

jhs



ABBAY OF GETHSEMANI  
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Feb. 9, 1961

Dear Graham:

Your good letter came yesterday. I am pleased that you should think me capable of what you ask, but I am not so sure of myself. Will you let me think about it for a bit? Kung Tzu is not an easy man to understand in translation, and I feel I have to do a great deal more thinking about his basic ideas before I can hazard any more ~~text~~ statements. I hope eventually I will be able to satisfy your request, but not just at the moment. I am hoping to devote most of this year and probably a great deal more time than that to study rather than writing.

One thing I had thought of was perhaps doing a few lines for you on Shaker ideals of craftsmanship. I am also terribly interested in the exhibition of Shaker inspirational that is going around the New England colleges. It would hardly be possible for me to get up there to see it, and I have not really been able to interest museum directors in this part of the country in getting them here. I would like very much to study them and perhaps do a few lines on them, but I can think of no way of going about it. I know you had a lovely reproduction of a Tree of Life in one of the recent Good Works.

Yes, we get Good Work here in the library, at my instigation, and I always go over it. I have been trying to get many of the other monks interested in it, and I think there is beginning to be a little response. We are plagued here with the usual infatuation over technological advance and when it comes to doing anything in the monastery we always head straight for the synthetic materials and the fluorescent lighting etc. I am so sick of vinyl asphalt tile and flourescents that I do not trust myself to speak on the subject any more.

I just found one more picture of Peter Watts' work, the St Bernard he did for our novitiate conference room. I don't think this was included in the last lot I sent you. Did I ever send you the essay on "creativity" ( fashionably synthetic word that I had in the Benedictine Review? I have lots of offprints so I include one herewith.

It would not hurt to have something in Good Work about Zen and art. This too I could attempt, but later. I think I might almost try this before the one of Confucius. I forgot to say that at the moment I am very tied up with the preparation for new classes and lectures that have resulted from the recent legislation of the Holy See about studies. We are very busy with this.

Once again, cordial good wishes in Christ

*Thomas Merton*