

# EDUCATION, WRITING AND EXISTENCE IN MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

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## Educación, escritura y existencia en Miguel de Unamuno

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### Abstract

During the long life of the writer and thinker Miguel de Unamuno, there were two tasks that he never left aside: his work as an educator and his life as a writer. Both were fundamental parts of his thought since he sees those as central to understanding the mystery of the existential characteristics of the man. The aim of this paper is the in-depth analysis of two main themes: the work of education and the work of writing in the thought of the Basque thinker. For this analysis, the scriptural work of the Unamuno was deeply investigated, considering that his ideas regarding education and writing are contained both in his poetic work and in his correspondence. Likewise, works by authors specialized in Unamuno and his thought were used to complement the ideas. It was possible to map the ideas of the Basque thinker to arrive at one of the central ideas of his thought: Both the educator and the writer can only teach what they are, that is why their work is no other than that of poetizing life, making its way through language, narrating oneself and helping others find their voice.

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### Keywords

Education, writing, Unamuno, poetics, thinking, language.

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### Resumen

Durante la larga vida del escritor y pensador Miguel de Unamuno, hubo dos labores que nunca dejó de lado: su trabajo como educador y su vida de escritor. Ambas partes fundamentales de su pensamiento ya que las entiende como centrales para comprender el misterio de la particularidad existencial del hombre de carne y hueso. El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo el análisis a profundidad de dos temas principales: la labor de la educación y el trabajo de escritura en el pensamiento del pensador vasco. Para este análisis se investigó a profundidad la obra escritural del vasco universal, tomando en cuenta que el grueso de sus ideas entorno a la educación y a la escritura se encuentran contenidas tanto en su obra poética como en su correspondencia. Así mismo, se utilizaron trabajos periféricos de autores especialistas en Unamuno y su pensamiento para complementar las ideas. Mediante la investigación, fue posible mapear las ideas del pensador vasco para llegar a una de las ideas centrales de su pensamiento: Tanto el educador como el escritor tan solo pueden enseñar lo que ellos mismos son, es por ello por lo que su labor no es otra que la de poetizar la vida, abriéndose paso a través del lenguaje, narrándose a uno mismo y ayudando a otros a encontrar su voz.

### Palabras clave

Educación, escritura, Unamuno, poética, pensamiento, lenguaje.

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## Introduction

Education and writing are two conjunctural aspects in Miguel de Unamuno's thought. The great writer practiced both the work as an educator (outside the university since 1884 and as a university professor from 1891), as the work linked to his literary consolidation since his first intellectual youth (he published his first novel in 1897). At the same time that he practiced these two activities, he reflected on them, however, he did not write (nor did he intend to do so) a treatise on education or a systematization of aesthetics or scriptural practice. On the other hand, his entire work is transversally implied by a meditation exercise on what it means to educate, as well as on the meaning of writing in the midst of a convulsive time like the one he lived. It creates a major problem, which offers the task of tracking and ordering the ideas Unamuno had about education and writing, as they are two valuable examples of his task as an intellectual. Therefore, this article aims to present a philosophical review that critically reconstructs Unamuno's assessments of education and writing, as well as their implications on the realization of existence.

In this way, it defends not only Miguel de Unamuno's pedagogical and scriptural reflection but its validity in our time, to contrast the statements that come from the institutionalization of contemporary educational practice. Therefore, this article will present and analyze the reasons through which the Basque philosopher links education with the vital realization of the individual. Above all, it does not associate pedagogical

cal work with the objectives of any disciplinary specialization, much less with labor finalism. This text uses a methodology of documentary analysis from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics that continues the dialogue with the texts from the questions they raise.

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, the paradox will be addressed as a method of thinking of the Spanish philosopher, analyzing how the affirmation of opposites allows him to consolidate a particular idea of education. Subsequently, we will reflect on the fact that when practicing the work of educator, Unamuno will also find reasons to see in the literary the vital accomplishment of his mission as educator, especially because his writing is a form of opening to the other (including the other that is in the self). Subsequently, an analysis will be presented around the reasons that lead Unamuno to consider writing as a pedagogical exercise and as a means to affirm individuality (both the author and the reader). Finally, we will consider the value for our time of Unamunian reflection that links education and writing in the realization of the existence of man.

## The paradox as a figure of Unamunian thought

Both in his private and family life in his rented house on Calle Bortadores, as in his public life during the nights in the “Novelty” of Salamanca, Unamuno represented different Migueles, but there were two who characterized him: the one that identifies Unamuno as a writer and the one that allows seeing him as an educator, because the general lines of his thought converge in both facets. There is something Don Miguel never gave up: writing and trying to educate while he did so. He did not do so at the height of public prestige and prosperity, nor did he do so in exile or in the whirlwind of the beginning of the civil war, in which he may never have understood what role he should play. For Unamuno, education and writing were two activities in which he gave himself completely, but in which he also put his entire conceptual universe at stake, since both were reasons for his praxis, because he could not understand writing without a didactic background, nor education without appealing to his craft of writer. The reason for this lies in the fact that, for him, both education and writing (if they are not two different ways of naming the same thing) are central to understanding the mystery that supposes the existential particularity of man.

As is well known, for Unamuno, the question of existence cannot be raised from an absolute conceptual sufficiency. And likewise, noth-

ing similar can be done when it comes to understanding what education means or what writing means. Though Unamuno did not systematize too much (at least not since the break with the scientific rationalism he had a torrid and then disenchanting youth romance), there were especially a couple of issues on which he never had the slightest temptation to systematize, namely writing and the study of education. All the approaches he had on these two topics were without appealing to the abstract *per se* and rather through the invocation of the most universal that every man can experience, which is his own individuality.

Therefore, it will be from the first person and from the irreplaceable experience that is known to be finite, that Unamuno will raise the questions concerning these two activities of which he was a true apostle. On the one hand, both in terms of the immeasurable work of education, as well as in terms of the unfathomable task of writing. Especially because, as stated above, at the center of all Unamunian thought is the affirmation of the flesh-and-blood man, *the one who is born, suffers and dies, above all dies*. For from that non-transferable experience of finitude and having discovered the presence of realities such as love and death, or freedom and the desire to persist—which resist the conceptual traditional logical truths—Unamuno will find the unwavering experience of paradox as a constant vital reality. So, it will be the methodical paradox, the Unamunian guide when he stops not only to practice his work as a writer and educator, but especially when he sets out to reflect on what education consists of and what is the ultimate sense of writing.

It can be said that the paradox is practically the figure that allows to understand the way in which Unamuno feels and argues. But it is also what he hopes to achieve as a result of meeting with his reader. This is stated in his essay “To my readers”: “I am satisfied with arousing ideas in those who read to me, even though these ideas are contrary to what I expose and defend” (Unamuno, 1966b, p. 391). It is clear that rather than inviting one to join a doctrine, what Unamuno intends is to gestate ideas in those who can read him. The Spanish philosopher’s emphasis on the human sense of contradiction is undoubtedly associated with his tragic view of existence. As he notes in several parts of his work and probably following Pascal on it, no act of rational intelligence can synthesize the abysses and contradictions of human existence.

Perhaps because of this, Unamuno resorts to paradox as a figure to make explicit our way of advancing in the tasks of thought. Especially because in the face of the vital agony discovered by the consciousness of finitude, the paradox appears as a form of pendulum that makes existence



a swing between opposites when the effort is undertaken to understand some fundamental question in existential matter. The path (method) that Unamuno follows when he thinks is the encounter (and even clash) between opposites. Therefore, he constantly warns in the aporetic nature of questions that human reason cannot answer by a syllogistic reason.

Therefore, the paradox understood as a way of Unamunian knowledge (Gordo, 2012, p. 171) implies assuming agonism as the basis of his philosophical proposal. Without forgetting that the Basque thinker understands by agony a constant struggle that is irreducible and unsavable for human reality. Above all, because it implies the recognition of plurality when an epistemic way of resolution is sought for some problem. In such a way that the paradox, in effective terms, discovers in the contradiction the richness that one finds in seeking meaning and observing that the tragedy of life consists precisely in an irreducible complexity that, nevertheless, also seduces us. Because, as Manuel Pérez López has learned when talking about possible Unamunian relativism, the paradox consists in “the idea that, being affirmed and denied at the same time, preached of itself and at the same time of its opposite, [while] maintaining in both cases a comparable degree of veracity in relation to our perception and experience of reality” (2003, p. 65).

Unamuno's thought allows us to find a certain philosophical-dialectical link that sees in the paradox a constant attempt to avoid the limiting impositions of positivist rationalism (which fascinated Don Miguel in his youth) in the exercise of deep meditation. For abandoning that feverish enthusiasm that he felt for logic after finishing his studies in Madrid, he finds in his maturity (from the publication of *Love and Pedagogy* of 1902, for example) a measured and delicate reflective game that identifies in the the paradox, the maximum tension of the possibilities of the spirit. Subversive provocation against any dominant system of conventions is constant in the execution of the *level*. And for this reason, it is constantly based on the paradox, not to propose some other substitute certainty but with the aim of affirming the value of uncertainty.

Thus, it is possible to speak of the paradoxical method in Unamuno. Although it may sound absurd to speak of method in the case of the Basque philosopher because of his untimely thinking, we cannot forget the primal meaning of this notion. If understanding it in a strict sense as a *path* (even especially in a spiritual sense), one could hardly find a better example than Unamuno to illustrate in what sense both educate and write are activities that are a method, especially because their exercise necessarily implies a path of paradoxes. Gemma Gordo has even spoken of the



“paradoxical-pedagogical method” in the case of the educational thought of Unamuno (2012, p. 170). Therefore, it can be said that in what can be read from the work of the Spanish philosopher, existence is in itself the praxis of a methodical paradox. This means that it is also an unwavering and non-transferable experience of the contradiction that is making its way. And that perhaps it is the only one to which man has access, who finds himself in the ontological precariousness of knowing that he is an individual condemned to finitude. And it is precisely from the pages of *On the Castism*, Unamuno (1958) has spoken of this method when he writes:

[...] The complete truth is usually sought in the middle just by the method of removal, *via remotiois*, by excluding the ends [...] It is better, I think, to follow another method: the alternative affirmation of the contradictory ones; it is preferable to emphasize the strength of the ends in the soul of the reader so that the medium takes life in it, which is the result of struggle. Be patient, then, when the rhythm of our reflections twists to one side, and wait until its undulation to twist to the other and let the resulting one occur in its spirit, if it succeeds (p.171).

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One world can be, among many other things, the philosopher of paradox. He never usually presents himself as a thinker of resolved problems or who comes to tell us how difficult the journey was until he found a definitive truth or certainty. He is not a philosopher of finished epistemic models. He is always a thinker who is on the road, who speaks from the crisis, who is making his own way by walking. Therefore, when Unamuno refers to education, we cannot expect him to give us a pedagogical explanation for the formation of man, just as we could not expect (we would do badly!) that when it comes to writing, Don Miguel offered in his reflections a manual of prescriptive poetics in which he taught us how to assemble pieces as a watchmaker who describes the tasks in his workshop. No way. Otherwise, neither education nor writing would be part of a vital poetics. However, in the case of Unamuno, it is very clear that the human being is not a finished entity, but that existence is something that constructs in the road while listening to the other and thereby enabling the understanding of himself.

And language plays in it a transcendental role, since as Joaqui and Ortiz point out, “as a basic condition of human existence, that makes it a being in the world, that speaks and that also listens, which totally forms it” (2019, p. 188). Don Miguel de Unamuno is not unaware of that. Therefore, for him education through writing brings together two facets of the same ontological experience: that of forming an existence through paradox. Thus, in the following section, the idea of Unamunian education will

be explored as an exercise of formation rather than information, which therefore leads to a vital poetics (an existential formation).

Immersing ourselves in language reminds us that all men are always the first man because the world begins to be from us and even against us, but never without our participation. That is why the world always reveals itself to us as something new, especially when it adopts in its own structure the figure of a revolution against what we believe. Hence, Unamuno's position in relation to education is linked to what the former Rector of the University of Salamanca understands by the exercise of thought through the practice of paradoxical pedagogy. If something characterized Unamuno's work as a thinker was his eagerness to move away from any form of dogmatism, whether scientific or religious, to the extent that it might be possible to reconstruct the itinerary of Unamunian thought in an antidogmatic key. All his disenchantments with the various schools of thought lie precisely in a dogmatic suspicion: the crises of faith, the crises of his confidence in reason, the crises within his political positions (going through socialism, republicanism, traditionalism...), always linked to that dogmatism that Unamuno identified in every position in which there was no possibility of doubt and coexistence with the different and even the opposite.

Although accepting the experience of living the contradiction, of assuming positions and paradoxical affirmations at the epistemological level, are precisely the first touchstone in Unamunian reflection on education. Which is linked to the problem of language as a means to open oneself to the understanding of the world and to know our place in it. Language is linked to the problem of cognition, as well as to all the ontological implications that result from it, since, as Vivas points out, "Organizing thought correctly depends on the structuring that is made of language" (2016, p. 71). And this is going to be done specifically in the idea of education that is forged within Unamunian thinking. It is therefore necessary to clarify what such ideas consist of.

## Education in Unamuno as an existential realization

Unamuno constantly remembers that going linguistically through the world (through writing, for example) allows us to organize our idea of the world and opens up the possibility of poeticizing it as well. The Spanish philosopher raises the need for a pedagogy that instead of affirming our supposed certainties *a priori*, undermines the foundations of our first

statements to avoid a dogmatic formation and also to enable a new organization of thought through language. This also allows Unamuno not to close to the fact that an education like this necessarily involves pain. It is the pain involved in the effort to look at the world from another beginning: from the beginning that the world has precisely around someone else. This allows Don Miguel (and of course this has a lot to tell our time) to distinguish between learning and playing. Especially because this reflection allows him to criticize the educators who found learning in the game, thus distorting those two activities, since, although he values both, he considers that each one can have its place:

[...] trying to make them learn while playing, the game ends up being turned into teaching. We seem to be scared to teach kids how hard work is. And that is where they learn by playing, which always ends when they play to learn. And the teacher himself who teaches them playing, he plays to teach. And neither he teaches, nor they learn anything worth it (Unamuno, 1902, p. 718).

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Unamuno holds the cultivation of both the body and the intellect, but he believes that teaching must distinguish from play in both respects. Above all, as far as teaching is concerned, the body must be sought in the same intensity as the spirit, for it confers upon them mutual influence. That is why Unamuno does not consider physical education as a curricular structure of the game but as a form of teaching that influences the formation of the character of those who participate in it, providing value. Now, when teaching is reduced to play, he assumes that even the biggest harmed is to play (Unamuno, 2016, p. 257). For Don Miguel, courage is a discovery that occurs precisely because of the experimentation of limits, because of the “effort” that characterizes every form of education. Above all, because the Spanish philosopher understands “the security that gives knowledge of his own forces or faculties [...] Value is the force ruled by reason, recklessness and force ruled by imagination” (Unamuno, 1999, p. 100). This is just a paradigmatic sample of the methodical paradox, because what it is in every teaching exercise is just to experience one’s own physical and intellectual abilities, until they are brought to their maximum tension. This is where a very fertile experimentation of the opposite occurs: when the body and the spirit have the lightness of what was thought uncritically perpetual. Unamuno does not think education is pain-free. While it is clear that an era like ours, so eager for effective ontological anesthesia and makeup almost any form of pain, will find this statement shocking.



But what is imagination but the answer to a state of affairs that hurts us? For Unamuno, imagination is as an instrument that makes available an unsuspected series of cognitive possibilities, even as regards character formation. Firstly, because it identifies in it the knowledge that makes evident a true exit from itself, especially because in imagining we necessarily move away from any preconceived dogma. And similarly, the Imagination is the tool that hinders us to the possibility of feeling in our own flesh the pain of the other. Because by breaking the barriers of self and putting ourselves on the path of the infinite other possibilities of being, the tragedy of life that characterizes the existential concept of Unamuno shows us that concern for the other is present even before the famous and documented crisis of 1897. And it is in this sense that we must understand perhaps what the Spanish philosopher says he will do after the publication of *The Kingdom of Man* (although he never gets to publish that story while he was alive):

[...] Anyway, when I release *The Kingdom of Man*, he says, I will pour all this into that anarchist sermon. I am not afraid of that name, the enemy of every violent means, of every war, of every revolution, of every dynamite. Someone has called me a conservative anarchist; whatever, another mystic anarchist. I accept any nickname, although I do not feel classifiable insect, who can put a pin through the basket, with its label, and so nail it in the cork of the entomological box. I am me, like every kiosk, gender apart. And my progress consists in Unamunomize me (Unamuno, 2017, p. 585).

Already in 1896, the Spanish philosopher postulates a first form of this concept which he will call egotism. It is a network of ideas that delineates its well-known spiritual anarchism and is related to a discovery of otherness that starts from the recognition of the self as the best way to approach the neighbor, whom it identifies as another self. For by then, to become unamunomize consists in delving into the tragedy of one's own existence in order to become twinned with others, in the form of a kind of mystical anarchism. That is perhaps why even when it refers to faith (before 97), he notices in it a creative faculty that links with the effervescence mood that stimulates the "holy imagination". He explains them in a letter dated November 1896, addressed to Francisco F. Villegas:

[...] I am not an anarchist in the bestial way, nor even in the way of Corominas, I am the way we are the ones who more than practically have poetry, as Tolstoy is, as poor Nietzsche was, as the mystics have been. I abhor all violent acts, I hate war, and I believe in revolution. I am a

conservative anarchist, you know it, actually socialist and of the most temperate (Unamuno, 2017b p. 590).

Imagination is the pendulum on which Unamuno's oscillatory intellectual mechanism is sustained. For this reason, he assumes himself as the living image of transcendental anarchism. Perhaps even echoing a Pascal heritage, which he always considered a spiritual brother, which is confirmed when reading his work, the passionate inclination towards thinking with and from the extremes. From the unpublished notebooks of youth, it can be identified that a typical Unamunian way to avoid any dogmatic formulation is to affirm the existential condition that clings to the extremes without ignoring the abysses. And this applies as much to science as it does to religion. In the *Untitled Notebook* (written around 1891), it is possible to find an example of what is stated here, when considering faith, a counterrational faculty, Unamuno underlines the creative value and which is put at risk because faith succumbs to dogma when transforming itself into religion. Miguel de Unamuno assumes that the fundamental task of an intellectual is to keep alive the scientific spirit, which is characterized by focusing on the spirit while entering full agitation. This is why Tanganelli points out that the Spanish philosopher configures the constant crisis as his most radical *modus vivendi*, and assumes it, moreover, as a style of thought. But it is more than that: we are facing the very genesis of their educational conception. This is passionately expressed in a letter he wrote to his friend Pedro de Múgica in June 1896:

[...]If you preach something that you believe to be purifying, idealizing, dignified and pure, you will immediately bring it down, make it dirty, understand it to the gross, make it progressive and turn it into a riot. It makes you want to become mystical, retreat to a hermitage and contemplate your belly button until you fall into a sweet hypnotic dream. Sleep! I've been thinking for a long time that what our society craves is to sleep and nothing more than to sleep, that they let it rest a little, a stop in the path of progress, a period of calm and mental digestion (Unamuno, 2017c, p. 560).

Just before the 97 crisis, Unamuno has already settled in a rejection of all forms of systematization: whether it is literatism or an arid and formal scientificism. Perhaps he finds in both the same model of attempt to systematize *a priori* the existence. He, on the other hand, seeks to assert individuality in a forceful way. That is why he even renounces writing his novels under the same aesthetic paradigm of realism that prevailed in his time (Ángeles Cerón, 2019, p. 36). In such a way that it breaks aesthetic



and rhetorical schemes to give life to a form of scriptural expression that preempts the modernist novel in several ways. Especially because the presence of the first person and the irreducibility of individual reality are perfectly evident in his novels.

The reason for this, although it can be easily guessed, is revealed by Unamuno in the letter he sends to *Clarín*. That is why the importance of Unamuno's epistolomania has always been pointed out. Because in his letters he offers not only coordinates for the reading of his own texts but also some of his most vivid and untimely reflection. The words that will be quoted below are more than the result of a rhetorical outburst and allow us to observe the consolidation of Don Miguel's most original thought. His attention is totally directed to the "deep within" and that is why he points out to his correspondent what are the concerns that occupy his spirit at that time:

[...]Forgive me for speaking about myself," he writes, but I know nothing but about myself or others, their selves, their guts. I am more interested in men than their things, and rather than understanding these, I want to feel those. There is no mystery more terrible than that of the impenetrability of bodies and souls (Unamuno, 2017, p. 571).

But what does Unamuno aspire to as an educator if he is relentlessly trying to avoid dogmatism? The answer seems to be found in the profound transformation suffered by Don Miguel between 1894 and 1897, since a deep spiritual *metanoia* is evident at this time, which extends to various areas of his thought and his own life. By then, his intellectual position is completely antidogmatic, in aesthetic, religious, scientific or moral sense (Unamuno, 2016, p. 612). And it is from this position that he consolidates his thinking through a conceptual framework that allows identifying his own style that influences his way of exercising ideas (including those concerning education). This trilemma can be stated as follows: "knowing to ignore" - "knowing to want" - "eternal resignation/temporary non-resignation". The "Holy Imagination", as Unamuno calls it, harbors creative faith and has a dynamic and fundamental place in this triad. One must educate to "know how to ignore": that is the only possibility that a formation will not then transform into induced dogmatism.

Since the very youthful writing of *Notebook V*, he notes that "Doubt is the beginning to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2016c, p. 44). In this way, it is possible to clearly elucidate the starting point of the philosopher of Unamuno. At that moment, he declares the importance of knowing how to ignore, and it is at that time that Don Miguel identifies that he



only goes out looking for what we recognize we have lost. Therefore, it is not trivial to point out that two years later, when he was writing the *17th Notebook*, Unamuno will note that “the principle of science is the knowledge to ignore” (2016d, p. 826) because the Spanish philosopher would have already consolidated doubt as a way of knowing.

It is this genuinely passionate approach to problems that Unamuno conceives as the fundamental teaching that must contemplate any form of education. It is not a question of passing on stoning sentences or unquestionable sentences that must be repeated until exhaustion. Rather, it is about learning to hesitate, suffering the “savory pain” of fighting one’s doubts, and not just veiled appeals to authority that confirm my supposed certainties. And this is expected from someone like Miguel de Unamuno, who in the *17th Notebook* noted “[...] Who will give me peace to my soul if my soul is born for war?” (2016d, p. 16).

But how should one teach one to know how to ignore? How to educate in the methodical paradox? There is no other way than the example. For this reason, he will affirm “that the best work that a man can bequeath to his brothers is his life as an example and as a vision” (Unamuno, 2016, p.1015). Perhaps never has it been possible to conceive of educational work as an apostolate. Because that good example of learning to live knowing how to ignore and not only wanting to know but especially knowing how to want, must come not only from characters or recognized figures, but especially from the master of being a man, because it serves as a model to the disciple with whom he lives daily.

[...] This is how the society must be prepared to fulfill its mission properly and fully, Unamuno says; and this also seems a great means of education, which should not be forgotten by educators. The good example is for the little ones much more profitable than all theories (Unamuno, 1995a, p. 216).

Because education is conceived by Unamuno as that exercise in which a model transmits the confrontation with reality by mimetic without the scaffolding of concepts that aim to offer us a linear image of the world that is not such. Because Don Miguel considers that the good example in the practice of knowing to ignore and wanting to know is the only mechanism to make the methodical paradox an inexhaustible affluence of ideas. For this reason, for him, education is more than an exercise of knowledge transmission, a practice accompanied by a way of life. It cannot be forgotten that Unamuno does not refer to educational practice as most officials of the ministries of education do nowadays, who have



mostly not stepped on a classroom in their entire lives. Don Miguel de Unamuno was a non-university professor from 1884 to 1891, and from his experiences as a teacher he even wrote in 1889 an article entitled “The precepts of the law of the school teacher”, which contains very interesting precepts around what Unamuno conceives as the daily practice of a perennial and transcendental vocation (Unamuno, 1995b, pp. 236-238).

The content of the text makes total sense when remembering the intellectual itinerary of Unamuno, which accompanied his evolution as an educator. The *Notes between Bilbao and Madrid* are a testimony that allows us to identify a long-matured apology of passion when it comes to thinking and teaching. In the first pages of that booklet the Basque philosopher states: “Many ponder my talent. What I know is known by many and many, there are people who know more than I do; but none has more heart than I do or know how to feel more than I do.” In this way, Unamuno showed a statement that he will never abandon and that we find as the sap that gives meaning to “The precepts of the law of the school teacher” which aims to want to know.

Unamuno has already experienced, by the time he writes the *Notes between Madrid and Bilbao*, enough spiritual and epistemological crises to constantly expose in various notebooks that hypothesis according to which, there is no greater teaching than that of knowing what to want. Hence, this booklet written around 1891 and contemporary of the Decalogue of teaching, is at the same time an “intellectual portrait” of Unamuno, a very clear explanation of what he understood since then by teaching. This is why the notebook titled *Notes between Madrid and Bilbao* is a real testimony of the constant crisis that exists in the youthful thought of Unamuno. This is a first moment in which the exhaustion of the purely intellectual way to solve problems experienced by Miguel can be documented. On the other hand, it is also a notebook that allows us to date the appearance of two new instruments of thought for Unamuno: introspection and passion. This is how it is possible to read it when, for example, the passage quoted below is mentioned above:

[...] How sad is the company of books! The book is silent, it says nothing, it is cold and dry, you have to force it to show you its secrets and only leaves the void behind it. / Know, know a lot, know more, more and more! This has been my dream, this is still. But what is the reason to know so much? No! To want, to want much, to want more, more and more and to know what you want. The greatest science is that of wanting, and knows more the person who best knows what to want (Unamuno, 2016a, p. 70).



In his commitment to passion, the Basque philosopher moves away from the figure of the cabinet philosopher and the library educator. Don Miguel de Unamuno presents the key to what he understands by thought and what should guide every educational exercise: “The greatest science is that of wanting,” he said, and “knows more the person who best knows what to want.” That is why he concentrates his efforts on recovering what he has said in the precepts for practicing teaching. To teach to know how to love is essential to love the disciples and to love the profession. For Unamuno, the exercise of thought reaches its peak in teaching. That is the place where the possibility of transforming thought into work takes place. That is where it really starts to exist. Because to teach is then to give oneself, to carry out an exercise of self-donation as an existence in transit and in full construction. Therefore, for him education is not essentially a transmission of contents but the loving exercise of a shared ontological opening. This is why he states that the true principle of knowledge is to know how to ignore. The question is precisely the vehicle on which existence unfolds from an exercise of shared indigence: which takes place between teacher and disciple and cannot occur without the assistance of both.

For this reason, for him education is linked to the scriptural exercise. If the binomial “master”-“disciple” reveals the uncertainty of existence, it will be another binomial, the one composed of “author” and “reader” that ontologically explains that Unamunian notion of existence where precisely exist is “to work”. According to the Rector of Salamanca, writing is a work in ontological terms: it means recognizing that existence is always being done and the exercise of materializing it to paper is the most certain existential consolidation. If in the unpublished notebooks of youth he has said that the fundamental triad of thought lies in “knowing to ignore”-“knowing to want”-“eternal resignation/temporary non-resignation”, this conceptual transition is only understandable to Unamuno himself in that magisterial exercise that takes place in writing. It is in the non-place of the word that existence unfolds as a kind of “temporary non-resignation”. Therefore, an analysis of the way in which the Spanish philosopher understands writing as education that results in the formation and affirmation of an existence will be presented.

## Writing as a means to make an existence

An important part of what Unamuno understands by teaching is sufficiently clear when approaching his notion of “author”. This is especially because, for him, existence is complete: because there is only one who



works and there is no one who works more than the one who writes for the fundamental purpose that Don Miguel finds in teaching: being ferment for the soul of others, giving reasons to doubt and question, rather than transmitting some finished vision of reality. In fact, when questioning his way of conceiving literary art, one immediately notices that what he thinks about the figure of the “author” is intimately linked to his conception of the “reader”, and that in all cases an existential dimension that he wants to make evident transcends them. He is convinced that literature is an exercise in giving oneself: it is a living mutual giving that takes place thanks to the spiritual nourishment in which the literary work is transformed. For Unamuno, literature is the vehicle in which the souls of the author and the reader are given entirely. Therefore, writing is intimately linked to education. This bond that unites these two realities is as much of an aesthetic character as of an ontological and moral character. This is the reason why for him, there is a determining parallel between the author-reader and teacher-disciple binomials, since we are talking about the confluence of the different existential tragedies that rethink, through literature, the drama of being.

Unamunian “pedagogy” and “demagogy” are the conceptual tools with which education is conceived as a mission in which the ontological drama discovered in one’s own existence is transmitted. Because the author who educates with his texts in which he has poured the deepest of his soul, writes ultimately to immortalize himself. And not especially through answers or dogmas that he imposes on the other, but in a particular way, sharing his doubts and fears, his desires and hopes: his hunger for immortality. This is the most radical sense of Unamunian egotism, because when writing one tries to get out of an existence by linking oneself with the “spirit of the reader” than only when one’s own drama meets the “spirit of the author”. Therefore, it is not surprising that Unamuno, postulated a scriptural conception with ontological ideas, since he notices in writing the most risky and lively way of the exercise of teaching, while the spirit of his “readers” is fed through the reception of the most characteristic spiritual features of his own being. As Unamuno notices a mimetic dimension in education, so he also finds it in writing, with whose practice it is observed that both teaching and writing are conceived as the contagion of a mission, as a *trans-mission*.

This reinforces the importance of the concept of “work” in Unamuno. Both teaching and writing involves acting, because they are two ways of realizing existence where the ontological link that arises plays a decisive role in every exercise of surrender that operates in transmission.

Both the “author” with his “readers”, and the “teacher” with his “disciples” experience a mutual and loving becoming through *trans-mission*. According to Unamuno, a person does not teach and does not write if does not transfer a mission. Therefore, it is particularly important that education and writing can only occur in harmony with the other. It is about the emotional becoming that serves as a pendulum between “intra-historical subjectivities”, since in that horizon opens the “historical subjectivity of the author”, who through writing in which it *is given* is also making his own existence by *donating*. This is the transcendence of the notion of Unamuno’s work that links the teaching profession with writing. There arises a spiritual relationship that mediates between the “author” and the “reader” in the same way as it does between “teacher” and “disciple”, which acts as a “remedy” for the *discontinuity or ontological indigence* that is the starting point of existence.

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For Unamuno writing is the vehicle of understanding the temporal conception of existence. But this is discovered by man through the eternal struggle of opposites that becomes evident in these concepts: a) “eternity of momentaneity” and b) “*momentanization* of eternity” (Unamuno, 1958, p. 661). While these expressions are common for those who know finite and hungry at the same time of immortality. With the experience of the “eternity of momentaneity” Don Miguel points out that the historical world supposes the eternalization of certain moments of human existence, which, due to their density and sense, deserve to be removed from the intrinsic death in every moment. Meanwhile, with the experience called “*momentanization* of eternity”, he demonstrates that this eternity requires, as a counterpart, an inert conception of temporality. However, beyond the *ontological discontinuity* implied by both conceptions of time, there is an obvious—albeit partial—continuity of “intra-historical subjectivity,” since this is—and will continue to be—the ontological foundation of “historical subjectivity.” However, these two experiences of man’s temporary and finite existence are clarified and understood as tensions of being through writing.

Unamuno maintained this concern both in his published work and in his rich and inexhaustible epistolary. But if looking at his public work, the text entitled *How a Novel Is Made* stands out. It is an exercise in which he paused thoroughly to think about existence as a pending reality that is only realized effectively in that exercise of surrender to the other that is perfectly represented by the scriptural practice and the practice of the magisterium. Although this is precisely so, because these two forms of work demand the contest of otherness. In this work of 1927, the Salamanca rector affirmed



that what has been said and not experienced is left aside in a text; therefore, literature must be lived so that it does not crystallize:

[...]What is called in the literature production is a consumption. The person who writes down his thoughts, his dreams, his feelings, consumes them, kills them. As soon as a thought is written, expressed, crystallized, it is already dead, and it is no longer ours. History, the only thing alive, is the eternal present, the fleeing moment that is passing, and literature is nothing but death. Death that others can take life. The person who reads a novel can live it, revive it—and the person who says a novel tells a story—and the person who reads a poem, a creature—a poem is a creature and creation poetry—can recreate it (Unamuno, 1958, p. 829).

And these ideas are expressed by Miguel from the considerations of another concept mentioned in his work, namely that of the philosopher-poet, where the best version of what he understands by “author” is crystallized. This was stated from one of his booklets, the one traditionally titled *Philosophy II*. In this text, while he was consolidating himself as a philosopher-poet (let us not forget that if Unamuno wanted to be remembered somehow it was precisely as a poet), Don Miguel expresses:

[...]Science is the reconstruction of the fact, mental reconstruction, the better reconstructed the more bound and organized to others, more as part of a whole one and complex, science is more perfect. / The reproduction of the poet or the descriptive painter is not in essence different from that of the thinker; there are degrees in reproduction. Hence, a thinker is a poet, and a poet is a thinker. / The thinker reproduces the fact in the abstract because he does not individualize it or add anything to it, the poet adds to it something of his own to objectify it and individualize it. Difference between art and science (Unamuno, 2016e, p. 9).

Unamuno clarifies in this valuable fragment the deep reasons that made him reflect on the various forms of art. Once again, the reader can realize how it is that the philosopher knows that the scientific spirit is totally linked to the poetic attitude. But they distinguish themselves precisely in the fact that the poet leaves all of him in his production (and that is one of his goals), while the scientist seems to be able to do without it. Nevertheless, the shared desire to open new paths for introspection and reflection on the environment lead Unamuno to consider that the only distance that exists between art and science is the individualization degree of the problem demanded by the artistic gaze, which is always called to create. Therefore, when Unamuno writes *Philosophy II*, it is clear that the poetic exercise is central when thinking about education. In this

regard, Paolo Tanganelli notes: “The philosopher knows how to represent in the abstract: his knowledge is rational, it is *epistemic* valid in any situation. The poet, on the other hand, has to add “something of his own” to concretize the fact, he has to renounce precisely objectivity to objectify it” (Tanganelli, 1998, p. 109).

This is important in the same way that real life has reached Unamuno in such a particular way on his reflection on the work of the poet and the artist and even what he thinks about philosophy and the work of the magisterium, which will be permeated since then by the experience of concrete existence. As said, even lightning rods are connected to the earth and the case of Unamuno is not the exception. For this time in which he writes *Philosophy II*, Don Miguel has arrived in Salamanca and besides continuing to work on booklets that remained unpublished until recently, he writes constantly in periodicals. Two things stand out especially in Miguel’s intellectual life: on the one hand, there is the fact that Unamuno will become a teacher of Greek language and literature, and on the other hand, he also stresses that the polemic tone will shape most of his texts. And although with the own nuances of each publication, it is from those particularities that the Spanish philosopher sets himself to the task of writing for different audiences.

This is one of the reasons why Miguel de Unamuno, when addressing the work of the writer, moves away from the prevailing paradigms both aesthetically and professionally at the level of his time. Hence, the enervated criticism that receives, for example, literary realism, which is the most accepted form of writing in its time. He always relates the aesthetic genres of writing with a way of understanding the world, and realism seems to him the most dogmatic of all because he puts a straitjacket on the “holy Imagination”. Unamuno insists on circumscribing literary realism in an *episteme* that does not assume the unrepeatable of existence and that is the fundamental problem. Individualizing an object is for Unamuno, from the notebooks of youth, the work of the artist and the poet, so that a real poet, a writer who deserved such a title would not write “literature” from the “naturalist-realism”. The difference is that “The thinker reproduces the fact in the abstract because he does not individualize it or add anything to it, the poet in order to objectify and individualize it adds something of his own to it. Difference between art and science” (Unamuno, 1891-1892, p. 9). Therefore, the Unamunian reflection coincides with the importance of emphasizing that, as Gutiérrez-Pozo (2023) has mentioned, “Life is the foundation of knowledge. Thought then cannot be understood as mere intellectual activity. Thinking is basically a vital



exercise” (p.168). So, we ask why we do not know something that reminds us of the creative value of ignorance and even the very foundation of the scientific spirit. Hence, teaching should consist of asking questions, which is also the central task of writing, as Unamuno conceives it throughout his literary career.

For the author of *Niebla*, writing is a privileged way of educating insofar as it involves the exercise of the construction of existence (both his own and others), since the position of a new episteme is assumed with the appeal to various narrative resources (such as the inner dialogue or the flow of consciousness). It is an episteme that tries to overcome the limits of objective knowledge that rests on algorithms that cannot embrace individualization and the contradiction that is normally in existence.

The Unamunian theory of the novel is especially committed to this that has been exposed. It warns in the genre of the *novel* the possibility of recovering at the narrative level and in the entities of fiction what the existence of the flesh-and-blood man experiences. Hence, the Basque philosopher writes in the “Epilog” to his novel *Don Sandalio, chess player*, that “Every poet, every creator, every novelist — to never create is to create—, by creating characters he is creating himself, and if he is born dead, he lives being dead” (Unamuno, 1930, p. 26). For Don Miguel, the exercise of novelty coincides with bringing into language the particular and unrepeatably appreciable of concrete existence; for this reason, he finds that “The greatest historians are the novelists, the ones who most engage themselves in their stories, in the stories they invent” (Unamuno, 1930, p. 25). Because Unamuno is thus distant from the alleged objectivity of positivism that he talks about or his first philosophical youth. The personal and intellectual problems put in crisis that paradigm and positioned him in such a position that by 1933, when he published this text, made him argue that “there is no more true truth than poetics, that there is no more true history than the novel” (Unamuno, 1930, p.25). This is more than just a play on words devised by Miguel de Unamuno. His vision as a writer is keeping his impression of the narrative dimension of reality. Therefore, he constantly appeals to the topic of the *theatrum mundi* to account for the structure of the real and when he reflects on the novel is no exception:

[...]Every poet, I mean, every creator, even the Supreme Poet, the Eternal Poet, even God, who, by creating Creation, the Universe, by continually creating it, poematizing it, does nothing but create Himself in his Poem, in his Divine novel (Unamuno, 1930, p. 26).

This is why for Miguel de Unamuno to *exist is to poetize*. In that sense, the act of writing novels is a way of prolonging existence. Unamuno's justification for writing this way lies in the fact that he has decided, he says, "to write for my readers that I have modeled at the same time that they have modeled me" (Unamuno, 1930, p. 26). It is a statement that places the author, his reader and fictional entities on the same plane, which says a lot about the Basque writer's conception of the novel. So much so that he even notices that his readers recognize and look in his novels the same thing that he does. This is how he expresses it in that "Epilog" to *Don Sandalio*, at the same time that he takes advantage of a new opportunity to separate himself from the realistic novel. Don Miguel therefore writes:

My readers, mine, do not seek the coherent world of soap operas called realists—is it not true, my readers? —; my readers, mine, know that an argument is but a pretext for a novel, and that this novel remains, the whole novel, and purest, most interesting, most novel, if the argument is taken away from it [...] They are not my readers from whom, when are going to hear an opera or see a film — sound or not — they buy the argument first to know what to stick to (Unamuno, 1930, p.26).

The Spanish writer recovers in this text that poetic consciousness that led his work in several moments but that comes to verbalize fictionally in *Niebla* and that, in the case of *Don Sandalio*, chess player is confirmed. Unamuno puts on the same plane the novel and existence not only by the appeal to a metadiegetic narrative resource. In a particular way, this shared plane is because he warns in this new way of noveling that breaks the epistemic and aesthetic paradigm of realism, the possibility of presenting existence as it is given factually in man, i.e., without argument. This is why he emphasizes the refusal not only to cover up from the argument, but also points out the distance that his reader establishes in relation to a narrative aesthetic that does not represent the incoherence and contradiction of existence. For Unamuno, to novel is the scriptural exercise of poeticizing according to the individual and diverse experience of living. This is where lies the fundamental link between education and writing in Unamuno's thought. For neither action is understood but as a work, and it cannot be done without being given to others.

Likewise, in the "Prologue-epilogue" that he wrote in 1934 to the second edition of *Love and Pedagogy*, Don Miguel concentrates on meditating on the reasons why he opts for innovation and experimental writing. Unamuno then defines his way of noveling as "Dramatic stories, full of intimate realities, entwined, without reality, without backstage or realisms



in which the true, eternal reality, the reality of personality is often missing” (Unamuno, 2017d, p. 52). That is precisely what *bullets* are about. And on that path he travels his journey as a novelist, which he glimpses lacking any argumentative and based on the representation of the various intimate realities: “I have continued to develop,” he says in that reflective text, “with perhaps more peace, but not less pain, the visions of these ‘deep caves of sense,’ as mentioned by St. John of the Cross” (Unamuno, 1958, p. 970). Because it is precisely like caves of sense that Unamuno thinks his novels. He precisely points to the particular and living inquiry that man has flesh and blood or fiction to realize his existence. Because to be, as with the characters of Unamuno, to live, ones must assume the painful trajectory of being in the world with no argument to follow. This is the Unamunian *dictum* according to which the principle of knowledge is to know how to ignore: to live is to know how to ignore. For Don Miguel de Unamuno the writer carries out a sublime task: the task of sculpting himself and the task of giving himself existence. That is the greatest task for the poet. It is in this way that the drama of existence is transferred, or better yet, extended to the novel. That is why Cerezo Galá has said that, for Unamuno, “being a poet is equivalent to existing originally as an architect of himself” (Cerezo, 1996, p. 553).

Therefore, for Unamuno, education itself consists in writing a novel: the novel of the existence of the disciple-reader. Because if education is to write a novel, it means assuming the inquiring nature of knowing how to ignore the one that the man who has discovered his vital indigence cannot give up, especially because education really wants to seek wisdom without any dogma. And there is no greater example of this than to find a novel that dispenses with any argument. This is Unamuno’s claim to novel, because with the construction of his entities of fiction he intends to bring to the narrative that same indigent condition of existence that is not updated by means of a coherent algorithm, but in the very act of narrating. This is mentioned by the writer himself when he says in the article “The Selection of the Fulánez” (1905): “The poet, if he really is, does not give concepts or forms; he gives himself” (Unamuno, p. 838). The Spanish philosopher conceives the act of writing novels as an exercise in which existence gives itself, with all its doubts, its mysteries, its unclarified interiors, and its pending episteme under construction. Philosophy is useful for this, not to access answers but to bring the spirit to its greatest tension with the experience of the world, which we understand to the extent that we poeticize it, i.e., to the extent that we become in it with each action. This can be seen, for example, in the same “Prologue- Epilogue” of *Love*

and *Pedagogy* when Don Miguel writes: “Sentiment, not the rational conception of the universe and of life, is better reflected than in a philosophical system or a realistic novel, a poem, a prose or a verse, a legend, a novel” (Unamuno, 2017d, p. 297).

The reason why Unamuno claims this is very clear. The *nivolist* in him stems from the recognition of the importance of individuality. He equates the realistic novel with the philosophical system that dispenses with the intimate reality and that is why he insists that the feeling of the whole universe and of life is best expressed in a novel (thus, without any epithet). Does it mean that what Unamuno is opposing to *the* realistic novel is the novel itself? As paradoxical as this might sound, the answer is affirmative. Unamuno is preparing in theory and in practice a narrative model that can emerge as an aesthetic and epistemological opposite to the realist-naturalist novel. Paul Olson, on *How a Novel is Made*, has insisted that Unamuno’s writing can be defined as an agenda that culminates in an “anti-novel” (Olson, 1970-71, pp.186-199).

Therefore, when trying to think about Unamuno’s writing style, one cannot do without the questions of even ontological order that precede his work as a notable literary figure. Above all, because in his writing, he condenses all the way that has taken him there, both intellectually and personally. And it is perhaps in that transformation that he is suffering from his first intellectual youth that makes him change his vision about literature and his practice as father of fictional entities. Because this idea Unamonian idea, according to which writing novels consists in not following an argument, fits perfectly with an ontological principle that Don Miguel ends by maturing in *The Tragic Feeling of Life*, where he points out that “to be is to work and only exists what works, what is active, and as a work” (Unamuno, 1958, p. 274). For this reason, he conceives his characters by granting them an ontological status such that his existence consists precisely in working. They are active as long as they are active and activity.

However, also on the other hand, Unamuno knows that, if one day it is to exist with complete truth, it must be assumed as part of an existence of a body of flesh and blood or fiction. Because men attach importance not to the representation of an idea but to the encounter with another existence (this is plagued by ideas, passions, contradiction, and activity). Luis Álvarez Castro has also referred to this topic: “Unamuno doubts that ideas can survive if they are not embodied in a personality that lends them their warmth, since what is only real—what works—are individuals, not ideas” (Unamuno, 1913, p. 292). Therefore, there is no teaching without a teacher and therefore there is no teaching that can be



understood as such without the presence of another person. This is precisely the objective of Don Miguel: that his novels are both the means of subsistence of his ideas and the vehicle in his magisterium, because it is not a mere representation of his own but of the person and the reflection of the reader who as a result also seeks to make an existence.

Therefore, the Unamunian writing style, when referring to his novels, acquires a greater dimension. When Don Miguel meditates on the style, he stops to reflect on elements that transcend the aesthetic of writing and that links it especially with education. In such a way that when thinking on Unamuno one cannot separate with a conceptual standard the diversity of interests of the Basque philosopher, which are condensed in the Unamuno discovery of being able to emerge a pedagogy through the novel. This is not a mere tool that can represent a cluster of ideas and communicate them, but rather it involves the exercise of *transmission* in its highest sense: the exercise of sharing a mission.

While it is true that Unamuno never offered a concrete definition of what literature was for him, he did offer constant reflections on what he might consider his opposite: literatism. It is this series of notes and references that allows us to weigh Unamuno's writing style from its own context. Because Miguel de Unamuno identifies in the midst of literatism a sterile aestheticism that he recognizes as an intellectual evil of his time. Recovering Miguel's contributions in this regard also allows us to better assess the construction of his style as a novelist, as well as the reflection he makes on his writing practice. Above all, in authors such as Unamuno it is difficult to interpret the first order: the one that arises from the overlap of his work as a writer, the reflection that he makes about himself and the public construction of his personality. However, it is important to note that what Unamuno exposes in the different prologues in which he theorizes about the novel is logical, at least, with what he also exposes in loose articles that he published throughout his life, and in which he departs from the aestheticism that he considers sterile. While there will always be a discussion about an author's sincerity when writing for his audience and even more so when explaining something about his own work, it is also true that authors can be known essentially by their words.

Unamuno's reflection on what he conceives of as literature will be permeated by his rejection of barren aestheticism. This is seen in an article from 1901 entitled "On the defensive", where he offers a highly characterized portrait of literature, the image with which he identifies the opposite of true literature, in the same sense in which he opposed to the realist-naturalist novel he calls without any epithet, simply novel.



Unamuno wants to distance himself from that literatism he says: “I know nothing meaner than our literary world. Most of our writers have the effect of atheist priests; they are priests of a cult in which they do not believe” (Unamuno, 1993, pp. 300-301). For him, literature consists of a profane aestheticism, or as Álvarez Castro says, as “the sacrilegious cult perpetrated by ministers who lack faith and yet arrogate to themselves the possession of artistic truth” (Álvarez, 2005, p. 58). And it is that this figure is parallel to that of the pedagogue who does not believe that he is forming an existence when he teaches. So, the uneducated pedagogue is practicing a sacrilegious cult as well.

However, it is important to note that Miguel de Unamuno is not oblivious to the latent danger that any artistic creation may carry some form of literatism. Especially when improving the technique or think about aesthetic innovation *per se*. Perhaps because of this, he strives to distinguish the notion of “style” with all the formation of a literatism. This is observed when reflecting on the former and makes it clear that style is a defining (if not *the*) trait of the writer’s personality (Unamuno, 1998, p.35). For this reason, those who lack a true personality and are only appearance, are prevented from accessing the sublime work of doing the work of poet. For Don Miguel, the figure of the literary creator is the result of an existence that makes an effort to become itself and that warns its true vocation to live in that struggle. For this reason Unamuno states that “there is no good or bad style, but to have it or not to have it” (Unamuno, 1924, p. 38), to the very extent that there is no good or bad personality, but that one has or does not have it.

The same happens to the educator. No good or bad style to educate according to Unamuno. You just have or you do not have the style to educate. What is the reason for these ideas? That the professor, as happens with the writer, does not have to teach but what he himself is. The exercise of transmission is that of the apostolate who testifies by involving his own life in it. Unamuno mentioned in the unpublished booklets as well as in the correspondence years before the spiritual crisis of ‘97, a deep interest in the individual personality, both at the level of writing and in the field of teaching. Because one cannot make a collective existence, but rather what one can do is appeal to concrete individuality: both in what corresponds to who is given and who receives. Unamuno is so interested in the individual existence that if recalling the letter addressed to Francisco Fernández Villegas on November 12, 1896, Unamuno insists that it does not matter that he is qualified as “another anarchist mystic”, and that, although he accepts any nickname, what interests him most is that his





progress as an intellectual, as a writer and as a man is known to consist more in “Unamunonize him increasingly” (Unamuno, 2017a, p. 585).

Likewise, in most of the texts that Laureano Robes compiled under the title *Around Style*, Don Miguel returns to the topic that necessarily links writing with personality, to the point that Unamuno’s voice seems to resonate addressing a novel writer saying “When taking the pen, be yourself, that is the rule”. In teaching, Don Miguel would throw a similar precept, as seen in the decalogue he built around teaching. “When teaching, be yourself, that has to be the rule.” For the Basque philosopher:

[...] style is not done. You’re born with it or you are not born. What happens is that sometimes it takes time for you to find your style. The person takes time to find himself, to discover his own personality (Unamuno, 1924, p. 39).

That is why not everyone can teach, nor can anyone really write. Both are difficult donation exercises. Because for Unamuno, the real creator, the real poet, is distinguished from the stylist (both in writing and education) because the existence of the poet (the real writer and the real teacher) consists in poetizing life. That means that it opens the way to the possibility of narrating itself through language in the same way that it does when it struggles to exist. Therein lies the background of this ontological aesthetic of Unamunian writing. Because in the sap of writing and in the work of the magisterium, there is an epistemological question that points to the very problem of existence, which involves making a life in a world that is difficult, that is not simple, but that can always try to stay one day longer in being.

Unamuno elevates to absolute value the writing that is magisterium and the magisterium that works as the writing. In both exercises the drama of his existence and personality is observed. These are two actions that undoubtedly show how education is for Unamuno a poetic action. Any aspiring educator could well like these words of Don Miguel de Unamuno that come from his “Poetic Creed” (written in 1907), and where is stated: “Think the feeling, feel the thought / [...] what thought is, do not doubt, the sense” (p. 200). This Unamunian “Creed” reaffirms among its verses the relationship between personality and the style of teaching when thinking of education as a way of making an existence: “Do not take excessive care of clothing / sculptor, it is not your task, /do not forget that never more beautiful / than naked is the idea” (p.200). Education, like writing, as Unamuno thinks, accompanies the disciple-reader until necessary. Because the writer-educator should not be frightened by the possibility of living without certainties, since it is also good to suffer difficulties.



## Unamuno versus current education

Unamuno's spirit was always combative, and when it came to education it was no different. On the contrary, he wanted to be constantly in the debate about what he considered important for the human formation of the citizen. Unamuno is certainly an interesting counterpoint when it comes to weighing the value of the technocratic and utilitarian education that dominates our time. Especially because Unamuno does not conceive education as an essentially professionalizing exercise, but as a mission transmitted that shares the deepest concerns that man can have. Because, as reviewed in these pages, education does not consist in the impersonal teaching of a method or a technique but rather in the personalized exercise that accompanies the individual in an integral way until it strengthens his own personality. When he insists that his main objective is to "unite" more and more each day, he is pointing out the central task of his pedagogical idea: carrying out the vital project of the human being based on its non-transferable characteristic.

In his famous essay "Inside", written at the beginning of the 20th century, the Spanish philosopher expresses in a specific way the way in which the one who intends to educate must act: "Communicate with the soul of each one" (he says), and not with the community" (Unamuno, 1966a, p. 951). In many ways, this contrasts with the education of our time. In the contemporary era, systems of training by competences prevail, which transmit skills for pragmatic purposes, and which evaluate the appropriation of knowledge in a standardized way. Above all, because the emphasis is placed, in particular, on the value of teaching for work purposes. To a large extent, the institutionalized education of this time is conceived as a certification exercise of the qualification for work.

This neglects the freedom of teaching and research at universities, for example. It favors the teaching of techniques and methods that allow to standardize a professional performance (more than paying to the disciplinary deepening), in favor of any pre-programmed pragmatic finalism (Restrepo, 2015, p.137). This is further supported by the fact that both the funding needed to fulfill the obligations (academic and labor) within the universities, as well as its budgetary justification, has led to a condition that ends up being suffocating for the attempt to preserve freedom and political, academic and ideological autonomy when it comes to defining the spirit of teaching.

Unamuno, on the other hand, thinks that teaching (through writing, but also in the university faculty) is just the opposite of any dogmati-

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zation and standardization exercise of individuals. Education is for him a liberating power. And there is a contrast with the current education that usually thinks about certifications before listening to the other, and in assimilation by synthesis, rather than in the affirmation of difference. While Miguel de Unamuno conceives education as an exercise that is closer to analysis than to the systematic enunciation of conclusions. Especially because he is in favor of the scientific spirit but is wary of any dogmatic tendency of science. He prefers doubt and the creative value of uncertainty, rather than the aridity of some purported certainty.

In the face of much of the individualistic education that can be found in contemporary times, Unamuno opposes a pedagogy that, based on individuality, recognizes the otherness as another self. Starting from the cultivation of the individual personality of each man through language, he advocates a social conception of the individual and his necessary education in society. Thus, in his reflection, he emphasizes the sense of the community in the educational formation of citizens, since as Gemma Gordo (2012) has said: “Unamuno always believed in the importance of education for a country and in the possibilities of regeneration that could come from it” (p.176).

Therefore, the value of Unamuno’s educational thought is and should be high in a time like the one we go through. Because it defends the freedom and individuality of teachers and disciples, but it does not confine them to a kind of existential solipsism. Rather, it recalls that freedom is lived in a social context of true openness to the other, without prejudice to the contradiction and the dispute in the public space. Because he pretends that education avoids as much as possible the empty formalisms, and perhaps for this reason he opts for literary writing to go beyond the classroom and continue with his passionate pedagogical exercise, making his voice a kind of scalpel of his own and other soul.

## Conclusions

It is evident that Unamuno warns his most felt vocation in the profession of educator, especially because he does not identify the activity as a labor exercise subject to educational reforms that are institutionally promoted. Rather, it is conceived as an educator of individuals, because he considers them the inescapable background of the only collectivity he trusts: people. Therefore, his work as an intellectual and his exercise as a public character are facets of his own ministry as an educator. Above all, because he does

not separate the mission of commenting and discussing ideas from the mission of promoting the formation of an ethos. Therefore, teaching is, for him, a task that is consolidated as it transcends the classrooms.

For this reason, his specific vocation as an educator makes him realize that the deep formation of the person is linked to openness, to listening, to the affirmation of otherness. Therefore, his deep concern for individuality causes him to move away from a dogmatic exercise, and rather, he believes that education should consist in fostering creativity that precedes all forms of dogma. This is something that is clear in his texts, in his articles and novels as in his vast correspondence.

For Don Miguel de Unamuno, it is clear that an educator cannot inhibit himself from human problems, but rather, delves into them as a further practitioner of the very complex existence. Therefore, in contrast to all the boom of the supposedly automated training, he opposes training through writing, which is another way of manifesting and practicing interest in others.

Hence, his writing is pedagogical in the written sense. Because it does not offer finished ideas, but rather invitations to think about the deepest human conflicts. And it does so, moreover, assuming a literary style that leads the reader to be himself, who seeks and pretends to find the formation of his own idea of himself and his place in the world. Just as when someone moves through the fog and if it does not stop, the light is made and everything that leaves us absorbed is gradually unveiled. But it is only possible with the personal involvement of the person who reads and who learns.

This is precisely what he insists on saying that his writing and his public exercise as an intellectual is aimed at the affirmation of individuality (of his own and that of others). As stated in this article, there lies the didactical exercise of the writer that offers ways to face the doubts, avoiding the syllogism, the treaty and the systematization, and betting instead on the cognition that makes possible the literary language, especially when it is offered as a cultivation of the spirit in which the reader approaches the question that arises to him as if he were peering into the abyss of his spirit. Because Unamuno does not prevent his reader from the vertigo of doubt, but rather promotes the discovery of creativity that holds uncertainty.

Therefore, Unamuno does not separate those two vocations, the educator and the writer. The writer who fulfills his task of promoting the spirit who earnestly seeks an answer to the conflicts of existence is the one who is truly educating. And those who educate by opening up to their disciples the ways that language offers us as means of understanding oth-



erness and one's own personality are those who are on the road to being a real writer. Therefore, there is in Unamuno an example of understanding writing as an education that aims to influence life formation. Above all, because as mentioned in this article, both writing and education are for Miguel de Unamuno ways to make a deep donation of himself.

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