

The University of Chicago

The Law School

CHICAGO
February 25, 1941

Dr. Charles DeKoninck
25 Ave. Ste. Genevieve
Province of Quebec
Canada

Dear Dr. DeKoninck:

I think the editors of the Thomist have already written you concerning my article (to appear in the April issue) and their desire to have you carry the argument forward by writing an article on the same general theme.

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I think I have solved the problem of species — in other words, I think there is no problem left now because the position which affirms four or five specific natures in the corporeal order can be completely proved to be true; whereas the contrary position can be shown to be absolutely untenable within the framework of the Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy of nature. In addition to making these proofs perfectly evident, the article does two other things: (1) it clarifies the use of the word "species" in ontological and in logical discourse and in doing so clarifies, I hope, the whole problem of the relation of ontology and logic; (2) it proposes a clear formulation of the relation between natural philosophy and natural ~~science~~. On both of these points our scholastic contemporaries seem to be very sorely confused, as all the discussion of my book so plainly indicated.

Jean McCall wrote me that you were planning to do an article for the Thomist dealing mainly with the problem of logical and the ontological consideration of species. I hope you will execute this resolve, because much work is needed to make our contemporaries really see the true solution here. In this connection it is my hope that you will find my article in the April Thomist a good springboard for the article you are planning to write. You can well imagine that I shall wait impatiently for the day when you have completed the reading of this forthcoming article of mine; I have a feeling that you will agree with it in substance, but I am very anxious to get your reactions in detail.

If you ever get the opportunity to write me, will you let me know about plans for the summer session at Laval. I am still considering the possibility of coming up to Quebec to give a short series of lectures, in order to enjoy the opportunity of long conversations with

Dr. Charles DeKoninck

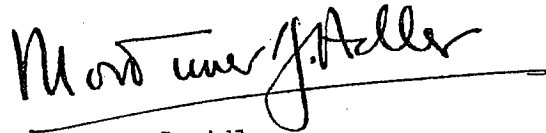
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you. My plans for the summer are still indefinite, but I think I shall take my family to the Atlantic seashore somewhere in New England. I do not think it would be difficult for me, once I have them settled, to get to Quebec for a couple of weeks.

With kindest regards.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Mortimer J. Adler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Mortimer J. Adler

P. S. I must say one thing more now. The book on species contained one serious error. None of its critics really discovered it, though one or two, notably Pegis of Fordham, almost had their finger on it. When I discovered the error and corrected it, I found the solution to the problem. If I had not made the error in the first place, I would never have supposed that what is called in the book, the second theory of species, could be tenable at all.

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CHICAGO November 25, 1942

Dear Charles —

You put to me a practical question without giving me enough of the facts that I need to know in order to answer the question. You do speak of the first two weeks of December. With respect to that time I can answer: (1) that I will be out of Chicago most of the time, and (2) that it would be much too soon to arrange a lecture for you here at Chicago. Even so, I would have to know specific dates and days of the week, in order to know definitely what my own program would be at the time, and what the chances are of arranging a lecture here at the University.

If you can postpone the expedition until January or February, please write me as soon as you can the precise dates when, in view of all your other engagements, you might be able to be in Chicago. Then I shall be able to write you, first whether I will be in Chicago and free at that time, and second, what the chances are of getting a lecture at the University. On the second point, I must tell you at once that the chances are likely to be slim for two reasons: first, that the University is completely disorganized by the war and ^{our} whole program of getting men into training for the army, and second, that the matter will have to go through McKeon's hands, unless Hutchins can manage to arrange it quite independently of the faculty, which will not be easy. In any case, I shall do my best on the matter as soon as I know the precise dates. I certainly would hate to have you be in or around Chicago without having a chance of seeing you.

"The Theory of Democracy" ought to be finished sometime in 1944. It has at least five or six more installments to come. When you say that you disagree with my theory of the common good, I hope that you are doing so on the basis of having read more than Part II. All of Part III is absolutely relevant, and even some of Part IV must be read before you are in a position to disagree. I also hope that you have read carefully footnote 263, on page 337 of the issue for April, 1941, because I wrote that footnote as a direct rebuttal of what I thought to be the fallacious objection you presented to me last Christmas in Philadelphia. Unless you have a better objection than that, I can't imagine what your argument comes to.

As a matter of fact, I cannot even believe that you disagree, any more than I was able to believe that you disagreed

Mr. Charles De Koninck

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with my theory of species. I was told that you did, before we met in Quebec, but I kept insisting that you couldn't possibly, and after our discussions there ~~you said~~ that the disagreement was entirely verbal and not real. I have the same conviction about this matter. My hunch is that the problem is largely verbal, and that you are either sticking too literally to the words of Aristotle and St. Thomas, or that you are failing to understand my position, because you are misreading my words as if I were using them in precisely the same sense as St. Thomas uses the same words. *I've found*

Of one thing, however, I am quite sure. If you really believe that St. Thomas (and Aristotle) are either correct or adequate in their account of the order of temporal and natural goods, and hence the common good in this order, then, of course, we do disagree, because I think they are both quite wrong on many fundamental points, though right on some. I am sure, in any case, that you will try to present an argument quite independent of the authority of Aristotle or St. Thomas. That is the only sort of argument I would really be interested in, though I should be happy to consider the less important matter of how to interpret their words, which are often thoroughly ambiguous and capable of many diverse interpretations.

My warmest regards to Zoe, and my best to you.

As ever yours,

Montmar