

The God of Miguel de Unamuno

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Many critics who have studied Unamuno's God-concept have concluded that he rejected the doctrine of pantheism, without stopping to examine the contradiction that this implies, since his description of God as the consciousness of the universe is basically pantheistic.¹ Pantheism is the doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is identical to God. Since the Greeks developed a rational philosophy which was inherently dualistic, most Western thinkers have conceived of the universe as separate from God; however, a pantheistic concept has appeared from time to time. Although the Catholic Church has condemned this view, some theologians have spoken of the unity of God and the universe, and the claim has also been made that certain biblical passages offer a pantheistic description of God.²

This same lack of precision with regard to pantheism appears in the work of Miguel de Unamuno. For instance, we will see that on numerous occasions he condemns pantheism as a form of atheism, and in a letter to Pedro Jiménez Ilundáin he has stated emphatically: "No soy ateo ni panteísta."³ However, in a passage from the *Diario íntimo* written in 1902, Unamuno describes the universe in pantheistic terms: "el Yo colectivo, el Yo Universo, el Universo personalizado, es Dios" (212). Then, in *Del sentimiento trágico* he writes: "en uno se dan el Universo y Dios"(XVI, 279)⁴ and he later refers to "la vision de Dios, es decir, el Universo mismo"(361), which shows that for him God and the universe are one.

The lack of agreement, both in the policies of the Church as well as in the thought of Unamuno, was perhaps caused by the fact that there have been several different forms of pantheism. For instance, when the identification of God with the universe is taken literally, this means that God is immediately present, or immanent, in all things; however, some pantheists have felt that God also transcends the existing universe. A well-known example of the view that God is identical to the universe is seen in the philosophy of Spinoza, whose rational approach to the

question of being led him to formulate the concept of an impersonal Deity, together with the view that individual identity, free will, and personal immortality are negated by the complete fusion of all beings with the divine whole. On the other hand, Karl C. F. Krause took a different approach to God, which he called "pantheism." Pantheism is not based on the complete identification of God with the universe, but rather on the notion that the world is "in God," without exhausting the infinite potential for being that is inherent in the divine nature. This view implies that God is both immanent and transcendent, and it corresponds to the biblical passages where St. Paul states that God is "above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians IV, 6), and "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts XVII, 28).⁵

In what follows, I will show that an understanding of the difference between pantheism and pantheism will help us explain the contradictions which we have found in the writings of Miguel de Unamuno. As we examine Unamuno's religious works, it is the pantheistic concept of God which we will encounter, rather than the limited, Spinozian view that he has vigorously rejected. We will also see that his God-concept remains essentially the same from the point at which he composed the *Diario íntimo* during his religious crisis of 1897, to the latter part of his life after his return from political exile in France in 1930. Leaving aside for the moment the question of his belief in God, I will first look at the reasons for Unamuno's negative attitude toward pantheism, and then I will examine some of the important aspects of his pantheistic view. Finally, I will try to show how Unamuno's God-concept relates to his hopes for the future of humanity.

I. The Rejection of Pantheism

As Unamuno discusses pantheism, it becomes clear that there are two major reasons why he cannot accept it. The first is his steadfast rejection of the rational approach to God which he associates with pantheism,

and the second is the loss of personal identity which results from the fusion of the universe with God. Both of these preoccupations were expressed in the *Diario íntimo* which was written during the crisis of 1897 when Unamuno's dissatisfaction with Spanish Catholicism led him to explore other forms of European thought, including the pantheistic writings of Büchner, Haeckel and, of course, Spinoza. For a time, he was strongly attracted to pantheism, even as he realized the negative implications of this way of thinking: "me ocurre la satánica idea de que por este camino voy a acabar por desear perderme en Dios, aniquilarme con aniquilamiento panteístico" (*Diario*, 106-07). And in spite of the fact that the Church has declared that God's existence has been rationally proved, one of the most important aspects of Unamuno's religious thought is the conviction that all attempts to approach God through the use of reason are counterproductive, since it gives us only an empty idea---"el Dios nada a que el panteísmo conduce"---rather than the living God who is present in our being (*Diario*, 15).

Some sixteen years later in *Del sentimiento trágico* Unamuno has maintained his conviction that pantheism leads to a rational definition of the divinity in which all individuality is negated. God can be experienced on a personal basis in moments of spiritual anguish (XVI, 296), but His being can never be defined, nor can it be made to fit within the limits of our rational understanding: "Los atributos del Dios vivo, del Padre de Cristo, hay deducirlos de su revelación histórica y en la conciencia de cada uno de los creyentes cristianos, y no de razonamientos metafísicos que solo llevan al Dios-Nada...al Dios racional o panteístico, al Dios ateo, en fin, a la Divinidad despersonalizada"(XVI,295). For Unamuno the concept of a living God to whom he can relate on a personal level is the only one which satisfies his desire for immortality, and that is why he rejects the philosophy of Spinoza "cuyo panteísmo es el más lógico, el más racional"(XVI, 216).

In spite of his strong rejection of pantheism in its most rational form, Unamuno has shown a positive attitude toward a non-rational concept of the unity of all being. For instance, in the *Diario íntimo* he refers to the passage from Acts which was quoted earlier: "A los atenienses fue a los que dijo S. Pablo que vivimos

y nos movemos y somos en Dios... Fue a los atenienses a (sic) S. Pablo a declararles ese misterio panteísta" (197). Not only does Unamuno show his acceptance of "ese misterio panteísta," but he also acknowledges the presence of a pantheistic element in the Bible. In *Del sentimiento trágico* he states that if by "pantheism" one means to express the concept that "todo y cada cosa es Dios," he cannot accept it, but he is willing to admit that "todo es divino"(XVI, 286). Then, in an article entitled "Recuerdos entre montañas," Unamuno says that since he was a child he has sensed the presence of God within the world of nature:

Reccuerdo que en aquellas mis soñaciones de mocedad, cuando me tendía bajo un árbol en la falda de Pagazarri, a hacerme el mundo que tenía delante, llegué a fingirme ... que la conciencia me venía de la tierra, que era yo como una planta que por sus sutiles raíces recibía del suelo sus soñaciones. Y es desde entonces desde cuando me persigue la vieja idea, la idea multisecular, de que nuestra Tierra es también un grande animal que piensa y sueña y crea y espera, que hay, en el sentido más estricto, un Alma del Universo, y que ese Alma es Dios. (Aquí un pedante dogmático exclamaría: ¡Panteísmo puro! ¡Bueno!) [X, 331-32].

When he realizes that his vision---the earth as a living organism of which the soul is God---could be classified as pantheism, he admits that this is true.⁶ In this important description of his God-concept, which Unamuno has accepted since he was very young, we have the key to the philosophy of his mature years. Here we see the origin of his view that God is the consciousness of the universe, which I will examine in the latter part of this study. But first we must look at the idea that everything exists in God.

II. The World in God

Julián Marías is typical of those who have concluded that, as he puts it, "Unamuno rechazó todo panteísmo"(197), and we have seen that in one sense this is true. However, this view is incomplete since, as I have shown, it does not take into account the pantheistic, or panentheistic, element which Unamuno's thought retained, in spite of his negative

attitude toward those who identify the universe with God. Although he does not make a detailed study of this aspect of Unamuno's writing, Miguel Oromí has at least described its presence more completely. First he agrees with Marías: "Es verdad también que se opone enérgicamente a todo panteísmo..." But after he has recognized Unamuno's rejection of all rational theology, Oromí goes on to say that "no podemos menos de creer que toda su concepción del mundo espiritual se mueve dentro de un pan-enteísmo no racional, sino sentimental o místico..." And finally, Oromí compares Unamuno's panentheism to that of Krause: "Es la misma conclusion a que llegaron los krausistas españoles, cuyo influjo se deja sentir muchas veces, y creemos ser la conclusion obligada de todos los sistemas que por el sentimiento o la intuición sentimental quieren llegarse a Dios" (182-83).

Therefore, before we go on to examine some of the details of Unamuno's non-rational panentheism, let us take a brief look at the God-concept of Spanish Krausism, as it is formulated by Julián Sanz del Río in *Ideal de la humanidad para la vida*.

A. *Krausist Panentheism*. Karl Christian Frederick Krause was born in 1781 and died in 1832. After studying in Jena with Fichte and Schelling, Krause joined Hegel and the other idealistic philosophers who followed and then modified the ideas of Kant. Like most German philosophers of the 19th century, his ideas had a strong pantheistic element, but he differed from his contemporaries in that he placed a stronger emphasis on the transcendence of God, thus eliminating some of the negative aspects of Spinozian pantheism. After his ideas were brought to Spain by Julián Sanz del Río, they became popular among Spanish intellectuals and later came to constitute the unofficial philosophy of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza established by Francisco Giner de los Ríos. Although Spanish Krausism was a broadly based doctrine which dealt with many problems of contemporary society, it was primarily a religious philosophy whose purpose was to create a state of universal harmony with all things in God. In a free translation of Krause's ideas into Spanish, Sanz defines God as Absolute Being "fuera del cual nada es ni tiene realidad, y en el cual son esenciados y fundamentados todos los seres finitos" (243). Then, in words which are similar to those of Paul quoted earlier, Sanz goes on to say that the most important

aspect of this view of God is "la idea de Dios como Dios y Ser Supremo sobre el mundo, y fundamento de la vida, en quien toda vida finita tiene su fuente y su plenitud última" (248). Human history is viewed as a journey to God which passes through three different "Ages," or stages of development. The first is the childhood of the race, when harmony with God existed because human beings did not yet possess the ability to choose for themselves. The second Age, through which humanity is passing at the present time, is a period of self-awareness and loss of contact with the divine source. The third Age which will occur at some time in the future is a time when the race will rejoin God with a greater awareness of its participation in the divine process; as Sanz puts it: "Nuestra humanidad no está, pues, todavía reunida en un todo orgánico en sí y en sus sociedades interiores; todavía no vive en la historia como una familia de hijos de Dios, como una patria terrena; pero está llamado a ello y lo alcanzará algún día" (76-77). All of the suffering and the mistakes of the past will act as lessons that will eventually teach humanity to act in harmony with God. At that time all beings will be resurrected as part of the divine family: "Florecerá entonces la tercera edad humana; habrá pasado de acá a allá largos tiempos; nosotros los hijos de hoy, habremos dejado esta vida natural; pero reviviremos en el espíritu y el corazón de aquella humanidad venidera, que nos recibirá a todos en la plenitud de su vida, bajo Dios y Dios mediante" (289).

B. *Unamuno's Panentheism*. In spite of the fact that on several occasions Unamuno refers to the oneness of God and the universe, he also makes it clear that in his view the universe is not identical with God, nor does it exhaust the divine potential, since everything has its being *in God*.

One of the earliest expressions of Unamuno's pantheistic vision is found in his essay "Nicodemo el fariseo," written in 1899, where he describes the history of our divine origin. In order to be born as creatures of flesh and blood, we first had to experience death, that is, a loss of contact with the eternal, heavenly spirit from which we came. Then, when our undeveloped spirit entered the material world, it was covered with layer after layer of impurities that hid the divine aspect of our immortal soul: "nuestro núcleo eterno." In spite of this apparent separation, we are assured that the essential unity of all things in God has not been destroyed: "Mas aun así

y todo comunicanse las eternas honduras de nuestra alma, con la hondura eternal de la creación que nos rodea, con Dios que habita en todo y todo lo vivifica, con Dios en quien como en mar común, somos, nos movemos y vivimos: (III, 133-34). Here, as in the writings of Paul and in Krausism, we have both the fundamental aspects of panentheism: God is immanent---“Dios que habita en todo y todo lo vivifica”---and He is also transcendent since we are part of a larger body of being which is God---“Dios, en quien como en mar común, somos, nos movemos y vivimos.”

This view of God remains constant years later in *Del sentimiento trágico* when Unamuno compares our life in God to that of a person who without realizing it is immersed in the atmosphere of the planet (XVI, 280). Later, he speaks about the direct experience of God when the divine presence is felt during moments of spiritual anguish, and this leads him to conclude that God can only be experienced on a personal level. This non-rational approach to God brings Unamuno face to face once again with the “misterio panteísta” that he found in the writings of Paul; as he expresses it, “la revelación sentimental e imaginativa, por amor, por fe, por obra de personalización de esa Conciencia Suprema, es la que nos lleva a creer en el Dios vivo. Y este Dios vivo, tu Dios, nuestro Dios, está en mí, está en ti, vive en nosotros, y nosotros vivimos, nos movemos y somos en Él” (XVI, 304-05).

C. God is Both Immanent and Transcendent. We have seen that Unamuno rejects the Spinozian concept of the strict identification of God with the universe, and his view that the universe has its being “in God” implies that, like the Krausists, he conceives of God as both immanent and transcendent.⁷ On several occasions he states this very clearly; for example, thinking of Christ’s words “I am the vine and you are the branches” (John XV, 5), in the *Diario íntimo* he writes: “Somos los cristianos miembros místicos de Él, que es una realidad fuera de nosotros, sarmientos de Cristo, que la vid” (101), which indicates that although Christ is the foundation of humanity, He also transcends it. In *Del sentimiento trágico* Unamuno speaks of God as an extension of our consciousness; however, this does not mean that God’s awareness is limited to that of man. Since he does not accept the strict identification of God and the universe nor the impersonal immortality which this implies, he conceives of a God who exists independently from the

Universe: “creemos que la persona divina vive y es independientemente del universo, que es su estado de conciencia *ad extra*...” (XVI, 277-78).⁸ He goes on to say that the only way to understand Paul’s “misterio panteísta” is to imagine that God’s consciousness is somehow different from the consciousness of those beings who exist in Him, and then he concludes: “Sólo así se comprende lo de que en Dios seamos, nos movamos y vivamos” (XVI, 281).

We have seen Unamuno’s rejection of the strictly rational form of pantheism, as well as his affirmation of a non-rational panentheism. In the remaining portions of this study, I will examine Unamuno’s view that all consciousness is moving toward God, together with his hope for the final divinization of humanity.

III. The Evolution of Consciousness

Of those critics who have recognized the pantheistic elements of Unamuno’s God-concept, Antonio Regalado García is the only one to comment on the similarity of his thought with that of the Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Referring to a speech which Unamuno gave in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Darwin, Regalado García has observed that “las analogías entre el pensamiento de Unamuno y el de Teilhard de Chardin, que aquí nos limitamos a apuntar, merecen un detenido análisis” (127). The most important aspect of this similarity is that both Unamuno and Teilhard de Chardin feel that consciousness is the basic substance of the universe and that the totality of consciousness is God. As we shall see, both also believe that consciousness is evolving so that at some point in the distant future the universe will be in complete harmony with God, or as Paul has put it in his first letter to the Corinthians (XV, 28), so that “God may be all in all.”

A. The God-concept of Teilhard de Chardin. In his book, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard says that the existence of consciousness proves that the universe itself is conscious, and he also stresses that all forms of material existence must have some type of consciousness within them.⁹ As life becomes more and more complex, the amount of consciousness in the world is increasing so that above and beyond the realm of plant and animal life (the biosphere) a new dimension of thought has developed, which he refers to as the “noosphere.” At present we are experiencing

an intensification of the noosphere which will eventually result in the creation of a supreme state of consciousness that Teilhard calls "Omega." He feels, however, that no matter how highly developed or how vast this new universal consciousness becomes, it is still a "collective agglomeration of individual minds." Love is the energy which preserves this personal focus, as it unites increasing numbers of conscious individuals into one whole.

At some point in the future, the convergent movement of consciousness will become so centered that it will be possible to leave behind the realm of material existence. This will be the "end of the world," but it will also be the spiritual fulfillment of the earth, a new "pantheism," which Teilhard compares to Paul's vision of Christ as the divine energy from which all things are made:

Christ, principal of universal vitality---put himself in the position (maintained ever since) to subdue under himself, to purify, to direct and superanimate the general ascent of consciousness into which he inserted himself.... And when he has gathered everything together and transformed everything, he will close in upon himself and his conquests, thereby rejoining, in a final gesture, the divine focus he has never left. Then, as St. Paul tells us, *God shall be all in all*. This is indeed a superior form of 'pantheism' without a trace of the poison of adulteration or annihilation: the expectation of perfect unity, steeped in which each element will reach its consummation at the same time as the universe. The universe fulfilling itself in a synthesis of centers in perfect conformity with the laws of union. God, Center of centers (249).

As we return to our study of Unamuno it is interesting to note in passing that Antonio Machado also thought of consciousness as the universal substance (315). Likewise, in a letter to Unamuno he implies that the purpose of human existence is to create more consciousness: "todos nuestros esfuerzos deben tender hacia la luz, hacia la conciencia."¹⁰

B. *God is Universal Consciousness*. In a letter to Pedro Jiménez Ilundáin, written in 1906. Unamuno declares: "Cada día creo más en un Dios personal, conciencia del Universo, ordenador de todo" (*El drama religioso*, 407). He also refers to God as universal consciousness in *La vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*, which was published in 1904; however, the first work which can actually be compared to Teilhard's ideas about the evolution of consciousness

is the "Discurso en el homenaje a Darwin" given at the University of Valencia in 1909. In this speech Unamuno declares: "El fin del progreso social es crear la conciencia colectiva social, dentro de la cual viven las conciencias individuales; es acaso hacer la conciencia universal, cósmica" (VII, 804).

Like Teilhard de Chardin, Unamuno discusses the evolution of consciousness in biblical terms. First, he relates it to the opening verses of the Gospel of John: "En el principio era el verbo, la palabra, es decir la conciencia, y por ella fue hecho todo. A la conciencia tiende la evolución de los seres humanos...." Then, after quoting I Corinthians XV, 28 where Paul foresees that one day God will be "all in all," Unamuno remarks: "¿No veis aquí la espléndida visión de un universo, que por la conciencia vuelve a Dios, a la Conciencia universal infinita y eterna, en quien somos, nos movemos y vivimos?" (VII, 808). Similar to the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, Unamuno conceives of a progression of consciousness that stretches from the realm of matter all the way to the universal consciousness which is God. Thus it is that through the expansion of consciousness---the divine potential that all being carries within itself---God's Kingdom will ultimately come on earth.

Several years later, Unamuno continues to develop these ideas in his book, *Del sentimiento trágico*. In a passage that bears a remarkable similarity to the theory of the collective unconscious expounded by Carl Jung, Unamuno gives us a definition of God as the infinite and eternal consciousness of the universe:

Y es que sentimos a Dios, más bien que como una conciencia humana, como la conciencia misma del linaje humano todo, pasado, presente y futuro, como la conciencia colectiva de todo el linaje, y aún más, como la conciencia total e infinita que abarca y sostiene las conciencias todas, infrahumanas, humanas y acaso sobre-humanas. La divinidad que hay en todo, desde la más baja, es decir, desde la menos conciente forma viva hasta la más alta, pasando por nuestra conciencia humana, la sentimos personalizada, conciente de sí misma, en Dios" (XVI, 303/)

And since the divine spirit is the basic substance of the universe, even so-called inanimate matter has within it the seeds of consciousness, a germ of awareness which is part the Whole. All forms of being---human beings, animals, plants and even rocks which are also "alive"---have at least a rudimentary consciousness that strives to reach a higher level:

La conciencia tiende a ser más conciencia cada vez, a concientizarse, a tener plena conciencia de toda ella misma, de su contenido todo. En las profundidades de nuestro propio cuerpo, en los animales, en las plantas, en las rocas, en todo lo vivo, en el Universo todo, hemos de creer con la fe, enseñe lo que nos enseñare la razón, que hay un espíritu que lucha por conocerse, por cobrar conciencia de sí...y como sólo puede lograrlo mediante el cuerpo, mediante la materia, la crea y de ella se sirve a la vez que de ella queda preso (XVI, 338).

Unamuno feels that God has created matter in order to grow through it into a more complex form of awareness; through the creation of limited, material forms, individuality is possible, and consciousness has a medium in which to grow. Human personality, and all other forms of being, are voluntary limitations that God has placed on Himself. The fact that God has chosen to exist within the confines of matter has two important consequences: it means that in a limited way the divine spirit can be affected by our efforts; and it also means that we must do everything in our power to bring about an expansion of consciousness, so that the limits of material existence may some day be overcome.

What we have seen here shows that Unamuno thinks it possible that this time of liberation will some day come to pass. He refers to this moment when all being will once again be in harmony with the divine Source, as the "apocatastasis." Although this specific term is not used until *Del sentimiento trágico*, we will see that the idea of a final return to God is present from the beginning.

IV. The Ultimate Reunion With God

The theory of the apocatastasis was developed by Origen in his *De Principiis*. Its main feature is the ultimate salvation of all creatures, up to and including the devil, and it is also based on the concept that all punishment has an educative purpose and therefore is not eternal. We will see that the apocatastasis is Unamuno's vision of the final goal for life on this planet. In addition to the fact that it is based on Paul's expectation of an ultimate reunion with God, it also parallels Krause's prediction for the Third Age, as well as the concept of Omega discussed by Teilhard de Chardin.

A. *The Theory of Universal Pardon*. It is well known that Unamuno struggled throughout his life

with the question of life after death—is the soul plunged into nothingness with the death of the body, or does the unique configuration of energy which is our personal identity remain as part of the divine consciousness? This is a question for which reason has no definitive answer, but in spite of his doubts Unamuno never ceased to hope for survival. Whatever his ultimate belief may have been, one of his strongest convictions, judging by the vehemence with which it is repeated, is that there is no such thing as eternal damnation. In the *Diario íntimo* he expresses the view that all souls will eventually be saved, and in *La vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* he explains that, although punishment will be given to those who deserve it, the purely theological concept that a soul must suffer for eternity does not agree with Christianity as he understands it. Just as God has given us free will, he would never condemn us to an eternal captivity. Then, some ten years later, in *Del sentimiento trágico*, Unamuno criticizes the Catholic theologians who have tried to find a rational justification for the concept of a punishment that lasts forever, and he repeats Origen's claim that all souls will be saved: "¿No es que al cabo se salvan todos, incluso Caín y Judas, y Satanás mismo, como desarrollando la apocatástasis pauliana quería Orígenes?" (XVI, 370). He goes on to state that the doctrine of eternal damnation is not justifiable in ethical terms, and he insists that a firm belief in our ultimate salvation, and not the fear of punishment, is what will make us strive to be better persons.

B. *The Loss of Personal Identity*. The problem that always arises when one considers the possibility of union with God is the loss of personal identity. For Buddhism, the concept of an individual soul is an illusion which must be overcome before one can enter the bliss of nirvana. Since Spinoza, many Western thinkers have believed in an impersonal immortality where the soul is like a drop of water that falls back into the ocean---although its substance remains as part of the whole, it ceases to exist as an individual entity. On the other hand, the panentheistic view of God preserves the concept of individual identity. Since the universe is not the totality of God, part of the divine potential is unmanifested. Therefore, all conscious entities are free to fashion their unique being from the unmanifested portion of the Whole. This concept of "multiplicity in unity" permits individual beings to retain their identity while still being part of God.

Teilhard de Chardin expresses this point of view when he insists that all beings will achieve their true individuality when they unite with God in Omega: as he puts it: "the concentration of a conscious universe would be unthinkable if it did not reassemble in itself all consciousness as well as all the conscious; each particular consciousness remaining conscious of itself at the end of the operation. . . becoming still more itself and thus more clearly distinct from the others the closer it gets to Omega" (261-62). Likewise, Sanz del Río has declared that no finite being will be lost in the final reunion with God, but will always remain as part of the Creator (270-71).

Unamuno mentions this idea of self-fulfillment in God on several occasions---in the *Diario* he states: "cuánto más vivas en Dios más en ti mismo vivirás" (176)---but perhaps the clearest explanation of this concept is found in *Del sentimiento trágico* where he discusses the experience of a mystical encounter with the divinity. Since he feels that the greatest pleasure of man is to acquire and to increase consciousness, Unamuno cannot accept the idea of loss of identity in God. In order to show that this is not what happens, he mentions the case of St. Teresa: "Si se lee con cuidado a nuestra mística doctora, se verá que nunca queda fuera del elemento sensitivo, el del deleite, es decir, el de la propia conciencia. Se deja el alma absorber de Dios para absorberlo, para cobrar conciencia de su propia divinidad" (XVI, 354). Rather than a loss of identity, what is felt during the mystical experience is an intensified awareness of the true self and its ongoing relation with God: "Y acaso el goce de la visión beatífica sea, no precisamente el de la contemplación de la Verdad suma, entera y toda, que a esto no resistiría el alma, sino el de un continuo descubrimiento de ella, el de un incesante aprender mediante un esfuerzo que mantenga siempre prolongado a nuestro modo natural de sentir" (XVI, 355). Here we have the key to Unamuno's understanding of the apocatastasis: a never-ending approach to God which permits us to retain our own "modo natural de sentir," that is, the awareness of our own individuality.

C. *An Endless Approach To God*. Like most of the ideas discussed so far, that of an endless approach to God is always present in Unamuno's religious thought. Since the ideas that I will examine are the very essence of his hope for the future of humanity, and since the vociferous debate about his belief, or

lack of belief, in God has sometimes caused his words to be overlooked, I will quote rather extensively.

Once Unamuno has rejected eternal damnation in favor of the concept that all souls will be saved, he tries to imagine how this process will occur, and in the *Diario íntimo* he mentions for the first time the idea of an on-going process of self-improvement:

He dado en imaginar que la gloria y la felicidad de los bienaventurados es creciente, que su vida consiste en un continuo aumento de felicidad y de divinización, que van divinizándose cada vez más, acercándose cada día más a Dios por eternidad de eternidades, siendo Dios su límite inasequible. Ese deseo de Dios, a quien se acercan sin cesar. es el acicate de su vida eterna... Así crece la bienaventuranza de todos los bienaventurados tendiendo a Dios, a su divinización, pero crece más la de los más elevados en goce. Y es la misma la gloria final de todos (162-63).

God is never reached in any final way, in the same sense that is impossible for the part to encompass the whole, and also in the sense that time has no end for a being who is grounded in eternity. The fact that the final union with God is forever out of reach is not a negative situation. On the contrary; it means that the self is never overwhelmed by the divine presence, and it provides an endless incentive for growth, that is, for the expansion of consciousness.

In *La vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* these ideas from the *Diario* are explained even more clearly, as Unamuno describes his vision of the final goal of life:

Esa visión habrá de ser un trabajo, una continua y nunca acabadera conquista de la Verdad Suprema e Infinita, un hundirse y chapuzarse cada vez más en los abismos sin fondo de la Vida Eterna. Unos irán en ese glorioso hundimiento más de prisa que otros y ganando más hondura y más gozo que ellos, pero todos irán hundiéndose sin fin ni acabamiento. Si todos vamos al infinito, si todos vamos "infinitándonos," nuestra diferencia estribará en marchar unos más de prisa y otros más despacio, en creer éstos en mayor medida que aquéllos, pero todos avanzando y creciendo siempre y acercando todos al término inasequible, al que ninguno ha de llegar jamás. Y es el consuelo y la dicha de cada uno el saber que llegará alguna vez adonde llegó otro cualquiera, y ninguno a parada de última queda. Y es mejor el no llegar a ella, a quietud, pues si el que ve a Dios, según las Escrituras, se muere, el que alcanza por entero la Verdad Suprema queda absorbido en ella y deja de ser (IV, 276).

Although some souls will learn more rapidly than others, all will have the same chance to progress, and the fact that union with God is never achieved in an absolute sense means once again that personal identity is never lost.

It is in *Del sentimiento trágico* that Unamuno begins to use the term “apocatástasis” to refer to the idea of a universal approach to God. First, he mentions the fact that there is a similarity between the theory taken from physics---that the universe is slowly moving toward a point of perfect stability and homogeneity---and the Pauline view that all beings will one day be in harmony with God. This causes him to wonder if the physical death of the universe may not also be the moment of spiritual liberation. Then, he gives us his third description of an endless approach to God:

¿No será más bien eso de la apocatástasis, de la vuelta de todos a Dios, un término ideal a que sin cesar nos acercamos sin haber de llegar a él, y unos a más ligera marcha que otros? ¿No será, digo, que todas las almas crezcan sin cesar, unas en mayor proporción que otras, pero habiendo todas de pasar alguna vez por un mismo grado cualquiera de crecimiento, y sin llegar nunca ... a Dios, a quien de continuo se acercan? ¿No es la eterna felicidad una eterna esperanza, con su núcleo eterno de pesar para que la dicha no se suma en la nada? (XVI, 370).

If it were possible to arrive at a state of perfection in God, there would be nothing further to accomplish and existence would be static. Therefore, Unamuno concludes that there will always be a state of tension between what is, and what is possible, and that pain will always exist to promote further expansion and creativity. Some who discuss the idea of an endless approach to God have felt that it involves the process of reincarnation, and they feel that the soul must exercise its free will (subject to the law of karma, or compensation) in many different lifetimes, until it finally learns enough to advance to a higher level. If Unamuno ever seriously considered the possibility of reincarnation, he does not say so openly;¹¹ rather, he views the need for self improvement in more orthodox terms as an “eternal Purgatory” in which the soul must endlessly labor to perfect itself. This is Unamuno’s *desire*, his hope for the future, which he has expressed since the moment of his earliest religious writing:

Y el alma, mi alma al menos, anhela [un] eterno acercarse sin llegar nunca, inacabable anhelo, eterna esperanza que

eternamente se renueva sin acabarse del todo nunca. Y con ello un eterno carecer de algo y un dolor eterno. Un dolor, una pena, gracias a la cual se crece sin cesar en conciencia y en anhelo... Un eterno Purgatorio, pues, más que una Gloria; una ascensión eterna (XVI, 381).

Since the identity of each individual will be preserved, the process of unification with God will result in the formation of a collective being---Krause referred to it as a “divine family” while Teilhard de Chardin called it “an organic super-aggregation of souls”---in which the individual is increasingly aware of his or her unique relation to the divine Source. For this reason, the salvation of each human being ultimately depends on the salvation of humanity as a whole. This is why Teilhard has stated that “no evolutionary future awaits man except in association with all other men,” (246), and Unamuno agrees that “el fin del hombre es la humanidad” (VI, 185).

D. *The Divinization of Humanity*. Unamuno has defined God as “el hombre proyectado al infinito,” and he does not accept the idea that it is wrong to think of God in human terms. Although He is more than the totality of human consciousness, the fact is that “la visión de Dios brotó en la conciencia humana y es forzoso que tenga forma antropomórfica” (VII 806), This is undoubtedly what Unamuno has in mind when he views the final purpose of the universe as the creation of a human society under Christ:

El íntimo anhelo cristiano, desde San Pablo, ha sido dar finalidad humana o sea, divina, al Universo, salvar la conciencia humana, o sea salvarla haciendo una persona de la humanidad toda. A ello responde la anacefaleosis, la recapitulación de todo, todo lo de la tierra y el cielo, lo visible y lo invisible, en Cristo, y la apocatástasis, la vuelta de todo a Dios, a la Conciencia, para que Dios sea todo en todo. Y ser Dios todo en todo, ¿no es acaso que cobre todo conciencia y resucite en ésta todo lo que pasó, y se eternice todo cuanto en el tiempo fue? Y entre ello, todas las conciencias individuales, las que han sido, las que son y las que serán, tal como se dieron, se dan y se darán, en sociedad y solidaridad (XVI, 378-79).

Here we have his conception of the purpose of life as well as the solution to his preoccupation with the problem of life after death; all souls (past, present, and future) will some day be part of a divine society. This makes it clear that he sees the perfection of humanity as the only way to reach the highest goal of all. In the closing remarks of his homage to Darwin, he reverses

a traditional ecclesiastical position in order to make a statement of even deeper religious significance: "Dentro de muy pocos días la Iglesia nos dirá: 'Acuérdate, hombre, de que eres polvo y has de volver al polvo.' Pues yo, para concluir, os digo: Acuérdate, polvo, de que eres hombre y de que por la humanidad has de volver a Dios, puesto que a Dios llevas en el alma" (VII, 809).

In order to be in harmony with the divine purpose, as Unamuno sees it, we must labor to expand our consciousness and, as he has always done, we must also try to stimulate a higher level of awareness in others. This means that Unamuno's God-concept carries with it a model for living, a practical morality which can guide our actions, as it helps to move the total evolutionary process closer to God; as he puts it:

"Sed perfectos como vuestro Padre celestial lo es," se nos dijo... Y ser perfecto es serlo todo, es ser yo y ser todos los hombres, es ser humanidad, es ser universo. Y no hay otro camino para ser todo lo demás, sino darse a todo, y cuando todo sea todo, todo será de cada uno de nosotros. La apocatástasis es más que un ensueño místico: es una norma de acción, es un faro de altas hazañas (XVI, 405).

* * * * *

We have seen that Unamuno conceives of God as the universal consciousness in which all things have their being and that he views life as a never-ending struggle to raise the vibratory level of material existence until it reaches the same frequency as the higher dimensions of God's being. When he has finished expounding his theory that all souls will one day be reunited with God, Unamuno's rational self tells him that there is no proof that this is real. However, he refuses to give in to this negative aspect of reason, and when his efforts to find proof come up short, he tells us that this is his "myth," his best non-rational attempt to find an explanation that gives meaning and purpose to life. And if reason is not satisfied, who is to say that this myth does not contain a portion of truth which is beyond the scope of rational thought: "¿Es que el ensueño y el mito no son acaso revelaciones de una verdad inefable, de una verdad irracional, de una verdad que no puede probarse?" (XVI, 382).

More than thirty years after he first expressed these ideas in the *Diario íntimo*, Unamuno has not changed his way of thinking, and he shows us that, in the midst of the frustrations produced by his encounter with

Spanish politics after his return from exile in France, he can still find satisfaction in the idea that our society will someday be spiritualized by our re-encounter with the divine spirit. In an article entitled "Contemplando el diplodoco,"¹² published in 1931, Unamuno asks why it could be that God created the world for man? Then, paraphrasing the words of St. Paul,---"¿No sabéis que sois el templo de Dios, y que el Espíritu de Dios mora en vosotros?" (I Corinthians III, 16)---he responds:

Una voz íntima---¿mía?, ¿suya?---me decía que en el principio fue, en el Templo de la Conciencia que es el Universo, el Verbo, y que cuando creemos con-templar a Dios, es que Dios nos está con-templando, en el mismo templo, en la misma conciencia que nosotros. Y todo esto me consolaba de la mezquindad de mi pobre menester político pasajero (X, 943-44).

In this study it has not been my intention to resolve the problem of Unamuno's religious faith, but after what we have seen here it would be rather short-sighted to insist, as some writer have done, that Unamuno was an atheist. It is true that he could not accept the rational proofs for God's existence, and it is certainly true that he did not always agree with the dogmas of the Church. However, in view of the consistency and the sincerity of his life-long effort to find a solution for the religious questions which always preoccupied him, it is clear that Unamuno was a deeply religious person who made his own contribution the evolution of consciousness.

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NOTES

¹ I have been able to find only five critics who have recognized that there is a pantheistic element in Unamuno's religious thought; they are Miguel Oromí, José Ferrater Mora, Hernán Benítez, Antonio Regalado García, and Gonzalo Navajas.

² For more information on this topic see John Hunt, *Pantheism and Christianity*.

³ The letters of Unamuno to Ilundáin have been published by Hernán Benítez in his book, *El drama religioso de Unamuno*. This passage is found on p. 400.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Unamuno's writing have been taken from his *Obras completas*. The volume and/or page number will be placed in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

⁵ Another example of pantheism in the Bible is the concept of the divine Word from which all things were made (John I, 1-3). Similar to John's concept of the Word, Paul says that all things were made through Christ (Colossians I, 15-17), and he sums it up by saying that "Christ is all and in all" (Colossians III, 11).

⁶ Gonzalo Navajas has mentioned this aspect of Unamuno's pantheism: "Unamuno propone un concepto panteísta del mundo natural en el que el yo y el otro pueden disolverse legítimamente en la naturaleza" (173).

⁷ Hernán Benítez feels that Unamuno has a strictly pantheistic view of God: "Busca a Dios dentro del hombre, un Dios inmanente, no trascendente" (154). However, José Ferrater Mora has recognized that Unamuno's God is both immanent and transcendent: "Si por una parte, sostiene que esta conciencia del universo se halla presa en la materia, aproximándose con ello a un claro monismo panteísta y aun materialista, por otra afirma que Dios, esta conciencia eterna e infinita del todo, es algo distinto de este todo, es la personalización del todo, pero no el todo mismo" (70).

⁸ Another member of the Generation of '98 who adopted the pantheistic view of Spanish Krausism is Antonio Machado. In my book *El pensamiento religioso y filosófico de Antonio Machado* (Sevilla: 1985), I have shown that Machado's God-concept is essentially pantheistic; this is evident in *Del cancionero apócrifo* where he states that in the theology of Abel Martín God is defined as Absolute Being (336). However, Machado does not see the universe as identical to God since, as he puts it "el mundo es sólo un aspecto de la divinidad" (350). Like Krause and the other pantheists, Machado feels that God is both immanent and transcendent, as he shows when he declares that God is viewed in our heart as "una otredad muy otra, una otredad inmanente" (503).

⁹ The strict separation of spirit and matter which resulted in large part from Newtonian physics has made it difficult to conceive of a pantheistic view of reality. However, the concept that mass and energy are interchangeable ($E=mc_2$), which has resulted from modern physics, makes it easier to accept the idea that the physical universe is part of the divine spirit.

¹⁰ Quoted by Manuel García Blanco, p. 99.

¹¹ The closest that Unamuno comes to a discussion of the theory of reincarnation in *Del sentimiento trágico* is during his remarks regarding a book by Charles Bonhefion, *Dialogue sur la vie et sur la mort*. Paraphrasing the ideas of Bonhefion, Unamuno declares: "Cada uno de nosotros, pues, ha vivido ya y volverá a vivir, aunque lo ignore."

Then, he relates all this to the idea of our final reunion with God: "¿Y qué es este ensueño cósmico de Bonhefion sino la forma plástica de la apocatástasis pauliana?" (XVI, 376-77).

¹² In this article Unamuno makes a play on the words "templo" and "contemplar"; as he puts it in the following passage: "Con-templar is juntarse en el mismo templo, en el Universo como templo de la conciencia universal y eterna" (X, 942).

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