

The Uncertainties in Twentieth-
and Twenty-first Century Analytic Thought:
Miguel de Unamuno the Precursor

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Preface

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Introduction

DURING MY UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES in philosophy and Hispanic literature at New York University, I became thoroughly familiar with the works of Miguel de Unamuno. In the graduate school program I focused my interest on his philosophy. My doctoral dissertation, "Unamuno in the Light of Contemporary Logical Empiricism," which was later published, marked the beginning of a lifelong study resulting in numerous publications on Unamuno's philosophy.

Many Spanish and American philosophers and literary critics, *e.g.*, González Caminero, Sánchez Barbudo and Gonzalo Sobejano, tend to emphasize only the existential and literary aspects of Unamuno's works and connect him to nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures such as Søren Kierkegaard, William James, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Modern philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Carl Jaspers, and Paul Tillich are considered much more systematic and foundational and therefore more purely philosophical than Unamuno. Other Spanish thinkers, such as Hernán Benítez, deny that Unamuno was a philosopher at all. Benítez tells us that it is Unamuno's excess of originality that prevents him from being a philosopher. It is my contention, as I tried to show in *Unamuno a la luz del empirismo lógico contemporáneo*, that it is precisely his originality—the impossibility of classifying Unamuno—that makes him a great philosopher.

I tried to establish in my first book that Unamuno was a unique, eclectic philosopher-poet who defies the facile "-isms" of his critics. It is basically this unique and eclectic approach to fundamental philosophical problems that led past and present Spanish and American students of his philosophical and literary works to connect him mainly to the

existential, literary philosophers. *Unamuno a la luz del empirismo lógico contemporáneo* took into account the basic philosophical problems that have confronted humankind in the Western world from the time of the Greeks to the present: the theory of truth, the theory of language, the method and means of knowledge, consciousness and the mind-body problem, God, death, and immortality. I studied these problems as they were treated by Unamuno, and I contrasted his thoughts with those of the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle of the 1930s and many of the softer-line logical empiricists from the 1930s to the 1960s. I attempted to show that there was a definite unity between the two major philosophical schools: existentialism and logical empiricism. Yet both schools of thought were in deep conflict. The existentialists accused the positivists and empiricists of being extremely limited in their approach to the above-mentioned problems, and the positivists and empiricists denounced existentialists as speaking in vague or meaningless language.

Since the publication of my book in 1969 there have been many studies on Unamuno and logical positivism and logical empiricism. Most of the positivists and logical empiricists changed their beliefs about metaphysics, while a few gradually branched out with other schools such as pragmatism, materialism, physicalism, naturalism, realism, objectivism, and functionalism, to name a few. Some of the members of these schools choose to be grouped under the umbrella of "analytic philosophy," while others prefer the individual labels. Both groups, however, share a common denominator: they attempt to analyze philosophical problems to some degree—if not entirely—in terms of language and/or science. I argue that the majority of the analytic philosophers from the time of the Vienna Circle to the present, both in Europe and United States, has been gradually moving toward Unamuno's position with regard to the basic philosophical problems.

OBJECTIVE

The present work, which updates my first book, is written in English to reach a wider audience. It attempts to prove that the major twentieth-century analytic schools of thought, from the 1930s to the present, have leaned even more toward what Unamuno had already realized in the early part of the century: that their philosophical systems not