

jhs



ABBAY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Nov. 2. 1965

Dear Victor:

Today I am sending you a copy of Chuang Tzu. J. certainly got this one out fast. I have no doubt he will send you one ~~too~~. You will see he made a generous use of the books Carolyn lent us, for which I am very grateful, and I hope they got back to you all right.

About "ornatus", I am afraid that I do not have much to offer in the way of clear ideas. I know St Thomas treats it somewhere as a virtue, but I think only in connection with dress. More likely the avenue to explore would be medieval metaphysics. For instance I was reading a Cistercian of the 12th century who talks about the accidental perfections of a being as being necessary to its full reality, which is of course obvious in the case of anything created. My only thought is that after all if we think of it, the mode which demands an apparent absence of "ornatus" is itself in its own way a form of ornamentation, i.e. an accidental style which adds a "character" of some sort to the thing made. Ornatus in any case is not "ornament", hence I would say that strictly speaking even austere simplicity could be classed as ornatus, for instance in Shaker work. However, I know that this does not offer much light, and I must conclude that this is a subject about which I know little. Whatever I may have to say about it, if it makes sense, has already probably been said much better by someone else: in this case you.

It would certainly be a great pleasure to see you and Carolyn, if you could make the trip. I will see if something can be done to arrange it at this end and will then tell you. Visits are supposed to have ceased in principle, but of course some rare exceptions are still foreseen. If the weather continues as it is now, November would be a good month. I will try to let you know in a few days.

Meanwhile I will get the book in the mail. The hermit life seems to agree with me. The complete isolation is a blessing, but it is also a little difficult in some ways. However as I realize that this difficulty is necessary for me, I do not mind it. And in any case, life among a large group of people has ceased to have any attraction for me whatever. Still less life in "the world".

Blessings to both you and Carolyn. Somehow I have had a hard time getting into the Eric Gill book and I think I must finally send it back without finishing it. But first let me see whether we will plan on a visit.

With all affection, in Christ,

Tom.