

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' 2016 Book and Walter J. Ong's Thought

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My favorite scholar is the American Jesuit cultural historian and theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003). In his massively researched book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Harvard University Press, 1958), Ong works with the aural-visual contrast that he explicitly acknowledges (page 338, note 54) borrowing from the French philosopher Louis Lavelle (1883-1951). The aural-visual contrast is also known as the sound-sight contrast, and as the hearing-seeing contrast. Briefly, Ong aligns the kind of philosophical thought that emerged in Plato and Aristotle with the visual polarity in the aural-visual contrast – that is, with cognitive processing adapted to visual orientations of thought.

No doubt Ong's claim about the visual cognitive processing involved in the philosophical thought exemplified by Plato and Aristotle is strengthened by Andrea Wilson Nightingale's book *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

After the publication of the classicist Eric A. Havelock's book *Preface to Plato* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), Ong himself switched to referring to orality-literacy contrasts. Ong never tired of referring to Havelock's 1963 book (and his later works). Havelock uses the term imagistic

thinking to characterize the kind of thinking in the Homeric epics out of oral tradition – and by extension, all thinking in primary oral cultures. Of course imagistic thinking involves images and the imagination. Over the centuries in Western culture, images were used to aid memory.

For Ong, then, the literacy polarity in the orality-literacy contrast refers to the distinctively literate thought that emerged historically in Plato's and Aristotle's philosophical dialectical thought and has persisted in our Western philosophical tradition of thought. However, we should note here that images can also be found in the short narratives in Plato's dialogues. See John Alexander Stewart's bilingual compilation in his 1905 book *The Myths of Plato* (London: Macmillan).

But what about the thought in the Hebrew Bible? The Hebrew Bible is not an anthology of Greek philosophical thought. But it was obviously written down in a form of the phonetic alphabetic writing system that was eventually adapted into the vowelized phonetic alphabetic writing system used in ancient Greece to transcribe the Homeric epics and later used by Plato and Aristotle.

For Ong, the Hebrew Bible is mostly an anthology of primary oral thought and expression that got written down, but this does NOT mean that there are no key ways in which biblical thought and expression can be differentiated and distinguished. But in Havelock's terminology, biblical thought and expression involve imagistic thinking – not the kind of philosophical thinking exemplified by Plato and Aristotle. Moreover, for Ong, the ways in which the various books of the Hebrew Bible are composed can be aligned with various ways in which primary oral thought and expression are composed.

However, for Ong, the work of the historian Mircea Eliade is important for differentiating the Hebrew Bible from the various forms of primary oral thought and expression (i.e., pre-literate thought and expression). As Ong notes, Eliade credits the Hebrew Bible with moving decisively away from the cyclic thought found in myths by introducing the distinctly historical sense of time.

In Ong's two 1967 books *In the Human Grain: Further Explorations of Contemporary Culture* (Macmillan) and *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale University Press), the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University, Ong discusses Eliade's claim. See the indexes of Ong's two 1967 books for specific page references regarding Eliade.

Incidentally, cyclic thought can be found in Plato's dialogue known as the *Republic* in the myth of Er that Socrates recounts. In this respect, and perhaps in certain other respects, Plato is arguably closer to the primary oral sense of life than Aristotle is.

Now, out of the enormous tragedy of the Holocaust, God has raised up out of his chosen people in the United Kingdom the prolific Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (born in 1948; married in 1970), the recipient of the 2016 Templeton Prize, who did his undergraduate studies in philosophy at Cambridge University and his doctoral studies in philosophy at Oxford University in 1981-- in political philosophy -- and his rabbinical studies at the Jews' College and Yeshivat Etz Chaim in London.

In Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' 2010 book *Exodus: The Book of Redemption* (Maggid Books and Orthodox Union Press), he also credits Eliade with accurately describing the distinctly historical sense of time in the Hebrew Bible (on page 66). In that book Rabbi Sacks says, "Judaism is a culture of the ear, not the eye" (page 298). But as I will explain momentarily, I disagree with him a bit about the latter part of his sentence. Yes, ancient Judaism in the Hebrew Bible is fundamentally a culture of the ear, as he says. But the eye and visual cognitive processing undoubtedly played a significant role in key ways in ancient Jewish culture.

No doubt Rabbi Sacks' claim that "Judaism is a culture of the ear" is strengthened by Jonathan C. Kline's new book *Allusive Soundplay in the Hebrew Bible* (Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2016).

But of course the various texts that were eventually gathered together in the Hebrew Bible were written texts. As a result, we should wonder about the extent to which visual cognitive processing

contributed to certain key features that emerged historically in ancient Judaism that set it apart from other cultures in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean areas – such as the sense of historical time (versus cyclic time).

In short, ancient Jewish culture in the Hebrew Bible represents a certain kind of hybrid culture. It is not as decisively oriented to visual cognitive processing as the ancient Greek philosophical culture of Plato and Aristotle was, but also not as decisively oriented to aural cognitive processing as other primary oral cultures (i.e., pre-literate cultures) were. For Ong, the culture of the Hebrew Bible represents a residual form of primary oral culture, but with certain significant differences (e.g., historical time versus cyclic time).

Moreover, the post-biblical world in which rabbinical Judaism emerged and developed also represents a certain kind of hybrid culture – not just a continuation of the hybrid culture of the Hebrew Bible, but arguably a deepening of the interiorization of visual cognitive processing. In this connection, I want to mention the late Rabbi Jacob Neusner's book *The Transformation of Judaism: From Philosophy to Religion* (University of Illinois Press, 1992). No, he does not happen to advert explicitly to Ong's work, even though he was familiar with it. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the pattern that Rabbi Neusner styles as "From Philosophy to Religion" does indeed represent a deeper interiorization of visual cognitive processing. For Ong, the deeper interiorization of visual cognitive processing is related to inner-directedness (in Riesman's terminology). For Ong, the deeper interiorization of visual cognitive processing emerges after the Gutenberg printing in the mid-fifteenth century in Western culture. (I will discuss inner-directedness further below.)

Next, I want to return to Ong's 1958 book, mentioned above, to make another point that is relevant here. In it he uses the various expressions "corpuscular view of reality," "corpuscular epistemology," and "corpuscular psychology" to describe the strong visual orientation of Ramist dialectic

(pages 65-66, 72, 146, 171, 196, 203, 210, and 286). To understand Ong's wording in these various usages, we need to understand that he works with what is known in philosophy as the mind-body distinction (also known as the soul-body distinction, because the distinctively human soul that decisively sets the human animal apart from infra-human animals is the rational soul).

In Ong's book *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Cornell University Press, 1981), the published version of his 1979 Messenger Lectures at Cornell University, Ong says that he is investigating "the biological setting of mental activity" (page 11). Of course as he understands, human mental activity is existentially inseparable in this life from its biological setting.

For an accessible explanation of the mind-body distinction, see the Aristotelian philosopher Mortimer J. Adler's book *Intellect: Mind over Matter* (Macmillan, 1990). As admirably lucid as Adler is in this and other accessible philosophical books, he is not as eloquent as Rabbi Sacks is – neither is Ong (nor am I). Indeed, at times, Rabbi Sacks excels at writing eloquent lamentations. If I am not mistaken, Ong never published a lamentation. However, I admit that I myself have, in effect, published numerous lamentations that Ong's work is not better understood.

But Rabbi Sacks does not explicitly, or implicitly, work with the mind-body distinction. Curiously enough, however, he sees the forty years of wandering in the desert as a psycho-spiritual process of purification. We Americans have the expression, "You can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy." In other words, we tend to carry our early cultural conditioning with us regardless of where our journey in life may take us. Rabbi Sacks sees the ancient Hebrew slaves as undergoing an elaborate process of cultural conditioning in Egypt. So he sees their forty years of wandering in the desert as involving a collective psycho-spiritual process of purifying them of their Egyptian cultural conditioning and thereby preparing them for founding a new cultural paradigm in the Promised Land – when they get there.

But we should note that Plato's Parable of the Cave provides us with vivid imagery about the individual process of psycho-spiritual purification and eventual emergence into the realm of non-corporeal philosophical light and clear-sighted interpretations of reality that is consistent with the way in which Ong works with the mind-body distinction.

Not surprisingly, Ong does not explicitly discuss the forty years of wandering in the desert that we read about in Exodus.

Even though I find Rabbi Sacks' interpretation of the forty years of wandering in the desert fascinating, I admit that it does give me pause. Forty years is a long time. After the Gutenberg printing press emerged in the mid-fifteenth century, we in Western culture have undergone centuries of cultural conditioning in the print culture. But according to Ong, our contemporary communications media that accentuate sound are re-orienting our Western cultural conditioning.

Around the time when Ong was calling attention in the 1960s to the critical mass of our communications media that accentuate sound, certain social and cultural movements were making headway in American culture, most notably the black civil rights movement and the women's movement. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was engaged in reforming certain key teachings of the church.

Now, in Rabbi Sacks' new 2016 book *Essays on Ethics* (Maggid Books and Orthodox Union Press), he discusses this contrast on pages xxvi, 42-43, 62, 217, and 218, as I will now detail.

On page xxvi, in the context of discussing shame cultures versus guilt cultures (see Ruth Benedict), Rabbi Sacks says the following: "Bernard Williams, in *Shame and Necessity* [X.51], points out that shame is essentially a visual phenomenon. When you feel shame, you are experiencing or imagining what it is like to be seen doing what you did by others. The first instinct on feeling shame is to wish to be invisible or elsewhere. Guilt, by contrast, is more a phenomenon of hearing than one of seeing. It

represents the inner voice of conscience. Becoming invisible or transported to somewhere else may assuage shame, but it has no effect on guilt. The voice goes with you, wherever you are.”

On pages 42-43, in the context of a close reading of a certain passage, Rabbi Sacks says the following: “We then read, or rather hear, a series of very poignant words. To understand their impact we have to recall that in ancient times until the invention of printing there were few books. Until then most people (other than those standing in the *bima*) *heard* the Torah in the synagogue. They did not see it in print. The phrase *Keriat HaTorah* really meant not *reading* the Torah but *proclaiming* it, making it a public declaration. There is a fundamental difference between reading and hearing in the way we process information. Reading, we can see the entire text – the sentence, the paragraph – at one time. Hearing, we cannot. We hear only one word at a time, and we do not know in advance how a sentence or paragraph will end. Some of the most powerful literary effects in an oral culture occur when the opening words of a sentence lead us to expect one ending and instead we encounter another.”

On page 62, in the context of an extended discussion of appearances versus reality, Rabbi Sacks quotes the following passage from page 68 of the 1975 edition of Heinrich Graetz’s book *The Structure of Jewish History, and Other Essays*: “The pagan perceives the Divine in nature through the medium of the eye, and he becomes conscious of it as something to be looked at. On the other hand, to the Jew who conceives God as being outside nature and prior to it, the Divine manifests itself through the will and through the medium of the ear. . . . The pagan beholds his god, the Jew hears Him; that is, apprehends His will” (the ellipsis here was inserted by Rabbi Sacks). On page 217, in the context of explaining “three things fundamental to Jewish identity,” Rabbi Sacks says the following: “Second, there is a tantalizing connection between *midbar*, wilderness,’ and *davar*, ‘word.’ Where other nations found gods in nature – the rain, the earth, fertility, and the seasons of the agricultural year – Jews discovered God in transcendence, beyond nature, a God who could not be *seen* but rather *heard*. In the desert, there is no nature. Instead there is emptiness and silence, a silence in which one can hear the unearthly

voice of the One-beyond-the-world. As Edmond Jabes put it: ‘The word cannot dwell except in the silence of other words. To speak is, accordingly, to lean on a metaphor of the desert.’”

Next, on pages 217-218, Rabbi Sacks quotes with approval a lengthy passage from Eric Voegelin’s book *Israel and Revelation* (I.187: 153).

Then on page 218, Rabbi Sacks makes the following statement: “In the silence of the desert, Israel became the people for whom the primary religious experience was not seeing but listening and hearing: *Shema Yisrael*. The God of Israel revealed Himself in speech. Judaism is a religion of holy words, in which the most sacred object is a book, a scroll, a text.”

In addition, Rabbi Sacks refers to Ruth Benedict’s classic 1946 book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Houghton Mifflin) for the distinction between a shame culture and a guilt culture. As he notes (pages xxv-xxvi, 70, 179, and 186), the paradigm of a guilt culture emerges in the Hebrew Bible.

Arguably the greatest breakthrough in historical thinking in our Western cultural heritage occurred with the emergence of Darwinian evolutionary theory involving history writ large, so to speak. No doubt Ong considered his own pioneering work as a further contribution to that breakthrough, but involving the non-materialist philosophical position – over against the materialist philosophical position.

But a word is in order here about how Ong proceeds to work with the dialectical contrasts he sets up as the framework of his thought. In typical dialectical fashion, the polarities that Ong works with can be operationally defined as mutually exclusive of one another. That is, by definition, the term that represents one polarity in the dialectical contrast cannot at the same time and in the same way be the term that represents the other polarity in the contrast. For example, cyclic time cannot at the same time and in the same way be historical time.

So in a certain sense, the polarities that Ong sets up and works with involve either-or thinking. But the polarities that Ong sets up and works with do not necessarily always involve “pro-“ and “con-“ thinking. In other words, his binary polarities tend to represent a descriptive sorting system. For Ong, the binary polarities he works with do not represent “good” versus “evil.”

Now, to be sure, Ong overall tends to favor historical thinking over against cyclic thinking. In other words, Ong does not tend to imagine cyclic thinking as representing a kind of Paradise lost, nor does he tend to imagine a Paradise regained when we in Western culture supposedly abandon historical thinking and return to cyclic thinking.

Nevertheless, it is instructive to look at another pair of polarities that Ong sets up and works with in his 1977 book *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Cornell University Press). In the chapter titled “Voice and the Opening of Closed Systems” (pages 305-341), Ong uses the terminology of systems theory to set up the binary polarity of closed-systems and open-systems. However, when he moves to apply these terms to human consciousness, he coins the expression “open closure” to characterize the optimal position of human consciousness, based on holding carefully reasoned principles.

In general, cyclic time represents closed-system thinking. By contrast, historical time represents open-system thinking. So Ong’s suggested open closure represents a kind of hybrid, but at least it sounds more open-ended than closed-systems thinking does.

Despite my above criticism of Rabbi Sacks, I consider his way of interpreting biblical texts as one valid way to embody and express the kind of open closure that Ong suggests. For Rabbi Sacks, the written texts of the Hebrew Bible are fixed – set in stone, as it were – in effect, closed systems. But they are open to interpretation, and indeed he shows that the rabbinic tradition of interpretation offers various and at times competing interpretations of the same text.

This brings me to Rabbi Sacks' chapter on "Awakening from Above, Awakening from Below" (pages 271-276).

Even though Rabbi Sacks is clearly in favor of awakening from below, and even though he prefers guilt culture over shame culture (in Ruth Benedict's terminology), and even though he says some fine things about our American cultural and political heritage, he does not happen to advert to the various American Protestant revivals known as Great Awakenings. In those historical religious revivals, how many American Protestants experienced what Rabbi Sacks refers to as awakening from below? Your guess is as good as mine.

In any event, it strikes me that humans have always and everywhere been capable of experiencing not only awakening from above (e.g., brief experiences of nature mysticism), but also awakening from below, regardless of whether or not they had a conception of the monotheistic deity.

No doubt Fr. Ong himself experienced awakening from below in the early 1950s when it dawned on him how he could use the aural-visual contrast that Louis Lavelle used so deftly (mentioned above). But Ong's breakthrough experience of awakening from below in the early 1950s was his own individual personal experience of awakening from below. No doubt the individual personal experience of awakening from below involves bottom-up spirituality, including of course the Jesuit spirituality that Ong had cultivated for years.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), mentioned above, many practicing Catholics renewed their interest in spirituality, including of course Jesuit spirituality.

In theory, the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church is supposed to be the work of the people participating in it. The etymological meaning of the word "liturgy" is "work of the people." In theory, the liturgy is supposed to involve the collective experience of awakening from below. In theory, that is

bottom-up collective spirituality. In practice, how many Roman Catholics who participated in the Mass over the centuries experienced it as awakening from below? Your guess is as good as mine.

Rabbi Sacks says, “In Judaism, it is *as a community* that we come before God. For us the key relationship is not I-Thou, but We-Thou” (page 143). He also says, “Community is the antidote to individualism on the one hand and overreliance on the state on the other” (page 143). He credits Alexis de Tocqueville with coining the term “individualism” (page 296). (Individualism in the pejorative sense should not be confused with individuation and individuality.)

But Rabbi Sacks also says that “the love of God is particular. It is an I-Thou personal relationship” (page 22). This is certainly consistent with Ong’s Jesuit spirituality. Incidentally, he never tired of referring to I-Thou communication. But Rabbi Sacks also says, “Revenge is an I-Thou relationship. . . . It is intrinsically personal. Retribution, by contrast, is impersonal. . . . *Retribution is the principled rejection of revenge*” (page 271; his emphasis). He favors the impartial rule of law. He says, “Indeed, the best definition of the society the Torah seeks to create is *nomocracy*: the rule of laws, not men” (page 271).

In general, sound oftentimes plays a key role in community liturgies – for example, in singing songs and in choral recitations. Even though Ong occasionally wrote about community liturgies, he did not happen to advert explicitly to We-Thou relationships or to awakening from above, as Rabbi Sacks does.

Nevertheless, I would connect what Rabbi Sacks says about awakening from above with what Ong says about how each distinctively human soul “is created by a direct act of God” in his 1967 book *In the Human Grain* (page 76). As a result of holding this philosophical and theological position, he sees Darwinian evolutionary theory as broadly acceptable as a way to account for the emergence and slow development of all that is material in the cosmos. However, for Ong, the distinctively human soul of the human animal is distinct from the infra-human animal soul and “transcends the merely material” (page

78). Here is how he describes what I see as Rabbi Sacks' awakening from above in our evolutionary history:

“At a point where living organisms approximating the present human body were appearing [in our evolutionary history] the first [distinctively] human soul is created by God, infused within a body in the material universe. This is, of course, a special act of God, for the creation of the [distinctively] human soul in its spirituality transcends the merely material” (page 78).

Now, Rabbi Sacks says, “The Jewish mystics, among them Rabbi Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls that each of us has – the animal soul (*nefesh habehemit*) and the Godly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die.”

He then quotes a passage from Ecclesiastes 3:19 about our animal nature.

“Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, and communicate. We can, by acts of speaking and listening, reach out to others” (page 154).

Rabbi Sacks also mentions “what the Jewish mystics called the *nefesh habehemit*, the animal soul” parenthetically on page 13.

My, oh my, Rabbi Sacks is not going to be popular with the political-correctness crowd. In Rabbi Sacks' estimate, the bonds of collective loyalty were “weakened by the individualism of the 1960s and further damaged by the ill-thought-out multiculturalism of the 1980s” (page xxxiv). We might wonder what a well-thought-out multiculturalism would be.

Ironically, in the United States, multiculturalism known for supposedly advancing identity politics, and Rabbi Sacks at times appears to advance his own brand of Jewish identity politics. Just as he

at times tends to be a cheerleader for Team Jewish, so too Ong at times tends to be a cheerleader for Team Catholic. But he does not appear to advance Catholic identity politics.

Later in his eloquent 2016 book, Rabbi Sacks says, “One of the aftermaths of Marxism, persisting in such movements as postmodernism and postcolonialism, is the idea that there is no such thing as truth. There is only power. The prevailing ‘discourse’ in a society represents not the way things are, but the way the ruling power (the hegemon) wants things to be. All reality is ‘socially constructed’ to advance the interests of one group or another. The result is a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion,’ in which we no longer listen to what anyone says; we merely ask what interest they are trying to advance. Truth, they say, is merely the mask worn to disguise the pursuit of power. To overthrow a ‘colonial’ power, you have to invent your own ‘discourse,’ your own ‘narrative,’ and it does not matter whether it is true or false. All that matters is that people believe it” (page 242).

This strikes me as a cogent and valid critique. However, for those people for whom “There is only power,” his critique will probably come across as a threat to their power, leading them to respond with hostility, perhaps even with intense hostility.

Now, Aristotle wrote a famous treatise ethics known as the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But I want to discuss his treatise on civic rhetoric. In it he discusses three different kinds of civic rhetoric: (1) deliberative rhetoric in legislative assemblies, (2) forensic rhetoric in courts of law, and (3) epideictic rhetoric in public ceremonies involving personal and civic values (such as funeral orations).

Both Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Rabbi Sacks’ *Essays on Ethics* involve epideictic rhetoric about personal and civic values. However, unlike Aristotle, Rabbi Sacks is an eloquent civic orator in the British tradition of parliamentary debate – with an impressive background in political philosophy and in the Jewish tradition of thought. Ong was not as deeply familiar with the Jewish tradition of thought as Rabbi Sacks is. Even though Ong published little about political philosophy, he may have been more

familiar with Western philosophy, most notably formal logic, than Rabbi Sacks is. However, unlike Aristotle and Rabbi Sacks, Ong did not write a book-length treatise on personal and civic values. Even though Ong was an effective and tactful public lecturer, I would not characterize him as a civic orator – a characterization I use for Rabbi Sacks as an honorific term.

I should also say that the Hebrew Bible at times features certain passages that biblical scholars refer to as lawsuits, because the passages seem to be conducted as claims and counter-claims in a court of law (Aristotle's forensic rhetoric). Of course the Hebrew Bible famously features the Mosaic law, as it is called. Incidentally, Moses is not initially portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as a charismatic speaker, but he later on he is portrayed as an effective speaker.

Make no mistake about it, Rabbi Sacks is British. But he has not neglected to study our American cultural heritage – especially the Calvinists in New England.

In his new book *The Kingdom of Speech*, Tom Wolfe, who holds a Ph.D. in American studies from Yale University, lists John Calvin as one of the six most influential persons in world history.

The Calvinists in New England came from East Anglia. At the time, Ramist dialectic dominated the curriculum at Cambridge University in East Anglia. Peter Ramus (1515-1572), the French logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr, was a French Calvinist.

Ong's family ancestors left East Anglia on the same ship that brought Roger Williams to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631.

Almost all the college-educated men in New England in the seventeenth century were Ramists. When Harvard College was founded in 1636, Ramist dialectic dominated the curriculum.

Rabbi Sacks says, "The early settlers were Puritans, in the Calvinist tradition, the closest Christianity came to basing its politics on the Hebrew Bible" (page 92). Elsewhere he characterizes them

as steeped in the Hebrew Bible (page 290). No doubt they were steeped in the Hebrew Bible. But does it make any difference that the Calvinist preachers were Ramists? Ramist dialectic was a form of philosophical dialectic. But as Rabbi Sacks describes the rabbinical ways of interpreting the Hebrew Bible, it does not strike me that their ways of interpreting it involve a form of philosophical dialectic. Their ways of interpreting biblical texts strike me as resembling the ways in which literary critics interpret literary works such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

In the book *Varieties of Transcendental Experience: A Study in Constructive Postmodernism* (Michael Glazier Book/Liturgical Press, 2000), the American Jesuit philosopher and theologian Donald L. Gelpi (1934-2011) gives no evidence of being familiar with Ong's study of Ramist dialectic. But Gelpi refers repeatedly to what he describes as the dialectical imagination of the American Protestant tradition of thought (pages 82, 132, 164, 172, 174, 192, 193, 206, 223, 224, 280, 281, and 282). He sees the dialectical imagination as characterized by either-or thinking. He contrasts this way of thinking with the Roman Catholic analogical imagination, which he characterizes as both-and thinking.

Now, Rabbi Sacks notes in passing that the Gutenberg printing press emerged in Western culture in the mid-fifteenth century (pages 65 and 81), which Ong sees as the key variable in advancing the deeper interiorization of visual cognitive processing and thereby enhancing inner-directedness.

But like Gelpi, Rabbi Sacks does not happen to advert explicitly to Ong's massively researched 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, mentioned above.

Rabbi Sacks also does not happen to advert explicitly to the Jewish Harvard sociologist David Riesman's widely known book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study in the Changing American Character* (Yale University Press, 1950). In it Riesman discusses three broad character types: (1) outer-directed (also

known as tradition-directed), (2) inner-directed, and (3) other-directed. He favors inner-directed types, and he is skeptical about the then-emerging other-directed types.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Sacks uses the terminology of inner-directed (page 179). Because Rabbi Sacks is conspicuously a Brit, I want to quote one of the more memorable comments he makes: “England is, or was until recently, a tradition-based society” (page 92). It fell to all those British colonists in New England and elsewhere to make American culture famous for producing inner-directed persons. He credits this remarkable development to the Puritans’ fascination with the Hebrew Bible.

In effect, Rabbi Sacks connects outer-directed types (also known as tradition-directed) with shame cultures, and inner-directed types with guilt cultures. On the whole, the ancient Hebrews portrayed in the Hebrew Bible pioneered guilt culture – amid a sea of shame cultures in the ancient world.

For Riesman, the then-emerging other-directed types were worrisome, because of the tendency toward conformity that he detected in them. But Ong was not critical of the then-emerging other-directed types, which clearly represented a kind of departure from inner-directedness. Even though he himself was inner-directed, he was not worried about the then-emerging other-directed types because he could also recognize other-directed tendencies in himself. But Rabbi Sacks, like Riesman, is worried about other-directed types in our contemporary culture today.

In the first book that Ong published, *Frontiers in American Catholicism: Essays on Ideology and Culture* (Macmillan, 1957), his only book that does not come equipped with an index, he discusses Riesman’s three character types (pages vii, 39-44). Ong points out that “the other-directed character is one which arises as a reaction to inner-directedness” (page 42). He says, “Riesman regards this other-directed character as still emergent” (page 42). Ong says, “This type of character, Riesman finds, is ‘friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval’ than is the inner-

directed type” (page 42). Even though Ong’s training in the inner-directed Jesuit spirituality has enabled him to emerge as an exquisitely inner-directed person, he allows that these other-directed qualities may have positive value.

For Ong, our contemporary secondary oral culture grows out of the impact of communications media that accentuate sound. However, he does not see it as a return to primary oral culture, which Rabbi Sacks characterizes as shame culture – which he differentiates from the guilt culture that emerged historically in Western culture in ancient Jewish culture. To the extent that Rabbi Sacks sees our contemporary secondary oral culture as a shame culture, he appears to be embracing a cyclic view of culture. But I am not sure that shame culture was completely and totally unknown in guilt culture, but at times Rabbi Sacks appears to imply that it was.

In conclusion, if Americans today are interested in the thought of a Brit born and raised in the tradition-based society of England, they might be fascinated with Rabbi Sacks’ creative interpretations of the Hebrew Bible and political thought in Western culture.