but only by way of love, and feeling does Unamuno come to a knowledge of the living God, and the human God. Reason proves nothing. He says man must begin by loving Him, longing for Him, hungering after Him before knowing Him, for God is indefinable. The tragic sense of life, then, with all its contradictions, with its supremacy of heart over reason, with its hunger for God, is for Unamuno the only proof of God's existence.

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9 Ibid., p. 164.
10 Ibid., p. 165.
CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Miguel de Unamuno has been called the "greatest heretic" and also the "greatest Christian of the latter part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries." 1 Only God knows where the truth stands between these two extremes. A number of Catholic authors criticize him for his heresy from the point of view of Catholicism, and this conclusion is well-founded for he was a man of both Protestant mind and a Catholic heart. The struggle between his heart and head was synonymous with the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism during the Age of Romanticism in Spain with its tendency towards feeling, originality and mysticism.

In light of recent studies of Unamuno, it is not difficult to form the opinion that he was an extreme heretic, a reluctant atheist. That Unamuno wanted desperately to believe in God and in personal immortality cannot be doubted, but his objectors say that to want to believe is not necessarily to 'be able.' In 1953, Bishop Pildain of the Canary Islands published a pastoral letter which labeled him "The Greatest Spanish Heretic of Modern Times," claiming that Unamuno denied the most fundamental dogmas of the Catholic religion. The Bishop substantiated the statement by listing no less than forty-five of Unamuno's anti-Catholic utterances regarding faith and belief in God. 2

But Unamuno's religion is not that simple to evaluate. He had hoped to gather everything together in his philosophy and to show that his religious despair and doubt is nothing more than the tragic sense of life, this human life without any hope. And whether Unamuno's philosophy is theocentric or anthropocentric cannot be readily determined.

1Rudd, op. cit., p. 149.
2Ibid., pp. 318-319.
There are, however, certain tenets of Unamuno's existential philosophy which can be evaluated. In regard to his belief in the struggle between life and reason, Don Miguel denies the traditional philosophical approach to the understanding of life and human existence. He posits instead a humanistic, subjective side of philosophy which is basically contra-rational. The drawback of this emphasis on the subjective approach to philosophy is the encouragement it may give to idiosyncrasy and fantasy which may generate a healthy radicalism and a one-track fanaticism.

His position, then, constitutes an extreme emphasis on existential subjectivity which falls within the scope of metaphysics. And this position is held at the cost of a considerable narrowing of the field of metaphysics and a consequent depreciation of the objective world. His ontology is based on the absurd. The only hope for this ontology is a lucid appraisal of the futility of seeking after truly sufficient reasons. He refused to allow any knowledge of the supersensuous order of reality. Thus his metaphysics was divorced from sensuous existence and ordered to the study of humanistic subjectivity. A sensist philosophy such as that of Unamuno is not sufficient, for it tends to accept only as real that which can eventually be given a direct appearance in consciousness. Consequently, it cannot be followed exclusively without converting metaphysics into a study of consciousness and its proper acts.

It is clearly evident that Unamuno, and the existentialists in general, has not developed a metaphysics of existence based squarely on the theoretical affirmation of existential act and the implications of this affirmation. Therefore, he has no central doctrine from which to evaluate the general notions of man and his relation to the world.
His approach to the characteristic existential situations of fear, freedom, consciousness and death is based essentially on a kind of disillusioned atheism, and for Unamuno, served to convince man that his "self" is constantly under threat. These situations cause conflicts and problems for the human existent living in the world, and through these conflicts and problems, man is given the power to organize a world of significant temporal and historical relations, yet a world ordained to man's own death. Therefore, all ends in contradictions and frustration, the hopelessness of eternal life. But we should always conduct our life with the idea that the world is all in all and that nevertheless, men are eternally attempting to flee from it to secure life everlasting, and not necessarily to flee from life because of the despair of the unattainability of eternal happiness.

Another important aspect of Unamuno's existentialism is its fundamental characteristic of humanism which is part and partial to his entire theory. The principal criticism of Unamuno's atheistic humanism is that it offers to man only what is human. This tends to betray man and wish him ill, for by the principal part of him, the mind, man is called to something better than a purely human life. Man is more than a sensible animal, and contrary to humanism, can possess supersensory knowledge through the spirituality of his human soul.

A true evaluation of the man Miguel de Unamuno and his philosophy is not complete without examining his contradictions both in his life and in his works. It is easy for the reader to say: "This man comes to no conclusions, he vacillates, affirming one thing and then its contrary," or "I can't label him. What is he?" Unamuno is just that—a man who affirms
contradictions, a man full of contradiction and strife, one who says one thing with his heart and the contrary with his head. And for him, this conflict is the very essence of life. Much of Unamuno's contradiction and conflict is, however, due to a streak of exhibitionism in him. He had a great thirst for attention from anyone and everyone and he enjoyed his role of dissenter. While for the rest of the world Unamuno became the embodiment of the Spanish spirit, in Spain he is the incarnation of rebellion, of all that is considered negative and harmful to Spanish tradition.

For every statement of conviction in his writings, it is possible to find a direct contradiction, but doesn't man who lives in the state of paradoxes and contradictions often mean the opposite? The philosophy of Unamuno, then, is understandable, and its tenets are related as a unified whole, only upon understanding the man Miguel de Unamuno, a man full of contradictions, struggle and agony who develops his tragic sense of life.

What he calls the tragic sense of life in men and peoples is primarily the tragic sense of life of the Spanish people. Together with the agony of Christianity, he felt the agony of his beloved Spain. And he said to Spain, the land of his people, and through it to all Christendom and the rest of humanity: "May the kingdom of God come to us! Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death, now, now in the hour of our agony!" 3

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