

# Probe: Walter J. Ong, St. Ignatius Loyola, and The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus

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## Article abstract

In the first part of this Probe, I explore the American Jesuit Walter J. Ong's work in relation to the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit order, and the history of the Jesuit order. In the second part of this Probe, I discuss Ong's work in relation to the new 2024 critical edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, written by St. Ignatius Loyola and his secretary and translated and edited by the American Jesuit theologian Barton T. Geger (born in 1968; doctorate in sacred theology, Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, 2010) – and published by the Institute of Jesuit Sources at Boston College. Geger wrote his doctoral dissertation on the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. He explicitly acknowledges (p. 5) that his translation builds on the 1970 translation of the *Constitutions* from the Spanish by George E. Ganss, S.J. (1905-2000). I style the present essay as a Probe because it is fundamentally exploratory and tentative – much more tentative than my articles and book chapters are.

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Probe: Walter J. Ong, St. Ignatius Loyola, and *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*

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**Abstract:** In the first part of this Probe, I explore the American Jesuit Walter J. Ong's work in relation to the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit order, and the history of the Jesuit order. In the second part of this Probe, I discuss Ong's work in relation to the new 2024 critical edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, written by St. Ignatius Loyola and his secretary and translated and edited by the American Jesuit theologian Barton T. Geger (born in 1968; doctorate in sacred theology, Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, 2010) – and published by the Institute of Jesuit Sources at Boston College. Geger wrote his doctoral dissertation on the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. He explicitly acknowledges (p. 5) that his translation builds on the 1970 translation of the *Constitutions* from the Spanish by George E. Ganss, S.J. (1905-2000). I style the present essay as a Probe because it is fundamentally exploratory and tentative – much more tentative than my articles and book chapters are.

My favorite scholar is my former teach at Saint Louis University, the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter Jackson Ong, Jr. (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955).

As a member of the Society of Jesus (abbreviated S.J.), Father Ong occasionally wrote about the Spanish Renaissance mystic St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) and the Society of Jesus. Ignatius is the author of the famous *Spiritual Exercises*. He served as the first Superior General of the Society of Jesus, and, in addition to writing thousands of letters, he also wrote *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*.

The American Jesuit theologian Barton T. Geger (born in 1968; doctorate in sacred theology, Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, 2010) has edited the new 2024 book *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: A Critical Edition: With the Complementary Norms [Promulgated by the Society of Jesus]*.

I will discuss Geger's new edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* further below in the second part of the present essay.

Now, I would like to draw your attention to three of Ong's relevant publications about St. Ignatius Loyola and the Society of Jesus.

"A.M.D.G.: Dedication or Directive?" in the now-defunct Jesuit-sponsored journal *Review for Religious* (September 15, 1952). The Latin expression *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* means "For the greater glory of God." Ong answers the question he posed in the title of his essay by pointing out that St. Ignatius Loyola used the expression "For the greater glory of God" as a way to guide and direct one's decision making, once one has identified the ethically permitted options available under the circumstances. Ong's essay is reprinted in volume three of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1995, pp. 1-8).

"St. Ignatius' Prison-Cage and the Existentialist Situation" in the Jesuit-sponsored journal *Theological Studies* (March 1954). Ong reprinted it in his 1962 book *The Barbarian Within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (pp. 242-259). It is also reprinted in volume two of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1992b, pp. 52-67).

The existentialists generally emphasized the importance of decision making – the very same context that Ong refers to in his understanding of "For the greater glory of God" as a directive for ethical decision making. In addition, as we will see, Ong was also deeply interested in the history and theory of rhetoric. Rhetoric also stresses the importance of decision making.

In Ong's 1986 book *Hopkins, the Self, and God*, the published version of Ong's 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto, Ong reprises his understanding of the expression *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (pp. 78-81 and 87). In addition, he discusses St. Ignatius Loyola and the Society of Jesus extensively (pp. 5, 25, 27, 36-37, 39, 44,

54-88, 60-61, 65-75, 113-122, 144, 155-156).

Now, we should note here that the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s. It helped propel an upsurge in literacy and formal education in our Western cultural history. Ong's pioneering study of the print culture that emerged in our Western cultural history after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s is also Ong's pioneering study of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history, his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (for specific page references to the aural-to-visual shift, see the "Index" [p. 396]). Peter Ramus (1515-1572) was a French Renaissance logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr. He was a regius professor at the University of Paris. (In our Western cultural history from ancient times, the verbal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic – also known as logic – constituted what is known as the trivium. The "Index" in Ong's massively researched 1958 book contains entries on grammar [p. 400], rhetoric [p. 405-406], and logic [p. 401-402].)

There is a certain overlap in the lives of Peter Ramus (1515-1572) and St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) – namely, the years 1515 to 1556. Moreover, Ignatius studied at the University of Paris, where Ramus was a regius professor. The French Jesuit Philippe Leclercq places Ignatius in Paris from 1528 to 1535 in his informative book *Paris in the Time of Ignatius Loyola (1528-1535)*, translated by Ralph C. Renner, S.J. (2011; orig. French ed. 2006). In any event, I have discussed Ong's thought in his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* in my OEN article "Walter J. Ong's Philosophical Thought" (dated September 20, 2020): <https://www.opednews.com/articles/Walter-J-Ong-s-Philosophy-by-Thomas-Farrell-Communication-Communications-Consciousness-200920-664.html>

Subsequently, Ong discusses the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history in terms of the sensorium in his 1967 seminal book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (for specific page references to the sensorium, see the "Index" [p. 356]), expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University.

Now, the early Jesuits, in addition to being missionaries in far-flung places in the world, emerged as the leading educators of Roman Catholics in Europe.

For an account of how the early Jesuits became leading educators of Roman Catholics in Europe, see the American Jesuit church historian John W. O'Malley's 1993 book *The First Jesuits*.

For a description of the curriculum in the early Jesuit colleges, see the 2005 book titled *The Ratio Studiorum: The Official [1599] Plan for Jesuit Education*, translated and annotated by Claude Paur, S. J.

Now, in addition to Ong's account of the print culture that emerged in our Western cultural history after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in the mid-1450s in Europe, Ong is also famous for his account of secondary orality and primary orality. Primary orality refers to all the cultural arrangements of our pre-historic and pre-literate human ancestors. For Ong, the development of phonetic alphabetic literacy in ancient Hebrew culture and in ancient Greek culture marked the emergence of chirographic culture, which fostered the aural-to-visual shift in ancient and medieval times – and gave way to typographic culture (also known as print culture) under the impact of the Gutenberg printing press that emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s. For Ong, our contemporary secondary oral culture emerged in the twentieth century under the impact of the communications media that accentuate sound – culminating in the widespread use of televisions around the 1950s and the 1960s.

With the emergence of our contemporary secondary oral culture, Ong was able to attain a measure of distance from print culture in our Western cultural history. This measure of distance enabled Ong to write such insightful essays as "The Poem as a Closed Field: The Once New Criticism and the Nature of Literature" (pp. 213-229), "Maranatha: Death and Life in the Text of the Book" (pp. 230-271), "From Mimesis to Irony: Writing and Print as Integuments of Voice" (pp. 272-302), and "Voice and the Opening of Closed Systems" (pp. 305-341) in his 1977 book *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture*.

I am going to go out on a limb here and say that just as the once New Criticism in literary studies thought of the

poem as a closed field, so too twentieth-century Thomists thought of Roman Catholic philosophy and theology as a closed field of thought – in short, twentieth-century Thomists tended to think of Roman Catholic philosophy and theology in terms of closed-systems thinking, not in terms of open-systems thinking. Fortunately for the well-being of Roman Catholic philosophy and theology, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the Roman Catholic Church demoted Thomism from its most-favored status up to that time in the twentieth century. Thomism had ascended to its most-favored status in the twentieth century up to the time of Vatican II because of the influence of Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, in which he urged close attention to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274).

As part of Ong's lengthy Jesuit formation, he studied both Thomistic philosophy and Thomistic theology – before he subsequently proceeded to doctoral studies in English at Harvard University. In two selections reprinted in the 600-page anthology *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 75 and 98), as the Thomistic philosophy taught at Saint Louis University was known. Even though, Ong did not present himself to the world as a Thomist, he was generous in his assessment, in a published interview in 1971, of the Thomist philosophy that he had studied as a young Jesuit seminarian at Saint Louis University:

“I hit Saint Louis University when St. Louis Thomism rose to its first crest, quite vigorously historical and structurally sensitive in the hands of the good teachers. What I learned studying philosophy at Saint Louis University made my work on Ramism possible and has given me a permanent edge over many colleagues around the world. The advantage of the kind of philosophical training we were given was that if you got it, if you studied it, you knew the central intellectual tradition of all Western culture.

“But you didn't really know that was what it was unless you knew a lot of things outside of philosophy too. So you had something that was a wonderful tremendous asset, provided you could open it up. That's just what many people then failed to do. Others succeeded. Today philosophy is beautifully open here [at Saint Louis University], and I think strong at the same time” (p. 98).

In any event, subsequently, Ong published “Hermeneutic Forever: Voice, Text, Digitization, and the ‘I’” in *Oral Tradition* (March 1995). It is reprinted in volume four of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1999, pp. 183-204).

Now, around the same time that televisions were becoming widespread in our Western cultural history, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) took place in the Roman Catholic Church. In the terminology that Ong uses in his essay “Voice and the Opening of Closed Systems,” the Roman Catholic Church emerged from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) in the print culture that emerged in our Western cultural history after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s as tending to favor closed-systems thinking. But the Roman Catholic Church emerged from the Second Vatican Council in the contemporary secondary oral culture fostered by the communications media that accentuate sound as tending to favor more open-systems thinking.

Actually, in “Voice and the Opening of Closed Systems,” Ong comes out in favor of the position that he refers to as open closure. When Ong and other Roman Catholics recite the Nicene Creed at Mass on Sundays, they are taking a position on certain matters of faith. But taking a position on those matters of faith necessarily closes one off from and sets one apart from all other relevant positions regarding those matters of faith. In short, one is no longer open to all possible positions regarding those matters of faith. Hence, open closure, but not fundamentally closed-systems thinking because one does not necessarily demonize all other positions. So I would characterize the documents of the Second Vatican Council as tending, fundamentally, to express something like what Ong refers to as open closure. I would also characterize Pope Francis (born in 1936; elected pope in 2013), the first Jesuit spiritual director elected pope, as fundamentally expressing the position that Ong characterizes as open closure – a tendency that certain conservative Roman Catholics are not yet quite ready to embrace.

For an account of what happened at the Council of Trent, see John O'Malley's 2013 book *Trent: What Happened at the Council*.

For an account of what happened at the Second Vatican Council, see John W. O'Malley's 2008 book *What Happened at Vatican II*.

For fresh English translations of the six most important documents of Vatican II, see the 2012 book *Vatican II: The Essential Texts*, edited by Norman Tanner, S.J.

For discussion of the ongoing reception of Vatican II, see *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II*, edited by Catherine E. Clifford and Massimo Faggioli (2023).

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

<https://www.opednews.com/articles/Pope-Francis-on-Evil-and-S-by-Thomas-Farrell-Abortion-Catholic-God-Homosexuality-190324-51.html>

For an insightful intellectual biography of Pope Francis, see the Italian philosopher Massimo Borghesi’s book *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s Intellectual Journey*, translated by Barry Hudock (2018; orig. Italian ed. 2017).

For an insightful account of the anti-Francis resistance in the Roman Catholic Church, see Massimo Borghesi’s book *Catholic Discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the field Hospital Church of Pope Francis*, translated by Barry Hudock (2021; orig. Italian ed. 2021).

Ah, but how does what Ong refers to as open closure work as a possible position for interpreting St. Ignatius Loyola’s *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* – or does it? In the past, have Jesuits themselves perhaps tended to take a closed-systems approach to interpreting *The Constitutions*? If that has happened in the past, how might Jesuits today discern this past tendency in their fellow Jesuits?

### **Geger’s New 2024 Edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus***

The 620-page Geger edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* includes three indexes: (1) “Index of Names” (pp. 569-573); (2) “Index of Places” (p. 575); and (3) “Index of Topics” (pp. 577-621). In Geger’s “Preface” (pp. 5-7), he thanks Katherine Kimball and Emily Glass of the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College for assisting with the creation of the indexes (p. 7).

In the “Index of Names” on p. 570, we learn that Geger frequently mentions Pope Francis. Good for Geger.

In the “Index of Places,” we learn that one place where St. Ignatius Loyola studied was the University of Paris (see esp. p. 226n.423).

In any event, in the “Index of Topics” in Geger’s new 2024 book, on p. 613, we learn that Geger frequently refers to the Second Vatican Council. Good for him.

Now, in Ong’s massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, there is an “Index” (pp. 395-408). One entry is on “Paris, University of” on p. 403 refers us to pp. 18, 19-29, 34, 54, 58, 62, 94-95, 110, 126, 131-148, 153-157, 175, 189, and 198. In my estimate, scholars who are interested in studying the life of St. Ignatius Loyola and his works should not ignore Ong’s detailed account of the intellectual milieu of the University of Paris. No, I do not consider the French Jesuit Philippe Leclercq’s informative book *Paris in the Time of Ignatius of Loyola (1528-1535)*, translated by Ralph C. Renner, S.J. (2011; orig. French ed., 2006) as an adequate substitute for reading Ong’s detailed account of the University of Paris.

In Geger’s “Annotated Bibliography” (pp. 541-568), Geger lists Leclercq’s informative 2011 book (p. 554).

However, Geger does not list Ong’s massively researched 1958 book, nor does he list the book *Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits and Modern Rhetorical Studies*, edited by Cinthia Gannett and John C. Brereton (2016) – which includes an informative “Foreword” by John W. O’Malley, S. J. (pp. ix-xii) and Janice Lauer Rice’s essay “Walter Ong: A Jesuit Rhetorical and Interdisciplinary Scholar and Educator” (pp. 188-199) and even an essay about the Canadian Jesuit theologian and philosopher Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), Paula Mathieu’s “Bernard Lonergan’s Rhetorical Resonances: A Preliminary Inquiry” (pp. 218-233). In the “Index” (pp. 425-444), we find entries on Farrell, Thomas (p. 430), Lonergan, Bernard (p. 435), O’Malley, John W. (p. 437), Ong, Walter J. (p. 437), and Soukup, Paul (p. 442). In the “Index of Names” in Geger’s new 2024 book, we learn that he refers to O’Malley on pp. 33, 33n.38, and 38.

Paul Soukup and I co-edited the ambitious collection *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age* (1993). According to the “Index” in *Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits and Modern Rhetorical Studies* (pp. 425-444 at p. 428), *Communication and Lonergan* is mentioned on pp. 153, 223, and

Now, in the Vatican II document titled *Perfectae Caritas* (1965), the Second Vatican Council instructed all Roman Catholic religious institutes “to study their original sources and return to their distinctive charisms while adapting them to the needs of the modern world,” as Geger puts it (p. 17).

In Geger’s new 2024 620-page book the Complementary Norms represent the various ways in which the Society of Jesus has adapted its original sources to the modern world (pp. 345-484). Nevertheless, despite these various adaptations, there is still a need for Jesuits to interpret St. Ignatius Loyola’s *Constitutions*, as Geger discusses in the subsection titled “Three Ways to Interpret *The Constitutions*” (pp. 28-41). He presents each of the three ways, followed by a critique of each way.

Now, when the Jesuits studied their original sources, they discovered that originally Jesuits gave what are now referred to as directed retreats following the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola – not the kind of preached retreat that the Irish novelist James Joyce portrays in his semi-autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Geger says, “After Vatican II, Jesuits returned to giving thirty-day [directed] retreats to individuals as part of the council’s call to return to their original charisms” (pp. 277-278n.565).

Disclosure: When I was in the Jesuits (1979-1987), I made my 30-day directed retreat in the novitiate. It was one of the most memorable events in my life.

Now, as I mentioned above, Ong published an article about the expression *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (“For the greater glory of God”) in 1952 and then reprised his discussion of the expression in his 1986 book *Hopkins, the Self, and God*. In the “Index of Topics” in Geger’s new 2024 book, we learn from the entry on “Greater Glory of God” (p. 596) that these words are discussed extensively in Geger’s new 2024 book (pp. 43-45, 53n.5, 82n.28, 84n.35, 95n.65, 152n.221, 166n.259, 168n.262, 177n.295, 196n.336, 215n.393, 242n.465, 254n.504, 260n.517, 278n.568, 287n.592, 390, 397, 434, 507n.70, 509-510, 529-531, and 533).

In any event, in Geger’s note titled “How to Use This Edition” (pp. 9-10), he says, “The last three decades have witnessed a surge in research on the Society [of Jesus], mostly by lay scholars and non-Catholic scholars who, as such, bring fresh perspectives to matters that Jesuits often take for granted. John W. O’Malley (1927-2022) largely inspired the so-called ‘Jesuitmania’ with his book *The First Jesuits* (1993; [mentioned above])” (p. 9).

In my estimate, all of Geger’s own publications about St. Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits are part of what he refers to here as “Jesuitmania.” For a selection of other works that are part of “Jesuitmania” over the last three decades, see Geger’s “Annotated Bibliography” (pp. 541-568).

In any event, in an email dated August 9, 2024, Father Geger sent me a pdf of an essay in Italian by the Italian-American scholar Emanuele Colombo of DePaul University in Chicago: “Gesuitomania: Studi Recenti Sulle Missioni Gesuitiche (1540-1773)” in the book *Evangelizzazione e globalizzazione: Le missioni gesuitiche nell’eta moderna tra storia e storiografia*, edited by Michela Catto, Guido Mongini, and Silvia Mostaccio (2010, pp. 31-59). I do not read Italian. However, from what I can glean, Colombo is writing about a book by the Protestant author Daniel Chamier (1565-1621) titled *La Iesuitomanie, ou Les actes de la dispute de Lecture* (1618).

In the history of the Jesuits, the period 1540-1773 refers to the period of the early history of the Society of Jesus – from its initial official approval by one pope to its official suppression by a later pope. This period of the early Jesuits is covered by O’Malley’s book *The First Jesuits* (1993). Subsequently, yet another pope restored the Society of Jesus to its official status as an officially recognized and approved religious institute in the Roman Catholic Church.

Now, for other scholars today who are part of what Geger refers to as “Jesuitmania,” I would draw your attention to Ong’s massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, discussed above. Regarding St. Ignatius Loyola, Ong says, in part, “Inigo de Loyola and his companions who were to found the Society of Jesus” were part “of the large Spanish and Portuguese student colony at the university” at Paris (p. 215).

In any event, because the new 2024 Geger edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* includes three indexes, I would urge other scholars who are also infected with “Jesuitmania” to look at Geger’s references to Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* (pp. 44n.77, 197n.344, 226n.423, 227, and 253n.499), on the one hand, and, on the other, Ong’s references to Peter Lombard (pp. 58, 146, 157, and 315).

Similarly, I would also urge them to compare Ong’s references to St. Thomas Aquinas (see the “Index” in Ong’s book for specific page references), on the one hand, with, on the other, Geger’s (see the “Index of Names” in



Geger's book for specific page references).

Now in Geger's "Introduction: Recovery of a Classic" (pp. 13-49), in his subsection titled "Experiential Interpretations" (pp. 32-35), he says, "The historian John W. O'Malley, S.J. (1927-2022), maintaining that scholars can err by limiting their ideas of a culture to the written texts that it produces. One must pay equal attention, if not more, to what people of the culture are saying and doing. In *The First Jesuits* (1993), he applied this idea to the early Society [of Jesus]. Putting aside for one moment the question of what *The Constitutions* says in theory, how did Jesuits proceed in reality? What style did they bring to preaching, teaching, and spiritual conversations? How did they accommodate their messages to unique cultures [as missionaries]? Where did they express their self-understanding in art, music, theater, and architecture?"

"The idea here is that *The Constitutions* and the lived practice inform each other, similar in the way that scripture and tradition inform each other in Catholic theology. In practice, early Christians recognized the bishop of Rome as an authority that transcended local churches: they also prayed for the dead and made public confessions of sins for absolution. The biblical writers address none of these things explicitly, nor did they ever imagine the papacy or sacramental confession in the form that these exist today. At the same time, the underlying spirit of certain biblical passages is consistent with these modern practices and justifies them.

"O'Malley and other scholars draw attention to the fact that early Jesuits strongly embodied the Renaissance ideals of humanism, liberal arts, civic responsibility, and accommodating one's speech and actions to the unique needs of one's audiences. And while it is true that one can find all these themes in Ignatius's writings, some writers [today] are [now] asking whether, on the whole, Ignatius's ways of thinking were not more medieval in character. If they were, then one could argue that, in practice, the early Society's actual practice during the Renaissance was a golden age that sets an example for all future generations of Jesuits" (p. 33).

Whew! Geger covers a lot of ground in those sentences.

Because Ong generally embraced an evolutionary view, I am reasonably certain that he would reject, in principle, any view of a golden age in the past.

As to whether St. Ignatius Loyola's "ways of thinking were more medieval in character" than in accord with "the Renaissance ideals of humanism," I am not going to try to adjudicate this matter here. By "ways of thinking more medieval in character," I assume that whoever is making this claim means that the college-educated St. Ignatius Loyola in his day resembled the Catholic college-educated medieval person more than the Catholic Renaissance humanist such as St. Thomas More or Erasmus.

However, I would call your attention to Ong's somewhat lengthy encyclopedia article on "Humanism" in *The [1967] New Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 7*, edited by William J. McDonald and others (pp. 215b-224b). It is reprinted in volume four of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1999, pp. 69-92).

In Ong's massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, he does discuss medieval scholasticism in the important background Chapter IV: "The Distant Background: Scholasticism and the Quantification of Thought [in Late Medieval Logic]" (pp. 53-91). But Ong's Chapter IV is a rather specialized chapter about late medieval logic that may include little, or nothing, relevant to those authors today who are asking if "Ignatius's ways of thinking were not more medieval in character" than they were in accord with "The Renaissance ideals of humanism." However, many other chapters in Ong's massively researched 1958 book may provide relevant information about and characterizations of medieval ways of thinking.

This brings me to my final reflection – on the first subtitle title of Geger's "Introduction": "Recovery of a Classic" (p. 13). In the first subsection (pp. 13-15), he makes a solid argument for the distinctiveness of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* among comparable founding documents for other religious institutes in the Roman Catholic Church. However, if I recall correctly, Ong somewhere describes the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola as a minor classic. I understood Ong to be placing this work in the larger context of other comparably enduring and important nonfiction works in our Western cultural history – in short, works that should be recognized as important not only by Jesuits and other Roman Catholics but also by non-Catholics as well. But is Geger perhaps intimating that *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* is an enduring and important nonfiction

work in our Western cultural history – important, that is, not only for Jesuits and perhaps other Roman Catholics and perhaps also for non-Catholic scholars involved in “Jesuitmania” but also for other non-Catholics as well? Now, when I took Ong’s course Practical Criticism: Poetry in the fall semester of 1964 at Saint Louis University, he assigned us to read the St. Louis-born-and-raised poet and literary critic T. S. Eliot’s book *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), in which he reprinted his 1944 essay “What Is a Classic?” (pp. 52-74). It is also reprinted in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Volume 6: The War Years, 1940-1946*, edited by David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard (2021, pp. 669-687).

In Eliot’s essay “What Is a Classic?” he labors diligently to operationally define and explain what he means by the term classic. If Geger wants to make the large claim that *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* is a classic – that is, an enduring and important work in our Western cultural history, then he will also need to undertake the task of operationally defining and explaining what he means by the term classic.

I am not qualified to comment on this matter. On the one hand, I have not studied *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* as carefully as Geger has – far from it. On the other, I have never published a detailed statement about any other work being a classic. However, I have routinely characterized certain books as “a classic” or as “a classic study” but without saying anything further about my thumbnail characterization.

Because I like to write about Ong’s work, I will frame my final comment about St. Ignatius Loyola and *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* in terms of Ong’s thought about the Renaissance in general in the context of our Western cultural history.

I am deeply impressed that St. Ignatius Loyola wrote thousands of letters offering spiritual advice, and I am also deeply impressed by the sheer length and detail of his vision of the Jesuit spiritual life, personal and collective, in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. His sheer articulateness about interior personal spirituality is impressive.

Because Ong likes to write about the big picture in our Western cultural history, how can we relate the articulateness of St. Ignatius Loyola about interior personal spirituality to any themes in Ong’s works?

In Ong’s 1957 book *Frontiers in American Catholicism: Essays on Ideology and Culture* (pp. vii and 39), he refers to David Riesman’s widely read 1950 book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing Character of American Character*. In it, Riesman famously refers to outer-directed character (also known as the tradition-directed), the inner-directed character, and the other-directed character. Over against Riesman’s misgivings about the contemporary other-directed persons, Ong states his benign optimism about the contemporary other-directed persons. (Subsequently, the all-male Jesuit order began referring to themselves as “men for others.”) For Ong and Riesman, the inner-directed persons emerged into prominence in our Western cultural history during the Renaissance – in the print culture that emerged after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s. In any event, Ong used Riesman’s term inner-directed in certain other publications.

Subsequently, Ong introduced the term inward turn of consciousness in his widely read and widely translated 1982 book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (pp. 178-179).

Ong does not happen to use the terms inner-directed persons or the inward turn of consciousness explicitly in his 1986 book *Hopkins, the Self, and God*, mentioned above. Even so, I should note here that Ong lists a number of studies of the inward turn of consciousness in the Renaissance in our Western cultural history in his “References” (pp. 161-172) – works that he does not refer to in the text.

Now, back to St. Ignatius Loyola. Briefly, he was an extraordinary example of what Ong and Riesman refer to as an inner-directed person. In him, what Ong refers to as the inward turn of consciousness reached extraordinary depths and heights – and articulateness. His articulateness in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* is extraordinary – indeed, it is spectacular.

In conclusion, I suspect that few people will proceed to read the Geger edition of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: A Critical Edition: With the Complementary Norm [Promulgated by the Society of Jesus]* straight through. Instead, most readers will probably turn to the three indexes and look for items that are of particular interest to them first, before they turn to a more detailed reading of the main text.

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