

1 Human Existential Desire for Immortality in Unamuno's 2 Perspective

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7 **Abstract**

8 Human existential desire for immortality of the soul has been a persistent philosophical
9 problem down the ages such that it is imperative for different thinkers to hold divergent
10 opinions in their genuine search for the truth. Unamuno in his sincere search for the truth of
11 immortality, firstly, tries rationalism, thereby tending towards Hegelianism. When he sees that
12 the power of human reason cannot express the inexpressible "the cardinal inherent human
13 hunger, thirst, and desire for self-perpetuation and self-preservation, the longing not to die but
14 to live forever" he turns to irrationalism. In other words, Unamuno, claiming that man
15 has eternal soul, substantiates his thesis of immortality of the human soul merely via the
16 method of irrationalism. Is this sufficient? Therefore, the paper exposes different views on the
17 immortality of the soul, and assesses Unamuno's method of enquiry and further clarifies his
18 notion of immortality of the soul. It proposes a synthesis of rationalism and irrationalism as a
19 solution in explaining the concept in question which provides more rooms for the different
20 dimensions of interpretations one might offer to the problem of immortality of the soul. The
21 paper illuminates people's minds on the problem of human existence and enlightens humanity
22 to live meaningful life here for the hereafter. ?To discover death is to discover the hunger of
23 immortality? (Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life)

24

25 **Index terms**— desire, existential, immortality, perspective.

26 **1 INTRODUCTION**

27 The concept of immortality has always existed in the minds of spiritualists, anthropologists, sociologists, politicians,
28 philosophers, and humanity in general. Many thinkers and philosophers in attempts to deal with the problem
29 of immortality have proffered some kind of definitions and arguments for and against immortality. Since the
30 immortality of the soul is a persistent philosophical problem, it becomes imperative for different thinkers to hold
31 divergent views. In other words, while some advocate immortality of the soul, others tenaciously uphold the
32 contrary view. Some thinkers even question the existence of the soul. Each thinker genuinely searches for the
33 truth.

34 Miguel De Unamuno in his sincere search for the truth of immortality, firstly, tries rationalism, thereby tending
35 towards Hegelianism. When he sees that the power of human reason cannot express the Author : Dusit Thani
36 Intl. College, Bangkok 10250 Thailand. E-mail : kevis02@yahoo.com inexpressible -the cardinal inherent human
37 hunger, thirst, and desire for self-perpetuation and selfpreservation, the longing not to die but to live forever he
38 turns to irrationalism. So he abandons human reason and resorts to non-rational in order to explain the concept
39 of immortality. Thus, Unamuno toes the path of irrationalism when he proposes that man is less rational than
40 irrational. For him, man is 'instinct-packed'. Some thinkers opine that man does not have soul at all, and some
41 others assert that man has corporeal soul, and yet others hold that man has immortal, eternal soul. Unamuno,
42 claiming that man has eternal soul, substantiates his thesis of immortality of the human soul merely via the

3 HUMAN THIRST NOT TO DIE

43 method of irrationalism. Is this sufficient? Therefore, this paper assesses Unamuno's method of enquiry and
44 further clarifies his notion of immortality of the soul. Acknowledging the fact that all philosophical investigations
45 and reflections aim at discovering and finding out the inherent difficulties in the people's views, redefine, refine
46 and remodel them, this write-up elaborates on Unamuno's worldview on the concept of immortality of the human
47 soul so as to illuminate people's minds by examining critically their notions of immortality.

48 2 II.

49 3 HUMAN THIRST NOT TO DIE

50 Unamuno, filled with strong passions which urge man to action, devotes all his life-time and works to the
51 question of immortality of the human soul to the extent that it featured in all his write-ups. He is wearied with
52 this unquenchable human thirst not to die, but to live on and gozarse uno la carne del alma (to enjoy the flesh
53 of one's own soul) [1]. Consequently, Unamuno rejects the wave of modernism which may draw him away from
54 the main business of his life -the saving of his soul which he interpreted as the conquest of his own immortality,
55 (his hunger for life, a full life, here and after). Thus determined, Unamuno writes in [2]:

56 To will oneself, is it not to wish oneself eternal that is to say, not to wish to die? ?the longing for immortality,
57 is it not perhaps the primal and fundamental condition of all reflective or human knowledge? ?the longing not
58 to die, the hunger for personal immortality, the effort whereby we tend to persist indefinitely in our own being?
59 is the affective basis of all knowledge and the personal inward starting-point of all human philosophy -the tragic
60 sense of life (pp. 36).

61 Actually Unamuno considers this mad desire in man not to die but to be eternal as the bed-rock of all that
62 man does on earth. So man employs all his knowledge in the struggle to preserve his life. Unamuno examines the
63 joy of living which enkindles in man the hunger for self-preservation and self-perpetuation [3]. Not of death, of
64 immortality! The fear that if we die, we shall die entirely, attracts us toward life and the hope of living another
65 life makes us hate this one. La joie de vivre the joy of living ?. Because man's greatest crime is to have been born
66 (pp. 78). In essence, Unamuno means that this problem will not come to stay if we are not born at all. In fact,
67 it would have been better if we were not born at all. This view seems to suggest a regret of human life. How it
68 is better that we are not born at all remains a question for Unamuno? How can our birth be the greatest crime?

69 Unamuno is deeply disturbed at the thought that he must one day die and face the enigma -the tragedy of
70 paradise -of what will come after death. Thus he lets loose his soul, in what appears to be a dirge, lamenting
71 from the abyss of his deep-seated feeling for immortality [2]: To be, to be forever, to be without ending! Thirst
72 of being, thirst of being more! Hunger of God! Thirst of love eternalizing and eternal! To be forever! To be God!
73 (pp. 40). Unamuno cries aloud from the depths of his soul as he imagines himself sleeping away from this life,
74 watching everything melting away from him into nothingness. If this fate applies to all men, he argues, therefore
75 this life will be going from nothingness to nothingness -a hostile cage of illusions. In other words, life will be
76 comparable to one falling from frying pan to fire. Thus life is futile, and tormenting, and the best remedy is death
77 which ends the whole issue of life. In the light of this understanding, it then becomes wise to join the Epicureans
78 in living a life preoccupied with caring for the body; eat, enjoy and make merry for tomorrow we die. But if
79 immortality is eventually realizable contends Unamuno, life, though is sweet, may be likened to a disease which
80 only effective medicine, the only health possible, may be death. This is so because the phenomenon of death
81 is supposed to take one to the eternal, immortal, everlasting life. Man prefers life thereof to life herein. In the
82 words of Unamuno [2], to discover death is to discover the hunger of immortality (pp. 60). Unamuno does not
83 devote himself the task of proving the immortality of the soul, but rather he shows an attitude of agnosticism.
84 For him, there may be immortality, or there may be not and as such we perish at death. The innate thirst for
85 immortality is certainly in man but the question of its realization becomes uncertain. Unamuno advocates that
86 we should live and strive hard to deserve immortality since we do not want to end up in death. If eventually it
87 is denied us and we face absurdity, it will amount to great deal of injustice [2]: If it is nothing that awaits us, let
88 us make an injustice of it (pp. 268).

89 These arguments are occasioned by the fact that immortality in Unamuno is not a matter of rational
90 demonstration but of feeling. Hence Unamuno insists that it is not rational arguments, but emotions, instincts
91 that cause belief in future life. The uncertainty of attaining immortality of the soul leads Unamuno to see human
92 life as a tragedy which goes into extinction at death. Philosophy, for him, is the science of the tragic sense of
93 life in men and in peoples [2]: We are perishable but let us perish resisting; and if it is nothingness that waits
94 us, let us so act that it shall be an unjust fate (pp. 263). Unamuno's philosophy of immortality of the soul has
95 man as its point of departure [2]: The concrete man, the man of flesh and bone is at once the subject and the
96 supreme object of all philosophy, whether certain self-styled philosophers like it or not (pp. 1-2). Hence Unamuno
97 discusses immortality of the human soul, and not animal's or plant's soul. According to him [2], the concrete
98 man whose soul is immortal means the man of flesh and bone; -I, you the man over there, all of us who move
99 about the face of the earth. ?men of flesh and bone, men who are born, suffer, and, although they do not wish
100 to die, die; men who are ends in themselves, not merely means; men who must be themselves and not others,
101 men, in fine, who seek that which we call happiness (pp. 16). So Unamuno in [2] talks about man built with the
102 instincts of self-preservation and selfperpetuation; the man who desires not to die but to live eternally, the man

103 who thinks with all the body and all the soul, with the blood ? with the heart, with the lungs, with the belly,
104 with the life (pp. 14).

105 Thus man is the concrete person we see [4], the real person that makes history (pp. 60). Man in his quest
106 to live everlasting life projects himself to that which is beyond him, God, and this is the birth of religion (faith)
107 on which Unamuno situates his notion of immortality of the soul. Man therefore becomes preoccupied about
108 the question of God because he is preoccupied about himself, his own existence, the why of his origin and the
109 wherefore of his destiny. This is the universal human longing [2]; the universal longing of all human souls ?
110 consists in the effort to persist eternally and without a break in the continuity of consciousness (pp. 166). Man's
111 hunger for God emanates from his innate thirst to live immortally in the life-after [2]: Why do I wish to know
112 whence I come and whither I go, whence comes and whither goes everything that environs me, and what is the
113 meaning of it all? For I do not wish to die or not definitely; if I do not die, what is my destiny? And if I die,
114 then nothing has any meaning for me (pp. 33). Unamuno seems to suggest that the only burning concern for all
115 men is the question of knowing what is to become of one's consciousness after one dies. This he

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118 Year calls [5] *El secreto de la vida* (the secret of human life), and he further defines it as the appetite for
119 divinity, the hunger for God (pp. 830). Therefore man's hunger for immortality propels him to search for God
120 though many religious attempts to substantiate the existence of God rationally and convincingly. He conceives
121 man's persistent longing for infinitude as that which gives birth to all philosophies. Unamuno alludes to Kant's
122 moral argument for the existence of God as emanating from that of immortality of the soul. In other words, Kant
123 introduces God with a view of tackling the concept of immortality of the soul. Unamuno in [3] tries to convince
124 himself that man's life on earth should not be all nothing ? those who die are buried and that's the end of it (pp.
125 5). Rather he advocates that man should strive hard with hope and faith to attain this loved eternal happiness.

126 Reason and life seem to be in perpetual and irremediable conflict in Unamuno's conception of immortality.
127 Reason for him can be equated to the principle of rationality while life, the concrete life we live, corresponds to
128 that of irrationality or faith. This is so because Unamuno bases his understanding of immortality of human soul
129 on instincts, on faith, on nonreason. In other words, he believes that reason does not serve to solve his problem.
130 Reason, he argues, is the alltime enemy of life. Both contradict each other, and as such remain in constant
131 struggle and agony, and the battle field is man himself -the man who yearns for the immortality of his soul [2]:

132 Unamuno seems to sit on the fence as to whether to choose reason and abandon life (faith) or vice versa. Reason
133 and faith are two enemies, neither of which can maintain itself without the other. The irrational demands to
134 be rationalized and reason only can operate on the irrational. They are compelled to seek mutual support and
135 association. But association in struggle, for struggle is a mode of association (pp. 111).

136 Unamuno asserts that reason and faith are enemies, yet they have a link in the sense of being associate
137 combatants in the combat to know. He likens them to the animal that is devoured and the devourer. He
138 accurately captures the essential characteristics of life -man's demand for rationality whether it is realized or not.
139 Man needs to know what to hold to, he needs to manifest certainty about the bugging questions of life.

140 And this for sure is called reason. Therefore this sole question of Unamuno applies to all men. At this point
141 we need to clarify these two principles from which Unamuno chooses his method -the principles of rationality
142 and irrationality. The principle of rationality holds that all behaviors, opinions, et cetera should be based on
143 reason, not on feelings or religious belief. Conversely, the principle of irrationality emphasizes that all behaviors,
144 opinions, et cetera should not be guided by reason, methodology, and/or logical rules but by drives, feelings,
145 emotions, faith and their likes. In other words, irrationality is that theory, which is not accessible to reason, that
146 which is perceptible only via irrational acts.

147 Unamuno, in choosing his tool, first makes use of the power of human reason. In short, he goes Hegelian and
148 imbibes rationalism. But on close examination of the contents of the theory of rationalism, he discovers that
149 it cannot vivify the dark corners of human existence which he sets out to explain. As a result, he goes to the
150 opposite extreme and adopts the theory of irrationalism. Miguel defines rationalism as basically materialist and
151 relates it to the most vital, the only really vital problem -immortality of the soul. Thus he writes in [2]:

152 Rationalism -and by rationalism I mean the doctrine that abides solely by reason, by objective truth -is
153 necessarily materialist ?. The truth is -it is necessary to be perfectly explicit in this matter -that what we call
154 materialism means for us nothing else but the doctrine which denies the immortality of the individual soul, the
155 persistence of personal consciousness after death (pp. 80).

156 Unamuno in the above passage wishes to be perfectly explicit in unveiling his reasons for choosing the method
157 of his discourse on immortality of the soul. Implicitly he has rejected rationalism since it denies the immortality
158 of the individual soul which he sets out to achieve. Unamuno speaks from personal experience because he has
159 tasted the two evils (rationality and irrationality), so to say, and chooses the lesser evil most probably, or as
160 Igbos say: Nwany? l?? di ab?? ?mara nke ka ya mma (if a woman marries two husbands, she knows the better
161 one). Unamunoan philosophy expels all the logical arguments made in the bid to substantiate consciousness as
162 sophistical subtleties designed to assert the rationality of faith in the immortality of the soul. Faith, he argues,
163 does not possess the value of objective reality, but its reality exists only in thought. Again personal immortality
164 [2], that is the continuation of this present life, is the immortality man desires (pp. 86).

6 III. MAN IN CONFLICT OF LIFE

165 Consequently, Unamuno situates the question of immortality of the soul in religion, and consequently goes
166 about it via religious belief, or better put faithfeeling. Faith (the irrational) is beyond the grasp of reason (the
167 rational). In other words, rationality cannot en-route irrationality (faith). So rationality for him hinders man
168 from attaining his much-yearned immortality. Unamuno's will to live perseveres such that he refuses to grant his
169 intellect the power to kill his faith. That which he accepts with his heart (irrational), he denies with his head
170 (rational). Unamuno does not even try to prove the immortality of the soul; rather he prefers to argue against
171 the possibility of life after death. Hence he declares in [2]: There is no way of proving the immortality of the soul
172 rationally. There are, on the other hand, ways of proving rationally its mortality (pp. 79).

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174 Volume XII Issue X" IV Version I [3] talks of the various attempts to rationalize religion which give birth to what
175 may be referred to as the religion of science ? the religious cult of scientific truth (pp. 70). This is the tragedy
176 of reason. The rational dissolution ends in dissolving reason itself [2]; it ends in the most absolute skepticism
177 ?. But reason going beyond truth itself, beyond the concept of reality itself, succeeds in plunging itself into the
178 depths of skepticism. And in this abyss the skepticism of the reason encounters the despair of the heart, and this
179 encounter leads to the discovery of a basis -a terrible basis! -for consolation to build on (pp. 104-105).(D D D
180 D) A Year Furthermore, Unamuno in

181 According to Unamuno, the tragedy is that reason finally detests itself, and consequently sinks into the deepest
182 abyss of doubt wherein it faces despair. The encounter between the skepticism of the reason and the despair of the
183 heart makes the abyss an uncomfortable ground for consolation to build on. The abyss seems to be man because
184 it is in him that both the rational skepticism and irrational desperation occur. Therein, one may say, the rational
185 irrationalizes and the irrational rationalizes. But this remains a problem. Thus Miguel concludes by proffering
186 a kind of solution to the struggle at hand [2]: No; the absolutely, the irrevocably irrational, is inexpressible, is
187 intransmissible. But not the contra-rational perhaps there is no way of rationalizing the irrational; but there is
188 a way of rationalizing the contra-rational, and that is by trying to explain it (pp. 126).

189 Actually Unamuno means that the really irrational cannot be communicated rationally. Why does he say so?
190 It may be because the really rational is really intelligible, and since the irrational or absurd is devoid of sense,
191 it eludes the grasp of rationality. So to succeed in giving expression and intelligibility to anything apparently
192 irrational, ipso facto, turns that thing into something rational. This is the case because if you hold that the
193 irrational is incommunicable, therefore your claim to communicate it will only be valid if you first of all turn it
194 into rationality before expressing it; if not, your claim is not plausible. Hence the conclusion is that rationality,
195 according to Unamuno, cannot express the inexpressible irrationality (absurdity). If irrationality is expressible
196 at all, it must be expressed by means of itself. Since Unamuno's understanding of the question of immortality
197 is based on the irrational human instincts, feeling, faith, then it is only the method of irrationalism which can
198 communicate immortality of the soul. Lastly to be immortal is to be eternal, to be everlasting, to live forever,
199 and never to die. In other words, immortality of the soul implies eternity, life everlasting. The soul is the spark
200 of the never-dying flame, the spirit that generates dreams and ideals, the light that illuminates and vitalizes the
201 body. Therefore immortality of the soul can be understood as the ability of this flame, spirit or light to be ever
202 aglow both here and hereafter. It is an act of the soul remaining immortally eternal and never to die.

203 6 III. MAN IN CONFLICT OF LIFE

204 Unamuno knows and expects various thinkers to either appreciate or criticize him, or both. This shows the
205 radicalism of Unamuno's philosophy for he writes what the critics may say about him [2]: This man comes to no
206 conclusion, he vacillates -now he seems to affirm one thing and then its contrary -he is full of contradictions -I
207 can't label him. What is he? Just this one who affirms contraries, a man of contradiction and strife ? one who
208 says one thing with his heart and the contrary with his head, and for whom this conflict is the very stuff of life
209 (pp. 260). Unamuno views philosophy as a discipline that has to deal directly with the visible individuals who
210 exist in this mundane world. For him [2], if a philosopher is not a man, he is anything but a philosopher; he is
211 above all a pedant, and a pedant is a caricature of a man (pp. 15). Owing to this view, Unamunoan philosophy
212 has man as its point of departure. By man [2], he does not mean the abstract man of classical philosophy whom
213 he calls the man noman (pp. 4). He means the concrete man of flesh and bone [2], man who is born, suffers,
214 thinks, wills, and, although he does not wish to die, dies; man who is end in himself, not merely means; man
215 who must be himself and not others; man, in fine, who seeks that which we call happiness (pp. 16). This is
216 the real man born with the instincts of self-preservation and self-perpetuation who desires not to die but to live
217 immortally, eternally [2]; the man who is in perpetual wrestling with the mystery of our final destiny (pp. 261)
218 -the immortality of human soul.

219 Although the concrete man of Unamuno may be fed up with this life and consequently desires to die, most
220 often than not, yet he hopes to live eternally hereafter. Most people believe that death is a ticket with which
221 one flies from this world to another. So even if they die, they still hope to live, not to die, in the life after. In
222 other words, they invariably thirst to be immortal. More so abnormal persons who have thrown in the towel
223 of existence have other people especially their relations and friends who long for immortality on their behalves.
224 Since nobody speaks from nowhere, this point has some bearing in the Igbo (Africa) worldview that ak?gbuo

225 ?nye ara, amara na mmad? nwe ya (kill a mad person and you will see his/her people). So despite that these
226 abnormal persons have gone-out-of-existence, in the strict sense, yet their people actually feel and hunger for
227 their immortality (the salvation of their souls, as religious-minded would prefer to say).

228 There is this glaring contradiction in Unamuno's philosophy of immortality of the soul, as deciphered from
229 one of his essays titled 'Adentro!' (Inward). Therein, he discusses the actual man as person who seeks

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232 Year immortality -a person who lives in relation with his life [5]:

233 You gradually emerge from yourself revealing yourself to yourself; your finished personality is at the end and
234 not the beginning of your life; only in death is it completed and crowned. The man of today is not the man
235 of yesterday or tomorrow, and as you change, so the ideal of yourself that you are forging changes too. Your
236 life, in the face of your own consciousness, is constant revelation, in time, of your eternity, the development of
237 your symbol; you keep on discovering yourself in the measure that you act. Advance, then, into the depths of
238 your spirit, and every day you will discover new horizons, virgin lands, rivers of spotless purity, heavens not
239 seen before, new stars and new constellations. When life is deeply felt, it is a poem with a constant and flowing
240 rhythm. Do not chain your eternal depth, which develops in time, to a few fugitive reflections of it. Live day by
241 day, in the waves of time, but resting on your living rock, within the sea of eternity; day by day in eternity -that
242 is how you should live (pp. 186).

243 Two divergent points of view worthy of criticisms appear in the long passage which portray a certain contrast,
244 and which in their opposition highlight the problem of immortality of the soul. These two views may continue
245 to contrast and oppose each other in Unamunoan philosophy. Firstly, Unamuno alludes to a depth or starting
246 point from which one lives, a depth which unravels itself: you gradually emerge from yourself, revealing yourself
247 to yourself; your life is ? constant revelation, in time, of your eternity; you keep on discovering yourself in the
248 measure that you act. In view of this, life may be an unfolding of an intimate root, an individual depth, in
249 time. And it seems that this root, this depth of the soul is the center of each man, that is, the person. Secondly,
250 Unamuno locates the personality at the end of life and crowns it by death; your finished personality is at the
251 end and not the beginning of your life; only in death is it completed and crowned. This implies that the person
252 appears as a life finished, terminated, or consummated in death alone. Then man will make his life at the same
253 time as his personality. Human life is constituted with the temporal process of events, a fleet of activities.

254 In the last statement of the extract, Unamuno's efforts to intertwine the two divergent views seem not very
255 successful or convincing. Remember he talks about the eternal depth which develops in time, and finally caps up
256 his theses in a single command: day by day in eternity -that is how you should live. Unamuno attempts to escape
257 from the bare temporality of life to what may be called historicism. To do so he appeals to eternity, but perhaps
258 the appeal is not plausible enough. Hence questions arise: How can one live day by day in eternity? Do days exist
259 in eternity? What does it mean to live in eternity? How can eternity and time be reconciled? Neither Unamuno
260 nor the author has answers to these puzzling questions, or is able to reconcile these obvious contradictions. Thus
261 the issues of eternity and time remain philosophical problems. Subsequently, this contradiction seems to beget
262 the discrepancy ascertained in two different works of Unamuno. In the Tragic Sense of Life [2], he asserts: For
263 in fact each man is unique and irreplaceable; there cannot be any other I; each one of us -our soul, that is, not
264 our life -is worth the whole universe. I say the spirit and not the life.? For life is of use only in so far as it serves
265 its lord and master, spirit, and if the master does perishes with the servant, neither the one nor the other is of
266 any great value (pp. 269).

267 Here it is established that each man's soul -his person -is irreplaceable and that the person is what gives value
268 to life. Life is at the service of the soul, of the person, and as such depends on it. As a result the soul is the root
269 of life, the primary and substantive reality.

270 Conversely in another work of Unamuno entitled The Agony of Christianity [4], he insists on the opposite
271 point of view: The purpose of life is to make a soul, an immortal soul, a soul which is one's own handiwork. For
272 when we die we leave a skeleton to the earth, a soul and a work to history. This is when we have lived, when we
273 have done battle with the life which passes for the life which remains (pp. 25).

274 Again the soul appears as a result, and it is equally identified with work and related to history. What has
275 become of that longing to take shelter in historicism, in the flow of time? It is of interest to pick up one phrase
276 from the extract: the contrast of the life which passes with the life which remains. What does this mean? If
277 we juxtapose this phrase with the expression immortal soul used earlier, we see that Unamuno thinks of the
278 concepts soul and life as united; the immortal soul is that which does not die but lives, and therefore the life
279 which remains is eternal life. The author believes that this is the final meaning Unamuno sets out to achieve
280 in 'Adentro!' where he says: Live day by day in eternity; live the life that remains, everlasting life, eternal life.
281 The expression eternal life unveils the continual struggle between eternity and time. It remains a fundamental
282 question in Unamuno who constantly repeats [4]: Your life passes and you will remain (pp. 25).

283 IV.

284 **8 METHOD OF IRRATIONALISM**

285 Critical reading of Unamuno's method of philosophy leads us to deduce from Unamuno that the cardinal problem
286 which has engendered the seed of philosophy in man ever since man came into being has been the issues of one and
287 many, particulars and universals, known and unknown; the issues of natural and supernatural, life and death,
288 rational and irrational. Ultimately man has been in the continuous quest to Unamuno begins his philosophy
289 with the tool of rationalism prevalent in his time. That is, he uses reason to address the only vital issue of
290 life -immortality of the soul. But he discovers that the power of human reason is weak [5]: I do not know how
291 to express myself when I enter into these hiding-places and dark corners of the life of the spirit, and I foresee
292 that adequate words are going to fail me (pp. 68). Therefore Unamuno's point of departure is a radical lack of
293 confidence in reason, which leads him to consider it incapable of penetrating the mystery of life, and consequently
294 of death, and still of immortality. Again he says [2]: There is no way of proving the immortality of the soul
295 rationally (pp. 79). Indeed, this is an indictment on Unamuno because from the on-set, he has condemned
296 reason as it were, and thus he seems to operate a closed-system which philosophy may not permit. The issue of
297 immortality of the soul is in part a rational conception. Therefore, it left much to be desired if one excludes the
298 rational aspect of the enquiry into the immortality of the human soul.

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300 Consequently Unamuno turns to the opposite extreme and embraces irrationalism as his method of enquiry. For
301 him [2] only the irrational -the non-reason or if you like faith, or even the Gospel (pp. 79), suggests Hume -can
302 express the instinctual nature of man, his quest for immortality while the rational is relegated to the background
303 having little or nothing to offer in the expression. He adds that the rational can never fathom this inexpressible
304 irrational hunger for immortality. To this extent, one may refute Unamuno's opinion owing to the point that
305 only the irrational may not completely explain man's innate thirst for immortality of the soul. Why? The reason
306 is that nature has embedded in man both the irrational and rational aspects of life.

307 Therefore, the author proposes that man in his rationality is irrational, and man in his irrationality is rational.
308 Igbos would say: aka ekpe kw?? aka nri, aka nri akw?? aka ekpe which literary means left hand washes the
309 right hand, and right hand washes the left hand (let each hand compliments the other). Let us explain this in
310 details. On the one hand, man is irrational in his rationality entails that human rationality alone cannot xray
311 all phenomena of life; that human reason cannot all by itself grasp reality as a whole. Even what we call reason
312 knows its limits and cannot go beyond itself [6]:

313 The last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but
314 feeble if it does not see so far as to know this (pp. 267). In other words, reason admits non-reason, rationality
315 irrationality.

316 Unamuno easily accepts that human rationality cannot communicate the whole of reality, thing-in-itself, and
317 not as it appears, but on the contrary, he does not agree that human irrationality cannot explicate the mystery
318 of reality as a whole. This point calls for deliberation because Unamuno emphasizes that human reason cannot
319 plausibly explain the reality of immortality of the soul. For him where human rationality stops, irrationality
320 begins; and to rationally transmit, if possible, the irrational, you must of necessity turn it into rational before
321 one can communicate it. Thus turned, the irrational ceases to be irrational; what one deals with is rational -no
322 longer the irrational. Also Unamuno in [2] reduces all the rationalists' efforts, all their sophistries, to that which
323 gear toward the sustenance of faith in the immortality of the soul (pp. 81).

324 The knowledge and experience of opposites, pros and cons, likes and dislikes, love and hate, unity and diversity
325 prevalent in human life, in each individual person finds expression in the concept of rational and irrational man
326 -the unity-in-diversity existent in the human person is also inferred from Unamuno's philosophy. In view of
327 this, Unamuno's conception of man as the concrete man of flesh and bone, who eats, drinks, feels, thinks, and
328 so on, implicitly concedes man as a composite of rationality and irrationality, instincts. Thus established, one
329 wonders why Unamuno celebrates the requiem of reason and cuddles nonreason, the irrational. From the foregoing
330 discourse, it is obvious that man in his rationality is irrational. So the rationality or reasoning of man at times
331 coincides with the irrationality or non-reason.

332 On the other hand, man is rational in his irrationality. This seems so because via the channel of reason or
333 rationality man acknowledges his non-reason or irrationality. In fact, irrationalism makes genuine sense only via
334 rationalism just as the essence of truth lies in untruth, taking a leaf from Heideggerian philosophy. In other words,
335 the essence of rationalism is made explicit through irrationalism or vice versa. Neither is without the other. A
336 typical example of this is Unamuno himself. He philosophizes with reason; he adopts the path of irrationalism
337 based on rationalism, and with reason he is comfortable with the method of irrationalism. In other words, he
338 is rational in choosing irrationalism as the tool of his philosophy. Choice or decision-making basically involves
339 some kind of reasoning or rationality. Indeed if Unamuno is not rational in his irrationality, he will not be able to
340 transmit his conception of immortality of the soul to us; to communicate to his head (senses/reason) that which
341 is in his heart (feeling/emotion), that which he feels instinctively.

342 If the irrational cum the rational aspects of life are in-built in man, then one may contend that every person is
343 to a certain degree irrational and to a certain other degree rational. And man manifests these in the course of the
344 events of his life. He approaches certain issues with his irrational dimension of life and certain other issues with
345 his rational self, and yet certain other Year issues which may have proved abortive for either of the two aspects

346 of man; he then approaches with the combined efforts of both dimensions. So if the problem of immortality,
347 as Unamuno claims in [2], is the only real vital problem, the problem that strikes at the root of our being, the
348 problem of our individual and personal destiny, of the immortality of the soul (pp. 4), then it needs urgent and
349 full attention of the combination of both irrationalism and rationalism since the two aspects actually constitute
350 the who of man as Unamuno would say.

351 The writer proposes that it is the two aspects in question that can perhaps unveil the clouds around the
352 doctrine of immortality of the soul to make it clearer and better understood by the searching minds. Neither
353 irrationalism nor rationalism can exhaust the concept of immortality of the human soul. Thus it seems that the
354 Igbos of Africa implicitly understand this when they talk about the concept of mmad? b? m?? (person is spirit),
355 or if you like m?? b? mmad? (spirit is person). This does not mean a mere equation of mmad? to m?? or
356 vice versa. It transcends that. It means that a person is both a concrete man, which implies reason, rationality,
357 and equally a spiritual man which denotes irrationality, instincts. By being a spiritual man, we do not mean
358 religious sanctity or holiness or righteousness but it is understood as man having an indwelling spirit, the spark
359 of life urges him on. In other words, a person is rational, logical as well as irrational, instinctual. Thus, the Igbo
360 concept affirms that man has both the rational and irrational aspects of life. As such he uses the synthesis of
361 both rationality and irrationality in proffering solutions to his basic problems of life since each or a part cannot
362 stand for the whole.

363 V.

364 10 DISCUSSION

365 The concept of immortality of the human soul, according to Unamunoan philosophy, is innate in humans.
366 This may have propelled Unamuno's saying that man is made up of the instincts of self-preservation and self-
367 perpetuation, the irrational quest to live immortal life. As a result, man strives towards saving his soul which
368 Unamuno depicts as strife towards the conquest of his own immortality. Again he sees this strive as the tragic
369 sense of life [2], as the starting point of all human philosophy (pp. 36). Consequently, this work examines the
370 concept of immortality of the soul and limits it to the concrete man of flesh and bone of Unamuno [2]: The man,
371 who is born, suffers, thinks, feels, eats, and although he does not want to die, diesthe man who is an end in himself,
372 and not merely a means (pp. 16). The man built with the instincts of selfpreservation and self-perpetuation,
373 yearns for the immortality of his soul. So man's desire not to die but to live immortally or eternally enables him
374 to project himself to that which is beyond him, God. As such religion is born. It is therefore in the framework
375 of religion that Unamuno bases his understanding of immortality of the human soul. Hence he talks about faith,
376 feelings, instincts, and irrationality, and not reason, logical rules, rationality. For him [2], [5] only the former can
377 en-route the question of immortality while the latter cannot express the inexpressible, the intransmissible (pp.
378 126), the hidingplaces and dark corners of the life of the spirit (pp. 68).

379 Moreover we see in Unamuno the struggle between reason and life (faith), between rationality and irrationality,
380 and the battle field is man. The man whom he says is inclined towards irrationality than rationality; the concrete
381 man who is instinct-packed, who is emotional. Thus Unamuno in [2] makes a distinction between man and other
382 animals when he argues that he has seen animals reason (think or meditate) than laugh or cry: Man is said to be
383 a reasoning animal. I do not know why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal. Perhaps that
384 which differentiates him from other animals is feeling rather than reason. More often I have seen a cat reason
385 than laugh or weep. Perhaps it weeps or laughs inwardly (pp. 3). Unamuno protects his proposal from attacks
386 when he concludes that probably these animals cry or laugh internally -who knows! Unamuno was imbued with
387 the irrationalism. He believed that reason does not help us to know life; that when trying to apprehend life in
388 fixed and rigid concepts, reason robs it of its fluidity within time and kills it. This conviction caused Unamuno [2]
389 to look away from reason and turn toward the imagination, which he called the most substantial faculty (pp. 79).
390 He concludes that to be immortal is to be eternal, to be everlasting, to live forever, and never to die. Therefore
391 immortality in his thinking is seen as the ability of the soul to be ever aglow, to remain immortally eternal and
392 never to die.

393 Furthermore, we critically evaluate Unamuno's understanding of immortality of the soul which has the concrete
394 man as its point of departure. We appreciate his reconstruction of man (generic man), his death and his desire
395 not to die utterly, but to live immortally. Also we apply it to the African Worldview. Unamuno's discussion of the
396 question of the relation between the person who lives and life of that person denotes some kind of contradiction
397 [7]; a contradiction between time and eternity (pp. 8), as regards the human person who hungers for immortality.
398 Neither Unamuno nor the author is able to reconcile the contradiction. Thus, it remains a philosophical problem
399 for further investigations.

400 Equally this contradiction informs a chain of discrepancies deciphered in Unamuno's thoughts. In [8], Unamuno
401 sees the soul as the root of life, the primary and substantive reality; as the lord and master of life (pp. 391). On
402 the contrary, in [4] Unamuno perceives the soul as one's own handiwork, a product of A Year man; and the aim
403 of life is to make a soul, an immortal soul (pp. 25). Again, Unamuno [9] thinks of the concepts soul and life as
404 united (pp. 19), and as being in constant combat. This implicitly resuscitates the question of eternity and time
405 [7].

406 Moreover we criticize Unamuno for inclining to the method of irrationalism as the only route to the problem
407 of immortality. This seems to be a closedsystem which philosophy does not entertain, and so it becomes an

10 DISCUSSION

408 indictment on Unamunoan philosophy. Also his condemnation of rationalism is not justified. Since Unamuno [2]
409 holds that the human person who thirsts for immortality of his soul has both the rational and irrational aspects
410 of life, and that the problem of immortality is the only real vital problem, the problem that strikes at the root of
411 our being (pp. 4), then the human person must of necessity give his full self, all his attentions both rationality
412 and irrationality, reason (senses) and faith (instincts) to solving this one cardinal problem of life.

413 Therefore, this paper proposes a synthesis of rationalism and irrationalism as a solution in explaining the
414 concept in question. This proposal gives more rooms for the different dimensions of interpretations one can offer
415 to the problem of immortality of the soul. In other words, the proposal is all-embracing, allencompassing. All in
416 all, Unamuno deserves our compliments for he has at least set the ball of immortality of the human soul rolling,
417 and invites the world to read him. Indeed, Unamuno has made an indelible mark; he has immortalized himself
in the history of philosophy. ^{1 2 3}



Figure 1:

418

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³Human Existential Desire for Immortality in Unamuno's Perspective

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