

425 E. Roosevelt Street  
Appleton, Wisconsin  
January 30, 1958

Dear Jose Ferrater Mora,

Upon contemplating the heavy kazy thick snow-flakes through my large windows of my sun parlor as I sat at the phone yesterday, I was struck at a saying my aunt, a favorite one, quoted, "January is almost gone, February is a short month and in March the dust will fly/". To me winter is delightful and I feel at my best in winter, spring and fall, but I do feel a twinge of sympathy for those who must be out toiling in near zero temperatures.

I am at a loss to know which letters I've answered and usually my memory suffices. This time I may be replying to yours twice.<sup>2</sup> From now on, I've resolved to put methodically on all letters, "Answered 1-?-58" or some such notation. But no matter, I am writing now.

I was reading a quote from Charles Clayton Morrison as he appraised the mind of our time when he wrote:

"The mentality of our time is a sensation-saturated mentality. Ours is a generation which lives in its sensations, far more than in ideas. It has almost forgotten how to think. We have only to consider the mass of stimuli with which we are bombarded... to realize how the human mind is swamped with sensation, leaving little margin for reflective thought. Modern ~~life~~ life with its quick movement from place to place, scene to scene, from engagement to engagement, is largely a life of sensation. The mind is given more than it can digest. It loses its power of reflective response and becomes a passive receptacle of sensations."

I had never heard of the man, but liked his quote. So I found a book of his in the library but think it is perhaps too sectarian-minded for my choice.

While some religions may be more constructive than others, to me all religions are much more alike than they are different.

To return to the quote. "What do you think of it? At first, I thought, "Yes, he is right." Then I wondered, and I thought over my own experience. In my twenties, that is the way I responded to engagements and activities. I was eager to accept, and those were the exciting years. In my thirties, which were very turbulent years in my case, the "sensation-saturated" life disturbed me. Now I am in my forties. I find contentment, a serenity in my forties that I never hoped to achieve.

After all, no-one has more than 24 hours. By maturity, we should learn how to pick and choose what we use these 24 golden hours for. E.G.- a friend of mine when we were talking of books said to me, "Oh, I wish I had time to read a book." Upon which I replied, "I wish I had time to play a game of bridge." She plays bridge. I read. It is simply a matter of which one prefers the more.

Oh, I know it isn't always such an easy choice. But when pressed to join yet another club, head yet another activity, at maturity, one must learn to say no. It can be done gracefully, sometimes needs be brusque, but it is imperative to say no to some requests.

I often think when people speak of feverish activity and the slower tempo of earlier times, "Well, I can cope with this tempo better than I could the time-consuming work methods of earlier days; I can cope better with the fears of atomic bombing than I could with the fear of being scalped by Indians, etc." ~~It's~~ It's all relative.

Just so - at a state historical banquet, instead of letting the 35 minute pithy talk of a fine speaker follow the hour dinner, first dragged in were awards and back-slapping words of praise from one official to another. Nothing wrong

with that at another time. But to delay the speaker's message till all were wearied with about two hours of sitting! Perhaps people need to learn to condense some things in a few brief words?

And so perhaps do I need to in this letter!

I suppose progress is not automatic. I do expect mankind to be better off in 1990 than now. I don't worry about 1958 if we all are trying. Perhaps, progress is slow in coming, but I do believe that in all countries there is a core of people concerned with true progress. Perhaps, they will be downed for a time as seems to have been the case in Russia, but I think U.S. policy has too often been dictated by economic greed covered with a gloss of charity and democratic isms. I do think that we are living in a fine country, but just to think it is so because it is our country and not because of what it is and does to me is dangerous. Only by self-evaluation can we improve.

Again, I am stealing some of your time by speaking of things I would like "your opinion on."

When you have a moment or two to frivel away, answer me. Remember I believe that others have the privilege and right too to say no. Don't think I will quote you, an author and authority, and spend time in phrasing your letter so it is quotable. I just am interested in what you think.

Which issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR will your article on the role of the so-called "intellectual" in contemporary society appear? I have a hunch that will answer all my questions I have implied in this letter. I have to buy the copy for it is not in our library. Perhaps I can get it at the Lawrence College library.

The book which you are writing "The present situation in philosophy", I hope to buy. When will it come out? Can I buy it through you or through what firm? I want it as soon as it comes out. I am rather greedy about books, you see. I must get them and read them. When I was little, 4 yrs

and began to read, I was concerned with the thought that some time I would read all the books there were and no new ones would be left. Now, I am concerned that I will lack the time to read all the good ones there are. For in spite of the many books written and the many poor ones, I still find many good ones, too many, alas, for me to read. But I do find time for many good new ones and rereading many fine ones.

Thank you for your answer on Spinoza. I liked it. I liked both your answer and the thought within is what I would believe.

This is indeed a "written talk", and please don't concern yourself if you need delay in answering. I will appreciate a tardy reply just as much, and I do realize you have many people to write to in the fine books you are formulating.

Thank you then.

Most sincerely yours,

*Evelyn M. Seybold*