

College of St. Thomas

St. Paul, Minnesota

August 22, 1945

Dear Charles,

I am sorry to have been forced to delay so long answering your letter of three weeks ago. My stay at Benincasa was abruptly interrupted by a call home when my aunt became critically ill; she recovered from the illness and I returned almost directly to St. Paul.

The translation of the Cassirer reached me safely. I have read only some fifty pages of the text, for again the work was interrupted by the trip East and the return to work at St. Thomas. The next few weeks preparatory to my leaving here will not afford much time either. But at the earliest opportunity in St. Louis I will get down to consistent work at it. I am anxious to settle down where I can apply myself to it. Cusanas' philosophy is certainly of amazing significance and throws great light on the whole thought of Feuerbach.

I got hold of the Eschmann article on your Common Good. It seems to me to be a pretty terrible piece no matter how you look at it. Anyone who has read your book will, I think, realize that Eschmann has failed to understand the whole problem and has certainly misrepresented you. In the first place he does not accept your statement that men are "les parties principales constituant materiellement l'univers"; but in the second place he shows that he doesn't understand it, for he attributes to that proposition consequences which do not belong to it, which you do not attribute to it, and which are absurd. For example, on page 189 he says: "for, being material parts of the cosmos and subordinated, as material parts, to the stars and the spheres, they (men) will have just as much responsibility...as the pistons in a steam engine". What is incredible is not so much that he doesn't accept the statement that men are "les parties principales constituant materiellement l'univers", as his refusal to see that it is as principal parts (and what that involves) that intellectual creatures are subordinated to the common good of the universe. That it is materially that intellectual creatures constitute the principal parts is easily enough shown by recalling for him the fourth lesson of the Commentary on Book Two of the Physics: "Et quod sint (animae rationales) in materia, per hoc probat" etc.

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What follows on pp.190-192 seems absolutely irrelevant. He has nothing to say upon that which ^{we} insist, namely, that the root reason why the common good is said to be common is its superabundance and incommensurability with the singular good of the person. He fails throughout to see this. Compare p.197: "Is not this act and good of the speculative intellect a personal good?" From beginning to end Eschmann shows a complete misunderstanding of your position. It is summed up in his statement that you "have constantly by-passed this most essential thesis of Thomistic ethics", namely, that the good of the speculative intellect is a personal good. But you give the whole answer on that point on pp.61-62 and p.65, "Rappellons". Eschmann adverts to your responses here, but what he does with them (and with Peter of Auvergne) is appalling. It is perhaps true that Peter of Auvergne's phrase "speculatio totius civitatis" is a bit curious, but the meaning is certainly clear enough as soon as "totius civitatis" is taken in opposition to "secundum seipsum solum". Eschmann's impression is evidently that you are basing the primacy of the common good on an "assecutio communis" of the end of the speculative intellect. It might be well, though, to clear up the ambiguity in the use of the term common good as applied to the practical intellect and as applied to the speculative intellect -I mean that the good of the practical intellect can be common to many while the good of the speculative intellect is singularly his who contemplates, although the good to which the speculative intellect is joined is more common than the good to which the practical intellect is joined. Eschmann puts that in a footnote on p.200; if he understood it rightly he would be led to concede the whole essence of your argument. Eschmann's whole point against you is erroneously taken; it seems to be that he represents you as basing the primacy of the common good on the assecutio communis of the end of the speculative life; and since St.Thomas insists on the absolute pre-eminence of the singularis assecutio of the speculative good it follows that this personal good has primacy over any common good. But it is clear how this is a misunderstanding of the whole business.

St.Thomas' use of "quoddam bonum commune" and "quasi civis" in speaking of the divine good does not in the least militate against your position (as Eschmann clearly seems to think it does). It seems to me that these modifying words simply indicate that beatitude of the individual person, although dependent upon its communicability to man and its incommensurability with the singular good of any one person, is not precisely the same as the common good of a temporal society -not precisely the same because it has more of the ratio of common good. The quoddam and quasi emphasize the fact that the common good of beatitude is a common good, as you say, sous

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la rapport tres formel. On this point Eschmann might be excused for misunderstanding. For the use of quoddam and quasi might ofcourse suggest that the terms "common good" and "citizen" do not really apply to the divine good and the Heavenly City; and thus Eschmann concludes that "to confuse examples with formal teaching is quite inadmissible" (p.195). But the contrary happens to be the case here; it is precisely the extreme formality of the notion of common good when applied to beatitude that causes St.Thomas to hesitate to use the terms common good and citizen in their temporal (or material?) signification. It is not that St.Thomas is using an example (as distinguished from formal teaching); it is rather that the common good of beatitude is (if I may put it so) exemplary. And anyway, Eschmann ought to have a very hard time on the basis of his position explaining why or how St.Thomas uses quoddam bonum commune and quasi civis at all!

Something might be made of the curious thing that Eschmann does on p.185. After denying what, he says, Maritain's critics allege to be true of the personalist position, namely, that the subordination of man to any general good but the good of God means a denial of man's very personality, Eschmann quotes St.Thomas with the intention, apparently, of showing that this false position could be defended in any case! He says: "Every Thomist is surely authorized to go, in this matter, just as far as St.Thomas himself has gone"; and then he quotes that passage in which St.Thomas is showing that it is possible that something act for an end without having knowledge of the end. The implication is supposed to be that man, when he acts upon the command of another (as a citizen or subject acts under the command of the lawgiver) ~~he~~ acts like an irrational animal; and thus the subordination of man to any general good but the divine good means -or may mean- the denial of man's very personality. -Talk about "non loquatur in angulis"!

Incidentally, on p. 187 there occurs a misrepresentation by which Eschmann is able to represent you as finding your own position distasteful and open to suspicion. He says that you seem to feel that your statement concerning the subordination of the person to the common good of the whole universe is a "revolting" (quoting yourself) statement. The fault here may simply be one of translation, but at any rate the implication is completely false. What you say in your text is: "Bien sur qu'on revoltera contre cette conception si l'on considere la personne singuliere et son bien singulier comme racine premiere...de tout bien intrinseque a l'univers" (p.30). Actually all you say is that those who

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*Communism which
Plat. & C.S. based upon
my own research*

October 9, 1946

Dear Charles,

I should have written before this, but as you can imagine the opening days of school were pretty crowded. It was wonderful to have had the Quebec visit and the trip to Les Escoumains before returning here for the year, and I am grateful to you and Zoe (I shall write to her too) for your kindness in having me with you so much.

The editor of the Modern Schoolman has asked me whether I could prepare an article during the year for his journal. I had thought that possibly I could work out something from the course which I am giving on the Theory of Democracy, but I do not feel entirely competent to handle a subject of that sort alone, and I have been wondering whether you would be willing to help me with such an article; or possibly you would even consider doing such an article with me. I would not have the temerity to propose that we do an article together except that you once suggested our doing together an article on Maritain's political theory. (I had thought too, of giving the Modern Schoolman some results of the study which I will make this year of Feuerbach, but I wondered whether that would be permissible in view of the fact that it will be a doctoral thesis). The ideas which have occurred to me for a paper on the theory of Democracy - a very hastily conceived outline, since the question was brought up only a few days ago - include the following:

I. Begin with a consideration of certain fundamental doctrines in Aristotle's political science - doctrines which are true for all forms of good government but which many writers today think of as being peculiarly democratic, namely:

a) that rule must be for the common good, so that, as you have often pointed out, a king would be a tyrant if he persisted in doing even a laudable thing contrary to the wishes of the community. (I'm not entirely clear on this point however - suppose the people are actually perverse, does the authority of the good ruler cease?) At any rate the doctrine of the primacy of the common good is in some sense equivalent to the doctrine of the consent of the governed.

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b) the unity of society is a unity of order only and not of simple composition or continuity (Ethics I, and St. Thomas' commentary). Thus the parts of the whole have a certain activity or function proper to themselves.

c) the fact that speculative science is not subordinated to politics in precisely the same way that the practical sciences are; thus Aristotle guarantees the independence of truth from political interference. The subjection of speculative science to political rule is characteristic of the totalitarian regimes - notably, of course, the Nazi regime with its Nazi biology and Nazi history.

For Aristotle says that democracy is justified if the majority are of equal virtue.

II. With these basic points established (and the interesting thing is that so many writers today regard the above as proper to democracy) I thought of going on to Aristotle's classification of forms of government. And here I would point out that while the principle which is proper to democracy is equality, the principle by which it really can be justified is the same as that by which it is shown to be absolutely not the best form of government, viz., the principle of virtue. Therefore it follows that, as Aristotle also says, the principle of preservation of such regimes as oligarchy and democracy cannot be that which is most oligarchical or most democratic. Here I am not sure just how democracies should proceed in order to preserve themselves (Aristotle's treatment of this is quite brief I think) but I have an idea that since equality is the principle of civil rule under the democratic form the evil of this is best offset in democracies by fostering the so-called "natural associations" such as the family and voluntary associations where the tendency of virtue to make itself felt in governance is not so deliberately repressed. (As Aristotle says - I may not recall this exactly - the first rulers of villages were kings because the villages were collections of families, and the eldest ruled).

III. Thus Democracy can be preserved only by understanding that it is not, simply and absolutely, the best form of government. Aristotle is correct in pointing out that democracy is destroyed by carrying its proper principle to its logical conclusion because the ultimate way to affirm the freedom and equality of men is to find the end for man not in man's nature (not in man's nature because men do not, for the most part, succeed in achieving the fullness of the life of virtue which their nature appoints for them), but in the dicta of society itself. Thus it is not surprising that what is

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at the root and what is common to the works of the progenitors of democracy (Adam Smith, Hume, Locke etc.) is also at the root and is common to the works of the progenitors of totalitarianism (Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx) -namely, the emancipation of man.

I went to the library last week to get the English translation of Feuerbach and discovered that the first twelve pages were missing from the library copy. But I will locate another copy in Chicago. By the way, Charles, I left my German copy of Feuerbach at your house along with the Satre book and John of St. Thomas which belonged to you. I hate to put you to the trouble of sending it to me, but if Zoe wraps it perhaps my request won't be too hard on you. And as soon as I have something ready on Feuerbach I will send it on to you.

My love to all of you and kindest regards to the Steverlyncks and De Monelons.

As ever yours,

Charles C. McGary

P.S. May I trouble you a bit further with two questions which have long puzzled me: (1) If a citizen is one who rules and is ruled in turn, who are citizens under Aristotle's monarchy

(2) St. Thomas in the commentary on Ethics I says that politics as architectonic science prescribes what the other practical sciences shall do even to the very determining of their work (ad determination actus). Would this not seem to interfere with the speculative element in practical science?

*find -
St. Thomas -
Richard
people*

FACULTÉ DE PHILOSOPHIE

Oct. 17 46

cinet du Doyen

Dear Charley:

I would be very glad to do an article with you, but, since it would be for the Modern Schoolman, I could hardly sign my name to it. They have been most unsporting in the controversy on the common good. First in accepting Eschmann's diatribe; in publishing his doctrine which is almost if not quite heretical; in offering me too little space for a reply and giving me no assurances that they would actually publish it; in sending me not a word of apology when, from my reply, they might gathered such a thing was imperative. But nothing should prevent me from helping you.

Now as to the points you raise:

(a) If the people are manifestly perverse, the monarch may, if the good result is reasonably certain, employ the methods of the tyrant, that is, force, if he has it. This does not make him a tyrant. If the people are perverse, they cannot be citizens and it might be to their own good to be treated as mere servants. But if such a thing is not practical, he must step out of the picture, not because he has lost his authority as if the latter came from the will of the people alone, but because the people refuse this authority. When the people are perverse they do not even seek a common good per accidens. If the people desire a communistic regime, the monarch, or the government, may use force to repel them because communism, even of the Socratic type, is perverse. (See II Polit., lect. 4, p. 69, col. b) Hence, what I said holds only as long as there remains at least a "bonum commune per accidens" sought by the people. If they lose their political nature, which is quite possible (for, to say that man is by nature a political animal does not mean that they necessarily have the proximate disposition to be citizens; man is by nature many things that he does not actually acquire or become), then they cannot be treated politically. Again, it is not the will of the people that makes the good it pursues a real good, not even a common good per accidens; it may be only a bonum apparens.

I realize that the incontestable fact "plures boninum sequuntur passiones", raises considerable difficulties concerning the very possibility of a good government, especially when the will of the majority, ut sic, becomes the rule. We'll discuss this some other time. I have some ideas on it.

(b) On the "unity of society", Mgr. Parent read a paper the other day which will appear in the next issue of our review. Roughly, there ~~are~~ as is clear in S. Thomas, and ~~xx~~ as was again pointed out in the Encycl. Mystici corporis, three kinds of "whole": the natural whole (which, I believe, with proper proviso, might be extended to the family insofar as the child is "aliquid patris"), the moral, and the mystical. Because the personalists in fact, though not assertedly consider the political ~~community~~ as a natural whole (they consider the moral person of the community as a natural or physical person—I pointed this out in my B.C.: personalism and totalitarianism) of which a person obviously cannot be a part, they have invented the distinction between person and individual, robbing a person of his ~~individuality~~ responsibility and making him at the same time a victim insofar as the state has a responsibility wholly apart from the former, for which it should, per se, be punished in this life, not being immortal. A person can be part only of a moral or mystical whole.

(c) While the state is not architectonic with respect to the speculative sciences, it may be so with respect to their exercise. It may appoint a man to study geometry and appoint another to study metaphysics. However, this theoretical power has lost its meaning and feasibility today because, ut in pluribus, the people we can now be governed by are, often without malice, corrupted as to the very communia of speculative science. I mean as to the very common principles to be accepted by any man even without being at all a philosopher. This has been lost in the course of the history of thought, which makes Aristotle's theory unpractical. Yet, we must observe that the marxists actually hold this right, but for the wrong thing, of course.

II. I believe, with the marxists, that absolute democracy can never be but a provisional regime, necessarily tending toward selfdestruction. It must allow a degree of freedom incompatible with even the lowest form of stability and security. It must allow even the right to contradict "absolute democracy". In the social field, it is perhaps the most striking and plausible illustration of contradiction. It contains its own contrary and is thus divided against itself in principle. The important consideration being that "plures hominum sequuntur passiones"; not that the plures will actually use this right to contradiction, but in that they will, through negligence and indifference for the common good, allow those who do contradict, to seize power. Ex.g.: several European countries today.

I equally believe that a mitigated democracy, i.e., a system which would forbid the contradiction of those principles which are essential to even the lowest form of good government, may preserve itself. But even this is not very practical today, since such principles could

hardly be upheld without falling back upon philosophical doctrines which have long been discarded.

Since, under the present circumstances, no other regime is practical, (I mean proximately possible), I think we must work for the latter notwithstanding the fact that the speculative foundations are ignored, but bringing out, negatively, it is true, the contradictions we are lead to if we do not accept certain fundamentals as at least an inescapable condition of preservation. This may be hoping against hope, but what else can be done?

Now, to get to Aristotle. His democracy is based on equality and freedom. These principles are essentially unstable. First, equality is contrary to what is simply just, because individuals and functions are not equal in those things which pertain to government or to being governed. While equality is never recognized in practice, the fact it is recognized in theory bungles the practice.

As I told you in my letter this is good work. It is precisely what I wanted you to do, and I'm happy to see that you are willing to make the necessary effort.

Page 1
Note 1

The line I parenthesize I would leave out because of what you have said in the preceding sentence. We could hardly subscribe to that statement without a careful commentary.

Page 1
Note 2

I think you should make much of the fact that Feuerbach, in this connection, uses, in the appendices to the last edition of his work, both St. Thomas and Aristotle as authorities. If I remember correctly, he even quotes the saying "anima est quodammodo omnia". I saw it in the Stuttgart edition of 1903. In this manner you would ward off the prejudiced reader who believes that you are merely trying to apply haphazardly a Thomistic criticism of a man so far removed, at least in appearance, from preoccupation with what we might think on such subjects. In fact, you might even present your work as an attempt to show how thoroughly Feuerbach misinterpreted St. Thomas. Few if any have pointed out that Feuerbach was most careful to show that his philosophy was a natural outcome of the great doctrines of the past. You could call attention to his many references to St. Thomas.

Page 1
Note 3

In presenting Feuerbach's view of "consciousness of species" I think you should make very clear just what he says

and what he does not say. This would gradually lead up toward your criticism. For instance, before mentioning Feuerbach's own position, you might point out that man's self-awareness reveals to him certain activities which set him apart from all other things surrounding him. The manner in which he knows, desires and transforms things, gradually leads him toward a knowledge of his own nature. An essential feature is his capacity to grasp the universal. Man knows himself as belonging to a certain species. Socrates knows that he is a man, but he also knows that man is not Socrates. At this point I would introduce Feuerbach's view.

In doing so, perhaps you should point out the ambiguity of the term "species". If I remember, Feuerbach uses the word "Gattung". You might show that this German term now means "species", then "genus", or, frankly, the "universal". When Feuerbach uses this term, whether he means species or genus he never prescind from its aspect of universality. It is precisely this which will allow him to reason as he does.

You should, I believe, arrange things in such a manner that when on page 2 you begin to discuss the two kinds of universality, you will no longer be bothered with the term species. Furthermore, since later on you yourself will use the term species à propos of sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge, you must be careful to forestall confusion in the mind of the reader.

I think you should also point out the ambiguity of the term "consciousness" as employed by Feuerbach. We have the right to do this, since he quotes St. Thomas, and translates the term "cognitio" for instance, to suit his purpose.

Page 2
Note 1

The last part of the second sentence of this paragraph, "not in the sense that it is opposed to matter", is introduced rather brusquely, and one does not see why, it is made. Presumably, you mean that while it is opposed to singular matter, it still expresses common matter: it excludes the flesh and bones of Socrates, but not flesh and bones.

Page 2
Note 2

You might introduce the following thus: in so far as a universal is predicable of many, such as man or animal, it has no being outside of reason. Here I would quote from Book I Contra Gentes, Chapter 26: "Adhuc, quod est commune multis non est etc." down to "et ipse Plato". You might also refer to De Ente et Essentia, Chapt. 4.

Then you may go on by "This kind of universal is called etc."

Page 2
Note 3

By this time, you should have eliminated the term species, and provisionally at least, confine yourself to a discussion of the universal. I would go on to say: But there is another kind of universality, quite different

from the first. It is universal not because it has its being in many but because its power extends to many kinds of effects. Thus the art of the architect is more universal than that of the carpenter. This means that the art of the former extends not only to the work of the carpenter, but also to that of the mason, the plumber, the electrician etc. From this example we may see the profound difference between the two kinds of universality. It is true that "art", considered in all its universality, may be called a universal cause. In reply to the question: What is the cause of shoes, we may reply "art". But we might give the same answer to the question: What is the cause of corkscrews? Explain here Physics II, lesson 6, numbers 2 and 3. Leave out, however, the example of the sun. Take a look at my Introduction à l'étude de l'âme.

You must point out also that a cause is called universal in causando, not merely because it extends to many effects, but because it extends to specifically different effects. On this point, see Metaphysics, Book 6, lesson 3, numbers 1207 to 1209.

Page 3
Note 1

Before going into this matter, I would say a few words about Plato. He too confused the logical and the real, but not in the same manner. As St. Thomas says in his commentary on Book I of the Metaphysics, lesson 10, n. 158: "Patet autem diligenter etc....non tamen eodem modo."

It is true that Plato too confused the universal in praedicando with the universal in causando. However, to this universal he gave a separate existence. Feuerbach, however, identifies the properties of Plato's separate idea with the singular material individual, and then goes on to say that man is distinguished from all other things in that he is aware of this universality.

From here on your treatment is first rate, and I have few suggestions to make.

Page 8 You should point out that Feuerbach himself quotes
Note 1 St. Thomas in this connection.

Page 13 Instead of the word "terminated", I would use the
Note 1 term "restricted".

Page 15 I would add the word "naturally". The preceding part
Note 1 of the sentence might convey to the reader that the intellectual soul is conjoined to the body in a platonic sense. You might of course give the sentence another twist. The addition of that word makes it rather awkward.

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Go right ahead. If you can keep this up, you will produce an excellent thesis.

Perhaps it would be opportune to insert a passage on Marx. In my book on the common good I quoted a passage

from him, taken from Morceaux choisis, page 217. I copied it on pages 183-184, note 67: "L'émancipation humaine ne sera réalisée etc."

In the poverty of Philosophy, Marx also has a significant passage on abstraction. In A Handbook of Marxism, it is reproduced on page 351. The rest of the passage we have reproduced in French on pages 1 and 2 in our Marxist texts.

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By the way, have you read de Monléon's "Petites notes autour de la famille et de la cité" in Laval théologique et philosophique, vol. III, n. 2, 1947, pp. 262-289?