

TRAGIC SENSE OF LIFE

By Miguel de Unamuno

Immortality is at hand. Sciences such as gerontology, biophysics, and biochemistry promise prolonged life-extension in the near future and a probable "cure" for aging and death within the lifetimes of people alive today.

Research proceeds at a dizzying rate, and whether the most important breakthroughs come first in the area of transplants, cloned or artificial replacement organs, cryonics, anti-aging drugs, or simply improved regimens in diet and exercise, the medical path of the future seems clear. Death and aging will be conquered as surely as so many other diseases of the past.

There exists, however, a peculiar nonscientific problem that may accompany this progress: Many people are philosophically unprepared—even opposed—to the very idea of immortality. Unbelievably, there are living persons who fear not death, but life itself—if it is to be extended beyond some traditional limit. Such a position affects not only those that desire death sometime for themselves, but everyone else as well. For as Alan Harrington has observed:

The attack on death has not been organized properly, for the simple reason that we have not dared announce it as an over-all objective. Still unconsciously afraid of antagonizing the gods (in this regard, the medical profession being as superstitious as the rest of us), we cannot bear to "speak the word," let the hubris out, that we have a secret intent to do away with death entirely. Having no word, we have no program.

There are several books out that present viable cases for eternal life—Ettinger's *Prospect of Immortality*, F.M. Esfandiary's *Optimism One*, Harrington's own *Immortalist*, and Jerome Tuccille's exuberant *Here Comes Immortality*. However, one of the most stirring and beautiful arguments on why people should desire immortality comes from a very strange and unusual book, Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*.

The book is strange in that it was written over 60 years ago—at a time

when the state of the bio-medical arts offered no chance for personal survival beyond normally "allotted" life spans. Unusual, in that Unamuno—one of Spain's greatest philosophers and writers—developed his plea for immortality almost as an aside in the wider context of his overall religious view of life. This broader view is unfortunately filled with a great many errors. Objectivists and other atheists will find little of value in it—though others may enjoy its lovely style and wide literary erudition.

Unamuno was professor of Greek at the University of Salamanca and possessed a most profound classical and humanist education. He was a proudly self-proclaimed individualist who set his goals high and thought little of those who did not do the same: "Only the feeble resign themselves to final death and substitute some other desire for the longing for personal immortality."

Despite his religious orientation, Unamuno felt that "the individual is the end of the Universe," and, even more startling, felt it important to state in the clearest possible language that:

I do not want to die—no; I neither want to die nor do I want to want to die; I want to live for ever and ever and ever. I want this "I" to live—this "I" that I am and that I feel myself to be here and now. I am the centre of the universe. . . . Each man is worth more than the whole of humanity. . . . That which we call egoism is the principal of psychic gravity, the necessary postulate.

Though human freedom is in the final analysis always a volitional matter, always subject to individual choice and action, there have existed external barriers to its achievement. Mortality is the last and greatest of these. It will soon be removed from the human scene. The tragedy of Unamuno's title need be tragic no more. When science permits human beings to live forever, their sense of life will no longer have any excuse not to be transformed into one of eternal happiness, joy, and triumph. REVIEWED BY WILLIAM DANKS / *Philosophy* (330 pages) / LR Price \$2.50

AN AFTERWORD FROM

Smith Replies to Hospers

This is in response to John Hospers' letter [LR, April] commenting on my review of C. J. Ducasse's book, *Causation and the Types of Necessity* [LR, January].

First, I agree with Professor Hospers that Nature, Mind, and Death represents Ducasse's "maturest thoughts" and that it is "a delight to read." Since, however, LR requested that I review *Causation and the Types of Necessity*, I trust that I shall not be taken too severely to task for doing my job.

Second, Professor Hospers takes issue with my claim that entities may properly be spoken of as causes. This is an important point, and one which needs to be pursued in greater detail. I can only sketch my position here.

Unless one rules out, a priori, final causation (i.e., causal explanation in terms of purpose), then it makes perfect sense to speak of an entity functioning as a cause. If, for example, we ask what caused a window to be opened, we may say that the proximate, or "efficient," cause was the upward movement of someone's arms. In another sense, however, we may speak of a final cause—e.g., the purpose of a person to let air in the room. This is one sense in which we may speak of an entity (in this case, a human being) as a cause. A given person, with a particular purpose in mind, caused the window to open. Notice that these two causal accounts—efficient and final—supplement each other; they focus on different aspects of the same state of affairs. (For those who wish to pursue this topic in more detail, I recommend Richard Taylor's *Action and Purpose*, and G. H. von Wright's *Explanation and Understanding*.)

Finally, I wish to comment on Professor Hospers' curious stance in regard to linguistic philosophy. Con-

cerning the meaning of "linguistic philosophy," Professor Hospers writes: "If it means that philosophy is basically a study of language, then it is false." Precisely. But Ducasse's remarks come dangerously close to this position, which is why I objected to them. For instance, in distinguishing philosophy from the natural sciences, Ducasse says that philosophy "is not concerned at all with the facts of nature, either to discover them, to explain them, to relate them, or to predict them." What, then, is the subject matter of philosophy? According to Ducasse, "It is only with truths about such questions as the meaning of the term 'true,' or 'real,' or 'good,' and the like . . . that philosophy is concerned." (My emphasis.) In other words, "The pressing problems of philosophy are . . . primarily problems of definition. . . ."

No sane person would dispute Professor Hospers' remarks concerning the importance of language in philosophic analysis, but to characterize such a view as "linguistic philosophy" is highly misleading, to say the least. A conception of "linguistic philosophy" that includes, by Professor Hospers' own admission, "every major philosopher from Plato and Aristotle to the present"—and which would therefore include such figures as Hegel—distorts the meaning of "linguistic philosophy" beyond recognition.

It is somewhat ironic, in this regard, that Professor Hospers cites Brand Blanshard's *Reason and Analysis* as a "classic of American philosophy." In two chapters devoted to a critique of "linguistic philosophy," Blanshard treats it as a distinctively modern movement which views the problems of philosophy as basically problems of language. Indeed, this is the meaning commonly ascribed to the label "linguistic philosophy," and it is a meaning which would not encompass Plato, Aristotle, et al.

This is the linguistic philosophy to which I strenuously object. Whatever contributions to clarity this trend has made (and even these are often exaggerated), its overall effect has been the trivialization of philosophy. If this dismissal of linguistic philosophy makes Professor Hospers "weary," then so be it.

GEORGE H. SMITH
Hollywood, Calif.

Groupies?

In his review of Nathaniel Branden's pamphlet, *An Informal Discussion of Biocentric Therapy* [LR, March], David Kantorowitz makes the following comment: "One of the problems in reading or listening to Dr. Branden is believing that behavior and attitudinal change occurs in biocentric therapy at the great speed portrayed." Mr. Kantorowitz immediately adds, however, that on the basis of personal observation, he believes Branden's claims are accurate.

The implication we are left with is that if Branden's patients claim to have experienced very rapid "behavior and attitudinal change" as a result of their therapy, this is evidence of the validity of Branden's psychological theories.

Further on in the same review, Mr. Kantorowitz unwittingly makes a remark which calls this assumption into question: "Dr. Branden has privately confessed to me that the real reason that people develop psychological problems is in order to meet him."

Branden, of course, made his comment in jest, and this is also the apparent reason that Kantorowitz saw fit to include it in his review. But remarks made in jest often contain significant truths which the speaker would never admit openly. If we think about it for a moment, how can we avoid noting how very plausible is this idea that many of Branden's patients manufacture psychological problems purely as an excuse to meet him? Prior to his break with Rand, Branden had achieved a demigod status in the minds of tens of thousands of people—a status second only to that of Rand herself. To a considerable extent, he retains that status to this day. It is by no means implausible that a high proportion of his patients are primarily motivated by a desire to meet him and that they either manufacture or exaggerate problems in order to do so. Since "psychological problems" which the individual has merely decreed into existence can be quickly and easily decreed out of existence again, it is hardly a surprise that Branden's patients claim to have experienced very rapid behavior and attitude change as a result of their therapy. Such "results," while they may titillate Mr. Branden's ego, are neither evidence of the

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Readers, Authors, Reviewers

validity of his psychological theories nor of the validity of the idea that meaningful psychological change is something which can be achieved quickly.

MITCHELL JONES
Austin, Texas

While it may be accurate, as Mr. Jones points out, that comments made in jest are often true, it is comforting to note that serious, purposeful comments (see Mr. Jones' letter) are often not true.

There are two points in Mr. Jones' letter that merit comment. The first is the assertion that rapid progress in biocentric therapy may be due to clients' manufacturing problems in order to meet Dr. Branden. Once that purpose has been served, the problems may be quickly given up. The irony is that Dr. Branden's jest (clients really develop problems in order to meet him) was actually created by myself and aimed solely at injecting humor into a review generally conceived and written in a light style. While the jest was never made, the point involved remains. Every psychotherapist is aware that a percentage of his clientele are purchasing friendship by entering therapy. This is doubtless true in Branden's case as well. Mr. Jones, however, hints that this is the critical factor in explaining Branden's success.

As most things in life are possible, Mr. Jones' assertions are as well. I doubt their validity however. If Mr. Jones' points are correct, certain deductions would be logically suggested. First, clients who "knew of" Dr. Branden (you must know of someone before you can adore him to the point of paying to meet him) would do better than clients who are referred to him by the usual sources. While many clients come to Branden after reading his books, etc., many come to him by the usual word-of-mouth sources. This latter group of people are not libertarians and often have never heard of Branden's objectivist history. I have genuinely failed to notice a differential response by these two groups to Branden's efforts. Second, since concrete problems that are confirmed by others (e.g., impotence, obesity) are more likely to be "real" than amorphous problems unsupported by any observable

data, then clients reporting concrete problems should not do as well as the other group of clients. Again, as far as I can tell, this is just not the case.

In any event, the success engendered by any form of uncontrolled, clinical intervention cannot lend conclusive evidence of the validity of underlying psychological theories. The issue is a methodological one. Regardless of the logical deduction of therapy intervention from theory, one can never partial out the effects of the therapist (unwitting reinforcement and modeling of desired behavior) and other set factors. Proving a functional relationship between behavior or attitude and suspected cause relies upon controlled manipulation of the cause with regular changes noted in the behavior. Rarely is such control demonstrated in a clinical setting. Dr. Branden is not experimentally oriented in this way nor would his style of working lend easily to this type of effort. Quick progress in therapy indicates achievement of quick progress in therapy—nothing more.

DAVID A. KANTOROWITZ
Santa Monica, Calif.

Monstrous!

Long a follower of the horror/science-fiction genre, I am disappointed at Robert LeFevre's superficial review of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. He spends most of his review lauding Shelley's virtues, her fascination with the Prometheus legend, and the novel's purported anti-statist theme; only one sentence is given over to a factual description of the story.

In fact, there is really no parallel between the Prometheus legend and Shelley's novel. Prometheus was moved by compassion to take the responsibility for imparting power to humanity. In contrast, Victor Frankenstein is driven by egotistical monomania in an enterprise whose consequences he cowardly evades. The story of *Frankenstein* is the story of the hatred and cruelty visited on a benevolent and prodigious creature—who repays its tormentors with bitter revenge. Victor Frankenstein is the moral monster of this classic tale, for he sets the course of his creature's development.

Unfortunately, most persons are familiar with the tale only through the prostituted mummery of the cinema, thereby associating the hoary machine-running-amok theme with the novel. I recommend that all persons should read *Frankenstein*, if only to get the facts straight.

It is not easy reading, however. LeFevre neglects to mention the crucial fact that Mary Shelley was an amateur attempting one of the first experiments in the novel as a literary form. Expectably, the novel suffers from a ponderous plot-line and mannered prose. Although Shelley ricochets from one moral theme to another, nothing is resolved, and religious notions of "blasphemy" pervade all considerations of Victor's responsibility. *Frankenstein* is basically an ambitious novel written ineptly by a person of limited philosophical insight. There is no internal evidence to support LeFevre's Man-vs.-the-State symbolism, and such an interpretation only intrudes into and distorts the actual meaning of the story.

If readers are interested in tales of the generation and regeneration of monsters, they might well be interested in either Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* or Robert Silverberg's *The Second Trip*. But, above all, read *Frankenstein* with clear eyes.

MIKE DUNN
Seattle, Wash.

Monster expert Mike Dunn, self-proclaimed horror/science-fiction follower, now finds horror in my review of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Moving from sci-fi [Argh!—KTP] to fantasy he finds that Dr. Frankenstein is the monster, Mary Shelley not far behind, and most monstrous of all is LeFevre, who fails to see the story as Mike Dunn sees it.

Peace, o monster critic. You have a right to see it through your own horrendous point of view. And so do I. And the fact that we disagree may indeed stir a few of the slothful to obtain a copy and read for themselves; the point of any book review when the book is worthy of thoughtful readership.

ROBERT LEFEVRE
Orange, Calif.

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A Word To Our Readers

■ This month *Libertarian Review* goes to 16 pages. This one-third increase in size—at no increase in cost to you—makes it possible for us to bring you more reviews each month. Also new this month is "LR Book Briefs," which you will find on page 10. Each month, "Book Briefs" will give you mini-reviews of several titles of interest to libertarians, all of which we will make available to you through the LR Mail-Order Service.

The new *Libertarian Review* gives you more for your money—a rare thing in these inflationary times! Why not extend your subscription today? One year (12 issues) of the expanded LR is still only \$6. As a way of saying thanks for saving us the cost of mailing you a renewal notice, we will send you free a copy of Murray N. Rothbard's "Nobel Prize to Hayek" (which includes an interview with Hayek held by LR associate editor Tibor Machan). For details of this offer, see the "FREE" box below.

■ This past April, the Science Fiction Writers of America awarded the first Grand Master Nebula Award to Robert A. Heinlein. The award was created by SFWA to honor living science fiction writers whose works, taken as a whole, have profoundly and positively influenced the sf genre. It is only fitting for Heinlein, who has been called "one of the greatest tellers of tales America has produced," to have received the first Grand Master Nebula, for his work quite literally has shaped the course of modern science fiction. Treat yourself to some of the Grand Master's best from the LR Mail-Order Service: *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (\$1.25), *Stranger in a Strange Land* (\$1.50), and *Time Enough for Love* (\$4.77—our cost).

■ Available this month at our cost is the Murray Rothbard poster done by Deanne Hollinger. This poster, depicting one of the giants of contemporary libertarianism, measures 22" x 24". Professionally done and suitable for framing, it is available from the LR Book Service for only \$1. Buy several and get your Christmas shopping done early this year!

■ This month we are offering 10% off on *American Liberalism and World Politics, 1931-1941*, the definitive study of pre-World War II American foreign policy by the distinguished revisionist historian James J. Martin. This two-volume boxed set was reviewed by Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., in the May 1974 *Libertarian Review*. It is the perfect companion to *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, edited by Harry Elmer Barnes and reviewed by James J. Martin in our April 1975 issue. Together these works will give you the real story of U.S. foreign policy from Hoover to Hiroshima. This month only, *American Liberalism and World Politics, 1931-1941* is yours at the low price of \$20.25.

■ Things to Come: Future issues of LR will feature Nicholas von Hoffman on Karl Hess' *Dear America*, J. Neil Schulman reviewing Tuccille's *Who's Afraid of 1984?*, Walter E. Grinder on the Great Depression, Robert Masters offering some reflections on Nietzsche, and Ida Walters on the possibilities offered by bio-feedback. And beginning in August: Jeff Rigenbach's new series on the world's great literature. Stick with us; you won't be disappointed!

■ *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, by Robert Nozick, continues to receive serious attention from critics and friends alike. Now, added to the extensive coverage given the book in *Newsweek*, *New Republic*, *Forbes*, the *New York Review of Books*, and the *New York Times*, comes the news that Nozick has been given the National Book Award in philosophy and religion. It is a rare thing when a serious philosophical work creates such a stir. Read it and find out why. (LR price \$12.95.)

■ The LR Book Service is happy to once again have in stock the libertarian classic *Human Action*, by Ludwig von Mises. For several months the book was unavailable from the publisher. Unfortunately, the ravages of inflation have taken their toll; *Human Action* is now selling for \$20.

REVIEWERS FOR THIS ISSUE: Barbara Branden lives in Los Angeles and recently completed her first novel, *Price No Object*. William Danks is a Fellow of the University of Hawaii's Faculty Institute on Planetary Resource Management. John Hospers is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California, the winner of one electoral vote in the 1972 presidential election, and an LR associate editor. C. Ronald Kimberling is a free-lance writer whose work has appeared in *The New Guard*, *Human Events*, *The Individualist*, and *Oui*, where he is a regular contributor to the "Openers" section. Robert LeFevre is the founder and past president of Rampart College and the editor of *LeFevre's Journal*. Leonard P. Liggio teaches history at City College of New York. Henry G. Manne is Director and Distinguished Professor of Law at the Center for Studies in Law and Economics, University of Miami School of Law. Robert Masters is a free-lance writer currently in transit between the wilds of New York City and the wilds of Washington state. Robert Poole, Jr. is an editor of *Reason* magazine. Jeff Rigenbach is book reviewer for the Los Angeles all-news radio station KFWB. Murray N. Rothbard, Professor of Economics at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, is an LR associate editor, editor of *Libertarian Forum*, and libertarianism's man for all seasons. Robert Sherrill is Washington correspondent of the *Nation* and a prolific writer on American politics. Jarret B. Wollstein studied psychology at the University of Maryland and is currently in the investment business.



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