

2049 Oak Street  
San Francisco, Calif. 94117  
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Professor Jose Ferrater Mora  
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Dear Professor Mora:

I think that I was fortunate in accidentally finding your little volume "Philosophy Today." I enjoyed reading it very much and I would wish to have a copy for myself if it can be had. The volume that I did read was borrowed from the Public Library.

I wish I had both the scholarly reputation of William James and an audience so that I too could sing the praises for the work as he did for Bergson in lauding "Creative Evolution" as he was himself writing his "A Pluralistic Universe."

Perhaps, with what I understand to be a crying shortage of teachers I might gain through the back door what I tried so hard to gain through the front door, and in a small measure satisfy the craving of close to a half century by "giving of myself" in teaching. To attain the achievement of my aim; the still the yearning of my heart, despite the obstacles of orphanhood with its attendant financial poverty and the impoverishment of inspiration and guidance through the lack of a father, I kept my aspirations alive for three decades after I was graduated from New York's elementary schools.

When time permitted because of the Depression, I made up for my lack of highschooling within one year and a summer by attending the private prep schools one finds in New York City and passed CMB, entering CCNY. My son entered at the same time. I supported the family by working nights. I went on to the "candidacy" for the Ph.D at NYU in Philosophy. I had the severest misfortune befalling any graduate student and sad to say the Philosophy Departments seem to be the worst offenders. Through no fault of mine I had a series of sponsors, was compelled to start new dissertation efforts with the resultant "loss of time" which was not allowed to me. In these efforts I could have written on what I now see as a thesis in "Historicism" though I was never advised nor guided pursuing the ontological structure of Time as Time per se and not Time as an historical process. The title of the dissertation was "Temporalism vs. Eternatism." The next effort was "The Religion of Naturalism." I had done an accepted chapter and a half when the sponsor resigned to go to Columbia (Albert Horstatter) and the third effort was "A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy of Morals and Religion." I think that in my reading for this work I came across Maritain's comment in criticism Bergson that Morals slips through one's fingers and all one has left is his insight. Bergson is indeed almost impossible to put one's teeth into; it is like chasing a shadow, especially in the temper of the 40's universities and especially NYU and Columbia were imbued with the influence of both the Pragmatism of Dewey and the Realism of Whitehead.

Opportunities through the years were always denied to me because of the lack of the "union card" as a result of Academic nonsense and the childishness of its gamesmanship. I might have a part-time job but the great yearning is the degree and the satisfactions it has; it is a possession of wealth -- for me.

I now have time to engage in scholarship; I am just too old in chasing pedantry, cozzening for grades, and while I thought myself capable to meet anyone and anything, still there is much to Thornton's and Woodward's Psychology of Learning that the curve is downward. Moreover I cannot "compete" with the youngsters just fresh out of school in adjusting to today, but I do have my store of background which is in truth eternal in that it is no different today than what it ever has been. Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Bergson are as true today as they were in my time. What is new somewhat are the Math Logics of Tarski, Quine, Russell, and the Analysis of Wittgenstein, Ryle and Carnap. Besides, my own leaning is toward the Scholastics and their Ontologists and Cosmologists. I would rather talk about the World and all there is therein; I would rather discuss the various "concepts about that World," rather than "talking about talking." Here, I might be out of step; but of what value are "words" (Tillich; the wordgame) if there be no world about which the words are to be used. But these are only my views, but I would talk about the world.

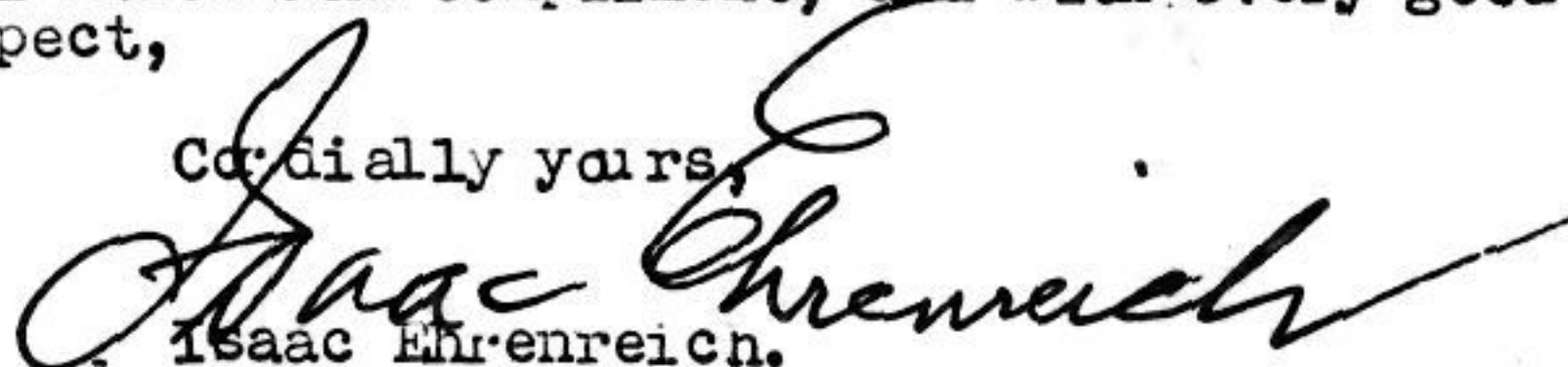
I wish I had the inspiration and its necessity to finish a doctoral dissertation as my first effort to do more writing. As I do not look upon Philosophy as a "word game" but as an attitude and an explanation through which to adjust life, to which Men could find sustention in their lives and like the "Anthropos" stand up to look up, perhaps in these parlous time, I might make some little contribution. To "write for the sake of writing" is both futile and "vain" for me. There must be a "transcendental reason," for doing it - the tension for accomplishment in the hope of the reward.

"Vanity" is justifiable. Through it, we strive and strain to become ever better and the tension gives significance to life. This does sound Schopenhauerian, but it is true; "Vainness" is the empty bellowing of an "appearance" for a "reality."

I hope that this letter might open up a friendship, and if there are things you might ~~be~~ be able to do for me THROUGH YOUR INFLUENCE or through an exchange of ideas I would be happy, and eternally grateful. If you have an extra copy of your book will you please send it to me, billing me for the expense.

With greatest of admiration and compliment, and with every good wish and deepest respect,

Cordially yours,

  
Isaac Ehrenreich.

I am much like Robert Frost. He too yearned for something withheld. He, the Nobel Prize, I having come so close to the Ph.D. and what I could do with it, and of course having something to show for labor and life. There are NO other comparable values, such as walking, traveling etc. One does not talk with people and I have no wish to impress the average man, but to be able to join in with others in learned societies and work through work which the degree would or might open in place or the many many wasted years spent on the most necessitous trivia that of making a living.

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