

PROBATIONARY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANT

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PROJECT TITLE

A Radical Reading of Miguel de Unamuno's Political Rhetoric: Ideabreaker and Intrahistorian

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

During this grant period, I had a course release of three hours, and my objective with this grant was to finalize my book project. My objective was to find a publisher for the book and finish the manuscript of the book for publication. This project stems from my dissertation. In the following report, I will review a description of the project and the project results.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and shortly before he died, renowned Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno confronted fascist generals, telling them, "You will conquer because you have brute force, but you will not convince. To convince you need what you lack, reason and right." Indeed, Unamuno's entire life was marked by similarly courageous battles of public intellectualism. Living during a particularly polarized period in Spanish history, he witnessed many conflicts, wars, and changes of governmental regime. In the midst of this polarization, he often took to the newspaper to diagnose Spain's problems and offered scathing critiques of its corrupt politicians. Although many are familiar with his works of poetry, fiction, and philosophy, he also spent a great deal of his time on public scholarship. During his career, he composed over 3,000 newspaper columns critiquing the government and causing him to be deposed, sentenced to jail, and exiled.

This manuscript examines these newspaper columns in order to understand the key ways in which Unamuno addressed the polarized political landscape of his time. In the articles, Unamuno characterized Spain's underlying problem as one of ideology, excess rationalism, and inauthenticity, and he approached it in two ways. First, he acted as what he called an "ideabreaker," or as one who assumes an attitude of skepticism to break down the ideologies that grasped the people. Second, he attempted to create a unified sense of community in Spain through what he called "intrahistory," or the history that occurs beneath written history. Intrahistory comprises the everyday bonds between people, and Unamuno suggested that a new rhetoric could strengthen these bonds, supplant ideology, and construct a collective consciousness.

Unamuno remains relevant today as many countries around the world are facing increased ideological extremism and polarization, and this book sheds light on the contemporary issue of building community in such a political climate. As such, it unearths questions at the forefront of many societies, such as how should we approach polarization and restore community? What is the role of the public intellectual in a polarized state? How does a society repair itself when it is torn apart by extreme political ideologies? Unamuno's columns address these questions and new methods of public intellectualism.

While Unamuno's novels and works of philosophy have been widely discussed, his political articles have not been studied or translated into English. Examining this case offers several interventions in the fields of rhetoric, philosophy, Hispanic studies, and political theory. Primarily, this study offers new rhetorical strategies for resisting polarization and ideological obsession in our current time. Moreover, this work translates selections of Unamuno's political rhetoric into English for the first time, bringing his political thought to new audiences around the world. Finally, it challenges the traditional

notion of the public intellectual, providing a new model for public intellectuals wishing to intervene in their own polarized societies.

I have dedicated the past five years of my research to this work because Unamuno is one of the most important Spanish thinkers and one of the most fascinating public intellectuals of the twentieth century. While many books offer conservative readings of his work, this study argues that he was quite a radical figure, in terms of his religious beliefs, his political philosophy, and his style of public engagement. As a radical activist, he wrote for anarchist and socialist periodicals in his youth, and he continued to speak out against every form of government in Spain during his lifetime. Although the mediums of communication have evolved since his lifetime, we continue to face similar political and social crises of polarization around the globe. While the work of some public intellectuals may be too embedded in their immediate contexts, Unamuno's work continues to speak to us, and his insights and methods remain valuable contributions to public life. Indeed, polarization and ideological obsession are timeless and global problems, resurfacing in every epoch and in every society. Looking to Unamuno's work provides insight on how to combat today's excesses of polarization and ideology.

TABLE OF CONTENTS AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Agitator of Spirits: Unamuno, Radical Rhetorical Public Intellectual

This chapter traces Unamuno's development as a public intellectual who critically responded to the political events in Spain's history. While reviewing the biographical events that shaped him as a public intellectual and political critic, this chapter also considers the political and social events in Spain's history that influenced his work.

CHAPTER 2

Inauthenticity and Ideocracy: The Authority of Rationalism and The Paradox of Common Sense

This chapter examines how Unamuno defined and categorized the problem during his time. According to Unamuno, one of the problems was the issue of inauthenticity, as he observed people neglecting their individual thought and development. A second problem Unamuno identified was the "tyranny of ideas," or the obsession with ideology, dogma, rationality, and authority. Unamuno argues that following the common sense and neglecting the individual sense can have dire consequences for a society. Rather than being controlled by authority, science, and "common" sense, Unamuno encourages people to enrich the individual sense.

CHAPTER 3

Ideabreaker: Overcoming the Challenge of Doctrinal Tendency

This chapter looks at one way that Unamuno approached the problem of ideological obsession. He believed in the power of ideas to form people into groups and control them. Moreover, ideas have material effects, as the "tyranny of ideas" serves as the foundation of the tyranny of government. Thus, Unamuno believed that by breaking ideas, he could break the tyrannical grasp of political regimes. This chapter defines how Unamuno functioned as an ideabreaker, one who applies an attitude of skepticism to all ideas, critically breaking them down. As he was a professor of classical studies, his skepticism was rooted in the ancient Greek notion of skepticism. After breaking ideas, he presents his concept altereutralty as a way of becoming free of ideology. Altereutralty takes an active position between polarized sides, uniting both poles, as it balances and resolves tensions.

CHAPTER 4

Intrahistorian: Rhetorically Constructing Collective Consciousness

This chapter delves into Unamuno's views on language and his belief that a reformed language could strengthen the collective consciousness of the people. It defines the concept of intrahistory, a neologism coined by Unamuno that describes the history found beneath the level of written history. Intrahistory also comprises the bonds between everyday people. The chapter also defines the rhetoric of intrahistory and demonstrates how Unamuno utilized this concept in his writings. Components of the rhetoric of intrahistory include the use of common myths and legends, descriptions of the physical environment, and nostalgic representations of childhood and familial relationships.

CHAPTER 5

"I, Individual, Poet, Prophet, and Myth": Unamuno's Legacy and the Radical Unamunian Public Intellectual

This chapter examines Unamuno's legacy as a figure in the history of ideas both in Spain and abroad. It also defines the Unamunian Public Intellectual, one who assumes an attitude of skepticism toward all ideas and then breaks ideas, only to rebuild a collective consciousness through a reliance on a shared intrahistory and a reformed language. This chapter demonstrates Unamuno's relevance in the present, offering a model for intellectuals dealing with political landscapes of polarization and ideological obsession.

RESULTS

My initial book proposal was rejected by the first press, so during this grant period, I reworked the proposal and met with several other publishers. One of the leading Unamunian scholars in Europe reviewed the proposal, and I signed a book contract with the University of Wales Press. Concurrently, I worked on the manuscript, and I am now in the final stages of revising footnotes and editing the manuscript, which is due to the publisher in August of this year. I was successful in achieving my goals during this grant period.