

## BEGINAGAIN

But in Chicago, Theodora had seen the nun who danced along the sidewalk, unconsciously, for joy, and the unnatural natural face of the dancing nun had sung some song she had just remembered. The nun's feet touched grass. So that Theodora smiled now.<sup>1</sup>

I am Theodora, and I am in University College Dublin in 1960, and the nun in my class, mentioned before,<sup>2</sup> and many of her class companions, are dancing psychically in the glow of a *positive haute vulgarization* of achievements of later years. They know and glow as beginners. Might this be how *Vignette 10* left you, leaves you: happily in the lightsome darkness of encouragement?

Perhaps I can begin this new beginning entertainingly by noting that if you put a hard avocado in a brown bag with a ripe banana, the avocado ripens. The brown bag is the 16 lines and 217 [LOL: found later to be only 139!] words of *Loneragan's 1833 Overture*. The ripe old banana is already in the bag: ripening since 1956 in the presence of a ripe Bernardo.

As I remarked before, the first-year class in mathematical physics had the advantage of a cultural surround of serious work in mathematics and physics. In the present undertaking—trying to get a community moving in seeding functional collaboration—there is no such culture. My *haute vulgarization* in *Vignette 10* lacks an audience, even among the experts. Even my old colleague, Fred Crowe, was ill-disposed to any venture into symbolism.<sup>3</sup> I have no doubt about how he would have reacted to the dense imaging  $\{\mathbf{M}(\mathbf{W}_3)^{\theta\Phi\Gamma}\}$ <sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> I quote here, as I do at the end below, from Patrick White's novel, *The Aunt's Story*. But the page reference escapes me: I gave no page number when I first quoted the book at the end of chapter 4 of *Music That Is Soundless* (1968; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Axial Publishing, 2010.) Theodora is trapped opposite "the man" in a railway carriage going west.

<sup>2</sup> See [Vignette 5](#), halfway through.

<sup>3</sup> Fred's first correspondence with me on the matter regarded my introduction of such terminology the "Being and Loneliness" (eventually the Epilogue of [Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations](#)) which he thought was a magnificent topic. His objection: "do we have to learn mathematics to do

So, let us put aside the symbolism and see can we find a way into this vital new human climb, this seed of serious hope. The serious hope is to grow into an effective community by the 10<sup>th</sup> millennium: seven years ago I wrote of that effectiveness as that of one in forty of the global community,<sup>4</sup> and my ongoing series of articles in *Divyadaan* points to an energetic convergence of world religions as a road to that complex topology of situations.<sup>5</sup> By then the ground of the 8-fold way will be globally obvious, and that ground will be a starting place fermenting in young psyches in early days at school. But such is not the present situation, and my ramble in these next ten Vignettes will not talk of the ground, but of both another way into the climb forward to a common global science and of, well, this and that.<sup>6</sup>

My information about ripening avocados came from a little book, *What a Plant Knows*.<sup>7</sup> On the back cover of my edition Hannah Holmes remarks: “Like us, a plant that aspires to win the rat race exploits the environment.”<sup>8</sup> So, my notion here is of us as planted in this horrific late negative Anthropocene Age, certainly surrounded by various rat races, trying to tune into the brilliance of plants.<sup>9</sup> This tuning is part of the message of the end of *Insight 722*: but let’s not go there again.<sup>10</sup>

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theology”? You can’t go on seriously in explanatory theology without symbolisms. How else might one handle Lonergan’s suggestion in the 24<sup>th</sup> place of *The Constitution of Christ*, CWL 7, p. 151?

<sup>4</sup> See my essay, presented in Puebla, Mexico in 2011, *Arriving in Cosmopolis*: available in Spanish and English at: <http://www.philipmchane.org/website-articles>.

<sup>5</sup> A pause over the manner in which this sublates the final paragraph of *Method in Theology* would be worthwhile.

<sup>6</sup> The “other way” is a two-fold way, messing creatively with the first and last specialties. But I don’t really develop that here. It floats around in the “this and that.” My efforts in my climb here, are they like sketchings of a Picasso *Guernica*? Or morning ventures like Cézanne’s poisings before Mont St. Victoire? I think of the lilies of the fields, God’s global panting cargo, and then muse over a parallel with Monet’s many “Water-Lilies” (See *Monet by Himself*, edited by Richard Kendall, Chartwell Books, 2014, 240–79. Poise over the remark, from a Monet letter of 2008, “It’s quite beyond my powers at my age, and yet I want to succeed in expressing what I feel” [*Ibid.*, 240]).

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Chamovitz, *What a Plant Knows. A Field Guide to the Senses*, Farrar Straus and Giroux, New York, 2012. On page 29 he recalls his grandmother who “learned this magic from her mother, who learned it from her mother, and so on.”

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Holmes is the author of some light lightsome reading: *Quirk: Brain Science Makes Sense of Your Peculiar Personality*, Random House, 2011; *The Well-dressed Ape: A Natural History of Myself*, Random House, 2008; *Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn*, 2005; *The Secret Life of Dust: From the Cosmos to the Kitchen Counter, the Big Consequences of Little Things*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Add to the book referred to in note 6 the delightful *The Hidden Life of Trees. What they feel, How They Communicate*, by Peter Wohlleben, Ludwig Verlag, Munich, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> I quote here, as I have done very regularly piecemeal, e.g. in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Axial Publishing, 2105), the final paragraph of *Insight 722*: “Finally, good will is joyful. For it is the love of God above all and in all, and love is joy. Its repentance and sorrow regard the past.

My zoning in on seeding functional collaboration is to take us towards musing on development as a reality and as a topic. I recall now how Lonergan mused it out to me in the summer of 1966 as we sat opposite each other in his little Regis College bedroom. He faced off his eight fingers and began, “well, its easy: you just double the structure.” For the next ten *Vignettes* I shall dodge the structure. It will be like talking about ripening without telling you the secrets of the double structure,  $H_2C=CH_2$ , of ethylene ( $C_2H_4$ ), our brownbag ripener.

How many of you are with me, up to having a shot at this adventure? Check with me if you wish: [pmcshane@shaw.ca](mailto:pmcshane@shaw.ca). The environment is dominated by “the man,” scrabbling on the surface of life. Might we dodge the man and listen together to ourselves and to plants in their heliotropic dancing? “Sunflowers Speak to Us of Growing.”<sup>11</sup>

Theodora heard the difference between doing and being. The corn could not help itself. It was. But the man scrabbled on the surface of life, working himself into a lather of perspiration under his laundered shirt . . . . The man said that the population of Chicago had risen from 2,701,705 in 1920 to 3,376, 438 in 1930. The population was being raised all the time. But in Chicago also, Theodora had seen the nun who danced along the sidewalk, unconsciously, for joy, and the unnatural natural face of the dancing nun had sung some song she had just remembered. The nun’s feet touched grass. So that Theodora smiled now. And the man in the perfect shirt was encouraged. He leaned forward to tell the population of Kansas City, St. Louis, Buffalo, and Detroit.

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Its present sacrifices look to the future. It is at one with the universe in being in love with God, and it shares its dynamic resilience and expectancy. As emergent probability, it ever rises above past achievement. As genetic process, it develops generic potentiality to its specific perfection. As dialectic, it overcomes evil both by meeting it with good and by using it to reinforce the good. But good will wills the order of the universe, and so it wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.” More in the next *Vignette*.

<sup>11</sup> This is the title of [Cantower 2](#) of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002. The *Cantower* begins with a poem I have repeated before in various works. “Sun, flowers, Son-flowered, / Speak to us of growth / Seed cauled, cribbed, / Kabod yet confined, / Crossed with dark earth, / Light-refined, / Rill open-ends a trill / Annotaste of Throat.”