

Pope Francis, Laudate Deum (“Praise God”): Apostolic Exhortation

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Review: Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum* (“Praise God”): Apostolic Exhortation

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Pope Francis’ somewhat lengthy 2015 eco-encyclical letter *Laudato Si’* (words in the expression used by the medieval Italian mystic Saint Francis of Assisi [c.1181-1226] in his famous canticle that mean “Praise be to you, my Lord” -- according to Pope Francis [Paragraph 1]) was undoubtedly the most widely read encyclical letter ever issued by a pope. It contained 246 eloquent numbered paragraphs, followed by 172 numbered bibliographic endnotes for quotations in the text (but scripture quotations in the text were followed by conventional parenthetical documentation of the biblical sources).

As an encyclical letter issued by a pope, it was part of the official teaching magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. As such, it was a landmark expansion of social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. (It is available in English and other languages at the Vatican’s website.)

The lay English theologian Anna Rowlands, a specialist in Catholic social teaching, discusses it in her aptly titled 2021 book *Towards a Politics of Communion: Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times* (for her discussion of Pope Francis 2015 eco-encyclical, see esp. pp. 270-274, 276-278, and 281-283; for her discussion of what Pope Francis refers to as the dominant technocratic paradigm, see pp. 210, 276-277n.12, and 276-279). However, I have to say here that I am not sure how many lay Catholics understand Catholic social teaching as well as Rowlands does.

In any event, on October 4, 2023, the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis (born in 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina; elected pope in 2013) issued his latest apostolic exhortation titled *Laudate Deum* (“Praise God”), addressed to all people of good will on the climate crisis. It contains 73 terse numbered paragraphs, followed by 44 numbered bibliographic endnotes – with scripture citations given in parentheses in the text. In the 44 numbered bibliographic endnotes, the most frequently quoted source in Pope Francis’ 2015 eco-encyclical – thereby establishing the continuity of his new 2023 eco-exhortation with it. (It is available in English and other languages at the Vatican’s website.)

So, 246 paragraphs in the pope’s 2015 eco-encyclical versus 73 in his terse new 2023 eco-exhortation on the climate crisis. Pope Francis’ 2015 eco-encyclical was impressive for its wide-ranging and comprehensive scope as well as for its graceful writing style. By contrast, Pope Francis’ new 2023 eco-exhortation is more sharply focused, and its terse style conveys the pope’s sense of urgency about the climate crisis.

In the pecking order of official papal documents in the teaching magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, encyclicals are the highest order teaching documents issued by popes concerning matters of faith and morals – which faithful Catholics are urged to read and

seriously consider with the utmost gravity. Apostolic exhortations are the second highest order teaching documents issued by popes.

I share Pope Francis' sense of urgency about the climate crisis. However, I do not seek to convey my sense of urgency about the climate crisis by writing the present review in the terse style that Pope Francis deploys so effectively in his new 2023 eco-exhortation.

As I was preparing this review, the science writer David Wallace-Wells, (born in 1982), the authors of the 2019 book *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* who regularly writes about "climate change, technology, the future of the planet, and how we live on it," published a sharp but judicious op-ed commentary titled "The Pope's Journey to Climate Outrage" in the *New York Times* (dated October 11, 2023) about Pope Francis new 2023 apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*. In it, among other things, Wallace-Wells says that Pope Francis "is also much angrier than he was eight years ago" when he issued "his landmark encyclical" *Laudato Si'*. "Last month," says Wallace-Wells, "I wrote about the change in tone from activist groups and climate establishmentarians toward the fossil-fuel industry. In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis channels that frustration, too, but he is more focused and withering on the failures of climate geopolitics since the publication of *Laudato Si'*."

Wallace-Wells claims that "Today, energy optimism is, broadly speaking, warranted. But so is climate pessimism. This is where the pope is. . . . he does not seem especially hopeful" about the upcoming "U.N. climate conference in the United Arab Emirates."

The *New York Times* regularly runs news stories and op-ed commentaries about Pope Francis -- and about climate change.

Now, because Pope Francis is the first Jesuit pope, I am going to bring into play in the present review the multi-dimensional work of the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955). Ong's work provides a broader context for considering Pope Francis' 2015 eco-encyclical and his new 2023 eco-exhortation, as I hope to show. However, even though I use certain aspect of Ong's thought to construct here a cogent critique of the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis' criticism of the technocratic paradigm in Western culture in recent centuries, I see my cogent critique of the pope's thought as constructive criticism of his thought. In short, I do not see my cogent critique as part of the anti-Francis sentiment expressed by certain vociferous conservative American Catholics. In plain English, my cogent critique of Pope Francis' thought about the dominant technocratic paradigm in Western culture in recent centuries does not undercut or undermine his overall concern about the climate crisis.

In Harvard's Naomi Oreskes' "Introduction" in the 2015 book *Pope Francis: Encyclical on Climate Change & Inequality: On Care for Our Common Home* (pp. vii-xxiv), she devotes a subsection to "The Technocratic Paradigm" (pp. xii-xxi). In it, she says, "While the word 'capitalism' does not appear in the [encyclical] letter, the word 'market' (or its variants) appears nineteen times, usually in a critical context. The pope is not advocating communism, but he is asking us to acknowledge that we live in a world where the ideology of the marketplace is so dominant that most of us can scarcely imagine an alternative, and where those who try are dismissed as unrealistic, irrational, naïve, faint-hearted, sentimental, romantic, out of step, or (if

American) communists” (p. xiii). She also says that “the technocratic paradigm is not a single idea but a conceptual matrix that begins with an overreliance on scientific modes of thought, moves quickly through instrumentalism, and lodges in a worldview that denies both the idea of limits and the visible consequences of ignoring them” (p. xiii).

Because the pope’s use of the term paradigm calls to mind the notion of a paradigm shift, we might expect that Pope Francis may envision a necessary paradigm shift, as the needed alternative, that “is not a single idea but a conceptual matrix.” But the pope himself does not explicitly use the expression paradigm shift. Instead, he calls for what he refers to as integral ecology.

Now, in advance of the October 4th release of Pope Francis’ new 2023 eco-exhortation, the American Franciscan theologian and columnist Daniel P. Horan revisited the pope’s 2015 eco-encyclical and published the perceptive column titled “Considering the spiritual roots of ecophobia amid climate change” at the website of the lay-sponsored newspaper the *National Catholic Reporter* (dated September 21, 2023).

I have praised Horan’s perceptive column in my *OEN* article “Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., on Ecophobia” (dated September 22, 2023).

Now, in section “The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis” in Pope Francis’ 2015 eco-encyclical (Paragraphs 101-136), the pope refers repeatedly to “the dominant technocratic paradigm” (e.g., Paragraph 101) that emerged in our Western cultural history – and is still the dominant paradigm in Western culture today (also see Paragraphs 108, 109, 111, 112, and 122). He says, “Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic” (Paragraph 108), and he also refers to the dominant technocratic paradigm as producing “a technocracy” (Paragraph 118). In those passages and others, Pope Francis seems to suggest that technological determinism is at work. However, the overall thrust of his 2015 eco-encyclical seems to deny that technological determinism is at work because he calls for a more sustainable paradigm shift to replace the unsustainable dominant technological paradigm. But I find it hard to imagine just how a more sustainable paradigm shift could emerge in Western culture today.

For related views of technology, see Jacques Ellul’s book *the Technological Society*, translated by John Wilkinson (1964; orig. French ed., 1954) and Neil Postman’s book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992).

In any event, not surprisingly, Pope Francis also refers to the unsustainable dominant technocratic paradigm in his new 2023 eco-exhortation as the formidable culprit that must be battled (Paragraphs 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, and 66).

It is incumbent upon me to relate Pope Francis’ multi-dimensional critique of the dominant technocratic paradigm to Ong’s thought. In Ong’s massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* – in *Ramus and in the Age of Reason*, Ong works with what he describes as the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history (for specific page refers to the aural-to-visual shift, see the “Index” [p. 396]). Simply stated, all of the features that Pope Francis critiques in connection with the dominant technocratic paradigm in our Western cultural history are aligned with the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history.

I have discussed Ong's account of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in his massively researched 1958 book *RMDD* and elsewhere in my somewhat lengthy *OEN* article "Walter J. Ong's Philosophical Thought" (dated September 20, 2020).

The landmark study of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in ancient Greek culture is the classicist Eric A. Havelock's 1963 book *Preface to Plato* – which Ong never tired of touting. Ong's review of Havelock's landmark book is reprinted in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 309-312).

But also see Andrea Wilson Nightingale's 2004 book *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context*.

For further references regarding visuality in Ong's works and in selected related works, see my 2017 resource document titled "A Concise Guide to Five Themes in Walter J. Ong's Thought, and Selected Related Works" that is available online through the University of Minnesota's digital conservancy.

Now, I also recognize that many readers are rightly concerned about certain other crises in American culture and politics today – including Trump and his lawsuits and the antics of Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives – not to mention international crisis such as Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine and, more recently, the Hamas' attack of Israel. For most readers, Pope Francis' new 2023 eco-exhortation faces stiff competition for their attention – and so does my present review.

Now, because Pope Francis is from Argentina, we may align him with the enormous part of the world known today as the Global South – the not very precise terminology that is used today to contrast with the supposed Global North (i.e., roughly equivalent to what is known as Western culture). Similarly, because Ong is from the United States, we may align him with the part of the world known today as the Global North. However, this contrast of Global South and Global North appears to be used as an adversative contrast – calling to mind the Cold War (1946-1991) adversative economic contrast of capitalism versus communism.

But the emergence of economic globalization seems to refer to the globalization of capitalism. However, modern capitalism emerged historically in our Western cultural history after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s.

For further discussion of the print culture that emerged historically in our Western cultural history after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s, see my 2023 3,775-word review essay "Jeff Jarvis' 2023 Book *The Gutenberg Parenthesis*, and Walter J. Ong's Thought" that is available online through the University of Minnesota's digital conservancy.

In any event, the recent emergence of economic globalization has rendered the old adversative economic contrast of capitalism versus communism outdated. Therefore, to keep alive the spirit of an adversative contrast that lends itself to good-guy-versus-bad-guy thinking, we now use the terminology about the Global South versus the Global North.

Would we be bereft without some kind of ready-to-use good-guy-versus-bad-guy thinking? Without explicitly using good-guy-versus-bad-guy thinking, I have urged readers in the English-speaking world to get their cultural bearings from the work of the American Jesuit Walter J. Ong, mentioned above, in my article “The West Versus the Rest: Getting Our Cultural Bearings from Walter J. Ong” in the print journal *Explorations in Media Ecology* (2008).

More recently, Harvard’s Joseph Henrich has advanced his related thesis about the West versus the rest in his cleverly titled 2020 book *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. Henrich’s clever acronym WEIRD stands for Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic – which pretty much excludes the people in China and in “the poorest countries” in the world today that Pope Francis refers to in Paragraph 72 of his new 2023 eco-exhortation (also see Paragraphs 9 and 53).

Now, because Pope Francis famously likes to scold people, he frequently constructs good-guy-versus-bad-guy thinking to suits his purposes. However, certain vociferous conservative American Catholics have used the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis himself to construct their anti-Francis polemics.

For an account of their anti-Francis polemics, see the Italian papal biographer Massimo Borghesi’s book *Catholic Discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the Field Hospital Church of Pope Francis*, translated by Barry Hudock (2021; orig. Italian ed., 2021).

For further discussion of the neoconservatism that emerged in U.S. politics well before the election of Pope Francis as pope in 2013, see Peter Steinfels’ 1979 book *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America’s Politics* and Gary Dorrien’s 1993 book *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology*.

The prefix neo- is used to differentiate this brand of American conservatism from the earlier brand of postwar American conservatism associated with William F. Buckley, Jr., and Russell Kirk. However, all brands of American conservatism tend to be decidedly backward-looking, without at the same time being forward-looking. The motto of all brands of American conservatism might be “Stop the world – I want to get off!”

In any event, I have discussed the need to also be forward-looking in my 2023 2,000-word review essay “Walter J. Ong on Being Both Backward-Looking and Forward-Looking at the Same Time” that is available online through the University of Minnesota’s digital conservancy.

Now, I have profiled the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis in my *OEN* article “Pope Francis on Evil and Satan” (dated March 24, 2019).

Now, the most efficient way for me now to proceed is to provide you with an overview of Pope Francis’ new terse eco-exhortation.

[Introductory Remarks] (Paragraphs 1-4).

“1. The Global Climate Crisis” (Paragraphs 5-10).

“Human causes” (Paragraphs 11-14).

“Damages and risks” (Paragraphs 15-19).

“2. A Growing Technocratic Paradigm” (Paragraphs 20-).

“Rethinking our use of power” (Paragraphs 24-28).

“The ethical good” (Paragraphs 29-33).

“3. The Weakness of International Politics” (Paragraphs 34-36).

“Reconfiguring multilateralism” (Paragraphs 37-43).

“4. Climate Conferences: Progress and Failures” (Paragraphs 44-52).

“5. What to Expect from COP28 in Dubai?” (Paragraphs 53-60).

[COP = Conference of the Parties – sponsored by the United Nations.]

“6. Spiritual Motivations” (Paragraph 61).

“In the light of faith” (Paragraphs 62-65).

“Journeys in communion and commitment” (Paragraphs 66-73).

Now, in my judgment, Pope Francis saves his strongest statements for Paragraphs 72 and 73. In Paragraph 73, Pope Francis says, “‘Praise God’ is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God’s place, they become their own worst enemies.” In Paragraph 72, Pope Francis says, “If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than those of the poorest countries [also see Paragraphs 9 and 53], we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact. As a result, along with indispensable political decisions, we would be making progress along the way to genuine care for one another.”

Well, sure. But exactly how does Pope Francis imagine his envisioned “broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model” as proceeding? He does not say exactly how this “broad change” might proceed.

I certainly have no idea about how such “a broad change” might proceed. However, I would point out that “the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model” emerged historically over centuries – as Pope Francis understands. Surely something that emerged historically over centuries is not going to undergo “a broad change” in, say, a mere eight years – the number of years between Pope Francis’ 2015 eco-encyclical and his 2023 eco-exhortation addressed people of good will on the climate crisis.

As noted above, the people in China and in “the poorest countries” in the world today that Pope Francis refers to in Paragraph 72 of his new 2023 eco-exhortation are clearly not included in Harvard’s Joseph Henrich’s clever acronym WEIRD – which stands for Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic.

Now, because the Swiss psychiatrist and psychological theorist C. G. Jung (1875-1961) has introduced us to the concept of the shadow, perhaps we could say that Pope Francis is urgently criticizing the shadow of WEIRD people/cultures.

The psychiatrist and Jungian psychological theorist Edward C. Whitmont (1912-1998) cogently argues in his 1982 book *The Return of the Goddess* that we in Western culture today are experiencing what he refers to as the return of the goddess in our psyches -- which awakens and strengthens the four feminine archetypes of maturity that the Jungian psychological theorist Robert L. Moore (1942-2016) refers to as the Queen archetype, the feminine Warrior archetype, the feminine Magician archetype, and the feminine Lover archetype.

Moore most fully developed his thought about the feminine archetypes of maturity in the 2007

revised and expanded edition of the book he co-authored with Douglas Gillette titled *The King [Archetype] Within: Accessing the King [Archetype] in the Male Psyche* (orig. ed., 1992). According to Moore, each of the eight archetypes of maturity has only one optimal form but two shadow forms – which taken together collectively for all eight of the archetypes of maturity constitute what Jung refers to as the shadow.

For further discussion of Whitmont's 1982 book, see my 2015 review essay titled "Whitmont Identifies the Next Evolutionary Step for Western Culture" that is available online through the University of Minnesota's digital conservancy.

The panoply of the four feminine archetypes of maturity that Whitmont refers to collectively as the return of the goddess in the psyches of people in contemporary Western culture is undoubtedly evoked by the communications media that accentuate sound – which Ong refers to collectively as secondary orality.

I have discussed Ong's account of secondary orality in my book chapter titled "Secondary Orality and Consciousness Today" in the book *Media, Consciousness, and Culture: Explorations of Walter Ong's Thought*, edited by Bruce E. Gronbeck, Thomas J. Farrell, and Paul A. Soukup (1991, pp. 194-209).

Now, I have already above touted Ong's work. As far as I know, in Ong's 400 or so distinct publications (not counting translations or reprintings as distinct publication), he does not make any specific predictions about the future that I could invoke here to address Pope Francis' concerns about the climate crisis. Even so, because Pope Francis understands that "the Western model" that he criticizes emerged historically over centuries, I want to review Ong's thesis about our Western cultural development over centuries.

For a briefly annotated bibliography of Ong's 400 or so distinct publications, see Thomas M. Walsh's "Walter J. Ong, S.J.: A Bibliography 1929-2006" in the 2011 book *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Thomas M. Walsh (pp. 185-245).

Now, in Ong's "Preface" to his 1977 book *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (pp. 9-13), he says the following in the first sentence: "The present volume carries forward work in two earlier volumes by the same author, *The Presence of the Word* (1967) and *Rhetoric Romance, and Technology* (1971)." He then discusses these two earlier volumes.

Then in Ong's "Preface" to his 1977 book, he says, "The thesis of these two earlier works is sweeping, but it is not reductionist, as reviewers and commentators, so far as I know, have all generously recognized: the works do not maintain that the evolution from primary orality through writing and print to an electronic culture, which produces secondary orality, causes or explain everything in human culture and consciousness. Rather, the thesis is relationist: major developments, and very likely even all major developments, in culture and consciousness are related, often in unexpected intimacy, to the evolution of the word from primary orality to its present state. But the relationships are varied and complex, with cause and effect often difficult to distinguish" (pp. 9-10).

Thus, Ong himself claims (1) that his thesis is "sweeping" but (2) that the shifts do not "cause or explain everything in human culture and consciousness" and (3) that the shifts are related to

“major developments, and very likely even all major developments, in culture and consciousness.”

Major cultural developments include the rise of modern science, the rise of modern capitalism, the rise of representative democracy, the rise of the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the Romantic Movement in philosophy, literature, and the arts.

But this brings me to an allegation that has been advanced against Ong’s work in media ecology – the allegation of technological determinism. To be sure, Ong emphasizes the important role of technology. Perhaps that important role could be described as determinative to one degree or another. However, as a Roman Catholic priest, Ong was schooled in the Roman Catholic moral tradition that emphasizes personal decision making and personal responsibility. Consequently, I regard the allegation of technological determinism as incompatible with Ong’s emphasis on personal decision making and responsibility.

Therefore, when I say here that for Ong major cultural developments include the rise of modern science, the rise of modern capitalism, the rise of representative democracy, the rise of the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the Romantic Movement in philosophy, literature, and the arts, I mean that numerous individual persons made numerous individual decisions involved in the rise of these various major developments in our Western cultural history – in short, technological determinism did not bring about the rise of each of these major developments, even if technological developments somehow played decisively determinative roles in bringing about these major developments.

In short, in terms of broad categories, Ong would be categorized as basically a technophile, albeit not an uncritical one. Because Ong was not an uncritical technophile, he would be open to the various criticisms that Pope Francis enunciates about the dominant technological paradigm. In contrast with Ong, Ellul and Postman, mentioned above, would be categorized as technophobes.

One of Ong’s many published statements that I would like to call to the attention of Pope Francis is “Technology Outside Us and Insider Us” in the print journal *Communio: International Catholic Review* (Summer 1978); it is reprinted in volume one of Ong’s *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1992a, pp. 189-208).

Now, more to the point of Pope Francis’ new 2023 eco-exhortation addressed to people of good will on the climate crisis, numerous individual persons will have to make numerous individual decisions to bring about the rise of effective major developments to address and ameliorate the climate crisis.

However, conversely, numerous individual persons could make numerous individual decisions that do not help bring about the rise of effective major developments to address and ameliorate the climate crisis.

For further reading about Ong’s view of personal decision making, see his article “A.M.D.G.’: Dedication or Directive” in the now-defunct Jesuit-sponsored print journal *Review for Religious* (September 15, 1952); it is reprinted in volume three of Ong’s *Faith and Contexts*, edited by

Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1995, pp. 1-8). In it, Ong argues that the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit order, used the Latin expression *Ad majorem Dei gloriam* ("For the greater glory of God") as a directive to guide Jesuits (and others) in the process of discernment and decision making.

Now, in effect, Ong implicitly works with this thesis in his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, mentioned above – his major exploration of the influence of the Gutenberg printing press that emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s.

Next in Ong's "Preface" in his 1977 book *Interfaces of the Word*, he explains certain lines of investigation that he further develops in it. Then he says, "At a few points, I refer in passing to the work of French and other European structuralists – variously psychoanalytic, phenomenological, linguistic, or anthropological in cast" (p. 10). Ong liked to characterize his own thought as phenomenological and personalist in cast.

I have honored these two aspects of Ong's thought in the subtitle of my introductory-level survey of his life and eleven of his books and selected essays: *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, 2nd ed. (2015; 1st ed., 2000).

Now, please note just how careful and cagey Ong's wording is when he says that his account of the evolution of certain changes does not "explain everything in human culture and consciousness" – or every cause.

On the one hand, Ong's terminology about primary oral culture (and primary orality, for short; and his earlier terminology about primarily oral culture) is sweeping in as much as it refers to all of our pre-historic human ancestors.

On the other hand, his cagey remark about sorting out cause and effect does not automatically rule out the possibility that certain changes somehow contributed to the eventual historical development of writing systems and specifically phonetic alphabetic writing (= literacy) as well as to the historical development of human settlement in agriculture (or agrarian) societies and economies.

In any event, Ong in his massively researched 1958 book *RMDD* devoted an entire chapter to the quantification of thought in late medieval logic: Chapter IV: The Distant Background: Scholasticism and the Quantification of Thought" (pp. 53-91).

Ong spells out the larger import of the quantification of thought in late medieval logic in his 1956 essay titled "System, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism" that he reprinted in his 1962 book *The Barbarian Within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (pp. 68-87):

"In this historical perspective, medieval scholastic logic appears as a kind of pre-mathematics, a subtle and unwitting preparation for the large-scale operations in quantitative modes of thinking which will characterize the modern world. In assessing the meaning of [medieval] scholasticism, one must keep in mind an important and astounding fact: in the whole history of the human mind, mathematics and mathematical physics come into their own, in a way which has changed the face of the earth and promises or threatens to change it even more, at only one place and time, that is, in Western Europe immediately after the [medieval] scholastic

experience [in short, in print culture]. Elsewhere, no matter how advanced the culture on other scores, and even along mathematical lines, as in the case of the Babylonian, nothing like a real mathematical transformation of thinking takes place – not among the ancient Egyptians or Assyrians or Greeks or Romans, not among the peoples of India nor the Chinese nor the Japanese, not among the Aztecs or Mayas, not in Islam despite the promising beginnings there, any more than among the Tartars or the Avars or the Turks. These people can all now share the common scientific knowledge, but the scientific tradition itself which they share is not a merging of various parallel discoveries made by their various civilizations. **It represents a new state of mind.** However great contributions other civilizations may hereafter make to the tradition, our scientific world traces its origins back always to seventeenth and sixteenth century Europe [in short, to Copernicus and Galileo], to the place where for some three centuries and more the [medieval] arts course taught in universities and para-university schools had pounded into the heads of youth a study program consisting almost exclusively of a highly quantified logic and a companion physics, both taught on a scale and with an enthusiasm never approximated or even dreamt of in ancient academies” (boldface emphasis here added by me; Ong, 1962, p. 72).

No doubt the quantification of thought in late medieval logic contributed to the subsequent rise of modern science and the rise of modern capitalism and, eventually, the rise of the dominant technocratic paradigm that Pope Francis criticizes.

Incidentally, Ong’s 1956 essay is also reprinted in volume three of Ong’s *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (pp. 9-27).

Digression: A shortened version of Ong’s 1956 essay was published in 1955 as “Space and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism” in the short-lived print journal *Explorations: Studies in Culture and Communications* (February 1955) (but without notes and with omissions from the 1956 article). The online journal *New Explorations* edited by Bob Logan is so named to honor the short-lived print journal *Explorations*, edited by Marshall McLuhan and Ted Carpenter. End of digression.

Ong’s most widely known and most widely translated book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), published in the New Accents series, contains not only a chapter titled “Writing restructures consciousness” (pp. 78-116) but also a chapter titled “Print, space and closure” (pp. 117-138). The latter chapter includes a subsection titled “More diffuse effects” (pp. 130-132). In that subsection, Ong claims that print “encouraged and made possible on a large scale the quantification of knowledge, both through the use of mathematical analysis and through the use of diagrams and charts [spatialization of knowledge]” (p. 130).

Now, the Canadian Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943) was inspired by Ong’s massively researched 1958 book to collect his thoughts and examples in his ambitious 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* – which helped make him the most famous academic in the twentieth century. (For specific page references to Ong’s various publications about Ramus and Ramism, see the “Bibliographic Index” in McLuhan’s book [pp. 286-287].) Ong’s generous review of McLuhan’s ambitious 1962

synthesis of Ong's thesis about the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history with his own thoughts and examples is reprinted in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 307-308). Concerning McLuhan's borrowing Ong's thesis in his massively researched 1958 book *RMDD* to construct his ambitious 1962 synthesis, see Philip Marchand (1989, pp. 59 and 155).

Because McLuhan was a devout Catholic convert (in the spring of 1937), and because Ong was a devout Catholic priest, we may wonder about how much, if any, their respective commitments to Roman Catholicism may have contributed to the parallel trajectories of their thought. Your guess about this is as good as mine. However, I really have no guess to offer here about this. However, if their devotion to Roman Catholicism did somehow contribute to the parallel trajectories of each man's thought, then perhaps that would be a good reason for non-Catholics to be wary of each man's thought. Nevertheless, we should note that their fellow Roman Catholics did not excel in embracing each man's thought.

Now, in Ong's 1967 seminal book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, mentioned above, he sounds a note of hope about what he refers to as our secondary oral culture (i.e., the culture engendered by our contemporary communications media that accentuate sound). However, even though Ong explicitly refers to Religious History in the subtitle of his 1967 seminal book, few scholars in religious studies or theology have taken up his challenge to examine the Prolegomena that he discusses in their own studies. In any event, Pope Francis is not familiar with Ong's account of our Western cultural history – nor are any of his many Vatican research assistants – but Ong's account of visuality in cognitive processing in Western cultural history can account for all the aspects of the dominant technocratic paradigm that Pope Francis criticizes both in his 2015 eco-encyclical and in his new 2023 eco-exhortation.

Ong's note of hope can now be invoked here as a note of hope about our contemporary climate crisis. Speaking with reference to COP28 in Dubai in Paragraph 53, Pope Francis says, "To say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change." So we need to have hope about the climate crisis.

In conclusion, I mentioned above that the Franciscan columnist Daniel P. Horan revisited Pope Francis' 2015 eco-encyclical in anticipation of the release of his new 2023 eco-exhortation on October 4, 2023. It now strikes me that many people who now read the pope's new 2023 eco-exhortation might want to revisit his 2014 eco-encyclical subsequently. In the meantime, I hope Pope Francis and his Vatican research assistants become familiar with Ong's various iterations about visuality in cognitive processing in Western cultural history.

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