May 31, 1944.

Rev. Father Bernard Flynn,
The Saint Paul Seminary,
Saint Paul, Minn.

Dear Bernie,

This letter will open with a quotation from yours: "For months I have been intending to write to you, but it seems that there is always something pressing to do when I am at my desk".

But that would not be giving you the whole truth. I have been doing things about this answer. Many years ago I wrote a paper for the ACFAS on the first point you ask me about. I can't find the darned thing. I don't remember the solution. I wonder whether it was any good. But it might have been a starting-point for a new discussion. I'll have to do without it and get down to St.Thomas' text prout jacet.

I presume you refer to the de Coelo, B.I,L.2, nn.7 & sq. You will note that he speaks of "probare demonstrative esse solum tres dimensiones", and not merely "esse tres dimensiones", for each of the three dimensions are given intuitively and defined as first principles. Now the question arrises: could there be more? Does mathematics have to stop at three? Then he refers to Ptolemaeus' argument. If this argument were valid, then we would have demonstrated implicitely that neither can there be more than three in nature. However, if mathematics could conceive a fourth, say, then it would still belong to experience to teach us whether there is a fourth in nature. When I say "to experience", I am taking experience in the broad sense, i.e. as comprising also that to which we must conclude in order to save experience proper.

Now mathematics is not confined to three-dimensional continuums. But it should be noted that when we go beyond them, we have to do away with our intuitive representation of space which allows only three. If I only had that paper before me I could tell you more clearly that a more than three-dimensional continuum is a dialectical construction. It involves the notion of limit. (Take a look at n.9, ibi "Tertium..." of the same lesson). That this is true you can learn from the better physicists, who will insist that when they speak of a four-dimensional continuum, they do not mean four spacial dimensions, but three of space and one of time. However, the four must be taken together in the sense that no event can be described but in terms of all those coordinates

taken together as one inseparable bolderklatz. But, und diss is not without importance; that may affect the very structure of your three dimensions of space. It might, for instance, coive your space, not, in the intuitive sense - we can't represent to ourselves a coived space except through a kind of metaphore, as when Eddington tells you to look at your image on a polished door knb. (Est autem valde notandum that I don't want to pronounce myself on curved space. It certainly remains a double hypthesis. (a) Can it, legitimately, be applied to the physical world? (b) If so, it still remains a hypothesis in the ordinary sense. The first hypothesis (a) may involve a contradiction methodologically, as when we posit some hypothesis which is later found out to involve a contradiction, although it seemed so save the appearances; the second does save the known appearances, although not definitely.

Does your difficulty about the ens per accidens follow from this: Risibilitas est ens per accidens quia non est ipsa hominis essentia: ergo homo risibilis est ens per accidens? Then I answer: Ens per accidens seu ens per aliud est duplex; unum proprium, aliud commune. Proprium est quod non potest abesse, ut risibilitas quae sequitur necessario ex ipsa hominis essentia, a.v. habent connexionem per se ita quod si datur unum, datur et aliud, et sic habent unam generationem. Aliud accidens est commune, ut musicus in aedificatore; aedificator enim non est musicus in quantum aedificator; generato aedificatore, non generatur musicus, nec e converso; non habent per se connexionem, nec unam generationem. Unde quamvis rationale et risibile sese habeant ut essentia, et quod est extra essentiam et in alio, scil. in rationali, tamen, quia connexio eorum est per se, homo risibilis est ens per, et unum per se. Unless of course you restricted "ens per se" and "unum per se" to that which is such "omnibus modis", that is, identical. In other words, risibile is a per se accidens.

I hope all this doesn't make you even more unhappy. Now the third point. McCoy will have finished his scholarity before the opening of our academic year. If his thesis is not ready, he can finish that in St.Paul. His plans are to go back to St.Paul. Does that mean you may be free? I hope Kocourek's coming won't prevent you. You must manage to spend a year around here.

I too have reasons to be unhappy. Our Dionne is in none too good shape. He had to drop all work several weeks ago, and may not resume his teaching until next fall, unless he improves considerably before the summer session. He has weak lungs and coughed all winter. It's in the family. Knowing what Dionne means to me, you'll understand.

Now about the last point. You and McCoy are pretty darn good; Kocourek may turn out all right; Dulac is promissing, and I understand you have more good students in prospect. That means that you could start from scratch and have a really well coordinated bunch. Would it have to include myself? I don't know. I don't say no. Other things come up. Whatever it is, I'll do the thing the common good seems to require.