

From Sir Richard Southern

40 St. John Street, Oxford OX3 2LH  
9-8-92

Dear Professor Giese:

It was very kind of you to write to me, and I'm glad to be able to tell you that Cantor's report of my attitude to Ernst Kantorowicz [sic] is very far indeed from the truth. So far as remember, I never met Kantorowicz - certainly never heard him lecture, and I don't think I knew he had ever been in Oxford. I was, as you remark, in Paris for the greater part of 1934. I never much liked his Frederick II, and I suppose his political attitude did not appeal to me, but that's about all I can remember of any 'attitude' to him in the 1930s. Of course he was no Nazi either in spirit or in fact. Much later I reviewed his *King's Two Bodies*, I think in the English Historical review. I was fairly critical, and someone (it might have been Cantor himself for all I know) told me that Kantorowicz had been 'furious' about what I wrote. This rather surprised me because I was deeply interested in what he said and I can't now remember the exact grounds of my criticism: I can't believe they were 'hostile.' I should have liked to meet him, but never did.

Cantor is a sad case. He did in fact send me a copy of his book, and I read a few pages but they were so wildly wrong - not only in what he confidently said about me and my attitudes, but about almost everything else - that I couldn't take any of it seriously and put it aside till I had more time. Which I have never had. And yet, I have to confess, I rather like him: he came from a harsh unintellectual background and had to fight to emerge from it - and unluckily he couldn't stop fighting and thinking the world was against him even when he had got a very desirable position in the world. So he has gone on fighting like a wild beast and cannot see that he has ruined a powerful mind and historical insight as a result.

Perhaps I should have done more about reading his book and telling him how wrong it is: alas one's sins of omission. But I really have had no time for it. Now that you have drawn my attention to the depth of its mis-statements perhaps I shall read some more of it and write to him (I haven't so far even acknowledged it so I owe him a letter), but it will be a grisly task.

So let me simply thank you once more for taking the trouble to alert me to some of the things I hadn't noticed. I fear there'll be many more equally horrible, and I'm very sorry to hear of the distress he has caused the families of those whom he has disparaged.

with all good wishes

Yours sincerely,

Richard Southern.