

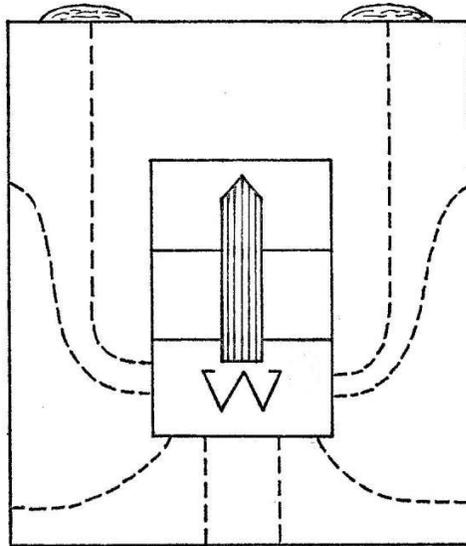
MIBOX

I promised earlier to get us further into the topic of Mibox. *Further* here should have the obvious meaning of an *Assembly* of some possibilities of novel relatively permanent recycling in the fostering of global progress. At this stage in my battle against various structures of betrayal of Lonergan's intent in his 1833 Overture, it seems as well to make this topic central, to gather ourselves for a more robust advance.

First, let me present you with the basic mibox diagram.¹

¹ "present you"? I recall now for you, with you, note 6 of *Vignette 11*, "Beginagain". "My efforts in my climb here, are they like sketchings of a Picasso *Guernica*? Or morning ventures like Cézanne's poisonings 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}). Here I am poised, like Monet "presenting" twice (*ibid.*, 268,269) a Japanese Bridge Among the Water Lilies."

I am not optimistic in bringing your neuronets to fish-catch, or latch on to, the bridge among the lilies. There were so many possible ways of presenting the bridge, a bridge related to the "natural bridge" of the first paragraph of *Insight* chapter 5, but weaving way beyond it, seeding a further climb in its positional poise to answer, in a fourth stage apokataphatic Lighthouseing, "where is finitude?" Such were some of the topics hovering over my fantasy about this Vignette, but, heavens, it would be a book-length thing, vibing up Lonergan's "Note on Geometrical Possibility" (*Collection, CWL 4*, 92-107) with it hints on symbolisms, neuromolecular natural bridges. But would it rescue the "basic position" of *Insight*? I think that that rescue is a matter of much later functional recycling and deep discomforts among dialectic experts in the groves of "the final objectification of horizon" of *Lonergan's 1833 Overture*. Over the past decades, for example, I have encountered, in so-called Lonergan experts, the view that the old epistemology problem is solved in chapter 10. It is not, a point I made with seeming clarity in "[The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan](http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-articles)," *Philosophical Studies* (Ireland), 1962, (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/published-articles>). Replace 'The Notion of Being' by 'The Notion of Oompa' in chapter 12 and you might sense the proper mibox suspense, leading you to you poisoning yourself with some vague decisiveness in the inscape of the top of page 413. Such "basic issues of philosophy" remain for the dialectic discomfort, in future millennia, of "the final objectification of horizon." "The Field" (*Phenomenology and Logic, CWL 18*, 199) will gradually lift the Tower people to the truth, the way, the life, and lead to a positive global *haute vulgarization* "Among the Lilies" (yes, there is a show of that name!) and not just Max Ernst's 1942 *Surrealism and Painting* will be seen as a reach for existential truth-poising, like knowing flower-people embracing Monet's Water Lilies (See McShane, *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human*, Axial Publishing, 2013, chapter 2, "Out-of-body Experiences").



I cooked up the diagram first in the late 1960s, and it appeared then in the little introductory book, *Towards Self-Meaning*.² It later appeared in my own little introduction of the early 1970s, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations. Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*, a book which gives fuller context, and one which is readily available on my website. It remains a solid introduction to Lonergan’s work, one praised and recommended by him. Indeed, I recall now, meeting a distinguished Lonergan scholar while walking round Boston College in the late 1970s. He remarked to me, with amusing astonishment in his voice. “I’m just coming from a meeting with Lonergan. He recommended that I read chapter 10 of *Wealth of Self*.” I keep his name out of it, but as I now read his faulty works I sometimes wonder whether he ever got round to reading the chapter, with its focus on microautonomy and functional collaboration.

There is a clear piece of my *Assembly* in my claim now that the chapter needs recycling and the context of the diagram above lifted, indeed, lifted into the view developed by me fifty years later, summed up in the dense symbol: $\{M(W_3)^{0\Phi T}\}^4$.

That symbol was introduced in [Vignette 10](#), “A Place in the Son: Rise With Me,” the key Vignette of Pentecost. The eleven Vignettes since have been a bridge to this St. Ignatius day landing—or take-off. Is there a sense in which we are dealing now, in this *Vignette 22*, with a Catch 22, “situation”? Well, we’ll get to that.

² Garret Barden and Philip McShane, Logos Books, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1969, p. 44.

It seems as well to note now that, while the mibox diagram was central to my twenty years of introductory teaching, I did not air it in more learned contexts until my recent push for my “Leaning Tower of Able” against various forms of faulty towers. Now I see its fuller role in the battle towards a redemptive Futurology and it is that fuller role that haunts my present *Assembly*. Let us give that Assembly a central text from Lonergan: step into its reverierun and let its 103 words tickle your already-out-there-now-real tows.

The context of our quoted piece from Lonergan is from what I might identify as the high point and pointing of his effort in *Insight*, but I leave you to dip your tows into that larger pointing in, well, your next few decades of developing, of “destiny.”³

Intellectual development rests upon the dominance of a detached and disinterested desire to know. It reveals to man a universe of being, in which he is but an item, and a universal order, in which his desires and fears, his delight and anguish, are but infinitesimal components in the history of mankind. It invites man to become intelligent and reasonable not only in his knowing but also in his living, to guide his actions by referring them, not as an animal to a habitat, but as an intelligent being to an intelligible context of some universal order that is or is to be.⁴

How might I enliven your reading of this piece? Of course, there is Lonergan’s pointing about that in the page 250 of our concern: think, for instance, of the pressure towards a “completed” reading generated by an open dialectic between searchers. Add—if it not there already—a fantasy about the cyclically-boosted situational-analysis of the 84th word “habitat.” Is the animal in the woods, and what are the meanings of “woods” that are to twirl us, in later communities of the Tower of Able, through the creative cycle? And now note—if you have not connoted already—the cunning of Lonergan: for the exchange of the third objectification is part of the present group-dynamics. You are confronted by my sixty years of reading *Insight*, thus, for instance by the discomfoting essays regarding the sixtieth anniversary of its publication. My comments on *habitat* and *woods* add to that discomfoting context.

What you must grapple with here is the character of the encounters foisted upon the group by Lonergan’s demand, by the weave of climbs of the full page 250.

³ *Method in Theology*, 289.

⁴ *Insight*, 498.

Think, perhaps, of the group gathered round Andrew Wiles talking out his proof of Fermat's Last theorem: the *Assembly* presented to the assembly is novel, a shock.⁵

Here, I am ahead of the pack and moving on to make the standard model meaning of the mibox diagram more remote than when I typed *Assembly*. AND note that this, too, happens regularly in the journey from *Completion* to "completed."⁶

It is generally the case in mathematics and, with qualifications, it holds in the enterprise of dialectic. Someone is ahead of the pack. The strategy of the third objectification makes that discomforting for the pack: unless the pack is tuned to adult growth in both its ontic and its phyletic reality.⁷

So let us now pause over the mibox diagram and remove the suggestion of eyes. In that suggestion there is the suggestion that we replace the phrase in our central quotation, "not as an animal to a habitat" to "not as a plant to a habitat." So, I am inviting you to some such adventure as would make you capable of more than a positive haute vulgarization reading of *What a Plant Knows*. When I mentioned that book previously I pointed to the subtitle, "A Field Guide to the Senses," and to Hannah Holmes' comment on the back cover, which now I extend.

Like us, a plant that aspires to win the rat race must exploit its environment. Even a daffodil can detect when you are standing in its light, and a rhododendron know when you are savaging its neighbor with the pruning shears.

Have we, but not the plants,⁸ lost something of our primitive attunement, failing to detect who is standing in our light, who is savaging our neighbor with the sheer stupidities of industrious progress? But let us pause with the plants, hugging them psychically in our struggle to find our mibox selves. I recall a wonderful interview with the old frail Anthony

⁵ Amir D Aczel, *Fermat's Last Theorem*, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York, 1996, 2–4.

⁶ My remembering of a directly-involved context can help. I am recalling a vivid moment in a 1971 conversation when I asked what I now put to you with precision, "When did you get clear on is?isliis.? His answer, "when I got that far in *Insight!*"

⁷ The tuning is graceful in our "absolutely supernatural" (*Insight*, 747, line 10) finitude. So there is the prayer of Grace in us, where we pretend to prayer (see *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, 199–200 223) : "Grace, Grace, Grace, Attune os to the Allure of the Scent of a Nomen" [echoes there of the film *The Scent of a Woman*].

⁸ Nor indeed the animals. This is a large evolutionary topic related to the final paragraph of *Insight* 722.

Quinn where he talked of having something to learn from the tree outside his window. We have something to learn inside the field of being by minding the tree.

We shall later pause over the shocking reach of our hugging and our minding, but now let us dally over the invitation of Chamovitz's little book. Charles Darwin, an avid bassoonist, played to a mimosa, a sensitive plant whose compound leaves fold inward and droop when touched or shaken. In fact, the plant was unwavering, so to speak, in the face of vibes of Charles' talent. Would variations in musical genre do anything for a plant? Much later work would show, e.g., that corn is no more excited by Mozart's *Symphonie Concertante* than by Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell*.

So we take a turn to a different approach, a turn that does not surprise you. We tune in, not to the effect of a musical surround but to the mimosa's mibox in its echoing a common life with us. We dropped the eyes in the diagram and I leave you to drop whatever else. The first chapter of *What a Plant Knows* is titled "What a Plant Sees."

The first sentence of the chapter is "Think about this: plants see you."⁹ My sentence to back this think up into an edgy thinking into luminous human seeing is, "Think about this: the plant has no illusions about seeing an already-out-there." Stand there, sit there, with tree or tulip and "see each other" freshly. "Of course, plants don't 'see' in pictures as you or I do."¹⁰ But they have a patterned biochemical affective-laden response to skin-lighting. What would be wrong with calling that patterning a picture? Or, shift from tulip to youlitup, and think of the commonness of pattern, both of you photoreceiving. Well, no: *photo* is just as odd a word as *picture*. *Fieldreceiving*?

Se we could talk of plants having, not phototropisms, but fieldtropisms. All we bios have field tropisms, and indeed do we not invent the likes in the non-bios by giving them receiving-patterns of electromagnetic waves? "The retina, the layer at the back of our eyeballs, is covered with rows and rows of these receptors, sort of like the rows and rows of LEDs in flat-screen televisions or sensors in digital cameras."¹¹ But note that this particular type of fieldreceiving is much more complex than yours. "Light for a plant is much more than a signal: light is food." Let's slide past that, and many other oddities of blindness in

⁹ *Field Guide*, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Field Guide*, 11.

plants and humans. But should we not pause over the wonder of the inner clock in us and plants? “Cryptochrome is the blue-light receptor primarily responsible for the resetting of our circadian clocks by light.”¹² So, we and all the bios, down to bacteria and fungi, have our sense of time.¹³ So that, yes, we all dance.

Of course, it is no surprise that we regard plants as stationary beings; they are sessile organisms that are eternally rooted and incapable of locomotion. But when we observe them patiently over a long period of time, this stationary statue gives way to an intricate choreographed festival of movement, much like Baryshnikov springing to life in the first scene of a ballet. Leaves curl and unfold, flowers open and close, and stems circle and bend.¹⁴

And the mustard tree has a parable about us being in a common craving box, each in our mibox, but none of us in a Noah’s ark.¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 26. Here I begin my leap over the series of chapters on smelling, feeling, hearing, location, memory. They certainly could be part of your field guide in the fullest sense of luminous self-identity, giving fresh meaning to my first paragraph start to *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*. “The emergence of humanity is the evolutionary achievement of sowing what among the cosmic molecules. The sown what infests the clustered molecular patterns behind and above your eyes, between your ears, lifting areas—named by humans like Brocca and Wernicke—towards patterned noise-making that in English is marked by ‘so what?’”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵ Best repeat here the pointers in note 12 of [Vignette 20](#): “See CWL 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 349, 351. How does one conceive of oneself in God? The issue is a high reaching of the Interior Lighthouse. See note 1 of [Vignette 24](#).”