INTRODUCTION

A philosopher like Jean Paul Sartre or a deconstructionist like Jacques Derrida would probably say that any attempt to translate poetry is futile since one can never know exactly what is meant by the poet's words. While I recognize the difficulty of knowing what is in the poet's mind, I refuse to accept the notion that we can never know what he wishes to say. After a careful study of Machado's poetry and most of his prose, I have a good understanding of his thoughts. It have now translated all the poems of Antonio Machado that are included in his *Complete Works* (*Obras: Poesía y prosa*) published by Losada (Buenos Aires, 1973): *Early Poems* (poems not included in Machado's Complete Poetry), *Solitude: 1899 – 1907*, *Fields of Castile: 1907 – 1917*; *From an Apocryphal Songbook* and *Other Poems*. Since it explains the philosophical basis for his poetic thought, I also intend to translate the complete prose text from the *Apocryphal Songbook* which I will then post on this web site.

There have been several translations of Machado's poetry; however, I have found that they often misinterpret what Machado meant to say because the translator has not considered the poet's pantheistic concept of reality. According to Machado's *apocryphal* poet and philosopher Abel Martín, God is defined as "absolute being" (*el ser* absoluto)[1] and Machado's other *apocryphal*, Juan de Mairena, also tells us that the theology of Abel Martín is based on a "pantheistic conception" of reality (OPP, p. 531.) For that reason, as Pablo de A. Cobos has said, "there is not a single poem, neither in Machado, nor in Mairena, nor in Martín that does not conform to a pantheistic, or a panentheistic viewpoint."[2] As an example of this neglect, none of the translations that I have found include the poetic culmination of Machado's pantheistic metaphysics, "To the Great Fullness, or Integral Consciousness,"—"*Al gran pleno, o conciencia integral*"—and like most critics of his poetry, these translations do not capture the significance of his concept of *la nada*—nothingness, or non-being—which in Machado's metaphysics is not a negative term. In order to correct this misunderstanding, I will make a translation which coincides with the pantheistic metaphysics I have discussed at length in my book, *The Religious and Philosophical Thought of Antonio Machado*, as well as in the articles where I discuss Machado's poems and his philosophy.

The translators of Machado's poetry have sometimes taken great liberties with the meaning of certain words. A close translation is often not appropriate since similar words may have a different meaning, and some idioms are impossible to translate. However, in some of the translations I have read, the meaning of the words is changed so that the poem becomes more a creation of the translator than of Machado himself. Whenever possible, therefore, I will try to make a close translation of the actual words Machado has used. In the poems where I am unable to do this, I will try to interpret the poet's meaning as completely, and as directly, as possible.

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1 Antonio Machado, *Obras: Poesía y prosa*, 2a Edición (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1973), p. 336.

2 Pablo de A. Cobos, *El pensamiento de Antonio Machado en Juan de Mairena* (Madrid: Ínsula, 1971), p. 236.

Other translators have tried to make a rhymed translation of some poems and in order to do this they have often had to alter the language and distort the meaning. For this reason, I have decided to ignore the rhyme scheme used by Machado. This means that some of the musical quality of the Spanish poems is lost, but it allows me to place more emphasis on the exact meaning of the words that Machado has used.

I have posted the translation of the poems in PDF files. In order to find an individual poem, the reader may use "Control F" with an appropriate key word, either from the Spanish or the English translation. For an analysis and an interpretation of the poems which have a religious or a philosophical content, the reader may consult my book, or my articles, which are also posted on this web site.