

Hello Professor Finkelstein,

I am a first-year medical student from Montreal, Canada - America's second Brooklyn with a twist of French colonial joie de vivre, where bagels can be found served with caviar and foie gras (if you are interested in this gastronomical digression, I suggest watching Anthony Bourdain's Parts Unknown: Quebec).

I had nothing to do during quarantine season (except for typing away at the first draft of a novel which I hope will one day come to an end) so I finally had time to read excessively on a topic which I always felt must be approached with time, sensitivity, and headaches: the Middle East. I started off with standard histories, then moved along to narrower topics, then eventually to Said and other Palestinian authors. But all of the back and forth between historical accounts, the omissions and the sometimes un-philosophical intellectual approaches made me realize that the real crux of the debate was found in the historiography - the unrooting of ideological inclinations and deceptions. Naturally, after rewatching a video in which you tell some emotionally disturbed fellow Canadian students to "Shut up!", I fell upon your work .

I've been devouring it at an unprecedented (queue-in Bernie's voice) rate. I am so obsessed with the craft, the meticulous attention to detail, the fervent dedication to truth and justice of your work that I am worried I am becoming an android for the Palestinian cause, blabbering on about UN Resolution 242 to uninterested audiences and sometimes even antagonists. Perhaps I should become an anesthesiologist so that my patients would not have to be conscious when suffering through my torturous intellectual pedantry. So far, my favourite of your works is "Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict," a superb argumentative toolbox against classic fallacious rhetoric.

A close second, however, is your book on Gandhi. I had not read much Gandhi before, but you have convinced me to start committing myself to his writings. I am not ethnically Jewish, but in the last few years I have been engaging with certain facets of the ethical perspectives of Judaism - the Judeo-Spinozian school, as I have coined it. I know that you have profound connections to your Jewish roots and especially your mother's powerful history and convictions (she seemed like a monumental woman), but have any "spiritual" elements of Judaism ever entered your personal and moral vocabulary?

I ask this because it is not only your books which have inspired me, but your spirit. Don't worry - I am no sycophant - I do not see you as a Patron Saint or a rock-star; rather, I simply see a lot of my own characteristics in your character. The obsession with truth, detail, but especially, the complete inability to abide by social decorum and popularity contests in the name of respectability. I often see myself mirrored in those televised moments in which you cause uproars with a reasonable but unpopular opinion. I am constantly causing uproars just by speaking and it is quite bewildering to me why until my girlfriend explains, after-the-fact, that I can be an aggressive pedant. People still talk about "that time" years ago that I told this or that person to check themselves like it was a boxing knock-out.

These ethical principles have led me to pursue medicine, but also to pursue universal justice - two goals which I do not believe can be divorced from each other. No volunteer doctor in Gaza can sincerely pretend that the occupation is "not her concern" when she must treat traumatized and maimed children. I wish one day (once I survive medical school), like Gandhi, to pursue nonviolent protest in the most aggressive sense: to heal those who are left for dead, to give back life to the lifeless so that their voices may resonate.

Thank you for the inspiration and dedication to truth,

Emmanuel