

16 Gray Gardens E., Cambridge, Mass.

February 2, 1961.

Dear Father Merton:—

I am very grateful for your letter of January 17, and apologize for replying so late and on such informal stationery.

As soon as I can I will look for the seven Coon's pamphlets you list, and if they prove to be here in Cambridge I will send them along. If I can't find them here they must be in our little house in Vermont, and in that case I will ask D. Lucia to send you duplicates.

It is good to hear that the Watts photos will be along soon as I would like to consider publishing them in the Spring issue of Good Work, and time is running a little short.

Have you a subscription to Good Work? If not I will ask our secretary to list you for a complementary subscription. I want to interest you in what we are trying to do, that is to present to whomsoever is willing to read it that part of the philosophia perennis which bears on man's ability to make; and to do this in simple terms that will have meaning for any contemporary reader of good will. One of our greatest difficulties is to find contributors who understand what it is we want to say, understand the importance of the message, and can write clear, simple English. Most of those who have helped us in the past are either dead (Eric Gill, Thomas Dearick, Coon's, Arthur Pearty) or one of my generation or older and hard to persuade to write (Fr. Desmond Chute, Donald Attwater, Walter Shewring, Fr. Bede Griffiths, C.S. Lewis, Philip Haggren). All of these are English (except Coon's who was only half English) and this disturbs some people, who feel that if our principles are as universal as we claim we ought to be able to find more Americans to write for us.

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Another difficulty is the age of our writers. I was eight years old when Victoria died, and the artistic world in which I grew up was that of the fin de siècle. I was in college when the Harmony Show came to Boston. I believe that I can understand the errors of the false gospels that ~~the~~ have been preached since 1900 and that I can understand the truths that have been preached and lived alongside of them, but this does not make me an effective persuader of others, especially of the younger people. It must occur to many people to ask "if the principles of the C.A.H. are as timeless as we are told they are, why can't they express them in a more contemporary idiom? Why must all these speeches + writings be crowding seventy."

I was thinking along these lines when I picked up Sublime and began to read your article on Confucius. Before I had done I had read it twice through. Needless to say I was much impressed by it. What you wrote was not only interesting in itself but it gave me a hint of what perhaps is the greatest obstruction to our <sup>C.A.H.</sup> progress. We know that many people object to the Aristotelian flavor of the philosophy with which we try to support our artistic ideas, but it is the only language in which I can deal with artistic problems, and still remain really clear about what is being discussed. Let me hasten to avoid misinforming you here. I am in no way a trained philosopher, either Aristotelian or Thomistic. But as Eric Gill claimed that he had "invented" the Catholic Church, so I feel that I can claim to have discovered for myself Aristotle's doctrine of four causes. I learned this doctrine not from books, but from experience of worrying about artistic problems. I have spent my life meditating on and exploring the potentialities of these rediscovered principles. To me,

and to a very small handful of unusually intelligent people, there seems to be great value in the thoughts I have got together, but I have been utterly unable to interest any but these very few.

<sup>For example</sup>  
I lectured for two seasons to college level and students at the Rhode Island School of Design on "The Philosophy of Design", and I really don't think one student got even an inkling of what I was trying to give them, though I tried to make it no more difficult than the multiplication tables. Obviously I am not a good teacher, but there is more in it than that. The Neo-Aristotelian approach to artistic problems is one which for some reason young people are unable to make use of. So, obviously, we must find another. But what other? Your Jubilee article seems to supply the answer. If they won't listen to Aristotle perhaps they will listen to Confucius. As far as I can see the Greeks and the Chinese are talking about the same tradition, what Coomaraswamy called: "The Christian and Oriental or True Theory of Art". On your sixth page there are hints, and more than hints, that King's "intelligent action" is identical with Aristotle's + St. Thomas' "recta ratio". "Right action depends on the awareness of the person acting..... the awareness of the thing to be done, of its objective social nature (TELOS), of its sacred meaning. And this awareness is not mere rationalization, it is embodied in the action itself. The order of society depends on right action and self-discipline in all its members, from the Ruler to the least common man."

I am running along at much greater length than I intended to. What I have been trying to say is this. The principles the C.A.A. exists to popularize are of great importance. If the C.A.A. is moving forward at all it is unacceptably slowly. I, personally, am unable to put the burden of our message into a ~~form~~<sup>vehicle</sup> that means anything to younger people. Is Confucius perhaps the answer? Would you consider writing for us an explanatory article of 2,000 or so words on King fu dzai and the Recta Ratio? I very much hope you will be able to do this. With best wishes, Graham Casey.