

AUTHORITY WITH AMBIGUITY IN KIERKEGAARD AND UNAMUNO'S AUTHORSHIP

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Kierkegaard presentó el concepto de autoridad en los escritos que datan del final de su vida como contrapunto a la estrategia literaria desarrollada por medio de pseudónimos varios para la promoción de un idea particular y espiritual de sujeto. Con el fin de comunicar coherentemente esta noción (esto es, sin imponer un sentido universal) hubo de reconocerse como autor “sin autoridad” [uden Myndighed]. La apasionada ambigüedad de este movimiento sería asumida décadas después por Miguel de Unamuno, en quien halló póstumamente uno de sus más fieles seguidores. Sintomáticamente, el español solía referírsele como al “hermano Kierkegaard”; pues como él creó un peculiar corpus literario: combinando ficción y no ficción, concibió autores imaginarios, escribió novelas acerca de cómo escribir una novela y plasmó pensamientos filosóficos a partir de la explotación de sus recursos poéticos, completamente afectado por una profunda inquietud religiosa.

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1. About the Christian Paradigm

Miguel de Unamuno openly refused to conceive faith as a pre-established belief in the unseen, a belief in *that* which could not be seen. He rather comprehended it as a creation of what *actually* (as a matter of fact and *in actu*) is being-unseen: “¿Crear lo que no vimos? -asks himself rhetorically- ¡Crear lo que no vimos, no!, sino crear lo que no vemos. Crear lo que no vemos, sí, crearlo, y vivirlo, y consumirlo, y volverlo a crear y consumirlo de nuevo vivién-

dolo otra vez, para otra vez crearlo... y así; en incesante tormento vital".¹ It is by seizing the similarities of the Spanish terms *creer* (to believe) and *crear* (to create), that Unamuno postulates the active, passionate behaviour that shall be maintained for a spiritual comprehension. Pointed out first in "La fe", an essay that dates from 1900, this precision would be reflected a decade later in his most famous philosophical piece; the piece in which Søren Kierkegaard's thought explicitly played a major role, namely *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres* (1911-1912).² According to Unamuno, religious belief does not consist in following abstract dogmas, but in creating lively, once and once again, the hidden, meaningful source. Creating that which we do not see, but nevertheless affects every day life in a concrete way; precisely, in the need for a meaningful life.³

The religious attitude that connects human beings with transcendence is, for Miguel de Unamuno, meant to be assured by Christ's exemplary life. More than asking for the support of a series of dogmas, the human face of the Trinity would encourage creatures to action, to a daily creation. Thus understood, the paradigm of *imitatio* transcends metaphysical theories and becomes, instead, a practical, ethical explanation. If Christ represents, as it is stated in the Gospel of John, the *logos* that turns the Creator's will comprehensible (inducing finally, by this same movement, the relief for worldly sufferings) *to believe* means to re-create lively, not intellectually, the meaning. In other words, to feel a responsibility in relation to the very act of "meaning". This common, English term appears to be both ideal and actual; or, as Unamuno says about faith, it works as an *actual-ideal* ("un ideal real"⁴): to *mean* is to say

¹ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "La fe", *Ensayos* (Tomo II), Publicaciones de la residencia de estudiantes, Madrid, 1916, p.221.

² UNAMUNO, Miguel de, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres*. Seguido de *Tratado del amor de Dios* (ed. Nelson Orringer), Tecnos, Madrid, 2005, p.342; *cfr.* p.301-302.

³ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "La fe", *ed.cit.*, p.223. Unamuno insists upon the fact that, from the Christian perspective, it is not necessary to attach to any ideology. Even the ones that refuse the official belief may be close to the spiritual dimension: "Tiénela muchos que de él dicen renegar; descubriríanla a poco que se ahondasen. Fe en Cristo, en la divinidad del hombre por Cristo revelada, en que somos, nos movemos y vivimos en Dios; fe que no estriba en sus ideas, sino en él; no en una doctrina que representara, sino en la persona histórica, en el espíritu que vivía y vivificaba y amaba. Las ideas no viven ni vivifican ni aman." (*Ibid.*, pp.228-229).

⁴ "La fe se alimenta del ideal y sólo del ideal, pero de un ideal real, concreto, viviente, encarnado y a la vez inasequible" (v. UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "La fe", *ed.cit.*, pp.222-223).

something, but then also to *mean it*, to support it with a specific, appropriated attitude. It is from this openly existential perspective that Kierkegaard emphasized, along his production (especially in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the work that Unamuno mainly refers to⁵), the need to conciliate theoretical and practical possibilities. In his journal he stated it clearly: “the distinction -is whether one speaks or whether one acts by speaking, whether one uses the voice, facial expression (...) or whether one uses his life, his existence”⁶. Before Unamuno's remarks, for which he would become exemplary, Kierkegaard stuck to the latter. Evidence will be provided in the following pages.

However, it is not the purpose of this essay to demonstrate, with a series of uncountable, existing facts, Unamuno's relation to Kierkegaard. This arduous task has been aimed in works like *Kierkegaard y Unamuno. La existencia religiosa*, by Jesús-Antonio Collado and, two decades later, in *Unamuno: afinidades y coincidencias kierkegaardianas*, by Gemma Roberts. The former points out similarities and differences in their respective concept of religion and God; while the latter, being composed of three essays, rather posits and develops the ideas in which both authors seem to agree, following, thus, Martin Nozick's interpretation⁷. Valuable as they indisputably are, and despite their significant differences, these approaches assume naturally that there is some kind of spiritual or ideological brotherhood, in tune with Unamuno's designation of the Dane as his brother, *el hermano Kierkegaard*. It should be noticed that there is no real difference in demonstrating the lim-

⁵ EVANS, Jan E., “Passion, Paradox, and Indirect Communication. The Influence of 'Postscript' on Miguel de Unamuno”, en *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook 2005* (Cappelørn, Niels Jørgen, Hermann Deuser & K. Brian Söderquist, eds.), Berlin/New York, 2005. pp. 137-152.

⁶ *Papirer X-2 A466* (v. KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *Journals and Papers*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1967).

⁷ COLLADO, Jesús-Antonio, *Kierkegaard y Unamuno. La existencia religiosa*, Gredos, Barcelona, 1962; ROBERTS, Gemma, *Unamuno: afinidades y coincidencias kierkegaardianas*, Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, Boulder, 1986; NOZICK, Martin, *Miguel de Unamuno*, Twayne, New York, 1971. Deserve to be mentioned, as well, the following articles: FASEL, Oscar A., “Observations on Unamuno and Kierkegaard”, *Hispania*, Vol. 38, No. 4. (Dec., 1955), pp. 443-450; BLANCO AGUINAGA, Carlos, “Unamuno's Niebla: Existence and the Game of Fiction”, *MLN*, Vol. 79, No. 2, Spanish Issue. (Mar., 1964), pp. 188-205; WEBBER, Ruth House, “Kierkegaard and the Elaboration of Unamuno's Niebla”, *Hispanic Review* Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr., 1964), pp. 118-134; EVANS, Jan E., “Passion, Paradox, and Indirect Communication. The Influence of 'Postscript' on Miguel de Unamuno”, *ed.cit.*; EVANS, Jan E., “Kierkegaard, Unamuno, and Don Quijote as the Knight of Faith”, *Symposium*, 60, 2006, p.3-16.

its of this brotherhood or exploiting its most intense coincidences, because both perspectives presuppose its existence. Furthermore, one could ask whether it is possible or not to find a profound link between them, and argue endlessly for its meaning. Instead of amplifying the research in this direction, the present text rather supports the thesis that what makes Unamuno a relative of Kierkegaard are not the many readings of his works (that he effectively possessed), but mainly his common need to find an appropriated, meaningful language for the communication of authorial inwardness in relation to his religious attitude. A kind of communication that, ambiguously enough -as we will illustrate-, is stated as problematical in both their respective works since the very establishment of its possibility, and that requires a complex, fictitious device for its development. Conceived as the possibility of being personally understood, this communication is to be found originally in the core of Christian paradigm by means of the co-action of *logos* and *agape*: *logos*, the redemptive incarnation of the Father's will become comprehensible, and *agape* (lat. *caritas*), the unconditioned, Christian work of love.

The ambiguity of the religious movement that affects Kierkegaard and Unamuno's production is not only justified by the Christian idea that no action at all can be truly certified as a charitable work, but also by the fact that there is not a pre-established discourse, a referential *logos* that assures the presence of love in the person that speaks. In the Gospel of Matthew (6:7) it is said how useless, when praying, it is to use plenty of clever words. And so Kierkegaard takes it literally: "There is no word, not one single one, not the most sacred one, about which we were able to say: if a person uses this word, it is unconditionally demonstrated that there is love in that person".⁸ An elevated or intellectual discourse does not guarantee the adequacy of the speaker. Similar, in this point, to the Kantian moral act, Kierkegaard- assumes that daily experience cannot provide a decisive proof for its religious validity. It is important to emphasize how this ambiguity, dramatically human, is related to divine authority: rather paradoxically -and this is the "how"- the fulfilling of the major Christian commandment (*you shall love your neighbour*) cannot be demonstrated, neither by acts nor words.

⁸ v. KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *Works of love*, (Howard and Edna Hong, ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995, p.13.

Cómo se hace una novela is the title of a late literary tour-de-force by Miguel de Unamuno, achieved during his Parisian exile between 1924 and 1925. A novel in which he wrote, on the one hand, about how a novel was to be written; and, on the other, attempted to reveal, adopting a confessional tone, the tension between the creative act and its very meaning for the others, the readers. As it happens along Søren Kierkegaard's treatment of his authorship, especially with the elucidation of the meaning of his authorial duty, in *Cómo se hace una novela* the topic of authority is problematized, ambiguously understood from the Christian perspective that relates *logos* and *agape*. Unamuno refers to the famous passage of the Bible where a woman who committed adultery is about to be stoned, in application of the Law of Moses (John 8:1-11). Jesus is then asked for his opinion by the accusers, which actually want to trap him. But instead of answering back, instead of explaining *what he thinks* with human words (words that could be legally confounded), he keeps quiet: seeming to be *lost in thought*, he merely writes something on the ground's dust. "Something" easily illegible, because, what kind of support is dust? Is it authoritarian enough? We can hardly imagine a better counter-example of Moses Stone-Tablets. The form of the commandment is, as Paul of Tarsus insisted on while his spreading task of Christendom, transformed by an internalized interpretation which is more existential than intellectual or legal; an interpretation that erases the limits, the criterions for the strict application of the law, but at the same time involves every single person, guilty or not. Thus, Jesus does not say explicitly what should be done in the case of the adulteress, but rather advises with an empty statement ("if any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her", John 8:7). Unamuno underlines the difficulty of this, his lecture; and deduces the appropriate-though-undeterminable attitude to follow: "¿Qué leyeron en el polvo sobre el que escribió el Maestro? ¿Leyeron algo? ¿Se detuvieron en aquella lectura? Yo, por mi parte, me voy por los caminos del campo y de la ciudad, de la naturaleza y de la historia, tratando de leer, para comentarlo, lo que el invisible dedo de Dios ha escrito en el polvo".⁹ This *invisible finger of God* points the possibility of a reading, but does not lecture, does not establish clear commandments for men's behaviour. All the responsibility is left to the one who assumes the task of a become-ethical, personal comprehension.

⁹ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, *Cómo se hace una novela*, Guadarrama, Madrid, 1977, p.49.

Such an understanding involves, at the same time, the *logos*, the comprehensive action of Christ's existence through the abasement of the Father. In his comment on the biblical passage of the adulteress, Unamuno specifies it: "Y Dios al escribirlo se doblaba a tierra. Y lo que Dios ha escrito es nuestro propio milagro, el milagro de cada uno de nosotros, San Agustín, Juan Jacobo, Juan Cassou, tú, lector, o yo que escribo con pluma y tinta este comentario, el milagro de nuestra conciencia de la soledad y de la eternidad humana".¹⁰ The movement of Christian paradigm, that both Unamuno and Kierkegaard recreate, may be thus understood from the perspective of ambiguity: it offers to the self, that inner person postulated first by Augustine of Hippo (later on would be conceived in secular terms as subjectivity or conscience), the lofty possibility to understand, to create its proper meaning; but at the same time leaves it in a tragic, unreachable loneliness. The transcendental power, the Creator, abases Himself in the person of Christ, whose sacrifice gives a tool for mankind's comprehension. "On his writing, God bends to the ground", stated -see the quote above- Unamuno. The "miracle" that represents the loving incarnation of God, the *logos*, remains ambiguous; because together with the possibility of a meaningful comprehension of one's self, it is simultaneously given the most frightful one: the absolute incomprehension from the world, la *soledad*, tragic, individual fate that the Spaniard refers to in the quote above (see, also, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres*), and that was originally experienced by Christ himself, when crucified. This lonesome suffering, depicted by Slavoj Žižek in a deeply theological work¹¹, allows the religious movement, the transcendence of the creatures' finitude, related in this manner to the creator. The words "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) show Christ's most human side: conscious of the paradoxical, almost absurd incapacity of his discourse (i.e., the need for a comforting explanation), seems to regret his insufficient condition as *logos* to the creator of logic¹², the creator of an a *priori* meaningful cosmos. Paradox does not come only from the idea of a *Death of God*, but from the fact that this self-understanding paradigm, distinctively Christian, takes place thanks

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ ŽIŽEK, Slavoj, *El títere y el enano. El núcleo perverso del cristianismo*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2005.

¹² Gordon Clark, philosopher and Calvinist theologian, went as far as to translate Logos for "Logic" in the opening verses of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Logic, and the Logic was with God and the Logic was God" (v. CLARK, Gordon H., *The Johannine Logos*, Trinity Foundation, Jefferson, MD, 1972).

to the impossibility of being understood by those others with whom it is actually shared the capability of understanding. A private dimension grows inside each individual, legitimated by the godly dialectic that authorizes inwardness; and, nevertheless, together with it grows the possibility of not having it recognized, in its specificity, by the impersonal mass. Through *logos* takes place the internalization of God's authority, according to Paul of Tarsus' message; but, as happened to Christ, the paradigmatic *logos*, authority can neither be imposed nor clearly exposed to the others. It is ambiguous (just as the work of love described with the parable of left hand's ignorance for what the right one does, in Matthew 6:3), and therefore needs - in Kierkegaard's words- to remain *incognito*, in spite of all the suffering.

2. The Problem of Communication

The peculiar ambiguity lying under the concept of authority is revealed in Kierkegaard's reflections about his literary, educative purpose; or, paraphrasing one of his late, auto-referential and biographical books, about that *work* as an author, which he precisely pretended to support "without authority" [*uden Myndighed*]. The confusion of literary authorship and religious authority appears clearer than everywhere else in the following quotation from his journal: "I as an author am a penitent, but if I let men perceive this, I would *eo ipso* not be a penitent, then they perhaps might even esteem me, that is, I would win them over directly, that is, I would deceive them"¹³. Assuming his condition as a mere author, he chooses to decline authority, thanks in part to what he calls "indirect communication" [*indirecte Meddelelse*]. But still, this disguised movement implies an authoritarian behaviour towards the others, who supposedly need to be relieved by a positive decep-

¹³ *Papirer IX A150* (v. KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *Journals and Papers*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1967).

¹⁴ Joakim Garff has pointed out some of the problems underlying Kierkegaard's late explanation about his literary purpose: "The desire to construct the self narratively or 'subjunctively' implies a destruction of the empirical or 'indicative' self, which, in a double sense, gives the bio-graphy the character of the deconstruction of the self. These are the terms of his bio-graphy, which renders impossible any final question of where (and when) Kierkegaard is a deceiver in his text and where (and when) the text deceives Kierkegaard" (v. GARFF, Joakim, "The Eyes of Argus. The point of View and Points of View with Respect to Kierkegaard's 'Activity as an Author'", *Kierkegaardiana* 15, C.A. Reitzel, Copenhagen, 1991, p.43).

tion; a deception that, recalling Socrates method, Kierkegaard would go so far as to call it *deception unto the truth*.¹⁴

Kierkegaard and Unamuno, religious writers both of them, experience the Christian universal-specificity in the very moment of creating a discourse about themselves for those others, the readers, capable also of self-understanding: "on the whole -writes Kierkegaard- one person can never understand another person altogether privately. Every third party (and that, after all, is what one person is always in relation to another) always understands the communication somewhat more universally"¹⁵. And Unamuno gives an almost identical reply: "No, no comunica uno lo que quería comunicar; apenas un pensamiento encarna en palabra, y así revestido sale al mundo, es de otro, o más bien no es de nadie por ser de todos. La carne de que se reviste el lenguaje es comunal y es externa; engurruñe al pensamiento, lo aprisiona y aun lo trastorna y contrahace"¹⁶. Unamuno *just like* Kierkegaard (if *that* individualistic reading could actually be shared, understood from a common perspective!) understands that language's incarnation adulterates somehow its very essence: its inward foundation is distorted when put outward.

Broken thus the linguistic link, the spiritual inwardness that both authors agree to conceive implies a detachment from the rest of selves, which happen then to be considered as mere objects, devaluated by the proper, individual existence. Before the so-called existentialisms, we find this same perspective already in Kierkegaard's thought, which locates them under the impersonal label of "the mass" [*Maengden*]. The Dane takes account of the misunderstanding of his contemporary fellows, long before Martin Heidegger's existential hermeneutics, and thus describes the improper way of understanding: "The multitude, the crowd, all agree, so they think, in thousands; they understand one another entirely in thousands. The better philosophers, however, know that there have never lived two persons who have completely understood each other"¹⁷. And, again, Unamuno (whose work seems to be predicted in Kierkegaard's preference for some philosophers) writes consequently about his need to escape the crowd:

¹⁵ KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *The book on Adler* (Howard and Edna Hong, ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998, p.92.

¹⁶ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "Intelectualidad y espiritualidad", en *Ensayos* (Tomo IV), Publicaciones de la residencia de estudiantes, Madrid, 1917, pp.198-199.

¹⁷ KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *The book on Adler*, ed.cit., p.92.

"Mi amor a la muchedumbre es lo que me lleva a huir de ella. Al huirla, la voy buscando" and, a little further, "Sólo la soledad nos derriete esa espesa capa de pudor que nos aísla a los unos de los otros; sólo en la soledad nos encontramos; y al encontrarnos, encontramos en nosotros a todos nuestros hermanos en soledad"¹⁸. This individual state of being (*la soledad*), understood by Unamuno as the most personal and common fate, can be translated both by the melancholic affection that is implied, as "Loneliness", and by the factual separation from the rest of selves, the "solitude" that reveals a longing, and together with it a common human origin, a mutual belonging.

As an application of the Christian paradigm, it seems to take place, for the foundation of the existential inwardness that we find both in Kierkegaard and Unamuno, a movement of this kind: *I am (more) myself when I am not mixed with the others, and being more myself I get to love better those who are not themselves, who are just "others" for themselves, as much as they are for me*. Love for the neighbour is, in these terms, unequivocally ambiguous: because, *if I really believe that he or she is just like me, why do I run away, looking for my specificity?* The fact is that the distinction of a personal "I" from the mass (authorized without daring to think *who* is the impersonal mass, acknowledging precisely its lack of *who*) establishes a criterion for the validity of the self's thought and action. Abraham's leap, taken from the book of *Genesis*, is one of the most meaningful examples for Kierkegaard, who developed it in his well known *Fear and Trembling*. Beyond any external determination, being impossible to comprehend by means of an objective, universally valid language, the model of subjectivity that represents Kierkegaard's Abraham authorizes itself in front of the Absolute, which validates the peripety. The meaning of it all, revealed in this explicitly religious example by God, paradigmatic authority, goes on to that individual [*Den Enkelte*]. Spiritually affected, discovers in his inner core a most extreme and unreachable principle of reality, a principle -we already mentioned it- that cannot be understood from the outside. The certainty of the proper deed is accom-

¹⁸ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "Soledad", en *Ensayos* (Tomo VI), Publicaciones de la residencia de estudiantes, Madrid, 1918, pp. 42-3. The following quotation explicitly connects him with Augustinian inwardness: "Sólo en la soledad, rota por ella la espesa costra del pudor que nos separa a los unos de los otros y de Dios a todos, no tenemos secretos para Dios; sólo en la soledad alzamos nuestro Corazón al centro del Universo; sólo en la soledad brota de nuestra alma el himno redentor de la confesión suprema" (*Ibid.*, p.43).

panied by the impossibility of communicating it. Kierkegaard develops this idea in the last problem of the three that compose *Fear and Trembling*, dedicated precisely to the impossible explanation of Abraham's silence. Should he have told his wife and son about the sacrifice God asked him for? But, could he really speak without being misunderstood?¹⁹

This same procedure (the religious foundation of subjectivity) was critically reported by Theodor W. Adorno in his early dissertation on Kierkegaard: "the ego, shelter of everything which is concrete, is contracted in its singularity in a way that nothing can be said of it: it becomes the maximum abstraction; to say that only the individual knows what the individual is, it is nothing but a paraphrase of the fact that nothing from the individual can be known; thus, the most determined I is at the same time the most undetermined I²⁰. In its enigmatic essence, the kierkegaardian subjectivity, described as "mythical and ambiguous", produces the meaning of actuality in an immanent, god-like (and thus, transcendental) movement; but, at the same time, detects the falsehood of its reflections, which turn meaningless when shared with other *egos*²¹. Jesús-Antonio Collado agreed to allude, in his book about Unamuno's relations to Kierkegaard, to the extraordinary emphasis placed by both thinkers on the category of subjectivity, which is even regarded as a "capital vice"²².

To conclude this section, it is necessary to underline that Unamuno's relations to Kierkegaard are not due to any ideological reason, but quite the opposite; i.e., because of the common belief of its lack, according to the religious, Christian paradigm. A belief translated by the subjective reading that enables by the responsibility (¿the authority?) implicit in the posited, untransferable interpretation. *Just like* Kierkegaard, Unamuno does not believe in the communication of an objective, shareable truth, but rather

¹⁹ Of course, Kierkegaard's reading of the Old Testament is a Christian one, from the perspective of the powerful, authoritarian ambiguity of *logos*. Derrida makes this point clear in *Donner la mort* (v. DERRIDA, Jacques, *Dar la muerte*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2006).

²⁰ ADORNO, Theodor W., *Kierkegaard. Construcción de lo estético*, Akal, Madrid, 2006, p.98

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

²² COLLADO, Jesús-Antonio, *op.cit.*, p.488 ("Ciertamente, podría decirse que éste es el vicio capital de Kierkegaard: una subjetividad exacerbada; como lo es también el de Unamuno, quien, por otra parte, posee un sentido de lo social que en vano se buscará en Kierkegaard").

recognizes it to exist exclusively and personally involved in the very act of creation. An act that separates them from that mass of readers for whom they actually create, while they become more and more aware of their inward, unreachable dimension. The feedback tension between ambiguity and authority, present throughout Kierkegaard and Unamuno's authorship, was also reflected by a well-known intermediate contemporary of them, Friedrich Nietzsche, who wrote: "Posthumous men -me, for example- are understood worse than the current, but better *paid attention to*. More precisely, we are never understood -and *hence* our authority".²³

3. Creators and Creatures

The overvaluation of subjectivity, obvious in Kierkegaard's position against Hegel and developed in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the work Unamuno quoted most, goes along with the crisis of language's objectivity, which is considered thus as an impersonal-thought-necessary medium for communication. In Kierkegaard's production, poetical resources, frequently attributed to pseudonymous authorities, are meant to solve precisely this problem. At this point takes place the -above mentioned- confusion between human authorship and divine authority. The Dane admits in his personal journal: "the fact that there is a pseudonym is the qualitative expression that it is a poet-communication, that is not I who speaks but another, that it is addressed to me as much as to others"²⁴. Assigning discourses to several pseudonyms, Kierkegaard pretends to be able to communicate thoughts, thoughts that actually are not his, but rather the non-authorized product of another author's imagination. Here again we confront an astonishing ambiguity, which was reflected, amongst other commentators, by Adorno²⁵. Certainly, it is not proper to ascribe

²³ "Posthume Menschen -ich zum Beispiel- werden schlechter verstanden als zeitgemässe, aber besser g e h ö r t. Strenger: wir werden nie verstanden -und d a h e r unsre Autorität..." (v. NIETZSCHE, Friedrich, KSA 6, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, DTV/ Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1988, p.61).

²⁴ *Papier X-2 A184* (v. KIERKEGAARD, Søren, *Journals and Papers*, ed.cit.). Close in spirit to Kierkegaard, Unamuno's passionate words say much about his problematical duty as a lyrical writer: "Es, en efecto, cosa terrible tener que escribir cuando se siente uno dominado por una potencia lírica, cuando la intimidad le rebosa, cuando no son noticias ni ideas o frases repetibles lo que se quiere decir, sino íntimas preocupaciones personales, de esas que por ser de cada uno lo son de todos" (UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "Desahogo lírico", en *Soliloquios y conversaciones*, Espasa-Calpe, Buenos Aires, 1942, p.54)

directly the contents of the pseudonym pieces to the one that decides to use the equivocal medium of pseudonymity. This medium represents the acknowledgement of the fact that he is not the owner of the truth, but just a self capable of conceiving it, of promoting this same conception into the others, those readers whom -perhaps not so humble- Kierkegaard needs to consider not enough subjective: "One of the tragedies of the modern times is precisely this -to have abolished the I, the personal I (...) I regard it as my service that by bringing poetized personalities who say I (my pseudonyms) into the centre of life's actuality, I have contributed, if possible, to familiarizing the contemporary age again to hearing an I, a personal I speak"²⁶. What is, then, Kierkegaard's relation to the fictitious, pseudonymous selves? Even if he claimed to be a mere observer, external to the aesthetical writing, pseudonymous works like *Fear and Trembling* -say much about his existence. Obviously, this opinion does not correspond either to a personal belief or a partial reading. He, himself, would consider retrospectively those works as causing his personal upbringing.²⁷

The problem that Kierkegaard faces by means of this strategy has been already outlined from the spirituality that supports his thought. As a true, radical problem, it cannot be solved, but rather studied in depth, progressively. Kierkegaard recognizes his task as author only "without authority" [*uden Myndighed*], which seems to be a clear paradox. Clearly paradoxical, but also utterly coherent according to the Christian paradigm, to the ambiguity that affects

²⁵ ADORNO, Theodor W., *Kierkegaard. Construcción de lo estético*, ed.cit., p.11 ("Respecto a la reivindicación poética, la obra de Kierkegaard es ambigua. Maliciosamente se presta a todo malentendido que inicie en el lector un proceso de apropiación de sus contenidos. La dialéctica en las cosas es para Kierkegaard a la vez dialéctica de la comunicación. En ésta, la obra reivindica engañosamente el título de lo poético para luego negarlo").

²⁶ The complete, meaningful passage: "One of the tragedies of the modern times is precisely this -to have abolished the I, the personal I. For this very reason ethical-religious communication is as if vanished from the world. For ethical-religious truth is related essentially to personality and can only be communicated by an I to an I. As soon as the communication becomes objective in this realm, the truth has become untruth. Personality is what we need. Therefore I regard it as my service that by bringing poetized personalities who say I (my pseudonyms) into the center of life's actuality, I have contributed, if possible, to familiarizing the contemporary age again to hearing an I, a personal I speak" (*Papirer* VIII-2 B88; *cf.* Pap. X-1 A531; v. *op.cit.*).

²⁷ "For me indirect communication has been instinctive within me, because in being an author I no doubt have also developed myself, and consequently the whole movement is backward, which is why from the beginning I could not state my plan directly, although I certainly was aware that a lot was fermenting within me." (*Pap.* X3 A413).

its origin; that is, the impossibility of being understood in the very act of understanding by love to the transcendental, by a secret identification with the authority. We have previously mentioned Abraham's sacrifice, an act that is commented in terms of *undecidability* by Jacques Derrida in *The Gift of Death*.²⁸ As Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, the creature that Kierkegaard re-creates in his fiction and names "Abraham" (but, couldn't also be called "Søren"?), cannot speak. Actually, he definitely *would prefer not to kill* what he loved most in the world (in Kierkegaard's biography: not to leave Regina, his fiancée), but feeling chosen by the ultimate, heavenly creator, *he had to do so*. The creature that appropriates the creator's authority, in a movement that Kierkegaard can only describe as absurd, represents a scandal for the society, but also for himself. Kierkegaard's claims (who especially by the end of his life, seizing the religious meaning of his *work as an author*, refused both religious authority and the exploitation of poetical resources) have to be understood in that sense. Undoubtedly, they appear not only paradoxical, but also pathetic: it is precisely by assuming a lack of legitimacy that he authorizes himself, so to accuse those who supposedly are not enough personal. In a rather authoritarian manner, Kierkegaard takes advantage of the obliged misunderstanding of his authorial task and sits close to the religious. In the name of something impossible to name, the kierkegaardian self appears above the rest of non-existing selves, in other words, the mass of mere readers.

Miguel de Unamuno, by his side, believed so deeply in the power of literary creation that he even compared it with God's. It should be noted that the extraordinary, self-conscious treatment of his production makes explicit what the kierkegaardian model implies, but whose consequences Kierkegaard does not always assume. Namely, that the author, the one who appears to be unequivocally authorized, becomes, by the same exclusive, transcendental leap, an isolated and meaningless being; in other words, an ambiguous focus of meaning. The consequences of this openly existential perspective are, in both cases, similar. If Kierkegaard, who claimed to be a unique self and promoted in the others their true "I", suffers by the end of his life from his fate, believing -perhaps needing to believe- that he has become in his contemporaries eyes' an overly dramatic caricature, Una-

²⁸ v. DERRIDA, Jacques, *Dar la muerte*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2006, pp.86-9.

muno recognizes -what could be called, after Cervantes' novel- the *quixotism* of his existence: he, the creator, has turned into a creature.²⁹ He is not anymore the one who decides but, existing for himself also in third person, *is decided* by others, the readers; the ones who shall fix posthumously the effective transcendence of his authority, who shall bring life to his effective death.³⁰

This dialectic, exemplary found in the second part of *El Quijote*, is revealed by Unamuno in *Niebla* at the precise moment when the main character, named Augusto, visits the author of it ("Miguel de Unamuno"), who immediately becomes, at the readers' eyes, a fictitious being. The author that is supposed to decide over his creatures' life and death admits ironically to be trapped by his own creation: he lets the creature, *his* creature, tell him that he is just a reader, a creature himself with the capacity of creating... but surely, also, with the possibility of being misunderstood, deceived by his own idea of reality. "No se incomode tanto -argues Augusto, Unamuno's character- si yo a mi vez dudo de la existencia de usted y no de la mía propia. Vamos a cuentas: ¿no ha sido usted el que no una sino varias veces ha dicho que Don Quijote y Sancho son no ya tan reales, sino más reales que Cervantes?"³¹ This ambiguous statement admits absolutely no reply. The creature accuses the creator through his own creation, erases the distinction between reality and fiction. This does not only represent a novelistic idea, explicitly related to Cervantes' major work; because Unamuno truly believes in the *undecidability* (the impossibility of reaching an elucidation) of his creation. He assumes that his daily task, what brings meaning to his life, is also what makes him unreachable, for himself as well. In his theory about the novel (his novel about a possible theory of the creative act, entitled *Cómo se hace una novela*) he concludes -back to the reflections on faith with which this

²⁹ Cfr. EVANS, Jan E., "Don Quijote, Kierkegaard, Unamuno, and Don Quijote as the Knight of Faith", *ed.cit.* This article does not develop the fictional devices that are being exposed in this section, but rather studies the adequacy of Unamuno's understanding of Cervantes' character as a representative of Kierkegaard's category of the religious individual depicted in *Fear and Trembling*.

³⁰ "Nuestro señor Don Quijote se ensimismó tanto en sus lecturas de los libros de caballerías que acabó 'asimismándose', o sea atribuyéndose a sí mismo las proezas que allí leía. Y por este camino llegó a enajenarse, a entregarse a los demás, y bus-cándose a sí propio darse por entero en holocausto a los otros" (UNAMUNO, Miguel de, "¡Ensimismate! Una vez más", in *Monodialogos*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1972, p.21).

³¹ UNAMUNO, Miguel de, *Niebla*, Espasa, Buenos Aires, 1942, p.172.

essay began- by relating creation, literary authorship, to a kind of religious belief: “este Unamuno me da vida y muerte, me crea y me destruye, me sostiene y me ahoga. Es mi agonía. ¿Seré como me creo o como se me cree? Y he aquí cómo estas líneas se convierten en una confesión ante mi yo desconocido e inconocible; desconocido he inconocible para mí mismo. He aquí que hago la leyenda en la que he de enterrarme”³².

Shall I be as I believe I am, or as I am believed to be (“como se me cree”)? Unamuno's desperate and ambivalent question can also be translated from the original language thus: *Shall I be as I create myself* (“como me creo”), *or as I am believed to be... as a creator?* What is clear is that the “legend” Miguel de Unamuno alludes to, his existence as an ambiguously authorized author, led him to the confession of a final, almost posthumous confusion. Something similar had happened decades before to his beloved, spiritual brother, Søren Kierkegaard, who experienced the need to write a final and true explanation of his authorship. An explanation projected, after many doubts, to be published posthumously with the (not ambiguous at all, but rather authoritarian) title: *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*. In spite of the absolute authority of death, most unambiguous *medium* of all, it has survived the problem of his authorship's meaning (a living proof: the uncountable existing bibliography on this purpose). And, although Kierkegaard's attempt to categorize explicitly, in the posthumous text, his poetical production under the idea of “ambiguity” [*Tvetydigheden*]³³, the clue of it remains secretly hidden, as a consequence of the ideal of subjectivity legitimated by means of an ambiguous, lifelong melancholic isolation. “A secret *always* provokes trembling”, wrote Derrida³⁴, who believed also that sharing it with others did not imply an elucidation, but rather the opposite. Perhaps this is the reason why Kierkegaard's unsolved and problematic

³² UNAMUNO, Miguel de, *Cómo se hace una novela*, ed.cit., p.66 (cfr., p.80).

³³ The objectiveness of a concept like “ambiguity” is hardly to believe, especially when the one who argues in favour has done everything along his lifetime to escape from philosophical speculations of this kind. Certainly, the control over the rest of the entire production (whose texts, as Joakim Garff has explained, would like to “over-write”) is, in *The Point of View*, dramatic (v. GARFF, Joakim, “The Eyes of Argus. The point of View and Points of View with Respect to Kierkegaard's 'Activity as an Author'”, ed.cit., p.36). The indirect way of communicating, the poetic discourse in which Kierkegaard often assumes to be trapped (Pap. X-2 A106; 83; Cfr. Pap. Pap. X-1 A78; 63 and X-1 A510; 329) appears to be, when directly, unequivocally confessed, at its maximum equivocalness.

³⁴ DERRIDA, Jacques, op.cit., p.65 (cfr. p.92).

issue keeps on appearing meaningful and suggestive. Actually, who can decide the meaning that energetically refuses to mean something? And -what seems even more troubling- is it possible not to get involved, from the perspective of the existing beings that we are meant to be, as readers, in such an *undecidable*, fictitious and yet real quest?

Abstract

The concept of authority was introduced in Søren Kierkegaard's writings by the end of his lifetime as a counterpoint to his literary strategy, developed by means of several pseudonyms, to promote the idea of a particular, spiritual self. In order to communicate coherently this notion, i.e. without imposing a universal meaning, he had to recognize himself as an author "without authority" [*uden Myndighed*]. The passionate ambiguity of this movement would be assumed some decades later by Miguel de Unamuno, in whom he posthumously found one of the most faithful followers. Symptomatically enough, the Spaniard used to call him "Brother Kierkegaard" [*el hermano Kierkegaard*]. Like him, he created a peculiar literary corpus: combining fiction and non-fiction, he conceived imaginary authors, wrote novels about how to write a novel, and captured philosophical thoughts supported by his poetical resources, affected altogether by a profound religious concern.