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Human Existential Desire for Immortality in Unamuno's Perspective

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Abstract - Human existential desire for immortality of the soul has been a persistent philosophical problem down the ages such that it is imperative for different thinkers to hold divergent opinions in their genuine search for the truth. Unamuno in his sincere search for the truth of immortality, firstly, tries rationalism, thereby tending towards Hegelianism. When he sees that the power of human reason cannot express the inexpressible – the cardinal inherent human hunger, thirst, and desire for self-perpetuation and self-preservation, the longing not to die but to live forever – he turns to irrationalism. In other words, Unamuno, claiming that man has eternal soul, substantiates his thesis of immortality of the human soul merely via the method of irrationalism. Is this sufficient? Therefore, the paper exposes different views on the immortality of the soul, and assesses Unamuno's method of enquiry and further clarifies his notion of immortality of the soul.

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'To discover death is to discover the hunger of immortality'

(Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life)

Keywords : desire, existential, immortality, perspective.

I. INTRODUCTION

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

Miguel De Unamuno in his sincere search for the truth of immortality, firstly, tries rationalism, thereby tending towards Hegelianism. When he sees that the power of human reason cannot express the

inexpressible – the cardinal inherent human hunger, thirst, and desire for self-perpetuation and self-preservation, the longing not to die but to live forever – he turns to irrationalism. So he abandons human reason and resorts to non-rational in order to explain the concept of immortality. Thus, Unamuno toes the path of irrationalism when he proposes that man is less rational than irrational. For him, man is 'instinct-packed'. Some thinkers opine that man does not have soul at all, and some others assert that man has corporeal soul, and yet others hold that man has immortal, eternal soul. Unamuno, claiming that man has eternal soul, substantiates his thesis of immortality of the human soul merely via the method of irrationalism. Is this sufficient? Therefore, this paper assesses Unamuno's method of enquiry and further clarifies his notion of immortality of the soul. Acknowledging the fact that all philosophical investigations and reflections aim at discovering and finding out the inherent difficulties in the people's views, redefine, refine and remodel them, this write-up elaborates on Unamuno's worldview on the concept of immortality of the human soul so as to illumine people's minds by examining critically their notions of immortality.

II. HUMAN THIRST NOT TO DIE

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

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

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

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

These arguments are occasioned by the fact that immortality in Unamuno is not a matter of rational demonstration but of feeling. Hence Unamuno insists that it is not rational arguments, but emotions, instincts that cause belief in future life. The uncertainty of attaining immortality of the soul leads Unamuno to see human life as a tragedy which goes into extinction at death. Philosophy, for him, is the science of the tragic sense of life in men and in peoples [2]: We are perishable but let us perish resisting; and if it is nothingness that waits us, let us so act that it shall be an unjust fate (pp. 263). Unamuno's philosophy of immortality of the soul has man as its point of departure [2]: The concrete man, the man of flesh and bone is at once the subject and the supreme object of all philosophy, whether certain self-styled philosophers like it or not (pp. 1-2). Hence Unamuno discusses immortality of the human soul, and not animal's or plant's soul. According to him [2], the concrete man whose soul is immortal means the man of flesh and bone; – I, you the man over there, all of us who move about the face of the earth. ...men of flesh and bone, men who are born, suffer, and, although they do not wish to die, die; men who are ends in themselves, not merely means; men who must be themselves and not others, men, in fine, who seek that which we call happiness (pp. 16). So Unamuno in [2] talks about man built with the instincts of self-preservation and self-perpetuation; the man who desires not to die but to live eternally, the man who thinks with all the body and all the soul, with the blood ... with the heart, with the lungs, with the belly, with the life (pp. 14).

Thus man is the concrete person we see [4], the real person that makes history (pp. 60). Man in his quest to live everlasting life projects himself to that which is beyond him, God, and this is the birth of religion (faith) on which Unamuno situates his notion of immortality of the soul. Man therefore becomes preoccupied about the question of God because he is preoccupied about himself, his own existence, the *why* of his origin and the *wherefore* of his destiny. This is the universal human longing [2]; the universal longing of all human souls ... consists in the effort to persist eternally and without a break in the continuity of consciousness (pp. 166). Man's hunger for God emanates from his innate thirst to live immortally in the life-after [2]: Why do I wish to know whence I come and whither I go, whence comes and whither goes everything that environs me, and what is the meaning of it all? For I do not wish to die or not definitely; if I do not die, what is my destiny? And if I die, then nothing has any meaning for me (pp. 33). Unamuno seems to suggest that the only burning concern for all men is the question of knowing what is to become of one's consciousness after one dies. This he calls [5] *El secreto de la vida* (the secret of human life), and he further defines it as *the appetite for divinity, the hunger for God* (pp. 830). Therefore man's hunger for

immortality propels him to search for God though many religious attempts to substantiate the existence of God rationally and convincingly. He conceives man's persistent longing for infinitude as that which gives birth to all philosophies. Unamuno alludes to Kant's moral argument for the existence of God as emanating from that of immortality of the soul. In other words, Kant introduces God with a view of tackling the concept of immortality of the soul. Unamuno in [3] tries to convince himself that man's life on earth should not be *all nothing ... those who die are buried and that's the end of it* (pp. 5). Rather he advocates that man should strive hard with hope and faith to attain this loved eternal happiness.

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

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

Unamuno asserts that reason and faith are enemies, yet they have a link in the sense of being associate combatants in the combat *to know*. He likens them to the animal that is devoured and the devourer. He accurately captures the essential characteristics of life – man's demand for rationality whether it is realized or not. Man needs to know what to hold to, he needs to manifest certainty about the bugging questions of life. And this for sure is called *reason*. Therefore this sole question of Unamuno applies to all men. At this point we need to clarify these two principles from which Unamuno chooses his method – the principles of rationality and irrationality. The principle of rationality holds that all behaviors, opinions, et cetera should be based on reason, not on feelings or religious belief. Conversely, the principle of irrationality emphasizes that all behaviors, opinions, et cetera should not be guided by reason, methodology, and/or logical rules but by drives, feelings, emotions, faith and their likes. In other words, irrationality is that theory, which is not accessible to reason, that which is perceptible only via irrational acts.

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, Unamuno in [3] talks of the various attempts to rationalize religion which give birth to

what may be referred to as the religion of science ... the religious cult of scientific truth (pp. 70). This is the tragedy of reason. The rational dissolution ends in dissolving reason itself [2]; it ends in the most absolute skepticism But reason going beyond truth itself, beyond the concept of reality itself, succeeds in plunging itself into the depths of skepticism. And in this abyss the skepticism of the reason encounters the despair of the heart, and this encounter leads to the discovery of a basis – a terrible basis! – for consolation to build on (pp. 104-105).

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

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

III. MAN IN CONFLICT OF LIFE

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

Although the concrete man of Unamuno may be fed up with this life and consequently desires to die, most often than not, yet he hopes to live eternally hereafter. Most people believe that death is a ticket with which one flies from this world to another. So even if they die, they still hope to live, not to die, in the life after. In other words, they invariably thirst to be immortal. More so abnormal persons who have thrown in the towel of existence have other people especially their relations and friends who long for immortality on their behalves. Since nobody speaks from nowhere, this point has some bearing in the Igbo (Africa) worldview that *akugbuo o nye ara, amara na mmadu nwe ya* (kill a mad person and you will see his/her people). So despite that these abnormal persons have gone-out-of-existence, in the strict sense, yet their people actually feel and hunger for their immortality (the salvation of their souls, as religious-minded would prefer to say).

There is this glaring contradiction in Unamuno's philosophy of immortality of the soul, as deciphered from one of his essays titled '*Adentro!*' (Inward). Therein, he discusses the actual man as *person* who seeks immortality – a person who lives in relation with his life [5]:

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

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

In the last statement of the extract, Unamuno's efforts to intertwine the two divergent views seem not very successful or convincing. Remember he talks about the eternal depth which develops in time, and finally caps up his theses in a single command: *day by day in eternity – that is how you should live.* Unamuno attempts to escape from the bare temporality of life to what may be called *historicism*. To do so he appeals to eternity, but perhaps the appeal is not plausible enough. Hence questions arise: How can one live day by day in eternity? Do days exist in eternity? What does it mean to live in eternity? How can eternity and time be reconciled? Neither Unamuno nor the author has answers to these puzzling questions, or is able to

reconcile these obvious contradictions. Thus the issues of eternity and time remain philosophical problems. Subsequently, this contradiction seems to beget the discrepancy ascertained in two different works of Unamuno. In the *Tragic Sense of Life* [2], he asserts: For in fact each man is unique and irreplaceable; there cannot be any other I; each one of us – our soul, that is, not our life – is worth the whole universe. I say the spirit and not the life.... For life is of use only in so far as it serves its lord and master, spirit, and if the master does perishes with the servant, neither the one nor the other is of any great value (pp. 269).

Here it is established that each man's soul – his person – is irreplaceable and that the person is what gives value to life. Life is at the service of the soul, of the person, and as such depends on it. As a result the soul is the root of life, the primary and substantive reality. Conversely in another work of Unamuno entitled *The Agony of Christianity* [4], he insists on the opposite point of view: The purpose of life is to make a soul, an immortal soul, a soul which is one's own handiwork. For when we die we leave a skeleton to the earth, a soul and a work to history. This is when we have lived, when we have done battle with the life which passes for the life which remains (pp. 25).

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

IV. METHOD OF IRRATIONALISM

Critical reading of Unamuno's method of philosophy leads us to deduce from Unamuno that the cardinal problem which has engendered the seed of philosophy in man ever since man came into being has been the issues of one and many, particulars and universals, known and unknown; the issues of natural and supernatural, life and death, rational and irrational. Ultimately man has been in the continuous quest to resolve this permanent conflict, the persistent dichotomy. And this is the key problem deciphered in Unamunoan philosophy vis-à-vis his *method of irrationalism*.

Unamuno begins his philosophy with the tool of rationalism prevalent in his time. That is, he uses reason to address the only vital issue of life – immortality of the soul. But he discovers that the power of human reason is weak [5]: I do not know how to express myself when I enter into these hiding-places and dark corners of the life of the spirit, and I foresee that adequate words are going to fail me (pp. 68). Therefore Unamuno's point of departure is a radical lack of confidence in reason, which leads him to consider it incapable of penetrating the mystery of life, and consequently of death, and still of immortality. Again he says [2]: There is no way of proving the immortality of the soul rationally (pp. 79). Indeed, this is an indictment on Unamuno because from the on-set, he has condemned *reason* as it were, and thus he seems to operate a closed-system which philosophy may not permit. The issue of immortality of the soul is in part a rational conception. Therefore, it left much to be desired if one excludes the rational aspect of the enquiry into the immortality of the human soul.

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

Therefore, the author proposes that *man in his rationality is irrational*, and *man in his irrationality is rational*. Igbo would say: *aka ekpe kwopọ aka nri, aka nri akwopọ aka ekpe* which literary means *left hand washes the right hand, and right hand washes the left hand* (let each hand compliments the other). Let us explain this in details. On the one hand, *man is irrational in his rationality* entails that human rationality alone cannot x-ray all phenomena of life; that human reason cannot all by itself grasp reality as a whole. Even what we call *reason* knows its limits and cannot go beyond itself [6]: The last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this (pp. 267). In other words, reason admits non-reason, rationality irrationality. Unamuno easily accepts that *human rationality cannot communicate the whole of reality, thing-in-itself, and not as it appears*, but on the contrary, he does not agree that *human irrationality cannot explicate the mystery of reality as a whole*. This point calls for deliberation because Unamuno emphasizes that human reason cannot plausibly explain the reality of immortality of the

soul. For him where human rationality stops, irrationality begins; and to rationally transmit, if possible, the irrational, you must of necessity turn it into rational before one can communicate it. Thus turned, the irrational ceases to be irrational; what one deals with is rational – no longer the irrational. Also Unamuno in [2] reduces all the rationalists' efforts, all their sophistries, to that which gear toward the sustenance of faith in the immortality of the soul (pp. 81).

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

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

If the irrational cum the rational aspects of life are in-built in man, then one may contend that every person is to a certain degree irrational and to a certain other degree rational. And man manifests these in the course of the events of his life. He approaches certain issues with his irrational dimension of life and certain other issues with his rational self, and yet certain other issues which may have proved abortive for either of the two aspects of man; he then approaches with the combined efforts of both dimensions. So if the problem of immortality, as Unamuno claims in [2], is the only real

vital problem, the problem that strikes at the root of our being, the problem of our individual and personal destiny, of the immortality of the soul (pp. 4), then it needs urgent and full attention of the combination of both irrationalism and rationalism since the two aspects actually constitute the *who* of man as Unamuno would say.

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

V. DISCUSSION

The concept of immortality of the human soul, according to Unamunoan philosophy, is innate in humans. This may have propelled Unamuno's saying that man is made up of the instincts of self-preservation and self-perpetuation, the irrational quest to live immortal life. As a result, man strives towards saving his soul which Unamuno depicts as strife towards the conquest of his own immortality. Again he sees this strife as the tragic sense of life [2], as the starting point of all human philosophy (pp. 36). Consequently, this work examines the concept of immortality of the soul and limits it to the concrete man of flesh and bone of Unamuno [2]: The man, who is born, suffers, thinks, feels, eats, and although he does not want to die, dies – the man who is an end in himself, and not merely a means (pp. 16). The man built with the instincts of self-preservation and self-perpetuation, yearns for the immortality of his soul.

So man's desire not to die but to live immortally or eternally enables him to project himself to that which is beyond him, God. As such religion is born. It is therefore in the framework of religion that Unamuno bases his understanding of immortality of the human soul. Hence he talks about faith, feelings, instincts, and

irrationality, and not reason, logical rules, rationality. For him [2], [5] only the former can en-route the question of immortality while the latter cannot express the inexpressible, the intransmissible (pp. 126), the *hiding-places and dark corners of the life of the spirit* (pp. 68).

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

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

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

Moreover we criticize Unamuno for inclining to the method of irrationalism as the only route to the problem of immortality. This seems to be a closed-system which philosophy does not entertain, and so it becomes an indictment on Unamunoan philosophy. Also his condemnation of rationalism is not justified. Since Unamuno [2] holds that the human person who thirsts for immortality of his soul has both the rational and irrational aspects of life, and that the problem of immortality is *the only real vital problem, the problem that strikes at the root of our being* (pp. 4), then the human person must of necessity give his full self, all his attentions both rationality and irrationality, reason (*senses*) and faith (*instincts*) to solving this one cardinal problem of life.

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

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