

The Incomparable

To what indeed shall I compare
The world and human life?
Ah, the shadow of the moon
When it touches in the dewdrop
The beak of the waterfowl.¹

I would ask you to re-read the final paragraph of the previous essay, and now pause over its final question. “Can we find our human way out, out out, in in, to salvage ‘dwindling humanism’?”² Indeed, we can: but only slowly, in a new togetherness that is remote from the present dwindlings in and divings into glossy horror, greed, unlivability.

Yes, the previous essay, as it promised, is and was a new beginning: “So: we begin again.” And that beginning, if followed seriously, patiently, contemplatively, led you and me to savor ourselves, each as a “what trapped.” Artistry relieves that entrapment: the little verse with which I began here shows you and me tinely and tinnily that if only we can untrap ourselves long enough to spend a moment in this garden, then the what that we are is not firmly trapped but *happeningly* rapt, wrapped in the Big Bang’s molecules of longing.

It would be a mistake for me to go on here in this vein of human blood. The **what** that is wrapped and trapped reaches seethingly for a teaching from those Big Bang bendings, a teaching that blossoms only if its core gives the native **what** its native air, what we can call an under stand, an under stance, but is really an inner stand, one that eventually wraps the little verse round the mark and marker—?—that ends its second line.

“International Trade” was our topic in the previous essay, and we can see and seize that it still is here, but now the trading is to be seen as between our **what** and the international that is given in humanity’s messy story. The English whatters traded with the rest of the globe, but did so grubbily and greedily.³ We must rise above that grubby greed and the grubby greedy

¹ A verse of Dogen, the Japanese Zen Master (1200–1253), quoted in Heinrich Dumolin, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Volume 2: Japan*. New York, Macmillan, 1990, 72.

² *Insight*, 750. We are poised at the end of the book. There remains the problem of a fuller “**Identification of the Solution**” (*ibid.*, with the bold face in the text).

³ “In England basic wage rates did not begin to rise until 1870; ...” *For a New Political Economy*, 313. You are gradually tuning in, I hope, to my push towards glimpsing the odd meshing of such defectiveness with the drive for a normative analysis. See notes 21–23 of [Æconomics 7](#). You could be helped towards sensing the full scope of that drive by venturing into and beyond chapter three, “Imaging International Credit,” of my *Sane Economics and Fusionism* (Axial Publishing, 2010). The nudges there can be turned into a full global heuristics of two-layer normativities, eventually lifting the detached naming of a presuppose “actuality of a standard of living” (CWL 21, 232) into a normative dynamics of sane shared global standards of living, something to think of as you muse over the 10th century blossom, “[Arriving in Cosmopolis](#).”

understandings of it if we are to come to live whatsomely. Part of that rising is to reach for a normative mechanical structure. “To what shall I compare?” Yes, “to **what** shall I compare.”

What, in nation A, can compare its goings-on with the goings-on of **what** in nation B, and arrive at noticing the advantage of comparing;⁴ eventually, in the new economics, within an appreciation of two flows of goods, and increasingly in the incomparable symbolized by the object of **what**'s $\{M(W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}$ ^{4,5} Thus might we, and those nations, twist forward to a fuller *nomos* of the rolling stone of Lonergan's achievement. “To what shall I compare?”: to the longing within, and its object, and thus to the within of the shabby achievement, to find it, oddly, “better than was the reality.”⁶

But I seem to be riddling along like Dogen. Best cut to the chase, not just here, but in the next essay, *Æcornomics* 9, with its quaint title, “We Were Not the Savages”. Best make that cut to, indeed, the entire chase, quoting from our first footnote here. “There remains the problem of a fuller ‘**Identification of the Solution.**’” In the face of reality **what** can bring forth normativity. The dynamics of that bringing forth was a concern of Lonergan from his early longings, but his economics is a little focused business, skimming past normative issues which we of future millennia, in our incomparable comparing, cannot avoid in our climb to the incomparable.⁷

The little focused business of Lonergan has been my main concern in these early *Æcornomics* essays: have I succeeded a little, an acorn little, an *e corde* little, an Eco little? Their general title has surely paused you, pawed you as I paw and pause you now?⁸ Might the pause not seed in you the desire to find a seeding and see-thing of the incomparable in the acorn claim of Lonergan about “understanding the object,”⁹ the distant oak of the fullness of being, in the incomparable genetic heuristic hidden in $\{M(W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}$ ⁴?

⁴ The comparing here is a tricky heuristic enterprise, part of the tuning mentioned in the previous note. Think of the comparing that needs to go into the normative study of the usual economics topic of trade, “comparative advantage”. This is a universe away from – I think of the card game – Beggar My Neighbour or, as it is also called *Strip Jack Naked*. Indeed, is the new human and humane game to be haunted by the Beatitudes?

⁵ I would first note the simple elementary beginning's diagramming in pp. iii-iv of *Economics for Everyone* (2017) and follow this my the not-at-all simple climb to the incomparable: “[Method in Theology: From \$\[1 + 1/n\]^{nx}\$ to \$\{M\(W_3\)^{\theta\Phi T}\}\$](#) ”, *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, vol. 10, 105–135, 2018.

⁶ *Method in Theology*, 153.

⁷ I refrain all along here from explicit pointings to the challenge of the climb named by me as a quest of/for *The Interior Lighthouse*. Only in the late adult end of that climb is there to be reached an operative grip on the title of the present essay.

⁸ How long a pause? Recall the old story of the Zen student: “How long to enlightenment, Master?” “Perhaps, ten years.” “But if I try harder?” “Perhaps, then, twenty.” So might you now read freshly, “most of all, what is lacking is knowledge of all that is lacking” (*Insight*, 559, line 24). What, now, is your heart-knowledge of this final series title of mine, *Æcornomics*?

⁹ “Understanding the Object” is the first aspect of interpretative inquiry mentioned in section 1 of *Method in Theology*'s chapter two, “Interpretation.” The incomparable acorn is resting in the words of the paragraph that turns the page in *Insight* 609–10.

I am tired of trying to weave the reluctant and savaged interest of my Lonergan colleagues around that acorn.¹⁰ So, I had best move on towards my little bridge effort of *Æcornomics* 10, “The Rub,” perhaps my last effort to shake the present well-dress savagery of students of Lonergan. Might I find them through this nudging, claiming, in a phony 2020 vision, “We are not the savages”? Surely my audacious brutal remarks will get them to break their disgusting silence?¹¹

¹⁰ A strategy I have used, but in vain, is to point out that in inviting a focus on being honest regarding—should I say honest guarding?—the challenge to scientific hermeneutics expressed in the paragraph I name *60910*—or if you prefer simply that third section of chapter 17 of *Insight*—I have emphasized that the challenge is pre-*Method*, pre-functional collaboration. But still, on it goes: “Lonergan and Jones”.

¹¹ Secretly, it is not disgust but pity. I was lucky to find my way into *Insight* through dipping into the *Verbum* articles in 1956, soaking in physics and mathematics through the early 1950s, underwatering in music in the 1940s. Lonergan is and was an evolutionary sport way beyond our times, way beyond me. But it does not prevent me from facing the uncomfortable obligation of trying to prevent the cultural death of Lonergan, an echoing of Thomas’s fate. See my “Prologue: The Betweenness of Death” in *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human* (Axial Publishing, 2013).