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ANDREA A. ROBIGLIO

How Maurice De Wulf went to Harvard (1914–1915)¹

The *Boston Evening Transcript*, on February 13, 1920, emphatically informed its readers that the “Belgian philosopher” Maurice De Wulf (1867–1947) was “back at Harvard.” His name, one could argue, should not have been unpopular if De Wulf’s postbellum return deserved such a welcoming advertisement.² Fifteenth months later, on May 9th, 1921, the Harvard University Board of Overseers gave its consent to De Wulf being nominated

¹ In addition to published sources, my Note is grounded on documents preserved both in US and in Belgium, i.e., at the Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Mass. (viz., Hug. 300, Quinquennial File ‘Dewing – Dewulf’) and at the Archives of the Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve (viz., “Fonds Maurice De Wulf”). On the latter, see MIRGUET, Françoise/HIRAUX, Françoise: *L’Institut supérieur de philosophie de Louvain (1889–1968): Inventaire des archives – Introduction historique* (= Publications des Archives de l’Université catholique de Louvain 21). Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant 2008, 257–264. I should like to thank the librarians who, both in Cambridge and Louvain-la-Neuve, have helped me. Mrs. Françoise Hiraux’s and Professor John Monfasani’s generous advice deserve here a special mention.

² See Appendix, *infra*, document *d*. De Wulf made the front page of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin, vol. XXII, N. 20, Thursday, February 12, 1920: “Professor Maurice De Wulf of the Belgian Academy has returned to the Harvard Division of Philosophy the second half-year, and will be warmly welcomed by all who recall the visit of this distinguished scholar in 1915–16. [...] He is one of the foremost living authorities on Medieval and Scholastic Philosophy. He is known to the wide public as the author of the best general text-books on these subjects, and to the narrower circle of scholars for his investigations among the contemporaries and opponents of the great st. Thomas. [...] It is hoped that the University will, in the near future, be able to undertake the publication of a series of texts in Medieval Philosophy, under Professor De Wulf’s editorship. The University library already possesses a collection of books in this field that has few rivals in the world. To this collection more titles have been added in recent years through the interest of Professor De Wulf’s pupil and colleague, Dr. Pelzer of the Vatican Library. There is promise of the steady enrichment of this collection by the Treat Fund and by occasional special gifts. Through the combined and (as it is hoped) increased generosity of his friends, Harvard may reasonably expect to become a center for advanced study and research in Scholastic Philosophy. And since Scholastic Philosophy is the philosophy of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, Harvard will, in that case, provide unusual opportunities for Catholic thinkers and for students of Catholic faith and tradition. Such a development would relate the University more intimately to the thought and sentiment which guides the lives of many millions of Americans. Nothing could be more in keeping with the aspiration of Harvard to be a place of open intellectual hospitality; where no idea is imposed from above but where every honest and humanly significant idea is given a hearing”. To get some impressions of Harvard Department of Philosophy at the beginning of the 20th Century, besides the classic essay by Santayana, one may read HOCKING, William Ernest: *Whitehead as I knew him*, in: *The Journal of Philosophy* 58 (1961), 505–516. See SANTAYANA, George: *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy* and *Character and Opinions in the United States*, ed. James Seaton. New Haven: Yale University Press 2009, 39–80.

“Professor of Philosophy”³, a title which he could claim from September 1 and until his early retirement from the position, six years later. The Harvard tenure of De Wulf (1921–1927) is known and generally referred to;⁴ however, the motives and the chain of events which brought the Louvain scholar to Harvard remain unfamiliar.⁵ The purpose of this Note is to shed light on the early contacts between Harvard’s Faculty of Philosophy and De Wulf well before his official appointment to the professorship.

The main actors of our plot are three Bostonians, promptly reacting to the devastating European Civil War that exploded in the summer of 1914. They are: Graze Linzee Revere (1854–1928), wife of the physician Sir William Osler;⁶ Abbott Lawrence Lowell (1856–1943), President of Harvard University from 1909 to 1933; and Dr. James Haughton Woods, Esq. (1864–1935), a cosmopolitan and widely read gentleman.⁷ It was the latter who

3 See Harvard University Gazette, May 14, 1921. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, President of Harvard University, wrote to De Wulf on 24th May 1921: “Dear M. De Wulf, / I was very glad to get your kind letter about my election as an associate member of the Royal Academy of Belgium in the Section des Sciences Morales et Politiques; and I appreciate deeply the honor that it means. / Things are going so strangely in this country, and indeed, all over the world, that it seems hardly normal to associate together the words ‘moral’ and ‘political’. However, the billows of the surface of the ocean do not really affect its general level, and the passions brought forth by an era of war, and following it like the waves that run over the surface of the ocean after a storm, in time subside, and human nature returns to its normal and more civilized form.[...]” (Archives of the Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Fonds Maurice De Wulf: BE UCL ARCV FI 119).

4 STEEL, Carlos: *Maurice De Wulf en de ‘belgische filosofie’*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 77 (2015), 557–586: 559.

5 On De Wulf’s biography, besides the welter of *In memoriam* notices written after his death, one might also consult VAN STEENBERGHEN, Fernand: *Maurice De Wulf historien de la philosophie médiévale*, in: *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 46 (1948), N. 12, 421–444, which capitalizes on the elegant *Festschrift* published fifteen years earlier, i.e. *Hommage à Monsieur le Professeur Maurice De Wulf*. Louvain: Imprimerie ‘Nova et Vetera’, 1934, esp. the contributions of Léon Noël (*L’œuvre de M. De Wulf*, 11–38) and Pierre Harmignie (*La carrière scientifique de M. le Professeur De Wulf*, 39–66). Cf. STEEL: *Maurice De Wulf* (n. 4), 557 n. 2.

6 Residing in Oxford, where her Canadian husband had accepted the Regius Professorship of Medicine in 1905, Lady Osler lost her only son in the battle of Sint Juliaan (Belgium, April 24–May 4, 1915).

7 On Woods, see CRAWFORD, Robert: *Young Eliot: From St Louis to ‘The Waste Land’*. London: Vintage 2015, 169–172 and *ad indicem*. See also *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, ed. V. Eliot, vol. 1, 1898–1922. London: Faber and Faber 1988, 67–68. One might also remember Nelson Goodman’s memories as a student: “We were first exasperated and then enthralled by the nearly incoherent but inspired and profound lectures of James Haughton Woods on Plato. He sharpened our philosophical teeth in almost daily discussions of such matters as Berkeley’s idealism, Plato’s theory of ideas, Whitehead’s extensive abstraction, and problems in logic” (GOODMAN, Nelson: *Memorial Note*, in: LAMBERT, Karel: *The Logical Way of Doing Things*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969, ix–x: ix). See also the on-line page at: <http://ealc.fas.harvard.edu/james-haughton-woods>. The original of Woods’ PhD diploma hangs in the office of professor Jeremiah Hackett, in Columbia, South Carolina. This diploma was gifted to Dr. Hackett by Rosamond Kent Sprague, Professor of Ancient Greek Philosophy and Classics at the University of South Carolina. She had been the wife of Arthur Colby Sprague (1895–1991), the Shakespeare scholar, whom Woods was related to. According to

had, mostly behind the scenes, played the crucial role: his engagement could potentially have been momentous for the fate of the History of Medieval philosophy in North-America.

Woods' education in Europe, in spite of his early focus on Indian and Eastern thought, had also included the study of medieval history and Romance philology in Strasbourg. While he was there, one might think he could have heard of the well-advertised foundation in Belgium of the École Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, which was later to be denominated 'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie'. Curious about the varieties of Platonism in history and of the philosophical writings of then scantily known figures like Nicholas of Cusa, introduced to him by the Neo-Kantian thinkers, Woods might have also read De Wulf's *Histoire de la philosophie en Belgique*.⁸ Arguably, he was also acquainted with the work of Peter Coffey, viz., Coffey's detailed report on "Philosophy and the Sciences at Louvain" published as an appendix to his translation of De Wulf's *Introduction à la Philosophie Neoscholastiqu*.⁹ In 1903, Woods had returned to Harvard as Instructor in the

Hackett's transcription the diploma reads as follows: "Quod bonum, felix, faustumque sit summis-auspiciis/ WILHELMII II/Germanorum-Imperatoris-Augustissimi-Fortis-Pii-Felicis/ ACADEMIAE-WILHELMAE-ARGENTENENSIS/ Rectore-Magnifico/ GUILIELMO WINDELBAND/ Philosophiae-Doctore et Professore-Publico-Ordinario/ ORDO PHILOSOPHORUM/ DECANO RICARDO REITZENSTEIN/ Philosophiae Doctore Philologiae-Professore Publico Ordinario/ VIRUM ORNATISSIMUM/ JACOBUM WOODS-Bostoniensem/ Postquam – Libellum Diligenter Scriptum Typis Expressum exhibivit,/ CVI Inscribitur/ THOMAS BROWN'S CAUSATIONSTHEORIE UND IHR EINFLUSS AUF SEINE PSYCHOLOGIE/ Et Examinibus – Ex lege institutis coram ordine Philosophorum Eruditionem suam comprobavit/ DOCTOREM PHILOSOPHIAE CREAT/ Creatum His Litteris Publicis Ordinis Sigillo Munitis Renuntiat Renunciato Omnia Iura Cu [...]/ Mai Anni MDCCCLXXXVII/<signed> R. Reitzenstein/ Ex Typographia universitat [...] (Reitz Et Muendel Socii)". The [...] indicates where the text is covered over by the Seal of the University. I should like to thank professor Hackett for his gracious help.

⁸ Woods' use of DE WULF, Maurice: *Histoire de la philosophie en Belgique*, Bruxelles/Paris: Albert Dewit/Félix Alcan 1910, 154, though arguable, cannot be established with certainty; neither could I tell when exactly such use may have occurred. As a not unrelated aside, I'd like to mention the letter Woods sent to Miss Belle da Costa Greene of the Morgan Library (Aug. 2, 1926): "Dear Miss Greene/ On behalf of one of our graduate students, may I ask whether the Morgan Library has a Catalogue of the Latin MSS. of the Jagellonian (University Library, Cracow (Krakau) Cracovie, Poland?/ In the Catalogue, I should like to know whether there is a reference to a *Compendium Divinorum* by Heimericus a Campo. It is possible that one must look for this title under ANONYMI./ Sincerely yours, J.H. Woods" (Harvard University Archives – hereafter: HUA, UAV 687.3). At that time, by the way, Woods was one of the driving forces behind the first project of an English translation of Étienne Gilson's *La Philosophie au Moyen Âge* (2 vols.; Paris: Payot 1922). On the same day (Aug. 2, 1926) he addressed a short letter to Scribner's Sons Publishing Company: "Dear Mr. Howe:/ Please let me know whether you have arranged with the publishers of Gilson's book so that I can arrange definitely with Zimmerman to begin the translation./ Sincerely yours, J.H. Woods."

⁹ See DE WULF, Maurice: *Scholasticism Old and New*, transl. by P. Coffey. Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son 1910, 263–317. Coffey's appendix, before describing the structure and purposes of the Louvain Institute of Philosophy, sketches an overview of the philosophical landscape on the verge of the new century; the two main currents, according to him, are Neo-Kantianism

Department of Philosophy and Psychology, getting more involved in the administration of that division and realizing the relevant impact of the new generation of Catholic students.¹⁰ From 1915–1918, moreover, he served as Department Chair.¹¹ Consulting the minutes of the letters sent from December 1910 to June 1915, one realizes that most of them are written by him.¹² Since 1913 Woods' influence had been growing as the President's adviser on matters touching on philosophy, a task he performed displaying wisdom and initiative.¹³

With the retirement of George Santayana (1912) and George Herbert Palmer (1913), the Department had to look for new staff, either permanent or temporary.¹⁴ Among the guest lecturers that Woods suggested to invite to Harvard College, one finds the names of Henri Bergson, Bertrand Russell, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Natorp, and Unokichi Hattori.¹⁵ Until the end of 1914, at any rate, one could hardly find – at least in the official correspondence – any mention of Neo-scholastics in general and of *lovanistae* in particular.

The summer of 1914 provokes a sudden and swift change in Woods' agenda. We are able to reconstruct the events of the last months of 1914 retrospectively, thanks to the letters Woods wrote a few months later,

and Positivism, but there is now *tertium datum*, namely Neo-Scholasticism. For the philosophical context, see ROBIGLIO, Andrea Aldo: 'Alle cose stesche': Léon Noël (1878–1953) e il tomismo creativo della Scuola di Lovanio, in: SALVIOLI, Marco (ed.): *Tomismo Creativo. Letture contemporanee del 'Doctor Communis'*. Bologna: ESD 2015, 263–282.

¹⁰ For the sociological context at Harvard under the Presidency of Charles W. Eliot (1869–1909), see MAHONEY, Kathleen: *Fin-de-Siècle Catholics: Insiders and Outsiders at Harvard*, in: *U.S. Catholic Historian* 13 (1995), N. 4 [Schools, Colleges and Universities], 19–48.

¹¹ In the Spring of 1917, in the midst of WW I, he travels to Paris and is substituted by prof. William Ernest Hocking.

¹² HUA, UAV 687.2. A *curriculum vitae* of J.H. Woods (dated Dec. 12, 1913) is found as attachment to a letter sent to Prof. Frederick J.E. Woodbridge of Columbia University. Numerous are the letters sent to A. Lawrence Lowell and to Charles Homer Haskins, then dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, both of them Woods' friends. Incidentally, I'd like to refer to a few letters to and concerning "a man of scholarly habit and wide reading", i.e., Thomas Stearn Eliot assistant in philosophy until September 1, 1915.

¹³ Several details reveal his open-mindedness, e.g., his vindication of Arthur Lovejoy against the criticism of those who opposed his nomination at Harvard: "I am profoundly convinced that in failing to appoint Lovejoy we are injuring Harvard. He stands out more and more in my mind as the one man of conspicuous and undoubted ability in the country" (*Woods to Reginald C. Robbins*, January 28, 1914, in: HUA, UAV 687.2).

¹⁴ See *Woods to Lowell*, Jan. 2, 1914, in: HUA, UAV 687.2.

¹⁵ Woods is very glad when Russell, whose wit he enjoys, accepts to teach at Harvard "for the second half of 1913–1914." Russell will be back and was appointed "for the second half of 1916–1917" too. His anti-war activities, however, would cost him the support of President Lowell; cf. WILLIS, Kirk: 'This Place Is Hell': Bertrand Russell at Harvard, 1914, in: *The New England Quarterly* 62 (1989), N. 1, 3–26: 13. A letter of President Lowell to Bernard Berenson (March 20, 1914) touching on Russell's appointment, reads: "I believe in him as I believe in no other living philosopher. If we could by hook or crook attach him to ourselves we might accomplish something towards regaining our former glory" (HUA, UAV 687.2).

while he was working to raise funding in order to establish a chair in Scholastic Philosophy at Harvard. In the letter Woods wrote to William Dameron Guthrie on January 20, 1916, we read that: "About a year ago Lady Osler, who was the Chairman of a Committee to protect Belgian refugees in Cambridge, England, asked whether Harvard University could give assistance to some of the refugee Professors and their families who have been obliged to leave their Universities. A subscription list was formed and Professor Maurice De Wulf of Louvain was called to give instruction in Scholastic Philosophy at Harvard [...]."¹⁶ Partly overlapping is the information provided by Woods in a letter to "Mrs. Stephen O'Meara" on 30th January 1915.¹⁷

The first contacts, therefore, took place after the beginning of World War I and they may be seen as a direct side-effect of the infamous destruction of Louvain and of its stupendously rich University Library.¹⁸ Professor Woods promptly seized the opportunity to secure for the Harvard Department a scholar whom he already knew and appreciated. The letter reproduced in the Appendix (b) illustrates the motives behind his action, which will relentlessly continue until 1921. Four aspects deserve attention: (1) the request for courses on Scholastic Philosophy coming from the students of the Sciences, "especially among the most progressive and scientifically-minded Catholics"; (2) "Scholasticism" being declared relevant for a comprehensive philosophical education; (3) the allusion to the possibility of making research plans that, upon De Wulf's advice, could strengthen a fresh area of studies; (4) Woods' keen interest in the systematic rather than the hermeneutical dimension of Scholasticism, so that any stress on medieval studies or history was avoided. The tragedy of war and the willingness to show the hospitality of Harvard to her unfortunate sister institutions in Belgium, on the other hand, remained in the background; but this tragedy might have been seen in the eyes of professor Woods as a sort of *felix culpa*.

¹⁶ HUA, UAV 687.2.

¹⁷ As for the addressee, I guess she is the wife of Stephen James O'Meara, legendary head of the Boston Police Department. See Appendix, document c.

¹⁸ Cf. FUGLISTER, Albert: *Louvain – Ville Martyre*. Paris: Éditions Delandre 1916. Of the many accounts of the destruction and first reconstruction of the Louvain University Library, see DELANNOY, Paul: *The library of the University of Louvain*, in: *The Nineteenth Century* 72 (1915), N. 59, 1061 – available on-line at: http://www.uniset.ca/microstates/delanney_louvain.htm; [GUPPY, Henry] *The reconstruction of the Library of the University of Louvain: Great Britain's Contribution, 1914–1925*, in: *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 10 (1926), 223–267. See also SCHIVELBUSCH, Wolfgang: *Eine Ruine im Krieg der Geister. Die Bibliothek von Löwen: August 1914 bis Mai 1940*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer 1993. On the intellectual context, one could ponder VIOLANTE, Cinzio: *Uno storico europeo tra Guerra e dopoguerra, Henri Pirenne (1914–1923)* (= *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico. Monografie* 31). Bologna: il Mulino, 1997.

Woods himself gave 150 US Dollars in July 2015 for the “De Wulf Fund” and, already two months later, he was able to donate 1300 US Dollars he had received from the numerous people he assiduously looked for and contacted.¹⁹ The Catholic Church did not help as much as expected: William Henry Card. O’Connell of Boston and John Murphy Card. Farley of New York responded after repeated requests and, as it seems, with no exceeding enthusiasm. More help came from Midwestern Catholics associations and people, Harvard (Catholic) Alumni and professionals. Card. O’Connell eventually supported De Wulf’s appointment, but he did so only after being assured that he was a laymen.

On Monday, September 6, 1915, the liner “Chicago” of the French Compagnie Générale Transatlantique sets sail from Le Havre heading west to New York. De Wulf was on board and began that very day to write a funny travel journal, which I shall discuss at another time. His first weeks in Cambridge had a positive impact. While writing to the Honorable Constantine E. McGuire at the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C.,²⁰ Woods was already able to give a first assessment:

“While Professor De Wulf has been here we have been impressed with the fact that his scholarship surpasses his reputation as one of the greatest authorities on Scholastic Philosophy, and furthermore, we are very much delighted with him as a colleague and friend, and in addition he is a skillful teacher and an enthusiastic friend of the students. He, himself, on his part has become interested in the University. It is quite clear that he would appreciate an opportunity to work here for a great number of years. He and I have already planned a series of text and handbooks on Medieval Philosophy. This being the situation, it seems that we must make an unusual effort to see that the opportunity does not pass through our hands. It may never recur and I hope we may strike hard now so that we can have this man as a leader in his subject for a long term of years and perhaps for the rest of his life. Harvard would then become one of the centres of scholastic teaching”.²¹

¹⁹ “At a Meeting of the President and Fellows of Harvard College in Boston, September 27, 1915/ Voted that the President and Fellows desire to express their gratitude for gifts amounting to thirteenth hundred dollars received though Professor J.H. Woods for the salary of Professor De Wulf, for the year 1915–1916 [...]” (*HUA*, UAV 687.2). De Wulf’s salary for half year was of 2000 US-Dollars.

²⁰ C.E. McGuire (1890–1965) was a Boston-Irish Harvard *alumnus*, friend of Woods with whom he shared a keen interest in Oriental languages. Interesting is the McGuire obituary by QUIGLEY, Carroll: *Constantine McGuire: Man of Mystery*, in: *The Foreign Service Courier* 14 (December 1965), N. 2, 6–20, available on-line at: http://www.carrollquigley.net/Articles/constantine_mcguire_man_of_mystery.htm (15.01.2017). Intriguing is Quigley’s report that McGuire claimed that “Harvard [in 1915] had an unwritten rule which barred any Roman Catholic from teaching medieval *history*” (my *Italics*).

²¹ *Woods to McGuire*, Nov. 16, 1915 in: *HUA*, UAV 687.2. During his first semester at Harvard, De Wulf basically taught in French, as it emerges for the titles of his lectures series and from Woods’ correspondence (e.g. *Woods to Agar*, Oct. 19, 1915). Harvard students, in

Appointed for a second time in 1916–1917, De Wulf had to decline the invitation because of the “submarine situation” in the Atlantic. Only at the end of the war was he able to honor the invitation again.

On another occasion I shall try to evaluate the impact of De Wulf’s teaching at Harvard, which – as I can acknowledge here – did not live up to its initial promise. For the narrower purposes of these pages, however, it might be enough to conclude with a few words taken from the address professor Josiah Royce gave on December 1915, for a gathering of teachers of philosophy at Harvard University “in honor of Professor Maurice De Wulf of the University of Louvain”: “This war, by the very vastness of the calamities through which it leads, will bring the nations to a new consciousness which will awaken the much needed international conscience.” When it was published in *The New York Times*, on 20th December 1915, Royce’s speech got the following title: “Belgium as the teacher of the Nations – Professor Royce predicts a new sense of international duty and a rapid recovery after the war.” Today, we ought to say that his prediction, possibly accurate in theory, was not timely.

those days, were able to attend lectures delivered in French and, in some cases, also in German (e.g., *Woods to Cassirer*, April 22, 1913). By the end of November the visiting lecturer can teach in English, as professor Ralph Barton Perry attests to in a letter to De Wulf, as he invites him to speak at the “Philosophical Club”: “It would give us a great deal of pleasure if you would be willing to talk to us very informally about Scholastic Philosophy. The course to which these men belong includes a very hasty and superficial summary of the Scholastic period. By the time our meeting occurs, they will have obtained some knowledge of Plato and Aristotle. I think that if Scholastic Philosophy could be brought to the attention of these younger students as impressively as you would be able to bring it, it might lead to their pursuing the study further in later years. It would help to give Scholastic Philosophy an established place in the curriculum./It would be necessary for you to speak in English, but that, I know, now gives you no difficulty [...]” (*Perry to De Wulf*, November 19, 1915, in: BE UCL ARCV FI 119).

APPENDIX

a – BE UCL ARCV FI 119:

Harvard University
Cambridge
President's Office
January 26, 1915

My dear Sir,

On the twenty-fourth I sent the following cablegram to Professor Dupriez, at Cambridge [sic!]-

“Telegraph DeWulf Harvards invitation to lecture one semester beginning February fifteenth or September Two thousand dollars Cable answer Harcoll Boston”

And received from you on the twenty-fifth an answer, by cable, as follows:

“Engagé Poitiers ecris.”

From this I understand that for the present you are engaged at Poitiers; but I do not know whether Professor Dupriez sent you my cablegram as a whole, or merely the invitation to come during the second semester of this academic year. Even if he sent the whole message, it might have been a little incomprehensible to you, owing to its abbreviations. Your inability to come now has been a cause of great regret to me and to the members of the Department of Philosophy, who were looking forward to giving you a hearty welcome here. I do not know how long your engagement at Poitiers will last, but the Department of Philosophy is deeply interested in having you come in January, and so are many other people; and I write to ask whether it may not be possible for you to come to us for the first semester of the next year – that is, from the latter part of September until the end of January. I hope earnestly that you will be able to come. I think you would find yourself comfortable and among very sympathetic friends among your colleagues throughout the University. I ought to add that the salary for such a period would be two thousand dollars.

Hoping very much that you will be able to accept, I am

Very truly yours,

Q. Lawrence Lowell

* * *

b – BE UCL ARCV FI 119:

Harvard University
Department of Philosophy and
Psychology
Emerson Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts
29 January 1915

My dear Professor De Wulf :

By this time you will have received President Lowell's cablegram and the letter of January 26 which he mailed to you after consultation with me. In it he assured you of the interest of the members of the Philosophical Department in your coming. And I take this opportunity of assuring you in the name of all members of the Department of our eager expectation of your willingness to join us in our work here. For many years professor William James devoted a considerable portion of his lectures to scholasticism, and later Professor Santayana gave a course during the whole year on scholastic philosophy, but both of these gentlemen were aware of their deficiencies, and we have always lamented the fact that we have never had an authority to transmit to the students a philosophy which so many of them require.

Since the University has been attempting to do what it could for the professors at Louvain who have suffered by the war, a great interest in the whole community has been aroused, and especially among the most progressive and scientifically-minded Catholics. I have been in correspondence with many of these persons, and they are eager that their sons, who belong to the most cultivated families, shall not be deprived of the kind of teaching that you could give them.

The subject, of course, is intricate, but the willingness on the part of the students is great, and there would be, if not many students, yet a few, who would devote themselves to work with you with the utmost energy and enthusiasm.

The opportunity thus is open for an extension of our work in your direction, and I hope that you will agree with us as to its importance.

In addition to these general considerations you will allow me to say that we shall offer you our friendship and our heartiest cooperation in case you can arrange your plans as to come.

With sincere regards,

Very truly yours,
James H. Woods

Chairman of the Department of Philosophy

c – HUA, UAV 687.2:

January 30, 1915

Dear Mrs. O'Meara,

A couple of months ago Lady Osler sent us from Oxford a list of professors from Louvain whom we were asked to help. The endowment which Professor Simpson²² received was vacated when he was made Ambassador to Argentina. This was assigned to Professor Dupriez²³. A small fund had been offered by members of the Harvard Club of Boston for a second professor from Louvain. This has been promised to the Department of Philosophy, and we expect to secure Prof. De Wulf in this way. But unfortunately in the cabling and transmission of correspondence, Professor de la Vallée Poussin²⁴ inferred that he had been given a call, whereas, inquiries only had been made, whether he could accept. This unfortunate occurrence left it incumbent upon me to see that Professor De Wulf should not be overlooked.

We have invited him to come, and we secured all but two hundred dollars. Apparently Professor De Wulf has meantime formed some temporary arrangement at Poitiers in France, but we hope to secure him either next autumn or a little later for a half year.

I shall be exceedingly glad if you could add your influence to this movement, and we should welcome any contribution that you might wish to send.

Very sincerely yours,
J.H. Woods

* * *

²² Frederic Jesup Stimson (1855–1943), appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on October 1, 1914.

²³ Léon Dupriez (1863–1942), professor of Roman Law at Louvain and then appointed at the Harvard Law School. His son studied Mathematics at Harvard (1918) and will later become the well-known economist Léon-H. Dupriez (1901–1986). I should like to thank my colleague Laurent Waelkens for the information he provided on Dupriez *senior*.

²⁴ Charles de la Vallée Poussin (1866–1962), the illustrious mathematician.

d - HUA, UAV 687.2:

*At a meeting of the President and Fellows of Harvard College in Boston,
March 10, 1919*

Voted to make the following appointments:

For one year from September 1, 1919

Edwin Garrigues BoringVisiting Lecturer on Psychology - \$ 2500

For the second half of 1919-1920

Maurice De Wulf Visiting Lecturer on Philosophy

The President reported that M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl had been appointed and accepted as Exchange Professor from France for the first half of 1919-1920

Voted to rescind the vote of February 8 granting leave of absence to Instructor B.A.G. Fuller

F.W. Hunnewell

Secretary

By W.

Abstract

The Belgian scholar Maurice De Wulf (1867-1947) was one of the pioneers in the study of Medieval Philosophy as well as one of the leading representatives of the "Neo-scholastic" movement at the beginning of the 20th Century. His tenure at Harvard University (1921-1927) is known and generally referred to. However, the motives and the chain of events which brought the Louvain scholar to Harvard remain unfamiliar. The purpose of this Note is to shed light on the early contacts between Harvard's Faculty of Philosophy and De Wulf, well before his official appointment to the professorship.