

**REDISCOVERING THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPORTANCE OF JOSE
INGENIEROS**

A Thesis

by

MANUELA ALEJANDRA GOMEZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2006

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Rediscovering the Philosophical Importance
of Jose Ingenieros. (May 2006)

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This thesis is the first presentation of the philosophical ideas of Jose Ingenieros in English. The works of this Latin American philosopher have never been translated. Until now, his ideas have been limited to Spanish speakers. My aim is to contribute to the rediscovery of Ingenieros and to incorporate his ideas presented in *El Hombre Mediocre* and *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas* to the current philosophical and sociopolitical discourse. In this thesis, I present the impact of Ingenieros' life and his radical moral philosophy. I also explore the relationship between him and Ralph Waldo Emerson. In addition, I explain why this link bridges a gap between Latin American philosophy and American pragmatism. Furthermore, I analyze the philosophical implications of Ingenieros' moral account, which states that there is a hierarchy of men: *inferior*, *mediocre* and *superior*, and that it is the duty of the superior to inspire and promote the perfection of the inferior. I analyze possible objections to his account of *idealistic elitism*, but ultimately argue that recognizing these differences does not lead to pessimistic effects. I will argue that, if applied correctly, his account overcomes many of

the challenges of egalitarianism, the opposing view that claims that men are equal in moral value.

To my father, my sister, and to those who have also been touched by the words of José Ingenieros.

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I. INTRODUCTION: WHO WAS JOSE INGENIEROS?



Figure 1 Jose Ingenieros

For over a hundred years, the works of Latin American philosopher Jose Ingenieros (Figure 1) have been limited to Spanish speakers. This thesis will be the first presentation of Ingenieros' ideas in English. My aim is to contribute to the rediscovery of Ingenieros as a philosopher. In the first section, I will present the life and philosophy of Ingenieros and introduce the concept of *idealistic elitism*, and analyze the philosophical implications that arise from Ingenieros' moral account.

In the second section, I will explore the influence and importance of Ralph Waldo Emerson to Ingenieros, two men from different sides of the world, but with very similar moral accounts. I believe that this link can help us better understand Ingenieros' philosophy and it represents an important step towards bridging the gap between Latin American philosophy and American pragmatism.

This thesis will follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Finally, in the third section, I will defend *idealistic elitism* from some common objections against elitism, and give the conclusion to my thesis. Ingenieros' moral theories need to be recognized and there is room and need for his innovative philosophy, specifically his idea of *idealistic elitism*, in the current sociopolitical arena. Ingenieros has been widely read in Latin America, but hardly any scholarly research has been done on the philosophical implications of his works in English and Spanish. My purpose is to provide a platform for future studies on his works and provoke further inquiry into his philosophy.

1. Life and philosophy of Jose Ingenieros

“Fame and celebrity are not the glory: only the deceitful approval of the contemporaries and the masses.”¹ These words spoken by Jose Ingenieros represent the authenticity of his life. Ingenieros never achieved great fame as a philosopher; even though his ideas are radically innovative, his works have been forgotten. Throughout history, many philosophers have been inevitably neglected and not all have received fame and celebrity. The reasons for this are innumerable, but in the case of Latin American philosopher Jose Ingenieros, the reason is primarily a language barrier. His unique and revolutionary philosophy has been limited to Spanish speakers because his works have never been translated. Until now, his ideas have been kept concealed. However, those of us who have read his powerful words believe that the impact of his philosophy should not be limited simply to Latin America. Ingenieros' philosophy is inspiring and deserves proper recognition universally.

¹ “La fama y la celebridad no son la gloria: nada más falaz que la sanción de los contemporáneos y de las muchedumbres.” For the remaining English quotes, I will state the original Spanish quote as a footnote.

Jose Ingenieros was born on April 24, 1877, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He died a young man in 1925. His life was short but it has served as an example of his philosophy of constant change and idealism². Ingenieros became interested in books since a very young age given that his father was a librarian who would constantly take him to work with him. Ingenieros' father, in a continuous struggle to keep his son entertained, would tell him that books were like toys and that is how Ingenieros' love for words began, first by reading, then by writing.

Ingenieros is known to many as one of the greatest writers ever produced by the Latin American continent. However, throughout his life, Ingenieros also held numerous degrees as a doctor, psychologist, art critic, criminologist, pharmacist, journalist, historicist, sociologist, scientific philosopher, original thinker, editor, publicist, educator and moralist, among others.³

Distinguished in all of them, he pursued his love for philosophy while incorporating the various elements he gathered from his other disciplines, mainly from his background as a medical doctor. Ingenieros' philosophy is strongly influenced by biological evolution as one of the most complex and general forms of development. Just like the classical American philosophers, Ingenieros was inspired by notions of evolution, process, and experience that are implicit in Darwinism.

² Ingenieros uses the term "idealism" not as the metaphysical view associated with Hegel, but as an ethical outlook to be contrasted with conformity and mediocrity. Ingenieros' definition of idealism will be further explored in this thesis.

³ "Uno de los mas grandes hombres de ciencia que ha producido el continente (Latino Americano) José Ingenieros: medico, psicólogo, critico de arte, criminólogo, farmacéutico, historiador, sociólogo, filosofo científico, pensador original, investigador en el campo de la biología, editor, publicista, educador y moralista." Castellanos, Juan Mario (1972). *Pensamiento Revolucionario de José Ingenieros*, prefacio 9 Editorial Universitaria Centro Americana. Costa Rica.

As a young man, Ingenieros was an admirable activist, always fighting to expose the truth and the injustice of his country while encouraging people to stand up and achieve great things not only for themselves, but for others too. In 1900, Ingenieros attended a private upscale medical school; he was there on a scholarship he received for his excellent grades. Ingenieros was not wealthy like the rest of his classmates and at times felt uncomfortable with their arrogance, so as a sign of protest, he dedicated his thesis to the school's janitor stating that he was the only one in that school who deserved total respect for being such a hard worker and modest man.⁴

In 1906, Ingenieros began teaching philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires. He also taught various psychology classes and often represented his country in international conferences and symposiums. He created several political magazines, all while practicing medicine and writing his philosophical books.⁵

Furthermore, Ingenieros wrote for several newspapers in Argentina and was often criticized for his frank political views. He also led several anti-war protests against World War I and created various intellectual discussion groups with his peers.

Ingenieros spoke several languages, among them Italian, French and English, however; all of his writings were written in Spanish. His two main philosophical works have been *El Hombre Mediocre*⁶, and *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*.⁷ These two books are intended to be elitist, in the sense that they are only directed to readers who are

⁴ *Ibíd.*, 12.

⁵ Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Bagu, Sergio (1963). *Vida Ejemplar de José Ingenieros*. p. 152. Librería "El Ateneo" Buenos Aires.

⁶ "Mediocre Man" Ingenieros, José (1963). *El Hombre Mediocre*, p. 66. Editorial Azteca. México.

⁷ "Towards a Moral without Dogmas." Ingenieros, José (1947). *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*. Editorial Losada. Buenos Aires. These are not the only two works by Ingenieros, but the most relevant to his philosophical implications.

passionate about idealism and rebellious against mediocrity. Ingenieros openly limits his audience as he normally stated such things as, “I write for you, the idealist,” and “Not everybody appreciates life and justice like you.”

By being so direct with his approach, Ingenieros is able to excite and captivate the reader who actually feels identified and personally addressed by his words. In these two books, Ingenieros explicitly claims that he does not want everybody to embrace his philosophical views because he knows that not everybody is capable of understanding the radical and original philosophical mission he presented for his time, which is to reject dogmas while accepting the evolution of morality, to recognize the importance of human experience and furthermore, to ultimately adopt idealism as a hypothesis for human perfection and as a guide for moral improvement.

In *El Hombre Mediocre*, and *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*, Ingenieros believes that the only way to achieve a better life and a more accurate ethical account is through constant change of ideas and elimination of imposed dogmas and metaphysical a priori, all of this ultimately guided by idealism. These two works present Ingenieros as a strong advocate of the metaphysics of experience and the evolution of morality.

Experience, evolution, and idealism, are some of the main words that characterize Ingenieros' philosophy. In all of his works as a psychologist and as a philosopher, Ingenieros struggled intensely to incorporate his scientific knowledge into

his ideas, and due to this, some have labeled him as a positivist; however, according to Gregorio Bermann,⁸ this label is not proper of Ingenieros.

Positivism states that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge. And even though, Ingenieros was influenced by science in a lot of his writings, he did not think science was the only way to know reality. Ingenieros also places a heavy emphasis on the metaphysics of experience and social interaction.

For instance in terms of love, Ingenieros claims that it is a result of the perfection of sexual selection; however, he also states that it is a complex experience derived from social interaction. So even though our attraction for others arises from natural instincts, Ingenieros claims that there are also social elements that come into play. A scientific explanation does not account for all there is to love as an experience.

Ingenieros' philosophical mission in regards to ethics is a viable and an appealing alternative to be considered in a time when dogmas and static conceptions of the good seem to be insufficient for a successful ethical account. However, before fully exploring Ingenieros' conception of idealism, it is important to recognize some of his influences to grasp a better understanding of his account and his time period as a whole. Undoubtedly, his main influence was Ralph Waldo Emerson.⁹

However, in *El Hombre Mediocre*, Ingenieros mentions and quotes several other philosophers that he finds inspirational for the pursuit of his own philosophy, Socrates,

⁸ Gregorio Bermann, in his work *Jose Ingenieros-El civilizador-El filósofo-El Moralista* (1926), argues that Ingenieros' philosophy is incompatible with the school of positivism and defends him of this charge by stating that this label was only given to Ingenieros to undermine the importance and innovation of his philosophy.

⁹ Ingenieros uses Emerson's life as an example of a great life and makes him the central character of his book *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*. An entire section of this thesis will be dedicated to the analysis of Emerson's influence on Ingenieros.

Stirner, Guyau, Ibsen and Spencer are among some of them. In addition to these influences, Ingenieros was exposed to Nietzsche's writings and they also seem to have had a great impact on him. This quote found in Nietzsche's *The Dawn* captures the essence of Ingenieros' project:

"In shedding one's skin. The snake that cannot shed its skin perishes. So do the spirits, who are prevented from changing their opinions, they cease to be spirits."¹⁰

Ingenieros' philosophy, just like the snake's skin represents change. There are striking similarities between Ingenieros and Nietzsche's philosophies, mainly their likeness to the idea of super manhood. The idea that some men are superior to others dates back to Aristotle; however, Ingenieros, incorporating his influence from Nietzsche and his background as a biologist, also claimed that by nature inevitably some men are born to be better and more moral than others. The implications of this belief and his elitist conception of men will be further analyzed once his main philosophical ideas are outlined.

2. Idealism

Ingenieros wrote *El Hombre Mediocre* in 1913, and almost a century later, the issues raised in this book are still current and many of the questions posed still unanswered. While the philosophical debate continues on which conception of the good is worthy enough to be followed and what exactly constitutes human nature, Ingenieros anticipated a lot of the theories put forward by present philosophers and argued against dogmas and theories based on metaphysical a priori. Ingenieros' elegant prose is in favor of a never ending progress of perfection and the recognition of experience.

¹⁰ Kaufman Walter. *The Portable Nietzsche*, (1969). *The Dawn*, p.573. Viking Press. New York.

In *El Hombre Mediocre*, Ingenieros offers an answer to the question, *how should men live?* The answer for Ingenieros is simply not to live in mediocrity. Although he does not provide a structured guide or specific rules on how to avoid mediocrity, he encourages men to aim for excellence with the help of idealism.

In *El Hombre Mediocre*, Ingenieros claims that idealism is not a permanent formula, but rather a perfectible hypothesis. Just like Socrates once claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living, Ingenieros claims that the life without ideals is not worth living either. Ingenieros' moral philosophy places a heavy emphasis on the importance of ideals. For Ingenieros, ideals are natural formations. "They arise when the function of thought achieves such a development that the imagination can anticipate experience."¹¹ For Ingenieros, imagination is the mother of all creativity and progress.

Ingenieros' conception of an ideal, metaphorically, can be seen as ideals being a means but not a particular fixed end. Just like William James and John Dewey would say, they are ends that are also means, or "tools" for present improvement of conditions. Ideals for Ingenieros unfold with experience and are not necessarily set or fixed. They constantly vary along with the individual and his circumstances.

For Ingenieros, the starting point is always experience, from experience; ideals are derived to aim at some improvement; however, that improvement is produced from analyzing the actual and immediate experience and conceiving of ways in which it could be perfected. Ideals are slaves to the possibilities of reality, ultimately to the possibilities presented by actual experience.

¹¹ "Los ideales son formaciones naturales. Aparecen cuando la función de pensar alcanza tal desarrollo que la imaginación puede anticiparse a la experiencia." *El Hombre Mediocre*, 6.

Ingenieros believes that since we are always evolving, we can always change and improve and that there is no need for a static or fixed conception of what is good or moral. He does not deny the fact that some conceptions of what is good or moral remain intact, but he advocates a constant change and revision of dogmatic conceptions.

Ingenieros claims that what once used to be moral has become immoral and vice versa and that that is how morality should flow. For instance, it used to be the case that thousands or even hundreds of years ago, polygamy was seen as moral and now for many it is seen as immoral. The same applies for women's rights; in the past it was considered moral to deny them the right to vote, whereas now it would not only be immoral to many, but also irrational. Furthermore, Ingenieros argues that without ideals progress is impossible.

For Ingenieros, "morality" can be a tool to impose a conventional conduct to the masses. However, it is important to recognize that Ingenieros distinguishes between different types of morality. His main criticism of morality is aimed at religious morality and social morality, which he believes were created on the basis of dogmas. The type of morality he advocates is an individual morality that is undefined, but constantly created by each individual with the guidance of idealism.

Ingenieros' primary aim in *El Hombre Mediocre* is to advocate for a *moral idealism*, founded in experience as a legitimate basis for all hypotheses and as the foundation for all perfectionism. Ingenieros conceived of human evolution as a continuous struggle of man to adapt to nature, which itself is constantly evolving as well. The main characteristic of idealism is that it is linked to imagination, creativity and

perfection. The main characteristics of idealists are that they are young, rebellious, passionate and unwilling to settle for mediocrity.

Ingenieros distinguishes between two types of idealism and he defines them as follows:

Romantic idealism: idealists under this category are insatiable, they are dreamers; they are curious and they aspire for social changes. They are also ingenuous and easily touched by enthusiasm and nobility. They have great visions of improving the world and are not limited by reality. Their passion is sometimes stronger than reason. Their reasons for improving the world are stronger than reason.¹²

Stoic idealism: this type of idealism focuses on the experience of putting romanticism into practice. The stoic idealist is hostile to his environment and against any form of mediocrity. However, his sensitivity is more individualistic, not in a selfish manner, but in an individualistic attitude, this means, questioning and in some cases rejecting imposed authority on the basis of dogmas. The individualism of this type of idealism is defined as opposing to the masses, which in some cases, Ingenieros claims, may have not questioned and simply followed; therefore, falling into mediocrity.

On my interpretation of Ingenieros, one type of idealism appears prior to the other, as he claimed that the perfect idealist is romantic when young and stoic when mature.¹³ Furthermore, in analyzing these types of idealism, the question of how idealism is attained arises. However, Ingenieros refused to dogmatically define idealism

¹² “Son ingenuos y sensibles, fáciles de conmoverse, accesibles al entusiasmo y a la ternura; con esa ingenuidad sin doblez que los hombres prácticos ignoran. Un minuto les basta para decidir toda una vida...”Ibíd., 18.

¹³ “El idealista perfecto sería romántico a los veinte años y estoico a los cincuenta.” Ibíd., 17.

as he claimed that if we reduced it to a certain theory or dogma we would be castrating its essence, which is to be an undefined longing for the possibility of perfection.

Perfectionist theories in general advocate the improvement of one's self and the development of human excellences. In addition, perfectionism promotes going beyond mediocrity by perfecting ourselves in virtue of our nature. In order to conceive of any possible perfection, Ingenieros argues that a certain ethical level is required from men along with an intellectual education.¹⁴ According to Ingenieros, everything we know can be improved by idealist men, who study and are passionate about idealism and focus on the significance of everyday experience.

A peculiar fact about Ingenieros' works is that he writes and directs his philosophy at young people. The meaning of youth is a central feature of Ingenieros' philosophy. He claims that it is the young of mind who are rebellious and eager for change. However, they are not limited to the young of age, as he claims that youth is something you attain. It is a certain attitude towards life.

According to Ingenieros, mental decay is when one is dead before aging because youth is something that lies in idealism.¹⁵ Ingenieros does not define youth in terms of age or appearance, rather he defines it as a fresh mental state of always being willing to question and dispute dogmas. For Ingenieros, a 70-year-old activist can be more

¹⁴“Para concebir una perfección se requiere cierto nivel ético y es indispensable alguna educación intelectual.” *Ibíd.*. 34.

¹⁵ “La vida vale por el uso que de ella hacemos, por las obras que realizamos. No ha vivido más el que cuenta más años, sino el que ha sentido mejor un ideal; las canas denuncian la vejez, pero no dicen cuánta juventud la precedió. La medida social del hombre está en la duración de sus obras; la inmortalidad es el privilegio de quienes las hacen sobrevivientes a los siglos, y por ellas se mide.”

youthful than a 16-year-old who spends his days in front of a television, at least in terms of mentality and aspirations. Ultimately, being young is being in a young mental state.

Unlike certain types of perfectionism that are founded on specific conceptions of the good and human nature, Ingenieros' project is an endless unfolding of undefined perfectionism. There is ultimately no absolute and single form of perfection for Ingenieros since everything is always evolving and perfection is defined in terms of experience. Ingenieros extensively argues that we need to be in constant revision of dogmas guided by idealism.

Besides passion for idealism, Ingenieros places a big emphasis on the power of education as he claims that those who live under the minimum threshold of education remain subjected to dogmas that others impose on them. Ingenieros claims that they are slaves to the ideals of others. They are invariable and cannot form their own ideals; ultimately they are incapable of virtue. Ingenieros does not fully elaborate on how virtue can be defined in his philosophy; however, on my interpretation, it can be equated to having the passion for idealism and an adequate education. A parallel to Socrates arises as he once claimed that virtue is knowledge. However, for Ingenieros, virtue is knowledge and idealism.

For Ingenieros, ideals are visions of a better self and a better world, and idealists are the men who are inspired by and promote these ideals in their everyday lives. Ingenieros uses Socrates as an example of an idealist, his ideal was to propagate knowledge to young people and was willing to die for his conviction, he was courageous and unafraid, just like Jesus, who is also another example often used by Ingenieros to

illustrate the image of an idealist man. Idealists are those who believe that the world can be better and that the purpose of life is to constantly strive for endless perfection of not only themselves but their circumstances as well. In a way, Ingenieros claims that by perfecting oneself, we are inspiring others to do the same and therefore, collectively improving our surroundings.

3. Introduction to idealistic elitism

Idealism is a central notion to Ingenieros' philosophy. However, according to Ingenieros, idealism is not something found in every man because all men are different. As mentioned before, Ingenieros was an elitist as he distinguished between different types of men. Ingenieros never used the term *idealistic elitism*;¹⁶ however this term represents the kind of elitism Ingenieros advocated.

For Ingenieros, human inequality is not a modern discovery, he mentions Plutarch as he once wrote that animals of a same species differ less among them than men do. According to Ingenieros, men are a product of two factors: their biological makeup and their education. Moreover, three key elements are relevant in determining their personality: their biological inheritance, their social imitation and their individual variation.

Despite the temptation to label Ingenieros' project as deterministic, Ingenieros is simply putting forward a sort of "soft determinism." We may be limited by our biological history or circumstances, but from there as a departing point we can aim at becoming better because we are not totally constrained by our circumstances. According

¹⁶ This is a term that I have created to help understand Ingenieros' concept of elitism.

to Ingenieros, we do have freedom to change and improve. That is the whole point of idealism, which is a tool to help us become better. So even though we may not all start as equals, most of us have the capacity to transform into superior men.

A key aspect of Ingenieros' idealistic philosophy is that it distinguishes between three types of men. He marks a difference between men who imitate and men who invent. The three types¹⁷ he presents are as follows:

Inferior men: their existence is natural and necessary. Ingenieros characterizes them as human animals.¹⁸ They are mentally inferior; they live half of their race, their time and their social class. They are incapable of imitation; their ineptitude is their greatest trait.

Mediocre men: enemies of all perfection, lack individuality, followers, imitators. They are the enemies of perfection. They lack personal characteristics and are the shadows of society.

Superior men: they are an advantageous accident of human evolution. They are original and creative. They are the forerunners of new forms of perfection, they think of improving the world they live in, and can impose their ideals on the routines of others. Ingenieros claims these men are the minority. He often gives examples of superior men as philosophers and artists.

¹⁷ *Ibíd.*, 39. Hombre inferior, mediocre y superior.

¹⁸ “Hay hombres mentalmente inferiores al término medio de su raza, de su tiempo y de su clase social; también los hay superiores.” *Ibid.*, 30. This comment can be interpreted as a basis for charging Ingenieros as a racist. In regards to the charge of racism, our intuition alarms some of us of learning that a particular race is inferior or superior to the other; however, Ingenieros does not fully reject the possibility of scientifically proving such a thing.

Mediocre men imitate; superior men create. Ingenieros aggressively criticizes the mediocre, more than he does the inferior because for him, mediocre men lack individuality and refuse to choose a better way of life. In a way, Ingenieros advocates a domestication of the mediocre by the superior. Intuitively, for many, this hierarchy of men causes great discomfort as the tradition of ethical theories has leaned towards equality of men. However, Ingenieros is not putting forward a traditional type of moral theory, rather the destruction of dogmatic theories.

Ingenieros disagrees that men are equal. For him, some are better than others. He believes that it is false to claim that all men have the same capabilities as others and criticizes most religions for instilling this forged belief on men. However, Ingenieros' purpose is to present a philosophical project which can help all men live up to their potential despite of their differences.

In other words, Ingenieros wants us to recognize that we are not all the same, and that we should not be alarmed by this statement. Some people are born sicker than others, and others are born geniuses, more intelligent and healthier than the rest. Ingenieros invites his readers to recognize this as a fact of life and embrace reality. By doing so, Ingenieros believes that we will achieve the first step towards building a morality without dogmas. One of the main dogmas that we need to get rid of, Ingenieros believes, is claiming that all men are equal. Ingenieros argues that some need more help than others and that it is the task of the superior to help the inferior in order to achieve a better moral system.

Furthermore, Ingenieros' philosophy is intended to be read and applied by the superior. What he is advocating with his implicit elitism is similar to what is proposed in Plato's *Republic* in the section of educating philosopher kings, which is to impose a great responsibility on the intellectually superior to overlook the inferior.

4. Morality and Ingenieros

What exactly is Ingenieros advocating in terms of morality? Ingenieros argues for the rejection of dogmas, which have domesticated the mediocre and stolen their identities. However, ultimately Ingenieros places great responsibility on the superior to take on the task of promoting the evolution of morality by initiating change and revolution against imposed metaphysical a prioris. Pragmatically, this task can only be employed individually, by beginning with one's self. Ingenieros implies that superior men should lead by example by thinking and creating better forms of life derived by their actual experience.

In *Hacia una moral sin Dogmas*¹⁹ Ingenieros defines moral dogmas as immutable and imperfect opinions imposed on men by an authority previous to their experience.²⁰ He recognizes that men need to be moral in order to live in social association; however, he argues that we should recognize the falsehood of dogmatism that has been imposed on morality throughout history.²¹

It is the task of the superior to take on this challenge. How this is to be achieved is up to each individual because by giving step-by-step guidelines, it would be

¹⁹ Written in 1912, a year before *El Hombre Mediocre*.

²⁰ "Un dogma moral es una opinión inmutable e imperfectible impuesta a los hombres por una autoridad anterior a su propia experiencia." *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*, 12.

²¹ "Los hombres necesitan ser morales para vivir asociados, aunque resulten falsas las hipótesis dogmáticas con que se ha explicado esa necesidad." *Ibíd.*, 13

inconsistent with Ingenieros' rejection of ethical theories centered on rules and principles.

For Ingenieros, philosophy needs to start and be based on experience. In addition, he stresses the importance of recognizing the social aspect of morality. Morality as presented by Ingenieros is a necessary condition for social life, not a metaphysical entity, no formal conceptions of the good, simply practical and conventional.

Ingenieros claims that men need to be moral to live associated, even if the dogmas in which their association relies upon end up being false. Ingenieros presents four general conclusions derived from experience:

1. The nature of morals: Moral experience develops naturally in human societies like a necessary condition of the relations between individual and society.²²
2. The autonomy of morals: Moral experience is not conditioned by revealed dogmas or rational dogmas tending to emancipate from them in the future.²³
3. Perfectibility of morals: Moral experience is not limited to revelation or reason, it perfects itself in function of social experience, having a tendency to adapt to variable conditions and renovating value judgments that are founded in obligation and sanction.²⁴
4. Sovereignty of morals: Life in society demands the social obligation and collective fulfillment of justice, like social sanction.²⁵

Ingenieros' project may be seen as an attempt to formulate a certain theory of perfection. Since he is against mediocrity it seems plausible to assume that he has a

²²“La naturalidad de la moral: La experiencia moral se desarrolla naturalmente en las sociedades humanas como condicionamiento necesario de las relaciones entre el individuo y la sociedad.

²³ La autonomía de la moral: La experiencia moral no está condicionada por dogmas revelados ni por dogmas racionales, tendiendo a emanciparse de ellos en el porvenir.

²⁴ La perfectibilidad de la moral: La experiencia moral no está limitada por la revelación ni por la razón, se perfecciona en función de la experiencia social, tendiendo a adaptarse en sus condiciones incesantemente variables y renovando sin cesar los juicios de valor en que se fundan la obligación y la sanción.

²⁵ La soberanía de la moral: La vida en sociedad exige la obligación social y el cumplimiento colectivo de la justicia, como sanción social.” Ibid. 28-29.

conception of perfection in mind, as a state of affairs, or set of conditions that must be attained at a certain point. However, the beauty of his account lies in the fact that perfection can never be achieved. To define perfection, would be to destroy his philosophy.

On my interpretation of Ingenieros, situations may never be perfect, however endlessly improved. Ingenieros did not conceive of social perfectionism as a product of uniformity of all individuals, but rather like a harmonious combination of originalities. Therefore, there is no homogeneous formula to be a good perfectionist. Ingenieros advocates diversity and pluralism of individuals and ideas. He claims that the aim of perfection is found in monists, dualists, theologians, atheists, stoics and pragmatists.

According to Ingenieros, idealism and the desire of moral progress are found in a lot of moral theories and in a lot of individuals. Furthermore, he believes that most of us have a natural tendency to aim at improvement and that we should not ignore it. The key is to constantly question, challenge and make the best of our character.

Ingenieros believes that all men have a purpose and the potential to constantly aim at perfecting themselves. According to Ingenieros, mediocre men can in fact become superior. His conception of morality is very dynamic and focuses on the participation of all types of individuals. Despite the categories men fall into, they are not condemned to stay that way. Everyone can change and not only be different, but also in fact become better.

It is important to recognize that Ingenieros did not present a cohesive system of ethics. His moral ideas are scattered throughout his works, including his many writings

in psychology and sociology. This is because he did not want to present a dogmatic system, rather he wanted to inspire and motivate others to apply idealism individually. His philosophy is not as systematic as others, but there is no doubt that we find normative prescriptions in his account.

Therefore, it is safe to say that Ingenieros' moral philosophy cannot be classified under a particular school of ethical thought, at least in the sense that he never labeled his project as belonging to any particular philosophical current, but the main essence of his approach is very similar to the American pragmatists, primarily because of his great focus on experience and idealism. Pragmatism itself is not a dogmatic doctrine of any sort; furthermore, if we compare ideas, pragmatism embraces a lot of the ideas Ingenieros put forward.

One of the benefits of shedding light on Ingenieros' moral philosophy is that it is an innovative approach that raises and addresses issues that are still relevant today. It also provides a significant historical link to the American pragmatists, in particular to Ralph Waldo Emerson. This next section will explore the powerful significance of this relation.

II. JOSE INGENIEROS AND RALPH WALDO EMERSON



Figure 2 Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. Impact of Emerson on Ingenieros

The impact of Emerson (Figure 2) on Ingenieros needs to be explored for two main reasons. The first one is that to better understand and appreciate Ingenieros and his moral philosophy, we need to understand his deep admiration for Emerson. Secondly, this relationship has never been explored in the history of philosophy and for over a hundred years, this unique connection has been hiding a link between Latin American philosophy and American pragmatism.

I believe that exploring this link is a promising area of research because the similarities between Emerson and Ingenieros are no mere coincidence. There is great evidence of the influence one had over the other. Each of these men are strong proponents of the similar philosophies they represent, even though they are from

different sides of the world, one from Boston, Massachusetts and the other one from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Undoubtedly, all philosophers have their influences, but what makes the influence of Emerson over Ingenieros peculiar and worth exploring is that it happened through many barriers, primarily those of culture, language and politics. However, despite the distance and countless barriers between them, they both managed to promote a radical ethical view in and beyond their own countries and ultimately present idealism as an inspiring philosophical notion.

Ingenieros' explicit philosophical purpose is to inspire individuals to reach their potential and avoid mediocrity. In *El Hombre Mediocre*, he presents his philosophy of idealism; however, in *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*, he points at the life of Emerson and says: here is an example of what I have been talking about. This is powerful because not all philosophers can present their moral theories and then point at a particular individual and claim that their life serves as a model of their philosophy.

Ingenieros believes that idealism is not only in the ideas somebody has about improving the world, rather idealism is in the life one lives. Therefore, Ingenieros was a vivid admirer of Emerson's life, not just of his ideas. Ingenieros extensively mentions his admiration for Emerson and dedicates most of the sections in *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*, to praise him as a human, but most importantly as a moralist.

Emerson is known to many as a great poet and as a key representative of American pragmatism, to some others as the first philosopher of the American spirit. He is also the

chief figure in the American literary movement called *Transcendentalism*²⁶, which was a philosophical and religious movement.

Transcendentalism is a complex movement, drawing upon Platonic, Christian, Stoic, and Hindu thought, but its most immediate affinity is with German Idealism as worked out from Kant to Schelling.²⁷

2. Historical significance

Emerson was born in 1803 in Boston, Massachusetts. Furthermore, most of his ancestors were clergymen as was his father. He was educated at Harvard University and graduated in 1821.²⁸ After a very productive life, Emerson died in 1882. There is no documentation of Ingenieros and Emerson ever meeting. However, Ingenieros' works reflect the impact that Emerson had on his life and philosophical career.

In 1916, Ingenieros traveled to the United States because of his great interest in Emerson. He obtained some of Emerson's writings and was inspired to write *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*,²⁹ in which he extensively presents Emerson as an example to be followed. All of Ingenieros' philosophical writings have a hint of Emersonian philosophy in them. However, Ingenieros' works are still distinctive and original on their own; but undoubtedly, Emerson played an important role in his philosophical formation.

²⁶ Transcendentalism was a historical movement limited in time from the mid 1830s to the late 1840s and in space to eastern Massachusetts.

²⁷ In his essay "*The Transcendentalist*," Emerson explained transcendentalism is "Idealism as it appears in 1842" and linked it with "the very oldest thoughts" such as Buddhism.

²⁸ In 1845 he began extensive lecturing on "the uses of great men," a series that culminated with the 1850 publication of *Representative Men*; by that year he was giving as many as 80 lectures a year. Through a career of 40 years, he gave about 1500 public lectures, traveling as far as California and Canada but generally staying in Massachusetts. His audiences were captivated by his speaking style, even if they didn't always follow the subtleties of his arguments.

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson>

²⁹ Written in 1919.

In *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*; Ingenieros states the following about Emerson:

True, like a poet—Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests with his multiple senses mystical and optimistic, social and human, natural and pantheistic, and his ways of rebellious student, in his actions as reformer and his lyrics as poet that he was one of the most intense moralists of the XIX century.³⁰

According to Ingenieros, Emerson belongs to the family of representative idealist men, in the most rigorous sense of the concept; and according to Ingenieros, it is not possible to appreciate him without knowing his social and religious surroundings. Ingenieros admires that despite Emerson's religious background, he was able to live a life guided by the unfolding of moral experience rather than by religious dogmatism. For Ingenieros, Emerson represents the example of a man who believed in God, but was not necessarily dogmatic.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Ingenieros' moral account does not advocate atheism. His implicit message is that despite the pressures of religion it is possible to achieve an independent and unique idealism. This is why, Ingenieros claims that Emerson is not recognized in the history of religion, as much as he is recognized in the history of ethical thought.³¹ Emerson was not perfect in the eyes of Ingenieros, but he was an idealist man who captured the essence of Ingenieros' philosophy of constant revision of dogmas in his everyday life.

³⁰ "Ralph Waldo Emerson sugiere en pocas líneas, el múltiple sentido místico y optimista, social y humano, natural y panteísta, que en sus rebeldías de estudiante, en su acción de reformador y en sus lirismos de poeta, nos permite reconocer uno de los moralistas más intensos del siglo XIX." *Hacia una Moral sin Dogmas*. Ingenieros, José (1947).p. 30. Editorial Losada. Buenos Aires.

³¹ Upon assuming the pastorate of a Boston church in 1829, Emerson experienced many doubts concerning traditional Christian belief. Emerson's first and only settlement was at the important Second Unitarian Church of Boston, where he became sole pastor in 1830. Three years later he had a crisis of faith, finding that he "was not interested" in the rite of Communion. He once remarked, that if his teachers had been aware of his true thoughts, they would not have allowed him to become a minister. Eventually Emerson's controversial views caused his resignation. However, he never ceased to be both teacher and preacher.

3. Philosophical similarities and differences

Style

The first similarity that needs to be acknowledged between Emerson and Ingenieros is their style of writing. Even though they both wrote in different languages, the elegant prose presented in their books is astoundingly similar. Furthermore, even though Ingenieros wrote his books in Spanish after reading Emerson, he was able to capture the same classiness and precise choice of words. Their analogies are genius and almost every sentence can be seen as a famous quotation. Due to the lack of any systematic and architectonic philosophy, Emerson and Ingenieros' ethics are the antithesis of the ethics of Spinoza. Their ethics lack, in a positive way, a structure and a system, which for many this is the reason why their books are pleasant to read and are accessible to almost everyone and not just limited to philosophers.

To this day, both Emerson and Ingenieros are taught outside of philosophy departments. Emerson is taught in English, Literature and History classes, while Ingenieros is taught in Sociology, Psychology and Spanish literature classes. Ingenieros does not see Emerson's writings as a philosophical system of ethical ideas; he sees more of an aesthetic approach to morality rather than a metaphysical one.

Emerson's writings, like Ingenieros' are not intended to be for the masses and are also mainly directed to idealistic individuals. Both Emerson and Ingenieros attack the mediocre man and persuade individuals to achieve perfection as the underlying purpose.

Experience

Both Emerson and Ingenieros place a big emphasis on the importance of experience. Ingenieros advocates for a sort of moral progress, or what others have interpreted as an evolution of morality. In addition, Ingenieros believes that life is our dictionary and that we should be guided by experience.

For Emerson, the recognition of experience is just as important. In the book *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*,³² Robert Richardson claims that one day after several years of losing his wife and pondering about death, Emerson was thinking about what it meant to not be alive anymore, and after several hours of confusion, he decided to go to the cemetery and unbury his wife with the purpose of having an actual experience with death. Emerson opened his wife's coffin to ultimately have an immediate experience and to perceive her decomposed body. This event, morbid to some, but powerful to many others proves the significance of experience for Emerson and his followers.

For Ingenieros, on the other hand, experience is and should be the basis of moral theories. Seeing, touching, breathing, talking and socializing all have more power to him as experiences than dogmatism—which is a paralysis of ideas that never change.

Mediocrity

In the first lines of his book *El Hombre Mediocre*,³³ Jose Ingenieros states that his writings are only for the men who look at the stars eager for perfection and rebellious against mediocrity influenced by the mystery of ideals. In some of his writings, Emerson

³² Richardson, Robert D. Jr., 1995. *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, introduction page. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

³³ “*Mediocre Man*” Ingenieros, José (1963). *El Hombre Mediocre*, . Editorial Azteca. México.

mentions that as a young man, he used to gaze at the stars as a way of nightly rediscovering the eternal—making each experience new.

In both of their writings there is a sense of idealism and dreamful attitudes. They both envision a world with the potential to be improved by men armed with imagination and originality. For Emerson and Ingenieros, the biggest impediment for moral perfection is mediocrity. For them, mediocrity is related to routine. Men who are afraid of changes and rely on dogmas to guide them on how to live tend to be mediocre and are the biggest enemies of perfection.

Ingenieros argues that we need to recognize that some men by nature are born to be better than others and that it is the duty of these idealistic men to overlook for the inferior and to evoke and inspire others to inquire truth and excellence and to refuse to be mediocre. Something along the lines of, “you must be the change you wish to see in the world.”³⁴

Ingenieros uses Emerson as an example of these men, who use their lives as inspiration for others. This kind of motivational approach is also seen in many of Emerson’s writings. The famous Emerson quote, “do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail” embodies this approach. They both encourage men to lead by example, to be the first and the best at what they do.

Conformity is the chief Emersonian vice, the opposite of the virtue of self-reliance. According to Emerson, we conform when we pay unearned respect to clothing and other symbols of status, when we show the foolish face of praise or the forced smile,

³⁴ Quote by Mohandas Gandhi.

which we put on in company where we do not feel at ease in answer to a conversation, which does not interest us. Both of their philosophies advocate the authenticity of self and encourage a modest and honest life. Emerson criticizes our conformity even to our own past actions-when they no longer fit the needs or aspirations of the present.

For Ingenieros, conformity, or as he calls it *mediocrity* is the main vice.

Ingenieros, like Emerson targeted young audiences as they saw the most potential in them. Ingenieros is also explicit about other vices, among others; he mentions vulgarity, routine, vanity, envy and dishonesty. As virtues: honesty, dignity and excellence of character are among the top ones. In most of his writings, Ingenieros advocates for a domestication of the mediocre.³⁵

Morality

Ingenieros claims that the understanding of the life, doctrines and social action of Emerson will allow us to understand that human morality can expand without the guidance of any dogma; moreover, the subordination of morality to dogmas is an obstacle that tends to complicate the free unfolding of our moral experience and that the way of error is not the one that leads to virtue.

Like many idealists, Emerson believes that a person's ethics flow naturally from an inner disposition. In addition, Emerson's views about morality, like Ingenieros are intertwined with his metaphysics of process, and with his perfectionism, his idea that life has the goal of passing into higher forms. For Ingenieros, life in society demands the individual acceptance of duty, social obligation, and the collective fulfillment of justice,

³⁵ This domestication has caused a lot of controversy in the sociopolitical arena of Latin American thought. The implications of this will be explored in the next section.

like social sanctioning. Ingenieros acknowledges that men need morality to live in society in a sense he has a pragmatic approach to ethics.

Ingenieros and Emerson's ethics are very similar. They both question how men can live in tension towards a morality that is more imperfect everyday with no more compass than ideals naturally derived from social experience. Furthermore, Ingenieros wonders whether humanity can renovate indefinitely its ethical aspirations independently from all imperative dogmas. They both see a link between nature and morality. According to Ingenieros, the words divine, nature, and morality are synonymous to Emerson in his writings. Emerson claims that everything that is moral is natural. According to Ingenieros, Emerson is an exponent of pantheism. Emerson calls nature God and spirit human thought.

For Emerson there is always an instinctive sense of right, he calls it an obscure idea, which leads us to act. Emerson claims that the idea of right exists in the human mind, and lays itself out in the equilibrium of nature. Published first in 1841 in *Essays* and then in the 1847 revised edition of *Essays, Self-Reliance* took shape over a long period of time; in this work, Emerson criticizes much of human life; he nevertheless devotes most of his attention to the virtues.³⁶

Chief among these virtues is what he calls self-reliance. The phrase connotes originality and spontaneity. The self on whom we are to rely is, in contrast, the original self that we are in the process of creating. Such a self, to use a phrase from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, "becomes what it is."

³⁶ <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/id-95,pageNum-28.html>

According to Emerson, the self-reliant person will publish her results, but she must first learn to detect that spark of originality or genius that is her particular gift to the world. It is not a gift that is available on demand, however, and a major task of life is to meld genius with its expression. The man, Emerson states is only half himself, the other half is his expression. There are young people of genius, Emerson laments in *Experience*, who promise a new world but never deliver: they fail to find the focus for their genius within the actual horizon of human life.

Even though Emerson emphasizes our independence and even distance from one another, then, the payoff for self-reliance is public and social. Although self-reliance is central, it is not the only Emersonian virtue. Emerson also praises a kind of trust, and the practice of a wise skepticism. There are times, he holds, when we must let go and trust to the nature of the universe: as the traveler who has lost his way, throws his reins on his horse's neck, and trusts to the instinct of the animal to find his road, so must we do with the divine animal that carries us through this world.

Emerson and Ingenieros believe in the power of self-perfection as they admire individuality and men in pursuit of greatness. Emerson's *Self-Reliance* is a praise of individuality. He calls everyone to speak and live their beliefs despite the censure of society. Society is constantly criticized as harmful to the development of the individual. Emerson claims that society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members.³⁷ Emerson believes that a man independent from society is the only

³⁷Waldo Emerson. *Self-Reliance*. Norton Anthology of American Literature. Shorter Fourth Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995. p. 21

true man. Ingenieros also claims that men who follow the majority tend to be mediocre because they live in the shadow of others.

Emerson considers the relationship of ethics and religion to nature. He finds that these two disciplines relegate nature to an inferior position in a scheme of values that regards spiritual truth as the only valid truth. Religion urges the individual to deplore the physical world and distrust the body, and both ethics and religion “put nature under foot.” Recommending that the individual focus on nature’s totality, Emerson cautions against excessively detailed inquiries into ethics and religion.³⁸

According to Ingenieros, Emerson sees in traditionalism a type of deadly paralysis. Both advocate a morality in continuous formation, each time improved and better adapted to nature. Emerson claimed that nobody could feel virtuous as a consequence of following dogmas and lies. Ingenieros believes in a constant formation of morals, each day better adapted to nature and aiming at a better harmony between man and everything that surrounds him. Emerson conceives the perfection of morality as an endless improvement of humanity to its environment.

For Ingenieros, a good life is lived by idealist men. Emerson is more specific, in one of his most famous quotes he states that, “To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,

³⁸ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emerson>

or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.”

Opposition to War

For Emerson the soul should transcend all conflict and have no enemies. He considered soldiers to be ridiculous. War, for Emerson, is "abhorrent to all right reason" and against human progress. From the perspective of spiritual oneness he spoke of "the blazing truth that he who kills his brother commits suicide." He looked at the Civil War as retribution to purge the nation of the evil of slavery, and he detested the lack of freedom during the war. In 1865, he vowed that if martial law came to Concord, he would disobey it or move elsewhere."³⁹ As stated before, Ingenieros was also an activist against war and constantly protested the use of force and violence as a means of resolving conflict. Both men believed in the power of idealism and dialogue.

Nature

Emerson's first book, *Nature*, a collection of essays, appeared when he was 33. Emerson emphasized individualism and rejected traditional authority. He also believes that people should try to live a simple life in harmony with nature and with others.

In *Nature*, Emerson claims that to have a direct relation with nature, with God's divine creation, simply go out and look at the stars. For Emerson, nature is sensually beautiful, it is beautiful morally, and it is beautiful intellectually: what is essential is to be in harmony with nature. But to be in harmony with nature, Emerson claims, is to be in

³⁹ "The Fortune of the Republic" by Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Complete Writings*, p. 1186.
<http://www.san.beck.org/GPJ16-Abolitionists.html>

harmony with God's design; it is to be morally virtuous. Our relation with nature is emotional and spiritual: nature always wears the colors of the spirit. We project our emotions into nature, and nature reflects them back to us. Nature is a mirror of the moral state of the soul.

Emerson's teaching stressed that one should have a very intimate relationship with nature; he believed that nature, itself, existed for the betterment of mankind and that man could only find his true morals and beauties within nature.

Differences

Although this is not central to my thesis, it is important to recognize that there are many differences between Emerson and Ingenieros. It would be unfair to consider Ingenieros as a shadow of Emerson since on his own he revolutionized many aspects of Latin American philosophy and introduced numerous original ideas to the philosophical discourse. In comparing their works, Ingenieros is more precise about criticizing mediocre men by giving more concrete examples of the lives they lead. Ingenieros goes as far as to give a specific classification of men as: *inferior*, *mediocre* and *superior*. However, despite the many differences between Emerson and Ingenieros, the importance lies in their similarities, mainly in their determination to change the minds of men, their faith in idealism as a tool of changing the world, and their unique ability to inspire others.

4. Bridging the gap between Latin American philosophy and American pragmatism

In Latin America almost all intellectuals are familiar with both Emerson and Ingenieros; however, in the U.S. Ingenieros is unknown. I believe it is important to study both as they signify an important philosophical bridge between American pragmatism and Latin American philosophy. Most famous philosophers come from Europe or the U.S. but rarely do any Latin American philosophers stand out.

Why are Latin American philosophers overlooked? It is not because of the lack of quality or innovation of their ideas. Perhaps, the problem is that no one has taken the task of rediscovering their works that have originally been written in Spanish, and incorporated them into the current philosophical discourse.

Latin American philosophy has commonly been viewed as concerning the history of the Aztec thought or the influence of the Che Guevara in Latin American societies, but slowly we should start opening the doors to the many possibilities that have been neglected throughout the history of philosophy. Countries are divided by many boundaries, but we tend to overestimate how philosophy has traveled and is not constrained by physical, national or cultural boundaries. If a young philosopher in Argentina was so captivated by the writings of an American that he traveled all the way to his home country to learn more about him and then went back to initiate his own philosophical mission inspired by Emerson, ultimately influencing many more Latin American philosophers, I believe that at the very least we should acknowledge this and incorporate it into the history of philosophy. I think my thesis is a modest step in this

direction in which, I would like to believe, will bring us closer to that ideal of unity and improvement of American pragmatism and Latin American philosophy.

Both Emerson and Ingenieros believe in the power of men to change and become better, to reject dogmas and question authority, but mainly to use their lives to inspire and help others. Ingenieros thought of Emerson as a part of the idealistic elite. But, the word “elite,” especially as part of an ethical vision is bound to be resisted or perceived as controversial. Is Ingenieros’ *idealistic elitism* free of challenges and objections? This next section analyzes the implications of Ingenieros’ elitist moral account.

III. A DEFENSE OF IDEALISTIC ELITISM

To teach that all men are born with equal powers and faculties, to equal influence in society, to equal property and advantages through life, is as gross a fraud, as glaring an imposition on the credulity of the people, as ever was practiced by monks, by Druids, by Brahmins, by priests of the immortal Lama, or by the self-styled philosophers of the French revolution. For honor's sake ... for truth and virtue's sake, let American philosophers and politicians despise it.⁴⁰

-- John Adams.

Elitism is often associated with the belief that some persons or members of certain classes or groups deserve favored treatment by virtue of their perceived superiority, as in intellect, social status, or financial resources. In addition, there is also a sense of entitlement enjoyed by such a group or class. This group of elite is seen as those who control, rule, and dominate. However, the view of elitism advocated by Ingenieros states that superiority does not come from a social status or a financial resource, rather through education and idealism for improving one's moral character and one's social environment.

The unique aspect of this type of elitism is that it is tied to moral perfectionism, and is to be applied by individuals to their own lives and their surroundings rather than leaving it up to the government to be implemented. In this section, I will argue that *idealistic elitism* is a promising ethical view that should not be dismissed just because it is "elitist" and that it deserves to be the subject of further inquiry.

Ingenieros ethical elitism should not be considered as something alarming that ultimately leads to negative effects such as discrimination or oppression of the inferior, rather if applied properly, the superiority of certain individuals can be something

⁴⁰ Letter from John Adams to John Taylor, (1776), <http://www.politicalgateway.com>. Article: *That All Men Are Created Equal*. Category: Political Commentary - Conservative
Posted Sun Jul 04,2004 12:16 PM Last Edited: Sun Nov 14,2004 10:54 PM

beneficial for all. In the case of Ingenieros' account, the charge of elitism is not morally problematic.

Most rational people would accept the fact that there is a difference between the life of Mother Teresa and the life of Charles Manson. While one life was dedicated to tireless efforts on behalf of world peace, the other was full of convictions and murders. Furthermore, it seems uncontroversial to acknowledge that individuals vary greatly among themselves and the lives they lead. Some individuals are idealistic as they have desires to help their fellow man and change the world, while others have desires to rape and kill and do not have adequate conceptions of improving the world or themselves. For Ingenieros, it is not problematic to come to the conclusion that Mother Teresa was morally superior and deserves higher respect than Charles Manson. However, Ingenieros is not the first elitist philosopher to acknowledge a hierarchy of men.

1. Brief history of elitism

It is important to recognize that elitism is not a modern idea; it has been around for thousands of years. Throughout history several philosophers have been in favor of recognizing that there are superior individuals. Plato and Aristotle advocated that governments mold their citizens' characters, with no restraints on how the molding was done, and they thought that education and political power were wasted on those who performed manual labor.

Plato's *Republic*⁴¹ suggests that the power should belong only to a selected few. Mainly, Plato suggested that philosophers should be kings.⁴² Furthermore, Plato supported elitism and claimed that the majority always tends to be ignorant and therefore the power should only belong to the wise. He advocated that we should do what we are best suited to do by nature. In addition, if by nature I was born to be wiser than you, then according to Plato, it follows that I should rule you.

Aristotle, on the other hand, supported slavery and claimed that women and slaves by nature are intellectually and rationally inferior to others. The good life, according to Aristotle is only available to males in the right material conditions and with certain levels of education. However, to pursue this life, some slaves need to be in place. Aristotle's conception of the good does not reject slavery. Therefore, the main aspect of his account of elitism is founded on the discrimination of others.

The problem with these ancient Greek accounts of elitism, from Ingenieros' point of view, is that for the ancients, the superiority of men is fixed by nature as an essence, whereas for Ingenieros, after evolution it is hard to perceive of superiority as something necessary in a fixed order of things. Instead for Ingenieros, superiority is contingent. His account is very dynamic, in the sense that men are not condemned to be inferior for the rest of their lives. For Ingenieros, some inferior men can become mediocre and ultimately superior. But in the case of Aristotle for instance, being born a woman is a permanent inferior trait just like being born into a family of slaves.

⁴¹ Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 250.

Other perfectionists, most notably Nietzsche also advocated elitism. As stated before, Nietzsche had a great influence on Ingenieros since they both agree on the idea of a “super man” who is better than the rest. For them, differences among individuals should be recognized. However, Nietzsche as opposed to Ingenieros aggregated using maximax.⁴³

Those in favor of maximax make society’s goal not the sum or average of its members’ perfection, but the greatest good of its most outstanding individuals.⁴⁴ Maximax supports inequality on almost any assumption about the world. If by nature some people have more talent, they should be given more resources because only their perfections will matter morally. Furthermore, society should arbitrarily pick some of its members and devote the bulk of its resources to them, because this will produce higher heights than if wealth were shared equally. Ultimately, maximax violates intuitions of favoring equal economic distribution.

Even though Ingenieros supported and encouraged the recognition of differences among individuals, in his own life, he was fond of socialism. It is important to state that Ingenieros put forward an ethical view of idealism and not a political theory. Undoubtedly, his philosophical ideas overlap with political issues, but in his philosophical writings he does not present any specific political ideas. The type of elitism supported by Ingenieros is not tied to the principle of maximax. It is a type of

⁴³ On a maximax view, the lives and perfectionist achievements of all but a very few persons have no moral value. Nietzsche's antiegalitarian maximax principle says society should maximize the excellence of its few most excellent individuals and neglect the inferior.

⁴⁴ Hurka, Thomas (1993). *Perfectionism*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 164.

elitism confined to idealists who believe in the endless improvement of current social situations.

Idealistic elitism does not need to be applied by the government onto individuals; rather Ingenieros advocates that it is applied by individuals onto their social environments. Therefore, this type of elitism differs from the types of elitism commonly tied to past elitist philosophers. In any case, nothing in Ingenieros' philosophy is incompatible with a government that is under the assumption that all men should be born to equal rights based on basic physical needs. In the words of Martha Nussbaum:

The body that labors is in a sense the same body all over the world, and its needs for food and nutrition and healthcare are the same.⁴⁵

For Ingenieros, in terms of physical needs we all have the same needs and the government should promote everyone's well-being equally. This is indubitable in his account. Furthermore, *idealistic elitism* does not imply that the government should favor certain elite individuals and discriminate against others. Just because a man happens to be inferior does not mean that he should not have the same rights as those of the superior.

An important key of Ingenieros' philosophy is that he does not generalize in terms of certain groups. Furthermore, he promotes individuality. And the type of elitism he puts forward; he argues, should be promoted by individuals and not necessarily by the government; yet again because Ingenieros' aim is to inspire individuals to perfect themselves and not to provide a specific political theory on how to achieve perfection.

⁴⁵ Nussbaum, Martha, 2000, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.22.

Ingenieros' perfectionism is directed to the superior, those who have ideals of improving the world. For Ingenieros, there is no need to formulate general moral theories to be applied to the masses. Instead, he advocates that individuals change themselves and begin by inspiring others to strive for perfection.

2. The controversial grounds of perfectionism

Perfectionist theories in general encourage the improvement of men in virtue of their nature. However, the issue of human nature is the most controversial aspect of perfectionism because the objective grounds to claim that there is such a thing as human nature have been questioned. In addition, perfectionism fails to objectively determine what *human nature is*. It is also undetermined whether we all share the same human nature, meaning the same traits or essence, or if we have a unique nature individually. For Ingenieros, by nature we are born differently, but have the freedom to improve or “perfect” ourselves.

If we consider the possibility that each individual has a particular nature, we run into the issue of whether by nature some individuals are born predisposed to be better than others. Nonetheless, some perfectionists ignore the issue of human nature altogether and support certain conceptions of the good based on different grounds other than human nature by making statements such as:

Whatever human nature turns out to be, whatever form of life satisfies people more, it would still be the case that [some forms of life] would be intrinsically superior [to others].⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Vinit Haksar, *Equality, Liberty, and Perfectionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 3-4

Having established that indeed there is a difference between the life of Mother Teresa and the life of Charles Manson, does it follow that *one life is better* than the other? Or most importantly, that one *individual is better* than the other? Typically, Western philosophical traditions and Christian conceptions of individuals argue that we are all equal. However, Ingenieros' elitist view claims that we are not equal. We are different, and indeed some individuals are superior to others. Being superior is the normative standard for Ingenieros.

Ingenieros presents a hierarchy of individuals: *inferior, mediocre, and superior*. For him, it is the duty of the superior to be idealistic and oversee the inferior in terms of improving their social environment. According to his philosophy, in the case of Mother Teresa, she would fall under the superior category and her life would be a perfect example of how she used her superiority to help the inferior, particularly the leprosy-afflicted.

Before outlining the criteria of what each individual falls under in terms of the hierarchy presented by Ingenieros, it is important to make the distinction between individuals being *different* and individuals being *better* than others. It is clear that all individuals are different from one another. We all have an exclusive individuality. Furthermore, difference does not immediately imply superiority. There are countless differences between men and women, but that does not mean that consequentially one is better than the other. The criteria for someone or something to be better does not automatically derive from it being different.

The justification for claiming that some individuals are *better* than others is normally grounded on a particular conception of the good. However, finding an objective justification for claiming that an individual is *better* than another is one of the biggest challenges that objectivist perfectionist theories have to confront, consequently, making subjectivism an appealing alternative to consider.

Philip Kitcher⁴⁷ strongly criticizes objectivist theories of human nature. He claims that whatever justification is given in support of any conception of the good and its link to the development of our essence must meet the reductionist challenge, which is once we state that something is good, the explanation for claiming such superiority over something else must be value-free.

Kitcher argues that the scientific bases of human nature are questionable and that a unification of physiological human characteristics will fail. He claims that ultimately objectivism fails because it is unable to provide non-trivial characteristics of human nature, more importantly; he claims that even if we did agree on what our human nature is, there would still need to be justification for why we should perfect it.

Kitcher further claims that objectivists, those who advocate a specific conception of the good, need to tell us a lot more about how we know something is genuinely valuable. However, if the issue of human nature, that is, the issue of objectively stating which human traits are essential for perfection, is open-ended; it seems that the alternative route for perfectionism to take is subjectivism, the view that since there is a

⁴⁷ Kitcher, Philip, "Essence and Perfection," *Ethics* 110(1999), pp. 59-84.

difference among individuals; whatever is desirable or pleasurable is ultimately up to each of them to decide.

On the other hand, subjectivism has proven to be a dangerous alternative because it fails in many respects. For instance, if an individual derives pleasure from killing, like in the case of Charles Manson, it seems problematic to argue that just because it is pleasurable to him, he should be allowed to do so. At least for the purpose of living in a society, we need a minimal conception of the good that allows for differences in individuals, but at the same time promotes harmony between one another.

Where does Ingenieros' view stand in this ongoing debate? Ingenieros' account is not subjectivist because he provides a general conception of the good life. For him, the good lies in idealism. On the other hand, we cannot label Ingenieros as an absolute objectivist either, because his conception of the good is dynamic and constantly open for change.

It seems unproblematic to recognize that there are certain differences among individuals. For instance, if individual A enjoys reading as opposed to individual B who enjoys dancing, most rational people would not have a problem accepting the fact that individuals A and B are different and that they are free to choose what is desirable and most pleasurable for them as a recreational activity; however, the main problem arises once we recognize that all individuals have to live in a social environment constantly interacting with one another and that whatever lifestyle A chooses should in a sense be compatible with the lifestyle of B, at least enough for one not to infringe on the other's life.

As appealing as subjectivism may appear to be because it acknowledges differences in individuals, it is necessary to establish at least some minimal agreements. For Ingenieros, there needs to be a conception of the good in order to ground any sort of harmony among individuals, consequently, perfectionism seems like a more practical alternative as opposed to subjectivism.

It is important to acknowledge that Ingenieros' conception of the good is not specifically defined. He refused to give specific definitions and guidelines of his moral account because he was afraid to fall into dogmatism. However, he states that constant revision of the good is needed along with idealism to aim at perfection. This means that individuals should have ideals and intentions of improving themselves and others constantly. Perfectionism in general ultimately advocates that all individuals improve their character and their lives. However, for Ingenieros, whoever is in charge of implementing such perfectionism must have great knowledge of what the good is. For him, superior men have this knowledge. Of course, knowledge as a mere intellectual capacity or excellence is not the only thing needed. An obvious counterexample would be the case of an intellectual who enjoys raping for fun. He has knowledge, but according to Ingenieros, he lacks moral wisdom and idealism. Furthermore, for Ingenieros, just because he is well-educated does not mean that he is superior.

The type of perfectionism advocated by Ingenieros is an alternative to both objectivism, as a grounded fixed conception of human nature, and also subjectivism. For Ingenieros, we do have a human nature; however, it is something that can be molded because we have freedom to change.

His conception of freedom is similar to Jean Paul Sartre's, for him, "Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you." However, even though there is no fixed conception of what the good is, Ingenieros does not fall into subjectivism because he argues for the constant improvement of ones' self and categorizes several virtues and vices in men.⁴⁸ Ultimately, his conception of the good lingers in his notion of improvement.

3. Is idealistic elitism anti-egalitarian?

Perfectionism has often been charged with being anti-egalitarian. Egalitarianism in general favors equality as it advocates the view that people should be treated as equals, in some respect. However, Ingenieros maintains that anti-egalitarianism, the opposite view that recognizes differences, is found in every aspect of society. In a family, there is no controversy in assuming that a parent has more knowledge and therefore more control over his or her kids. In this sense, a five-year-old boy is not treated the same as a parent because he does not have the same status. There is a hierarchy of authority, a certain paternalism embedded in family relations that allows for the unequal treatment of its members. However, inequality does not necessarily have to mean something unfavorable, as in the case with the boy who has to obey his parents. His status is subordinate and his decisions have an unequal standing to those of his parents as he does not have the same capacity to choose or mandate; however, it is sometimes in his best interest that his parents choose for him. For instance, in the case of

⁴⁸ These virtues were presented in the second section. Among them are: honesty, dignity and excellence of character. As vices he mentions: vulgarity, routine, vanity, envy and dishonesty.

when the boy wants to play with snakes or Clorox, it is best for the boy that the parents decide for him and overlook his well-being.

In addition, in our social environment, we tend to assume that a doctor knows best about our health than we do, because as patients we have unequal knowledge compared to the doctor. Furthermore, we can grant that a hair-stylist knows how to cut our hair better compared to others. Moreover, we tend to give certain authority to other individuals that we assume have more knowledge and a positive interest in our well-being. In addition, we trust certain individuals to do things for us because they are more capable than we are. Therefore, it seems unproblematic to grant that certain individuals have better knowledge than others, in a way, making them superior.⁴⁹

Why then does it seem controversial to acknowledge that there are certain people who deserve more respect and more authority than others? For instance, a Nobel peace prize winner is more respectable than a child molester; furthermore, a teacher has more authority than a student. A possible objection could be, but what if the child molester is a world renowned scientist? He must clearly have some sort of wisdom. However, as stated before, for Ingenieros, knowledge or wisdom is not the only requirement to deserve respect and the label of superior.

Egalitarian doctrines tend to express the idea that all human persons should be equal in fundamental worth or moral status, but *idealistic elitism* questions this strict egalitarianism. Even if everyone is deserving of some minimum respect, why is

⁴⁹ If by superior we mean more knowledgeable. I will later argue that the combination for superiority is knowledge and idealism in accordance to Ingenieros' conception. The lack of methodology for determining an individual's label in terms of: *inferior, mediocre or superior* may be seen as a weakness of Ingenieros' account; however, his aim in being so ambiguous is to avoid dogmatism and strict rules.

everyone deserving of the same amount of respect? Ingenieros believes it is important to categorize degrees of respect, but at the same time, he recognizes that opening the doors to any sort of elitism in individuals may lead to dangerous effects.

4. Dangers of elitism

George Sher is defensive against the charge of elitism in his perfectionist account as he claims:

If governments may act on beliefs that some *ways* of living are better than others, it seems a short step to the view that they may act on beliefs that some *types of persons* are better than others. This suggests that governments may legitimately discriminate in favor of some citizens—the “better” ones—at the expense of others. Just as disturbingly, it suggests that the state’s decisions are best made by a select class of overseers.⁵⁰

Sher’s concerns are well-taken, but the *idealistic elitism* advocated by Ingenieros’ account does not necessarily lead to pessimistic or “disturbing” effects. On the contrary, if applied correctly, this type of elitist conception of individuals may have a positive outcome.

There are some possible objections against elitism that need to be considered. A main objection is that it may lead to the oppression of the inferior. Classic examples include discrimination and exploitation of the less fortunate from the part of the superior. Throughout history, we have seen that women and certain races have been discriminated because of erroneous conceptions of the good held by the superior individuals in power. However, it is important to recognize that there is a difference between having authority and being tyrannical.

⁵⁰ Sher, George, 1997, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.5.

The main difference is that it is possible to be authoritative with a positive interest for those who are being overseen by the superior and ultimately be more beneficial to the inferior. Having authority and deserving more respect does not necessarily translate into negative manipulation. However, I am fully aware of the risks, I can conceive of a situation in which a benevolent dictator becomes corrupted by power.

Ingenieros' account does not guarantee that the superior will remain kind to others. However, if he/she gets morally corrupted, he/she ceases to be superior. In addition, ceasing to be superior in Ingenieros' view is possible because no one is fixed in his/her place. On the other hand, for Plato, and some of the ancient elitists, there is no room for this sort of dynamic mobility or openness to change.

Furthermore, paternalism is sometimes justified, not always, but even when it is, it is very dangerous. However, we need to acknowledge that manipulation is sometimes needed. Just like in the case of when a mother manipulates or tricks her child into taking some cough medicine for his own good. Or when a sober friend manipulates his drunken friend to give him his car keys and prevents him from driving.

Yet another objection to elitism is that it may also lead to brainwashing and indoctrination. This charge may most commonly be associated to those elitists who claim to hold the one and only true conception of the good. An example that comes to mind is that of a religion or cult. A cult leader may brainwash its members to follow him, and in this case, he may manipulate them in a negative way, either convince them to commit suicide, convert others, or impose their beliefs onto others at any cost.

However, having established that there is a risk of negative manipulation, brainwashing and indoctrination once we accept elitism, we should also recognize that in some instances manipulation is not necessarily a negative thing, as there are some individuals who profit from being manipulated. Ingenieros mentions Socrates, Wagner, and Christ as being idealists and being superior because they used their lives to help the inferior and in a way, with their knowledge positively manipulated others with their teachings and inspired them to become better. In this sense, Ingenieros' elitism is tied with perfection of one's self and the individual environment surrounding us. Ultimately, Ingenieros' account has adequate answers to most of the dangers.

5. Advantages of idealistic elitism

Ingenieros does not fully address the advantages of elitism, but on my interpretation it would support arguments like the following: elitism promotes degrees of respect. For Ingenieros, there is an important sense of respect that is lost with strict egalitarians in our everyday relationships. Having superior individuals overseeing and inspiring others would promote the appreciation and the respect of these superior sources in terms of moral matters. For Ingenieros, moral wisdom, and moral authority are tied to respect. In his account, we should give more respect to the superior individuals among us.

Our intuitions tell us that everyone deserves some minimum amount of respect, consequently, Ingenieros advocates that we respect everybody because in his account even the inferior deserve some moral respect; however, not everybody deserves the same amount. Of course an obvious objection would be: *how do we measure this respect?* The

answer is we cannot measure it, just like we cannot measure how much more an individual is mediocre rather than superior, but regardless of the lack of guidelines, the distinctions are real and important.

It is essential to recognize that there are different degrees of “respect.” For Ingenieros, the superior deserve more respect than the inferior; however, this does not mean that we should discriminate the inferior, rather encourage and inspire them to become better. For instance, Mother Theresa, who would fall under the category of superior, deserves more respect than Charles Manson, who would be considered inferior, but this does not mean, at least for Ingenieros, that we should not respect Charles Manson at all. Ingenieros would argue that we should inspire inferior individuals, like Manson, with our own lives by using ourselves of examples of constant perfection, like Mother Theresa did.

Yet another positive feature of recognizing elitism is that it promotes competition. In an academic environment a lot of students are motivated to excel in their studies by desires of entering top universities or receiving certain scholarships. However, they recognize that not all of the students who apply to Harvard get in. Only the most qualified. The same applies to those who try out for the Olympics, not everyone who competes gets to be a Gold medalist. It is the best out of the competitors who gets that title. Thus, the notion of competitiveness encourages individuals to want to excel even more; ultimately, promoting their perfection as individuals.

So if we grant that one of the many benefits of elitism is that it promotes degrees of respect, specifically more respect to superior individuals, then this notion would

potentially make inferior individuals strive for more respect, in a way engaging them in a competition where the prize is self-perfection.

Yet another favorable feature of elitism is that it encourages creativity. If everyone is “equal,” in the strict egalitarian sense, then society is morally homogenous. Once we acknowledge that we are not morally equal, meaning that some men are in fact superior, we can perceive an active moral society, in the sense that individuals are constantly striving for moral improvement and finding new ways of changing themselves and their surroundings. Once individuals recognize that there is a need for improvement, they can begin using their imaginations to be not simply different than they are, but ultimately better.

A homogenous society would be constituted by citizens of the same sex, size, age, strength, stature, activity, courage, hardiness, industry, patience, ingenuity, wealth, knowledge, fame, wit, temperance, constancy, and wisdom. However, if everyone is morally equal, then there is less creativity, there are no challenges and ultimately no risks. If there are recognized differences among individuals, new knowledge comes into play because individuals have improved expectations. In addition, there is open-endedness, if everyone is equal, there is no novelty as everything is determined because there is nothing new to be expected.

Ingenieros attacks equality in the sense of perceiving all men as equally deserving of the same amount of moral respect, but he does not attack social equality.⁵¹ Ingenieros thought that the dangers of a strict egalitarianism do not outweigh the

⁵¹ In the political sense. For Ingenieros, just because we are different does not mean that we should have different rights.

advantages that come from accepting elitism as ones' ethical view. It must then be acknowledged, Ingenieros claims, that there are inequalities which God, nature, or social environments have planted among individuals. But at the same time, these inequalities can be transformed. The superior can help the inferior in an endless cycle of constant improvement.

I will not analyze the political implications of Ingenieros' account, although, like I mentioned, he argues for socialism in several of his works. The details of how such a type of socialism could be put into practice are a different topic itself; even though some may perceive the elitist aspect of Ingenieros' philosophy as a drawback on his account, in my opinion, he is stating reality. His account is ultimately optimistic.

Times change so should morality, according to Ingenieros. Ingenieros' account is not necessarily relativistic, but progressive. Descartes is famous for his: I think therefore I am. Ingenieros' philosophy can be summarized as: To change is to be.⁵²

I understand that there are other risks that would be more serious if elitism were understood as a proposal of a sociopolitical theory, but it is instead an ethical vision. The objections that arise only show how difficult it is to live in accordance with *idealistic elitism*, but this does not mean that Ingenieros' view should be abandoned in favor of a strict egalitarian view, which in my opinion seems to be inadequate.

⁵² I have tried to present Ingenieros' main ideas. However, each of his ideas is a paper topic in itself. The aim of this thesis has been to introduce his philosophy and situate his works in a similar context to those of the American pragmatists. The link among them should be further explored in future research projects.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have tried to defend a term that instantly carries negative connotations. I have made an effort to show that *idealistic elitism* is something to be considered by those who are passionate about idealism and sociopolitical issues. This type of elitism advocates beginning the perfection of one's self and leading by example. Mother Teresa was not sponsored by the government to do what she did; regardless, she used her idealism and applied it to her life; consequently, impacting thousands of lives more. Socrates did the same. He went around provoking people's thoughts and inviting a search for truth. Jesus was another idealist who had visions of a better world and better men. Furthermore, Emerson used his own life to motivate Ingenieros and many others to have faith in idealism and pursue the dream of living in a better world. Many other idealists come to mind, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Subcomandante Marcos in Mexico, but at the same time I can think of you and me among the idealistic elite. We have the power to use idealism to inspire perfectionism in others. Idealist men do not necessarily need to achieve fame and celebrity, they simply are courageous, always fighting for justice and standing up for what is right. They lead and not follow. They are the heroes, poets, saints, philosophers and truth seekers among us.

I am aware of the dangers of *idealistic elitism* when put into practice, but I have yet to read a convincing argument for why it must therefore be abandoned. In Ingenieros, we find a view of perfection that while not totally immune to the problems I have presented, is more promising than contemporary versions of perfectionism and deserves the attention of philosophers today.

Many questions remain unanswered and many issues regarding Ingenieros' overall account unexplored. For instance, the issues of racism and democracy: is Ingenieros opening the doors to a possible recognition of racism? Is democracy possible in Ingenieros' account? Can you be democratic when individuals vary so greatly among themselves? Is there an inconsistency with perfectionism and certain forms of government?

I encourage you to consider these issues and give them proper recognition in the philosophical context, as I have merely laid the ground work for the rediscovery of this great philosopher who has inspired me to be an idealist. I hope my thesis serves as a platform for future inquiry into the life and works of Jose Ingenieros and that others may become inspired with his words too. Because of Jose Ingenieros I am a philosophy student. The first philosophy book I ever read was *El Hombre Mediocre*. The first page spoke to me directly as a 16-year-old wondering about life; it said that if you had ever looked at the stars wondering about their ungraspable majesty, all while being zealous about perfection and rebellious against mediocrity then within you laid the mystery of ideals. After reading the first lines, I remember feeling excited because I had felt identified with his words; at that point, Ingenieros had inspired me to believe that the world could be better and that regardless of the many barriers in front of me, I had the power to act in a way in which I could improve myself and my surroundings.

If you look at yourself and know that there is room for improvement and then look around you and see that there are others are in need of your help, then you are a candidate for idealism. Ingenieros refused to dogmatize his ideas and give us a specific

guide on how to live; he preferred instead to have each individual find his own way. It is up to us then to figure out how to leave an impact in the world and become a part of the idealistic elite.

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