

Donald Lazere's New Book and Walter J. Ong's Thought

Thomas J. Farrell
Professor Emeritus in Writing Studies
University of Minnesota Duluth
tfarrell@d.umn.edu

The retired American academic Donald Lazere (Ph.D. in English, Berkeley, 1974), a professor emeritus of English at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, who most recently taught at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, has just published new 330-page book, his sixth book, *Political Literacy in Composition and Rhetoric: Defending Academic Discourse against Postmodern Pluralism* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2015).

Books advertising themselves as “Defending Academic Discourse against Postmodern Pluralism” are typically written by conservatives. But Lazere describes himself as “an unreconstructed New Leftist” (page 11). Nevertheless, the political-correctness police in composition and rhetoric are likely to consider him to be a conservative – or worse. However, he is now retired (and so am I). As a result, he may not need to worry about his professional reputation in composition and rhetoric.

In Lazere's discussion of my controversial 1983 article (pages 197-201), he says, “Farrell ran into a buzzsaw by cultural pluralists in response to his articles that indirectly criticized the 1974 *Students' Right to Their Own Language* [an official position paper that is still the official statement of the professional group in composition and rhetoric], ‘Differentiating Writing from Talking’ in 1978, and ‘IQ and Standard English’ in 1983” (page 198).

As you can see, he characterizes the political-correctness police in composition and rhetoric as “cultural pluralists,” thereby intimating that they may be included under the umbrella term “Postmodern Pluralism” that he uses in his subtitle. In any event, the so-called “cultural pluralists” that he refers to will most likely declare Lazere to be a conservative – or worse.

As you might expect, because I am not totally masochistic, I did not appreciate their character assassination, which Lazere likens to running into a buzzsaw. But President John F. Kennedy and the Reverent Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., two my heroes, were actually assassinated for real. But I suffered only character assassination. As a result, I had to cope to the best of my ability with the character assassination. Fortunately for me, as I struggled to cope with the characterization, Ong was very supportive, and so was my colleague Michael D. Linn in linguistics, who certain people who supported the 1974 position paper that Lazere mentions.

Linn knew Elizabeth McPherson and others who were associated with the 1974 position paper *The Students' Right to Their Own Language*. He never tired of telling me that that position paper had been railroaded through by the organization's leadership group, including of course McPherson. In other words, the leadership group did not put that position paper before the organization's members to vote on. Perhaps the high-handed way the leadership group made that

position paper the official policy statement of the organization could be seen as a wee bit authoritarian, eh?

But Linn called my attention to the work of the African American linguist John R. Rickford at Stanford University. From his publications, I learned about Gary Simpkins' doctoral dissertation in education at the University of Massachusetts, *The Cross-Cultural Approach to Reading* (1976), and about the five-volume series of booklets that he prepared with Grace Holt and Charlesetta Simpkins, *Bridge: A Cross-Culture Reading Program* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

I regret that I did not know about his dissertation and their series of instructional booklets before I published my 1983 controversial article.

I jest about not being totally masochistic. However, over the years I told interested persons that I had anticipated well in advance the character assassination that came my way. In Lazere's imagery, I walked right into the buzzsaw with my eyes wide open. Slowly and deliberately, after much consultation, I proceeded to publish the essay that I had worked on for almost ten full years. Based on the feedback that I had received for people who read various drafts and iterations of that essay, I felt that I had a responsibility to publish it.

At one time, one draft exceeded 70 typescript pages. Of course the published version was much shorter than that due to the space restrictions of the journal.

I presented an earlier and longer (than the 1983) version of my paper at the Highlands Conference on Literacy '78 at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on May 5, 1978. Incidentally, Elizabeth McPherson presented another plenary presentation at that same conference. As I explain below, she and I taught at the same community college in the City of St. Louis for nine years.

In addition, at the invitation of David R. Olson, later the author of the book *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), I presented a longer (than the 1983) version of my paper "IQ, Orality, and Literacy" at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the school of education at the University of Toronto, on February 8, 1985.

Temperamentally, I am characteristically quiet and retiring. As far as I can remember, I always have been. For this reason, I proceeded slowly and cautiously to publish my controversial 1983 article.

However, at neither of those two presentations did I encounter the kind of hostility that Lazere aptly characterizes as the buzzsaw. Perhaps my presentations were challenging to certain people in the audience at each presentation. But I encountered no expressions of hostility at either of them. Perhaps the longer length of those two presentations contributed to making them sound less abrupt and jarring.

Perhaps I should explain that Lazere was instrumental in arranging a number of related sessions devoted to discussing literacy at the 1984 annual meeting of the Modern Language Associate in

New York City. My controversial 1983 article was one focal point of discussion. However, even though he urged me to attend, I was not able to attend.

Ellen K. Coughlin reported those discussions in a front-page article “‘Literacy: ‘Excitement’ of New Field Attracts Scholars of Literature” in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (dated January 9, 1985, pages 1 and 10).

Now, because Lazere includes an account of his life, at times humorously, and work in his new book, I will include an account of my life and work in the present essay, including some information regarding the backstory of how I came to “indirectly criticize” that 1974 position paper. As I explain below, I had the opportunity to read the draft before its final approval. Elizabeth McPherson gave me a copy of the draft to read before it was finally approved.

In the present essay I try to discuss everything in as good-humored and straightforward way as I can. But I admittedly do not try to discuss anything here in a humorous way, except for my admittedly small jest about not being totally masochistic. Lazere’s book does not evoke pleasant memories in me.

Nevertheless, I hope that I now have enough distance from what Lazere describes as the buzzsaw to discuss my earlier work in the 1970s and 1980s.

Lazere and Walter J. Ong

Lazere reports that his doctoral dissertation was published as the book *The Unique Creation of Albert Camus* (Yale University Press, 1973). Camus, Sartre, and other existentialist thinkers were much talked about in my junior and senior years at Saint Louis University (1964-1966), the Jesuit university in St. Louis, Missouri.

For example, I read William Barrett’s book *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (1958) for an upper-division art appreciation course I took at SLU – from a Jesuit. In my senior year, I took an upper-division elective philosophy course in which I read a book about Sartre, the exact title of which I do not recall now.

When I was a student at SLU, it had long been considered to be the finest Catholic university in the United States. In terms of prestige, the large Department of Philosophy ranked second to the School of Medicine.

The Department of Philosophy was large because the four required philosophy courses in the required core curriculum were taught by tenure-track faculty who held doctorates in philosophy. At that time, SLU was still one of the two leading centers of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy in North America, as it had been for decades – the other being the University of Toronto.

But James Collins (1917-1985; Ph.D. in philosophy, the Catholic University of America, 1944), a paraplegic confined to a wheelchair, was the most prolific author in the SLU Department. For example, he published the books *The Existentialists: A Critical Study* (Regnery, 1952) and *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Regnery, 1953).

Then as now, Regnery was regarded by non-Catholics as a conservative publishing house, because then as now Catholics were regarded as conservative by non-Catholics.

But I just checked the database known as WorldCat. It shows that 691 participating libraries today hold Collins' book on Kierkegaard, and 626 hold his book on the existentialists. But according to *The Economist* magazine dated August 18, 2015, there are today only 244 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.

At SLU, my life intersected with the life of the American Jesuit cultural historian and theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955), starting in the fall semester of 1964, as I explain below. As part of his Jesuit training, Ong had earned three graduate degrees at SLU – in English, philosophy, and theology – before he proceeded to Harvard to undertake his doctoral studies in English.

For years, Ong taught an honors course on Existentialist Literature at SLU (which I did not take). He characterized his work as phenomenological and personalist in cast.

In accord with his own preferred descriptors, I titled my book *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, 2nd ed. (Hampton Press, 2015; 1st ed., 2000).

At the time when I was writing and publishing my articles in the 1970s and 1980s that Lazere discusses, Ong was having his proverbial 15 minutes of fame. I got to bask in his reflected glory. No doubt it was a heady experience for me to publish those articles in the 1970s and 1980s.

Incidentally, the American Buber scholar Maurice Friedman (1921-2012), who was a pacifist and conscientious objector in World War II, has published the anthology *The World of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, 2nd ed. (1991; 1st ed., 1964) that is still useful.

In the lead-up to World War II, the modernist novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) published her feminist and pacifist manifesto *Three Guineas* (1938). Tragically, she committed suicide in 1941, when she still seemed to be at or near the height of her powers. Her lengthy experimental novel *THE YEARS* (1939) was a best-seller in the United States. As a result, *Time* magazine did a cover story about it.

I have never considered myself to be a pacifist. However, I participated in demonstrations against the Vietnam War, and I was opposed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now, in Lazere's account of his own formal education, he does not explicitly state that he studied the history of philosophy. Typically, most people who earn doctoral degrees in literary studies have not studied the history of philosophy seriously. In his book Lazere does not seem to understand Ong's philosophical thought.

See my essay "[Understanding Ong's Philosophical Thought](#)".

In my estimate, if Lazere does not understand Ong's philosophical thought sufficiently to adjudicate supposed objections to my controversial 1983 article based on Ong's philosophical thought that he (Lazere) does presume to adjudicate. In my estimate, his supposed adjudications of certain points are hot air.

You see, if you do not give evidence of understanding Ong's thought, or my thought based on his work, then your so-called objections are not likely to hit the mark, as they say. Instead, they are likely to be sound and fury signifying nothing but your own hostility.

You give evidence of understanding Ong's thought, or my thought, by accurately paraphrasing the gist of what the author says. When you do not accurately paraphrase the gist of what the author says, you are most likely using the author to set up a proverbial straw man.

In my estimate, Lazere does a good enough job of paraphrasing the gist of my thought. But when he turns his attention to adjudicating certain objections, his adjudications are hot air.

But can Ong's overall work serve as a framework for composition and rhetoric? Yes, it can – no doubt about it – provided that people in composition and rhetoric undertake to study Ong's thought carefully enough to use it. But Lazere gives no evidence of having studied Ong's thought in depth.

But let's pose another question: Can people in composition and rhetoric pursue other academic interests without undertaking to study Ong's thought in depth? Sure – no doubt about it.

Restricted Code and Elaborated Code

I should also spell out explicitly that something I said really hit the jackpot with Lazere (page 197), figuratively speaking, because that he could readily assimilate my brief statement to his already established framework of thought. Fair enough.

I appreciate the care with which Lazere paraphrases and clarifies what I said and what I did not say in my controversial 1983 article. In addition, I appreciate his suggestions about how I could have worded certain statements more felicitously and how I could have strengthened certain points.

However, I want to point out that Lazere fails to emphasize that I presented a hypothesis to be tested. The hypothesis I presented is testable. But I do not expect to see it tested. It would not be hard to work out the research design for a longitudinal study involving a large control group of students and an equally large experimental group of students in a given schools district, or perhaps more than one.

In addition, it would be possible to formulate more than one instructional approach to be used with the students in the experimental groups. But to formulate orally based instructional approaches, the researchers and the teachers would first have to study Ong's thought and become attuned to orally based thinking and expression.

As odd as this may sound, the article in which I use Ong's framework of thought that would be most closely connected with what Lazere prefers to refer to as the restricted code of expression and the elaborated code of expression is titled "Walter Ong and Harold Bloom can help us understand the Hebrew Bible" in the journal *Explorations in Media Ecology*, volume 11, numbers 3 & 4 (2012): pages 255-272).

Briefly, the restricted code can be related to the thought and expression of the world-as-event sense of life; the elaborated code, to the world-as-view sense of life.

As an aside, I would point out that Lazere uses the acronym RC to stand for restricted code. But RC is used by certain other people to mean Roman Catholic. In general, I wish that Lazere had used fewer acronyms in his new book. Below I discuss anti-Catholic bias in American culture.

But I do have a tip to offer readers who may undertake to read Lazere's new book: Each time you see him indicate an acronym after a word-group, use a highlighter to highlight each acronym. As I say, certain non-academics might find his book interesting to read -- except for all the acronyms.

From Lazere's account of the restricted code, I would say that the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are composed of thought and expression in the restricted code in poetry – usually sung with musical accompaniment.

By contrast, Plato's dialogues tend to use the elaborated code.

Concerning the Homeric mentality over against which Plato struggled to develop a new mentality, see Eric A. Havelock's book *Preface to Plato* (1963). Ong reviewed Havelock's book and never tired of referring to it.

No doubt people who are capable of using only the restricted code, as certain poor immigrants to the United States were, can be law-abiding, hard-working, and responsible citizens – as can people who use the elaborated code can be.

However, the prestige culture in American culture historically, and today, tends to favor people who use the elaborated code.

American journalists today tends to use the elaborated code, but they also tend to favor using shorter sentences and writing in an accessible way.

I see one overall goal of formal education (i.e., K through 12 and postsecondary) as helping the students learn how to use the elaborated code effectively, just as I see another goal of formal education as helping the students develop critical thinking.

However, I do not think that one course, or a two-course year-long course, will have much impact of postsecondary students. So I'd like to suggest that Lazere arrange to have his theory about political literacy instruction as part of a writing course tested: The research design should include an experimental group and a control group. There should be pre-tests and post-tests

involving measures of political literacy and writing. Then the scores on those measures should be analyzed.

Lazere is Ambitious

Now, more recently, I published the essay “Ong’s Work and College Writing Instruction: A Modest Proposal” in the ambitious anthology *Of Ong and Media Ecology: Essays in Communication, Composition and Literary Studies*, edited by me and Paul A. Soukup (Hampton Press, 2012, pages 303-324).

As I explain in that essay, my proposal about college writing instruction is modest compared to Lazere’s proposal in his earlier 550-page textbook *Reading and Writing for Civic Literacy: The Critical Citizen’s Guide to Argumentative Rhetoric* (Paradigm Publishers, 2005).

Whether or not the approach Lazere sets forth in that lengthy textbook works with certain first-year students, I have to say that I could not have ever expected most of the first-year writing students that I ever taught to read a substantial part of that reader. I know, I know, the market for first-year writing instruction is flooded with lengthy readers. Perhaps there are first-year writing students in certain colleges and universities in the United States who read lengthy readers when they are assigned to do so.

Compared to Lazere’s ambitious approach to writing instruction in his 2005 textbook, my proposal in my 2012 essay is modest.

Now, apart from Lazere’s 2005 textbook, his new book is undoubtedly ambitious, but not in the same way. His new book is ambitious because of the sheer number of points he undertakes to discuss. But I am not going to discuss all of the points he discusses. Instead, I will highlight certain points and discuss them a bit in the present essay.

Ong and Dwight Macdonald

Now, in his new book Lazere notes that Dwight Macdonald was one of his personal mentor as a teacher at Northwestern University (page 293, note 2).

No doubt Macdonald’s influence encouraged Ong and other English teachers to critically examine various manifestations of American popular culture.

But in the 1940s, Ong was publishing articles about American popular culture in the Jesuit-sponsored magazine *America* and elsewhere.

When I took Ong’s two upper-division English courses on Practical Criticism at SLU in the 1960s, which I discuss further below, he assigned us to read Marshall McLuhan’s experimental books *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (1951) and *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), and William F. Lynch’s fine book *The Image Industries* (1959), among others.

But Ong did not put Dwight Macdonald's book *Masscult and Midcult: Essays against the American Grain* (1961) on the reading list for those courses.

Interestingly enough, Ong himself published a collection of essays titled *In the Human Grain: Further Explorations of Contemporary Culture* (1967). But he does not happen to advert explicitly to the subtitle of Macdonald's book. However, Ong's main title stands in contrast with Macdonald's subtitle.

Incidentally, in the book *Hillary's Choice* (1999), Gail Sheehy (page 48-49 and 66) reports that young Hillary Rodham (born in 1947) read Ong's book *In the Human Grain: Further Explorations of Contemporary Culture* (1967) in the summer of 1967 and was thoroughly impressed with it. She read his book because one of her professors had called it to her attention.

For a complete bibliographic listing of Ong's 400 or so publications, including bibliographic information about reprintings and translations, see the late Thomas M. Walsh's "Walter J. Ong, S.J.: A Bibliography 1929-2006" in the book *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Walsh (Hampton Press, 2011, pages 185-245).

Now, even though Lazere addresses his book to academics in composition and rhetoric, it might interest progressives and liberals who are not academics in composition and rhetoric – provided that they have a certain interest in education and political literacy.

The Now Old New Left

Lazere styles himself as "an unreconstructed New Leftist" (page 11; his capitalization). For those readers who may be too young to remember the now-old New Left, or New Leftists, I should point out that there was indeed a vocal movement in American culture historically that was known at the time as the New Left. Of course today it is no longer new, just as the so-called New Criticism in literary studies is no longer new.

As Lazere explains, the New Left was associated with the "Port Huron Statement" (pages 107, 147, 162, and 282), the Students for a Democratic Society (pages 29, 107, 162, and 282), and the Free-Speech Movement at Berkeley (pages 28-29, 35, 107, 236, 282, and 295, note 4).

Disclosure: I have never identified with the New Left, but I also have not published anything explicitly criticizing the New Left, or specific New Leftists. Nevertheless, in the present essay I criticize Lazere, despite the fact that I appreciate his dedicated support of my early works. (He does not examine anything I published after 1983. My controversial article that he carefully discusses and criticizes at time was published in 1983. It's not been reprinted anywhere, and I've never thought about revising it further for publication anywhere else.

As an aside, I should point out that I published two articles in 1978. On page 198, Lazere gives the title of one of those articles, but in his Works Cited (pages 299-315), he lists the other one instead (page 303).

In his Works Cited Lazere lists my 1977 article “Literacy, the Basics, and All That Jazz,” which was reprinted in *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, edited by Theresa Enos (Random House, 1987, pages 27-44). Ong’s 1978 Article “Literacy and Orality in Our Times” is also reprinted there (pages 45-55). In 1978, Ong served as president of the Modern Language Association of America.

In his Works Cited, Lazere does not list my 1986 article “A Defense for Requiring Standard English,” which was reprinted in the anthology/textbook *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, and Boundaries*, edited by William A. Covino and David A. Joliffe (Ally and Bacon, 1995, pages 667-678).

But I also published other articles at different times in the 1970s, which I mention in passing below – and later. However, after, say, 1987, I turned to writing about other topics that are well beyond the admittedly broad scope of Lazere’s references in his new book. Besides that, I am but one of many people he engages with in his new book.

Now, on the back cover of Lazere’s new book, Henry A. Giroux of McMaster University makes the following statement about the book:

“Political Literacy in Composition and Rhetoric is a stunning book, filled with insights that rework the relationship between education and politics on the one hand and critical literacy and pedagogy on the other. At a time when critical thinking and civic literacy, if not democratic politics itself, are under attack, Donald Lazere’s book is a crucial and brilliant reminder of how important reading, writing, and literacy in general are to developing the formative culture necessary for substantive democracy.”

Lazere discusses Giroux’s work (pages 20-21, 31, and 164).

As far as I know, Ong did not publish anything on education and politics. Neither have I. I do not recall that I have ever used the exact expression “critical literacy,” which seems to resemble terms like “media literacy.” I do not recall seeing Ong use the expression “critical literacy.”

But Lazere frequently uses the expression “critical thinking.” Long before this term became fashionable to use, Ong was in effect teaching upper-division English courses designed to cultivate critical thinking – the kind of judicious thinking that a literary critic cultivates. Judicious thought and expression is not exactly, or always, the same kind of estimate that has been eschewed as “judgmental.”

In a similar way, discrimination in literary and artistic taste, including taste about various manifestations and expressions of American popular culture, should not be confused with discrimination against certain people based on so-called race, religion, or ethnicity.

What’s Conservative?

Now, at an earlier time in American culture, Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, both of whom were non-Catholics, were also concerned about “developing the formative culture

necessary for substantive democracy” through reading and discussing what they considered to be the *Great Books of the Western World* (1952; 2nd ed., 1990).

Briefly, as Adler explained the approach they advocated, it involved reading different texts on arguably the same theme and then discussing the pros and cons of the arguments advanced in the different texts. He styled this approach to the texts as being dialectical.

When the set of books was first published in 1952, many academics at the University of Chicago and elsewhere were aghast that the set included two volumes devoted to the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. No doubt that both Hutchins and Adler were fascinated with Aquinas’ thought. However, Adler was probably more an Aristotelian than a Thomist.

In the prestige culture in American culture, Aquinas was anathema because his metaphysics did not happen to conform to Kant’s. But Kant had not done his homework – he had not studied Aquinas’ metaphysics.

But it wasn’t just Aquinas who was anathema. In general, all Roman Catholics were considered to be “conservative” by the in-group in the prestige culture. For example, Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) was a contemporary of Albert Camus (1913-1960), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). But Marcel was a Roman Catholic, so the gatekeepers of the prestige culture considered him to be a “conservative.”

However, as far as I can tell, Marcel was frequently read by students at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Perhaps this shows what is meant by characterizing American Catholics as having a parallel sub-culture.

But let’s not pretend that American Catholics were responding only to anti-Catholic views in the United States, because that was not the case. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, popes inveighed against modernity – and against so-called Americanism.

Now, because I am well aware of how Roman Catholic thinkers were frequently dismissed as “conservatives,” I tend to cringe at Lazere’s facile categorizations of various types of people and positions that he refers to as “conservative,” at least some of whom are American Catholics.

Please do not misunderstand me here. I do not detect any hints of anti-Catholic bias in Lazere.

In numerous op-ed pieces that I myself have published at OpEdNews.com, I have also categorized certain Americans as conservatives. However, I do not recall ever characterizing them as supposedly authoritarian or connecting their expression of their views as being connected with supposed authoritarianism, as Lazere routinely does.

As a result of his facile use of those descriptors, Lazere does seem to be thoroughly enmeshed in the values, attitudes, and views of certain stylish academics. As noted, he styles himself as “an unreconstructed New Leftist.” But political correctness is fashionable in certain academic circles. He seems to form his ethos-appeal out of being an unreconstructed New Leftist and engaging in his own kind of political correctness by deploying those descriptors.

Even though Lazere does not happen to refer to the American sociologist David Riesman's book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Culture* (1950), fear of the possible development of authoritarianism in American culture understandably permeates Riesman's postwar book – just as it permeates Fromm's books.

Briefly, Riesman works with three so-called character types: (1) outer-directed persons (also known as tradition-directed); (2) inner-directed persons; and (3) other-directed persons. Riesman fears that the so-called other-directed persons might succumb to authoritarianism.

However, in my view, all three of those so-called character types could succumb to authoritarianism.

Now, what Lazere refers to as the restricted code, mentioned above, is associated with the outer-directed character type; the elaborated code, with the inner-directed type.

No doubt highly educated people tend to be inner-directed types.

No doubt formal education tends to encourage students to develop inner-directedness to a certain extent.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that for decades now American students have tended to be like Riesman's other-directed people.

As a result, many Americans today are probably most aptly characterized as other-directed, not inner-directed – or at least not as inner-directed as Americans may have been in the past.

But here is the problem that I have with Lazere and other fashionable academics who write about supposedly authoritarian tendencies.

It looks to me like the tendency toward in-group cohesiveness from time immemorial could be characterized as a form of authoritarianism as certain fashionable academics use the term today.

But today the Roman Catholic Church and all other Christian churches in the United States require a certain measure of cohesiveness in order to sustain the church group as an in-group. In certain academic circles today, it is fashionable to be anti-religion. I have no problem with religions being criticized, or with religious people being criticized. But I do have a problem with an orthodoxy advancing an anti-religion view.

But let's be clear here. Religious fundamentalists, whether Jewish or Christian or Muslim or other, are not the only fundamentalists in the world today. For example, Pope Francis' encyclical criticizes the prevailing technocratic paradigm in the global marketplace. Yes, there are free-market fundamentalists such as economic libertarians in the United States.

But what about the fervent political-correctness police? In their fervent expressions of their own views, can't they also be characterized as manifesting a certain kind of authoritarianism?

Now, Martin Heidegger, who used the elaborated code fluently, was a Nazi. The Nazis were authoritarian. I have to assume that Heidegger as a Nazi could somehow also be considered to be authoritarian, even though he used the elaborated code fluently.

Me, I'm in favor of retiring the charge of supposed authoritarianism and attending instead to whatever the people are saying – and/or doing.

In short, I do not favor the opposition of secularism versus religion as a new orthodoxy – or anti-religion as a secular orthodoxy.

In any event, I should mention here that the gatekeepers of the prestige culture in American culture and elsewhere did make an exception for a book published posthumously, the French Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's book *The Phenomenon of Man*, translated by Bernard Wall (1959; orig. French ed., 1955).

For a more recent translation of Teilhard's visionary book, see *The Human Phenomenon*, translated by Sarah Appleton-Weber (1999).

For a recent translation of Simone de Beauvoir's influential book, see *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, with an introduction by Judith Thurman (2010).

Ong first published something about Teilhard's thought in 1952. Ong never tired of referring to Teilhard's thought.

No doubt Ong enjoyed his proverbial 15 minutes of fame because the gatekeepers of the prestige culture in American culture also made an exception in his case.

However, not all of the gatekeepers of prestige culture were impressed with Ong, to put it mildly. At times, certain commentary about Ong's work seemed tinged by centuries-old anti-Catholic bias.

Now, before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the Roman Catholic Church, the church promoted Aristotelian-Thomistic thought in philosophy and theology.

However, Adler criticized American Catholic higher education for supposedly indoctrinating students in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy, instead of following his preferred dialectical approach. There may be a measure of justice in his criticism. But I have a criticism of my own to offer.

I am sure that not all of the students who took required core philosophy courses in American Catholic colleges and universities over the decades when Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy dominated the core curriculum fully grasped what they were being taught.

But was the failure of many students to grasp what was being taught in those philosophy courses due to the orientation toward indoctrination that Adler alleges? I doubt it. I suspect that much of what was taught in those required core courses in philosophy was over the heads of many of the students at the time when they took those courses.

Now, had Adler's so-called dialectical method been employed to teach those student been used, I am sure that not all of them would have grasped the philosophical thought being taught.

But in my undergraduate philosophy courses at SLU in the 1960s (and later as well), we heard a lot about competing philosophical views.

I grasped Aristotle's discussion of potency and act. Act actuates potency (potential). My articles that Lazere discusses are predicated on Aristotle's discussion of potency and act. My articles are about actuating potential.

I also grasped the import of Ong's philosophical thought.

But Lazere centers his attention on public higher education in America. He offers no substantive observations about American Catholic higher education in his new book, which served generations of children of Roman Catholic immigrants, many of whom were not rich or upper-class.

Indeed, the entire primary and secondary American Catholic school system served generations of children of Catholic immigrants, most of whom were not rich or upper-class.

Disclosure: My entire formal education was in Roman Catholic educational institutions. Like Lazere, I come from a lower middle-class background. I had some distant older cousins who had gone to college. But my mother and father and their siblings had not gone to college. My mother's younger sister and her husband were active in the Democratic Party, so I heard a certain amount of political conversation from them when they visited with my parents.

To avoid certain possible misunderstandings, I want to say that I am not a practicing Catholic today – and I haven't been for years now. But I would describe myself today as a theistic humanist, as distinct from a secular humanist.

When I was growing up in Kansas City, Kansas, my mother's hometown, we did not live far from where the mayor lived – I went to the same parish school that the mayor's son went to. In various other places in the United States, Irish Americans were also deeply involved in local politics.

However, when the Irish American and Harvard-educated Senator John F. Kennedy from Massachusetts ran for president of the United States in 1960, his Roman Catholic religion was a stigma for national office, because centuries-old anti-Catholic views were deeply entrenched in white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). No doubt American Jews contributed decisively to Kennedy's narrow margin of victory in the 1960s election. (In 1961, I wrote my first op-ed for my high school student newspaper endorsing the famous line from President Kennedy's

inaugural address: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” No doubt I was an impressionable 16-year-old.)

In 20/20 hindsight, it strikes me that Kennedy’s narrow victory in 1960 inaugurates the waning of the centuries-old dominance of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, or lapsed Protestants, in American culture. As a result of the waning of WASP dominance in American culture, we have had a kind of competition of various groups contending to be included in the in-group in prestige culture.

In that contending, the various people that Lazere refers to as “cultural pluralists” (page 198) have risen in ascendancy in academia. Today they are still powerful in academia.

But American Catholics have not fared well in the contending for status and respect in the still-emerging prestige culture, even though six Justices on the U.S. Supreme Court today come from a Roman Catholic background.

See Philip Jenkins’ book *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (2003) and Mark S. Massa’s book *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (2003).

No doubt what both authors refer to as the last acceptable prejudice is fueled, at least in part, by the religious zealotry of Roman Catholics who oppose legalized abortion in the first trimester. (Disclosure: I do not oppose legalized abortion in the first trimester.)

Now, due to the anti-Catholic bias of the dominant WASP culture historically, American Catholics in the 19th and 20th centuries created their own sub-culture to parallel the dominant WASP culture: primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and hospitals. I grew up in the local instantiation of that sub-culture, except that I did have part-time jobs that put me in contact with people in the non-Catholic culture – and as a teenager I subscribed to TIME magazine to keep informed about the outside world.

My Life Drama

When I compare my life and education to Lazere’s account of his life and education as an American scholarship student from a Jewish background in Des Moines, Iowa, I am struck repeatedly by how my undergraduate years especially included ideas and events that do not appear in his account of his life and thought. But certain aspects of his life include ideas and events that were also included in my own experience.

Nevertheless, his honest account of his life and thought does help me get some distance from my own experiences. Ong liked to say that we need both proximity (closeness) and distance to understand something.

Now, I do not remember ever seeing any African Americans in our church. But we did not live far from a large number of African Americans. No African Americans lived on my newspaper route. But occasionally I took over another fellow’s newspaper route and delivered the paper to the African Americans on it and collected payment for the paper from them. In addition, I had

contact with numerous other African Americans in other ways, including talking with two young men I worked with regularly on two other part-time jobs I had.

Incidentally, I first heard about the *Great Books of the Western World* when my mother's younger sister and husband bought a set. Years later, I also bought a set. I've never tired of reading and recommending Adler's accessible philosophical books.

Unfortunately, Lazere does not make Adler one of his discussion partners. Lazere does not even mention Adler's book *The Paideia Proposal: An Education Manifesto* (1982). Briefly, Adler urges us to think of formal education as having three broad goals: (1) acquisition of organized knowledge; (2) development of intellectual skills – skills of learning; and (3) enlarged understanding of ideas and values (page 23).

What Lazere means by political literacy would involve the goal of acquisition of organized knowledge. The so-called mechanics of writing (i.e., rules of grammar and punctuation) would also involve the goal of acquisition of organized knowledge. Even instruction about matters of style would also involve the goal of acquisition of organized knowledge.

But much of what academics mean by composition and rhetoric, the actual practice of writing, would fall under the goal of development of intellectual skills – skills of learning.

But what Lazere means by critical thinking would fall under the goal of enlarged understanding of ideas and values.

For a recent study of Adler's work, see Tim Lacy's book *The Dream of a Democratic Culture: Mortimer J. Adler and the Great Books Idea* (2013). On the back cover, Gerald Graff is quoted as saying the following about the book: "“Since the culture wars of the ‘80s, Mortimer Adler and the Great Books idea have been associated with a conservative or traditionalist view of academic humanities. In this provocative book, Tim Lacy shows how ill-informed this view is by reconstructing the bracingly progressive and democratic vision behind Adler's work.”"

Lazere dedicates his book to Richard Ohmann and Gerald Graff, and Lazere discusses Graff's work extensively (pages 82, 109, 112, 140, 155, 171-172, 177, and 291).

My Life Drama at SLU

Now, when I transferred to SLU in the fall semester of 1964, I had decided that I would major in English. So I saw the department head for academic advisement. He said, "If you're going to be an English major, you should take Fr. Ong's course Practical Criticism: Poetry." And so I did. In the spring semester of 1966, I also took Ong's course Practical Criticism: Prose. (I took a graduate course in English from Ong in the fall semester of 1967, and I unofficially audited another graduate course Ong taught in the summer session in 1971. My 1979 article "The Male and Female Modes of Rhetoric," mentioned above, was a direct outgrowth from auditing Ong's course in the summer of 1971.)

I know that Janice M. Lauer in English at Purdue University, who is now retired, took Ong's course Practical Criticism: Prose when she was a student at SLU. For many years, she invited Ong to be a speaker at summer conferences in composition and rhetoric at Purdue. Nevertheless, Lauer and other former Ong students in composition and rhetoric have not done much to use his thought in their own scholarly publications.

In composition and rhetoric, the later Robert J. Connors, who was not a former Ong student, used Ong's thought in certain articles. For a selection of his articles, see *Selected Essays of Robert J. Connors*, edited by Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford (Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2003).

Now, on Monday afternoon, October 12, 1964, I heard the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speak to a packed gymnasium on the SLU campus. At a later time, Fr. Jerome J. Marchetti, S.J., the executive vice president of SLU, told me that that had been the first time in world history that a Baptist minister had been allowed to speak on a Jesuit campus.

On March 25, 1965, I traveled by bus with other students from the St. Louis area to join Dr. King's march from Selma to Montgomery, where I heard him speak again. (No doubt I was an impressionable 21-year-old.)

Subsequently, as Lazere knows, I devoted ten years of my life (1969-1979) to teaching inner-city African American students in postsecondary education under open admissions. I taught approximately 1,000 African American students and an equal number of white students.

Because Lazere discusses Erich Fromm a bit (pages 231, 240, and 265), perhaps I should say that I read two of Fromm's books in my undergraduate years, and I heard him speak on the SLU campus on Sunday evening, April 25, 1965.

The student government arranged to have Dr. Fromm and Dr. King to speak at SLU. Over my years at SLU, I was involved with the student government. For example, in the issue of the student newspaper dated May 16, 1969, I was named by the editors as "Man of the Year" for my work in the student government (page 6).

At that time, I admired the work of Ira Magaziner and his fellow students at Brown University in bringing about curricular reform at Brown. They worked through the system to bring about change at Brown. In a similar way, I and other students in the student government at SLU worked through the system to bring about certain changes at SLU, but we did not undertake anything as ambitious as the curricular changes that Magaziner and his fellow students succeeded in bringing about at Brown.

Later, Magaziner emerged as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's chief architect in constructing her doomed health-care proposal.

For an up-to-date study of Fromm's life and thought, see Lawrence J. Friedman's book *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet* (Columbia University Press, 2013).

Lazere's extensive discussion of authoritarianism (pages 230-231, 232-233, 234-235, 237-241, and 270-271) includes authors and works that I am familiar with.

Now, because Lazere discusses my work a bit (pages 197-201, and 223), I would like to say that I think that I may have been the first person in composition and rhetoric who ever discussed Lev Vygotsky's book *Thought and Language*, edited and translated by Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (MIT Press, 1962). Lazere discusses Vygotsky extensively (pages 15, 105, 196, 205-206, and 221).

Lazere (pages 196, 205, 206, and 221) also discusses A. R. Luria's book *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, translated by Martin Lopez-Morillas and Lynn Solotaroff; edited by Michael Cole (Harvard University Press, 1976). Lazere (page 196) even quotes a comment that Ong makes about Luria's book in his (Ong's) book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982). I may have been the first person to call Ong's attention to Luria's book.

Now, in terms of substance, Lazere devotes his entire new book to advocating critical thinking.

Surprise, surprise, Ong was teaching critical thinking in both of those courses.

Let's be clear here. The expression "critical thinking" contains the word "critic" – as in the expression "literary critic." So Ong was teaching English majors how to be literary critics of poetry and of prose, including advertising.

Now, as one source that advocates critical thinking, Lazere (pages 30, 52, and 71) invokes the Report of the Commission on the Humanities published as *The Humanities in American Life* (University of California Press, 1980). (The Commission on the Humanities was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.)

Surprise, surprise, Ong was a member of the Commission on the Humanities. When I read that report in the 1980s, I marked passage after passage, especially in chapter two, that sounded to me like something that Ong could have written.

So why was Ong selected to be on the Commission on the Humanities?

Ong's massively researched 1954 Harvard doctoral dissertation included a rather detailed account of the history of formal education in Western culture. His dissertation was published, slightly revised, in two volumes by Harvard University Press in 1958.

In the academic year 1966-1967, when Ong was the visiting Berg professor in English at New York University, he also served on the 14-member White House Task Force in Education that reported to President Lyndon Baines Johnson in the summer of 1967.

Now, Lazere (pages 157 and 159) discusses Jurgen Habermas' book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by Thomas Burger with assistance from

Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1989). That book by Habermas is an important study of the emergence of print culture in Western culture.

However, in my estimate, Ong's massively researched book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Harvard University Press, 1958) is a far more important study of the infrastructures of print culture in Western culture. But Lazere does not even mention it.

The Catholic Canadian literary critic Marshall McLuhan's experimental book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (University of Toronto Press, 1962) is a pioneering account of print culture that can be related to Ong's 1958 book.

Concerning Habermas' thought, see William Rehg's books *Insight and Solidarity: The Discourse Ethics of Jurgen Habermas* (University of California Press, 1994) and *Cogent Science in Context: The Science Wars, Argumentation Theory, and Habermas* (MIT Press, 2009). Rehg is a professor in the SLU Department of Philosophy.

Incidentally, in the book *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, translated by Ciaran Cronin (Polity, 2008; orig. German ed., 2005), Habermas urges his fellow secularists to hold their fire on religion.

Now, the term "discourse" appears in the subtitle of Ong's book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (1958) and in the subtitle of Lazere's book *Political Literacy in Composition and Rhetoric: Defending Academic Discourse against Postmodern Pluralism* (2015).

In Ong's book, the art of discourse refers to how instruction in logic (also known as dialectic) had been typically described for centuries in Western education before Peter Ramus (1515-1572) and his followers emerged historically. Not at first, but eventually Ramus and his followers came to practice the art of reason that Ong connects with Descartes and Cartesian reason and with Kant and Kantian reason – and for all practical purposes with the so-called Age of Reason (also known as the Enlightenment).

Robert J. Connors' articles "The Rhetoric of Explanation: Explanatory Rhetoric from Aristotle to 1850" and "The Rhetoric of Explanation: Rhetoric from 1850 to the Present," both of which are reprinted in *Selected Essays of Robert J. Connors* (2003, pages 25-42 and 43-61), mentioned above, seem to me to echo certain aspects of Ong's thought in *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958), even though Connors does not happen to advert explicitly to Ong's 1958 book, because what emerged historically in Western philosophic thought as the art of reason basically involves explanatory rhetoric. By contrast, philosophical (and theological) thought based on the art of discourse can be characterized as basically involving argumentative rhetoric.

But I use Connors' discussion of explanatory rhetoric as a bridge to what I want to say about Lazere's term "academic discourse." By and large, academic discourse today employs explanatory rhetoric.

Put differently, most academic discourse does not usually involve argumentative rhetoric in which one sets out to announce a certain specific real or imagined adversarial position and then proceed to refute as to the best of his or her abilities.

No doubt many college writing students write what they, and their teachers, consider to be argumentative essays that do not including naming a real or imagined adversarial position -- or refuting it. In effect, they are writing an explanatory essay explaining their debatable thesis statement.

Now, Ong's only full-fledged argumentative essay that I know of is his 1951 article "The Lady and the Issue," which he reprinted in his book *In the Human Grain* (1967, pages 188-202), mentioned above.

But Ong approaches something like naming real adversarial positions and commenting on them in the chapter on "Some Theorems" in his most widely known, and most widely translated book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982, pages 156-179).

My Life Drama Beyond SLU

Now, Lazere discusses the work of Mina P. Shaughnessy extensively, carefully, and intricately (pages 9, 12, 14, 43, 53, 77-85, 90, 92, 96-97, 130, 133, 186, 189, 197, 201, 208, 249-250). At one point Lazere enlivens his discussion by recounting a published anecdote about Mina's flare for dressing stylishly (page 250). To put her stylish dressing in perspective, I should explain that a good number of women in Manhattan dress quite stylishly.

It's not hard to spot women who dress stylishly – especially in Manhattan. Indeed, their stylish dressing is designed to call our attention to them.

But don't certain academics "wear" stylish garb of a different kind? For example, Lazere claims that he is "an unreconstructed New Leftist" (page 11; his capitalization). Isn't that statement his way of advertising just how stylish and trendy he is? Different strokes for different folks, eh?

Incidentally, arguably the counterpart to the New Left in the Roman Catholic Church was liberation theology, which deeply annoyed Pope John-Paul II and his successor, Pope Benedict XVI.

I mention this analogy within the Roman Catholic Church because Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope and the first pope from Latin America, has introduced a new note of reconciliation with liberation theology. Of course it remains to be seen how far his new spirit of reconciliation with liberation theology goes.

But I mention the analogy to suggest to Lazere that perhaps the time has come to reconstruct himself a wee bit – from being "an unreconstructed New Leftist" (page 11).

But have I reconstructed myself over the years? Yes, I have – and more than once. For example, as I mentioned above, my publications after, say, 1987 turned in directions that were different

from the directions of my earlier publications. In addition, I have also reconstructed myself and the direction of my life more than once – most recently by retiring from teaching at the University of Minnesota Duluth at the end of May 2009.

Looking back on my life today, I readily recognize and acknowledge that I was an impressionable teenager and an impressionable young man.

No doubt many American students in postsecondary education today are also impressionable.

For a discussion of some of the mischief of Pope John-Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, see Matthew Fox's fine book *The Pope's War: Why Ratzinger's Secret Crusade Has Imperiled the Church and How It Can Be Saved* (2011).

For a discussion of certain American Catholics, see Damon Linker's book *The Theocons: Secular America under Siege* (2006).

For an apologia and defense of conservative American Catholics, see Todd Scribner's book *A Partisan Church: American Catholicism and the Rise of Neoconservative Catholics* (2015).

In any event, based on a single article of mine about open admissions (1974) that Lazere does not mention, Mina Shaughnessy single-handedly arranged for me to be invited to teach in the large Department of English at the City College of the City University of New York in 1975-1976. New York City went bankrupt in 1976, and we did not get paid our May paychecks until many years later.

But that was the most memorable year of my life. My colleagues in the department passed around copies of two of my articles (1974 and 1975) that Lazere doesn't mention. As a result, I received more face-to-face praise from one colleague after another than I had ever received before in my life – or since.

On July 4, 1976, I took a break from writing one of my articles that Lazere refers to, and walked from my Manhattan apartment over to the banks of the Hudson River and watched the Tall Ships sailing up and down the Hudson. I was born in a hospital overlooking the Hudson in Ossining, my father's hometown. (But today I have no relatives who live in Ossining.)

Subsequently, I published my article "The Female and Male Modes of Rhetoric" in *College English*, volume 40 (1978-1979): pages 909-921, which Lazere does not mention. Among other things, I discuss Virginia Woolf's way of presenting her thesis, typical of the male mode of rhetoric, in her otherwise writing in the female mode of rhetoric in her feminist manifesto *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

In all humility, I would humbly suggest that my descriptors and characterizations of the female mode of rhetoric can be related positively and constructively to the thoughts advanced in two books that Lazere discusses: (1) Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982) and (2) Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy

Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule's *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (1986).

Concerning Mina Shaughnessy, see Jane Maher's book *Mina P. Shaughnessy: Her Life and Work* (National Council of Teachers of English, 1997).

Now, Lazere (page 202) also discuss Elizabeth McPherson in connection with the Conference on College Composition and Communication's position paper known as *The Students' Right to Their Own Language* (1974).

The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC or 4C's) is a professional organization, which publishes the professional journal *College Composition and Communication* (CCC). CCCC is a subset of the larger professional organization known as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Liz McPherson and I taught at the same community college in the City of St. Louis over a period of nine years (1969-1975 and 1976-1979; as noted above, I taught at City College/CUNY in 1975-1976).

Liz McPherson and many other English teachers at that community college in St. Louis were very active in CCCC. One year, Liz served as the president of the CCCC.

Now, Liz McPherson was involved in the drafting of the position paper *The Students' Right to Their Own Language*. Another colleague at that community college told me that that document was being prepared and urged me to ask Liz to allow me to read the draft. I did ask to read the draft, and she did allow me to read it. I wrote copious notes criticizing it. When I returned the draft to her, I also showed her my notes. She read my notes. Then she told me that the draft was too far along to be modified, but she urged me to publish something about my concerns. I did eventually publish my concerns about that document, as Lazere notes. But he might be surprised to learn that she had encouraged me to publish my concerns about that position paper.

Now, in that community college in the City of St. Louis, certain other faculty members had grown interested in Ong's work. As a result, I approached the campus president and urged him to invite Ong to speak on campus to the faculty. The campus president, an African American who held a Ph.D. in chemistry, arranged for Ong to speak on campus in an in-service workshop for the faculty not on one weekday afternoon, not on two weekday afternoons, not on three weekday afternoons, but on four weekday afternoons in the week of November 6, 1972, giving the same presentation four times over so as to maximize faculty attendance! Not only Liz McPherson but almost everybody else of the faculty attended one of Ong's four presentations.

Because open admissions at City College/CUNY received so much media attention, I should explain that the community college district in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County was at the time considered to be one of the top two community college districts in the country – Miami-Dade being the other top district.

Joseph P. Cosand was the founding president of the district (1962-1971). He built the three campuses and the separate administrative center. In addition to being a capable administrator, he was a powerful and effective speaker. He and other administrators helped to publicize the campus where Liz McPherson and I taught. Cosand left St. Louis to take a high-ranking position at the U.S. Department of Education.

As a result of the publicity that he and other administrators created for us, in the program that I taught in, we had a steady flow of visiting faculty from other new community colleges around the country.

So in addition to the heady experience of basking in Ong's glow during his proverbial 15 minutes of fame, I also had the heady experience of working in a widely publicized program in a widely publicized community college in the City of St. Louis.

Now, Lazere (page 45) briefly discusses Martha C. Nussbaum's short book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

But I wish that he had also worked in a discussion of her cogent article "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism" in the journal *Political Theory*, volume 20, number 2 (May 1992): pages 202-246.

Next, I want to return to what I referred to above as the waning of the dominance of WASP culture and values in the prestige culture in American culture.

By, say, 1960, the communications media that accentuate sound had reached a certain critical mass. In the spring semester of 1964, Ong delivered his Terry Lectures at Yale's Divinity School, the expanded version of which was published as the book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale University Press, 1967). Toward the end of that book, Ong expresses hope about the possible positive potential of our cultural conditioning by the communications media that accentuate sound.

But Ong made no specific predictions. Nor did he undertake to discuss possible negative potential that might arise from our cultural conditioning by the communications media that accentuate sound.

Now, in the book *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford University Press, 2006), Philip Jenkins details how movement conservatism capitalized understandable concern about the riots and violence in the late 1960s, and used anti-60s rhetoric to strengthen movement conservatism.

In the book *The Catholic Labyrinth: Power, Apathy, and a Passion for Reform in the American Church* (Oxford University Press, 2013), Peter McDonough explains that the sexual excesses of the 1960s and 1970s prompted a backlash in certain American Catholics.

However, above and beyond and apart from the particularities of riots and violence, and/or sexual excesses, our still-emerging cultural conditioning by communications media that accentuate sound has been evoking responses deep in our psyches.

Now, on the other side of the political and cultural spectrum, the people that Lazere refers to as cultural pluralists have also been responding to evocations deep in their psyches prompted by our still-ongoing cultural conditioning by communications media that accentuate sound.

Perhaps we could describe the evocations deep in our psyches as a kind of shake-down cruise that we are going through collectively.

Jean Houston, who read in the 1970s the longer version of my controversial 1983 article, likes to say that we are going through a breakdown that is a breakthrough.

In conclusion, your guess is as good as mine as to what impact Lazere's new book will have on academics in composition and rhetoric. After all, he is retired, so they may just disregard his new book.