

# Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (Penguin Press, 2024)

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**Review: Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (Penguin Press, 2024).**

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In my adult life, I have expended an enormous amount of time and energy writing about the mature thought from the early 1950s onward of 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).

Over the years, I took five courses from Father Ong at Saint Louis University, the Jesuit university in the City of St. Louis, Missouri – my alma mater (class of 1966; M.A.(T.) in English, 1968; Ph.D. in education, 1973).

I wrote an introductory-level book about Ong's life and work titled *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication* (2000; revised and expanded second edition, 2015). It received the Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field Media Ecology, conferred by the Media Ecology Association in 2001.

I describe my book as “an introductory-level book about Ong's life and work” because it is not a full-fledged biography of Ong nor a sophisticated discussion of his work. Thus far, neither a full-fledged biography of Ong nor a sophisticated discussion of his work has been published.

However, thus far, two full-fledged biographies of the Canadian Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943) have been published: (1) Philip Marchand's *Marshall McLuhan: The*

*Medium and the Messenger* (1989); (2) W. Terrence Gordon's *Marshall McLuhan: Escape into Understanding: A Biography* (1997).

Now, I have discussed Ong's account of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history in his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus [1515-1572], Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* in my somewhat lengthy OEN article "Walter J. Ong's Philosophical Thought" (dated September 20, 2020). I characterize Ong's thought as philosophical, because Ong himself described his work as phenomenological and personalist in bent – in short, he himself used philosophical terms to characterize his thought. As far as I know, Ong nowhere discusses neuroscience. However, in Haidt's new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, he discusses neurotransmitters and dopamine (pp. 129-130, 132-135, 187, and 227). In Nicholas Carr's 2010 book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, discussed below, he discusses neurons, neuroplasticity, neuroscience, and neurotransmitters extensively (for specific page references, see the "Index" [p. 270]).

But also see Ong's own essay "'I See What You Say': Sense Analogues for Intellect" in *Human Inquiries: Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* (1970). Ong reprinted it, revised, in his 1977 book *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (pp. 122-144). It is also reprinted in volume three of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1995, pp. 91-111).

Yet another pertinent essay by Ong is his "Information and/or Communication: Interactions" in *Communication Research Trends* (1996). It is reprinted in volume four of Ong's *Faith and Contexts*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (1999, pp. 217-238). It is also reprinted in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 505-525).

Now, Peter Ramus (1515-1572) was a French Renaissance logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr. He wrote most of his works in Latin, the lingua franca of his day, and his works were widely known in educated circles in Continental Europe and in England (where John Milton studied Ramist logic at Cambridge University) and in the English colony in New England (where Ramist logic dominated the curriculum at the newly founded Harvard College).

Harvard's Perry Miller discussed Ramus extensively in his massively researched 1939 book *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (for specific page references to Ramus, see the "Index" [p. 528]).

When the young Canadian convert to Catholicism Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943), fresh from his studies at Cambridge University, was teaching English at Saint Louis University and continuing to work on his 1943 Cambridge University doctoral dissertation, he called young Walter Ong's attention to Perry Miller's massively researched 1939 book. When Ong later proceeded to undertake Ph.D. studies in English at Harvard University, Perry Miller served as the director of Ong's massively researched doctoral dissertation about Ramus and the history of the verbal arts of logic and rhetoric in our Western cultural history.

McLuhan's 1943 Cambridge University doctoral dissertation was published posthumously, unrevised by with an editorial apparatus, as the 2006 book *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time*, edited by W. Terrence Gordon (for specific page references to Ramus, see the "Index" [p. 274]).

Much later, McLuhan published his ambitious and controversial 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (for specific page references to Ong's publications about Ramus and Ramist logic, see the "Bibliographic Index" [pp. 286-287]).

Now, I have also discussed the importance of Ong's work for understanding our contemporary culture in my essay "Secondary Orality and Consciousness Today" in the anthology *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). For Ong, secondary orality refers to the orality of communications media that accentuate sound – including television.

Now, the American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (born in 1963; Ph.D. in social psychology, University of Pennsylvania, 1992) of New York University's Stern School of Business is a Jewish atheist who respects spirituality. He is also the author of *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (2005) and *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012); the co-author (with Greg Lukianoff) of *The Coddling of the American Mind* (2018); and co-editor (with Richard Reeves and Dave Cicirelli) of the 2018 book *All Minus One: John Stuart Mill's Ideas on Free Speech Illustrated*.

In the text of Haidt's new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, he discusses *The Happiness Hypothesis* (pp. 12, 16, and 199-200), *The Righteous Mind* (pp. 13, 211, 215, and 328n.8), and *The Coddling of the American Mind* (pp. 13-14, 23, 30, and 89).

Haidt's 2012 book *The Righteous Mind* became a bestseller – making him famous. I discussed it in my 2,150-word *OEN* article “Jonathan Haidt on the Righteous Mind, and the Catholic Anti-Abortion Crusade” (dated March 22, 2012). Even though I single out socially conservative Catholics in the anti-abortion crusade in the United States in my *OEN* article, I am well aware that certain liberals, including certain academic liberals, also manifest what Haidt refers to as the righteous mind.

Now, the most efficient way for me to provide you with an overview of Haidt's new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* is to tell you its parts:

**“Introduction:** Growing Up on Mars” (pp. 1-7).

**Part 1:** “A Tidal Wave” (p. 19).

Chapter 1: “The Surge of Suffering” (pp. 21-45).

**Part 2:** “The Backstory: The Decline of the Play-Based Childhood” (p. 47).

Chapter 2: “What Children Need to Do in Childhood” (pp. 49-66).

Chapter 3: “Discover Mode and the Need to Risky Play” (pp. 67-94).

Chapter 4: “Puberty and the Blocked Transition to Adulthood” (pp. 95-110).

**Part 3:** “The Great Rewiring: The Rise of the Phone-Based Childhood” (p. 111).

Chapter 5: The Four Foundation Harms: [1] Social Deprivation, [2] Sleep Deprivation, [3] Attention Fragmentation, and [4] Addiction” (pp. 113-141).

Chapter 6: “Why Social Media Harms Girls More Than Boys” (pp. 143-172).

Chapter 7: “What Is Happening to Boys?” (pp. 173-197).

Chapter 8: “Spiritual Elevation and Degradation” (pp. 199-218).

**Part 4:** “Collective Action for Healthier Childhood” (p. 219).

Chapter 9: “Preparing for Collective Action” (pp. 221-226).

Chapter 10: “What Governments and Tech Companies Can Do Now” (pp. 227-245).

Chapter 11: “What Schools Can Do Now” (pp. 247-266).

Chapter 12: “What Parents Can Do Now” (pp. 267-288).

**“Conclusion:** Bring Childhood Back to Earth” (pp. 289-295).

“Acknowledgments” (pp. 297-299).

“Notes” (pp. 301-338).

“References” (pp. 339-367).

“Index” (pp. 369-385).

As you can see, Haidt not only presents information about and analysis of the problem of mental illness in Gen Z, but also calls for action to be taken by different stakeholders.

Now, numerous themes in Haidt’s new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* appear in several chapters of the book -- for

example, in alphabetical order: (1) addiction; (2) defend mode (behavioral inhibition system); (3) depression; (4) discover mode (behavioral activation system); (5) embodiment; (6) Great Rewiring of Childhood; (7) parent, parenting; (8) phone-based childhood; (9) play; (10) pornography; (11) schools; (12) smartphones; (13) social media; (14) spirituality; (15) suicide; and (16) video games (for specific page references, see the entries for each of these in the “Index”).

Now, speaking of how “Social Media Harms Girls,” the opinion columnist Nicholas Kristof recently devoted a somewhat lengthy column to “The Online Degradation of Women and Girls That We Meet With a Shrug” (dated March 23, 2024) in the *New York Times*. I’d not be surprised to see Kristof devote a future column to reviewing and commenting on Haidt’s new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*.

Now, the contrast that Haidt works with in his new 2024 book of play-based childhood versus phone-based childhood in Parts 2 and 3 is part of the larger detrimental pattern that he refers to as the Great Rewiring of Childhood (for specific pages references, see the entry Great Rewiring of Childhood in the “Index” [p. 375]).

Ong celebrated the spirit of play in his “Preface” in the 1967 book *Man at Play* by the German Jesuit Hugo Rahner, translated by Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (pp. 9-14). Ong’s 1967 “Preface” is reprinted as “Preface to *Man at Play*” in *An Ong Reader: Challenges for Further Inquiry*, edited by Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (2002, pp. 345-348).

In my estimate, the spirit of intellectual play pervades much of Ong’s work. In effect, Thomas D. Zlatich described what I am here referring to as the spirit of play in Ong’s work in his essay “The Articulate Self in a Particulate World: The Ins and Outs of Ong” in the 2011 anthology *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Thomas M. Walsh (pp. 7-29).

Now, in Haidt's new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, we also learn that he discusses Arnold van Gennep and rites of passage – puberty rites in Chapter 4: “Puberty and the Blocked Transition to Adulthood” (pp. 99-103, 106, and 108).

Ong also discussed Arnold van Gennep and puberty rites in his essay “Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite” in *Studies in Philology* (April 1959). Ong reprinted it in his 1971 book *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (pp. 113-141).

Now, the major contrast that Haidt works with throughout his new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* is the contrast that he refers to as play-based childhood versus phone-based childhood in Parts 2 and 3 (pp. 47-218).

In Haidt's Chapter 5: “The Four Foundational Harms,” he discusses the American journalist Nicholas Carr's well-informed 2010 book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, mentioned above (Haidt, 2024, p. 127).

**Digression:** In Nicholas Carr's 2010 book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, he includes a section devoted to categorized “Further Reading” (pp. 253-256). In it, Carr includes six categories of “Further Reading”: (1) “The Brain and Its Plasticity” (pp. 253-254); (2) “The History of the Book: (p. 254); (3) “The Mind of the Reader” (pp. 254-255); (4) “Maps, Clocks, and Such” (p. 255); (5) “Technology in Intellectual History” (pp. 255-256); and (6) “Computers, the Internet, and Artificial Intelligence” (p. 256).

In Carr's category on “The History of the Book,” he lists works by, among others, David Diringer, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and Paul Saenger. In Carr's category on “The Mind of the Reader,” he lists books



by, among others, Sven Birkerts, Stanislas Dehaene, Jack Goody, Eric Havelock, Ann Moss (on Renaissance commonplace books), David Olson, and Walter J. Ong (but not his 1967 book in which he discusses commonplaces, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* [for specific page references to commonplaces, see the “Index” [p. 347]]). In Carr’s category on “Technology in Intellectual History,” he lists books by, among others, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan (two books), Lewis Mumford, and Neil Postman.

I suspect that Haidt has not read many of these books that Carr has listed. But, of course, I could be mistaken about this.

The one book by Ong that Carr lists in his category on “The Mind of the Reader” is his 1982 book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, his most widely read and his most widely translated book. Even so, Ong was never as widely known internationally as McLuhan was.

The two books by Marshall McLuhan that Carr lists in his category on “Technology and Intellectual History” are his 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, mentioned above here, and his 1964 book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Those two books, and their translations in many other languages, catapulted McLuhan to extraordinary international fame – making him the most widely known academic in the twentieth century. Ah, but we are now more than two full decades into the twenty-first century, and not all authors writing about the internet today are as studious as Carr about studying McLuhan.

In Carr’s category on “Technology and Intellectual History,” he also lists Neil Postman’s 1992 book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*.

Now during my years of teaching at the University of Minnesota Duluth (1987-2009), I regularly taught a reading-intensive and writing-intensive introductory-level survey course known as Literacy, Technology, and Society. It fulfilled a distribution requirement in UMD’s Liberal Education Program. Because it was

an introductory-level course, there were no prerequisites for enrolling in it. The distribution requirements in UMD's Liberal Education Program were designed so that first-year students could enroll in them. However, many UMD students delayed completing those distribution requirements until their junior or senior years at UMD. In any event, occasionally computer science majors enrolled in my course Literacy, Technology, and Society.

In it, the required reading included Ong's 1982 book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* and Postman's 1992 book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*.

The final exam in my course Literacy, Technology, and Society was a take-home essay exam that was to be completed and word-processed and then turned into me at the time of the scheduled final exam period (during final exam week). Here is an example of one final exam item:

"6. In *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Neil Postman distinguishes tool-using cultures, technocracy, and technopoly. First, explain what he means by tool-using cultures as manifested historically in Europe. Next, explain what he means by technocracy as manifested historically in Western Europe and the United States. Finally, explain what he means by technopoly as manifested recently in the United States. (NOTE: If you answer item #6, you may refer back to your answer and then add further relevant points in answering items # 7, 8, 9, or 10. However, if you do not answer item #6, then you should expect to write a fuller account of Postman's thought as you answer items # 7, 8, 9, or 10.)"

In any event, I have no reason to suspect that the doctrinally conservative Pope Francis (born in 1936; elected pope in March 2013) is familiar with Postman's 1992 book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention here that Pope Francis regularly inveighs against what he refers to as the technocratic paradigm. See, for example, his widely read 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'* (it is available in English and other languages at the Vatican's website).

For a relevant discussion of Pope Francis' 2015 eco-encyclical and AI technology today, see Scott

Hurd's article "Hope for an AI doomer: 'Laudato Si' predicted today's technology threats" (dated April 4, 2024) in the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Now, in the text of Carr's 2010 book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, he refers to Marshall McLuhan frequently (pp. 1-2, 6, 10, 24, 46, 56-57, 89, 102, 210, and 212) -- and to Walter J. Ong frequently (pp. 51, 56, 57, 77, 232n., and 234n.).

In any event, Carr added a new "Introduction to the Second Edition" (pp. ix-x) and a new "Afterword to the Second Edition: The Most Interesting Thing in the World" (pp. 225-238) to the 2020 updated paperback version of *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. In his new "Introduction," he says, "When I wrote this book ten years ago, the prevailing view of the Internet was sunny, often ecstatically so. . . . Much has changed in the decade since *The Shallows* came out. Smartphones have become our constant companions. Social media has insinuated itself in everything we do. . . . This tenth-anniversary edition of *The Shallows* takes stock of the changes. . . . I have left the original text of the book largely unchanged. I'm biased, but I think *The Shallows* has aged well. To my eyes, it's more relevant today than it was ten years ago. I hope you find it worthy of your attention" (pp. ix-x). Fair enough.

In Carr's new "Afterword," he says, "When it comes to how we think – the central subject of this book – smartphones and their apps have reinforced the status quo of the digital age, not upended it. They have amplified and accelerated all the psychological and cognitive trends I have described in the preceding pages" (p. 227).

**Now, whatever merits Carr's book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* may have – and for me, one of its merits is Carr's attention to Ong's 1982 book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* – I wish that Carr had seen fit to examine Ong's account of the psychodynamics of orally based thought and expression (pp. 36-57). If, say, Carr were to use the nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression as the baseline against which**

he could discuss the emerging patterns of thought and behavior associated with smartphones and social media, would Carr then conclude that smartphones and social media are now returning us to the nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression that Ong delineates?

If smartphones and social media are now returning their users to the nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression that Ong's delineates in his 1982 book *Orality and Literacy*, then those users are returning to conditions that Ong associates with primary orality in primary oral cultures.

However, if those users of smartphones and social media are not returning to the nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression that Ong delineates in his 1982 book *Orality and Literacy*, then those users are not returning to conditions that Ong associates with primary orality in primary oral cultures.

I have discussed the nine characteristics of orally based thought and expression that Ong delineates in his 1982 book *Orality and Literacy* in my article "Walter Ong and Harold Bloom can help us understand the Hebrew Bible" in *Explorations in Media Ecology* (2012). End of digression.

Now, as an aside, I should note here that my associative and digressive style in the present essay relies positively on what Haidt refers to as "Attention Fragmentation" in Chapter 5: "The Four Foundational Harms" as one of the four foundational harms. I should also point out here that what is known as stream of consciousness in modern literature, such as Molly Bloom's monologue in the last chapter of James Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses* and in Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* – both classics in modernist literature – involve what Haidt refers to as "Attention Fragmentation."

Now, in Haidt's disturbing and cogently argued but remarkably accessible new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, he is concerned about the impact of smartphones and social media on the mental health of Gen Z – and

Haidt identifies four foundational harms of smartphones and social media: (1) Social Deprivation; (2) Sleep Deprivation; (3) Attention Fragmentation; and (4) Addiction in Chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 113-172). Now, according to the *Wikipedia* entry on “Social Media,” the World Wide Web was founded in 1991, and social media started in the mid-1990s. Ong published comparatively few articles in the 1990s.

For a briefly annotated bibliography of Ong’s 400 or so distinct publications (not counting translations and reprintings as distinct publications), see Thomas M. Walsh’ “Walter J. Ong, S.J.: A Bibliography 1929-2006” in the 2011 anthology *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), mentioned above.

Yes, the smartphones and social media that Haidt writes about in his new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* are byproducts of what Ong refers to as our still evolving secondary oral culture. Yes, Haidt tends to emphasize the visual dimension of smartphones and social media. His emphasis on the visual dimension should remind us that Ong first explored the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in our Western cultural history in his massively researched 1958 book *Ramus [1515-1572], 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]), mentioned above.

However, even though Ong adverted to visualist tendencies in numerous books and articles that he published from the early 1950s onward, he does not discuss the kinds of specific harms that Haidt discusses in Chapter 5 in connection with smartphones and social media in his new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*.

Even so, in Ong’s seminal 1967 book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University, Ong does write

of “a lack of systemized fancy or delusions acting as ego defenses” (p. 133). Yes, ego-consciousness needs defenses. Without adequate defenses of ego-consciousness, ego-consciousness can be overthrown in a psychotic break. Then Ong says, “A great variety of studies shows that illiterates seldom if ever indulge in the schizophrenic delusional systemization which is a regular syndrome of individual under great stress in literate cultures. That is to say, under psychological pressure, illiterates do not commonly withdraw into themselves to create a little dream-world where everything can be ideally ordered” (pp. 133-134). “The individual is psychologically faced outward” (p. 134).

Let me be clear here. Haidt in his new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* is not writing about illiterate people (illiterate = primary oral people). He is writing about people who are fundamentally literate. Even so, the people he is writing about grew up in our contemporary secondary oral culture. But Haidt presents a very complicated picture of Gen Z, to say the least.

So let me use Ong’s characterization of the illiterate person (from a primary oral culture) as “psychologically faced outward” as a point of departure for discussing how complicated Haidt’s account of Gen Z is.

Regarding boys in Gen Z, Haidt discusses externalizing disorders in them (pp. 25, 181, 182, and 184) as well as internalizing disorders in them (pp. 181, 182, 184) and the *hikikomori* (a Japanese term) lifestyle in them (pp. 179-180 and 189).

Regarding girls in Gen Z, Haidt discusses externalizing disorders in them (pp. 181 and 182) as well as internalizing disorders in them (pp. 25, 174, 181, 182, and 184).

In light of the main title of Haidt’s new 2024 book, it is not surprising that he also writes about anxiety in boys in Gen Z (pp. 174, 178, and 186) and anxiety in girls in Gen Z (pp. 27, 38, 145, 148, 152, 162, 167, 174, 175, 181, 190, and 306n.48).

In addition, Haidt devotes Chapter 6: “Why Social Media Harms Girls More Than Boys” (pp. 143-172) and Chapter 7: “What Is Happening to Boys” (pp. 173-197) to discussing girls in Gen Z and boys in Gen Z, respectively.

In Haidt’s “Acknowledgments” in his new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, he says, “I sent the manuscript out to dozens of friends and colleagues in the summer of 2023 with a request to find errors and rough spots” (p. 298). He then thanks a long list of people who helped him (in alphabetical order) (pp. 298-299). In addition, he says, “A few people on that long list rose to the level of super-editor, with detailed comments on every page” (he then lists them alphabetically) (p. 299).

In the “Index,” we learn that Haidt discusses Richard Reeves’ 2022 book *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It* (Haidt, 2024, pp. 177-178). In Haidt’s “References” in his new 2024 book, he lists five further publications by Reeves or by Reeves and co-author(s) (p. 360).

I reviewed Richard Reeves’ 2022 book *Of Boys and Men* in my *OEN* article “Richard Reeves on Boys and Men Today” (dated March 11, 2023).

Now, the *New York Times*’ business reporter Emma Goldberg previewed Haidt’s new 2024 book in her article “First He Came for Cancel Culture. Now He Wants to Cancel Smartphones: The N.Y.U. professor Jonathan Haidt became a favorite in Silicon Valley for his work on what he called the ‘coddling’ of young people. Now, he has an idea for fixing Gen Z” (dated March 23, 2024).

Now, since I retired from teaching at the University of Minnesota Duluth at the end of May 2009, I have published more than 600 articles online at [www.opednews.com](http://www.opednews.com) – including my *OEN* article “His

Majesty, Baby Donald” (dated October 1, 2018). My article is a streamlined review of the American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Justin A. Frank’s 2018 book *Trump on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*.

In any event, Haidt’s disturbing and cogently argued but remarkably accessible new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* comes with advance praise by Susan Cain, Adam Grant, Johann Hari, Russell Moore, and Emily Oster quoted on the back of the book’s dust jacket. Perhaps the most extraordinary advance praise comes from Russell Moore, the editor of *Christianity Today*: “This book poses a challenge that will determine the shape of the rest of the century. Jonathan Haidt shows us how we’ve arrived at this point of crisis with technology and the next generation. This book does not merely stand athwart the iPhone yelling “Stop!” Haidt provides research-tested yet practice counsel for parents, communities, houses of worship, and governments about how things could be different. I plan to give this book to as many people as I can, while praying that we all have the wisdom to ponder and then act.”

In conclusion, Haidt’s new 2024 book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* is alarming, but not alarmist. Rather, it is designed to alert us to the harms of smartphones and social media – and to exhort us to take action collectively to check those harms.

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