

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO
ANTHONY KERRIGAN

Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno

The Private World, Volume 2



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Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno

Volume 2

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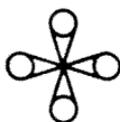
1. *Peace in War*
2. *The Private World*
3. *Our Lord Don Quixote*
4. *The Tragic Sense of Life*
5. *The Agony of Christianity*
6. *Novela/Nivola*
7. *Ficciones: Four Stories
and a Play*

Miguel de Unamuno

The Private World

Selections from the *Diario Íntimo*
and Selected Letters 1890–1936

*Translated by Anthony Kerrigan, Allen Lacy,
and Martin Nozick*



*Annotated by Martin Nozick with Allen Lacy,
with an Introduction by Allen Lacy*

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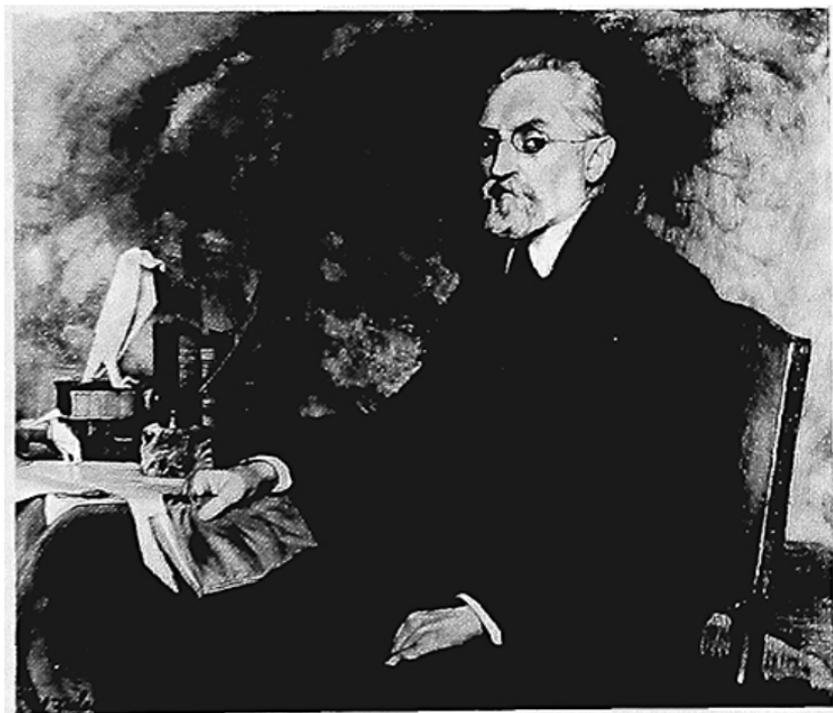
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Portrait of Unamuno by Ignacio Zuloaga y Zamora. Courtesy of the Hispanic Society of America

Introduction

“IN MOST OF the histories of philosophy that I know,” Miguel de Unamuno remarks in the opening pages of *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations* (1913), the book that brought him the international recognition for which he had ardently thirsted since his youth, “philosophic systems are presented to us as if growing out of one another spontaneously, and their authors, the philosophers, appear as mere pretexts. The inner biography of the philosophers, of the men who philosophized, is assigned a secondary place. And yet it is precisely that inner biography which can mean most to us.”

In thus describing the biographical questions which frame the history of philosophy, Unamuno warns his readers that if they, men of flesh and bone like himself, expect to understand his thought they must also explore the inner biography of one who passionately refused to be the mere “pretext” of his ideas. *Thinking* and *being* are inextricably linked to one another in such tight connection that anyone who attempts to separate them not only falsifies both but also denies his own humanity as “the man of flesh and blood, 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 loves; the man who is seen and heard; one’s brother, the real brother.” It is Unamuno’s insistence on this point that places him solidly in the company of St. Augustine, Pascal, Hamann, Kierkegaard, and other

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thinkers who have argued, with passion equal to his, for the primacy of concrete human existence over any abstract system of ideas.

It sometimes happens that when the private papers of notable persons are published, they occasion great surprise and astonishment. The well-known diplomat and man of action turns out to have been a mystic. The great spiritual leader indulged himself without apology in the grossest sensual excesses. The world-famous authority on sexuality lived in impotence and died a virgin. The author of a sensitive book on love and friendship ruined his children's lives and was a beast to all who knew him.

Such cases are not unknown, but *The Private World*, this selection of letters and diaries of Miguel de Unamuno, will reveal no astonishing surprises to readers who are familiar with his published work—even though many of the materials presented here deal with an agonizing spiritual crisis he experienced in 1897, a crisis which received no attention from scholars until 1950.

The crisis burst on Unamuno in the spring of 1897 like an explosion, but it is deeply rooted in his personal history, from childhood on. Born in 1864 to a devoutly religious and politically conservative family, he was raised a Roman Catholic. As a youth in Bilbao, in Spain's Basque country, he grew up in a pious atmosphere in which the great iconographic scenes and personages of the New Testament were incarnate in the rhythms of cultural life. In the town of his birth the dramas of salvation were played out in the midst of common life. During Holy Week, street and church were held together in ancient and predetermined movement. Time was marked by fast and feast, and Christ was crucified anew each spring.

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In his adolescence, Unamuno belonged to the *Congregación de San Luis Gonzaga*, a group of religious young people who met Sunday mornings to hear Mass and Sunday evenings for meditations under the direction of a spiritual guide who, Unamuno writes in his *Recuerdos de niñez y de mocedad* (*Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*), "called us sheep times without number and spoke to us of spiritual pastures." During these meditations, he dreamed of becoming a saint. But he also, at the age of fourteen, began to read philosophical works, immersing himself in such books as the *Filosofía fundamental* of the Catholic apologist Jaime Balmes, whom he later sharply criticized for his intellectual shallowness and narrow dogmatism. The effect of his reading was to plunge him into the world of philosophy. With friends he walked along the banks of the Nervión River in Bilbao, ardently discussing "the first cause and the ultimate meaning of everything." Of these fledgling efforts at philosophizing, he later wrote: "I bought a cheap notebook and began to develop in it a *new* philosophical system, very symmetrical, bristling with formulas, and as labyrinthine as I could possibly make it."

When Unamuno left Bilbao for the University of Madrid in 1880, two things characterized him: an unquestioning piety, somewhat tinged with mystical romanticism derived from his extensive readings of such curious authors as Ossian, and a deep thirst for knowledge. His piety soon departed: not long after arriving in Madrid, he ceased attending Mass. But his thirst for knowledge sharpened. He became an avid reader, with special taste for positivistic philosophy, physiological psychology, and Italian and British poetry. He taught himself German in order to read Hegel and English in order to read Spencer and Carlyle (both

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of whom he subsequently translated), just as two decades later he taught himself Danish in order to read Kierkegaard, becoming one of the first persons outside of Denmark to fathom the extraordinary significance of that solitary Dane. He soon became part of the circle of students and writers who frequented the Ateneo de Madrid, which one of his teachers, Ortí y Lara, once called "the little blasphemy shop on Montera Street." Above all, he read: Krause, Hegel, Kant, Spencer, Schopenhauer, everything he could get his hands on.

In 1884 Unamuno finished his studies at Madrid, presenting a doctoral thesis on the problem of the origin and history of the Basque people. The thesis shows his determination to use scientific method in dealing with this question, and it rejects almost everything that had previously been written about the Basques for failure to formulate the critical problems with sufficient clarity. It also gives evidence of the author's formidable intellectual development: at the age of twenty Unamuno knew eleven languages—Castilian, Basque, Greek, Sanskrit, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, German, French, Italian, and English—with varying degrees of proficiency, and he had mastered the discipline of philology, a course of study not then offered at the University of Madrid.

After graduating from Madrid, Unamuno returned to Bilbao, where he spent six years in rather precarious economic circumstances, eking out a living by private tutoring, meanwhile writing newspaper articles against those of his fellow Basques who espoused separatism and the replacement of Castilian in their provinces by the Basque language, and making several unsuccessful attempts to gain a teaching appointment in a university. It is clear that during this period, Unamuno was wholly antipathetic toward religion. His own com-

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mitments were to materialistic monism, to science, and to positivism. In a fragment of manuscript written somewhat prior to 1886, he wrote, "Seek the kingdom of science and its righteousness, and all the rest will be added unto you."

But Unamuno's views were not cast in concrete, and in the late 1880s they became more fluid. He was engaged to marry his childhood sweetheart, Concepción Lizárraga, as soon as his future became more secure, and in a letter to her, written sometime before 1890, he reported a disturbing and strangely prescient dream:

One night there lowered into my mind one of those dark, sad, and mournful dreams which I cannot banish from my thoughts, even during moments of happiness during the day. I dreamed that I was married, that I had a child, that this child died, and that over its body, which seemed to be made of wax, I said to my wife: "Behold our love! Shortly it will decay: this is the way everything ends."

The significance of the dream is that it raises a profoundly unsettling question for someone committed to a belief in salvation through positivistic science: how do you speak of the death of a person, a loved one, in the language of science? What are the "facts"—stories about the cessation of movement, the halting of bodily processes, embalment, entombment, chemical changes, microbiological events? And what "laws" emerge from the contemplation of these facts in a detached and objective manner? The very question is an obscenity, and it underlines the necessity for some kind of personal, perhaps even religious, vocabulary for talking about love and death.

In 1891, Unamuno married Concepción and secured an appointment to the faculty of the University of Salamanca as a teacher of Greek. He continued to

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write newspaper articles, worked assiduously on his novel *Peace in War*, and carried out philological research on the language of ordinary people in their daily lives. Two sons were soon born to the young couple, and then, on January 7th, 1896, a third, Raimundo Jenaro ("Raimundín"), whose tragic illness precipitated Unamuno's intense religious crisis of 1897.

In November 1896 Raimundo contracted a severe case of meningitis which left him hydrocephalic and partially paralyzed, and doomed him to an unconscious existence that lasted until his death in 1902. Unamuno felt on the verge of paralysis himself, was preoccupied with worries over the state of his own heart, and fell into a deep depression, until one night in March 1897, when his wife awoke to find him weeping, and uttered two words—"My child!"—which altered forever the horizons of his life. Writing during his exile in 1925 about his episode, he remarked that in a sense his Concha, the mother of his eight children, was

my own true mother as well. In a moment of supreme, of abysmal anguish, wracked with superhuman weeping, when she saw me in the claws of the Angel of Nothingness, she cried out to me from the depths of her maternal being, superhuman and divine: "My child!" I discovered then all that God had done for me in this woman, the mother of my children, my own virgin mother, . . . my mirror of holy, divine unconsciousness and eternity.

The words spoken by his wife on that spring night, which in some inexpressible way he saw as the answer to his own "abysmal anguish," his tormented anxiety over the sense of nothingness and meaninglessness provoked in him by his son's condition, were forever engraved on Unamuno's mind. In a letter of January 11th, 1901, to Pedro Corominas, he wrote: "I will never forget the tone with which on a certain occasion

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. . . , on hearing me weep, she exclaimed, 'My child!' She called me *child*, and it is true: I own that I am her child, her spiritual child, in not a little of the good that I have today." These words are enigmatic, but at least a part of their meaning is that what Concepción said to him on that night in March 1897 brought Unamuno to some kind of feeling of his *sonship* before God the Father, providing him a single paradigmatic moment to which he could relate many of the traditional conceptions of Christianity, but in a uniquely personal and private way. The diary which Unamuno kept during the outworking of his crisis returns again and again to deep meditation upon the words "Padre nuestro"—"Our Father."

Unamuno's first impulse was to return by force to the faith of his childhood. He wrote the rector of the Congregación de San Luis in Bilbao, Father Juan José Lecanda, asking for his spiritual guidance and indicating his desire to spend Holy Week in his company. Lecanda wrote back, advising him to avoid solitude and inviting him to come to Alcalá de Henares for Holy Week. Easter that year was on April 18th. Unamuno arrived in Alcalá the Sunday preceding.

In Alcalá, Unamuno read devotional books and the Gospels, berated himself for the intellectualism of his previous life, meditated on Christ and the Virgin Mary, and poured out his feelings in the diary he had begun to keep in a small, bound notebook. The tone of the diary, up to a certain point, suggests that it is almost the story of a converted intellectual—of a man who, having once given up the language of the Church, its practice and liturgy, in order to pursue his own secular intellectual interests, at last returns to the faith, like a Prodigal Son making his way back to his boyhood home. The early entries in the diary show Unamuno

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attempting to express in familiar, pious, and orthodox terms the significance of his wife's maternal exclamation.

But his effort to work out his salvation within the structure of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain did not succeed. On April 18th he found himself unable to perform his Easter obligation of making confession and receiving Communion. Lamenting his dryness of spirit, he returned to Salamanca, where he continued to pour his inner turmoil into his diary, struggling at great length with the questions of confession and Communion. His references to death (*muerte*) become so frequent that at last he comes to write the word simply as *M*.

The exact nature of Unamuno's religious position after the crisis has been a matter of great controversy. He has been called a thinker with a Protestant head and a Catholic heart; an atheist who dissimulated his disbelief with word-games and verbal tricks; a man who somehow got stuck halfway through a genuine process of conversion; a thinker flawed by a frivolous and unnecessary heterodoxy; Spain's greatest heretic and teacher of heresies; and a genuinely apostolical Christian of the twentieth century, perhaps its greatest. This list does not begin to exhaust the labels pinned on Unamuno—who was impatient of all labels in such matters.

Since questions about what someone *really* believed, apart from what he *said* he believed, are ultimately impossible to settle, I offer here only an interpretation of Unamuno's position which, first, takes seriously the genuineness of the 1897 crisis as it was recorded in his diaries, and, second, gives due consideration to the setting in which Unamuno tried to make himself be heard—Spain at the turn of the century, a country so

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divided that many of its intellectuals spoke quite seriously of "the two Spains": one liberal and forward-looking and secularist, the other conservative and traditional and clerical-minded.

Quite apart from the religious language in which he sought to express himself, Unamuno's agonized crisis brought him to the sharp recognition, already adumbrated in his dream of the death of a child, that to be authentically human means to live in the presence of death, to understand that mortality is the root of our condition—and to understand further that a great deal of human conduct can be understood as an evasion, a denial, a diversion whereby we seek not to accept the most fundamental reality of all, the fact that we will die.

Unamuno was not, of course, the first thinker in history to place an unflinching and steady meditation on the fact of mortality at the very center of his examination of man and society. Many of the writers of the Old Testament were there before him, as were Pascal and Tolstoy. Later, building on Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilytch*, Martin Heidegger, who seems not to have known Unamuno's work, argued that human-being was *Sein-zum-Tode*, being-towards-death, and that any self-understanding which is not grounded in this fundamental characteristic of *Dasein*, of that kind of existence which is human existence, is inauthentic—what Unamuno would have called "a vital lie." More recently, in a canon of works of increasing range and depth, climaxing in his posthumous masterpiece *The Denial of Death* (a book which unites psychoanalytic theory with Kierkegaardian ontology in a way that Unamuno would have approved wholeheartedly), the late Ernest Becker developed an un-

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derstanding of the nature of human existence which dovetails completely with Unamuno's.

To state the points of congruence between these two thinkers, but using Becker's language and terminology, the predicament of all human beings can be stated as follows.

We human beings are born tiny in a world of people with larger bodies and sometimes ambiguous intents. We die without ever quite having gotten over the things that happened to us in early childhood. Between birth and death we live largely by words and symbols, the most urgent of which deal with the nasty little secret separating us from the rest of animal creation. We will die, *and we know it*. We are contingent creatures, and we have such an uncomfortable, intestinal knowledge of our contingency that we develop a panoply of cultural symbols, rituals, and institutions offering the illusion of perpetuity. Not daring to peer into the Abyss, we have invented culture, mechanisms of comfort and consolation which give meaning and significance to our existence.

This argument can be advanced into the territory of social history, via an exploration of what might be called the natural history of evil. To call the human lot secure is to falsify reality. Even apart from human-caused evil, creation is a "nightmare spectacular," the earth a blood-soaked arena where organisms gorge and feed on one another. Bosch and Goya are perhaps our truest painters. Ernest Becker believed that he detected "the rumble of panic underneath everything." Living beings are animated digestive tracts, equipped on one end with teeth capable of ripping up flesh, on the other with organs of excretion and stench.

For each of us, our own mortality is the greatest of personal evils, but culture provides us an apparent

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chance to mitigate contingency, to lose our sense of individual frailty and insignificance in larger affairs.

Since the culture to which we belong gives us meaning, we may be driven to absolutize it—to deny that it is as contingent as we are. Since our own cultural system gives us value and self-esteem, we conclude that other systems must be perverse and evil. Throughout history, humans have lashed out in all directions at other human beings who live by different mythologies of significance. Wars may seem to have their ultimate causes in politics or in economics, but only to those who are philosophically or psychologically myopic: politics and economics are part of a larger system of culture whose deepest roots lie in the denial of death.

This summary of Becker's *The Denial of Death* is also an almost perfect summary of Unamuno. He knew these things, albeit dimly, long before the 1897 crisis, and in the crisis itself they loomed with terrifying clarity in his consciousness. And he stated them magnificently in his last public act, on October 12th, 1936, when before an audience assembled for a solemn ceremony at the University of Salamanca he denounced General José Millán Astray—and by implication Generalísimo Franco and the Falange—for his necrophilous battle cry "*Viva la muerte!*"—"Long live death!—and for his odd desire to find psychological relief "in seeing mutilation around him."

But in his diary, on the heels of his spiritual crisis, Unamuno couched his meditation on death in traditional Christian theological terms of the resurrection of the flesh and the immortality of the soul. During the summer of 1897 he read devotional works, scholarly books (mostly by Protestants) on the history of Church doctrine, and the Bible, especially the Gospels

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and the Acts of the Apostles. In October, with a letter to Juan Arzadun, he began to attempt to communicate directly to his friends, using strongly Biblical language, the content of his awakening. This period might be called the iconographic stage of Unamuno's career: he announces his intention to write a work called *Evangelical Meditations*, composed of essays about New Testament characters and incidents. In letters to various of his friends, he lists several such essays: "Jesus and the Woman of Samaria," "The Evil of the Century," "The Social Kingdom of Jesus," "Nicodemus the Pharisee," "The Prayer of Dimas," and "St. Paul on the Areopagus." Of these, only "Nicodemus" was published; it had been delivered at a meeting of the Atheneum of Madrid in November of 1899.

Unamuno's friends, many of them atheists or agnostics in religious matters, liberals and secularists in political and economic matters, were not especially sympathetic toward his apparent attempt to convert them. He wrote Pedro Jiménez Ilundain in January of 1898 about his crisis and his proposed *Evangelical Meditations*, but Ilundain's reply in April was sharp. Noting certain Protestant and heterodox elements in Unamuno's letter, he pointed out that this "isn't something generally desired in Spain. *I fear greatly that your words are being lost in the void.*" Catholics would not trust him, and non-Catholics would be indifferent to what he said. Ilundain then questioned the use of Biblical quotations and references to Jesus and other Biblical figures as a suitable vehicle of communication. He then suggested that Unamuno say what he had to say in novels or essays—"not so obviously religious"—and that in his criticism of tendencies in modern society he not use as his "only base of argument the an-

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nouncement that such things are condemned by Christ and his Gospel.”

There is little doubt that Ilundain's warning that Unamuno's words were being “lost in the void” hit its mark. For eight months, Unamuno did not reply, and when he did, on December 23rd, 1898, it was to announce, first of all, that he was studying economics, and second, that he had begun a drama about “the struggle between the attraction of glory and the love of inner peace.” The announcement of this drama marks the beginning of a new stage in Unamuno's attempt to communicate the sentiments that grew out of his personal crisis. The works on Biblical themes largely cease—with a few notable exceptions such as *The Christ of Velázquez* (1920)—and there begins an incredibly varied and prolific authorship: myriad occasional essays, book reviews, poems, novels, plays, prologues, public lectures, and a host of short stories. Again and again, Unamuno returned to religious questions in such works as *The Tragic Sense of Life* (1913) and *The Agony of Christianity* (1925, 1931), but he resorted to paradoxical, often ambiguous language designed to confound anyone who would catalogue him under some handy tag, such as “believer” or “nonbeliever.” His writings, by his own account, were meant to raise questions, not to give answers; they were not “bread” but “yeast.”

Throughout his long career after his crisis, Unamuno labored hard to avoid attracting an audience that was identified with any particular group. In *Tragic Sense of Life* he wrote:

But the truth is that my work—my mission, I was about to say—is to shatter the faith of men, left, right, and center, their faith in affirmation, their faith in negation, their faith in abstention, and I do so from faith in faith itself. My

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purpose is to war on all those who submit, whether to Catholicism, or to rationalism, or to agnosticism. My aim is to make all men live a life of restless longing.

In this position, Unamuno has at least two powerful allies, one of them a profoundly Christian thinker who has had an enormous influence on even secular philosophy in the twentieth century and the other a Lutheran theologian, martyred under Hitler, whose last years had been spent in meditating over the peculiar status of Christians living in a post-Christian age. Søren Kierkegaard was avidly read by Unamuno, and the reason is obvious. In his intuition that true Christianity was almost impossible in "Christendom," in a society where people become "Christians" in the same way that they become citizens, merely by being born, Kierkegaard resorted to what he called indirect communication, addressing his readers (what few there were during his lifetime) by means of an elaborately contrived system of fictitious authors representing sometimes contradictory points of view. And the words of the imprisoned Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written shortly before his execution in 1945, serve to illumine Unamuno's decision to offer his fellow human beings yeast instead of bread, even though bread is a much more easily marketed commodity. Writes Bonhoeffer:

Atonement and redemption, regeneration, the Holy Ghost, the love of our enemies, the cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship—all these things have become so problematic and so remote that we hardly dare to speak of them any more. In the traditional rite and ceremonies we are groping after something new and revolutionary without being able to understand it or utter it yet. That is our own fault. During these years the Church has fought for self-preservation as though it were an end in itself, and has thereby lost its chance to speak a word of reconciliation to mankind and to the world at large. So

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our traditional language must perforce remain powerless and remain silent, and our Christianity today will be confined to praying for and doing right by our fellow men.

These words of Bonhoeffer—with which Unamuno would probably have agreed from late in 1898 onward—make an admirable commentary on the materials contained in Unamuno's diary and in many of the letters contained in this volume.

Unamuno's *Diario íntimo*, most of which was written in the months immediately following his crisis, in five bound notebooks, was circulated (except for the brief and scanty entries from 1899 and 1902 contained in the fifth notebook) to several of the author's closest friends between 1898 and 1901, then hidden among the papers in his study, forgotten by all save Don Miguel himself. In 1927, during his exile, Unamuno wrote Salomé, his eldest daughter, an anxious letter about the possibility that she or his eldest son, Fernando, might have come across it in his absence. Its existence was unknown to the growing band of Unamuno scholars until 1944, when Unamuno's letters to his boyhood friend Juan Arzadun were published in the Argentine review *Sur*, including the letter of October 30th, 1897, where he wrote, "Perhaps one day I'll give you the notebooks in which for the past seven months I've been writing everything that comes to mind, everything that I feel and think and discover inside myself." The first scholar to deal with Unamuno's religious crisis was Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, in a rather unsympathetic series of articles published in *Hispanic Review* and *La Revista Hispánica Moderna* and later in his book *Estudios sobre Unamuno y Machado* (Madrid, 1960).

It was the Peruvian scholar and critic Armando Zu-

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bizarreta who, while working in the Unamuno Casa-Museo in Salamanca on his doctoral dissertation, a study of *How a Novel Is Made* (*Cómo se hace una novela*), discovered among Unamuno's papers the notebooks containing the *Diary*. It was not until 1966 that the *Diary* itself was published, but Zubizarreta published an account of its content and of the circumstances surrounding its writing in an article appearing in the *Mercurio Peruano* in April, 1957 and again in his critical study *Tras las huellas de Unamuno* (Madrid, 1960).

The *Diario íntimo* is by no means a polished piece of work. It was written *ad se ipsum*, even though he was willing for a time to share it with intimate friends, few of whom were sympathetic with the attempt to return to the faith of his childhood which is recorded in its pages. Even in the abridged version which is given in the present volume, few readers will fail to notice that it is obsessive, extremely repetitious, and often self-conscious in a rather theatrical way, nor that it lacks the literary merit that, even for relentless non-believers, distinguishes such other examples of confessional writing as St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Pascal's *Pensées*. But it is an important document for two reasons. First, it announces many of the themes that were to occupy Unamuno in later years, especially in *The Tragic Sense of Life* and *The Agony of Christianity*. Second, it provides a vivid picture of a sensitive and deeply intellectual man—deeply intellectual despite his negative words about “intellectualism”—who, in his inability to return to the neat simplicities of orthodox Christianity and in his recognition of the inadequacies of “modern and progressive” thought, may perhaps be the first post-modern man.

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Accompanying the *Diary* in this volume are some sixty-four letters, spanning the last forty-seven years of Unamuno's life, from 1890, when he was living on dreams and occasional tutoring jobs, seeking (for some time, in vain) a university teaching appointment and looking forward to marriage and fatherhood, until 1936, when he was secure in his international fame as Spain's most committed man of letters, but bereft of his wife and deep in despair over the tragic course of Spanish political history.

Unamuno was a prodigious letter-writer, although from 1910 onwards he complained that the press of his other duties forced him to neglect his correspondence—and he published in various Spanish and Latin American newspapers the kind of commentary on his readings and on the events of the day that a few years earlier would have gone into personal letters. He saved most of the letters he received, and many of those to whom he wrote saved his letters as well. His correspondents included close friends such as Juan Arzadun and Pedro Jiménez Ilundain, complete strangers, and such celebrated figures as Antonio Machado, Rubén Darío, José Ortega y Gasset, Jorge Luis Borges, and Giovanni Papini. By far the greater part of his correspondence (amounting to nearly forty thousand letters) remains unpublished, but those letters that have appeared in print (many of them in Latin America rather than in Spain, because of the Spanish political climate during the Franco years) are sufficient to fill a good-sized library shelf. Of necessity, therefore, the letters in this volume have been selected to represent the range of Unamuno's philosophical, religious, political, educational, and purely personal concerns. They reflect his early flirtation with socialism, his constant preoccupation with religion from the late 1890s on-

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ward, his sturdy political convictions, and his ever-shifting and ambivalent attitudes toward his native country, which he loved, often to his deep distress.

No one could ever accuse Unamuno of keeping his personal life and his public life in separate compartments. His public writings are filled with the intimate details of his life, sometimes directly, sometimes by allusion. And his private correspondence is seldom purely personal. Even with his close friends, the act of writing letters to them provided him with a pulpit from which to excoriate the Jesuits, lambaste devious politicians of every party and sect, lament the existence of stupid kings and moronic but powerful dictators, bemoan the mediocrity of public education, condemn German technocratic militarism and anti-Semitism, mock French literature for its triviality and Teutonic scholarship for its pedantry (although he held such German Protestant historians as Adolf von Harnack in high esteem), and point out the deficiencies of the separatist movements in Catalonia and the Basque provinces. He also used his personal correspondence as a sounding board for his work-in-progress, sometimes discussing books he planned but never wrote. (His biographer Emilio Salcedo lists over twenty such unwritten works, including a *Tristan and Isolde* and a book called *The Tragic Resentment of Life*, on which he was working during the last months of his life in 1936, when he was under house arrest in Salamanca at the order of Generalísimo Franco.)

Unamuno was a man of powerful, almost volcanic, energies; many of his letters show him in full eruption. He was also equipped with an indomitable ego and sometimes transgressed the boundaries of restrained behavior—in, for example, the two letters he wrote one day apart, in 1900, to the noted critic Leopoldo Alas (“Clarín”), where, at enormous length, he de-

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manded to be noticed, even though at that stage in his career his accomplishments were slender. Not everything in Unamuno's letters is admirable, but much is. His critique of the illusions of progress was prescient, as was his distrust of Germany's intentions towards the rest of Europe. And he was capable of great tenderness, as in his letter to Matilde Brandau de Ross after the tragic death of her young husband Luis Ross, a Chilean for whom Unamuno felt the sort of affection that Socrates felt toward his youthful admirers.

The final letters in this volume are more personal and less political than the earlier ones, but the volcano was merely dormant, not extinct. In October of 1936, during a public ceremony in the Paraninfo or ceremonial hall of the University of Salamanca, Unamuno erupted in a fiery and deeply moving denunciation of the death-exalting and anti-intellectual tendencies of Franco's Falangist movement. He was not permitted to appear again in public, and when his voice was stilled for all time on the last day of 1936, the Falange buried him with its military rites, attempting most unjustly to claim him as its own. But the "last lecture" he delivered in October in the ceremonial hall to an audience that included Franco's wife was one of the most magnificent moments in his life. Thus we print here, as an epilogue to this volume, Luis Portillo's splendid account of the occasion.

There is, unfortunately, no biography of Unamuno in English that does justice to the complexity of the man. Until there is, it is hoped that the readers of this version of his *Diary* and this selection of his letters will find in these pages a fair picture of Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, his life and times.

ALLEN LACY

Linwood, New Jersey
September, 1982

Chronology

Titles of works published in English are italicized.

- 1864 September 29; Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo born in Bilbao.
- 1874 Witnesses the Carlist siege of Bilbao.
- 1875-1880 Secondary education in his native city.
- 1880-1884 University of Madrid; doctorate in 1884.
- 1884-1891 Gives private lessons and does other teaching in Bilbao; writes articles for local newspapers; prepares for permanent teaching position.
- 1891 Marries Concepción Lizárraga; wins chair of Greek at the University of Salamanca, where he will live for the rest of his life except for the years of exile.
- 1895 The essays of *En torno al casticismo* (On Authentic Tradition) published separately; published as a book in 1902.
- 1897 Year of the religious crisis; starts writing the unpublished *Diario*; publishes first novel, *Paz en la guerra* (*Peace in War*).
- 1898 Writes play *La esfinge* (The Sphinx).
- 1899 Publication of "Nicodemo el fariseo" (*Nicodemus the Pharisee*) and *De la ense-*

Chronology

- ñanza superior en España* (On University Teaching in Spain); writes play, *La venda* (The Blindfold).
- 1900 Named rector of the university; publishes *Tres ensayos* (Three Essays).
- 1902 Publishes *En torno al casticismo* (On Authentic Tradition) in book form; the novel *Amor y pedagogía* (Love and Pedagogy); the travel sketches *Paisajes* (Landscapes).
- 1903 *De mi país* (From My Native Region).
- 1905 *La vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (*The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho*).
- 1907 *Poesías* (Poems).
- 1908 *Recuerdos de niñez y de mocedad* (Memories of Childhood and Youth).
- 1910 *Mi religión y otros ensayos breves* (*My Religion and Other Short Essays*).
- 1911 *Por tierras de Portugal y de España* (Through Regions of Portugal and Spain), travel book; *Soliloquios y conversaciones* (Soliloquies and Conversations), essays; *Rosario de sonetos líricos* (Rosary of Lyrical Sonnets).
- 1912 *Contra esto y aquello* (Against This and That), essays; 1898 correspondence with Angel Ganivet published as *El porvenir de España* (The Future of Spain).
- 1913 Publication of Unamuno's central work *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los*

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hombres y en los pueblos (*On the Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*); *El espejo de la muerte* (*The Mirror of Death*).

- 1914 Dismissed from rectorship; publication of the novel *Niebla* (*Mist*).
- 1917 *Abel Sánchez*, novel.
- 1918 Publication of the long poem *El Cristo de Velázquez* (*The Christ of Velázquez*); *Tres novelas ejemplares y un prólogo* (*Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue*).
- 1922 *La tía Tula* (*Aunt Tula*), novel; *Soledad* (*Solitude*) and *Raquel encadenada* (*Rachel in Chains*), both plays.
- 1922 *Andanzas y visiones españolas* (*Spanish Travels and Vistas*).
- 1923 *Rimas de dentro* (*Rhymes from Within*), poetry.
- 1924 21 February: Unamuno leaves Salamanca for exile in Fuerteventura, one of the Canary Islands, where he arrives 10 March. Escapes from the island and arrives in Paris 28 July. Publication of *Teresa*, poetry.
- 1925 Middle of August: Unamuno moves to Hendaye where he spends the remainder of his exile. Publication of *De Fuerteventura a París* (*From Fuerteventura to Paris*), sonnets of exile. *L'Agonie du christianisme* (*The Agony of Christianity*) published in the French translation of Jean

Chronology

Cassou; in 1931 it is published in Spanish as *La agonía del cristianismo*.

- 1926 *Sombras de sueño* (Dream Shadows), *El Otro* (*The Other*), both plays.
- 1927 Publication in Buenos Aires of *Cómo se hace una novela* (*How a Novel Is Made*), which appeared in 1926 in Cassou's French translation as *Comment on fait un roman*.
- 1928 *Romancero del destierro* (Ballads of Exile).
- 1929 *El hermano Juan o el mundo es teatro* (Brother John or The World Is a Stage), a play.
- 1930 9 February: Unamuno crosses the border back to Spain. Publication of *Dos artículos y dos discursos* (Two Articles and Two Speeches).
- 1931 14 April: Spain is declared a Republic; Unamuno reappointed rector of the University of Salamanca.
- 1933 Publication of *San Manuel Bueno, mártir y tres historias más* (*St. Manuel Bueno, Martyr, and Three More Stories*); 14 July: death of his oldest daughter Salomé.
- 1934 May 15: Unamuno's wife dies; 30 September: Unamuno is retired as a professor and named lifetime rector of the university.
- 1936 Receives honorary doctorate from Oxford in late February. The Civil War

Chronology

breaks out on 17 July. Unamuno publically denounces Franco and the Falange on 12 October. Dies 31 December.

- 1937 *Soledad y otros cuentos* (Soledad and Other Stories).
- 1941 *La ciudad de Henoc* (The City of Enoch), articles written in 1933.
- 1943 *Cuenca ibérica* (Iberian Watershed), further essays from 1932-1933.
- 1944 *Paisajes del alma* (Landscapes of the Soul), essays.
- 1945 *La enormidad de España* (The Enormity of Spain), essays.
- 1949 *Visiones y comentarios* (Vistas and Commentaries), essays.
- 1953 *Cancionero* (Book of Songs).
- 1950-1954 *De esto y de aquello* (On This and That), four volumes of essays.
- 1955 *España y los españoles* (Spain and the Spaniards), essays.
- 1956 *Inquietudes y meditaciones* (Concerns and Meditations), essays.
- 1957 *En el destierro* (In Exile), essays.
- 1959 *Mi vida y otros recuerdos personales* (My Life and Other Personal Remembrances), two volumes of essays.

I

The Diary

Notebook 1

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HOLD ALL worldly wisdom and all human self-satisfaction in less esteem.

The mystery of freedom is the very mystery of reflective consciousness and of reason. Man is nature's consciousness, and his true freedom consists in his aspiration towards grace. That man is free who is able to receive divine grace and be saved by it.

One must seek for the truth of things, not their reason, and truth is sought in humility.

Leopardi, Amiel, *Obermann*—

With my reason I was seeking a rational God, who kept disappearing, being purely an idea, and who turned into the Nothingness-God which pantheism leads to and into the pure phenomenism which is the root of my intuition of the void. I did not feel the living God who dwells within us and reveals himself to us through acts of love, not through the vain conceits of pride. But then He called out to my heart and put me in the fear of death.

Know thyself.

“But if they should hear about themselves from you, they cannot say, ‘The Lord lies!’ What else is it for

Diary

them to hear from you about themselves except to know themselves?"

St. Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 3.

I had taken note of that proposition of Spinoza which says that the free man thinks about everything but death, since his life is a meditation on life itself, not on death.

And I did not understand that to become a free man in spirit and in truth it was necessary to become a slave and, once having become a slave, to await from the Lord the freedom which permits us to live in meditation on Life itself, on Christ Jesus.

He who wants everything to happen that does happen brings it about that everything happens as he wishes. Human omnipotence, by means of resignation. But I did not understand that such resignation is reached only through grace, through faith and love.

For a long time in my study two drawings, one a portrait of Spencer and the other my own drawing of Homer, beneath which I had copied out those verses from the *Odyssey* that read "the gods weave and accomplish the destruction of men in order that their posterity may have something to sing." And that is the quintessence of the vain spirit of paganism, of the sterile aestheticism which kills all spiritual substance and all beauty.

I have often written about the difference between reason and truth, without understanding that difference very well. In this world, amid the disputes to which God delivered us we may manage by reason to prove that we are right—but truth is wisdom and peace.

Notebook 1

Just as God made procreation and nutrition matters of delight, so that we gladly do what we might not do out of mere duty, so He added the delight of vainglory in works of art and science so that we might carry them out. But just as that carnal delight, that concupiscence, causes many to die, so is this spiritual delight also a cause of death when it feeds on spiritual pride. Happy are those who raise children with their gaze fixed on the service and glory of God; happy are those who spread their thoughts abroad for the glory of the Lord and the good of their neighbor!

Through humility one reaches the wisdom of the simple, which is to know how to live in peace with oneself and with the world, to live in the peace of the Lord, trusting in truth, not reason.

I enter on faith with the pride of my past years of sleep, so that everything turns to arranging my own vainglory, making God serve me rather than me Him. I was thinking about famous converts and about the vanities of a showy Catholicism. I ask God to strip me of myself.

I would not like to make truth into reason, to turn ineffable truth into reason subject to the figures of logic. I would ask, not argue, that your name be hallowed, Lord, not with vain words but with acts, and with words that be also acts, words of love.

I have never been able to be a sectarian. I have always battled against every kind of dogmatism, allegedly for the sake of liberty. But really it was from pride, in order not to have to get in line, recognize a superior,

Diary

or discipline myself. Now I want to listen to life and death in the army of the humble, joining my prayers to theirs in the holy freedom of the obedient.

I have tempted the Lord, asking of Him something prodigious, an open miracle, with my eyes closed to the living miracle of the universe and to the miracle of the change in me.

The comedy of life. A stubborn tendency to sink into sleep and to play a role without seeing reality. And there comes a point when one plays the comedy all alone, plays the comedian for oneself alone, wanting to keep up a pretense before Thee, who reads our hearts. Not even to ourselves are we sincere and simple! That's how blind we are, and hidden from our own eyes.

To know ourselves in the Lord is the beginning of salvation.

I must be careful not to fall into the comedy of religious conversion and not to let my tears be theatrical ones. No one, Lord, can deceive You.

“Often, out of very contempt of glory a man derives an emptier glory. No longer, therefore, does he glory in contempt of vainglory: he does not despise it, inasmuch as he glories over it.”

St. Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 63.

Socialism and Communism. The holy communism of Communion, of all taking part in the same God: Communion in spirit.

What makes a community of a people but its religion? What unites them *beneath* history, in the dark

Notebook 1

course of their humble daily labors? Self-interest only appears to be the link that ties them together; it is religion that produces communal spirit. Religion creates a nation and is the spiritual fatherland.

Childhood. I've often thought that God does not destroy us because of the just men of Sodom.

"Suffer little children to come unto me." "Who-soever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

From D. J. J.

I don't want to be anything nor have anyone remember me. Work? What for? I immerse myself here among a few old men, and—on with life? My aspirations are already satisfied. A nihilist.

At the beginning I asked only for peace and serenity, thinking only of myself. But one day, at Alcalá, opening *The Imitation of Christ*, I read: "I have no words to speak but only this: I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned. Have mercy on me and forgive me." And I realized immediately that I should have asked forgiveness, not peace. Forgiveness and nothing else! Until then it had not occurred to me clearly that I had sinned much against the Lord.

When I prayed, my heart recognized the God my reason denied.

If I come to believe, what better proof of the truth of faith? It will be a miracle, a true miracle, a testimonial to the truth of faith.
