

Narrative Fiction as Philosophical Exploration: A Case Study on Self-Envy and Akrasia

1 Unamuno's Literature as Philosophy of Emotion

Emotions were one of the main philosophical concerns of Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936). His novels, short stories, poems, narrations, and other fictional and non-fictional writings all seek to understand the human heart better. However, Unamuno rarely presents his complex and fine-grained views on feelings in form of statements or arguments in favour of specific positions. With the sole exception of his major essay *Del Sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1913), in which he analyses the »man of flesh and bone« and his desire for survival and immortality, Unamuno's philosophy of emotions is developed primarily in literary form. Indeed, his literary writings engage with a wide range of emotional phenomena – such as sham emotions, herostratism, envy, jealousy, love, hatred, malice etc. – as he aims to shed light on their constitutive role for human beings. Yet, in none of them do we find arguments for specific claims. As Carlos A. Longhurst has noted, Unamuno was not a conventional philosopher: »[...] he was a philosopher in a sense that has less to do with the discipline that is practiced in university departments of philosophy and more to do with the mythic style of exploring and communicating ideas through the medium of imagined worlds, as was the case with much Greek tragedy, with which Unamuno was very familiar.« (Longhurst 2014, p. 153) Thus, if we want to know and understand the basis of Unamuno's philosophy of emotions, we have to turn to his literary writings rather than to his major philosophical treatise.

Unamuno's interest in philosophizing in literary form has two main motivations. First of all, he thought that rational argument might deceive and mislead us. He did not reject rational forms of argumentation, but he was aware of the manifold ways in which they can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Contrary to rational argument, literature does not aim at reducing the vital experiences to justified true statements. Secondly, and related to the first motivating factor, literature has the capacity not only to present the complexities of human beings without circumscribing them within specific concepts but also to engage the reader at an emotional level. Thus, while Unamuno sees rational argumentation and poetic reason as two complementary ways of doing

philosophy, he deems literature to be the most appropriate means of expressing the intricacies of human life.¹

As noted above, Unamuno's philosophy of emotion is presented mainly in literary form. As such, his fictional writings have a strong cognitive component. They are, as Julián Marías puts it, a »method for obtaining knowledge.« (Marías 1950, p. 67) Literature is Unamuno's psychological laboratory where he explores the possibilities of human existence. His works of fiction function as thought experiments through which questions concerning human nature are carefully investigated. However, the expressions »psychological laboratory« and »thought experiment« should be employed here only in a metaphorical sense. Unamuno's literature *shows* us the complexities of human existence by *imaginatively acquainting us* with essential aspects of our human reality, but it does not set out overt arguments in favour of specific positions or distinct claims.

Inspired by Gottfried Gabriel's philosophy of literature, I will offer a reading of Unamuno's literature based on the idea that if his literature conveys knowledge, it is not because we are persuaded to (dis)approve of any particular claim but rather because his writing places us in contact with aspects of reality which are essential to an understanding of the *conditio humana*.² Through the work of fiction, Unamuno explores and presents to the reader experiences that are too rich to be reduced to a set of statements. Thus, they are cognitively valuable not only for Unamuno but also for the reader. Given that the experiences with which we are confronted while reading literature are never closed or resolved but instead entail moments of indeterminacy, ambiguity, and interpretation, readers are invited to arrive at their own conclusions.

Taking this idea that Unamuno's literary writings are cognitively valuable to both the writer and the reader, this paper explores one of his most challenging short stories: *Artemio, heuatontimoroumenos* (1918). In this text, Unamuno deals with an experience for which he coins the expression ›self-envy‹. Envy was a recurrent topic of fascination for Unamuno. He believed envy to be the most tragic of all passions since it is the one in which the conflict between reality and desire, which, for Unamuno, is inherent to the nature of human beings, is made most tangible. As he writes: »Envy is a thousand times more terrible

-
- 1 I follow here Ferrater Mora, according to whom Unamuno was able to develop his philosophy using literary as well as non-literary forms, depending on the ideas he wanted to express and the topics he wanted to address (Ferrater Mora 1957, p. 106). I disagree with María Zambrano's interpretation, according to which Unamuno moved from non-literary to literary forms so as to overcome the limitations of rational argument (Zambrano 2004, p. 79).
 - 2 Gabriel 2014, p. 163–180 and Longhurst 2014, p. 153. For a non-metaphorical use of the analogy between literature and thought experiments, cf. Elgin 2014, p. 221–241.

than hunger, for it is spiritual hunger.« (Unamuno 1921, p. 55) *Abel Sanchez*, one of his most celebrated novels, is devoted to the case of existential envy, i.e., an envy felt towards the entire existence of another human being. Meanwhile, the novel *La Tia Tula*, the only one of his novels to feature a female protagonist, can be interpreted as a case study of the envy of motherhood.³ But is ›self-envy‹ conceptually sound? Or is it an unsuitable phrase for an emotional state that has nothing to do with envy?

The paper proceeds in four steps in order to answer these questions. After presenting Unamuno's *Artemio, heuatontimoroumenos* (section 2), the following section considers the notion of self-envy, which I interpret as a singular but instructive case of envy (section 3). My attention then turns to a more general emotional state, which I interpret using the concept of akratic emotion (section 4). The paper concludes with some considerations as to the use of literature as a form of thought experiment for philosophical purposes. In sum, I show that *Artemio* can be effectively read as a thought experiment in relation to envy and akrasia, i.e., the state of acting against one's better judgement.

2 *Artemio, heuatontimoroumenos*

Unamuno's *Artemio, heuatontimoroumenos* is a three-page short story. It was originally published in 1918 in *Nuevo Mundo*. The text begins with an intriguing question: May envy's corrosive and toxic nature cause the envious person to envy herself, part of herself, or one of her egos? Rather than answering this question directly, Unamuno presents the vital struggle of a fictional character called ›Artemio A. Silva‹.

As it is the case with all of Unamuno's fictional figures, Artemio is marked by an inner conflict. In this particular case, however, the inner conflict leads to a division of the self into two rival halves. On the one side, Artemio has a public ego – an arriviste, egoist, and optimist; on the other side, he has a private ego – pessimistic and full of moral concerns. Both egos, which Unamuno calls ›demonic‹ and ›angelic‹ respectively, exist in permanent tension, and despite all efforts, Artemio is unable to resolve the struggle in favour of one or the other part of the self. The actions planned by the demonic ego are constantly suffocated by the moral man, and simultaneously, the ideas and ideals of the angelic ego are systematically sabotaged by the demonic one. Neither of the two can emerge victorious from the permanent state of conflict. The result of this self-sabotaging attitude is that each one of his egos knows what action

3 Cf. Sinclair 2001, p. 140.

should be undertaken, and, yet, these very plans are frustrated by the other ego. This state of frustration and dissatisfaction leads Artemio to hate himself and to be self-contemptuous. He also regrets being unable to allow one of his egos to become dominant over the other and to take full control of his life. The angelic ego envies the demonic one for being goal- and action-oriented but, at the same time, restrains him from any perverse actions. The demonic ego is resentful towards the angelic one for frustrating all his perverse plans. In the end, the angelic ego hates the demonic one, with the former becoming as bad as the latter, while the demonic ego develops a strong form of contempt towards the angelic one. As a result, neither of Artemio's egos is able to develop its respective vocation. People say of him: »He was too cowardly to be bad.« (translation by the author) (Unamuno 1966, p. 879)⁴ Artemio is unable to let his bad ego fully develop his bad tendencies, but he is also too faint-hearted to allow the angelic ego to take control of his whole life.

To describe Artemio's existential situation, Unamuno uses the expression »heautontimoroumenos«, which means »the one who torments himself« and coins the expression »self-envy« (Unamuno 1966, p. 879).⁵ This concept, however, is far from being self-evidently clear, and it requires some further elucidation. To speak of ›self-envy‹ seems at first sight implausible and mistaken for envy has traditionally been defined as an emotion that is directed towards others, concerning their goods and talents. How, then, are we to make sense of the idea of feeling envious of ourselves? I will attempt to answer this question in the following sections by arguing that the notion of ›self-envy‹ is neither the product of Unamuno's overflowing imagination, nor is it the result of an excess of creativity; rather, ›self-envy‹ is a sound concept. An interpretation of this concept and the experience that it describes is necessary both to cast light on aspects of envy that have been overlooked hitherto in philosophical research and to understand the relation between emotions in general (and not only envy) and the will.

3 Self-Envy as Envy

Unlike psychoanalysis, which has drawn attention to the idea of ›self-envy‹ by studying how envy might be directed towards oneself, philosophers have paid

4 »No tuvo valor para ser malo.«

5 My interpretation in this paper will mainly focus on the emotion of envy. Other authors have read *Artemio* through the lens of the division of the self and its moral implications, downplaying the role of envy in this short story to a secondary one (Ilie 1967, p. 144).

little attention to this possibility.⁶ Envy has been considered paradigmatically as a *social* emotion, one that is directed towards others (and their talents, qualities, and existences) but not one that can be felt towards oneself. From a philosophical perspective, the notion of ›self-envy‹ is paradoxical. In contrast to self-hatred or self-contempt, the theoretical construct of ›self-envy‹ remains, for philosophers, unclear. In this context, I offer Unamuno's text as a case study in respect of this phenomenon and I explore what this notion might teach us about envy more generally.⁷

As already stated, Unamuno considers envy to emerge from the painful experience of a conflict or gap between reality and desire. More specifically, it is the gap between our ontological reality – the factual person that each of us is individually – and our ontological possibilities – the different individuals we could have or can become. Usually, we experience this gap by comparing ourselves with others who have some significance for us, but in the case of Artemio, Unamuno underlines the possibility of experiencing this gap by comparing our factual self with our desired selves without taking the other into consideration. Envy highlights and magnifies something we lack and something that is essential for our feeling of self-worth, though we need not compare ourselves to others in order to experience such envy. For instance, this form of emotion might also be aroused by comparing our factual self with our possible selves, none of which came to be realized. For the latter case to occur, one would have to objectify part of oneself and consider this objectified part as an outsider, as something external. What is interesting in Unamuno's short narration is that he interprets this case not as remorse, regret, repentance, or sorrow but as a case of envy, i.e., a case in which we envy ourselves for not realizing those possibilities inherent in ourselves.

As if the above were not enough, the case presented by Unamuno is even more complicated. However, once clarified, this complication might help us make some features of envy and self-envy more salient, but for now, some interpretative effort is called for. According to my interpretation, in *Artemio* there are two possible selves that work as focal points of comparison; that is to say, the gap between the real and desired Self can be interpreted in two different directions:

- (a) *Envy between different selves (angelic vs. demonic ego)*: In this case, we have a divided self and each one of the egos envies the other. Artemio's

6 For a study of ›self-envy‹ in psychoanalysis by way of object relations theory, see López Corvo 1994.

7 For Unamuno's philosophy of the emotions (and in particular envy) in literary form, Cf. Vendrell Ferran forthcoming.

angelic ego envies the capacity of the demonic ego to pursue its goals regardless of the means that have to be taken into consideration, whereas the demonic ego envies the virtuosity of the angelic one. If we assume the factual ego as the angelic ego – for instance, because this ego is regarded as Artemio’s intimate self or is characterized as his moral ›conscience‹ – then the demonic ego works as a desired ego – for instance, the angelic envies its power of determination, strength, will power, etc. But if we take the factual ego to be the demonic one – for instance, because this is Artemio’s public ego, the one that does not allow him to be a good person etc. – then this ego envies the angelic one for being morally good and it is the angelic ego that operates as the desired self. Notice that this possibility presupposes a split of the ego in two different selves which envy each other.

- (b) *Envy within each one of the parts of the self*: It is also possible that each part of the self envies the possibilities inherent in it and those that have yet to be realized. In this case, we do not have a struggle between the angelic and the demonic ego but rather an ›internal‹ struggle within each part of the self. Thus, the factual demonic ego envies the possibility of having been a real man of action and of politics, who pursued his goals unscrupulously, a possibility that was constantly frustrated by the angelic ego. The factual demonic ego envies the desired demonic ego (who never came to be). Analogously, the factual angelic ego envies the possibility of having become a truly virtuous man, but this possibility inherent in him was permanently frustrated by the plans and actions of the arriviste and demonic ego. Here, the factual angelic ego – who was, in Unamuno’s own words, »hypocritical« (Unamuno 1966, p. 879) – envies the desired angelic ego (who never came to be). Envy here does not imply a split of the ego, but it takes place between a factual self and a possible desired self which cannot come to realization.

If this interpretation about the concept of ›self-envy‹ is right, then we should distinguish two different meanings of this notion which I consider to be two types of self-envy. (a) *Self-envy as envy between parts of the self*: In this case, to feel envious of oneself presupposes a splitting of the self in which one part envies the other. (b) *Self-envy as envy between a factual and a possible self*: Here a self envies the possibilities inherent in it that have not been realized. Put it briefly: A factual self envies a possible desired self. According to the view that I am defending here, both types of ›self-envy‹ resemble envy in the sense that this emotion points to a gap between reality and desire. We have good reasons to assume that ›self-envy‹ is a form of ›envy‹. An analysis of the three moments

belonging to the concept ›envy‹ will help us support this claim and defend the idea that ›self-envy‹ is a philosophically sound concept.

a) *Affective Moment*: At the affective level, envy is an emotion that never appears in isolation; rather, it is always accompanied by other negative emotions. For the case of ›self-envy‹, we see that both types of this emotion are linked to rivalry, contempt, and hatred. There is a permanent rivalry between the angelic and the demonic egos (a) as well as between each one of these factual egos and the possibilities that each ego experiences as unfulfilled (b). There is also mutual hatred and contempt. As in envy, both types of ›self-envy‹ involve feeling the lack of power to change the situation.

b) *Cognitive Moment*: At the cognitive level, envy presupposes an awareness of the value of the envied person. At the heart of envy lies an appraisal of the value of the envied. Envy also presupposes a complex set of evaluations to which the following elements belong: 1) Identification of a significant other with whom we might identify. This other must be relevant to us; 2) comparison by which we focus on those aspects of the envied that are relevant for our self-assessment and self-evaluation; 3) as a result of this comparison, we are at a disadvantage; 4) we deem this to be unfair; 5) and we consider the other to be a burden. All of these elements are also given in the case of ›self-envy‹, but in the latter case, there is no other whose value we perceive and to whom we compare ourselves.

Let's consider these five cognitive elements for the two types of ›self-envy‹ mentioned above. (a) Regarding the first type, there is a splitting of the ego into two selves. The demonic self identifies with the angelic one because it is a former part of oneself. The demonic ego compares itself with the virtues and the vices of the angelic one, which is important for its self-evaluation. As a result, it feels at disadvantage because it considers the angelic ego to be morally better than itself. The demonic self feels treated unfairly by the angelic one, who constantly reminds it of its moral flawed character, and it considers the angelic ego to be a burden to the realization of its plans (an analogous case can be built for the angelic ego envying the demonic one). (b) Regarding the second type of ›self-envy‹, according to which the factual self envies those inherent possibilities that never came to realization, we can also find the five conditions mentioned above. First, the factual self identifies with its past or its desires, and, thus, there is identification with the possible self. It then compares itself with its intrinsic possibilities, which are important for its self-assessment. As a result, it feels a disadvantage; e.g., Artemio's factual demonic self feels a disadvantage when he compares itself with what it could have achieved. It experiences the situation as unfair, but the unfairness is mostly attributed to external

factors. One might complain that the possibilities inherent to oneself have not come to realization because of the lack of favourable conditions. Interestingly enough, what is considered to be a burden here are these external factors, but at the same time, it becomes clear to the envious person that it was because of herself that these possibilities never came to realization.

c) *Conative Moment*: At the conative level, envy has a strong motivational force, which is directed towards the symbolic or real destruction of the other, and which aims to change the order of the world so that the envious no longer feels inferior and powerless. The same conative self-destructive moment can be found in both cases of ›self-envy‹, but here, the destructive and corrosive elements are directed towards oneself. (a) In the first case of self-envy, one part of the self desires the annihilation of the other part of the self. (b) In the second type, the self can direct this destructive force towards two different objects: the factual self (which leads to self-contempt and self-hatred) or to the possibilities inherent to oneself (which leads to a passive, unambitious, and punishing attitude that excludes each form of human flourishing).

Unamuno's conceptual construction of ›self-envy‹ as developed in the figure of Artemio reflects these three different moments although it does so in a peculiar way because instead of being directed towards a significant other, the target of one's envy is oneself (in the two different cases stated above: one of the divided parts of the self or the possible self). To recap, despite its paradoxical appearance, the concept of ›self-envy‹ is a sound one and it can appear in the two types mentioned above.

4 Self-Envy as Akratic Emotion

This section will explore a different feature of Unamuno's short story, which concerns not just envy but emotions more generally. To this end, one might ask: How are emotions related to our will? According to my proposal here, ›self-envy‹ is a case of akratic emotion, i.e., an emotion we experience against our better judgement.

In this light, *Artemio* is not just a thought experiment about envy; it is also a thought experiment about the weakness of the will. The character of Artemio is strikingly irrational; indeed, it is unlikely that one would ever encounter someone like him in real life. The accusation of irrationality affects both types of self-envy mentioned above: the one that involves a split of the ego (a) and the one in which the factual self envies the possible selves (b). However, I will limit my interpretation in this section to the case of the split

of the ego because Unamuno in his narration focuses mainly on this kind of self-envy.⁸ Artemio's demonic and angelic egos simultaneously hold contradictory beliefs, desires, and feelings. We can identify irrational patterns on at least three levels: 1) *Cognitive Irrationality*: At the cognitive level, Artemio is able to hold opposing beliefs about what he should think of himself, of life, and of others; 2) *Practical Irrationality*: The demonic and the angelic ego constantly plan conflicting actions; and 3) *Emotional Irrationality*: Artemio's two egos experience emotions that are mutually exclusive.

This attribution of irrationality should not lead us to interpret Artemio as crazy and pathological but rather as a philosophically interesting case that deserves full attention. The aspect that I am interested in here is that Artemio remains in this situation of pain and conflict throughout his entire life despite his better judgement. For Artemio, the contradictory feelings and the sense of *extreme ambivalence* that he has towards himself are very unpleasant. He suffers and is frustrated, which leads him to despise himself. Artemio is aware that it would be better not to have these emotions, but he is unable to get rid of them: Neither the angelic ego nor the demonic one is able to assume control over the other part of the self. The strategy of partitioning the self into two different egos does not alleviate the pain: Both parts remain in constant tension and conflict. At the end, Unamuno describes how the two egos merge into one another: The angelic becomes lost in the demonic one, leading to the dissolution of both (Unamuno 1966, p. 879). But his entire life was one of suffering and pain. How is this possible?

In what follows, an answer to this question will be given by focusing on the last case of irrationality mentioned above, which affects Artemio's emotions. To this end, it is necessary to introduce the concept of ›akratic emotion‹. ›Akra-sia‹ is usually interpreted as a phenomenon that concerns intentional *actions* that are carried out against the agent's better judgement. However, as Alfred Mele has shown, it is also possible to consider an analogous case for *emotions*, that is to say that we might experience emotions against our better judgement. Examples of akratic emotions abound in our everyday lives: We may be in love with someone who we think does not deserve it, or we might feel envious of our best friend while thinking that we should in fact celebrate her success. *Artemio* should be interpreted in line with these examples.

Mele defines akratic emotions as follows: »S's being or remaining in a feeling-state, X, during t is an instance of strict akratic feeling if and only if S's being

8 It is not difficult to imagine cases in which the factual self judges, acts, and feels differently than his possible self.

or remaining in X during t is uncompelled and, during t , S consciously holds a judgement to the effect that there is good and sufficient reason for his not being or remaining in X .« (Mele 1989, p. 281)⁹ There are three main features entailed in this definition, which should be fleshed out before applying them to Artemio's case.

- 1) *Akratic emotion is an emotion that exists against the subject's better judgement* (Mele 1989, p. 277). A first feature of akratic emotions is that the subject of the emotion judges that it is better not to experience it.
- 2) *Akratic emotion is experienced as unexplainable*. It is not just that we do not want to experience it but also that we cannot understand why we experience it. Thus, to feel nervous before an important event in our life, despite our not wanting to feel this way, is not an instance of akratic emotion because in this case we find the emotion reasonable.
- 3) *Akratic emotions must be uncompelled*. According to Mele, akratic emotions can be controlled by the subject who experiences them (cf. Mele 1989, p. 278). While phobia is a case of compelled emotion, i.e., an emotion that is beyond our control (think of, for instance, the uncontrolled fear that an arachnophobic feels towards spiders even if he knows they are not dangerous), akratic emotions are under the subject's control. When we experience an akratic emotion, we need to have at our disposal a suitable means to prevent ourselves from feeling it or to change it. We are not just helpless victims of our akratic emotions: The subject has at her disposal ways of bringing these emotions into line with her better judgement. For instance, we may center our attention in order to understand the deep roots and sources of our feelings or we may contrast our perception of a certain situation with the perceptions others might have of the same situation.

All of these moments, which, according to Mele, are characteristic of akratic emotions, might be applied to Artemio's case. The first two criteria seem unproblematic. He judges it would be better not to be ambivalent, and he not only rejects the ambivalence but also finds it unreasonable. However, the last feature of akratic emotions in Mele's model seems questionable when applied to Artemio. Is Artemio's ambivalence a compelled or an uncompelled emotion? Does Artemio have some responsibility for and control over his feelings? We tend to judge him to be responsible for his feelings: He should put his emotions

9 Although Mele speaks about »feelings«, in this paper, I apply his theory to the case of »emotions«. I take emotions to constitute a specific type of »feeling« – one that is based on cognitions (perceptions, imaginings, beliefs, and suppositions), with a specific phenomenology, and which is directed towards values.

in line with his better judgement. And we think that he has at his disposal ways to overcome his ambivalence. At the same time and despite all efforts, Artemio fails and cannot allow one of his egos to take control of his life. Thus, his case shows that the boundaries between compelled and uncompelled emotions are not easy to trace.¹⁰ As formulated by Mele, the third criterion is too vague to be successfully applied to our case, and it requires more refinement in order to help us explain what happens when we are not in control of our emotions.

For this refinement, I will take up a suggestion proposed by Dina Mendonça, according to which cases of akratic emotion are those in which »we also feel confused, puzzled and sometimes surprised by our own feelings, unearthing a meta-emotional level within our emotional world.« (Mendonça 2016, p. 53) Mendonça's point here is that we do not simply experience an akratic emotion; we also react emotionally to it. This is precisely what happens to Artemio in Unamuno's short story: The character develops emotional attitudes of contempt, anger, sadness, resentment, and hatred towards his own feeling of ambivalence. He despises himself for being the way he is, an irremediably envious person, incapable of establishing a consistent personality. Akratic emotions might come together with a meta-emotional level: They involve meta-emotions about the initial emotions. The analysis of these meta-emotions might serve to refine Mele's third criterion for akratic emotions concerning the possibility of taking control over our own (akratic) feelings.

Prima facie, there are two important elements here. First, an akratic emotion usually involves a meta-emotion, which takes place concurrently with the akratic emotion. The akratic emotion will determine and influence the kind of meta-emotions we experience towards it, but it is also possible that the meta-emotion (or meta-emotions) might interact with the akratic emotion, influencing, shaping, colouring, and moulding it. The influence that meta-emotions might exert over akratic emotions may come in different degrees and take different forms. For instance, it is possible that meta-emotions can reinforce our first-order emotions, as when we are sad about being sad. But it is also possible that both emotional experiences move in opposite directions, as when one feels embarrassed about being angry. In Artemio's case, the latter possibility is in evidence: He feels uneasy about his ambivalence. The fact that meta-emotion and akratic emotion are in contradiction leads him to become aware that he really wants to eliminate his ambivalence. It might also motivate him to transform the akratic emotion (i.e., his ambivalence) into a more desirable emotion. This points to the possibility of taking control over his feelings.

¹⁰ For this criticism, cf. Mendonça 2016, 52.

While he will not succeed in this enterprise, the meta-emotions regulate his awareness and motivate him to change.

Moreover, the meta-emotions might give the subject of akratic emotions a kind of internal coherence. While Artemio's akratic emotion is marked by ambivalence, it can be the case that his meta-emotions are more unitary. All his meta-emotions signal a rejection of his akratic feelings. The meta-emotions might give Artemio's self a kind of unity and coherence that is lacking in the first-order emotions. Behind a divided self, we discover a unitary self: Behind the akratic emotion, there exists a self that is able to react coherently. This is only a possibility, but it is worth to explore when trying to find certain coherence behind Artemio's irrational behaviour.

This ability to become aware of what we feel, to be motivated to change how we feel, and to react in a coherent manner towards what we feel is linked to the possibility of gaining control over our own emotions. Such considerations demonstrate that Artemio's akratic emotions can be seen to be ›uncompelled‹: At a meta-level, he is able to take a stance towards them, to become aware of them, and to influence them, for instance, by altering his perceptions of him, by judging his akratic emotions as wrong, and by imagining possible ways to overcome them. Artemio was not compelled to feel these emotions, and he can take some responsibility for them: In the end, he was able to step back and to reflect on them.

Despite the possibility of taking some control over his akratic emotion, i.e., the emotion of ›self-envy‹, Artemio remained, throughout his life, in a permanent struggle. What might explain his remaining in such a state? One's better judgement is not sufficient to dissolve the akratic emotion. What appears to sustain the whole system of self-sabotage is a deep-rooted lack of self-esteem, or more precisely, a strong sense of self-hatred. Because of his negative emotions, Artemio was focusing on reasons that he considered to be insufficient, wrong, or less motivating. Better judgement alone is not adequate to change an akratic situation because beneath that judgement, there is an emotional phenomenon or a set of emotional phenomena that sustains it.¹¹

11 In the contemporary debate about akrasia, only judgements, desires, and intentions seem to play a role in explaining akratic action. By contrast, my account works with the assumption that emotions might also be pertinent in the explanation of akrasia. For an account in support of the view that emotions are causally involved in akratic action and make the latter intelligible, see Tappolet 2003, p. 98.

5 Exploring Envy and Akrasia through Fiction

In the previous sections I have offered an interpretation of Unamuno's *Artemio* as a thought experiment in relation to envy and akrasia. In this paper, Artemio's divided self, which enabled an experience of ›self-envy‹, was interpreted in two steps. First, I maintained that the concept of ›self-envy‹ is a sound one. Second, I considered Artemio's emotional experience to be a case of akratic emotion. However, the claims about envy and akrasia developed above cannot be found in Unamuno's short story. The author presents us with an extreme emotional experience, one that goes beyond what we would normally encounter in real life, but he is not arguing for or against any concrete philosophical statement. Now, the question arises whether my reading of Unamuno's text is legitimate: Would Unamuno himself consider my philosophical exercise a fruitful way of reading his text?

To answer this question, it is necessary to return to the idea of a thought experiment as introduced in the first section. Unamuno's chief aim in his fictional writings was to confront the reader with certain aspects of human experience, particularly those that are challenging and enigmatic. According to the view developed in the paper, if literature is a method of obtaining knowledge, this means that the author reveals the complexities of different human situations and not that he analyses premises and develops arguments in his fictional writings. As already stated, Unamuno was interested in exploring the intricacies of the human heart. His literary writings allowed him to explore questions around the self and its emotions, the weakness of the will, freedom, and personality. But, in my view, Unamuno wrote his literary fictions with the aim that they would function as thought experiments *not only for him* but also *for his readers*.

Unamuno used literary fictions and other literary forms to explore aspects of the human condition. His narrative technique consisted in writing ›oviparous‹ novels, i.e., novels that have a short period of gestation and that he immediately felt compelled to write after having the initial idea to develop them, without following a plan. In addition, his ›nivolas‹ (rather than novellas) correspond to this pattern of creation. Nivolas is a genre he invented that is much more interested in the monologues and dialogues between the characters than in the descriptions of time and space or in plot development. They aim to explore the psychology of the figures and to highlight certain aspects of human experience. Unamuno writes ›a lo que salga‹, i.e., no matter what happens; he develops his ideas by writing them down in a novel and letting them take on a life of their own.

We can distinguish two main aims in this way of writing literature. On the one side, Unamuno utilised his literary writings in order to explore aspects of the human condition for his own edification. On the other side, he also aimed to present the reader with aspects of the human condition that are too complex to be reduced to mere statements. Rather than confronting us with certain theses about what it means to be human, to feel and to suffer, and so on, Unamuno confronts us with situations in which certain aspects are made more salient than others, so that we are provoked to reflect on them. His philosophy is not presented by way of logical claims and detailed argumentation; instead, it is presented in context and as a living and evolving phenomenon. Indeed, Unamuno considered narrative fictions to be a better means to engage the reader than philosophical statements or treatises. Works of fiction engross the reader at a deeper level, one that goes beyond rational understanding. This involvement is made possible because, unlike philosophical statements, which are presented as objective in the form of a treatise or a paper, literary fictions affect the reader's emotions and feelings and elicit aspects of their own biography and subjective experiences. As such, Unamuno sought an active reader, one who becomes involved in the text and who is compelled to reach her own conclusions about the situations depicted on the page.¹²

Bibliography

- Catherine Elgin: Fiction as Thought Experiment. In: *Perspectives in Science* 22(2) (2014), pp. 221–41.
- José Ferrater Mora: Unamuno. *Bosquejo de una filosofía*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1957.
- Gottfried Gabriel: Fiktion, Wahrheit und Erkenntnis in der Literatur. In: Christoph Demmerling, Ingrid Vendrell Ferran (eds.): *Wahrheit, Wissen und Erkenntnis in der Literatur*. Philosophische Beiträge. Berlin 2014, pp. 163–80.
- Paul Ilie: Unamuno. *An Existential View of Self and Society*. Madison 1967.
- Rafael López-Corvo: *Self-Envy. Therapy and the Divided Inner World*. New York 1994.
- Carlos Longhurst: *Unamuno's Theory of the Novel*. London 2014.
- Julián Marías: *Miguel de Unamuno*. Buenos Aires 1950.
- Alfred Mele: Akritic Feelings. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50/2 (1989), pp. 277–88.

¹² The author would like to thank Simon Mussell for constructive criticism of the manuscript.

- Dina Mendonça: Emotions and Akratic Feelings: Insights into Morality through the Emotions. In: Sara Graça da Silva (ed.): *Morality and Emotion*. London 2016, pp. 50–61.
- Alison Sinclair: *Uncovering the Mind: Unamuno, the Unknown and the Vicissitudes of Self*. Manchester 2001.
- Christine Tappolet: Emotions and the Intelligibility of Akratic Action. In: Sarah Stroud, Christine Tappolet (eds): *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality*. Oxford 2003, pp. 97–114.
- Miguel de Unamuno: *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples*. Translated by J. E. Crawford Fritch. London 1921.
- Miguel de Unamuno: *Obras Completas IX*. Madrid 1966.
- Íngrid Vendrell Ferran: Exploring Self and Emotion: Unamuno's Narrative Fiction as Thought Experiment. In: *Philosophy and Literature* (forthcoming).
- María Zambrano: *Unamuno*. Barcelona 2004.

