

**INTERPRETING “STANDARD OF LIVING”<sup>1</sup> IN PAUL, POPE, ROBINSON,  
LONERGAN, ET AL.**

*Why has not man a microscopic eye?  
For this plain reason man is not a fly.*<sup>2</sup>

The first four words of my title are only vaguely clear in denotation for most readers; the first three names in the title are, as we’ll see, not too clear for many readers. It seems, then, that interpreting my title would be a wise start to this essay, where interpreting in this instance does not venture much beyond common sense. Perhaps I should write of a distinction between *Interpretation P* and *Interpretation S*, where the added letters point to *Popular* and *Scientific*. Then my interpretation P here aims at nudging people to the “vast task”<sup>3</sup> of Interpretation S, where that interpretation is symbolized neatly enough by  $W_3$ .<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the nudging reaches into a future where P will carry, in any culture of the globe, a sufficiently effective overtone of the meaning of S.<sup>5</sup>

The first word of my title points, for me and for those sufficiently in the ball park, to Interpretation S, but in a restricted sense. The restriction is to the core component of Interpretation S, or of the global task  $W_3$ . That core component is an up-to-date self-luminosity

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<sup>1</sup> See the text below at footnote 28. To reach for a fuller meaning see my index to *For a New Political Economy* under *Standard of Living*.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, lines 192–93.

<sup>3</sup> *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 105: Lonergan is concluding here, on a high see, his 1942 searching and his reach into “The Financial Problem” (100–106).

<sup>4</sup>  $W_3$  is perhaps by now sufficiently familiar as a central heuristic. It has the added advantage of being the beginning of a Trinitarian prayer: “Double You Three in me, in all, Claspings, Cherishing, Cauling, Craving, Christing.” In *Interpretation 16*, “The Interior Lighthouse IV: Twenty-Seventh Lea” note 3, there is a comment on the initial invention of the display. At the time I had no idea of calling it  $W_3$  and when I did I had no idea about the connection with the prayer.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to a positive aspect of “*haute vulgarization*” (See CWL 6 on the negative aspects, 121, 155) that is to weave increasingly into the later positive Anthropocene age.

regarding and guarding the heuristic genetics of meanings. That “self-control”<sup>6</sup> is symbolized by the paragraph in *Insight* named 60910.<sup>7</sup> A glimpse of that core component has been our aim right through this series. Recall the first essay that pivoted on thinking out the problem of “understanding the object.”<sup>8</sup> There is an object: say, fire. We as yet do not understand it fully, but we are doing better than the Greeks and the Phlogiston theorists. The task of progressing from the best of today’s efforts is not just puttering around with today’s best meaning till it fractures, but having an open genetic heuristic grip of the best geohistorical contributions up to now and beyond: to a “remembering of the future”<sup>9</sup> that is not shocked by the fracture.

Next, we pause over the three following words, *Standard of Living*: SOL for short. They were already referenced in the title, pointing you to the discomfiting task of moving into that meaning by battling through the references I gave in my index to *For a New Political Economy*. Nor is that battling sufficient to get you to the meaning of the words, for that meaning has to be lifted into the self-luminous genetic heuristic mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph. Here I turn my hand to an Interpretation P of my core of Interpretation S of SOL. Can you imagine—or should I say might you strain your molecular powers of fantasy to envision—an ordered encyclopedic grip not only on all the actual standards of living in history but on all the seriously suggested standards?<sup>10</sup> To get beyond initial imagination is to head into a sublated version of that strange new science of finitude named by Lonergan *Metaphysics*. One

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<sup>6</sup> I am quoting the last word in Lonergan, “Mission and the Spirit,” *A Third Collection*, 33. It is the end of a key quotation from Paul (*Galatians* 5:22). The same text occurs significantly on *Method in Theology*, 106. See note 8, below, for the fundamental problem of interpreting Paul. The topic is given a wider treatment in [Disputing Quests 10](#), “Paul’s Epistles and Functional Systematics” and in [Disputing Quests 17](#), “Moving towards Self-Control of Disputing Quests.”

<sup>7</sup> *Insight* 609–10.

<sup>8</sup> “Understanding the Object” (*Method in Theology*, 156) is the first basic exegetical operation listed by Lonergan. The first essay in the Interpretation series locates its correct meaning in the dynamics of scientific hermeneutics.

<sup>9</sup> “Remembering the Future” is the title of a chapter on J.M. Synge in Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland. The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Harvard University Press, 1995. The mood dominates in [Cantowers 36 and 37](#). It is to be the normative mood of the Leaning Tower of Able, the existential poise of W<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>10</sup> The imagination and the fantasy need symbolic crutches such as are briefly identified as the aggregates of eight layers of situation rooms hovering over any situation in history in “*The Situation Room: The Stupid View of Wolf Blitzer*,” chapter 12 of Philip McShane, *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, Amazon, 2016. Can you see the wavering in my text over the first three situation rooms, the first three functional specialties?

reaches for “the conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being”<sup>11</sup> and that reach is in and into a care for each hungry proportionate being in history.<sup>12</sup>

Next, I give you a twist of the meaning of the first four words by fancy-dancing round the fifth word, “in.” Let’s get the twist going by hyphenating the first four words: Interpreting-Standard-of-Living: ISOL for short. ISOL is a state of mind, or better, of minding. In present culture it ISOLates you from all present paradigms for considering SOL. What, then of ISOL in Paul or anyone else? You, or I, having that state of minding, enter into or take in Paul’s writings, where “enter into” and/or “take in” have a strange meaning beyond a Star-Trek mind-meld.

Perhaps it would help you along here if I referred back to the venture earlier in my day that led me to begin this essay.

My interest was initially in doing something helpful here to our advancing into the desperately-needed science of economics, by getting into an interpretation P of Joan Robinson and John Eatwell’s text, *An Introduction to Modern Economics*.<sup>13</sup> I had been in and around this text for over twenty years and obviously found it useful in my effort to replace it as an introductory book in economics with my *Economics for Everyone: Das Jus Kapital*. Might a short or lengthy commentary, an Interpretation P, by me, of R+E, not be a help to others? Various perusals of the book over the past months discouraged me, and we’ll get to some facets of that discouragement as we ramble along. But our first focus is a meaning of ISOL in R+E. Does it make any sense to you to think of the meaning as R+E weaved—ho ho does Spock’s mindmeld help?—into my mibox? I bring R+E into my present mibox heuristic and find that R+E represents such an impoverished mind-state that commenting on it in a detailed fashion

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<sup>11</sup> *Insight*, 416.

<sup>12</sup> There is a massive present difficulty in reading vibrantly, mibox “wise”, Lonergan’s definition of metaphysics. (on **mibox**, see the reference at note 22 below). Surely it is evident that it includes the 100 billion or so human proportionate beings, as well as the lilies of the fields?

<sup>13</sup> McGraw-Hill hard and soft cover, 1973. I’ll refer to the book throughout here as R+E. In the text above I do not refer to John Eatwell: no disrespect meant. It is just that I have worked within the context of Robinson’s efforts over the years and find the book in decent continuity with her other efforts. I have no doubt that Eatwell’s view at the time of writing is being expressed in the work. He is now President of Queen’s College, Cambridge.

would be a burden on me and not much help to you. I note, however, that this does not mean that  $R+E$  is to be cast out: indeed it is to be swung into the full dialectic operation that surrounds 60910. But that is not my interest nor intent here: my bent is towards helping forward the implementation of Interpretation S. Nor, I hope, do I have to make the point that my interest and limit is methodological. My title points to a set of large projects: An ISOL-mibox sifting of genetic inserts from the authors mentioned to ISOL mediated by miboxing the works of the authors mentioned.

That loaded previous sentence is our focus in this little essay. But before touching on that adventure let us muse over the four names in the title. There is an obvious reference to St. Paul, but how about Paul Samuelson (1915–2009) the distinguished economist, and indeed all the other economists, up to our times, with a view of sufficient wages? The Pope I have in mind is Alexander Pope (1699–1744) but might we not think of the views of Popes from Peter to Francis regarding the poor being permanently around? Then there is Robinson, Joan: but perhaps you did not think, as I did, of that fictional Robinson Crusoe, the other *Robinson* in my *CWL* 21 index?<sup>14</sup> On the last name I will not fudge. Yet Bernard Lonergan being in the list may puzzle you. Is he not the center of our attention? No: the center of attention is the heuristic component of  $W_3$  that is our focus here: the genetically-ordered, indeed, geohistorically ordered, attempt at understanding, implementationally, effectively, SOL. My global imaging of international credit helps here: it is in a chapter titled, “Imaging International Credit,”<sup>15</sup> and I quote the central pointer:

But now I must add the key image that I would suggest as dominating the immediate effort to glimpse the real problem of twenty-first century credit. It is an image that fits beautifully with the drive of IOC<sup>16</sup> through history, but first envisage it

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<sup>14</sup>  $R+E$ , 146 notes, “The economists who describe Robinson Crusoe reckoning the marginal value of coconuts and fish are reading commercial notions into an economy in which it has no place” (146). Lonergan has broader and more precise pointers (see the index), one of which I note, from a stray fragment of his writing of 1943: “When Robinson is reaping greater harvest from more numerous fields, he is incapable of the illusion that the corn he will not care to eat can be transmogrified into the capital equipment of, say, a power plant or another cleared field” (*For a New Political Economy*, 151).

<sup>15</sup> The chapter is the 7<sup>th</sup> in my *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*. It is chapter 10 in my *Sane Economics and Fusionism*.

<sup>16</sup> IOC is my way of referring, in that chapter, to Randall D. Germain, *The International Organization of Credit: States and Global Finance in the World-Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

ahistorically. The image in question, in our questing eye and kinesthetic sensibility, is the image mentioned in the summary above: an image of two surface spheres of micro-oscillations covering the globe. In its most elementary form it is a two-dimensional drawing of three close circles, the two outermost being slightly irregular. Think of the inner circle as the surface of the earth, taken as uniform and watery. Then the next circle can be imagined as like the ups and downs of the ocean's flows. But why the second such image of ocean flows? Because we are imaging the actualities of any economy that we know of: two layers of flow, production goods and consumer goods. And that imaging, in its simplicity, is to be placed in the context of the global village's challenge to meet the promise of money: a concomitance of the two flows, within the dynamics of our feeble human creativities, which would gently lift our standard of pilgrim living to new unimaginable levels of love and leisure.<sup>17</sup>

Holding to an ahistorical image, one can imagine it controlling a global accounting of basic income. But lest you slip into naïveté about this, it is as well to have you pause over the first page of Lonergan's treatment of such accounting:

The simplest manner of attaining a fairly adequate concept of basic income is to divide the economic community into an extremely large number of groups of practically equal income. Among these groups it will be convenient to include a zero-income group composed of dependents, the unemployed, potential immigrants, recent emigrants, the recently deceased, and so on. In any group  $i$  let there be at any given time  $n_i$  members; let each member receive an aggregate (basic and surplus) income  $y_i$  per interval, so that the whole group receives  $n_i y_i$ ; finally let us say that the group directs the fraction  $g_i$  of its total income to the basic demand function, so that basic income per interval is given by the equation  $DI' = \sum g_i n_i y_i$ .<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, p. 41. In the text at note 22 I mention a cut-back from book-length pointings. This central note 17 of 33 notes seems an appropriate place to hint at some of the omissions. There is, first, on the heuristic side, the fuller vision that is gained of ISOL by leaping into and beyond the final chapter and the Epilogue of *Insight*. Secondly, on the empirical level, there is the varied yet scattered effective interest of many groups in the relief of global hunger and poverty: at one stage in my reflections there emerged the vision of integrating creatively those scattered efforts into an open heuristic of situations and situation rooms, but that vision points to a massive shift of global culture rather than the vague reach of a single *Essay on Women and Men*. Thirdly, there is the larger mesh of the heuristic and the empirical that becomes possible by weaving together Lonergan's 1936 *Essay in Fundamental Sociology* with the weaker expression of a larger hope expressed in the three final sections (pp. 358-68) of *Method in Theology*. Lift, in see-thing fantasy, those sections beyond Christianity into a sniff of World Religions mediated by a future-bent ISOL and you begin to seed in our common neuromolecules the stand of *Isaiah* 2:2-4 that would redirect 2% of GDP arms-funds towards humanity's yearning for the untranquil vibes of true peace in which "they may all be one" (*Method in Theology*, 367).

<sup>18</sup> *For a New Political Economy*, 285. It is the beginning of chapter 18, "Cycles of Income and Prices," where Lonergan climbs astonishingly to a heuristic grip on the Juglar and Kitchin cycles.

Such an accounting is only the beginning of the road to a Bell-curve effective geohistorical accounting of incomes. The community of economists must move to a normative control of local meanings reminiscent of an applied Fourier analysis of large complex waves. The issue is to meet the normative needs of sub-situations: we thus enter refinements of our heuristics of situational effectiveness.<sup>19</sup>

But let us step back from the beginning of the vast task, since only Lonergan has tackled that beginning adequately<sup>20</sup> and he only in a broad heuristic manner. ISOL, in its operative fullness, is a distant dream.<sup>21</sup> The distance is symbolized by the gap between Lonergan and the world of present economics established by our reflections in *Interpretation* 18–20 on that single page 55 of his first economic essay of 1942, “For a New Political Economy.” So I cut back now what could have become a book, a lengthy *Essay on Women and Men* in their vital valuing,<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A massive amount of heuristic diagramming is needed here (think in the context of note 17 above) to generate the global collaborative structure that is to become increasingly effective over the centuries and millennia: it is a complex topology of eight layers of situation rooms-activities of caring for local situations. In “[Arriving in Cosmopolis](#)” (an article on my website in English and Spanish) I push for a heuristics of Tower Population in the year 9011 A.D. that would put one fortieth of the world population in that contemplative care zone.

<sup>20</sup> In various places of my works I have parallel the magnificent climb of Lonergan mentioned in note 18 with swimming-pool modeling of wave dynamics that is to be compared to the massive ventures of, say, the theoretics of the four volumes on detailed hydrodynamics of the *Collected Papers of Sir James Lighthill*, edited by M. Yousuff Husanni, Oxford University Press, 1997, or the empirics of my old colleague Patrick Crean in his work on the sea-shifts between Vancouver and Vancouver Island: The title of his work (with T.S. Murty and J.A. Stronach) is *Mathematical Modelling of Tidal and Estuarine Circulation: the Coastal Seas of Southern British Columbia and Washington State*. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1988). The work is one of 30 volumes with the general title, *Lecture Notes on Coastal and Estuarine Studies*.

<sup>21</sup> The dream character surely is sufficiently evident from these final footnotes? A context for savoring that dreaming is Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas* (Axial Publishing, 2010), chapter 10, “The Dominant Context of Lonergan’s Life.” That chapter places him in a world altogether remote from that of his disciples. The dreaming is symbolized in that book by the tower image of page 163, a page titled “The Tower of Able: Lonergan’s Dream.”

<sup>22</sup> “So, we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal and religious values in an ascending order” (*Method in Theology*, 31), but the distinction is not some profound metaphysical distinction: it is a mibox determination of aggregating “capacity, need” (*ibid.*, 48). On the meaning of mibox, and muddles about the metaphysics of vitality see [Disputing Quests 14](#), “Doran Versus Wilkins,” and [Disputing Quests 16](#), “Detailed Disputes: Doran.”

to savor slimly—Interpretation P-wise—the feeble effort of that good lady, Joan Robinson in *Comparison*<sup>23</sup> with Lonergan’s sowing of seeds.

Both R+E and *For a New Political Economy* have index entries to guide us: in Lonergan the index title is *Standard of Living*; in R+E it is *Standard of Life*, a naming she consistently uses.

What becomes evident to the reader somewhat conversant with his economic theory is that *Standard of Living* is centre-stage for Lonergan and has its range of fluctuating meanings from the rich perspective of his climb to his 1944 work.<sup>24</sup> For Robinson this is not the case.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Comparison* (*Method in Theology*, 250) has a precise technical meaning that is central to the entire enterprise of Futurology or Theology. I put, in the text above, a misuse of it to stir thinking about its difference from the old “academic disciplines” (*Method in Theology*, 3) style of comparing X and Y. *Comparison*, in its correct set of operations, is a comparison of any achievement of anybody **with the established standard model geohistorical genetics of the time.**

<sup>24</sup> I do not wish to venture into his later work, his lectures from 1988 to 1983, represented by *Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, CWL 15, edited by Frederick G. Lawrence, Patrick H. Byrne and Charles C. Hefling, Jr. The index there under *Standard of living* contains abundant references, though they are undifferentiated.

<sup>25</sup> Venturing into a vague hint of the work of pure formulation and hypothetical expression (See *Insight*, 602-603) on this would lead to more than a long article, and it would require the context of a decent stab at ISOL genetics and its effective global realization. Into that genetics would go such elements as the pointers regarding an analysis of school texts in economics that I gave in the 50-page website essay, [Prebious 1](#), “Teaching High School Economics. A Common-Quest Manifesto.” Perhaps it is as well—recalling my early mention of Paul Samuelson—to end my little note with the final sentence—and its footnote—of my Introduction to *For a New Political Economy* (p. xxxi). “The massively innovative primers that would meet millennial needs, 500-page texts of empirically-rich, locally-orientated, normatively focused non-truncated writing, are distant probabilities.” The footnote reads: “Relevant here is the heuristics of the transition from paradigm shift to ‘normal science’ of texts and programs. See, for example, K.A. Pearce and K.D. Hoover, with a comment by A. Cottrell, “After the Revolution: Paul Samuelson and the Textbook Keynesian Tradition,” pp. 183-222 of *New Perspectives on Keynes*, Annual Supplement to *History of Political Economy* (27), eds. A. F. Cottrell and M.S. Lawlor, Duke University Press, 1995. This book deals, in the main, with the diffusion of Keynes’ view. One must hope for a like diffusion, however distorted, of Lonergan’s view, in the new millennium.”

In Lonergan's thinking, care for human vital well-being is not restricted to the science of economics,<sup>26</sup> even in its fullness,<sup>27</sup> but it is the core meaningfulness of progress of the productive process, "the totality of activities bridging the gap between the potentialities of nature, whether physical, chemical, vegetable, animal, or human nature, and, on the other hand, the actuality of a standard of living."<sup>28</sup> For Robinson, "the interaction between human and technological relationships is the subject matter of economic analysis."<sup>29</sup>

I have surely made it sufficiently clear that these brief comments are a skimpy Interpretation P, giving you an impression of a deep discontinuity, a dread-filled Existential Gap,<sup>30</sup> between Lonergan's economic perspective and that inherited from classical, neo-classical or post-Keynesian economics. But the point of my little essay is to get you to glimpse the dread-filled Existential Gap between any sort of Interpretation P and the achievement, perhaps in this next century, of a decent shot at Interpretation S in economics. Let me symbolize this gap by asking you to reach in strenuous fantasy for a sniff of the replacement,

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<sup>26</sup> The context here is section 17, "Limitations of Exchange Economy," of *For a New Political Economy* (35-37). It is a topic too large to tackle in my little foray here, but the basic point is made at the beginning of the section. "A fundamental defect lies in the innocent first step of the solution, in which those who are willing to contribute for little or no return are brushed aside, to make the exchange system an exclusive club for business men. With the psychological effects of this arbitrary procedure we are all familiar. It produces the split personality of the businessman in his office and the respected citizen in his home." (*Ibid.*, 35).

<sup>27</sup> It is enlightening to consider this fullness in the context of the second paragraph of the first chapter of *Method in Theology* (p. 3), where Lonergan poses the problem of bold science and feeble academic disciplines. The full bold science of physics, e.g., twines engineering and physics. See, as a lead into this, Terrance Quinn, *The (Pre-)Dawning of Functional Specialization in Physics*, World Scientific, 2017. Think now of economics as effectively financing and feeding adequately the world's population. Think it existentially, a la note 30 below.

<sup>28</sup> *For a New Political Economy*, 232.

<sup>29</sup> R+E, 55.

<sup>30</sup> See *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, "The Existential Gap" (281-84) and "Horizon and Dread" (284-97), which is the content of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. I regularly recommend that and the final chapter of this book for intussusception on the road to the field of ISOL. The issue throughout the two chapters is "a resolute and effective intervention in this historical process" (306) for which "one has to postulate that the existential gap must be closed." I would say that the present existential crisis in Lonergan studies is an honest **effective** advertence to its ineffectiveness, to the dodged implementation that is the heart of the leaning Tower of genuine metaphysics, without which "there is no fruit to be borne" (*Method in Theology*, 355). In concrete terms there is needed a strategic communal turn to the eighth functional specialty as the central component of Interpretation S.

in that new context, of Joseph Schumpeter's massive *History of Economic Analysis*,<sup>31</sup> written by a brilliant man in the absence of the control of the core geohistory of economic science, within which there would needs be our normative ISOL. And of course that control would lean on the general Markov sphere imagery of progress that has been a regular topic in these essays. And might we not now re-read profitably the concluding sentence of my extract from the essay on "Imaging International Credit"?

That imaging, in its simplicity, is to be placed in the context of the global village's challenge to meet the promise of money: a concomitance of the two flows, within the dynamics of our feeble human creativities, which would gently lift our standard of pilgrim living to new unimaginable levels of love and leisure.<sup>32</sup>

*Fame, wealth and honor! What are you to love?*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> New York: Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. 1160.

<sup>32</sup> *Profit. The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, line 79.