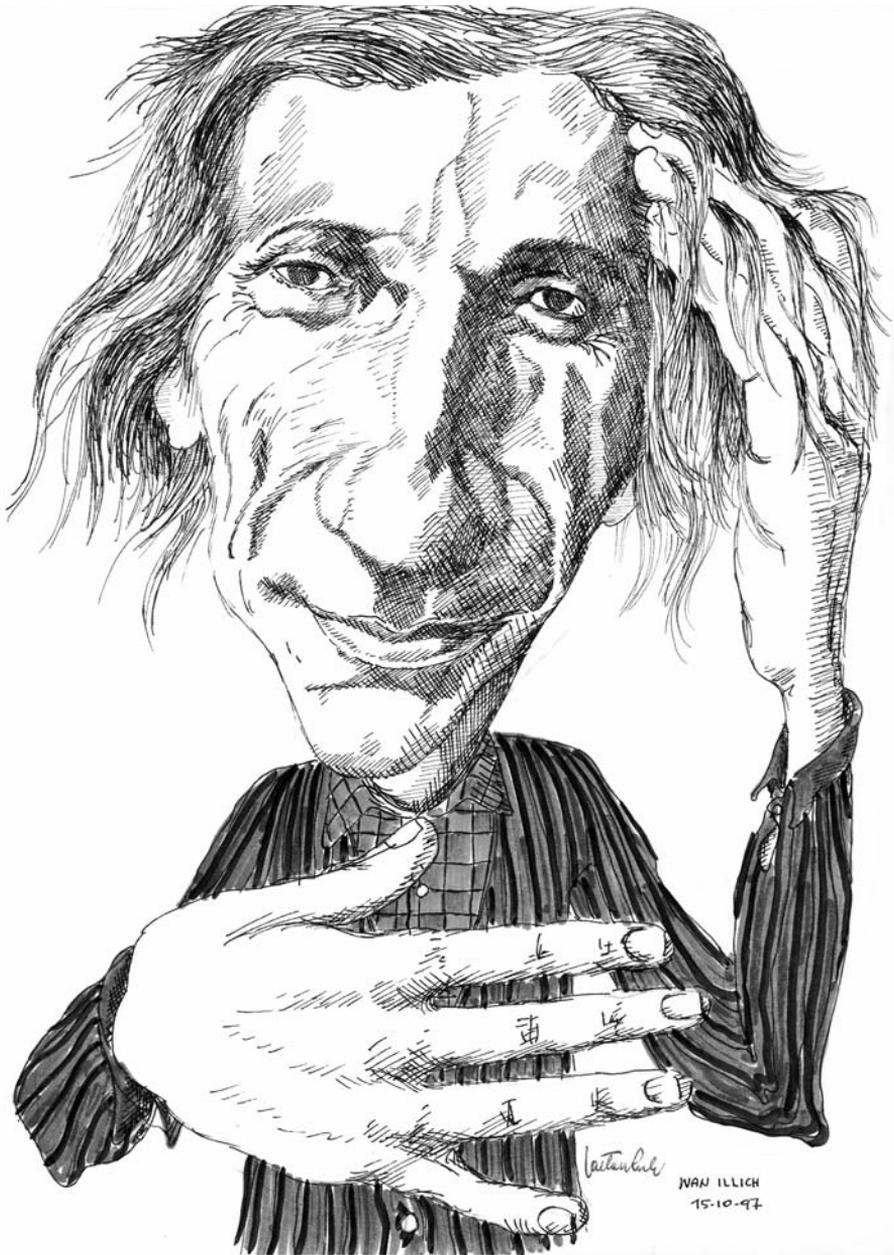


*The Challenges
of Ivan Illich*

A Collective Reflection

Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham, Editors

THE CHALLENGES OF IVAN ILLICH



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Edited by
Lee Hoinacki
and
Carl Mitcham

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book had its genesis on the occasion of Ivan Illich's seventieth birthday in 1996 when a small group of friends at Pennsylvania State University sought to reflect on the implications of his work. We took as our theme the phrase "No Easy Answers" because that was precisely our state of mind. In many ways it still is. A year later we sought to expand the collective reflection by inviting more than fifty colleagues from the Americas, Europe, and Asia to share their own perspectives on this theme. The result was almost thirty contributions, only about half of which we have been able finally to bring together here.

Although the outgrowth of multiple friendships, this work has been a difficult undertaking. We especially want to apologize to those whose contributions were not able to be included. Space limitations forced us to exclude much more than we would have liked. Indeed, our hope is to be able to find another venue to publish another selection of those contributions that continue to be offered.

In addition to this volume's contributors, including the artists and translators and three anonymous reviewers, we would like to recognize Richard Devon of the Pennsylvania State University for the generous provision of office space and materials; Karen Snare of the same institution for her many-sided assistance at all times; and Arthur Sacks of the Division of Liberal Arts and International Studies at the Colorado School of Mines for his support. We also wish to thank Abby Hoats for her friendly and efficient work in text composition.

The volume itself is a testimony of our multiple intellectual debts to Ivan Illich. Indeed, each of us has been richly gifted by his friendship.

Lee Hoinacki would like to thank Judith Van Herik for the various dimensions of her hospitality while he was in State College, Pennsylvania, and Barbara Duden for her warm hospitality while he was in Bremen, Germany—the two places where he has worked most extensively on this book.

Carl Mitcham would like to express his gratitude to the large circle of Illich friends—from Valentina Borremans, Peter Bohn, Barbara Duden, Robert Duggan, Sezer Göncüoğlu and Semi Eser, Hans Achterhuis, Dana Stuchul, and Jerry Brown—all of whom have hosted conversations enriching the reflections embedded in this collection.

PART I
INTRODUCTIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

Reading Ivan Illich

Lee Hoinacki

On various occasions, I have set out on the perilous enterprise of attempting to interpret Ivan Illich. One day an astute questioner angered me, blurting out, “Oh, so you produce Cliffs Notes!”¹ After calming down I thought about her comment and concluded that, Yes, I did indeed want to do something like that; I believed this could be an honest work. After nearly forty years of knowing Illich, and discussing his writings with others, I think that a certain kind of midwifery can be enlightening, both for me and for his readers.

People sometimes regard Illich as if he were a social critic, or a historian, or a philosopher, or—more rarely—a theologian. But starting with one of these categories, many go astray. Illich has not produced a coherent social theory; he has not written a major historical study; he will not be remembered as an important twentieth-century philosopher. But he has made startling contributions in each of these areas. For example, the critical outline described in *Deschooling Society* (1971) enables the perceptive reader to see the structure and myths that drive the beliefs of modern society. Those unfamiliar with the tradition of apophatic theology mistakenly view the book as only about schools. *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), with its dimensional analysis, goes far to suggest a sensitive and complex theory of the Western tool, today called technology. Critics of the medical system can still profit from the most revelatory notion in *Medical Nemesis* (1976)—cultural iatrogenesis. If Illich’s general thesis in *Gender* (1982) is accurate, much of the social and economic history of western Europe should be interpreted differently. People bothered by religious questions often note that he is a perceptive commentator on Sacred Scripture, that he sometimes speaks to them with disturbing insight.

The first difficulty in approaching him is that people look in the wrong direction—they look toward Illich. In this respect, the example of Søren Kierkegaard is instructive. Kierkegaard held that one could not examine his body of writing as if one

were reading a textbook on physics or literary criticism. One could only reach a verdict on the truth of what he wrote by responding out of one's own individual existence. The issue is not one of objective verification, but of subjective simplicity or purity.

Apropos of this view, Illich himself suggests that the entire question of an object in the modern sense, leading to the notion of hard objectivity or "objective truth"—that is, separated from the person presumably knowing—may find its origin in the thirteenth century.² This kind of objectivity contributed greatly to the creation of contemporary science and to the disembodiment of a sensuous universe. Most viciously and destructively, it continually arises in the way many people instinctively view the other, whether that other is intimate or stranger. Because of this radical disconnection of seer and seen, many are easily seduced to believe that it is legitimately progressive and productively efficient to instrumentalize all of creation: nature "out there," in the other, or in oneself. Throughout his writings, Illich peremptorily rejects the kind of dichotomization that leads to such an aberration.³

Writers, such as Donna Haraway, who look critically at contemporary science point out some of the nefarious consequences deriving from this sort of objectivity.⁴ But many readers of books are infected by the prodigious successes of modern science, no less than by the spirit and ideals of the Enlightenment. Kierkegaard is a kind of anomaly, awkwardly at odds with the ideas of progress predominant in the nineteenth century. Illich is not a twentieth-century Kierkegaard, but his life and work call for a stance similar to that demanded by Kierkegaard. Unless I proceed in this way, I will never grasp the import of Illich's criticism of the Western experiment.

A reading that objectifies Illich's books, isolating them from myself, from where I *am*, from the way I live, begins as a performance in diletantism and ends as a feeble exercise in futility. Illich—as with any person—cannot be subjected to some assessment according to an objective, impersonal, universal standard. Adolf Hitler's diagnostic treatment of homosexuals and Jews exhibited not just the criminality but also the sinfulness of a universalizing procedure. Along with certain other persons—with whom he shares important affinities and experiences—Illich presents a discomfiting challenge to readers and friends: the more acute and painful, the more one gets closer to him and his writing.

For many, Illich incarnates the character of witness; he bears witness against our time. To recognize and grasp his unique fit in that place, one can look at some of the likenesses and differences between him and two other contemporary witnesses: Paul Celan and Primo Levi. I assume that the notion of witness today conjures up the specter of twentieth-century abominations. These two men, who with Illich also experienced the frightful maliciousness of fallen humans, help to situate him because of their proximity in ethnic origin, physical geography, and historical time. Celan and Levi, too, were Europeans who were privileged with a profound immersion in the disciplines of Western high culture.⁵ These men, directly, in their flesh, were pierced with what many judge to be the overarching evil of recent Western history, the

hatreds and lethal power of National Socialism.⁶ Their act of witnessing was expressed indomitably and poignantly in language; they struggled to bequeath a literary monument testifying to the enigmatic monstrousness of our age.

Illich, while also experiencing in his family and flesh the same venom spurting out of delusionary sin, has not sought to be, like Levi, a chronicler of explicit cruelty and obdurate hardness of heart.⁷ From his writings, one sees that Illich focuses on something else, something truly beyond the depravity of National Socialism, but also more subtle and hidden. He sees what Karl Marx completely missed—and was brutally attacked by Marxists when that ideology was still the fashion. He forcefully uncovers what Martin Heidegger only murkily ruminated about. The tools of the modern world—the world created by what Jacques Ellul recognized as *la technique*, the world of an all-encompassing instrumentalization—“create” a universe utterly transcending the conflict between social classes.⁸ Tools/technologies form an all-embracing world independent of nationalist or ethnic passions, a world whose hubris recognizes no limits, indeed, a world beyond the hegemony of *homo economicus*, a juggernaut to which both men and women now rush to sacrifice themselves. Nearly all have submerged themselves in *la technique*, instrumentalizing even love and reflection, thereby losing the wonders and joys of committed fidelity and contemplative idleness.

Facing this world, Illich could not follow the example of men such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Franz Jägerstätter.⁹ One could no longer be a witness by submitting one’s neck to the executioner’s garrote. After all, the only sense of witness is to bear witness. Although many did not want to admit the truth of what Bonhoeffer and Jägerstätter died for, those whose moral sensibility had not been completely corroded or corrupted could see what was going on; the evidence of wickedness was not hidden from them. Illich, however, faces a different perversion of the truth: He has to testify against almost everything that people, from pope through respected citizen to street corner drug pusher, regard as the marvels of modern civilization—the impressive and attractive accomplishments of education, transport, medicine, social services, and communications. He calls into question the most noteworthy and awesome triumphs of human ingenuity, devices producing “goods” and services, hardware and software, instruments designed to control micro or macro universes.

The third edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* lists one direct sentence from Illich: “In a consumer society there are inevitably two kinds of slaves, the prisoners of addiction and the prisoners of envy.”¹⁰ In these words, the compilers catch one of his crucial and cutting insights: Many, perhaps most persons, in modern societies have delivered themselves over to a kind of servitude that both binds and blinds. Faced with this depressing historical novelty, where can one stand? What can one possibly say? Can one only turn to the example of Don Quixote and learn to be a modern clown? Some novelists have imagined this option.¹¹

To express his own perceptions and understanding, Illich had to forge the concepts to make known what he believed to be happening in the contemporary world.

Why do the most privileged people in history choose slavery? His conceptual repertoire is rich and varied, his insights often sharp and subtle, and he has published a number of essays and short books. But his writing is characterized more by brilliant epigrammatic judgments, such as *Tools of Conviviality*, rather than by conventional or linear argument.

Illich does construct his own kind of argument, however, around one key notion—ritual—and unerringly reveals the frightening power of the world's most ambitious and prestigious institutions to seduce the “favored” who participate in those institutions. In a disenchanting world, people above all hunger for the reassuring order, the drama, the magic enclosure, the alembic of a ritual.

As he pointed out early in his public writing, it does not make any difference whether, for example, a school is in a miserable ghetto or a luxurious estate, whether it is “traditional” or “free,” whether organized by a totalitarian or democratic regime, it does and teaches exactly the same thing: there is always the hidden curriculum.¹² In some of his latest work, he continues to point out the power of ritual, for example, in all diagnostic and counselling encounters in an increasingly therapeutic-making-sick society.¹³

Socrates understood the power of the spoken word.¹⁴ At the other center forming the matrix of Western awareness of “what is,” so did Jesus of Nazareth. Many have pointed out that neither Socrates nor Jesus wrote anything.¹⁵ Historically, both Athens and Jerusalem agreed on the critical and decisive character of language. The question, however, repeatedly arises: What is the reality of language, whence comes its power? According to one interpretation, a tradition begun in ancient Israel reached its perfection in the doxologic mode of speech found, for example, in the Roman Ritual of the high Middle Ages. This specific view holds that Christianity, in the Roman rite, extended and perfected the Platonic doxologic account of purpose in language. Language primarily exists and, finally, only has meaning, in praise of the divine.¹⁶ Ritual language, then, can be powerful beyond all power because of its transcendent dimension; its counterfeits can be frightening because they sometimes successfully mimic a true doxologic language. Here one can feel the fire of the demonic.¹⁷

Illich was trained in ecclesiology and was especially intrigued by liturgy.¹⁸ He understood, I would argue, that the most ominous expression of secularization in the West was not the death of nature (although this was related), nor a misnamed materialism, nor sexual “freedom,” but the decline of liturgy, the routinization and emptying out of religious ritual in the churches. As he suggests, this process began with clerical actions to establish various assured institutional responses to God's calling, later legitimated by a juridical or legal order; men hesitated to rest all hope on gratuitous gifts of grace. Illich captures the dénouement of this lack of faith with the ancient Latin adage *corruptio optimi quae est pessima* (the corruption of the best turns out to be the worst). He has attempted to show that this apothegm accurately reveals the origins of “normative notions of a cruelty, of a *horrifying* darkness, which no other culture has ever known.”¹⁹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, portrays institutional mistrust as a demonic

temptation in Ivan's poem, "The Grand Inquisitor," perhaps literature's most terrifying image of the betrayal of the freedom graciously given to people by Jesus.

The historical record appears to establish conclusively that people and ritual go together. Part of the genius of modern institutions is that they developed rituals that speak to every aspect of peoples' desires: to vanity, to the love of beauty, to the pursuit of truth and order, to all sensual delights and, coming full circle to the origins of humans—according to scientific criteria—they especially speak to fear.²⁰

Illich has pointed out, again and again, that modern rituals, no matter the degree of sophistication found in their design and operation, lead inevitably to some kind of slavery.

[The school is] the locus of the ritual which reproduces and veils the disparities between myth and reality. [It is] the central social ritual . . . (p. 54)

Of course, school is not, by any means, the only modern institution which has as its primary purpose the shaping of man's vision of reality. . . . But school enslaves more profoundly and more systematically, since only school is credited with the principal function of forming critical judgment and, paradoxically, tries to do so by making learning about oneself, about others, and about nature depend on a prepackaged process. (p. 68)

Once young people have allowed their imaginations to be formed by curricular instruction, they are conditioned to institutional planning of every sort. (p. 56)

The man addicted to being taught seeks his security in compulsive teaching. (p. 57)²¹

People of every nation are proud of their "good" schools, embarrassed by the bad ones; so it goes with other modern institutions as well. Illich, however, sees something else: a picture of universal misery, imposed with the power, at times apparently fiendish, of clever rituals. Contemplating this desolate landscape, he has chosen to stand by that most ephemeral of realities, the word. In one of his most striking statements, written at the end of *Tools for Conviviality*, he says:

I feel almost unbearable anguish when faced by the fact that only the word recovered from history should be left to us as the power for stemming disaster.²²

To take up words, he collapses three historical figures—poet, clown, and prophet—into one, making up his one voice. The very trope illustrates a characteristic of his method.

Poets and clowns have always risen up . . . [to oppose oppression]
They demonstrate the follies of seriousness . . .
The prophet can denounce creeds and expose superstitions.²³

Here one sees the way Illich often proceeds—more by way of acute assertion than by sustained argument. But the assertions have a grounding, deep sources in both ancient Western traditions and contemporary insights. Some of the essays included in this volume explore these traditions, others the insights. The authors, taken together, manifest a polyphonic texture of voices through their focus and approach, their respective style and interest and, thereby, reflect various facets of Illich's influence.

Because of his rootedness in his own tradition, Illich knows that no word or action is complete on its own. The current running through everything Illich writes and does is an anticipatory belief in his action's ultimate eschatological consummation.²⁴ The power of his practice—in life and art—derives from his recognition that he faces a crisis, that is, a crossroad. There are only two choices for him: Either he follows the contemporary world in its postmodern *acedia*, or spineless boredom, sauntering toward nihilism, or he lives in hope, eyes fixed on a future eschaton. Illich detailed the first option in his book *Tools for Conviviality*. He expressed the foundational germ of the second option in his early essay "Rebirth of Epimethean Man."²⁵

The pieces collected here, from a score of contributors, reveal the variety of persons attracted to Illich's life and thought. The essays differ greatly from one another, in both content and style. Carl Mitcham and I thought it proper to allow the writers to express their thoughts in their own unique voices. All have reflected on the disturbing challenge Illich presents to every person who meets him or who reads his writing. Since Illich is still very much with us, and his lively gaze looks no less deeply into the hearts of his friends than into the idiocies of the age, we want to publicly thank each person for courageously coming forward, for daring to put down on paper, his or her reflections on this witness. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and others have noted, the intellectually gifted do not always exercise the courage our time demands.

Bremen, Germany

NOTES

1. The trade name of a series of synopses of, for example, Shakespeare; using them, students may be able to pass exams without having read the original.

2. Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 64, n. 54.

3. See his remarks in Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (San Francisco: North Point, 1988), pp. 119–127; Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), especially pp. 74, 75 (the Notes), and 146 (the text); also, Lee Hoinacki, "Friendship in the Writings of Ivan Illich," unpublished manuscript, 1995.

4. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 1997); for example, see pp. 23–39.

5. See, for example, Paul Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 1989); Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit Books, 1988); Marco Belpoliti, ed., *Primo Levi* (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 1998).

6. Although Illich has also been affected by his experiences in places as diverse as India, Japan, and Latin America, I confine my perspective to what occurred to him in his early years in Austria, Dalmatia, and Italy.

7. See David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992), pp. 1–2, 79–80. This book is the best introduction to and overview of Illich's life and work.

8. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Random House, 1964); and Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

9. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Gordon Zahn, *In Silent Witness* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1986).

10. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 47; *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 270.

11. See, for example, John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces* (New York: Grove-Weidenfeld, 1987); and Heinrich Böll, *The Clown* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971). The major such tale in modern literature is Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*.

12. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). As the title implies, Illich's interest in writing this book is not in the school, as such. This is also true with the other institutions he examines in later books.

13. At the moment (early 2001), this work has only reached the discussion and early draft stages.

14. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274 to the end.

15. The exceptions only confirm the point: "But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger" (John 8:6). Socrates drew a geometric figure—I assume, in the sand—for the slave boy of Meno (Plato, *Meno*, 82–86).

16. For a recent and impressive study of the tradition, see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). The actual expression of doxologic language today can most often be found, that is, experienced, in the Orthodox churches.

17. Although listening to the radio was an important pastime in our small-town mid-western household when I was growing up, I remember only one broadcast almost as if it were yesterday: one of Hitler's speeches. I must have been ten or twelve, could not understand a word, but also could not change the station or turn off the old Atwater-Kent.

18. See Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, pp. 65–66.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 213. Emphasis in original. See also pp. 242–243.

20. Thinkers in the Christian tradition have discussed the gift of discernment: the ability to distinguish divine from diabolic internal movements. The gift enables one to recognize truth and falsity in ritual today.

21. Illich, *Deschooling Society*. He writes about the power of ritual throughout his works, but his initial presentation of the thesis is found in *Deschooling Society*. See also Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, p. 66.

22. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, p. 119.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

24. See Pickstock's comments in *After Writing*, p. 221.

25. This essay serves as the concluding chapter to *Deschooling Society*. It suggests the most fundamental position of his life and work.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Challenges of This Collection

Carl Mitcham

This collective reflection on the life and work of Ivan Illich is both less and more than a *Festschrift*. It is less, because it is not primarily an offering of professional scholarly contributions inspired by the work of a professor. It is more, because it goes beyond scholarship, attempting to engage both professional and vernacular scholars alike in the fundamental challenges with which Illich himself has grappled—and asks us to grapple.

LIFE AND PUBLICATIONS

Born in Vienna in 1926, Illich grew up in south-central Europe. He studied natural science, history, philosophy, and theology. Following ordination to the Catholic priesthood in Rome, he worked as a parish priest among Puerto Ricans in New York City, and in 1956 was appointed vice rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico. There he founded and directed the Center of Inter-cultural Communications to prepare people to work with Puerto Rican immigrants to the mainland. In 1961 he established related centers for cross-cultural studies in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where it was known as the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC), and in Petropolis, Brazil, where he collaborated with Paulo Freire.¹ He withdrew from direction of the Petropolis center in 1967 and dissolved the Cuernavaca one in 1976. Since the late 1970s he has divided his time between Mexico, Asia, and a number of visiting professorships in the United States (most notably at Pennsylvania State University, through the efforts of Rustum Roy, a professor of materials science) and in Europe (of longest duration at the University of Bremen, at the invitation of Johannes Beck, a professor of humanities).

Illich's radical anarchist views first became widely known through a set of four books published during the 1970s: *Deschooling Society* (1971), *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), and *Medical Nemesis* (1976).² *Tools for Conviviality* is

the most general statement of Illich's social criticism. The other three volumes expand on examples sketched there in order to critique what he calls "radical monopolies" and "counter productivity" in the technologies of education, energy consumption, and medical treatment. This critique applies equally to both the so-called "developed" and the "developing" worlds, but in different ways to each. *Deschooling Society*, *Tools for Conviviality*, and *Medical Nemesis* each created a voluminous literature of commentary and debate that continues into the present.³

Two subsequent collections of occasional pieces—*Toward a History of Needs* (1978) and *Shadow Work* (1981)—stress the distorting influence on society and culture of the economics of scarcity, or the presumption that economies function to remedy scarcities rather than share available goods. *Toward a History of Needs* also hints with its title at a new project in historical archaeology that takes its first full-bodied shape in *Gender* (1982), an attempt to recover social experiences of female/male complementarity obscured by the modern economic regime. *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (1985) extends this project into a history of "stuff." *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988) carries Illich's project forward into the arena of literacy, as does *In the Vineyard of the Text* (1993). *In the Mirror of the Past* (1992) is a collection of occasional essays and talks from the 1980s linking his concerns with economics, education, history, and the new ideological meaning of life.

Illich himself is a polymath who speaks fluently in at least eight languages (one of which is Latin), writes regularly in four (English, Spanish, German, and French), and has been translated into more than twenty others. As a public intellectual he has consulted with politicians such as Pierre Trudeau (four-term Prime Minister of Canada between 1968 and 1984), Jerry Brown (Governor of California, 1975–1983, and currently Mayor of Oakland, California), and Freimut Duve (member of the German Bundestag, 1980–1998). But perhaps even more important, his thought and life have had a strong influence on a close circle of friends who have produced their own insightful and independent work. Representative of what might be termed an Illich community of reflection are, for example, recent works by Barbara Duden, Wolfgang Sachs, David Schwartz, Uwe Pörksen, Lee Hoinacki, and Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva.⁴ One aim of the present collection is to extend such a community of reflection.

SCOPE OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into four overlapping sections. Part 2, "The Person," contains five chapters of biographical interpretation. As such it serves as a supplement to Francine du Plessix Gray's profile in *Divine Disobedience* (1970) and David Cayley's *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (1992)—the former a journalist's report, the latter a dialogue in self-presentation.⁵ Here five persons who have known Illich personally provide their counter-reports and presentations. Jesuit sociologist Joseph Fitzpatrick's "Ivan Illich as We Knew Him in the 1950s," offers a personal reflection on Illich's work es-

pecially among Puerto Rican immigrants. Marion Boyars's "The Adventure of Publishing Ivan Illich" offers a partial account of her relation to Illich as his most significant publisher; she, unfortunately, died before completing her memoir. John L. McKnight's "On Ivan Illich and His Friends" gives a view of Illich as social critic and activist by a professor of community studies. Gesine Bottomley writes about Illich as bibliophile and scholar in "Ivan Illich at the *Wissenschaftskolleg*." Domenico Farias's "In the Shadow of Jerome" goes beyond personal narrative to interpret Illich as similar to St. Jerome, the fifth-century translator of the Bible into Latin: a wandering, homeless man, but one nevertheless rooted in a tradition that is itself tied to a particular land and history. Thus is Illich sketched as priest, author, social activist, scholar, and vagrant—five aspects of a complex person.

Part 3, "Arenas of Thought," contains four chapters on key dimensions of engagement in Illich's work. Lee Hoinacki and I use the term "arena" intentionally to indicate that Illich seeks to contest or challenge certainties or assumptions in a number of fields, from educational theory and economics to history, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy. Robert Kugelmann, a professor of psychology, in "Economy, Subsistence, and Psychological Inquiry," shows how Illich's unorthodox approach to economics has implications for and has fundamentally challenged his own work in psychology and sociology. Barry Sanders, in "ABC Redux: Or Literacy Matters. And How!" reengages with his former coauthor of a book on the implications of literacy, in those arenas defined as "history," "culture studies," and "education." David Schwartz, a one-time administrator of government programs to assist the developmentally disabled and now a practicing psychotherapist, with his contribution on "Illich's Concept of 'Rests': Glimpses of a World Past," builds a bridge between cultural archaeology and the struggles of contemporary daily life, using Illich's work as a major structural support for his own efforts to practice a quotidian intelligence. Alfons Garrigós, who teaches philosophy at a secondary school in Spain, sees Illich as both a historian and a philosopher of technology, and distinguishes three key strategies manifest in all the arenas in which Illich contends: his appeal to nature as norm, his historicism, and his concern with ethics as virtue. By his very title, "Hospitality Cannot Be a Challenge," however, Garrigós (in typically Illichian manner) also questions the adequacy of the name given to this collection. Is Illich challenging or seeking instead to undermine the challenging mindset of the contemporary world? Certainly the challenges *of* Illich, challenges *of* understanding him, challenges from him *to* his readers, and challenges *from* readers back to him—all of these are present in this collection.

Part 4, "Facing Society," emphasizes Illich's special stance in the arena of social criticism and activism. Although it is social criticism for which Illich is probably best known, his position is often misinterpreted. Correspondingly, its influence is broader than might be supposed. For instance, Aaron Falbel's "The Mess We're In: How Ivan Illich Revealed to Me That the American Dream Is Actually a Nightmare"

explains how a person who pursues what many would call an antilife—a way of life antithetical to that dominant in contemporary North America—found Illich’s social analyses useful to defend the practical pursuit of such radical alternatives. The East Indian–American, Madhu Suri Prakash, who is also a professor of educational theory and policy, in “A Letter on Studying with Master Illich” likewise shows how Illich helped open a way toward reconnecting with her traditional roots. Eugene J. Burkart’s “From the Economy to Friendship: My Years Studying Ivan Illich,” describes a recurring encounter with Illich that led toward a nontraditional practice of law. Finally, the Scot cleric Alastair Hulbert, who writes from the perspective of his former work in the European Union bureaucracy, seeks to imitate what he sees in Illich (via Miguel de Unamuno) as a “Don Quixote in the Contemporary Global Tragicomedy.” Here then are four quite different ways of facing society—radical disengagement, return to cultural roots, lawyer for the poor, and inside questioning of governmental bureaucratic projects—that all find inspiration in Illich’s thought.

Part 5, “Extending Interpretations,” builds on Illich—and attempts to go further. The move is from explications of the challenges Illich presents toward challenging Illich himself. Jean Robert’s “Energy and the Mystery of Iniquity” and Jean-Pierre Dupuy’s “Detour and Sacrifice: Ivan Illich and René Girard” both deal with Illich’s argument in *Energy and Equity*. Robert provides a close reading of this neglected text, exploring the creeping evil of inequality that technological advance enhances across many dimensions of social life. Yet while it is the case that questions of equity have become primary themes in such applied ethics fields as those dealing with biomedicine and computers, seldom is the issue pursued to the depth that Robert attempts. Dupuy relates Illich’s argument to the thought of René Girard, a provocative literary critic whose theory of sacrifice Dupuy sees as complementary to Illich’s understanding of the pathologies of counterproductivity, thereby proposing by means of a mutual reflection to advance the thought of both authors. Pieter Tijmes, again relating the thought of Illich and Girard, raises basic questions about “Ivan Illich’s Break with the Past.” For Tijmes, it is not clear that what he takes to be Illich’s radical historicism is either true or necessary to his major projects, and he proposes to correct Illich by appealing to the philosophical anthropology of Helmuth Plessner. Barbara Duden, one of Illich’s closest collaborators, in her “The Quest for Past Somatics” elaborates on Illich’s special approach to what has become known as “body history.” To this end she reviews developments in Illich’s deepening understanding of the central importance of the body and the senses, and thus the transformation of his social criticism into anthropological criticism. For Duden it is not so much social inequality that is the fundamental threat of the technological project, but a distorting of bodily orders configured by the introjection of technology.

The seventeen contributions that form parts II through V of this volume thus represent the work of men and women, junior and senior, academic and vernacular

scholars from a dozen different countries. They also represent the views of individuals involved precisely in the kinds of work that Illich has often subjected to withering criticism—that is, teachers, professionals, service workers, and others—as well as persons who have been moved by their encounters with Illich to make serious alterations in their own life projects. The sections are as a whole somewhat arbitrary, with easily overlapping themes, as must be the case with any reflection on the work of someone so eclectic as Illich.

Without making any specific response to the preceding essays, Illich's own "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," which constitutes Part 6, "Epilogue," provides a fitting closure to our collective reflection. In it Illich offers a personal review of the trajectory of his thinking, emphasizing the emerging central importance of friendship and the senses as the foundation for all truly human experience of the good. In contrast to modern theories of the social contract as the foundation of politics, Illich suggests that a very incarnated, flesh-based breathing together is the real root of any convivial community that might become the effective arbiter of its tools—a kind of social relation that is threatened at the deepest levels both by virtual communications and genetic engineering.

Illich is a person of intense, commanding presence who, despite fervent views across a complex spectrum of issues, nevertheless often chooses to speak elliptically and circuitously. His epilogue is a case in point. In consequence it is not always easy to pin down either his thought or its influence. In lecture or conversation listeners are drawn into the circle of his passionate attention and readily mesmerized by his masterful rhetoric, confident that they have learned something profound, even when they are not able to say precisely what. Moreover, Boyars's story of her first meeting with Illich, when he began by rudely dismissing her as a publisher but then later initiated a conversation that led to a deep friendship of over thirty years duration, is not untypical of personal encounters. Many people have felt the sting of Illich's barbed judgments and sarcastic diatribes, only to wind up being effusively praised or assigned major projects that fit in with some larger Illichian scheme. Of course, many have also felt only the barb and not the balm. As Fitzpatrick's memoir suggests, Illich seems to reserve his most unalloyed affection for those who are not intellectuals.

In the diverse arenas in which Illich has repeatedly challenged the certainties of official wisdom—from theory and practice in education, medicine, and economic development to cultural history and applied ethics—his characteristic method of intellectual work is that defined by his CIDOC years: repeated, focused conversation with a small circle of colleagues. Prakash and Burkart specifically reference such conversations. A typical seminar begins in the morning with a short presentation by one member of the group followed by a couple of hours of ardent conversation. After a break for tea, a second presentation will be followed by another round of discussion. A second break blends into a midday meal, perhaps followed by a siesta. But mid-afternoon will

witness a resumption of the cycle of two-hour presentation and discussion for another couple of rounds, then a lighter evening meal, and possibly another cycle of presentation and discussion. Wherever Illich takes his traveling road show he tends to recreate this form of disciplined engagement.⁶

What commonly emerges from repeated iterations of such discussions with different but overlapping sets of colleagues and acquaintances, perhaps first in Germany at one friend's house, then in Italy or the Netherlands, and again at three or four more locations in the United States and Mexico, is an occasional public presentation that collapses literally months if not years of argument and intellectual exercise into an hour of oratory and a supplementary, highly compact publication in which extended development of a position is replaced largely by anecdote and allusion—with implications that are difficult in short compass to appreciate. Another option is for Illich to initiate a project but then hand it off to others, or for years to pledge to turn insight into monograph, although such commitments have, since the mid-1990s, increasingly failed to reach fruition. When Hans Achterhuis published a history of scarcity, he sent Illich a copy with a note to the effect that here was his attempt to realize a project that Illich had been saying for years that he wanted to pursue, but clearly was not going to manage.⁷ This situation makes it doubly necessary for others to take up the charge of Illich's penetrating intuitions and their broad implications, as, for instance, Kugelmann, Schwartz, and Garrigós have done.

Most well-known for his social criticism, Illich nevertheless embodies a commitment that reverses the thrust of Karl Marx's eighth thesis on Feuerbach: For Illich the purpose of philosophy is not just to change the world, but to rethink it. His uncompromising critique of social institutions may be for some, such as Falbel, justification for a radical personal practice, and for others, such as Burkart, a stimulus to reconsider professional obligations. In their concluding contributions to the first three chapters, however, Farias, Garrigós, and Hullbert all argue for something unique about Illich's stance toward society. For Garrigós and Hullbert, especially, the uniqueness is typified by its comic dimension. One is reminded of Plato's *Symposium*, in which Socrates becomes the synthesis of tragedy and comedy.

In his comic sensibility there is, however, the highest seriousness. As already suggested, one aspect of Illich's thought that this collection highlights is its suggestive and unsystematic character, which more or less demands extending interpretations. Robert and Dupuy undertake this effort in exemplary fashion, focusing on one short book. To this extent they complement (and are complemented by) a previous symposium on Illich that focused on four other books: *Deschooling Society*, *Tools for Conviviality*, *Medical Nemesis*, and *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*.⁸ Tijmes and Duden undertake a more general discussion of Illich's positions, not unrelated to those found in Kugelmann, Sanders, Schwartz, and Garrigós. Illich closes with his own, clearly comedic, rehearsal of his vagrant history, illustrating many of the themes

raised by others if not replying directly to them. Indirection has the last word, at least as far as the subject of this collective reflection is concerned.

CENTRAL ISSUES

From personal engagement to historical archaeology one may nevertheless attempt to disentangle at least five crucial overlapping issues raised by Illich's work, not all of which are dealt with equally in the present collection, although each makes at least oblique appearance. These may conveniently be highlighted as basic sociological, historical, anthropological, ethical, and theological issues. Here it is possible to do little more than list the issues with some associated questions, trusting that the chapters to follow provide further stimulus for reflection. It must be emphasized as well that, given the broad scope and implications of Illich's thought, these five issues are not to be taken as an exhaustive framework.

The first, or sociological issue, is the challenge Illich addresses to institutions such as schools and modern medicine. Here Illich's key concepts are radical monopoly and counterproductivity. Illich's claim, no doubt related to that of Marx, is that social institutions easily become ideologies, self-justifying pursuits. Jacques Ellul, for instance, in his two major supplements to *The Technological Society*—that is, in *The Technological System* and *The Technological Bluff*—references Illich's analyses of limits beyond which a productive technique turns counterproductive.⁹ Automobiles, for instance, have tended to crowd out other means of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and trains, even while the government legislates against corporate monopolies in their manufacture and sales. Economic or superficial monopolies are restrained by the very states whose policies of urban planning and highway construction garner a radical monopoly for the technology of the car. Then in their radical monopolistic condition, cars become increasingly unable to deliver on the goods they promise: utility withers in the face of congestion, cost, and pollution. In place of cars one may substitute any number of modern technical commitments from schooling to high-tech medicine. Yet one may well inquire of Illich: Are these limits material or moral, that is, unavoidable historical forces or questions of ethics and politics? Like Marxists, Illich sometimes appears to imply the former, other times the latter. Moreover, what about counterexamples, such as movies and television, that have not so much crowded out the stage or the radio or books as they have functioned as supplements? Finally, are there no instances of large-scale institutions doing good? Are not social institutions of some sort simply part of the human condition and thus necessarily ambivalent? The fact that Illich may, and often has, rejected such questions, as well as more specific interpretations of his thought, is not in itself sufficient for rejecting them.

Second is what may be termed a historical issue. Illich is equally uneasy with the received approaches to history in terms of politics, economics, or culture and with deconstructive sophistications. It is broad interdisciplinary histories that make

substantive judgments such as can be found in the works of Karl Polanyi, Leopold Kohr, Gerhart Ladner, Louis Dumont, or Don Gifford to which Illich most often makes approving reference.¹⁰ Moreover, one of his fundamental suggestions is that history should be grounded in lived practices: for instance, vernacular gender, body experienced, or the arts of suffering and dying. Illich's philosophy of history further postulates the centrality of breaks or ruptures, especially in the Western tradition. But in his tendency to emphasize breaks at the expense of continuity, could Illich not be projecting the hiatus that opened up with the rise of modernity onto more historical changes than can be truly justified?¹¹ Is there not to some degree a hyperbolic rhetoric at play in many of Illich's historical claims?

Third, emerging as it were as in harmonic overtone to problems associated with the first two issues, is a question of philosophical anthropology. Illich emphatically rejects the idea of an ahistorical human being because what really exists are concrete, embodied men and women living in particular times and places. In lectures he has mentioned the usefulness of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's "phenomenological analysis of the reality of everyday life,"¹² with his own approach being even more grounded than such a sociology of knowledge, in pursuit of what may be termed a "historical archaeology of the senses." Just as, in the sociological order, he rejects the institutionalization of human services to fulfill human needs, so his philosophical anthropology explores the concrete experiences of the human sensorium. But this raises important methodological problems. What kind of history can the senses have, and how would such a history be known, especially if one presumes the kind of radical breaks in human experience that Illich often postulates?

Philosophical anthropology readily blends into the fourth issue, that of ethics—which, of course, is just anthropology in other terms. Here Illich's claims about the goods of autonomy, of friendship, and of silence (along with the associated rejection of the widely proclaimed good of "life") increase in their provocativeness. In the early books—*Deschooling Society* through to *Medical Nemesis*—autonomy appears as a fundamental good. The autonomy at issue, however, is not simply Immanuel Kant's autonomy of rational agents; it is embodied autonomy of flesh-and-blood historical men and women that has more in common with Marx's concern for alienation, especially as interpreted by Erich Fromm, than with Kant.¹³ Illich's phenomenology of technology, for instance, notes a progressive separation between artifacts and their users in the move from tool (which requires human power and guidance) through machine (dependent on nonhuman power but also requiring human guidance) to cybernetic system (requiring neither human power nor direct human guidance). Moreover, machines and electronic communications increasingly exist in a world so structured that people are more and more dependent on those complex and semiautonomous devices they have so cleverly constructed to carry out their most basic activities. Automobility, for instance, has ceased to be the ability to walk with one's own two legs, and become instead the driving of a car. As technologies take on the appearance of

autonomy, human beings lose the reality; the displacement of autonomy creates the heteronomous lifeworld.

The second fundamental good, friendship, is interpreted in an equally provocative manner. From the beginning, friendship plays a prominent role in Illich's work, even being named as the touchstone of technological assessment in *Tools for Conviviality*. The notion nevertheless seems to play a subordinate role in the early work, only to come increasingly to the fore in Illich's later thought, a trajectory sketched by Illich in his chapter for this book. But according to Illich true friendship implies sensuous (not sensual) engagement with the other. Is such bodiliness always equally necessary? Moreover, when he describes a shift from friendship as the consequence of virtue to the foundation of virtue, is he not in danger of making an idol out of *philia*? Is friendship not subject to the good—that is, are there not good and bad friendships? Although Illich is representative of the recent philosophical reassessment of friendships,¹⁴ his position is clearly more radical than most.

Illich's most controversial ethical argument, however, concerns his rejection of certain discussions concerning the use of nuclear weapons, advanced biomedical techniques such as human and artificial organ implants, genetic engineering, "responsibility" for one's health, and the "value of life." For Illich, what is above all else necessary is to discover the locus and scope of a proper *askesis* for our time—that austerity which, even in *Tools for Conviviality*, he argued was the foundation of friendship and all its associated goods. In the most traditional version of his argument, Illich simply defends silence; silence is not the absence of speaking but in many instances superior to speaking.¹⁵ Silence is the basis for a contact with reality from which false speaking easily hides it, a contact from which authentic speaking arises. Attempting to speak about the unspeakable, such as the so-called ethical use of nuclear weapons or advanced biomedical interventions like human cloning, obscures in the extreme what Illich calls the "horrors" of the present emerging technogenic way of life. For Illich, the immorality of bioethics is not just that it fiddles while Rome burns but that it reassures us that the fires are being set in the most humane way possible or being fought with the most cost-effective means—and in the process makes money off the spectacle.¹⁶ Furthermore, to admit some responsibility for taking charge of one's biology through the use of advanced medical techniques or to call for the assumption of responsibility for the natural environment of the planet Earth constitute extreme forms of stepping outside the bounds of what is proportionate or fitting to being human.¹⁷ Thus, Illich places himself in fundamental opposition to Hans Jonas's argument for an imperative of responsibility in the face of our new technoscientific prowess;¹⁸ certainly Illich's rhetoric appears more in harmony with that of, say, Leon Kass's argument in "The Wisdom of Repugnance."¹⁹ Yet it is not clear that Jonas's "heuristics of fear" is wholly distinct from Illich's own hyperbolic rhetoric of horror, which itself does always appear proportionate to the contemporary situations in the techno-lifeworld to which he applies it. Why does

Illich sometimes seem to go out of his way to separate himself from so many who might appear to be natural allies?

Finally, fifth, there is a theological issue. Repeatedly in his late work Illich uses the sentence *Corruptio optimi quae est pessima* (The corruption of the best is the worst). The history of this notion is rich and suggestive, and deserves investigation beyond the didactic use that Illich makes of it. The idea is first articulated in Plato and Aristotle, is alluded to by Cicero and Thomas Aquinas, and makes a metaphorical appearance in Shakespeare.²⁰ Although Illich, with the help of David Cayley, has sketched with peculiar rhetorical flair the idea that such a corruption within Christianity may make it singularly responsible for many contemporary phenomena he criticizes,²¹ this theory is not especially new²² and calls for considerable substantive development. Is the corruption at issue the result of a necessary internal dynamic or an accident of history? Should one practice *Gelassenheit* in the face of such a phenomenon or seek to respond more actively? How is this situation to be thought, and what is to be done?

FROM CRITIC TO ELEGIST

Illich's work began as pointed social criticism calling attention to missed opportunities, celebrating an awareness that opens up new possibilities, arguing a techno-political dialectic of inherent limits. How is it, for instance, that in an age when there is more opportunity for what even contemporary culture pays homage to as the higher dimensions of life—the arts, literature, philosophical reflection, celebrations of friendship, meditation, and prayer—a smaller percentage of possible time and energy today appears to be devoted to such activities than at any time in the past? Instead, the possibility space opened up by our labor-saving technologies is being squandered in the pursuit of more and more consumables and electronic entertainment. In comparison with the historical opportunity, our era may well be one of the most shallow, achieving the least while being offered the most. The claim that our technological invention is itself an achievement comparable to the Renaissance is surely a specious rationalization.²³ Illich begins with “slashing attacks” on our counter or failed productivity, and our propensity to replace spiritual with mere material activity, apparently in the belief that this alone will goad us into turning our attention to higher things.²⁴

But during the late 1970s and early 1980s, by his own admission, he began to recognize the futility of this strategy. Social criticism was replaced first by historical archaeology, and then by lament: “I must accept powerlessness, mourn that which is gone, renounce the irrecoverable.”²⁵ Illich's writing becomes not so much social criticism as historical elegy. His late work thus exhibits a whole range of practices and approaches connected with the lament. Indeed, the etymologies of the very words “elegy” and “mourn” call up associations that repeatedly characterize Illich's writing since the early 1990s.

As any etymological dictionary reveals, the English “elegy” comes from the Greek *elegos*, a song of mourning, a lament—originally without reference to metrical form, subsequently in classic Greek and Latin always in alternate hexameters and pentameters. The Greek word is derived from the phrase *e e legein*, meaning “to cry woe, woe,” and is associated with *aluros*, indicating the absence of accompaniment by the sweet lyre, therefore accompanied by the mournful flute. *Elegos* likewise named the haunting songs of the nightingale and the kingfisher.

To mourn has even more universal roots: the Middle English *mournen*, *mornen*, from the Old English *murnan*, to care for, be anxious about, lament over; the Old High German *mornen*, the Gothic *maurnan*, the Old Norse *morna*, to pine away; the Indo-European (s)*mer*, to care for, be anxious about, think, consider, remember; the Latin *memor*, mindful, and *memoria*, memory; the Avestic *mimara*, mindful; the Greek *mermeros*, causing anxiety, mischievous, baneful, and *merimna*, care, thought; and more. The elegy mourns and remembers, but in mourning remembers in a special way. It remembers not simply what has been but what has been lost, that which is absent but might very well have been present—except for some untoward happening. One does not mourn simple change or loss, such as the disappearance of the sun at night or the cascading of water down a stream. The great elegies are not for the deaths of old men or women who have fulfilled their days, but for the deaths of the young and unfulfilled, for the passing of orders and goods and beauties that need not have passed away, for disappearances in which we may well be implicated.

The elegy thus witnesses to what is absent but might have been present, and in this witnessing, this act of thoughtful concern for the past, it both asserts the loss and casts into the present a new kind of awareness. In the presence of mourning one is invited not just to remember but to take care, to rethink what one does, to alter or moderate one’s actions, to act more cautiously, with a new sense of human limitations, and to respect what has been. The elegy implicitly calls upon us to be still and savor the tragedy—as well as the comedy—of the human condition. In this sense Illich is not so much a social critic, philosopher, or prophet—all of which he has been called—as one who cries out in our high-tech cities for recognition of the destruction that has been rendered by technoscientific progress and its glamorous excitements, both epistemological and political. He practices deconstruction with the purpose not so much of giving us license to continue on our destructive and overwriting paths, but to pull us up short, so that we might possibly learn to live in a new way in our cities of manifold erasures and allurements. Commemorative remembrance has consequences.

In the spirit of the later Illich, this collective reflection offers its own kind of remembrance, of Illich’s past and of his present—inviting us to rethink Illich and thereby ourselves and our lives.

APPENDIX 1. PUBLICATIONS OF THE CENTRO INTERCULTURAL DE DOCUMENTACIÓN

Shortly after being named the vice rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico in 1956, Ivan Illich established a Center of Inter-cultural Communications (CIC). When Illich left Puerto Rico for Mexico in 1961 his institutionalizing efforts morphed into the Center of Intercultural Formation (CIF), with branches in Cuernavaca and in Petropolis, Brazil. In 1966 a major rethinking at Cuernavaca led from CIC through CIF to the creation of the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC). After a decade of existence, CIDOC closed its doors in 1976. During that time, however, CIDOC privately published, mostly for subscription purchase, a large number of books. These remain a major and largely untapped source for the study of Illich's thought. The CIDOC volumes, mostly paperbound typescripts, come in five color-coded series:

1. *CIDOC Dossier: Fuentes para el estudio de las ideologías en el cambio social de América Latina* [CIDOC Dossier: Sources for the Study of Ideologies of Social Change in Latin America]. No. 1 (1966)–No. 38 (1971). Red bindings. Volumes range from one hundred to over four hundred pages in length; all but one (which is in Portuguese) are in Spanish. Each has a designated editor and is devoted to a particular issue in some country. For example, No.1, edited by Tarcicio Ocampo, entitled *Puerto Rico: Idioma escolar; Reacciones de prensa 1962–1965* [Puerto Rico: School Language; Press Reactions 1962–1965], is a collection of press reports concerning the debate about the language of instruction in Puerto Rican primary and secondary schools; No. 12, edited by Alejandro Del Corro, entitled *Colombia: Camilo Torres, un símbolo controvertido, 1962–1967* [Colombia: Camilo Torres, a Controversial Symbol, 1962–1967], is a collection of press documents focused on the priest and revolutionary, including numerous of his own statements.

The introduction to No. 38, an *Índice a CIDOC Dossier Nos. 1–37*, pp. 1/2–1/3, which is signed by Illich, provides a bilingual (Spanish–English) description that gives a good feel for the spirit of all CIDOC publications. (The nonstandard typography of this quotation is that of the original.)

In the course of a seminar on the relationship between social character, ideology and institutional structure at CIDOC in 1965 a group of participants decided to create an Archive, which came to be called CIDOC DOSSIERS. Each Dossier was meant to provide evidence about the *style* in which a contemporary public controversy in Latin America was being conducted. The Collection of Dossiers was to provide the basis for research on the imagery, the symbols, and the rationalizations which emerged in the process of political discourse during the sixties in an area which goes from Puerto Rico and Mexico to Brazil and Chile.

Work on the Dossier continued during a 5-year period. It was conducted by a dozen individuals, overwhelmingly by people who volunteered their time. The board of CIDOC authorized the publication of 45 volumes and their sale—on a subscription basis only—in order to recuperate costs.

In 1971 the CIDOC board came to a double conclusion: 1. The subscription price paid by 37 large institutions spread through 9 countries had covered only a small part of the total cost incurred by CIDOC. 2. The Dossiers had been used only rarely for the type of research for which they had been initiated.

At the same time it became evident that the Dossiers had come to constitute a unique research instrument for Latin American studies of the sixties. They list with full bibliographic description more than 40,000 documents, many of them reproduced in the series and all of them available in the CIDOC archives. 10,115 names appear as authors of these documents, and a majority of these persons are not listed in any other index, catalogue or Who's Who. Many of these documents proceed from journals, circulars, bulletins or archives which have, to our best knowledge, never been listed in a bibliography.

On the basis of these considerations the CIDOC board decided: 1. To suspend the assembly and publication of "Dossiers." 2. To prepare a cumulative index which would list all persons who appear as authors of any document listed or reproduced in the 37 volumes, as well as all persons mentioned within the title of any of the documents listed; as well as two additional indices, one listing 865 serials used in the compilation of the Dossiers and the other, 3,089 associations of any kind mentioned in the Dossiers.

We hope that this index will now serve the student of Latin American history, local leadership, political undercurrents, political language, and grassroot movements. We also hope that researchers at some future time will stumble across these Dossiers in a library and be able to use them in conjunction with other evidence for the verification of the socio-psychological hypothesis for which they were originally prepared.

2. *CIDOC Sondeos: Una colección de estudios sobre el fenómeno religioso en América Latina* [CIDOC Soundings: A Collection of Studies on the Religious Phenomenon in Latin America]. No. 1 (1966)–No. 89 (1976). Blue bindings. To give a sense of the character of this series, it is perhaps useful simply to annotate the initial five volumes:

- No. 1: Javier Castillo Arroyo, *Catecismos peruanos en el siglo XVI* [Peruvian Catechisms in the Sixteenth Century]. Pp. vii, 337. Actually compares and contrasts the relation between the doctrines of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and colonial catechesis and that between Vatican II (1961–1965) and contemporary evangelization. By a diocesan priest from Peru.
- No. 2: Robert Montilus, Jean-Marie Salgado, Legrand Bijou, Pradel Pompilus, François Gayot, Jean Parisot, and Willima Smarth, *Etudes sur le vodou* [Studies on Voodoo]. Pp. 163. Eight studies on the ethnological, psychiatric, literary, and pastoral dimensions of voodoo.

- No. 3: Dorothy Dohen, *Two Studies of Puerto Rico: Religion Data, the Background of Consensual Union*. Pp. 155. The two studies are "Introduction to a Socio-Religious Statistical Study of Puerto Rico" (prepared in 1959 under the direction of Ivan Illich, Joseph Fitzpatrick, and Theodore McCarrick) and "The Background of Consensual Union in Puerto Rico" (Dohen's M.A. dissertation in political philosophy and the social sciences, Fordham University, 1959).
- No. 4: Francisco Bravo, *The Parish of San Miguelito in Panama: History and Pastoral-Theological Evaluation*. Pp. vii, 458. Although the title is in English, the text itself is in Spanish. An appendix includes almost one hundred pages of documents from the 1960s describing the development, activities, and finances of the parish.
- No. 5: *Camilo Torres: Por El Padre Camilo Torres Restrepo (1956-1966)*. Pp. 377. A collection of all available letters and statements from the last ten years of the life of this priest-revolutionary.

3. *CIDOC Cuaderno* [CIDOC Notebook]. No. 1 (1968)–No. 90 (1976); No. 1000 (1970)—uncertain. Yellow bindings. *Cuaderno* constitutes the largest collection of CIDOC publications. The primary series itself includes at least four clearly delineated subseries:

"Catálogo CIDOC": Two or three volumes per year listing all the new acquisitions of the CIDOC library for the years 1966–1971.

"CIDOC Informa": Documents and reports on church and politics throughout Latin America. Begins with *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 6 (1968), covering April–December 1964, and includes ten volumes, running to June 1970.

"CIDOC Documenta": Collections of essays from various residents and visitors to CIDOC. Five volumes: July 1970 to December 1973.

"CIF [Center of Intercultural Formation] Reports": *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 36 (1969) began to republish this series from vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1962). A total of seven CIF volumes cover the years 1962–1967. The original editor, Peter V. V. Brison, worked with two staff members, six associate editors, and eleven advisory board members from throughout Latin America. Illich's name does not appear on the masthead. A quotation from the first issue editorial, "For a Dialogue," gives a feel for its character:

CIF REPORTS will present, in each of ten issues a year, not only the information and materials that are a part of courses in intercultural formation, but also a variety of other articles that originate from sources contacted by us throughout the Americas and elsewhere. Each issue will aim to be a highly concentrated and clearly distilled fund of data needed as the spark and fuel of profitable dialogue between North Americans and their Latin neighbors.

When Brison was killed in a plane crash in 1966 his position was filled by José Maria Sbert.

CIDOC Cuaderno is also where many of Illich's own publications first appeared in draft form. Examples:

- No. 54 (1970): Ivan Illich, *The Dawn of Epimethean Man and Other Essays*. Pp. 151 (although not consecutively numbered; instead, each of eight essays has its own page numbers). This was a draft that became *Deschooling Society* (1971).
- No. 65 (1971): Ivan Illich, *Hacia el fin de la era escolar*. Pp. 191 (but numbered only within the preface, introduction, and seven chapters). This is a Spanish translation of *Deschooling Society* by José María Bulnes Adunate and Ernesto Mayans.
- No. 80 (1973): Ivan Illich, *Retooling Society III*. Pp. 212 (but numbered only within the front matter, five chapters, and an extended bibliographical appendix). A preface to this publication provides a good overview of Illich's project in social criticism at this time:

This CUADERNO is planned as the first in a series by which we hope to prepare a consultation during the first three months of 1975. The general theme of the consultation will be the multiple and independent limits to the further expansion of the industrial mode of production. Each of the symposia to be published we expect to be the result of several meetings and seminars, which will be held at CIDOC during the years 1973 and 1974 in preparation of the consultation of 1975, and which will address themselves to a specific aspect of the general problem. Some of the proposed themes are:

- the limits inherent to the institutionalization of service-values, such as health, learning, communication, security, conflict-resolution
- the conceptual analysis of social problems to be expected in societies in which specified empirical limits are defined: ex. gr. The bicycle-speed [bicycle-speed] society; a society without practicing professional doctors; a society in which energy and the per-capita control over it are kept within a specified ration [ratio]
- the specific problems creation by the transition towards a stationary state in specific areas of Latin America, Africa and Asia.

- No. 86 (1974): Ivan Illich, *Hygenic Nemesis* (very first draft). Pp. 112. First draft of *Medical Nemesis*. Includes reference to the first eight volumes in the *CIDOC Antología* series (see below).
- No. 90 (1975): Ivan Illich, *On the Limits of Medicine* (*Medical Nemesis*—final draft). Pp. 320.

Illich drafts and other more ephemeral publications also made up what may be termed a fifth subseries of *CIDOC Cuaderno*, nos. 1000ff. For instance, *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 1007 (1970), is Illich's "Ciclo Lectures Summer 1970," an even earlier version of *Deschooling Society* than that found in *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 54.

4. *CIDOC Fuentes: Fuentes para la historia de la iglesia en América Latina* [CIDOC Sources: Sources for the History of the Church in Latin America]. No. 1 (1970)–No. 20 (1970). Brown bindings. Along with *CIDOC Dossiers*, *CIDOC Sondeos*, and selected volumes for *CIDOC Cuaderno*, this series has been folded into a CIDOC microfiche collection: Valentina Borremans and Ivan Illich, eds., *The History of Religiosity in Latin America, ca. 1830–1970* (first series) (Zug, Switzerland: Inter Documentation, 1985). This collection, which now contains almost 50,000 fiche pages, is described in three catalog volumes: *CIDOC Collection*, *CIDOC Collection 2*, and *CIDOC Collection 3*, currently available from the Inter Documentation Company BV, P.O. Box 11205, 2301 EE Leiden, Netherlands. For a brief introduction to this collection, see Carl Mitcham, “A Note on Sources for the History of Religiosity in Latin America, circa 1830–1970,” *Catholic Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (April 1994), pp. 412–415. The introductory note mentions inclusion of *CIDOC Dossiers*, *CIDOC Sondeos*, and selected volumes from *CIDOC Cuaderno* but fails to note the inclusion of *CIDOC Fuentes*. (The *CIDOC Collection* is also mistitled, since it includes almost 4,000 titles of periodicals and monographs dating back well beyond the nineteenth century to the 1500s.)

5. *CIDOC Antología* [CIDOC Anthology]. No. 1 (1973)—uncertain. Orange bindings. This is the least significant series of CIDOC publications. Its focus is precisely what the name implies, collections (including bibliographies) of previously published articles for use in research conversations. There are at least two distinct subseries. Series A constitutes the first eight numbers and provides support for Illich’s *Medical Nemesis* in the form of bibliographies (nos. A1 and A2), articles on alternative health care (nos. A3 and A4), Spanish translations of English texts (nos. A5 and A6), and sets of technical papers (nos. A7 and A8). A second series (B1–B8, 1973) deals with transportation, and thus constitutes a background for *Energy and Equity*.

This color binding also includes a 1978 draft of Valentina Borremans’ *Reference Guide to Convivial Tools*, labeled *Techno-Politica* 79/13 (meaning, apparently, 1979, publication 13). This volume subsequently appeared as *Guide to Convivial Tools*, with a preface by Illich: Library Journal Special Report No. 13 (New York: Bowker, 1979), a pamphlet that provides an extended annotated assessment of the alternative technology literature from the perspective of the theory of *Tools for Conviviality*. The *Techno-Politica* series, edited by Valentina Borremans, continued as an occasional series into the 1980s, well after the official closing of CIDOC.

APPENDIX 2. IVAN ILLICH BIBLIOGRAPHY: MAJOR BOOKS, BRIEFLY ANNOTATED, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

The focus of this bibliography is works in English, with eclectic citations of versions in other languages, and modest reference to works that appear only in languages other than English. All references are to works actually seen. (Note: When two dates are given for Portuguese translations, these appeared under different titles in Portugal and Brazil.)

Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution. Introduction by Erich Fromm. New York: Doubleday, 1970. Pp. 189. Twelve critical reflections

from the 1960s on the protest against the Vietnam War, the attitude of the Catholic Church toward Latin America (especially Puerto Ricans), institutional schooling, and the idea of economic-technological development. Also published, London: Calder and Boyars, 1971. German version: *Almosen und Folter: Verfehlter Fortschritt in Lateinamerika*. Translated by Helmut Lindemann. München: Kösel, 1970. Same translation, with contents reordered: *Schulen helfen nicht: Über das mythenbildende Ritual der Industriegesellschaft*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1972. Retitled, with prefatory notes by Illich: *Karstellungen: Pamphlete und Polemiken*. München: C.H. Beck, 1996. French version: *Libérer l'avenir: Appel à une révolution des institutions*. Translated by Gérard Durand. Paris: Seuil, 1971. Spanish version, which selects English chapters 1-3, 7, and 9-10, and includes four other studies on schooling, development, and medicine: *Alternativas*. Translated by Ernesto Mayans, María Teresa Márquez, Matea Padilla de Gossman, Eliana Baytelman, and Carlos R. Godard Buen Abad. México, DF: J. Mortiz, 1974. Also available in Dutch (1971), Portuguese (1973, 1975), Greek (1977), Japanese (1985), Polish (1994), and Farsi (1353 hijri), among other languages.

The Church, Change, and Development. Edited by Fred Eychanger. Chicago: Urban Training Center, 1970. Pp. 125. Expanded proceedings from a Chicago workshop. Illich comments in the preface (p. 12): "These papers were meant for . . . people whose faces I could look at. . . . The context and style . . . belong to the past."

Deschooling Society. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. Pp. ix, 181. A trenchant argument for the disestablishment of compulsory education. Influential on the alternative schools movement of the 1970s, and perhaps Illich's most widely read book. French version: *Une société sans école*. Translated by Gérard Durand. Paris: Seuil, 1971. German version, with a forward by Hartmut von Hentig: *Entschulung der Gesellschaft: Entwurf eines demokratischen Bildungssystems*. Translated by Helmut Lindemann. München: Kösel, 1972. German reprint, with a new preface by Illich: München: C.H. Beck, 1995. Spanish version: *La sociedad desescolarizada*. Translated by Gerrardo Espinoza and Valentina Borremans. Barcelona: Barral, 1974. Translation revised by Borremans: México, DF: Posada, 1978. Also available in Finnish (1972), Malayalam (1975), Greek (1976), Norwegian (1973), Polish (1976), Slavic (1972), Swedish (1972), Japanese (1977), Indonesian (1982), and Portuguese (1982).

After Deschooling, What? Edited by Alan Gartner, Colin Greer, and Frank Riessman. New York: Harper and Row, 1973. Pp. x, 162. Eight essays (the title one by Illich) first published in the journal *Social Policy* in 1972 and 1973, supplemented by two other papers on the same theme. Also available in Spanish (1977).

Tools for Conviviality. New York: Harper and Row, 1973. Pp. xxv, 110. Classic and influential attempt to lay out ethical standards for assessing technological development. Provides a general theory for, and became associated with, the alternative technology movement. French version, which was rewritten, and

became the basis for translations into other languages: *La convivialité*. Paris: Seuil, 1973. Spanish version: *La convivencialidad*. Translated by Matea P. de Grossmann and José María Bulnes from the French. Barcelona: Barral, 1974. Translation revised, with a new preface by Illich: México, DF: Posada, 1978. German version, which was revised again, and is considered by Illich the definitive text: *Selbstbegrenzung: Eine politische Kritik des Technik*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975. Republished, with a new preface by Illich: München: C.H. Beck, 1998. Also available in Danish (1973), Dutch (1973), Japanese (1973), and Italian (1978).

Energy and Equity. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Pp. xxx, 84. An extension of the argument in *Tools for Conviviality*; developed from an article in *Le Monde* (1973). Also available in Dutch (1973), French (1973), Danish (1974), German (1974), Spanish (1974), Swedish (1974), Portuguese (1975), and Norwegian (1982).

Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health. New York: Pantheon, 1976. Pp. viii, 294. Savages the health establishment, arguing that high-tech medical interventions do more harm than good, especially if the good is conceived as more than the simple prolongation of physical life. Note: This title was used for a substantially shorter text on the same theme published in London: Calder and Boyars, 1975. Then, under a different title, *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*, Marion Boyars published a British version of the U.S. text. French version, translated and rewritten by Illich with the assistance of Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Hélène Maillard, Maud Sissung, and Paul Thibaud: *Némésis médicale: L'expropriation de la santé*. Paris: Seuil, 1975. Italian version, which Illich considers the most carefully published edition: *Nemesi Medica: Lespropriazione della salute*. Translated by Donato Barbone and Illich. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1977. German version of the Calders and Boyars short text: *Die Enteignung der Gesundheit*. Translated by Nils Thomas Lindquist. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975. German revision of the longer U.S. text, revised in later chapters in collaboration with the translator and Freimut Duve: *Die Nemesis der Medizin*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977. Final German version, with a new preface by Illich: *Nemesis der Medizin: Die Kritik der Medikalisierung des Lebens*. Translated by Thomas Lindquist and Johannes Schwab. München: C.H. Beck, 1995. Also available in Portuguese (1975, 1977), Norwegian (1975), Swedish (1975), Spanish (1984), Hindi (1985), Burmese (n.d.), and Croat (n.d.).

Disabling Professions. With Irving Kenneth Zola, John McKnight, Jonathan Caplan, and Harley Shaiken. New York: Marion Boyars, 1977. Pp. 127. The title essay (of five, one by each contributor) is by Illich. German version, which adds essays by Valentina Borremans and Joseph Hubner: *Entmündigung durch Experten: Zur Kritik der Dienstleistungsberufe*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1979. Also available in Italian (1978), Spanish (1981), and Japanese (1984).

The Right to Useful Unemployment and Its Professional Enemies. London: Marion Boyars, 1978. Pp. 95. "This essay is a postscript to my book, *Tools for Convivial-*

ity, published in 1973" (p. 11). French version: *Le Chômage créature: Postface à La Convivialité*. Translated by Maud Sissung. Paris: Seuil, 1977. Also available in Spanish (1974), Danish (1979), Japanese (1979), Portuguese (1979), Norwegian (1980), and Finnish (1990).

Toward a History of Needs. New York: Pantheon, 1978. Pp. xiii, 143. Five essays: "Useful Unemployment and Its Professional Enemies," "Outwitting Developed Nations," "In Lieu of Education," "Tantalizing Needs," and the short monograph "Energy and Equity" (published separately in 1974). The first two develop themes from *Tools for Conviviality*, the third from *Deschooling Society*, and the fourth from *Medical Nemesis*. Reprint, Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, n.d. Also available in Italian (1981). Closely related German text: *Fortschrittsmythen*. Translated by Thomas Lindquist. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978.

Shadow Work. London: Marion Boyars, 1981. Pp. 152. Five essays: "Three Dimensions of Social Choice," "Vernacular Values," "The War against Subsistence," "Research by People," and "Shadow Work." The thesis of the title essay is that the money economy depends on a shadow or unrecognized nonmonetary economy. German version, including five other essays (from *In the Mirror of the Past*): *Vom Recht auf Gemeinheit*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982. Also available in French (1981), Italian (1981), German (1982), Japanese (1982), and Dutch (1985).

Gender. New York: Pantheon, 1982. Pp. xiii, 192. Argues a distinction between sex (economic and biological) and gender (social and cultural). The historical transformation from vernacular to modern economic milieus has fundamentally obscured gender. Reprint, Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, n.d. German version, reviewed by Illich with Barbara Duden: *Genus: Zu einer historischen Kritik der Gleichheit*. Translated by Ruth Kriss-Rettenbeck. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983. Second German edition, with translation revised by Barbara Duden. München: C.H. Beck, 1995. Also available in French (1983), Italian (1984), Japanese (1984), Swedish (1988), and Spanish (1990).

Schule ins Museum: Paidros und die Folgen [School in the Museum: Paideia and Following]. With an introduction by Ruth Kriss-Rettenbeck and Ludolf Kuchenbuch. Bad Heilbrunn, Germany: J. Klinkhardt, 1984. Pp. 70. A catalog and commentary on a museum exhibition on the history of schooling.

H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of "Stuff." Dallas, TX: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1985. Pp. 150. Reprint, with a different subtitle: *An Inquiry into Our Changing Perceptions of Urban Space and the Waters That Cleanse It*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1985. Critical analysis of the typically modern attitude toward water and its urban uses. German version, with a new preface by Illich: *H₂O und die Wasser des Vergessens*. Translated by Regina Carstensen, Wolfgang Mattern, and Barbara Duden. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987. Spanish version: *H₂O y las aguas del olvido*. Translated by José María Sbert. Madrid: Cátedra, 1989.

Also available in Danish (1982), Japanese (1986), French (1988), Italian (1988), and Turkish (1991).

ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind. Coauthored with Barry Sanders. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988. Pp. xi, 166. On how writing has transformed thinking. Also available in German (1988) and French (1990).

Was macht den Menschen krank? With Paul Watzlawick, Verna Kast, Erwin Chargaff, and others. Basel: Birkhäuser, 1991. Actually a volume edited by Klaus Jork, Bernd Kauffmann, Rocque Lobo, and Arika Schuchardt, which nevertheless lists Illich on the title page as primary author. Includes eighteen essays.

In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990. New York: Marion Boyars, 1992. Pp. 233. The texts, often extensively revised, of nineteen occasional talks delivered in Asia, Europe, and North America. Also available in French (1994) and Italian (1992). Another Spanish volume collects much of the same material: *Alternativas II.* México, DF: Joaquín Moritz/Planeta, 1993.

In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Pp. 154. Explores the transformation of the text as a physical object and the experience of reading during the thirteenth century, by way of an extended commentary on Hugh of St. Victor's "Didascalicon." French version: *Du Lisible au visible: La naissance du texte.* Translated by Jacques Mignon and Maud Sissung. Paris: Cerf, 1991. German version: *Im Weinberg des Textes: Als das Schriftbild der Moderne entstand: Ein Kommentar zu Hugos "Didascalicon."* Translated by Ylva Eriksson-Kuchenbuch. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1991. Also available in Japanese (1993) and Italian (1994).

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire's most well-known book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), carries a cover endorsement from Illich: "This is truly revolutionary pedagogy." For more on the Illich–Freire relationship, see Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, with Heinrich Dauber and Michael Huberman, *Diálogo: Análisis crítico de la desescolarización y concientización en la coyuntura actual del sistema educativo* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1975). For more on CIDOC and its important Illich publications, see Appendix 1.

2. Full references for all books by Illich cited in the text can be found in Appendix 2, an annotated bibliography.

3. The deschooling literature was first surveyed by John Ohliger's 1974 *Bibliography of Comments on the Illich–Reimer Deschooling Theses*, ERIC Clearinghouse No. SP007833, a 65-page compilation of 570 authors in 71 books and 351 periodicals from 30 countries in just two years after Illich's book was published; and the commentary has continued to grow enormously since. For an early assessment of the "convivial tools" discussion, see Valentina Borremans, *Guide to Convivial Tools, Library Journal Special Report No. 13* (New York: Bowker, 1979), which "lists and describes 858 volumes and articles." The medicalization debate has not been so thoroughly surveyed, although it is almost certainly of the same, if not greater, magnitude. Another remarkable aspect of Illich is his ability to present what some might call an "avant-garde reactionary" stance even in the midst of technoscientific enthusiasts such as Stew-

art Brand and the *Whole Earth Review*, to which he lent the motto “access to tools,” and in the various permutations of which he has regularly appeared.

4. See, for example, Barbara Duden’s *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor’s Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) and *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, trans. Lee Hoinacki (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Wolfgang Sachs’s edited volume *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London: Zed Books, 1991); David Schwartz’s *Crossing the River: Creating a Conceptual Revolution in Community and Disability* (Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1992) and *Who Cares? Rediscovering Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997); Uwe Pörksen’s *Plastic Words: The Tyranny of a Modular Language*, trans. Jutta Mason and David Cayley (University Park: Penn State Press, 1995); Lee Hoinacki’s *El Camino: Walking to Santiago de Compostela* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1996) and *Stumbling toward Justice: Stories of Place* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1999); Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva’s *Escaping Education: Living as Learning within Grassroots Cultures* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988); and Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash’s *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Culture* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

5. Francine du Plessix Gray, “The Rules of the Game,” in her *Divine Disobedience: Profiles in Catholic Radicalism* (New York: Knopf, 1970). This profile first appeared in *The New Yorker*, vol. 46 (April 25, 1970), pp. 40ff. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992); Cayley’s fifty-seven-page introduction is the best single overview of Illich’s work that exists to date. The Cayley book arose from an interview first broadcast on the *Ideas* program: “Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich” (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1989). Most books on Illich, excluding anti-Illich propaganda such as Joaquín Sáenz Arriaga’s *Cuernavaca y el progresismo religioso en México* (México, DF: 1967), have focused on specific Illich theses regarding schools, medicine, or development, many in languages other than English. With regard to schools, see, for example: Harmut von Hentig, *Cuernavaca oder: Alternativen zur Schule?* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1971) and *Die Wiederherstellung der Politik: Cuernavaca Revisited* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1973); Alan Gartner, Colin Greer, and Frank Riessman, eds., *After Deschooling, What?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Hubert Hannoun, *Ivan Illich ou l’école sans société* (Paris: ESF, 1973); Lauro de Oliveira Lima, *O enfant sauvage de Illich numa sociedade sem escolas* (Petropolis, Brazil: Vozes, 1975); John Elias, *Conscientization and Deschooling: Freire’s and Illich’s Proposals for Reshaping Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); and Patrick Vivert, *Attention Illich* (Paris: Cerf, 1976). With regard to medicine, see: Luigi Bovo and Pia Bruzzichelli, eds., *Illich Risponde dopo “Nemesi medica”* (Assisi, Italy: Cittadella, 1978); Rainer Flöhl, ed., *Masslose Medizin? Antworten auf Ivan Illich* (New York: Springer, 1979); and David F. Horrobin, *Medical Hubris: A Reply to Ivan Illich* (Montreal: Eden Press, n.d.). On Illich’s criticism of development, see: Hans Achterhuis, *Filosofen van de derde wereld: Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Mao Tse-Toeng* (Bilthoven, Netherlands: Ambo, 1975); Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Jean Robert, *La trahison de l’opulence* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976); and Raffaello Ciucci, *La società conviviale: La profezia post-industriale di Ivan Illich* (Pisa, Italy: ETS, 1984). Among the very few attempts to integrate these three themes or to step beyond them are Stephan H. Pfürtnner, ed., *Wider den Turmbau zu Babel: Disput mit Ivan Illich* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985); and Tetsuji Yamamoto, *Gakkō iryō kōtsu no shinwa: Sangyō sūbisu seidoron* [Myths of School, Medicine, and Transportation: The Logic of Industrial Service] (Tokyo: Shinjyōron, 1984).

6. See, for example, S. Leonard Rubinstein, “Things Have Consequences,” *Research Penn State* 15, no. 3 (September 1994), pp. 22–27, a narrative report on a spring 1994 weekend

conversation among Illich, Albert Borgmann, Richard Buchanan, Barbara Duden, Eric Higgs, and others.

7. See Hans Achterhuis, *Het rijk van de schaarste: Van Thomas Hobbes tot Michel Foucault* [The Reign of Scarcity: From Thomas Hobbes to Michel Foucault] (Barn, Netherlands: Ambo, 1988). For another Illich project taken up by Valentina Borremans, see the massive Borremans project on collecting sources for the history of religiosity in Latin America mentioned in Appendix 1 under *CIDOC Fuentes*.

8. See Leonard J. Waks, ed., "Symposium on Ivan Illich," *Philosophy and Technology*, vol. 8: *Europe, America, and Technology: Philosophical Perspectives* (Boston: Kluwer, 1991), pp. 15ff. Contents: Carl Mitcham, "Tools for Conviviality: Argument, Insight, Influence," pp. 17–56; Leonard J. Waks, "Ivan Illich and *Deschooling Society*: A Reappraisal," pp. 57–74; Robert N. Proctor, "Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis*: Fifteen Years Later," pp. 75–94; and Larry D. Spence, "Ivan Illich's H_2O and the *Waters of Forgetfulness*," pp. 95–105. Note: In his introduction to this symposium, Waks presents these four papers as part of a forthcoming book to be edited by Rustum Roy; this book has not appeared, although "Ivan Illich: Appreciation," a slightly overlapping collection of papers, was published in Roy's journal, *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 16, nos. 5–6 (1996), pp. 233ff.

9. Jacques Ellul's *La Technique, ou l'enjeu du siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1954) appeared in English as *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Knopf, 1964), which was the version Illich actually read first. For Ellul's comments on Illich in the two supplements, see *The Technological System*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Continuum, 1980 [French original 1977]), pp. 335 n.22, 339 n.4, 348 n.7, and 355 n.13; and *The Technological Bluff*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990 [French original 1988]), p. 108.

10. See, for example, Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Reinhart, 1944); Leopold Kohr, *The Breakdown of Nations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); and Don Gifford, *The Farther Shore: A Natural History of Perception, 1798–1984* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990). The favorable references to these books are more verbal than written, although Illich has done prefaces for two of Kohr's books and given a lecture on him; see Leopold Kohr, *City of Man* (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1976); and *The Breakdown of Nations* (reprint Routledge, 1986); and Ivan Illich, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr*, 14th Annual E.F. Schumacher Lectures (Great Barrington, MA: E.F. Schumacher Society, 1994).

11. With regard to historical questions, one should note that Illich's doctoral dissertation was entitled "Die philosophischen Grundlagen der Geschichtsschreibung bei Arnold Joseph Toynbee" [The Philosophical Foundations of History Writing according to Arnold Joseph Toynbee] (Universität Salzburg, 1955).

12. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. v.

13. Erich Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Ungar, 1961) includes a translation (by T.B. Bottomore) of Marx's "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" and emphasizes the concept of alienation. Fromm was a neighbor of Illich in Cuernavaca and a close friend. See, for example, the mentions of Illich in Daniel Burston, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Rainer Funk, *Erich Fromm: His Life and Ideas*, trans. Ian Portman and Manuela Kunkel (New York: Continuum, 2000). Fromm also wrote a preface for Illich's early book, *Celebration of Awareness* (1970).

14. For a useful introduction to the spectrum of contemporary philosophical discussion about friendship, see Preston King and Heather Devere, eds., *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000). It is also worth noting that CIDOC publications already indicate the importance Illich placed on friendship; see, for example, *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 51(1970), Adele M. Fiske, *Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition*.

15. See Ivan Illich, "The Right of Dignified Silence," "I Too Have Decided to Keep Silent," and "Silence as a Commons," in his *In the Mirror of the Past* (1992), pp. 27–33 and 47–54. This view of silence is foreshadowed in an essay on "The Eloquence of Silence" in *Celebration of Awareness* (1970).

16. Illich gave a public lecture at Penn State University in the Fall semester 1997 entitled "The Immorality of Bioethics" in which he recalled earlier critiques, including a manifesto in his *In the Mirror of the Past*. For one extended argument that exhibits sympathies with Illich's position, see Anne Maclean, *The Elimination of Morality: Reflections on Utilitarianism and Bioethics* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

17. To date, the best single reference for this radical ethical stance is "Ivan Illich: Toward a Theology of Technology," a special theme issue of the *Ellul Studies Forum*, issue no. 8 (January 1992), pp. 1–18, which includes Illich's "Health as One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!," "Against Health: An Interview with Ivan Illich," "Posthumous Longevity," and "Toward a Post-Clerical Church"; Lee Hoinacki's "Reflections on 'Health as One's Own Responsibility'" and "Dear Kelly' Memo"; and David Schwartz's "The Teddy Berracks."

18. See Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas with David Herr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

19. Leon Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance: Why We Should Ban the Cloning of Humans," *New Republic*, vol. 2 (June 1997), pp. 17–26. For a general defense of the role of emotion in the moral life, see Mary Midgley, *Heart and Mind: The Varieties of Moral Experience* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

20. See Plato, *Republic* VI, 491d–e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 10, and *Politics* IV, 2; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* IV, 13; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II, Q. 39, art. 4, 1, and Q. 105, art. 1, 5; and Shakespeare, Sonnet 94: "For fairest things grow foulest by foul deeds;/Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds." See also Thomas Fuller's *Gnomologia* (1732): "Women grown bad are worse than men, because the corruption of the best turns worst." One may note, however, that Illich's wording is at odds with the most common forms of the Latin proverb—*Corruptio optimi pessima* and *Corruptio optimi pessima fit*—neither of which is actually to be found in any classical author. According to William Francis Henry King—*Classical and Foreign Quotations*, rev. ed. (London: Whitaker, 1889), p. 99—the more medieval wording referred originally to bad priests and especially to the sins of all who had been supernaturally blessed.

21. David Cayley, "The Corruption of Christianity: Ivan Illich on Gospel, Church, and Society," *Ideas* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 2000).

22. See, for example, V.A. Demant, *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1952), p. 180: "Certain features of modern Western civilization which are contrary to a Christian view . . . are nevertheless outgrowths of . . . Christianity. . . . This suggests that Christianity is a very dangerous religion; for when its faith fails to inform the culture it so largely induced, man is in a more risky predicament than if he had remained pagan." Demant includes footnotes and references demonstrating extensive discussion of this idea, although he understandably fails to cite Simone Weil, *Cahiers*, vol. 3 (Paris: Plon, 1956), p. 136: "Les erreurs de notre époque sont du christianisme sans surnaturel. Le 'laïcisme' en est la cause, et d'abord l'humanisme." For an English version, see *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, vol. 2, trans.

Arthur Wills (New York: Putnam's, 1956), p. 502. Jacques Ellul puts forth another version of the thesis in *The Betrayal of the West*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Seabury, 1978), p. 66: "The West has created the best and produced the worst, because man cannot permanently maintain so difficult and demanding a balance." For further references to this instability version of the argument, see Carl Mitcham, "Technology as a Theological Problem in the Christian Tradition," in Carl Mitcham and Jim Grote, eds., *Theology and Technology: Essays in Christian Analysis and Exegesis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), especially note 7 and the related text.

23. For an illustration of this position, see Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970* (New York: Viking, 1989).

24. The "slashing attacks" characterization is from Albert Borgmann's *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Culture: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 167, in which he faults Illich for exhibiting what he calls the pessimism of optimists (see p. 145).

25. Ivan Illich, "Health as One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!" *Ellul Studies Forum*, no. 8 (January 1992), p. 4.

PART II
THE PERSON

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CHAPTER THREE

Ivan Illich as We Knew Him in the 1950s

Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J.

Ivan Illich embarked on his New York City career as a young assistant priest at Incarnation Parish in upper Manhattan where, in a few short years, he became the beloved priest of a quite varied gathering of parishioners. It was also in this position that he began to exercise an extraordinary influence over the administration and the young priests of the New York archdiocese. At this time the archdiocese was experiencing a rapid influx of hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans, newcomers to a city that had been a haven for immigrants for more than a century. This immigration was a challenge to the city as well as to the archdiocese. If the archdiocese responded reasonably well in its performance, this measure of success was due, more than to anyone else, to Ivan Illich. He gave a vision to officials and priests that they needed and was able to guide them in the development of a pastoral ministry to the Puerto Ricans that was remarkably creative.

It was in this context that I came to know him, and his friendship has been one of the great blessings of my spiritual and religious life as well as of my professional career. With all the attention given to *Deschooling Society* or *Medical Nemesis* or *Gender*, to those of us who were close to Ivan in his early days, he is remembered as a profoundly religious person capable of giving us a deep insight into the realities of our religious experience and of inspiring us to dedicated ministry.

Once Illich arrived at Incarnation Parish and realized that many newly arrived Puerto Ricans had moved into the area, he went to Puerto Rico, learned Spanish almost overnight, and spent one month on foot exploring many aspects of Puerto Rican life. He asked Bishop James Davis, then the ordinary of San Juan, if anyone had come from New York to study the background of the Puerto Ricans. The bishop told him that I had been there some months before and gave Illich a report of my visit that I had left with him. Illich read this and searched me out when he returned

to New York. I was amazed at the insights he had gained into the culture of Puerto Ricans, and the vision he reflected that would guide us in our ministry to them.

He was keenly aware of the importance of ministering to them in a spiritual and religious style that made sense to Puerto Ricans in the context of their culture and traditions. He saw the danger of seeking to make them over in the image of the Irish or German Catholicism of New York. He had also established an extraordinary relationship with Francis Cardinal Spellman. Then, in his conversations with me and the priests of the archdiocese, he worked out with us the pastoral style that assisted us greatly in our response to the spiritual needs of the newcomers. However important it was to help them learn English for education, employment, and political activity, their religious practice made sense only in their native language. He also insisted on a ministry that would enable them to continue their traditional religious practices. He formed a generation of priests who became outstanding in parishes where it was necessary for them to minister to established English-speaking parishioners and, at the same time, to adapt their ministry to the needs of Puerto Ricans.

One of his first achievements was the development of *El Cuartito de María* (The Little House of Mary), as creative a response, as I have seen, to Puerto Ricans. He rented an apartment in a tenement occupied by Puerto Rican families. With the help of a few dedicated young women of the parish, he set up an informal neighborhood apartment where the young women could play with the children and mind them while their mothers were shopping; where women could gather for friendly conversation; and where the young women simply fulfilled the role of good neighbors. This was exactly the kind of casual, personal relationship that would have been characteristic of a *barrio* in Puerto Rico. Had this kind of imaginative response been multiplied, the experience of Puerto Ricans would have been much easier. It is an illustration of the kind of innovative leadership that Illich provided. Looking back on this, I recognize his clear conviction of the need to enable the people to use their own resources in order to cope with their problems rather than constructing agencies and institutions to care for them.

Ivan always refers to me as his teacher, an overstatement if ever there was one. However, he used to come to my lectures in the early 1950s, some on culture, or on the modern city, or on social structures and social systems. He devoured the books I gave him. Being a slow reader myself, I was astounded at the speed with which he went through books. Further, he knew what he was reading and retained it. Many of the ideas of culture and cultural differences, intercultural understanding, and communication that are characteristic of my writings, also appear in his. I never knew whether he got the ideas from me, or whether I got them from him, or whether both of us got them elsewhere.

The concept of culture was just being introduced into popular consciousness at the time and I was among those who were making it so. When we spoke about culture in the early fifties, many a popular audience reacted as if we were speaking

Greek. I marvel how deeply the concept has penetrated popular consciousness now after forty years. Ivan and I were constantly in trouble later on in Puerto Rico because of my lectures on the cultural definition of morality. I simply illustrated that the same form of behavior can be culturally defined as morally right in one society and morally wrong in another. Therefore, it is essential to know the cultural definitions before making a moral judgment. Ivan will be amused to remember an elderly priest seriously advising him to do something about those lectures of Fitzpatrick that were harming the young priests by giving them the impression that moral principles were relative, not absolute. And some of the nuns were quite shaken that I dared to say that consensual unions (common at that time in Puerto Rico) were not, on the face of it, immoral.

Whatever Ivan claims to have learned from me, it cannot compare with what I have learned from him. His erudition was immense and he had the gift of perceiving what the consequences would be twenty years later of a policy or program in force today. I always had the impression that, through his influence, I was years ahead of the game—or as Robert Merton the sociologist would say, that I was standing on the shoulders of a giant.

In the meantime, he was establishing his contacts with the intellectual world, with Father William Lynch, editor of *Thought*, the Fordham University quarterly, and with Dorothy Dohen, then editor of *Integrity*, a bright and penetrating periodical of Catholic laymen and laywomen. He published in *Integrity* under the pen name, Peter Canon.

One article was a perceptive treatment of “The Parish,” a remarkable statement that shows Illich’s grasp of history and his sensitivity to the changes to which the Church must adapt.¹ The seeds of his later “Vanishing Clergyman” can be recognized, but the gentle, temperate tone was to change. Even at this early moment he was asking all priests and parishioners to look carefully at the new social situation and the changes that would be necessary if a priest was to minister to the people as Christ intended.

He published another article, “Rehearsal for Death,” an instruction to people to see death as a “birthday,” and to prepare to embrace it positively rather than simply let it happen.² For a person in the United States only two or three years, his language is impressive and the style unusually literate. All of these were important and inspiring spiritual messages.

About this time he gave a talk on “Virginity”—namely the vow of celibacy either within a religious community or continuing life as a layperson. I don’t know whether he ever published it; he should have. It was a deeply moving essay, emphasizing the significance of vowed virginity as a recognition of the transcendence of God and God’s love, and the affirmation of belief in eternal life by dedicating one’s creative powers to God, foregoing the generation of new life as a public profession of belief in immortality. This added a new perspective to the vow of virginity, which had gener-

ally been explained as a sacrifice of married love and family in order to commit one's entire love and affection to God.

Illich introduced me to Dorothy Dohen and thus began a three-way friendship. Dorothy was a very saintly woman, and Illich's spiritual guidance was important to her for many years of her life. Until her death in 1984, she continued to urge him to return to the practice of priestly ministry (from which he resigned in 1968), but her encouragement in this regard was ineffective. She appreciated, as I have also, the great spiritual and religious influence that Ivan could have on people, and she was convinced that, in the long run, this was more important for God and God's people than his learned social commentaries and critiques.

For example, when Illich was assigned to Puerto Rico in 1956, he began a practice of visiting a small community of Puerto Ricans in a barrio called Playita Cortada, not far from Ponce. He would construct a temporary altar on the porch of a small family house and gather the people for mass. It was most impressive to see the impact of Illich's ministry among these poor people. Dorothy Dohen would remind Ivan of this, and I am sure she often said to him what she said to me: "Ivan would do so much more for the people of God and for himself if he would go back to Playita Cortada." Powerful intellect and super diplomat that he was, he could be as much at home with illiterate peasants as with university professors.

He had an incredible ability to operate at the highest administrative levels, and it was at this level that he had his greatest influence. Cardinal Spellman's trust in him has been a mystery to many people; they had such diverse personalities. But Spellman recognized the importance of Illich's vision and adopted it. Beginning in 1954, the cardinal sent half of the newly ordained priests to Georgetown University for training in Spanish. In 1955, he funded a conference in Puerto Rico on "The Spiritual Care of Puerto Rican Migrants," in which Illich played a major role; it was a meeting of priests from the mainland and Puerto Rico to work out a joint program for the migration. This was later published as a book.³ In 1956, Illich organized the first outdoor Fiesta de San Juan Bautista (Celebration of the Feast of Saint John the Baptist). The celebration of pastoral feasts is a major tradition in Puerto Rico and the San Juan fiesta continued the practice in New York. Thirty thousand Puerto Ricans gathered on the Fordham University campus to celebrate the day with Cardinal Spellman. The event attracted national publicity. It was the first time in New York City that the Puerto Rican community felt completely at home. Later that year, at the request of the Puerto Rican bishops, Cardinal Spellman assigned Illich to Puerto Rico as the vice rector of the Catholic University. The following year, 1957, Illich established the Institute of Intercultural Communication at the university. At this center during the following fifteen years, thousands of priests, sisters, religious brothers, and laypersons were prepared in language and intercultural understanding to work with Puerto Ricans on the mainland.

Ivan hit Puerto Rico like a meteor. In short order he became acquainted with every important intellectual on the island, and soon became a confidant of the gov-

ernor, Luis Muños Marín. I used to teach all summer at the institute, and saw much more of Ivan in Puerto Rico than I had seen of him in New York. We would spend one evening with the governor's family on the terrace of his mansion; another evening, with some "bright lights" of the University of Puerto Rico, or with a few leading figures of the government. He was in close contact with the prominent persons on the planning board, and he always took me along to introduce me to many of them. At the same time, he would track down a family of folk musicians and invite them to play for the students at the institute, thus familiarizing all of us with the culture of Puerto Ricans. He traveled around to folk festivals and dances and brought us with him; he located the *Santeros*, the traditional wood-carvers, to help us appreciate this disappearing art. Sometimes he would stop his car at lonely stretches of beautiful beach to swim. Puerto Ricans cautioned him: He would be attacked by sharks if he did not watch out. His response, more serious than humorous: "The statistical chance of being killed by an automobile in Puerto Rico is far higher than the chance of being attacked by a shark."

They were days of excitement. I had the feeling of being well-informed about every aspect of the island's life. Illich's curiosity was contagious. They were thrilling days and all of us, especially the priests and sisters at the institute, had the feeling of being part of a crusade, filled with enthusiasm and energy and vision. Illich had the capacity to inspire and excite. The spirit flowed back with us to New York and poured life into our efforts to make the Puerto Ricans feel at home in New York City. His charisma communicated itself to most of us—but not to all.

There were critics, plenty of them. One unfortunate development occurred before his arrival at Catholic University. The previous rector, Father William Ferree, was a brilliant man of vision like Illich himself. He was the one who urged the bishops to ask Cardinal Spellman to assign Illich to Puerto Rico. Just before Illich's arrival in late 1956, Ferree was elected to a position in Rome and was replaced by a very insecure priest who had none of the ability of Ferree. The poor man faced the task of dealing with Illich as his second-in-command. The situation was extremely awkward: painful for the rector and frustrating to Illich.

It was during this period that some of Illich's most impressive conferences and sermons were given. They have probably been taped by hundreds of nuns and priests but, unfortunately, few ever found their way into print. Listening to him was a potent experience. Sometimes response to a conference was thunderous applause; sometimes just rapt silence. Two examples of these conferences appear in a little collection of essays, *The Church, Change, and Development*.⁴ One of these, "Missionary Poverty," was the conference with which Illich inaugurated the Institute of Intercultural Communication in 1957 (pp. 112–119). The impact of this talk is still vivid to me. I have heard many more references to it among former students of the institute than I have heard about any other of Illich's writings. Set within the context of Gospel references, he uses the analogy of the Eternal Word of God expressing Godhead in

human form: "To communicate Himself perfectly to man, God had to assume a nature which was not His, without ceasing to be what He was. Under this light the Incarnation is the infinite prototype of missionary activity . . . The missionary is he who leaves his own to bring the Gospel to those who are not his own" (p. 113). Illich elaborates on the wide range of cultural differences, within each one of which the Word of God can express itself. Missionary poverty is the willingness to recognize that one's own cultural expression of God's Word is not the only one; indeed that it can be set aside so that the missionary allows the Word of God to express itself within the context of a culture not his own. The missionary's detachment must go beyond that of visible conveniences; go beyond even affection and opportunities of self-expression; missionary poverty must imitate the emptying of the Godhead involved in the Incarnation of God becoming man.

A companion piece, "Missionary Silence," presents another aspect of this same counsel to missionaries: "listen" to what persons of another culture seek to communicate—more often by silence than by words (pp. 120–125). Again, the statement is made in the context of the Gospels; the silence of Mary, as she conceives the Word of God; her silence which delicately communicates that the Word is growing within her; the silence not of death but of the mystery of death. Illich weaves his message in and out of the Gospel references, illuminating the subtleties of what he is seeking to say, but always opening up surprisingly new visions for his listeners.

I would say these were the great moments that reflected Illich's prophetic gifts, an insight into spiritual realities, and the ability to illustrate the ways these expressed themselves in the routine of daily life. These are the gifts Ivan gave so many of us in those exciting days of Ponce, Puerto Rico. And this continued during the early years at Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Those of us who knew Ivan at that time were not shaken when his brilliance turned to a critical analysis of human institutions. It is interesting to note that before he gave his attention to schools, medicine, and language his first critical effort was aimed at the Catholic Church and the way the Church had institutionalized the priesthood.⁵

During the days of Puerto Rico, Illich often addressed the issue of priesthood with us. This was a few years before Vatican II. It was clear to all of us that he was not speaking about priesthood in its essential sense; he was questioning the way priesthood was "institutionalized" in recent centuries in the Catholic Church. He foresaw the challenge to the Church of the social changes that were coming, and he was trying to alert us to look carefully at the need to prepare for change. Long before he published these discussions, he had spoken about them and had provoked controversy.⁶

Briefly, he was saying that the Church had institutionalized priesthood around four characteristics: (1) seminary trained; (2) committed to a celibate life; (3) full-time functionary of the Church; and (4) support by the institution. None of these characteristics is essential to priesthood. Therefore, these institutional structures that con-

stitute what he called “the cleric” (not the priest) are capable of change, and he urged us to consider how these changes might occur.

By the time the argument took published form in *The Critic*, Vatican II had taken place and the changes of the 1960s were in full flood. Illich’s language was sharp and devastating, describing an institutional structure committed to destruction. It was marked by the intensely critical style of *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality*. Slowly many of my own statements became an effort to explain what Illich was saying, and to place it in a context that had more meaning for a variety of audiences.

By this time, of course, Ponce had come to an end. In the political controversy in which the Church in Puerto Rico became embroiled in the 1960 election, Illich found himself out of favor with the bishops who had launched their own political party. He had been declared “persona non grata” and was told to leave the island. He returned to New York, then spent many months traveling throughout South America. After that journey, he arranged with Fordham University to sponsor a new training center in Cuernavaca and was granted a five-year leave by Cardinal Spellman to launch the Mexican project. The Center of Intercultural Formation was put together in an old converted barracks on the Fordham campus in the Bronx, the memorable Silk Hall, Room 13. But there begins another chapter of Illich’s history.

In all my associations with Ivan, I always felt I had a privileged view of the next generation. He was and still is a man of brilliant perceptiveness. I have felt a great loss in seeing so little of him in recent years. I used to welcome the weeks and months when I would work through versions of a forthcoming book with him. When it appeared, I always felt prepared ahead of time to help people understand it.

Ivan has always told me that he would write an article or book that would reveal to me the uselessness of the concept of social structure or social system. I have no doubt that he could do this—another stage of his education of Fitzpatrick. But I have always told him that he must first reconcile himself to institutions. He would often remark, especially at Cuernavaca, that he was going to “deinstitutionalize the Church in Latin America.” I would then comment that he did not seem to realize that he was “institutionalizing the deinstitutionalization of the Church!”

In his savage devastation of institutions, he has often been asked what institution he is going to suggest to replace the ones he claims will disappear. In these conversations, I always think back to El Cuartito de María. Let life express itself spontaneously in the familiar context of people’s lives. Institutions should exist simply to enable people to do this themselves; not have a preconceived structure imposed on them.

In fact, with all the notoriety of his super critiques of modern institutions (and I have profited enormously from all of that), I often feel I am with the real Ivan when we say a few evening prayers together, or when he devoutly assists at my masses.

It was always clear to me that Dorothy Dohen's request that Ivan return to pastoral ministry was a futile one. But I do hope that the prophetic vision of those early years at Incarnation and Ponce will begin to appear more clearly again as he continues to project so brilliantly the characteristics of the world of the future.

New York City

NOTES

1. Peter Canon, "The American Parish," *Integrity* (June 1955), pp. 5-16.
2. Peter Canon, "Rehearsal for Death," *Integrity* (March 1956), pp. 4-10.
3. William Ferree, John [sic] Illich, and Joseph Fitzpatrick, *The Spriritual Care of Puerto Rican Migrants* (New York: Arno Press, 1980). This is a reprint.
4. Ivan Illich, *The Church, Change, and Development*, ed. Fred Eychanger (Chicago: Urban Training Center Press, 1970). All page references in this and the next paragraphs are to this text.
5. See Ivan Illich, "The Vanishing Clergyman," in his *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Awareness* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 57-84.
6. "The Vanishing Clergyman" was first published in *The Critic* (June-July, 1967).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Adventure of Publishing Ivan Illich

Marion Boyars

I became a publisher in 1960 by buying 50 percent of an existing publishing house that eventually changed its name to Calder & Boyars. Young people forty years ago had an indomitable belief in their power to make an impact on the world to better it. I don't think many young people in their twenties, except perhaps the very active environmentalists, have the optimism or the arrogance to believe in such possibilities today, but certainly, for those in their forties and fifties, such an impulse is negated by the profound materialism and selfishness that inform our Western civilization now. In 1960 I thought quite sincerely that as a publisher I had the soapbox from which I could send forth new ways and new ideas in the arts and in social concerns. In literature, Calder & Boyars had a recognized special forum for the avant-garde (which unlike now was not a dirty word). Then chance or good luck connected me with Ivan Illich, which changed not only my life but the perceptions and goals for a vast number of people throughout the world. This is how it happened.

Publishers have a habit of traveling worldwide to see other publishers in order to share in each other's finds. I had a visit from a highly acclaimed editor working for the American publisher Doubleday. She brought me proofs of a slim volume of essays, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution*, by Ivan Illich. This was the first book by an intriguing ex-cleric who was now devoting his life to teaching Spanish in Mexico to young American students who wanted to become missionaries in Latin America. Apart from language skills taught by use of the toughest possible course (a hard-working student could learn very good Spanish in six weeks), he discussed with them, and with many American and European intellectuals, professionals, and even politicians who crossed his path, principles that questioned conventional institutions and hierarchical orthodoxies, such as those found in the Church, schools, social services, the state, and established fields such as medicine

and welfare; in fact, all the “sacred cows” of society. Not only did he question and criticize, but without any condescension he showed a way in which one might, through one’s own efforts, achieve human dignity and joy for oneself and others.

I took the proofs home and read the twelve essays in one go. This was truly subversive and stimulating thought. I published this book in 1971, followed by *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality*. I did not know Illich when I published *Celebration of Awareness* but had a polite correspondence with him—and that was it.

Our publishing *Deschooling Society* coincided by chance with a Teilhard De Chardin Conference, and Ivan Illich was a featured speaker. I invited myself and sold the two Illich titles from a big table to the very large enchanted audience. Illich was mobbed. A very tall and extremely handsome man whose public speaking was very clear despite his guttural accent, he provoked the listeners with his courageous attack on received notions and his call for us “to create the humanity, the dignity, and the joyfulness of each one of us.” The reformers in those days were always complaining and whining—here was a revolutionary who, with charm, intellect, and humor, analyzed, dismantled, and built up again.

Of course I did not meet him during the conference. I was too shy to approach him and he did not take any notice of me, despite the large name tag I had pinned to my jacket. But there was one more chance. I had been invited to the dinner at a Spanish restaurant which the Teilhard Society was hosting for the speakers. We sat on benches for the predinner drinks, and Ivan Illich came to sit next to me. I introduced myself. He said, rather curtly, “I do not like publishers; I don’t want to talk to you.” I swung around, and with my back to him, spoke to someone I happened to know on my other side. I consoled myself by bravely muttering that one can admire someone without a direct contact.

For the dinner, I was placed on the opposite side of an extremely large table from Illich. I decided to leave after coffee, and Illich suddenly pounced on me, asking if I had a car (in the early seventies you could still park easily in central London), and would I drive him to his hotel. Arriving there, he asked me to have a drink with him in the large and very elegant lobby. Despite the then-strict licensing laws, hotel guests were allowed to drink in England as late as they wished. Contact between Illich and me was quickly established, and I was bowled over by his extraordinarily wide interests and knowledge. He is also a marvelous conversationalist and has an unusual capacity to make friends.

The next day he visited my office and saw that this publisher was not in a glass-and-steel building, that the atmosphere was informal and friendly. Since then we have had a friendship lasting twenty-six years of adventurous and sometimes difficult publishing. After *Tools for Conviviality*, which I still had to license from a U.S. publisher, we embarked upon an original publication, *Energy and Equity*, a call for radically reduced car and energy use. He prophesied that traffic would inevitably come to a standstill. How right he was!

We met in Paris and discussed editorial and presentation matters, sitting at the Deux Magots. There, the “Ideas in Progress” series was invented by both of us; it is a commercially published series of working papers dealing with alternatives to industrial society. Roughly, the series had three characteristics: (1) experts could propose alternatives to crippling and unsatisfactory institutions; (2) the text may be unfinished, but must be clear as a think piece; and (3) to foster direct contact between author and reader, readers were invited to participate in the debate by sending ideas straight to the author, whose address was given in the book. In the series we published texts on housing (John F.C. Turner), renewable sources of energy (Godfrey Boyle), economics (James Robertson), family planning (Peter Diggory and John McEwan), education (James Hemming), advertising (Judith Williamson), and basic income (Tony Walter), to name just a few.

Ivan Illich does not usually appear on television. He did, however, agree to give a lecture at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and I talked him into having the hour-long lecture televised, with no advertisements, by the commercial station Channel 4. No distracting lights could be used, cameras had to be of the silent variety, and the Channel 4 producer, Udi Eichler (who became a close friend), gave me editorial veto power. Although Udi showed me the program before it was broadcast, I did not have to exercise my veto power because his editing was superb.

That was the first solo lecture by Illich I heard, and I recognized not only his originality of thought and courage to propose countermeasures, but I also saw a philosopher and personality with real charisma. In those days people more often than not were looking for gurus who had all the answers. Illich rejected that role, partly out of modesty, but largely because he had an abiding belief in the intelligence and self-reliance of the individual who could come to solutions through his own awareness. All do-goodery was regularly laughed into oblivion.

Illich was the most severe and uncompromising taskmaster I have ever met. I had been educated at a boarding school where the emphasis was on one’s own duty; one’s expectations were to be centered on responsibility toward others, and integrity toward oneself—being true to oneself. For the first time since my school days, I heard these values expressed on a very high intellectual level. What delighted me was that my fellow citizens were as interested in Illich’s ideas as I was. People responded, not only through buying the books, but they wrote and telephoned to thank me, a mere publisher, for promoting these exciting thoughts.

In the winter of 1974, I went to Mexico to take part in a weeklong meeting at Illich’s center, CIDOC, in Cuernavaca. I flew from London to New York, and changed planes at Kennedy Airport to go straight on to Mexico City. After I arrived, I realized that my luggage had been left behind in New York. But by the time I discovered this, the airport in Mexico City was deserted and there were no taxis to take me to Cuernavaca. Night had fallen, I had no Spanish, but solved the problem by hiring a minibus to take me the fifty kilometers or so over the mountains. Without

the language, there was no point in sitting with the driver, so I decided to relax right in the back of the empty van. January is a warm month in Mexico, and there was a full moon. The trip to Cuernavaca was incredibly romantic, a spectacular moonlit mountainscape; no traffic on the road, hence very quiet; I was intensely happy to be alone.

At midnight I arrived in Cuernavaca, a dark town, except for a few lit-up storefronts, which all turned out to be coffin shops. I found my disgustingly dirty hotel, and woke up to the most wonderfully sunny morning. Looking out the window, I saw a crocodile of flower-bearing children and grown-ups. When I looked closer, I also saw a man carrying a very small white coffin on his head. My first impressions of Mexico were two instances of death: the coffin shops and the funeral. Mexico is very death-oriented, as I was to learn during my stay.

Illich had invited friends from all over the world: doctors from Illinois, Texas, and New York; various professors from Italy and Canada; writers from Germany and France; and a holy man from India, to whom I took an immediate dislike. He was wearing several layers of wool clothes of great filth. When I asked him why he was wearing so many clothes in a temperature of a comfortable 75–80 degrees Fahrenheit, he said he was on his way to New York where the temperature was, of course, freezing. As he would not eat what we ate, he had some old cheese in a pouch in his overcoat. I was glad that most of the sessions were held in the open air!

In a small medical journal, published in Texas, Illich had coauthored, with two doctors, an essay questioning the role of the medical establishment in terms of health in Western society. It was a short piece of no more than three pages, but was the basis of his next book, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*. He decided to publish this in the first instance as an “Ideas in Progress” book. The object of the meetings in Cuernavaca was to debate the role of the institution of medicine.

The publication of his small volume, *Medical Nemesis*, coincided with many conferences and lectures, first in England, then almost everywhere else. The book was sadly misunderstood by the media, who regarded it as an attack on medical innovation. The first sentence in the book reads: “The medical establishment has become a major threat to health.”

I managed to get some of this book serialized in an important daily newspaper before publication. Illich had become a very famous writer and the invitations to speak were now pouring in. The first was in Edinburgh, and I decided to travel to Scotland with him. I had asked the organizers what size audience they were expecting, and they said sixty or so. Three thousand came and they had to listen to him via television hookup. In Dublin, all lecture halls were used for the eight thousand people who had to listen via radio linkup. At one university, the academic staff listened in a special room because they did not want to be seen by the students. Every major university, even pharmaceutical companies, organized lectures. It was miraculous, and the books sold like hotcakes.

The newspaper coverage was never-ending. The Establishment fought his writings, but the ex-monsignor found the Catholic Church on his side; the young applauded his revolutionary stance; the debate was in full swing. Illich responded to hero worship and accusations of satanic intentions with laughter and indulgence.

In my publishing career, I have had fantastic privileges meeting some of the best minds in literature, music, and philosophical thought. Do I fall into hero worship, too? Yes, up to a point. Do I think Illich is the devil incarnate? Sometimes. If one is allowed to love a mind, I plead guilty. If loving the mind one loves the man, so be it.

London, England

[Editorial note: Marion Boyars died before she could finish this essay. She published seven more books by Illich and was discussing another with him at the time of her death.]

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CHAPTER FIVE

On Ivan Illich and His Friends

John L. McKnight

It has been three decades since I first met Ivan Illich at his gathering place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC). He was surrounded by people of every persuasion and nationality, and the rich creativity of the dialogue was a tribute to his convivial household. While the talk could have been understood as intellectual, it was distinguished by its passionate excitement. These were people who had brought their lives, as well as their minds.

Eventually, CIDOC closed, and the lives that had joined Illich there returned home. Since that time, it has been my fortune to travel constantly across North America and sometimes Europe. Wherever I go, in always surprising places, I have met people who have visited CIDOC, have heard Illich, or have read his work. When we discover each other, I find we are each compelled to stop, to share, to remember, and to enjoy. A special place has been created by this meeting, a day made memorable by memory, a friend first met.

I have come upon these people as they were cooking in kitchens, writing bawdy poems, planting seeds, praying, creating social inventions, studying, building a home, directing a cabinet, teaching, or grieving. And in these places or vocations, I learn over and over again of the profound influence Illich has had in the lives of people of such diversity.

Reflecting upon these conversations, I have come to understand which of Ivan's ideas are abiding—those most savored and felt anew. These collected memories are focused on two visions. The first involves the nature of institutionalization. The second reflects the personal consequences of an institutionalized society.

Regarding the first vision, I hear repeatedly the idea that institutions have invaded our lives, families, neighborhoods, vocations, society, and culture. Little that is convivial remains. Our functions, roles, and places are relocated—but not replaced. From birth to death modern systems lay claim to living our lives for us. We

are colonized and yet controlled by enthralling technological illusions of independence, freedom, choice, and, even, community.

Perhaps the most repeated idea about the institutionalizing process is Ivan's understanding of institutional counterproductivity. For many, many people he has made sense of the confusing disarray of the apparently ordered world of modern systems. He has helped us see that institutions can evolve to produce the exact opposite of the function they claim. There can be, in his words, "stupid-making schools," "iatrogenic medical systems," and "crime-making justice systems." Even more significant is the common understanding that this is because the system has displaced friendship, community, and the everyday habits of vernacular life.

There is also a common question that follows this understanding. There is a general impression that Illich saw, even predicted, that institutional counterproductivity would result in an implosion—systems collapsing on themselves. This imminent event represented an opportunity for the redefinition or restoration of a convivial society. Some ask, therefore, why this collapse hasn't happened. Haven't the schools persevered, medical systems grown ever more imperial, prisons flourished, corporate modification proliferated? How should we understand his critique in the face of the ever-expanding institutional invasion of everyday life? Does it hold the seeds of its own destruction? Will enough people finally recognize the counterproductivity so that institutional hegemony will end? Or will the new technological capacities render people so senseless that they can't see the Emperor, much less laugh him off the streets?

About these questions, many people wonder.

The second vision grows from the first. Many people see, in their own lives, the widespread effects of colonizing counterproductivity. As a felicitous consequence, this has clarified for them the ways and woes to be held dear.

The personal sequels are deep and pervasive. As the institutional bulldozer has leveled vernacular space, Ivan points out that the horizon disappears. There is no perceived limit. And so it is that we lose the possibility of satisfaction. There is no end, no home. There is only the endless desert of prospect. It is a prospect that is a mirage. Therefore, we are never anyplace, yet we are addicted to seeking someplace where we can make a world of our own.

Another commonly recognized consequence of our lost horizon is the disappearance of mystery and surprise. The culture claims that everything can be understood. Yet each day we feel that we understand less and less. And in an incongruous inversion, the mystery is said to be our doubt rather than the inexplicable.

Without mystery, we lose the genuine joy of surprise. Now we can see that the mystery is the surprise. It reveals itself like a flower that unfolds in our imagination and memory. In this recovery of our nature, we can see the possible again. It is this possibility that is the hope in the lives of Illich's listeners.

In his later years, Ivan has focused on friendship as the beloved manifestation of our possibility. He has sought to define the conditions that allow, even nurture,

this possibility. And we know that these include a place where surprise, mystery, and memory are at the heart of our discovery of each other.

Illich titled his first book *Celebration of Awareness*. We return to that idea as we seek the realm of friendship because the institutional invasion has also rendered us senseless—lonesome sleepwalkers in a horizonless landscape. So to find our place and be a friend, Ivan reminds us of our senses as convivial guides. We must see, hear, smell, taste and feel to be and, therefore, to be a possible friend. Of course, in television we cannot see; with compact disc, we cannot hear; with deodorant, we cannot smell; in Olean, we cannot taste. And in chat rooms, we cannot feel our presence or our spirit.

Our possibility and our satisfaction is in avoiding these tools for non-sense. Perhaps then we can sense each other. In our friendship we will find sensibility, sensuality, suffering—and satisfaction.

I can see Ivan smiling as he reflects on these words and understandings. He has always said that we cannot capture anything—least of all an idea. So these understandings are those of others, including myself. They are the ways friends have heard and felt him in their lives. They do not capture his thought or friendship because “senseful” people are undomesticated.

Paul Winter is a musician who has attempted to give musical voice to the sounds of animals. He has spent endless hours in the wild watching wolves and birds and whales while listening to their voices. He says the thing distinguishing these animals for him is this: One can see that every sense is alive, alert, focused, sensitive. Consider the deer, the hawk, the schools of fish, the field mouse. Every sense is aware. And yet, Winter points out, we call them wild—uncivilized. By civilized we mean a being that will sit quietly in a classroom or symphony hall and hopefully open at least an ear or an eye. Winter points to the paradox of sensual awareness being called wild and muted, limited senses being civilized.

In Ivan Illich this is not a paradox. About civilized life, whether vernacular or institutional, there is no one I know who sees so clearly. And at the same time he is the wildest man and best friend we have ever known.

Evanston, Illinois

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CHAPTER SIX

Ivan Illich at the *Wissenschaftskolleg*

Gesine Bottomley

Sunday night, October 1981, Berlin-Grunewald. The first Fellows of the *Wissenschaftskolleg*, eighteen of them, including two women, gather for the opening dinner with the rector and to meet the staff over a glass of wine afterward. I have just begun my job as the librarian of this newly founded Institute for Advanced Study, have no idea yet what “fellows” look like, how they work, what they work on, whether they want books, would visit libraries, or need a librarian.

“Are you Gesine Bottomley, the librarian? Then you are the most important person for me at the *Kolleg*. I am Ivan Illich, come along and let’s talk about the library!”

That was the beginning of an ongoing conversation about libraries, books, catalogues, reference works, the people who use them and how they use them, why they should use them, how to evaluate an encyclopaedia or dictionary, where to open them, the treasures and secrets they hold, where to find them, and, above all, what a pleasure it is to be in a library: be it a school library in a village in Mexico, the library of the Vatican in Rome, the *Wissenschaftskolleg*’s library or the beautiful halls designed by Hans Sharoun of the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin.

Within minutes of meeting, we discovered that we both adhered to the same “bible” in the field of librarianship: Eugene Paul Sheehy’s *Guide to Reference Books*, then in the ninth edition, published for the first time in 1907 by the American Library Association. This discovery solved the mystery that had puzzled me since my arrival as a librarian at the Institute: Someone had arranged for the purchase of mailbags full of reference works as starting stock for the library, using as order forms photocopies from entries listed in Sheehy. So it was thanks to Ivan Illich that Liddell and Scott’s *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Ferdinand Brunot’s *Histoire de la Langue Francaise*, and, of course, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory*,

as well as the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, for example, were already waiting for the potential user even before any shelves had been ordered.

This first encounter with Ivan Illich on that Sunday night in October 1981 convinced me to proceed with my plan to create a library service of the highest order for scholars at the Wissenschaftskolleg. If this service reaches Illich's standards and needs, it will also satisfy any other researcher as well.

The fellows stay at the Kolleg for ten months, from October to July, to work on a research project of their choice. They work in a great variety of subject areas, from English literature to physics, history, or Islamic studies; they work in many different languages and can come from anywhere in the world.

Illich worked on his book, *Gender*, during his stay at the Institute. He regularly showered the library with slips measuring 3 x 5 inches, containing bibliographic details about the books and articles he needed for his research. These slips were like thin index cards, which he filed in very long cardboard boxes, several of which were lined up next to each other on his desk, each representing the temptation or possibility to be turned into a book eventually.

The little thin cards reaching the library listed titles from all centuries, in many different languages. Wonderfully or sometimes annoyingly carefree about the details of the spelling of authors' names or about dates of publication, the book requests always arrived as a challenge. Illich intuitively made his way through library catalogues, but his book requests would present problems to the student assistant who could not quite place Pörksen or Petrarch in the precise decade or century. On the other hand, the references were always correctly cited in the format prescribed by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, eliminating doubt whether the item was a book, a journal, or an article.

His work schedule was also precisely organized week by week: "For work May 12th-20th," "Urgent, but not very," "Need it for Feb. 15th," and my favorite, "Sonderlinge—not at all urgent," or "Attention! Year is uncertain—I assume it is between 1955-70."

Unorthodox reference questions or, rather, reference questions asked in an unorthodox manner, were often fun to solve. My favorite was Ivan singing the first lines of a verse to me, such as "*Multi sunt presbyteri*," explaining that much of the song was about a *gallus* (cock) on a church steeple, and asking me to find the complete text.

IVAN ILLICH AND REFERENCE TOOL SELECTION

During Illich's stay in Berlin as a fellow, he and I also entered into a dialogue on library matters, a discussion that has lasted almost twenty years by now, full of pleasure about the publication of new reference works, their evaluation or condemnation ("You do not need the *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*" or "This work is full of inaccurate details on the twelfth century" or "Is it not wonderful how the individual volumes are divided: From Aachen to Bettelsordenskirchen"). His delight was obvious when I

had managed to put a rare purchase on our shelves, such as the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Suggestions still keep arriving from Bremen, Cuernavaca, or State College. The latest batch of “Ivan Zettel” arrived just this summer—by now printouts from his laptop: “Ray, Alain. *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Francaise*. Gesine, if I were to award a prize for the best new reference work, this one would get it!” Or a suggestion concerning a new area of interest being established at the *Wissenschaftskolleg*: “Mani, Vettam. *Puranic Encyclopaedia*. Gesine, this is a feast for Indian scholars whose Sanskrit is a little shaky.” And, of course, I try my best to get a particular out-of-print publication when Ivan tells me it is worth the extra effort, even though it is only a thin little volume.

IVAN ILLICH AS TEACHER-LIBRARIAN

Illich is not only a knowledgeable and enthusiastic librarian-colleague, he also gives voice to the basic conviction of the importance of libraries and free access to material preserved anywhere by anyone. We share the firm belief that acquiring knowledge begins in the library, and is accompanied at every step by the wealth contained and organized in libraries, and that independent study can best be contemplated through the skilled use of library resources. Value lies not simply in the book collections of libraries, but also in the reference works, indices, and catalogues enabling access to the contents of books and journals.

It was not surprising, therefore, that it was Ivan Illich who organized the first library instruction course—spanning an entire semester—ever offered at a German university. Having a working knowledge and appreciation of German as well as English and American libraries, he knew that, in sharp contrast to the Anglo-Saxon library world, neither subject nor title catalogues of any consequence or a unified classification system existed in German libraries, making independent research very difficult for students, teachers, and researchers. He often talked about the many German scholars who—until the late 1980s—would travel to the United States to put together subject bibliographies with the help of library catalogues at Harvard, Berkeley, or other specialized libraries, and then return to Germany to use the rich library holdings in this country.

His experience in the 1980s had been the same as for other library users: New technological tools and supports had increased and changed the possibilities in bibliographic research. However, the ability of students and teachers to make use of these new means of access had not improved to the same degree. Consequently, when offered a guest professorship at the Philipps University in Marburg in 1986, he accepted the post with the condition that the students be given the opportunity to gain working knowledge of the reference collection of the main library of the university. In an act altogether typical of the man, Illich simply stated that he would not be able to work with them otherwise.

Once he had convinced the Philipps administration of this, he asked me to put together a course that would teach young researchers to feel at home in the reference rooms of libraries all over the world, and to work with the material of the reading rooms in a competent, economical, and meaningful manner. We were to make information cheerfully and freely available to all. He frequently talked about the liberating use of reference tools when he explained the importance of promoting and stimulating the courage and competence of the students to enter into research on subjects either close to their own or even totally different from their areas of competence.

He persuaded not only the students, but also several of his professor colleagues to spend every other Friday afternoon and Saturday morning with me in the university library, where I introduced the group to our highly valued Sheehy, the bibliography of bibliographies, and “walked” them in every sense of the word through the reference collection and reference works until they were able to surefootedly reach the *Internationale Jahresbibliographie der Festschriften* and turn to the “Keyword Index of Contributions” to check, for example, for additional articles on DNA, about a particular person, or a certain historical period.

The highlight of the course for the students, however, was when Illich came as a “guest” to the seminar. Generous as always with his time and knowledge, he led the group of students for two hours along the shelves of the reference section, pulling out this or that reference work; demonstrating for what, how, and when he used this book; talking about the editor or how much better, more carefully edited, perhaps, an earlier edition is; or flipping open an index to show the wealth of information made accessible through that particular section. He left us breathless, pleased, and with the firm conviction that we would spend all our spare time in libraries from now on.

IVAN ILLICH AND LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY

The importance Illich places on knowing printed reference tools has not diminished with the advances in electronic databases and other new library technology. In fact, in our conversations he stresses “the importance of *active* research in printed library reference tools at a moment when the massive offer of electronic data bases further threatens to decrease the research ability of scholars, young and old” (he wrote me in 1990). Yet he did exchange his portable typewriter for a laptop and soon became the first person I knew in Germany who had somehow gained access to an on-line library catalogue, that of Pennsylvania State University, well before the pervasive onslaught of modems and Internet sources.

The slips I receive from him now are generated by a database from his laptop. As a technical tool, that makes a certain kind of research, such as access to library catalogues, easier. So, new technology is allowed into the research activities of Illich. For example, he gathered a group of students around his laptop last autumn so that I could introduce them to library matters and research on the World Wide Web. We

then proceeded to spend the major part of the evening around his dinner table discussing the “*Ausbildung zur Verwendung von Papier auch in der Sturmflut von Bits*” (Education for movement from paper to the flood storm of bits), and to me this sounded like a promise of many more conversations on libraries and reference tools to come.

Berlin, Germany

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CHAPTER SEVEN

In the Shadow of Jerome

Domenico Farias

I want to comment on some autobiographical passages to be found in the volume, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*.¹ I would like to elucidate and synthesize the words of the text and, moreover, to explain why, in this case, having reached a certain interpretation and integration, I am obliged to pause at a critical point. In the text there occurs a break beyond which the path seems to continue, but in between there is a gap, or the waters of an impetuous torrent. Although an exegetical commentator tries to build bridges and piers to make it easier for ordinary readers to overcome the interruption, they cannot be saved from the labor and risks of a “hermeneutic leap,” jumping from one shore toward the other, attempting thus to grasp the essential underlying unity—the unity of a way of living that saves itself by appearing to lose itself.

Recalling the locales of his childhood in Dalmatia, Illich says this:

That island from which I come is one of the very few places where Rome permitted, after the Council of Trent, the Roman mass—which was established at the Council of Trent—to be read in Slavonic, in old Slavonic. I’ve increasingly been certain, as I’ve grown older, that it’s good to be very consciously a remainder of the past, one who still survives from another time, one through whom roots still go far back, and not necessarily examined roots. I’m aware of the tremendous privilege of coming from certain traditions, and of having been deeply *imbued* by them. (p. 101, emphasis in original)

He also says, “Since I left the old house on the island in Dalmatia, I have never had a place which I called my home. I have always lived in a tent” (p. 80).

These words have an immediate and easily understandable meaning from which it is not difficult to arrive at further geographical and historical knowledge important for a better understanding of the course of Illich’s life. Split in Dalmatia and Vienna,

where Illich was born in 1926, are not distant memories of the Middle European world of yesterday, before World War I. They were transmitted through the figure of his grandfather, along with an even more remote past through the contemplation of a natural and human landscape, familiar since infancy. All these remained afterward in his soul, reemerging and explicitly resuggesting themselves to consciousness many years later, many thousands of miles away, in Southeast Asia, Mexico, Brazil, and Pennsylvania.

The Dalmatia that Illich speaks about with David Cayley is the same one he described to me nearly fifty years ago in Venice when the two of us, theology students on vacation, were looking for the precise location of his ancestral house on the shore of the Adriatic near its true capital. “You know, Domenico, we Dalmatians are certainly not Italians; but, rather, Venetians.” The same Dalmatia, but with a more youthful soil (and sea), is growing younger while he is growing older, “outliving another epoch.” It is an epoch held in the memory, where it does not lie inert, but lives, representing itself to consciousness in more essential and fresh forms, such as to rejuvenate also its host, as Athena did in her apparitions to Ulysses.

To “outlive another epoch” is also *revirescere* (to grow green again, to grow strong, young again), *reviviscere* (to revive), *reflorescere* (to blossom again). These expressions are to be found in the pages of ancient Latin writers, *de re rustica*—speaking of the pruning of plants. Expressions known and dear to Illich, received—I was going to say, “sucked up”—from Gerhart Ladner, who studies them in his work *The Idea of Reform*,² one of Illich’s beloved books, mentioned also in the conversation with Cayley (pp. 210ff). Knowing that I, too, held it in high regard, he succeeded in obtaining a signed copy of the second revised edition for me. I still remember my amazement when the mailman in Catanzaro brought me the volume. I had read it in its first edition without, however, personally knowing the author.

In an older person, Dalmatia, relived in the memory of a man “deeply imbued,” and “coming from certain traditions,” might make one think of Marcel Proust, of time lost and found again, but the comparison seems rather imperfect.³ Certainly it is a Dalmatia in idea, but not a question of a formal ideal type, of an entity less than real, spectral like a soul in Hades, shipwrecked in time, but of a more than real being, *επιουσιον* (sufficient for the day),⁴ from which the person receives existential solidity, a second youthfulness, for which he cannot give a reason. One might think of Platonic anamnesis opening up the vision of the Ideas and introducing the seer to dialectic, but that would be off the mark, too. There is nevertheless some truth in these comparisons. To recall the names of Plato and Proust is not altogether useless, even if the unilateral objectification of memory in the first, as well as the subjectivization of memory in the second, are foreign to Illich.

To that Dalmatian island from which Ivan Illich comes, in which he does not now live, and to which he does not intend to return, he does not belong. His “tremendous privilege” consists not in pertaining to a certain region of the earth, but

to be “coming from certain traditions, and of having been deeply *imbued* by them” (p. 101, emphasis in original).

In a somewhat cryptic manner, the experience of soil, of living on a soil, treasured in memory, is integrated and unified in the wider and more intimate experience of *παραδοσις* (tradition) and of *σφραγισ* (sealing up). The earth is double, is *adamah* and *ehretz*,⁵ mystically transposed and transfigured, destined first to a usage oriented by the Levitical paradigmatic usage, and taken up later in Christian transfiguration. This same earth is simultaneously enjoyed ascetically, in an effort to “celebrate the present and celebrate it by using it as little as possible” (p. 282). Thus Illich also says,

[L]et’s be alive and let’s celebrate—really celebrate—enjoy consciously, ritually, openly, the permission to be alive at this moment. (p. 284)

I think it is a necessary condition for thinking and reflecting . . . to know that we have no future. There might be a tomorrow, but we have no future about which we can say anything, or about which we have any power. (p. 282)

To enjoy an unorganized earth, and one that cannot be organized within a future, and to rejoice in a fruitfulness of which one uses as little as possible, seems a paradox. I would like to throw light on it by proposing a synthetic interpretation of which, as I said, I am, up to a key point, certain. Then there will be a leap, and maybe I’ll stumble and fall.

Everything I am going to say can be summarized in the charge Ivan recalls and makes his own: “*nudum Christum sequere* . . . the ideal of some of the medieval monks whom I read” (p. 283).⁶ With these words, we are still in Dalmatia. They are, in fact, the words of the Dalmatian, Jerome, a contemporary of the destruction of Stridon, his native city, a nomad in Aquileia, Gaul, Antioch, Rome, in Scylla—very near my hometown, Reggio Calabria—and “encamped” in his last earthly stage in Bethlehem.⁷ Without a country, in a civil society without a future, at the end of the ancient era when Rome was being sacked for the first time by Alaric, and Christians could truly and literally live the words of the Apostle Paul: “*non habemus hic manentem civitatem sed futuram inquirimus*.”⁸ Augustine was writing *De civitate Dei*, and Paulinus retired to Nola.

I like to think that in Illich something of Jerome lives, but if this is not so, and friendship veils my judgment, I wish it were so. I am not mistaken, however, in comparing our times to those of this great Father of the Latin Church—times of violence and destruction. A faulty comparison, because nowadays it is not only Rome but the earth that is collapsing. I think all can recognize themselves in these words: “[I]t becomes very difficult to say that for me earth and soil are still the same thing [as in my youth]” (p. 287).

Jerome’s call, *nudum Christum sequere*, follows an Abrahamic dispossession: “Get thee out of thy country!” (Gen. 12:1). Not only from Dalmatia, Stridon, Split,

or Rome, but also, in general, from the earth—indeed, even from Gaia and the illusory responsibilities that, through her, are legitimated.

It would be truly presumptuous to pretend to know everything about the nomadic condition exemplified in Ivan Illich's existence by studying his words and writings, but the fundamental traits of the tradition to which he belongs, and which have marked him, can be determined rather well in themselves. In relation to other perspectives, the contrast further clarifies them.

He is in the great tradition of the Exodus, of the individual and of a people who experience a God different from other gods, those with fixed abodes in certain sites, of a God who passes over the earth and can be known only by someone disposed to see his back as he passes by—and to follow him.

This brings to mind also the *Life of Moses* by Gregory of Nyssa, when we read in Cayley: "Let's be alive and let's celebrate" (p. 284).⁹ Surely this recalls the Book of Exodus: "[A]nd now let us go, we beseech thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord, our God" (Ex. 3:18); "Let my people go, that they may worship me" (Ex. 8:1); "Then Pharaoh said, I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord. But do not go too far" (Ex. 8:28); "And Moses said . . . until we get there we will not know what we are to use to worship the Lord" (Ex. 10:26).

Where is this place to be found, toward which the nomads of God are walking? What are the sacrifices of the journey? What truly is the desert?

The pagan, Celsus, was convinced of being able to answer these questions. He evidently saw in them a Hellenic theme that could be reduced to the Platonic distinction between the earth here below and the pure earth found in a pure sky, of which Plato speaks in a famous passage of the *Phaedo*:

I believe that the earth is very vast, and that we who dwell in the region extending from the river Phasis to the Pillars of Heracles inhabit a small portion only about the sea, like ants or frogs about a marsh. . . . But the true earth is pure and situated in the pure heaven . . . we are dwelling in a hollow of the earth, and fancy that we are on the surface; and the air we call the heaven, in which we imagine that the stars move. But the fact is, that owing to our feebleness and sluggishness we are prevented from reaching the surface of the air: for if any man could . . . take the wings of a bird and come to the top, then like a fish who puts his head out of the water and sees this world, he would see a world beyond; and, if the nature of the man could sustain the sight, he would acknowledge that this other world was the place of the true heaven and the true light and the true earth. (109Bff)

In *Contra Celsum*, Origen denies that the promised land, the place toward which the pilgrim people of God are walking, could be identified with the heaven Plato talks about, close to the elevated place of the astronomers and astrologers.¹⁰

According to the Jewish thinker, Philo, an exile in Alexandria, if one had a genuine love for Jerusalem and the Holy Land and examined the issue of the

authentic conquest of this good and pure earth, he would conclude that Moses, who had not possessed but only contemplated it from the heights of Mount Nebo, had in truth rejoiced in it. The same goes (perhaps even more so) for Abraham or Jeremiah who, exiles in their own land, experienced it as true Levites of the Holy Place. Philo also explains with admirable clarity that one should not confuse people of the earth with the peoples of heaven, that it is necessary not to forget the essential difference between people of heaven and people of God, as well as that between the trials of the journey borne by the first and the sufferings and trials the second must bear, perils from the elements and perils from other people, perils of the body and perils of the soul.¹¹

Illich is also hesitant about astronomy and astrology, diffident even of the sky, because of his skepticism toward science:

I'm really not interested in scientific theories in 1992. (pp. 287–288)

I'll never forget. . . . On the icebox door [of the students' apartment] two pictures were pasted. One was the blue planet and one was the fertilized egg. Two circles of roughly the same size—one bluish, the other one pink. One of the students said to me, "These are our doorways to the understanding of life." The term *doorway* struck me profoundly. I began to reflect on whether these two circles, the blue one and the red one, were not the *sacra* of our time. They are pure science, they are not objects. They are, to speak with Cardinal Ratzinger, emblems for scientific facts, results of technological instruments. As Wolfgang Sachs says so beautifully, the most violent view ever obtained was that of the Earth from the outside. Imagine how many tons of explosive went into separating a Hasselblad camera from the Earth so that they could photograph the earth from the outside. . . . Remember in what a powerful way the traditional and probably necessary division between here and there is abolished. . . . when we look at the Earth from the outside. (pp. 263–264, emphasis in original)

The Earth, which is nothing else but a photograph taken by a Hasselblad whirling around in a satellite, is a denial of the Earth. One can speak about atheism. One doesn't have a word, *agaia*, but Gaia is an "agaia" hypothesis, an agaistic hypothesis, inimical to what Earth is. . . . Earth is something that you can smell, that you can taste. I am not living on a planet. (p. 287)¹²

So as not to misunderstand this text and other similar ones, it is necessary not to forget that the author is a nomad. Few people today could manifest a more non-territorialized existence than he. Fifty years ago I was already struck by the rapidity and precision with which he prepared, and helped others to prepare, their luggage, and to elaborate plans, both for real and for virtual journeys. This born nomad does not wish to see the Earth from the outside; he is not interested in the earth-planet.

Why? He even seems not interested in the sky, as if the tradition that marked him did not proclaim, *coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*,¹³ and did not contain stories about Magi kings and a star.

Why this mistrust of Gaia? And the desire to sniff the Earth, like a dog searching for truffles? Is this the attitude of a nomad? Is there not a contradiction?

In the conversation with Cayley one can find some clarifications concerning these questions, but I should like to add some hermeneutical explication. The “leap” will come later. Illich, as well as others, when speaking of today, sometimes uses the word *nothingness* (p. 266), at other times the phrase, *empty space* (p. 269). Occasionally, the two words are closely associated, as in this passage: “I find the emptiness into which the blue and red thresholds lead much more frightening because what stands between these thresholds is not just emptiness but nothingness” (p. 268).

Rereading these texts, we can see that the nothingness of which they speak is the result of a destruction wrought by human beings, frightening in its operation but even more in the operators—a nothingness, therefore, with a double profile.

Imagine how much violence was done to women, how much shameless violence, in order to photograph the zygote . . . and when we look at the unseen in pregnancy as something already visible here. (p. 265)

This is the first profile of nothingness.

The second profile, in a certain sense even more frightening, is in the doer, not only, to be noted, in the one who has destroyed, but also in the one who, incongruously, appeals to a sense of responsibility, believing in a cosmos dependent on human beings. Such people think themselves capable of improving, recovering, and saving life, to be able by themselves to remedy the damage of the earlier destruction, or even of impeding further ruin.

Illich’s thoughts on this subject of nothingness become clearer in these words:

I am speaking of a mode of being, of talking, of signalling, and of perceiving in which the creatureliness of the world is strongly accentuated, in which we speak about a fertilized egg as a creature and the rose as a creature without ever thinking about a creator. The term *creature* or *critter* has been detached from the term, the object of faith, to which in our Western tradition it has always been connected. (p. 276)

Shortly before he had said, “Life has become a pseudo-god, and a negation of the God who took on flesh and who redeemed us” (p. 276).

The first nothingness: Life violated and destroyed. The second nothingness: The negation of life, a nothingness within human beings, an interior nothingness, a “thinking” that deconstructs reality, a refusal, a negation, not only of the first but also of the second creation, the presumption to possess the power to recreate life destroyed, to “save” it, in this sense, to be responsible for it, to be its re-creator, but

bringing forth instead a horrifying surrogate, raising up “that life which is nothingness” (p. 277).

Not having been able to talk with Illich about this responsibility, what I had read by him on the subject seemed incomprehensible at first. The reference to Hans Jonas (pp. 283–284) had also disconcerted me, for although his later works are not known to me, he is an author who had taught me a great deal about ancient gnosticism and Philo of Alexandria. After a more attentive rereading, however, I became aware of having fallen, maybe, into an error, resulting from my too etymological and theological interpretation of the word *responsibility*, whereas Illich’s interest was in reaching greater precision in more recent historical connotations.

The connotations are more recent regarding the semantic evolution of the word but very ancient in the word’s connection with the proposed thesis, a thesis of moral philosophy. The nomadism of Ivan Illich distances itself not only from constellations but also, and maybe more strongly, from a stoic-cynical moral autarchy; from a mode of understanding virtue in which one glories in saying, with Epictetus: “as to reason, you are neither worse nor less than divine . . . equal with the gods”; and with Seneca: “In what way is Jove superior to a virtuous man?”¹⁴

Philo of Alexandria has this to say about a person who thinks and acts thus: “Instead of piety they have embraced egotism (*φιλαυτιαν*) attributing to themselves the cause of righteous action.”¹⁵ Augustine will say clearly, “*Deformare potuimus, reformare non possumus*,”¹⁶ an expression much loved by Ladner. Schematizing maybe excessively, Baius concludes, “the virtues that the pagan philosophers speak of are not authentic virtues, but *virtutum simulationes et vitia; virtutis imitantia*.”¹⁷

I don’t know if Illich would share this judgment in connection with so many current situations—maybe yes, maybe no. It seems to me that what he says about responsibility clearly shows the difference between the primacy of morals and the primacy of faith, and aims to keep open and viable a narrow road that is the only way to salvation, as defense against the desolation of a time of “the disappearance of basic decency” or of “basic humanity” (pp. 286–287).¹⁸

One cannot find in our time heights of virtue offering a unique richness of wisdom that no destruction can touch (*Omnia mea mecum porto! Mea virtute me involvo*).¹⁹ Neither heavenly theories, nor heavenly moral values are sufficient for the following of Christ. One seeks Christ on a desolate earth, an earth reduced to a muddy morass.

Here also I would like to recall a passage in Jerome:

“The earth has yielded her fruit” (Ps. 67:6). Holy Mary, who is from our earth, from our seed, from this clay, from this slime, from Adam. Dust you are and unto dust you shall return [see Job 34:15]. This earth has yielded its fruit; what was lost in the Garden of Eden, is brought forth in the flower. It says so in the Canticle of Canticles: “I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys.” This flower has become fruit that we might eat it, that we might consume its flesh. . . . Listen to what the fruit

itself says: “Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it cannot bring forth much fruit” [John 12:24]. The earth has yielded her fruit, it has yielded a grain of wheat . . . it fell into the ground and died . . . the fruit multiplied in the head of grain. Because one had fallen, it rose again as many.²⁰

This passage specifically unifies core elements to which Illich refers, but their profound unity may not be apparent to the reader.

In the history of monasticism, it is known how much the themes of pilgrimage and hospitality were interwoven with that of immobility and the vow of stability, taking their example from Christ nailed to the cross, the cross driven into the earth, and raised up from it. This is the meaning of ascension in the Gospel of John; it is an important point, that one not mix up the sense of agape with other intellectual or moral dynamisms.

Christians do not want to leave the earth because they do not want to leave the Crucified. At his wish, one would go to another place, provided that there also one would find Christ. Like Mary Magdalene, one stays by the empty tomb and asks where they have laid him. Like a poor dog, one sniffs around the tomb. I believe the origin of the cult of relics is found here.

I do hope an excessively imaginative bias has not led me into an improper understanding, throwing me off the track, but it is in this sense that I interpret the following passages:

I want to be able to kiss the soil on which I stand, to touch it . . . earth is something you have to use all your senses to grasp, to feel. Earth is something that you can smell. (p. 287)

But what was important was that the people themselves smelled the sanctity of a relic, the odor of sanctity. (p. 138)

Bones of saints . . . this is how Christianity started—celebrating the glorious victory of people who had voluntarily accepted ultimate punishment. (p. 137)

[T]he people themselves smelled the sanctity of a relic. (p. 138)

By the end of that century [the tenth] the smell of sanctity was no longer perceived. . . . It disappears. (p. 138)

These words, if taken literally, are not quite true. Jestingly, I might add that they undermine a town precious to Illich—Marburg! I am thinking of the pages that Ernst Kantorowicz dedicates, in his work on Frederick II, to the days of rejoicing in Marburg, days filled with the smell of the balsamic oil exuded by the bones of Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia, carried on the shoulders of the emperor, her cousin, who walked barefoot.²¹

Even more evocative and detailed are the pages of Charles de Montalembert's *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth*, albeit historiographically questionable.²² But today we have a more reliable work: *Sainte Elisabeth de Hongrie*, written by Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, who carefully reconstructs that memorable day of May 1, 1236.²³

Moving from Marburg to Bologna—another city cherished by Illich—I can cite the work of Enrico Morini, a scholar of Oriental and Calabrese monasticism, who published *La chiesa ortodossa*.²⁴ This work can be read with pleasure by whomever would wish, like Illich, to kiss and smell the earth as a true pilgrim, without falling into “misplaced concreteness” (p. 287).

What Jerome affirms about flowers germinating in the earth and what Illich says about the perfume of relics has to be integrated with the parallelism between Jerome's words on the fruitfulness of wheat and the expression of Illich on the hospitable table. I don't mean to argue that this contains the key to reconstruct his general view on conviviality; such would be presumptuous on my part. But Illich reminds us that tomb and table go together: “In the first thousand years of Christianity, Christians assembled around a table called an altar and built above an empty tomb” (p. 280).

The first altar was only a table with a twofold symbolic sense for the early Christians, who preferred to avoid the word altar, reserving it for the sacrifice of the cross and the heavenly liturgy. On earth there is a table prepared for many, of which Jerome speaks in the passage mentioned above. Christians unite not only the cross and the rose, but also the cross and the wheat, the cross and the grape, the cross and the bread, the cross and the wine—at the table prepared by God in Christ, the Last Supper, the memorial of the Pasch. The festive table is remembered when we read of the “dinner table which symbolizes opposition to that macabre dance of ecology, the dinner table where aliveness is consciously celebrated as the opposite of *life*” (p. 282). The word *life* emphasized signifies the emptying, the nothingness that earthly life becomes when Christ is not given what is Christ's.

“Life has become a pseudo-god, and a negation of the God who took on flesh and who redeemed us” (p. 276). Such words, it seems to me, should be understood in connection with what was discussed above, the human claim to reconstitute oneself as a being responsible for salvation.

Considering everything, there is not much mentioned of the “festive table” in *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. I believe this is a deliberate silence, similar to that about Jacques Maritain, a friend who is alluded to circumspectly (p. 152). A festive table, however, in a non-liturgical context, is that of the meal shared with Philippe Ariès in Paris. In the restaurant, some good bottles of Cahors were served (p. 76). Then, after the meeting, Ariès published his famous work about death.²⁵ Rereading this passage, at first an expression of Jerome came to my mind. Commenting on the

verse of Ecclesiastes, “A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry” (Eccles. 10:19), Jerome writes: “*Omnis . . . vir sanctus qui, ut Christus praecepit, magister Ecclesiae est, in risu et laetitia panem facit et vini pocula ministrat in gaudio.*”²⁶

From days long distant—when we were theology students—another memory comes to light, the recollection of a true *magister*, one who insisted that Illich stay at his home for dinner. Illich had paid him a visit, because he wished to know more about the *Herrlichkeit* of Jesus. So the conversation continued *inter pocula*, with Romano Guardini, the author of *The Lord*.²⁷ Back in Italy, Illich told me about the circumstances of the encounter, the explanations he had received, and the joy it had given him.

The reader may have noticed that I am digressing. Actually, I hesitate out of a profound respect. I feel a certain interruption and silence is fitting, a silence which, however, is also eloquent. It is a timely silence and, at times, necessary, when even at the festive table shadows fall or, more seriously, one senses the need to call on the Lord to protect us from “the night” (see John. 13:30).

But, once again, I draw light, comfort, and hope from Jerome, to attempt what I called at the beginning of this essay “a hermeneutic leap.” I’ll let him speak. And the reader also, if he or she wishes, can listen to him directly, reading his entire Letter #21, to Pope Damasus, where he speaks of the banquet, of the father, and of the two brothers. Here I’ll quote only those words of Jerome that go to the root of our incapacity to seat ourselves at the festive table in the proper wedding clothes (see Matt. 22:11–14)—we cannot thank the Father together: *Tu ea mente qua invides fratri, qua a patris recedis aspectu et semper in agro es, nunc quoque vis absente eo inire convivium* (emphasis added).²⁸

The other texts of Jerome to be remembered here—texts of his or those that tradition ascribes to him—are the commentaries on Psalm 40 and on Psalm 55:²⁹ a kind of *vademecum* for whoever sits down with joy, but also in suffering, at the festive table, and sometimes does not know if he is the downtrodden or the one who does the treading. And maybe it is good not to know such things, *dum peregrinamur a Domino*,³⁰ so long as we live, as Gaston Fessard would say, the historical actuality: *[C]e noeud des libertés humaines au sein duquel s’échangent leurs questions et leurs réponses pour donner au monde un sens qui les rapproche ou les écarte de leur fin transcendente*.³¹

There is the Major Transcendence and there are the minor reciprocal transcendences of the souls who, in the pilgrim church, live not only an apophatic theology, but also an apophatic anthropology. That they might remain in communion, it is good that they practice the “leap”: *Charitas omnia credit, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet. . . . Videmus nunc per speculum, in aenigmate.*³²

NOTES

This chapter was translated from the Italian by Mother Jerome Nagel, O.S.B.

1. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992). All subsequent references to this book are given by page numbers in parentheses within the text itself.

2. Gerhart H. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

3. Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984–1987).

4. See the Greek New Testament, Matt. 6:11, and the eight pages of commentary in Gerhard Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1990), pp. 587–597.

5. *Is dust and land*. See Gen. 2:7, Zech. 2:12, Gen. 13:14–15, and Deut. 34:4.

6. The Latin translates as “Follow the nude Christ.” The full Latin text is *Nudum Christum sequere nudus* (Follow the nude Christ nude).

7. Jerome repeats the phrase at least three times in his letters. See the word, *nudité*, in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 11, cols. 508–517 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1982), and the bibliography cited there.

8. “Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Heb. 13:14).

9. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 134.

10. Origène, *Contre Celse* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969), p. 76.

11. See Philo, *On the Cherubim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), in “Philo,” Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2, pp. 38–41; Philo, *On the Change of Names* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), in “Philo,” Loeb Classical Library, vol. 5, pp. 220–221; Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), in “Philo,” Loeb Classical Library, vol. 4, pp. 168–169.

12. In these three quotations, which are taken from a radio interview transcript and never corrected by Illich himself, there are some obvious errors that have been silently corrected.

13. “The heavens proclaim the glory of God” (Ps. 18:1).

14. See Epictetus, *Discourses and Enchiridion*, bk. I, ch. 12, trans. Thomas Higginson (New York: Walter J. Black, 1944) p. 38; see also ch. 26, pp. 66–68. Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, no. 73 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 223; see also no. 9, pp. 17–22; no. 13, pp. 30–34; and no. 18, pp. 47–50.

15. Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), in “Philo,” Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8, pp. 318–321. The Greek translates literally as “self-love.”

16. J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, sive bibliotheca universalis . . . omnium sanctorum patrum* Series Latine, 221 vols. (Paris: 1844–1964), 38:255. The Latin translates as, “We can deform, but not reform ourselves.”

17. See Vittorino Grossi, *Bonio e Bellarmino interpreti di S. Agostino nelle questioni del soprannaturale* (Rome: Studium Theologicum “Augustinianum,” 1968), p. 87. The Latin translates as, “are vices, simulations of virtues, the imitation of virtue.”

18. Illich attributes the quotes to George Orwell and Nils Christie, respectively.

19. See Horace, *Opera* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984), ed. Stephanus Borzsák, “Carminum,” bk. 3, stanza 29, p. 100. The Latin translates as, “All the things I need amount to very little, and I can carry them along with me! I wrap myself in my virtue as in a mantle.”

20. See Origene-Girolamo, *74 omelie sul libro dei Salmi*, ed. Giovanni Coppa (Milan: Edizione Paoline, 1993), p. 7.
21. Ernst Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Düsseldorf: H. Küpper, 1963). Italian translation: *Federico Secundo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1988), pp. 419-420.
22. Charles de Montalembert, *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth de Hongrie, duchesse de Thuringe, 1207-1231* (Paris: De Bécourt, 1836).
23. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Sainte Elisabeth de Hongrie* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 1946), pp. 354-357.
24. Enrico Morini, *La chiesa ortodossa: Storia, disciplina, culto* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1996), pp. 401-409.
25. Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Originally published in French as *L'Homme devant la mort* (1977).
26. Translation: "As Christ decreed, every holy man who is a teacher in the Church prepares the bread in laughter and joy, and ministers the cups of wine rejoicing."
27. Guardini was an internationally famous teacher and author in Germany. See Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Chicago: Regnery, 1978).
28. Translation: "That envy of your brother, which takes you from your father and *keeps you always out in the field*, now pulls you away from the feast."
29. See J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, vol. 26, pp. 1003ff and 1044ff.
30. Translation: "While we are on pilgrimage, separated from the Lord."
31. Gaston Fessard, *De l'actualité historique*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960), p. 293. Translation: "this knot of human liberties inside of which the questions and answers are exchanged to give a sense to the world which moves one closer to or farther from one's transcendent end."
32. Translation: "Love believes everything, hopes for everything, puts up with everything. . . . [N]ow we see only in a mirror, enigmatically" (1 Cor. 13:6-7 and 12).

PART III
ARENAS OF THOUGHT

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Economy, Subsistence, and Psychological Inquiry

Robert Kugelmann

Ivan Illich's thought has been a genuine challenge to some of my basic presuppositions. My early work attempted to redress the alienating power of objectified accounts of the body by discovering the lived- or ensouled-body in anatomy and physiology.¹ I had neglected to consider that these alienating accounts arose as discursive practices of modern social institutions (the state, medicine, law, education). These institutions mediate self-understanding as conditions of living in the modern age. If my project had succeeded, it would only have worsened our condition, by putting "soul" into the accounts. One advantage of mechanistic explanations of the body is that they do bifurcate the self, relegating soul to an unknown realm of no institutional concern. Mental mechanisms are clearly mechanisms, so that the two—body and soul—are not confused. I recall Illich saying that attempts such as mine, filled with good intentions, "dress up Justine's body."²

Thus a psychologist discovers his genealogy. But Illich's challenge was not simply to pay attention to historical context, nor even to keep in mind that the past is other, that understanding is distorted if the past is colonized by contemporary concepts. No, the basic challenge was one I subsequently found in all of Illich's work. As he wrote in 1970, each of his writings is "an effort . . . to question the nature of some certainty."³ This questioning differs from that of genealogical critics such as Friedrich Nietzsche or Michel Foucault, because it does not lay bare an underlying will to power. It differs from Edmund Husserl's *epoché* as well, because it does not suspend relations with the world. Illich's questioning of certainties provokes a particular distance from the contemporary world; it calls for an *askesis* of knowing, in order to be open to the real.

Other thinkers challenge the premise that contemporary categories are eternal verities. Illich's questioning points elsewhere. It does not yearn for a tradition that

has been discarded or neglected. Much has been cast off and lost, often to our impoverishment. Yet all modes of thought are metaphors, ephemeral enactments, as long-lived as the Japanese cherry blossom or the western rose, two symbols for the best and the most beautiful. If taken for more than that, they become idols. Illich's questioning does not celebrate progress; it does not anticipate what should happen as a result of his scrutiny, nor does it seek to leave those who respond to the searching doubt adrift in the chaos of choices that is the sea we swim in. The consequence of his interrogations might be hope.

It was only in reading Emmanuel Levinas on the distinction between two types of knowledge that I came to understand better what Illich does. One type of knowledge is truth as "autonomy," symbolized by Odysseus, the man who comes home. This is the way of the same, the assimilation of what is, expanding and making more powerful the grasp of reason, whether it be to contemplate or to change nature. The other type of truth, "heteronomy," the way of the other, is symbolized by Abraham, the man who left home never to return, venturing into the other, the foreign, the strange, in response to a call and in hope: "Truth would thus designate the outcome of a movement that leaves a world that is intimate and familiar, even if we have not yet explored it completely, and goes toward another region, toward a *beyond*, as Plato puts it."⁴

In being faced by another in heteronomous thought, consciousness becomes conscience, which is not a power but a task: "The life of freedom discovering itself to be unjust, the life of freedom in heteronomy, consists in an infinite movement of freedom putting itself ever more into question."⁵ Illich's continuous review of modern "truth" is, to use somewhat old-fashioned phrasing, less consciousness raising than conscience raising. An early example: "I am here to suggest that you voluntarily renounce exercising the power which being an American gives you. . . . I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the 'good' which you intended to do."⁶ A later example: "I take up this challenge by making you reflect on a characteristic of twentieth-century institutions: their ability to generate entities that can be defined as basic needs and which, in turn, define resources that are perceived as being scarce."⁷ I find a heteronomous orientation in these words. By this I mean: If I take them seriously, I look around at the world differently. It is the moment King Midas discovers that everything he touches turns to gold. This epiphany of otherness in the king's life initiates remorse and grief for his power to produce wealth. The self-identity of the modern self, the basis of its much-vaunted self-esteem, is Midas's power, which we call the economy.

Contemporary professionals, including psychologists, are Midases who turn suffering and misfortune into gold. Worse than Midas, they first define the other as needy and then provide the service or the theory to fill the void that they first established. Reading Illich, I began to reconsider my place in society as a professional, a citizen, and a person. The immediate impact for me was to begin to distance myself

from psychology. Psychology serves to perpetuate *homo economicus* and the social structures that support it. Psychology is a “disabling profession,” perhaps *the* disabling profession of the century. As Illich has shown, professionals like psychologists are latter-day clergy in a church that promises, with due self-deprecation, the keys to the kingdom, if only the fees keep coming in: a twentieth-century Grand Inquisitor.

This was the challenge I felt: To respond to the actual situation of our day, outside of all efforts to develop institutions or a profession, outside of all efforts to offer plans. For psychology, this caveat means dissent from the definition of people as “needy.”⁸ If I so dissent, then what I do must change, for psychology is the handmaid of economics. Psychology has largely served to legitimate and normalize possessive individualism. This way of thinking seemed to foster a thinking that offers no know-how. Foolish thoughts.

In response, I ask a question: What in Illich’s work needs to be extended or corrected? From one perspective, this question is even more foolish, since I remain a teacher in an educational institution. Here in my place I have been afforded the luxury to consider psychology as a discipline. I shall attempt to spell out what I mean by discipline, but for the moment I define it as an orientation toward ends, with an understanding that *finis specificat media* (The end sought: psychology “with a soul”). The means are to bring Illich’s work to bear in psychology—even though psychologists have not been much affected by his challenges. Nevertheless, I would like to indicate three contributions to psychology that Illich’s work suggests: (1) A questioning of the nature of the science of psychology, in light of his critique of economics. (2) A questioning of the unit of psychological study, individual behavior and experience, in light of his critique of *homo economicus*. (3) A questioning of the meaning of critiques, in light of our situation of living in technological milieus.

PSYCHOLOGY AS SCIENCE

Psychology as a science has existed only since the end of the nineteenth century, and its status as science has never been resolved. Recently, some realize that this lack of resolution is essential to the character of psychology and that, further, its failure to become a “real” science is its singular good fortune.⁹ As to its alleged success in contributing to social engineering, Sigmund Koch, the most profound of psychology critics within the discipline, claims that psychology has reconciled people to their objectification.¹⁰ Nor is humanistic psychology an antidote to this situation: Humanistic psychologists insist on a piece of the action, whether in the therapy or the education business. Their desire to maximize human potential and to provide non-reductionistic alternatives to the excesses of reductionistic theories deepens our neediness in the economic sense. The offer of “unconditional positive regard,” with the promise to address spiritual needs and the whole person, probably exceeds the hubris of the medieval sale of indulgences, since the returns are promised now, not in the afterlife. Psychology’s holism and embracement of systems

thinking are made real through the outpouring of understanding and empathy, a sort of soft pornography.

The twentieth century has been called the “age of psychology.” As a profession, it has made a “cash cow” out of the I-Thou relationship, helping people adjust to the realities of economic life. If, as Illich writes, the economy, or the reign of scarcity, is the inverse of culture, then psychology has been a major means of dehumanization. It is no accident that a large number of psychologists and their associates, from social workers to sex therapists, exists in the United States, and that as economic development proceeds, so does the need for and availability of psychologists.

However, some distinctions are in order since psychology has a complex genealogy: “Psychology is a cluster of activities with a family resemblance but no common identity, and the field undoubtedly has multiple origins.”¹¹ The conflict over the disciplinary status of psychology—is it a natural science? a human science? a loose collection of psychological studies?—is not a failure of psychology to achieve paradigmatic status, but the very identity of psychology.¹² There is more to psychology than accommodation to the domination of social life by economic relations. Psychology serves as an emergency bridge for people distorted by economic relationships. In this perspective, psychology is an attempt at self-understanding by individuals who struggle with the contradictions of modern conditions.¹³

This critique of psychology depends on an understanding of the relationship between culture and economy. Illich argues “that economic value accumulates only as a result of the previous wasting of culture, which can also be considered as the creation of disvalue.”¹⁴ By culture, Illich means “the art of living in its entirety—that is, the art of loving and dreaming, of suffering and dying.”¹⁵ Within a culture, people find themselves in the center of the world, and their labor, with locally available means, provides for subsistence. A culture informs the making of use-values, things made not primarily for the market but for everyday living, for “autonomous and creative human action, required to make man’s universe bloom” (p. 6).¹⁶ A culture is a way of “being-in-the-world,” that is, of inhabiting the world in a particular way. A culture is not a plan, program, or system: Poetically, by making a way of life, do humans dwell, to paraphrase Martin Heidegger.

Modern economy, according to Karl Polanyi, marked a rupture with cultures and their grounding in subsistence living. Subsistence activities cannot be completely displaced, but they have been replaced increasingly by institutions such as education, medicine, transportation, communications, and entertainment. For Illich, it is always a matter of balance, the sufficient, the fitting. Beyond a certain limit, economic production is counterproductive, destroying rather than enhancing cultural life. Modern economy, dominating and displacing autonomous activity, is ersatz culture, replacing use-values with commodities that render us helpless to subsist in any meaningful way: “the division of labor, the multiplication of commodities, and dependence on them have forcibly substituted standardized packages for almost everything peo-

ple formerly did or made on their own” (p. 7). Economic relationships create value (in commodities and services) and simultaneously “disvalue.” Disvalue “bespeaks the wasting of the commons and culture with the result that traditional labor is voided of its power to generate subsistence.”¹⁷ Disvalue is clearly not part of economic discourse, one of whose functions is to obscure the devastation that the spread of the economy entails. Illich has also used the term *modernized poverty* to name “the decline in the individual-personal ability to do or make which is the price of every additional degree of commodity affluence” (p. 11).

The commodification of living entails change in both person and place, insofar as existence is being-in-the-world. The self as en fleshed and ensouled, and the “stuff” with which we make our living is not what it used to be. Illich’s critique of the economy differs from Karl Marx’s in an important way. For Illich, subsistence and economy are not just two different means of production. The Marxist analysis assumes an equivalence between them, ownership and power being the operative interests. For Illich, however, there was a rupture, or set of ruptures, historically dividing cultural relations from economic ones. To understand this distinction, the question of the historicity of being-in-the-world must be addressed.

THE UNIT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

The disembedding of the economy affected more than the arts of living, it changed the stuff of living as well. The study of the historicity of things, of the elements, of the body, and the self has been fruitful for the comprehension of the spread of disvalue. History for Illich is remedial, because it shows the extent to which contemporary realities differ from those in the past. *Homo economicus* is not only a dependent consumer of commodities and services but also a self, a body, and such a form of humanity handles things that provide the fertile ground for the spread of disvalue. However “the psychological” is understood, it involves the activities and experiences of selves.

Illich’s turn to body history in the 1980s offers an important contribution to the question of the nature of the psychological. Psychology has largely assumed the possessive individual as its unit of study, and the biological body of this individual is taken as an ahistorical ground.¹⁸ Illich’s contribution focuses on the body in its sociogenesis. The self that possesses this body began to take shape in the twelfth century, as people were encouraged to discover themselves “without the bonds which had sustained them and constrained them within the predetermined feudal *ordo*.”¹⁹ This new self progressively became detached from flesh and place as economic relations dominated living. Prior to this asocial and disembodied self, the household was the subject of history, which is why there can be no science of psychology where households still exist. The development of the modern self and of the economy occurred at the expense of households. The history of the self, the body, and of things constitutes a necessary component of the study of psychological life. Psychology itself

is one product of a modern self, serving to maintain it despite the contradictions it entails. Culture and economy, on the one hand, and the historicity of the self and of things, on the other, are intimately related, with a direct bearing on psychology.

What are the implications of these studies of the economy and historicity for psychology? First would be a distinction between psychology as a science and profession, and psychology as a discipline. By discipline I mean the practiced submission to the study of some reality. A discipline gets its bearing, its methods, and its goals from its subject matter. Psychology, the science, gets its bearings from its methods, its “methodolatry,” as Gordon Allport called it. Psychology, the profession, gets its bearings from its pursuit of legislative and economic identity. Psychology, the discipline, gets its bearings from the psychological.

If the discipline of psychology were to take Illich’s contributions seriously, it would, first, study psychological life in the context of the economy. What are the contemporary forms of “social character”? to use Erich Fromm’s term. What are the structures of behavior and experience, of body, of mind, of relationships in an economic age? Their study demands a philosophical anthropology in the light of which and against which the discipline can contribute to a decline in the economy. Second, the discipline entails historical studies of the psychological, with due consideration of discarded realities, such as soul and psyche and humors. In considering, for example, the soul or the vice of *acedia*, the goal of the study should be the investigation of these phenomena as clues to lost or foreign ways of being that are inseparable from a culture. The historical aspect can help us learn again what cultures were like. Such a discipline of the psychological is critical in spirit. If it is to take Illich’s contributions seriously—as psychology has not done to date—it would investigate the psychological consequences of disvalue. The discipline of the psychological would highlight simulacra of the psychological, that is, the ways that contemporary psychological concepts foster economic relations at the expense of subsistence relations.

Such a disciplining of psychology might best begin by adopting a suggestion made by Sigmund Koch. Koch argued that psychology is not a unified science, because some parts of it are naturally scientific (aspects of sensation, for example), while others—the study of personality, of social relations—are closer to the humanities. Rather than artificially tying these disparate things together, Koch recommended dissolving psychology into psychological studies. If psychology were to take Illich’s insights to heart, it would move in this direction, especially since psychology as a science and profession is tied to the project of modernity—the establishment of an economy. Psychology emerged at a distinct historical moment as an epoch-specific discourse on subjectivity. The discipline that studies the psychological, then, will not be psychology.

Psychological phenomena ground my discipline. Illich’s critiques will affect how we approach them. Current debates in psychology on the character of human nature fall roughly into two camps: materialists who assert that the natural sciences estab-

lish the essence of psychological life, and social constructionists and other postmodernists who assert that the psychological has no essence. For the latter, local psychologies exist in every society, but beyond a belief that humans are historical, there are no foundations for the discipline. The Scylla of a materialist monism and the Charybdis of groundless pluralism have defined the straits of the study of the psychological.

Both positions are problematic. The materialists have been criticized for their reductionism, their a priori commitments to a misguided paradigm of natural science, and for the hierarchical political implications of their theories and practices. Psychologists who lived under repressive regimes in Eastern Europe in turn question social constructionism, suggesting it is a cover for consumer noncommitment and possible only in a market society, which it seems to promote.²⁰ It is around this topic, so central to the discipline, that Illich's thought could make its most important contribution.

When the uses of economic commodities and services exceed certain limits within a society, they destroy the possibilities for the arts of living within that society. It requires no great leap to see that this proposition implies a vision of human nature. Illich has written extensively but not systematically about this vision. His view differs from both psychological reductionists, for whom the economy would simply be a human way of enacting DNA-orchestrated imperatives, and from the social constructionists, for whom the economy and technology offer unprecedented possibilities for human freedom. Neither the reductionists nor the constructionists reckon with Nemesis.

Nemesis named the retribution of the gods toward those who "would challenge the limits set by nature for man" (p. 98). Illich claims that "Nemesis has become endemic: it is the backlash of progress. Paradoxically, it has spread as far and wide as the franchise, schooling, mechanical acceleration, and medical care" (p. 98). Nemesis is not a by-product of industrial production; it is the disvalue it produces. Nemesis asserts limits: "Beyond a certain threshold, the multiplication of commodities induces impotence, the incapacity to grow food, to sing, or to build" (p. 10). One consequence of Nemesis is the poverty of affluence, rendering us, for example, "time paupers,"²¹ and impoverishing the air, water, land, sociality, and silence. Nemesis appears in the acceleration of neediness. The greater the commodification, the greater the demand, and the addict becomes a typical social character.

Nemesis delimits modern living, because as needs are perpetually stimulated and growth is perpetually promised, the consequences are increased helplessness, passivity, and dependence. Illich's *Medical Nemesis* details the effects of substituting the economy for culture in medicine.²² The contemporary Tantalus struggles with dieting, with not eating the abundant commodities whose images cloud consciousness, in order to maintain health; the contemporary Prometheus is kept alive with life-support mechanisms, tempted to wish for someone else's death so that his liver

can be replaced, until the time comes when he can no longer tolerate his longevity, and lines up for the latest scarce resource, physician-assisted suicide.

The only alternative to Nemesis is the political acknowledgment of limits. That limits to the transformation of the human condition exist is a difficult one for psychology because this is not simply an empirical question. It may be counter-empirical, to the extent that in the contemporary West the person is a priori a boundlessly needy being. Illich asserts that a human being has limits, which is to say that he makes a claim about human nature. Claims about human nature before modernity asserted things not only about human beings as they are, but more importantly, human beings as they are to become, to be truly what they are. The question of Nemesis concerns both types of statements, but more specifically the latter.

Modern objects differ from traditional things, so that Illich's critique does not simply repeat older warnings against *luxuria*. The proliferation of modern objects not only atrophies human abilities, it disables the social relationships in which the activities take place. Their corrosive effect occurs at the juncture of self and world, at the "being-in" of being-in-the-world. For Illich, renunciation of the desire to be a technological slave owner is required to begin to reckon with our situation. If the image of humans as slave owners is the negative, what is the positive telos that contrasts to it? It is here that I find the greatest potential for Illich's contribution to psychological studies.

Subsistence is a key term in Illich's vision of the human condition. I begin with subsistence as cultural activity, and then turn to its further elaboration in philosophical anthropology. Cultures are "programs for satisfying subsistence activities" (p. 7). Subsistence activities produce use-values, which foster the "aliveness" of a people. Aliveness has no standard measure, although it can be known. Hans-Georg Gadamer notes that in Greek there were two meanings of measurement: "The first is that which is used when one wants to take a measurement and the procedure is brought to the object from without. The second is the measure which is to be found within the object itself." The second type of measure is the "fitting" or the "appropriate." Gadamer continues: "What does 'appropriate' mean here? Clearly in the present context it refers to that *inner* measure which is proper to a self-sustaining living whole."²³ Subsistence activities establish and maintain the fitting or the appropriate in all spheres of living. Illich refers to these activities as the "arts of living."

This characterization of subsistence differs from the taken-for-granted caricature of it as eking out an existence in dire poverty, without the benefit of modern conveniences. The truth in the caricature is that subsistence activities do not depend, or depend only marginally, on market relations.²⁴ Illich observes that the level of subsistence activities has typically marked the well-being of a culture: "All through history, the best measure for bad times was the percentage of food eaten that had to be purchased" (p. 9). In earlier writings, Illich used the term "autonomy" to describe subsistence: That which a person or a people can do and make on their own, draw-

ing on the materials available to them in their place. The disembedded economy produces disvalue by disabling subsistence: “Industrial society destroys this center [of a culture] by polluting it with the measured output of corporations, public and private, degrading what people do or make on their own” (p. 9). Subsistence in Illich’s usage means, then, what people do with their own abilities in the arts of living, actively making their lives.

Subsistence points to something other than Luddite distaste for machines. It points to an understanding of the human condition. For Illich: “Observations of the sickening effect of programmed environments show that people in them become indolent, impotent, narcissistic and apolitical. The political process breaks down because people cease to be able to govern themselves; they demand to be managed.”²⁵ The active use of one’s faculties, in contrast to the consumption of goods and services, is for Illich the criterion of well-being.

Man ceases to be recognizable as one of his kind when he can no longer shape his own needs by the more or less competent use of those tools his culture provides. Throughout history, most tools were labor-intensive means that could be employed to satisfy the user of the tool, and were used in domestic production (pp. 39–40).

Such activities are protected by liberties—in contrast to rights, which guarantee access to commodities and services—that are lived in enjoyment and suffering.

The term *labor-intensive* is central to this analysis of subsistence, pointing to how subsistence activities are inherently face-to-face relationships. Relationships mediated by modern instrumentalities, which are also commodities, are disembedded social relationships.²⁶ Watching a wedding or a funeral on television is a social activity, but it is not a face-to-face relationship. Mediated or disembedded social relationships differ from the face-to-face. The face-to-face is a higher relationship, that is, more oriented toward the telos of human life as implicit in Illich’s position on subsistence.

THE MEANING OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

What possible difference could it make to the vitality of human living if the balance of one’s life is heavily weighted toward commodities and services? Is not Illich’s position mere romanticism or outworn asceticism? To address these questions, I turn to Illich’s philosophical anthropology.

Illich’s use of subsistence extends the philosophical concept of the same name. Subsistence means continuous embodiment, embodiment being “the ontological foundation of all forms of my human existence.”²⁷ Subsistence belonged to medieval inquiry into the nature of the person. Thomas Aquinas defined a person as “an individual substance of a rational nature” (*Summa theologiae* I, Q. 29, art. 1), emphasizing singularity (as opposed to generality) in this concept. For Aquinas, a person “subsists by itself,” by which he meant that persons “have control over their

actions, and are not only acted upon as other beings are, but act of their own initiative.” Subsistence has primarily an existential meaning: Subsisting is the act of autochthony.²⁸ Phenomenological thought emphasizes the incarnational dynamism inherent in the idea of subsistence. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the body-subject, which Stephen Strasser draws on to explicate subsistence, shows that subjectivity has a foundation in sensorimotor activity: The “I” is first of all an “I can.” I am to the extent that I “make my living.” Sensorimotor engagement with the world sketches a human way of inhabiting, which outline is filled in by culture. Subsistence happens in singular human intertwining with the world and in making a place there.

Subsisting takes place insofar as the human being is being-in-the-world. Person and place, just as person and others, form necessary relations. The “where” of human subsisting matters, co-constituting the “how” of subsisting. At the juncture of person and place the anthropological analysis of subsistence flows into the discussion of how cultures in various ways imagine and en flesh human existence. The concept of subsistence, then, demands an investigation of the dynamics of *Eigenwelt* and *Umwelt*, of soul and soil, as a condition of possibility for the flourishing of human living or aliveness. In contrast to medieval considerations, contemporary ones, Illich’s included, stress the relational significance of subsistence: a person subsists in relation to others and to the world.

Certain conditions diminish a person’s subsisting. If I am ill, my candle grows dim, although reckoning with this diminution, as with mortality in general, is integral to subsisting. Human subsisting is relative, since we are mortals. Being ill, being famished, and being weak and helpless as an infant, these are modes of subsisting, and if we can affirm that in the *joie de vivre* we find ourselves most fully alive, we can also affirm that pain and illness can be an occasion for the fullness of living. When “I am ill,” I am no longer an “I can,” because dis-ability is part of illness but, as Viktor Frankl found, when all else is impossible, a person can still suffer. In the passivity and dependence and disability of suffering, there remain arts of living.

To the extent that I am dependent—in yet another sense—my subsistence is compromised. The distinction between two types of dependence gets to the heart of Illich’s analysis of the effects of economic relations. To subsist does not mean to be a self-contained monad. It means to dwell or inhabit, which means to make, with others, a habitation from the surrounding elements. However, disvalue, the impoverishment that comes from excessive dependence on commodities and services, signifies a compromised subsistence in this other sense. When, beyond the fitting or the appropriate, commodities, services, and professional expertise substitute for subsistence activities, the “I” becomes an appendage of these means, and autochthony is compromised.

Human subsistence involves dependence on what is other. This dependence, “independence-in-dependence,” differs from economic dependence. “Though it thus

depends on what is not itself, this [subsistent] dependence is not without a counterpart which in the final analysis nullifies it. What we live from does not enslave us; we enjoy it."²⁹ The measure of subsisting is enjoyment.³⁰ This enjoyment is "a movement toward oneself."³¹ As subsisting, the "I" has no basic needs that must be met. Appropriating is self-appropriating.³²

In contrast to independence-in-dependence is economic dependence, that is, dependence-in-independence. Economic relations individuate by severing ties with place and others. I own myself as my property, and I have only contractual ties with others. Dependence on economic relations sustains this autonomy. This individuality has common measures and basic needs. Commodities substitute for subsistence activities. Economic independence diminishes subsistence: (1) I make my living to a decreased extent, I subsist less, to the extent I depend on commodities and services. This dependence differs from passivity, for subsisting includes the passivity of suffering; economic dependence is an absence of (subsistence) activity altogether. (2) Since labor-intensive activities decline, I-Thou relations decline, as disembedded existence dominates daily life, diminishing our subsisting together.

Subsisting is not a solitary act, any more than it is isolation from the elements that nourish it. The subsisting self is both substantial and relational: "to be is to be substance-in-relation."³³ Only to the extent that one is first a "Thou," can he or she be an "I." "I am the self I am thanks to what is not self but other."³⁴ The way of life in which one is reared affects the manner of one's subsisting.³⁵ The fountain of subsisting overflows into expression and relationship, without which subsisting could not occur. The necessary connection between "being" and "being-with," however, does not minimize the difficulties of social relationships or eliminate from consideration possibilities for exploitation, war, commerce, and murder.

This limited discussion of subsistence and the self indicates one way that psychology must go. Illich's observations on subsistence must be synthesized with philosophical, historical, and psychological analyses. This synthesis would extend and challenge Illich's contributions, and it will most surely alter the context for psychological thought. The administrative boundaries that have institutionalized psychology and purified it of economics and philosophy would no longer be relevant.

Except for vague references to heteronomy, I have not addressed the telos of subsistence, which in the older writings was foremost. To address fully the meanings of subsistence for psychology requires a reintroduction of discourse on the soul. The late nineteenth century saw the rise of a "psychology without a soul." That was a fruitful development, because it separated the study of the psychological from overly rationalistic philosophical anthropologies. Today, the situation has changed, and the absence of the soul in psychology as a discursive object has become a liability. To reintroduce soul, without dressing up Justine's body yet further, requires that the differences of soul from body and world—even within an Aristotelian anthropology—be reckoned with. Soul without these polarities becomes an economic resource.

Illich depicts the present moment as one in which the dichotomized modern world of subject and object, of inside and outside, of soul and body has dissolved into systems. Systems do not stand over against a subject, as does an object: They occur between and within subjects and objects. Quasi-objects and quasi-subjects form systems, to use Bruno Latour's terms, hybrids of the factual and the fictional, the artificial and the natural.³⁶ In systems, without contradiction, persons both individuate and understand themselves as replaceable components. In terms of subsistence, in systems there are no persons, for no one has singularity nor autochthony. The study of systems—how they transform the body, and with it our perceiving, remembering, thinking, and being—is of the utmost importance for psychological inquiry. But having no boundaries, we cannot stand outside systems. Expert advice from intellectuals such as psychologists is welcomed in the interest of quality control. Expertise is absorbed, because knowledge is power.

Illich's critiques point in another direction than expertise; his writings are occasional and ethical appeals. They are occasional in that they have the flavor of the *hic et nunc* of their delivery and of the interlocutors to whom they were addressed. In a precise meaning of the term, his writings are addresses. An address occurs in the face-to-face relationship on a particular occasion. In order for an address to occur, common ground must be established.

Illich's writings are also ethical inquiries. Ethical inquiry is treacherous in light of the fact that ethical, indeed rational, discourse only occurs where there is an underlying common ground.³⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre describes the bankruptcy of moral discourse in our day, a view furthered by Illich's inquiry into systems as amoral, groundless milieus. But what makes Illich's addresses ethical is that they call to the reader or auditor. When I read them, he is my Other. The essence of the ethical appeal is its powerlessness: It has no force, provides no know-how, and makes no recommendations or plans. Ethical force resides in renunciation of power, calling to me—the reader or listener—to put my freedom into question.

The condition for ethical discourse, and for rational discourse, is not the rationality of systems thinking, but the other whom I face. A complete system excludes discourse, for "language loses all social signification; interlocutors renounce their unicity not in desiring one another but in desiring the universal."³⁸ The condition of possibility for ethical inquiry, indeed for speech, is heteronomy. The other who faces the self is not on the same plane as the self, but in a superior position. The other grounds discourse and reason.

To respond to the face of another is to stand below and look up. This is perhaps a further nuance to "subsisting" as "standing under": standing under or below the other to whom one must reply. And the other is *this* other, not the masses or the audience. Persons exist only in particularity. Inquiry in the age of systems, if it is to have any claim to be ethical inquiry and not input or information, must originate in such a stance, in reply to another who presents the origin of the inquiry.

The choice is not between the rationality of systems and the impotent madness of irrationality, but in attention to the invisible: The exteriority of the other.

Dallas, Texas

NOTES

1. Robert Kugelmann, *The Windows of Soul* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983).
2. The allusion, of course, is to the Marquis de Sade's pornographic novel, *Justine or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, first published in 1791.
3. Ivan D. Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), p. 11.
4. Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of the Infinite," in his *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Adrian Peperzak (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 89. Emphasis in original. The French text reads *vers l'étranger*, translated here as "toward another region," but also translated as "toward the stranger," as Peperzak notes in his commentary. The ambiguity of *l'étranger* is important for following Illich's thought. Illich's queries lead us to come to grips with the "brave new world" that we inhabit. His skepticism is in the service of community and friendship, "the end of privilege and license" (*Celebration of Awareness*, p. 17). The comforts making North American life tolerable are the result of the slavery of my brothers and sisters near and far.
5. Levinas, "Philosophy," p. 117.
6. Ivan Illich, "Yankee, Go Home: The American Do-Gooder in Latin America," in his *The Church, Change, and Development*, ed. Fred Eychanger (Chicago: Urban Training Center Press, 1970), p. 53.
7. Ivan Illich, "The Institutional Construction of a New Fetish: Human Life," in his *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), p. 218.
8. "This perception of the human as a needy being constitutes a radical break with any known tradition. Within the needs discourse, human equality is anchored in the certainty of the identity of all peoples' basic needs. We are no longer equal because of the intrinsic dignity and worth of each person, but because of the legitimacy of the claim to the recognition of a lack." "Alternatives to Economics: Toward a History of Waste," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 41.
9. On the first point, see Roger Smith, *The Norton History of the Human Sciences* (New York: Norton, 1997). On the second, see Bernd Jager, "Psychology in a Postmodern Age," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 22 (1991), pp. 60-71.
10. Sigmund Koch, "Psychology and Its Human Clientele: Beneficiaries or Victims?" in R. A. Kasschau and F. S. Kessel, eds., *Psychology and Society: In Search of Symbiosis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), p. 43: "Modern man now *wishes* to be an object; it is deeply reassuring to think oneself mendable, calibratable, lubricatable, and refinishable like any other machine." Emphasis in original.
11. Smith, *The Norton History*, p. 493.
12. There is no lack of claims to have established a scientific psychology. For a particular example of grounding psychology, see Edmund O. Wilson, "The Biological Basis of Morality," *Atlantic Monthly* 281, no. 4 (1998), pp. 53-70. For a criticism of such attempts, see Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

13. J.H. van den Berg, "What is Psychotherapy?" *Humanitas* 7 (1971), p. 344: "What happens to the individual when the *community he lives in loses its cohesion*? The answer to this question concerns us all. If society falls apart, then the individual too will fall to pieces." Emphasis in original. For van den Berg, the psychologist "waits to be replaced" (p. 370). Such vigilance is crucial for psychology to be a discipline.

14. Ivan Illich, "Disvalue," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 76.

15. Ivan Illich, "Dwelling," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 56. "I would like to call what others call culture the particular style of living, of enjoying and of suffering life." Ivan Illich, "Health as a Disease," *The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture Newsletter* (Summer 1985), p. 10.

16. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to Ivan Illich, *Toward a History of Needs* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1978).

17. Illich, "Disvalue," p. 76.

18. See, for example, Philip Cushman, "Why the Self Is Empty: Toward a Historically Situated Psychology," *American Psychologist* 45 (1990), pp. 599–611.

19. Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 23.

20. See Csaba Pleh, "The Symbolics of Psychology under a Totalitarian System: The Case of Hungary in the 1960s" (paper presented at the meeting of the European Society for the History of the Human Sciences, Budapest, Hungary, August 1997).

21. Steffan Linder, *The Harried Leisure Class* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

22. Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

23. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 98. Emphasis in original.

24. Illich, *Toward a History*, p. 52: "Let us call modern subsistence the style of life that prevails in a postindustrial economy in which people have succeeded in reducing their market dependence, and have done so by protecting—by political means—a social infrastructure in which techniques and tools are used primarily to generate use-values unmeasured and unmeasurable by professional need-makers."

25. Ivan Illich, "Silence Is a Commons," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 47. This observation supports Koch's remark on the value of applied psychology.

26. Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

27. Stephan Strasser, *The Soul in Metaphysical and Empirical Psychology* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1957), p. 148.

28. Illich defines it as "the ability and freedom to grow one's own food, construct one's own shelter, move oneself spatially and spiritually." Ivan Illich, "Subsistence," in Kenneth Vaux, ed., *Powers That Make Us Human* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 50.

29. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 114.

30. Erich Fromm remarks that "Joy is the glow that accompanies being." *To Have or To Be?* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), pp. 103–104.

31. Levinas, *Totality*, p. 118.

32. Illich speaks of dwelling as subsisting in this sense: "To dwell then means to inhabit one's own traces, to let daily life write the webs and knots of one's biography into the landscape." Illich, "Dwelling," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 55. In line with Merleau-Ponty and Levinas on the body, Illich writes further: "For the dweller the center of the world is the

place where he lives" (p. 57). Illich speaks of subsistence in terms of "aliveness," "sweetness," "conviviality."

33. W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1993), p. 70.

34. Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, *Being and Knowing* (Albany, NY: Preserving Christian Publications, 1995), p. 207.

35. Illich extends the notion of "subsistent relations" in his *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982): subsistent relations constituted an "ambiguous asymmetry" between men and women in the past, when their relationships were not of the order of exchange within established systems, but were of the order of "fuzzy, partly incongruous complementarity that can be understood only by means of metaphors" (p. 75, n. 57);

36. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). See also Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964); and William Arney, *Experts in the Age of Systems* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

37. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

38. Levinas, *Totality*, p. 217.

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CHAPTER NINE

ABC Redux: Or Literacy Matters. And How!

Barry Sanders

I have accepted Lee Hoinacki's invitation to step back and "revise and clarify" some of Ivan Illich's ideas. Such a task I undertake with great trepidation. How easy to criticize, how unfair, especially when a person, Ivan, has provided so many of us with such a potent, apophatic way of seeing. I am comforted in the knowledge that, since Ivan and I have written a book together, I reevaluate myself in the process.

I take a deep breath, then, and proceed, begging the reader's indulgence. For in the act of re-tailoring Illich, I have to describe (re-describe) the old cloth and old cut of his suit. By narrowing the lapels and tapering the trousers, I merely modernize a bit. I cut according to my own bias. Have I made the suit hang with a bit more authority, a bit more character, or has the aesthetic simply changed? Who knows? A little of both, perhaps. In any case, more than ten years have passed since we wrote *ABC*, and I see things a bit differently now.¹

I begin by commenting on my title. I am particularly interested in the pun, which I borrow, shamelessly, from Cornel West's *Race Matters*.² I am aware that there is no apparent "matter" in "subject matter," as there is in something so substantial, say, as solid matter or even atomic matter. At the same time, I am keenly aware that something is the matter with literacy—wonderfully the matter; and indeed through alphabetic literacy people matter in the most extraordinary ways—they begin to reflect and think abstractly, to develop a unique perception and insight: In short, they take shape and feel those early inklings of power.

I know that the tricky word *matter* derives, ultimately, from the Latin *mater*, "mother." And it is in that sense of the word that I think literacy truly matters, in the way that teachers find themselves mothering, nurturing, and raising their students. The French have a phrase, *ours mal leche* (a badly licked bear), which they apply to

recalcitrant children. A child who acts in an unruly way displays bad form and stands in need of a good tongue-lashing, a licking, to get that young person back into shape. The phrase grows out of the activity of bear sows, who lick the bellies of their cubs to set into motion peristalsis, thus enabling the cub to digest its food, grow, and indeed to take shape. The bear mother, in biological fact, licks her cub into its proper form. I want to explore a very specific, very special, highly invisible but utterly human sense of the shaping, *in-forming* power of the “Mother Tongue.” I refer here to a peristalsis of the intellect that young people must undergo to achieve, as I hope to explain, a certain recognizable shape.

I offer hypotheses only. The times permit such dreaming. Fifty years ago, we could have had a fanciful discussion about television, as we once had about the efficacy of nuclear radiation for certain illnesses, or as we might have had, a very long time ago, about the introduction of alphabetic literacy. Today, the computer demands our attention. In 1988, when Ivan and I published *ABC*, we worried about the death of the book at the hands of electronic media. I now believe, however, that the threat comes not so much directly from the box—the computer—as students process their words, but from the way electronic media have burrowed themselves inside something as crucial as the business of book production, into publishing itself. As major houses turn media stars—Jerry Seinfeld, Howard Stern, Tim Allen, Paul Reiser—into best-selling authors, they insist on these objects, advertise and sell them, as books. Still, I cannot imagine a future without real books in a great many hands. Stated flatly, I cannot imagine people without a rhetorical repertoire.

I know that scores and scores of young people have assigned to computers a permanent place in their daily working and recreational lives; that at times—even at crucial times—desktop and laptop computers make the quotidian possible and very often a snap. Computers have come to stay. However, even those who use the computer daily for all sorts of tasks still express to me from time to time, more than a longing, more than nostalgia, I believe, but a remembered familiarity with what Ivan has called “the text architecturally configured without the aid of the electronic composer.” They recall the pleasure of the word *handmade*, the word before it fell as a handmaid of the machine. Something reassuring lingers from that remarkable medieval artifact, the alphabetic text—which monks brought into existence through a series of innovations. Because this text lies at the heart of the literate mind-frame—indeed, exists as the subject matter of literacy—I very briefly restate the history that Ivan has so marvelously detailed in several places.³ I use Ivan’s sentences here; I conflate; I rearrange sentences to shape the story.

This particular text could not have come into being without the alphabet as a technique for recording speech sounds in visible form. In this sense, the alphabet is much more than any other notational system, like ideograms or hieroglyphics, for it makes it possible to read correctly without any understanding. And, in fact, for well over two thousand years, one could not decode the alphabetic record with the eye

alone. “Reading” meant loud and oftentimes disquieting recitation. Augustine in the *Confessions* expresses surprise at learning to read without noise and without disturbing the sleep of his brothers.

Silent reading was all but impossible well into the seventh century because letters had not yet been gathered into little bundles called “words”: Sentences ran on and on in an uninterrupted line of alphabetic characters. Scribal monks introduced that one crucial change, breaks between words, in the eighth century, an innovation that changed the procedure for copying manuscripts. Up to that moment, a monk dictated the original to several scribes, or a scribe had to read aloud as many words as he could hold in his auditory memory, and then write them down by dictating to himself. Spaces between words made silent copying easy work—the copyist merely transcribing word for word—and it made silent reading a real possibility.

Even though the codex of the early Middle Ages contained clearly separated words, as Ivan points out, it did not make the text visible. That new reality took shape, it is generally agreed, only after the time of Peter Abelard, that is, around the middle of the twelfth century. It was brought to life by the convergence of close to two dozen techniques, some with Arabic and others with classical antecedents, and a few entirely new. These techniques conspired to support and give shape to a substantially new idea: that of a text which is distinct both from the book and from its readings.

To begin with, monks assigned titles to chapters and then divided those chapters into subtitles. They gave numbers to chapter and verse; marked out quotations by underlining them in different colors; introduced the idea of paragraphs, occasionally summarizing their content with marginal glosses. They began painting miniatures—less for ornament and more for illustration. With those devices in place, they could now prepare a table of contents and an alphabetical subject index, but more important, they could make references from one part of a chapter to another part. The book that formerly had to be read straight through, from beginning to end, now lay before each reader totally accessible, ready to be entered at random. Or, the reader could choose to enter the front of the book, wander about, and leave out the back. Either way, it gave the idea of consultation brand-new meaning in the twelfth century, referring to a meeting between the reader who faces the book and discusses its content silently with his or her own self. In effect, readers gave counsel to themselves.

Thanks to these technical changes, consultation, the checking of quotations, and silent reading became commonplace, and *scriptoria* ceased to be places where each one tried to hear his own voice. Neither the teacher nor the neighbor could now hear what was being read and—partly as a result—both bawdy and heretical books multiplied. As the old habit of quoting from a well-trained memory palace was replaced by the new skill of citing right out of the book, the idea of a “text” that is independent from this or that manuscript became visible. Many of the social effects that have often been attributed to the printing press, Illich so astutely argued,

were in fact already the result of a text that readers could, as we say, look up. The old clerical skills of taking dictation and reading out lines was now complemented by the skills we take so much for granted—of contemplating and searching the text with the eyes.

The abstraction of the bookish text, like a ghostly edifice, hovered over the physical object. The book, with its new volume, did more than signal the end to manuscript culture. This new text opened a volumetric frontier inside every reader. By getting under the skin, the text became a metaphor around which readers began to organize their inner lives. They could now stand back, reflect, and consider things from a place deep within. Those who could read turned more palpable. Still, hundreds of years later, in 2001, to conceive of what they want to do next, even the most ardent hacker must drop the mouse and take up residence, if only momentarily, in that same textually engineered mental space. Only so much looking at the screen will do; it fails as a mirror. The operator must turn blind—Borges blind—and gaze inward.

Electronic technology has all the help it needs to make its way. The computer takes its place as a triumph of entrepreneurial know-how. The book, the underdog of the late twentieth century—who would have thought it!—needs all the help it can get. In many ways, it has fallen victim to that same entrepreneurial savvy. In a strange echo of the blockbuster mentality, scholars hold aloft certain authors—Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Joyce, Woolf, and a handful or two of other names—as fetishes almost: offered as proof of the perdurability of literacy. Texts, however, in themselves do not matter. Only the coming together of reader with text, or reader ingesting text—only such integration matters. Only at those private moments, by disappearing into their metaphoric innards, do our students begin to matter. I want to posit the delicate matter of literacy, then—what Illich might call the “taught mother tongue”—against the antimatter of fiber-optic technology. I say this out of the following belief: Everything that ultimately matters begins in conception and perception—off the machine, out of cyberspace, and in that mysterious space called the mind.

Over the years I have tried to get at the heart of technology to understand its shaping power as a tool from another time. I wanted to describe the lengthening shadow that this peculiar machine has cast over our lives. I began by writing books, which ended up merely arguing for the necessity of reading books. Only slowly did my subject emerge—the screen as the central metaphor for organizing interior life. Ivan made me see that. When we wrote *ABC*, both of us were afraid that the screen and the text could not occupy the same space. The computer, we believed, with all its megabytes of power, would put the boot to the text. And always I, at least, ignored that entrepreneurial genius Bill Gates. He dominated the computer systems market, certainly, but he appeared to me only as a distant and remote billionaire.

In 1998, he did something remarkable: Gates fell off the screen and gave us not just a book, but a rather startling book at that. His memoir, *The Road Ahead*, created its own genre.⁴ I reserve the category of science fiction, normally, for dreamy projec-

tions into the future. But Gates writes a book about a future that he, himself, in a most powerful and masterful way, brings into reality day by day. Day by day, he offers each one of us a few more bits of personalized power. He fantasizes and, immediately after, tools up and brings the next gadget to market. *The Road Ahead* stares dead-on at a self-engendered future, at what Gates calls a “totally mediated life,” where cyberspace replaces inner space. Such a world I am eager to grasp. My literate mind encourages me, entices me, to spy on that world. But, if I even barely understand that alien phrase “a totally mediated life,” then I think Mr. Gates has got it wrong. Here, for the first time, he cannot get his way. And he cannot get his way precisely because literacy matters too damned much.

But this book by Gates interests me, not so much for its content. What I find more compelling is the fact that he chooses paper over micro bits. For the moment, I ask you to set aside questions of money—hard if not impossible to do with someone like Gates—and assume, after amassing close to \$40 billion in personal wealth, that he does not care very much about Borders, or Barnes & Noble. I ask, then, Why the book? Not why *this* book, but why write a book? Why not opt for total mediation? Perhaps literacy matters more for Gates than he lets on. For, after thinking about this electronic revolution over the years, I am left with a simple conclusion: As in reading and writing, as in cyberspace, it is mind over matter. Or, more accurately, it is mind that finally matters.

I want to approach this notion of “mattering” by trying to describe, in the briefest way, the glimmerings of three distinct but interpenetrating sensibilities. This, too, Ivan—and Ivan and I—have discussed in great detail. I call them here by their standard names: orality, literacy, and a third, for which I find no free-standing noun, the realm or domain of electronic technology. Language fails me here. These are not realms or domains in the sense of well-fortified enclaves, but easily breached, semipermeable, porous activities. At any rate, I describe each of them very briefly, as I say, to try to realize what takes place at some unseen, underground level when I ask my students to take on those twin tasks that reduce them to silence: reading with understanding and writing with some precision.

Please understand: As Ivan and I point out in *ABC*, I cannot project myself back into orality without standing solidly on this most familiar soil of literacy. Even then, I see every detail filtered through the grid of literacy. Letters, fixed permanently on the page, make possible critical, abstract, and analytical thinking; they enable me to perform magical feats like conceiving of a past time and imagining a future time. I gaze across a vast chasm and without thinking it strange in the least conjure a life under a totally different symbolic system—under the conditions of primary orality. No one in orality can return that favor. No one in a purely oral culture can imagine, even remotely, what it feels like to be a thinking me. And in that third domain, of electronic technology, well, thank God, no computer can yet imagine anything. The machine cannot have fun—as of yet.

In pure orality, we must first acknowledge that words fly away as soon as they are sounded. No authorized telling ever gets written down. So your story stands toe to toe with mine: my word asserting itself against yours, my version of reality commanding as much attention as yours. Truth and lying fall by the way. The fandango of “he said/she said” punctuates all of oral discourse. Information, ideas, everything we need to know about living, we learn there by speaking and listening, from stories told in straightforward, simple sentences—in subject, verb, object constructions. People regulate their lives by the movement of the sun and stars, by the seasons turning over and over. Poets sing of heroes who leave the comfort of their own shores for long and arduous adventures in the most bizarre of lands and, after successfully defeating a string of monsters and villains, return safely home. The wheel turns round and round, without that nagging refrain, “Oh, I’ve heard all that before.”

Every culture that eventually passes into literacy begins in orality. Each literate soul has his or her sensibility formed first in speaking and listening. Typically, however, no one teaches us—in that strict sense of instruction—how to form sentences. In early connections, with our mothers primarily, we entered into verbal play, heard songs and lullabies, nonsense rhymes and silly jingles; and we repeated and imitated them, mimicked the sounds, and internalized the rhythms—without getting a grade or a mark. Language meant the grand exhilaration of play—the satisfying release of play. The lesson comes early in orality: few if any rules operate here—punctuation mistakes unheard of; spelling errors nonexistent; syntactic blunders few and far between. A playground, a swing set of breathing easy rhythms into sentences and fragments of sentences, that’s the sheer joy of orality. At a later age, the young person learns pacing and pitch, duration and intonation, how to tantalize and scare, how to make others cry and laugh; when to withhold information and when to close at just the right instant with a zinger—simply with that most invisible, most evanescent stuff: breath.

Orality provides the armature, the shaping force for literacy. For me, literacy begins there, in orality, with the broad stroking of the mother’s tongue—freedom to roam, freedom to explore. Literacy heaps on that unboundedness a large helping of rules—of complete sentences, correct spelling, exact punctuation, syntax, tone, and on and on. It leaves the faith of spells for the accuracy of spelling. It provides the pattern for that uncast matter of orality. Two extraordinary acts—reading and writing. But the trick, the great exciting trick, is to merge that spirit of play from orality with the rules and restrictions of literacy. That’s the humanizing game: to give proper shape *and* distinct rhythm to our breath.

With literacy comes the authorized version, the signed agreement, the gospel truth—history itself. When I can return to letters over and over again, I begin to develop a critical attitude; I start to abstract from the statements that remain fixed on the page. Stories no longer resemble a circle, but unfold with a beginning, a rising middle, and a falling away to an end—closer in shape to a triangle. Every story feels

like a detective yarn, filled with snooping, deducing, and solving; every writer automatically an authority.

The heart of literacy, for me, is “silent” cursive reading, in which the reader tries to retrieve not just meaning but the rhythm of meaning. Ivan and I have argued before that, while reading, people take inside themselves—internalize—the text as metaphorical object, and on its pages write the permanent story of their own lives—complete with a beginning, a somewhat blunted and often crisis-riddled middle, and a slowly descending, gradual drift toward an ending. Literate memory begins here. Most important, the architectural configuration of the text gives each literate person depth and volume, an interior space which provides that essential meditative retreat for the active mind—indeed, an interior space that goads the mind into turning more active.

Of course, oral peoples also enjoy rich cognitive lives, with an inner world, even of symbolic complexity—they dream, recollect, in some ways imagine. But I describe a much different sensibility here. Reading and writing make the reader aware that the continuous string of speech sounds has given way to something quite different, some new disembodied entity, made up of sentences and words and paragraphs frozen on the page—a separate creation called “language.” Perhaps it is this new consciousness that most clearly marks the literate person from the oral. Just as reading and writing alter any earlier, oral mind-frame, and even though we do not yet know the exact configurations, we can count on the symbolic system of technology to affect literate consciousness.

I know most of us find it hard to imagine reading as an exotic activity. We feel much too familiar with it. The Middle Ages offer a chance to see it fresh. Illich’s brilliant rendering of Hugh of St. Victor’s *Didascalicon* allows the modern person to appreciate reading as a most highly charged, spiritual activity. So exquisitely has Ivan brought Hugh to life that I refrain from summarizing the text here. I leave it to everyone to pick up his retrieval from 1128 and read it. I say only that Hugh calls the reader away from the “sweetness of his native soil,” to a journey of self-discovery deep in the loneliness of the long road. He invites Christians to read their way out of the midnight of their sins, and back into light, to the full drenching illumination of God the Son (Sun), and the liberating joy of Christ’s spoken word. Medievals read through the sentences of a manuscript back to the rhythms of a highly charged orality.

By 1340, the inward journey had grown a great deal more sophisticated. A devotional manual entitled the *Ayenbite of Inwit* directs each person to read something new—his or her own inner text, as a way of achieving a kind of self-confession.⁵ *Ayenbite* translates as “again-biting,” the constant gnawing away of the conscience, of one’s “inner-wit” or “inner-knowledge.” Here, readers do not recall Christ’s spoken word, but their own, sometimes haunting inner voices. In modern terms, the *Ayenbite* explores one of the key emotions made possible, it would appear, by the internalized text, and that is remorse, the *re-mordere*, or re-chewing and re-biting, from which the word *remorse* derives. The idea of mulling over an idea, of calling up an event and

ruminating over it like a cow, or having an event dog one's emotional life, over an extended period of time, seems to suggest that the new symbology of the text has made its way into the emotional life. Not coincidentally, the first time the word *mind* is used in English to mean "the seat of consciousness" occurs in this same year, 1340.

By the fifteenth century, the *Devotio moderna*, a radical manual of devotional procedure, intended to reform the institution of pilgrimage, already takes for granted that pilgrimages on the ground can be easily and quite naturally replaced by a metaphoric journey in the mind. The new devotional envisions no quick trip to a familiar shrine, but a protracted, arduous journey to the Holy Land in which the person retraces the steps of Jesus Christ in order to relive the passion of their Lord.⁶

I cite these examples from a world moving deliberately into literacy. Orality, however, continued to exert a force. Even today, even from a deeply entrenched literate position, one, of course, uses orality in daily discourse. The two domains continually interpenetrate. Conversation requires that I retreat into my alphabetically constructed space, reflect about an idea or a problem, and express myself back in orality. But, after having attained literacy, my sentences dramatically change, no longer resembling those utterances in what anthropologists call a "primary orality." Instead, they more closely resemble literate constructions. Our utterances, as Ivan and I say, have been alphabetized. They turn complex—linked together with dependent, grammatical constructions.

And now, still with literacy at the core, as a base, I must interact with a third domain, electronic technology. Even though I do not compose on a word processor, I find myself interacting, at the most basic levels, of toasters and irons and air conditioners, with digital technology. As much as I may want to say no, I have been recruited by an army of digitalized appliances. I cannot appear for most of my conferences without relying on the technological competence of pilots and air traffic controllers, ground technicians, and on and on. Like the after charge of an electrical storm, I can feel the buzz in the air; it beckons from every plug and outlet. I can try to understand the effects of electronic technology only from this grounding in literacy—by abstracting and imagining from some interior space. Only with this highly personalized tool of literacy, this contextualized mind, can I theorize about that electronic world, the technical workings of which leave most of us baffled or flat-out unconcerned.

The computer's metonymous presence comes to us through the screen; that's the window through which we see Gates's planned world. That's our new perspective, in its Latin sense of "seeing through" to another plane—not to a vanishing point, but in those Windows 2000 to a flat, two-dimensioned image. On that plane, as everyone knows, the composer or operator can rearrange sentences and paragraphs, delete words, or eliminate an entire composition, with the click of a key. That's the new text—a glowing screen—and that's the new attitude toward letters—no big deal: easily rearranged, mostly disposable, semipermanent at best.

That's the text that people now internalize on their way to a Gates-directed literacy, one that begins, emanates from, has as its starting point, not the handmade text, but the electronically composed, free-floating word. On that text, little holds fast. On those screens—television, film, computer—ideas and images hop about at a rapid clip, leaving behind a great deal of fallout. And I wonder aloud about the debris. At a deeper level, I have the sense that, as the screen nudges aside the text, interior space narrows, leaving young people with difficulty breathing and seeing. Except as a concept on the ground, vastness is alien. I save this as a topic for another time, but my antennae tell me that the one most straitening, narrowing emotion has begun to make itself felt beyond all proportion—and that emotion is anger. With a change in interiority, I wonder if certain of the emotions might not drop out of interior life, particularly those that require deep reflection to grasp and understand (I cite remorse and guilt as examples). Which leads to another possibility: that certain new emotions, emotions we have never seen before, might be making an appearance. Again, I leave this for another time.

Ivan Illich describes a revolution in reading and writing that took place in the thirteenth century equal in importance to the invention of movable type. From a manuscript that monks meditated on in monasteries to find God's word, scholastics moved to a text that they began reading in universities to find the truth about things—to uncover facts—about this world. The text itself, this template of literacy, became the subject of reading, as it opened up new dimensions, new perspectives, into reality and into the person. As Illich notes, rather than monks reading for its own sake, the clergy now pursued reading for the management of laws and the recitation of clerical formulas. We witness here a shift from reading as a moral exercise to reading as a technical activity.

This spectacular shift, enhanced by the birth of vernacular languages—of an array of mother tongues—produced the symbology of the text and, in turn, I believe, a rhetorically informed consciousness. Whatever else the mind might be, however else it can be constituted, it is at least an artifact—a processing artifact for everyone who can read this essay—of reading and writing.

The screen has to have some effect on such cognitive awareness. I do not know what that will be. But the uncertainty of the moment entices me to speculate. In addition, the computer squats everywhere I look. At this moment, I still have the luxury to wonder about that new mental space whose generating axioms, as Illich points out, “are no longer based on the encoding of speech sounds through alphabetic notation, but which relies instead on the power to store and manipulate ‘information’ in binary bits.” Illich further worries about a system that reduces words to “message units,” speech to the “use of language,” and conversation to something called “oral communication.” I can but stick my pointy nose in the air to sniff out the possible changes. I smell at least one thing rotten, this one image of possible change—the narrowing of interior space.

At the heart of the word processor, I find a curious paradox. Its very name announces that the text is important—maybe even crucial. It makes a bow toward literacy. After all, a good many people use the machine for reading and writing, indeed for teaching reading and writing. Mr. Gates has, over the years, designed elaborate programs to facilitate the stringing together of words. Thus, we tend to think of this text composer as merely a more efficient way of assembling sentences. Nonetheless, I feel a slight chill.

I ask here if the machine might just bypass the symbolic skin of reading and writing—the very abling power of textual literacy. Because of a different attitude toward words and language, might the computer weaken that metaphoric, hovering text that came into view in the Middle Ages? Can it be that the computer, because of its own unique symbolic format, actually does something more than Illich imagined, that it flattens the text as it turns meaning into communication, a change that would have serious implications for the shape of cognition? The symbolic life that surrounds a bookish text in real space—the one that I hold in my hands, open and close, thumb and riffle, pick up in joy, or toss across the room in disgust—surely, that solidity must structure perception differently from one that shimmers into life on the screen.

Just as literate people draw on and move in and out of orality, so people move from books to computers and back again. The two realms—literacy and technology—interpenetrate. Indeed, the three realms move in and out of each other. And just as we experience various levels of literacy, so the symbol-generating power of the machine must affect people's perceptual schemes—must “take” at differing levels of intensity. Fifty years ago, Alexander Luria studied the major shifts that occur in mental activity as people acquire the ability to read and write.⁷ Their cognitive processes cease to be mainly concrete and situational. They begin to draw inferences, not only on the basis of their own practical experience, but on assumptions formulated in language. By focusing on reading and writing as a new linguistic phenomenon—one that exists beyond speech and called “language”—literacy dramatically changes the perceptual frame of orality. Reading and writing might even make me aware that I am aware of language. Speech and thought after all are two different things.

As I say, I do not know how computer technology will actually affect inner sensibilities, how it will alter the symbolic, inner life. Perhaps indwelling life will turn richer. I doubt it. Whatever the case, to ensure the efficacy of this inevitable interpenetration, the computer absolutely needs the rhetorical excesses of literate consciousness. Thus, I offer a proposal: That we try to create the largest mental space possible in our students as a way of accommodating this breach of their cognitive lives by the reach of electronic technology.

In the past, as I noticed young people listening to a great deal of programmed orality, and at the same time saw them turning their backs on books, I suggested new boundaries, a broadening of the definition of literacy, to include orality. I proposed removing students from their linguistic limbo—neither oral nor literate creatures—

and moving them back to a beginning, oral stage, encouraging them to hear stories read aloud, asking them to make up their own stories, and urging them to tell those stories aloud to their classmates. I wanted students to like the sentences they uttered so much that they would no longer want them to disappear into thin air, but would feel the need to write them down—to make them permanent. In my own writing classes, I do not ask students to put pencil to paper until many weeks into the semester; instead, I urge them to stand in front of their classmates and tell stories and jokes. I could not have come to these conclusions without the chance to collaborate on *ABC* with Ivan.

Now, a decade and a half later, I find the need to redefine even further. I take Ivan's old plea for a lay literacy and change it to a plea for a newly invigorated pedagogy, one that emphasizes the symbolic potency of the text—call it a pedagogy of symbolic interaction—a movement into literacy that continuously recognizes the presence of electronic technology. Today, I would suggest keeping students in literacy for longer than usual before they make their first move to the word processor. Today, I think students might well spend a good deal of time creating handmade texts themselves. As the skin of culture thickens, it takes a bit more time and effort to embody, to en flesh the text.

I propose that we teach, not so much the page, but this multidimensioned object Illich has called “the text.” The page has become too flat, too inconsequential; it, too, much resembles the screen. I suggest that we view the text as an object under constant threat, as something that demands attention if it is to remain intact. As teachers, we must make literacy matter.

Like Ivan, I once believed that the screen would displace the text, that technology had too deep, too insidious a reach. I can no longer defend that view. Just as orality persisted in the face of literacy—reshaped, redefined—so literacy—literate cognition—with its insistence on critical thinking, promotes survival and strategies of adaptation. But its own survival now requires a renewed commitment to the bookish text. Even though computers grow more and more powerful, more prevalent, I still find books of interest, as if they had been spawned in self-defense. I search harder to find them; I work out buying strategies to get them; I hunt for bookstores that carry them; but through it all, beleaguered and embattled, the book persists. Given the miles and miles of fiber-optic highway crisscrossing the world, books hold their own against tremendous odds. I use the term *book* in the way Thoreau uses it in *Walden* in trying to sort out the publishing crisis of his own day: “yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.”⁸

As Ivan likes to point out, Hugh of St. Victor talks about three levels of reading: “I can read aloud to you; you can read aloud to me; and I can read contemplatively to myself.” I do not know how many levels of computing there may be. I focus on only

one (my ideal): a young person deep in meditative reflection, in silent conversation in a chat room of the self. In this version, the screen still gets under the skin but must accommodate itself to the interior architecture it finds there. Here, then, the screen interpenetrates with an already established, ongoing, tough-minded, inner life of the operator. It will be the generation of young people at the screen without the intervention of literacy who, I fear, will fade away and not matter much at all. Only something with the extraordinary power of the mind can make certain that the computer remains in its place; can guarantee that it is we who control the machine, and not the computer that controls us.

Pasadena, California

NOTES

1. Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988).
2. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
3. I use as my sources the following: Illich and Sanders, *ABC*, pp. 29–51; Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1991), pp. 159–182; and Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 115–124.
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CHAPTER TEN

Ivan Illich's Concept of "Rests": Glimpses of a World Past

David B. Schwartz

I have never understood how
the mountains when first seen by hunters
and traders and settlers were covered
with peavines. How could every cove
and clearing, old field,
every opening in the woods and even
understories of deep woods
be laced with vines and blossoms in
June? They say the flowers were so thick
the fumes were smothering. They tell
of shining fogs of bees above
the sprawling mess and every bush
and sapling tangled with tender
curls and tresses. I don't see how
it was possible for wild peas
to take the woods in shade and deep
hollows and spread over cliffs in
hanging gardens and choke out other
flowers. It's hard to believe the creek
banks and high ledges were that bright.
But hardest of all is to see
how such profusion, such overwhelming
lushness and lavish could vanish,
so completely disappear that
you must look through several valleys
to find a sprig or strand of wild
peavine curling on a weedstalk
like some word from a lost language
once flourishing on every tongue.

—Robert Morgan¹

We were out of water, again, so I packed up the jugs in the car and went to get some more. Years ago, when we had lived in the lake country of upstate New York, I used to drive dirt roads over the Hector Ridge to Texas Hollow. Texas Hollow was a long, sharp-sided valley whose steep hills were covered with a forest of old trees. A few miles down the road there was a hollowed-out log pouring a steady stream of spring water into a ditch at the side of the road. Capturing the bright cold water welling up around the roots of an ancient tree, the moss-covered chestnut trough made it easy to hold your jugs up and fill them with water for the coming week. If it were a hot day, you'd stick your head under it before you left, cupping your hands to take a deep drink of clear water.

This was the water, said my old friend Gordon Hubbel, who lived in a cabin a mile down, that cured his ulcer, back when he retired from selling snowplows on the road. There was something magical in it, flowing day and night, back in memory to when I was a child, and into generations before me. If you went up on Saturdays, now and no doubt then, there might be a cluster of cars and pickup trucks ahead of you, full of jugs like yours. Waiting your turn, you'd pick up a conversation with your neighbors—the spring was running pretty full for a dry summer, wasn't it? Or maybe somebody had seen the first family of wild turkeys to come back into the area, come up the backbones of the Pennsylvania ridges. Had you heard that John Batterly saw a young black bear up on Satterly Hill? This was a ritual that I had learned when I was a child, when gallon jugs were made of glass. I had listened to the grown-ups talk, exchanging the local news, while I shuffled my shoes and made little stone dams in the ditch, learning without knowing it just what one did while waiting at the spring.

But now I didn't live in the country anymore, except for short spaces of the year. I lived in the city, where the water was piped from the reservoir in the northern hills to our taps. Apparently, it was good water where it started—I had seen it from my canoe—but by the time it got to houses in the city it was full of lead and chlorine and other things, and didn't taste right in tea. So, again, I had to pack up my jugs and drive to get water.

Here in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, however, there were no springs—unless you counted the tapped water sources feeding the bottled springwater companies, who shipped to the grocery stores or even delivered directly to your house. But that was far too expensive for us, leading a fairly modest existence in an old neighborhood of downtown. For us, the only cheap source of drinking water was the new coin-operated water dispenser at the front of the supermarket in the mall across the river. A man who had been in the navy had just installed it; when he was handing out samples one day, I talked to him. He had been on an aircraft carrier, and his job was to run the freshwater plant that deionized and filtered seawater to supply the vast needs of the ship, from showers to steam-driven catapults that launched the jet fighters off the deck. When he returned to civilian life, he thought, "Why couldn't you run this as a business?" So he started installing big deionizing and filtering plants behind gro-

cery stores, running a pipe to a coin-fed dispenser at the store's front. "H₂O to Go," said the new sign above the coin slot, "Better than Spring Water." You drove up, fed in quarters, and filled your jugs.

Despite my use of this dispenser, I did not confuse what filled my jugs with actual water. The difference between water and this stuff—H₂O—had been made clear a long time ago in Ivan Illich's *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*.² This was not the stuff of Lethe that I was hauling in to make my morning tea with, but "recycled toilet flush." I had learned to be conscious that my action was reduced to this: drawing a chemical formulation from a pipe rather than springwater from a mossy log. This was merely another concession to living in the modern world, rather than the world of my childhood or even the world still existing in Texas Hollow, far away in the hills of New York state.

Standing in line with a pocketful of quarters, I struck up a conversation with the fellow ahead of me. Yes, the water in the city pipes was terrible, wasn't it? Even in the state environmental department downtown they didn't use the drinking fountains, but paid for springwater dispensers instead. We talked about the politics of the city. Were they really going to level that block of row houses to build yet another parking garage for commuters? We talked of this and that until it was his turn, and then it was mine. My young son fed in the quarters while I managed the jugs.

Standing on the asphalt of the parking lot, I looked at what surrounded us. Behind us was the mammoth supermarket, and beyond that the chain stores of the strip mall. All about us the asphalt of the vast parking lot blotted out all features of landscape for acres, merging with other lots of a hospital, apartment houses, fast-food outlets, and doctors' offices. At the edge of the lot, a six-lane highway arched above us. The scene was, in other words, as bleak and devoid of sense of true place as any such suburban location one could find in the United States and, increasingly, elsewhere. I could be in Florida or Utah, California or Caracas, standing in the same parking lot, with the same stores, drawing H₂O out of the same dispenser. Was this Harrisburg, or merely the same industrially created reality that I encountered these days most places I traveled?

Yet against the uniform and artificial environment in which I stood, one thing appeared in sharp contrast: my conversation with the man ahead of me, while waiting in line. This one friendly exchange, a short bit of local conversation, would have been familiar and recognizable to my grandfather, Jay Beardslee, who was born in a log cabin not far from Texas Hollow. For despite the foreignness of the setting, our habit of conversing while waiting our turn for the water was a thread that ran back not only to Texas Hollow but to Texas Hollow when I was a child and Texas Hollow when my grandfather was a child, when people came there with horses and farm wagons, and beyond that, thousands of years of peoples all over the globe standing by village wells back into the origins of time. Despite radical changes in the shape of the world, that one tiny action had not altered; it was there if one could notice it.

Once the world was covered with such rituals, each unique to its particular place, yet as ubiquitous as peavines. Now one had to look with a keen eye for this glimmer of an ancient past that somehow continues, remaining as a remnant in modernity, this “rest” of a bit of human culture, to use Illich’s word. Perception and recognition of this remnant, small and almost hidden, can open the door to perceiving one’s own time in a new and powerful way. As I stood in the parking lot, loading my filled plastic jugs into the trunk, the difference between our modern surroundings and the thread of a conversation appeared in a sharper contrast, and I increasingly began to see where I actually was.

LIVING IN VIRTUAL REALITY

There is an old story that if you drop a frog into boiling water it will immediately jump out; but if you put a frog in a kettle of cold water and slowly raise it to a boil, the frog will never notice the incremental change and be boiled alive. Whether true or not for frogs, the moral of this story is that conditions can become unlivable without it being noticed, as long as change is slow. Men and women, unlike most other creatures, are extraordinarily adaptable to external changes; frogs, it appears, are dying out even in the most remote areas of the earth. This adaptability of humans has been a keen evolutionary advantage, although it may turn out that adaptability leads them beyond the edge of survival in the end, frogs pushed only slightly ahead of our own species.

In daily life one adapts to the surroundings. It becomes easy and pleasant to start up the car, drive to the H₂O dispenser, and take the interstate back home, with the air conditioner running and digitally recorded music playing. But if you look around reflectively, searching for some sense of the past, it can become striking just how alien a place the modern world has become. Is this world likely to be supportive of life over the long term? Some are beginning to ask this question. Has the world that people used to dwell in been slowly replaced by something as different as Astro-turf from grass? Illich claims that this is, in fact, the case. Current ways of living are composed of virtual reality, as distinguished from the vernacular realities that existed before modernity; instead of being surrounded by what is culturally grown, one is enclosed in an institutionally planned existence.

Picture, if you will, he suggests, a large translucent sphere. People live in the center of the sphere. From the outside, a series of projectors throws images of reality onto the sphere, covering it. Looking from the inside, one is seduced into taking the projected scenes for the actual world. The projectors are the reality-producing institutions of the modern world. To fill out the trope, there are educational, medical, social, and many other systems, all contriving an ersatz reality. While superficially different, they all derive from the same assumptions or certainties about the human condition. Together, they create a deeply convincing show for the senses. One is exposed to pseudo-verities, such as people learn only through being taught, and are responsible for an entity called health. They come to believe that depression is a

medical disease due to the deficiency of a chemical in the brain. They learn to see the president as an image on the television screen, right before Marilyn Monroe.

The sphere, however, is still not perfect in its illusions. Although they are not many, a few people start to find that it is full of cracks. And once you see one, it is easier to see other cracks as well. Through these cracks you can catch brief glimpses of the real world outside; you detect remnants of the vernacular shining through like tiny bright stars in a cloud-filled night sky. These remnants, or rests, can serve to give you your bearings, like the sparkle of stars seen through an overcast night at sea. When you focus on the world seen through these cracks, the plastic sphere, heretofore as invisible as a movie screen, begins to be perceived. The virtual reality projected on it suddenly starts to lose its solidity. The more you peer through the cracks, the less persuasive what once appeared to be reality becomes.

I thought of this recently when waiting in a queue to board a plane at Heathrow Airport. From the time we stepped on the underground (subway) in London, I saw nothing but virtual reality. Trains, buses, hotels, waiting lounges, X-ray security screenings, Burger Kings, and television screens—all was artificially, institutionally, created. And the remarkable thing to me was that as obviously engineered and dreary as these spaces were—even the outside air was gray and smelled of kerosene—nobody seemed to notice or complain of discomfort. One simply waited in line, perhaps to board a plane to some glamorous package vacation destination one had seen in a video.

These scenes, whether a parking lot in Harrisburg, or an airport in London, seemed so similar because they share a central commonality. Whereas once one traveled the world to find varied and distinctive forms of living, the ways, in Illich's words, of facing "illness, suffering and death" that some call culture, now one encounters considerable uniformity. What has become of human cultures that were unique even from valley to valley in a region? One can only conclude that we no longer have a culture; all we have is an economy masquerading as a culture.

In his work, Illich has been inspired in part by some keen observations of Karl Polanyi regarding the way culture has been displaced by the rise to prominence of a free-market economy, which now runs rampant as a malignancy.³ This once strange and limited way of dealing with one another has historically spread to cover the surface of the globe, choking out vernacular cultures, as agribusiness, parking lots, and lawns choked out peavines. That a free-market economy with its adjuncts of professional and managerial systems has established itself as the exclusive reality could be attributed in part to the triumph of the presentation of images—the flickering but apparently solid world inside the sphere—over the safeguards formerly supplied by common sense.

Since I was visiting the bleak post-industrial city of Manchester, England, the very place where the industrial revolution was born, I reflected on how thoroughly the processes Polanyi and Illich describe have transformed the surface of a world once wild and green. Reading a history of the underground (subway) by Benson Bobrick, I found

some beginnings of an explanation. In this single invention, Bobrick claims, the early story of the transformation can be traced. In fact, he believes that the underground was influential in promoting it.⁴

Bobrick points out that in the initial days of the mines, the dark and human-made industrial world was confined to the tunnels below the earth's surface. Even in mining areas, the land was verdant and agricultural over a subterranean world likened to the fiery pits of hell. Suddenly that world of the industrial lower regions erupted onto the surface, brought by coal-car tracks that were the first subways. After this, the land surrounding the pits became despoiled. Eventually, people didn't even think it strange to rush along in the dark under the Thames in the tube, something that would have been unimaginable only a short time earlier. But let Bobrick speak for himself.

As life above came to resemble life below, modelled on the mine, it became possible for people to reconcile themselves to living in the underworld. . . . The first railway had in fact been a sort of a subway, serving the underground cities of iron and coal. It emerged from the mine, carried its message across the land, then plunged back into the earth, in time taking the rest of the world along.⁵

Looking back, one can see that a dramatic change in perception occurred: to see a mountain not as a majestic wonder, but as a heap of potential wealth in coal or iron; or a forest not as a "dark wood," but merely as so many board feet of lumber to be extracted. It seemed that Bobrick showed me why the section of Heathrow where I was waiting had no windows. In taking the underground from central London to the air terminal I had never left the stage set of virtual reality. Windows were no longer missed. In vain I searched for a tiny crack through which to catch a glimpse of the world outside.

RESTS

Back in Harrisburg, I walk my neighborhood with an eye out for remnants of a world that once was. On Saturday morning, we go to the farmers market down the street. The long hall is filled with stands of farmers and peddlers from the outlying districts selling bread or flowers or produce. At one counter women with Mennonite caps make pretzels behind a lucite screen; across from them, another woman sells homemade cookies. A Vietnamese family dishes up steaming bowls of their celebrated soup—chicken on Fridays, beef on Saturdays. Two Greek women sell salads, dates, and olive oil. Soon it will be Easter, and baskets will appear on the counters filled with handmade chocolate eggs made by various church ladies as fund-raisers. There are no labels, but there is an unspoken language in the foil wrappers: purple signifies coconut, bronze peanut butter.

Although the market buildings are surrounded by automobiles rather than horses and wagons, this is also a scene my grandfather would recognize. While there are many differences in products and the clothes people wear, what would be

instantly recognizable is the way people come together on Saturdays in the center of town to sell what they produce and thus make a living. Again, this is a tradition extending back into early history all over the world. It is not a planned business in the way a supermarket functions; rather, it is an organization based on the natural vernacular activity of a people. At one moment in the nineteenth century, the enterprise grew to a point where the city of Harrisburg erected a stone building to protect the sellers and their goods from the elements.

As we wander home from the market, we pass many other scenes that have traditions reaching into the past. There are local cafés and diners where neighborhood regulars meet for coffee, even tiny one-person grocery stores. People call out their greetings to each other on the street. Further on, there are two gendered locales: a tobacconist's, where men seated in clusters of leather-covered chairs puff on pricey cigars, and a beauty parlor, where women come to be fussed over and touched; there's always a pot of coffee on in the back. These singular corners, I know from Illich's studies, may be the most significant remnants of all—"rests of gender."⁶ In such places one can see traces of a time when men and women used different tools on either side of a gender line, a core characteristic of the vernacular world. Then, men and women came together in a relationship of "asymmetric complementarity," now almost completely faded from Western culture.

Most of these activities, often too small to be seen from a car speeding by, exist, it is true, at least partially in the world of the free-market economy. But unlike the supermarket and the strip mall and the H₂O dispenser, these places were not institutionally created for the purpose of economic gain. They do not work like projections on a spherical screen, inducing the illusion of reality, creating a virtual reality. Here there is a balance. In Illich's words, they are places where "the economy was kept at bay." There are other things, equally or more important than money: certain cultural traditions relevant to the practice of the activity itself.

As I said to the Jewish proprietors of an especially friendly and cozy café, their genius lay in living out a commentary from their own Talmud.

Rabbi Yitzchok of Vorki once praised the hospitality of a certain innkeeper who always treated his guests with much respect. "But he takes money from those who stay at his inn," someone argued. "Of course he takes money," replied Rav Yitzchok, "but he does so to enable himself to continue his commendable conduct. The warmth of his welcome and the thoughtful care he gives are proof that he feels love for his guests. If he wouldn't take money, he would not be able to continue his hospitality."⁷

This is how you can recognize remnants of the vernacular world persisting into the cracks of the virtual reality that presents itself as the modern world: something other than gain inspires them. One has to search carefully for such remnants, but the more the eye becomes refined for seeing them, the more they draw attention to themselves.

Purifying the eye to see remnants, to detect the riches of tradition, offers three gifts. First, focusing on bits of genuine reality allows one to base perception on something true. In this light, the artificiality of institutionally generated reality begins to be perceived. It becomes possible to recognize good and evil, truth and falsity, beauty and ugliness, rather than be imprisoned by relative economic concepts such as value.

Second, seeking out and embracing remnants can give you a place to stand in the modern world. Like stepping-stones across a creek, each rest can give you some place to plant your feet in the quest to actually dwell in a place.

Third, seeing remnants can open the possibility of cherishing and stimulating the growth of what is clearly seen as beautiful. The farmers market that you walk to on foot is more beautiful than the supermarket to which you drive. Asking a neighbor to feed your cats when you're gone is more beautiful than hiring a pet-tending service; your relationship with your neighbor will allow you to reciprocate. Giving alms to the beggar on your street is more beautiful than donating a portion of your salary to the United Way. And the group of friends following his widow, daughter, rabbi, and the pallbearers carrying my friend Lou's body from the chapel to his grave site in the hot summer sun is a more fitting way of mourning his sudden tragic death than a caravan of automobiles from the professional funeral home. This sad walk, too, paces backward into the origins of human community.

The enlargement of hospitable traditions in society is one of my particular interests. In this spirit, some of us started a tradition of having Anthony, a retired actor, read Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in a nearby café as a neighborhood ritual each December. Anthony, however, had a stroke that confined him to a wheelchair in his rather inaccessible apartment. For two years he seldom got out to the street. What he needed was a ramp. But that was complicated to arrange, and nothing happened. A social worker remarked that maybe Anthony could apply to various local and government agencies to qualify for funding assistance, help with city zoning approvals, and the rest. That sounded awfully involved to me.

This year, when I went as usual to get his wheelchair down the stairs and take him to the café, I brought along a member of the audience to help me. Bill was a high-level hospital administrator who, when in college, was also employed as a steelworker. I figured him to be a guy with a big heart; it turned out I was right.

When Bill saw the setup at Anthony's house that kept him prisoner, he was aghast. He was a man used to taking action; so he did. Two weeks later, he showed up with a load of lumber and three friends. One was a contractor; the other two were emergency room doctors. The three of them devoted the weekend to building an extensive ramped entrance. Bill and the doctors paid for all the lumber.

Why did these men do it? To me, this question points to the same issue about rests. Remnants of hospitable impulses persist in the hearts of people, even people who spend their lives working in densely bureaucratic caring systems. It is a remnant

of ancient impulses toward mutual help that lies there dormant, waiting to be excited, if one can perceive its existence and is ready to be surprised.

REMNANTS OF CARING IN THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS

For some patients, though conscious that their condition is perilous, recover their health simply through their contentment with the goodness of the physician.

—Hippocrates⁸

In the 1970s, Illich used the term *liberal professions* to indicate kinds of practice, such as medicine and law, which had their own traditions. It is a term he no longer uses. The reason, I believe, is that the twin diseases of professionalism and free-market economics have smothered such traditions. John McKnight was correct in claiming that the helping professions hide their economic need for clientele behind a "mask of love." McKnight and Illich together named their collaborative book, *Disabling Professions*.⁹ The title itself tells the story.

Using Illich's analysis, it is clear to me that what is now accepted as care, or education, or medicine, is not based on love at all. Illich generally rejects such professions today as thoroughly and perhaps irremediably corrupt. But I think his work allows an additional question that can be pursued: Is his claim universally true, or can rests of ways of facing illness, suffering, and death still be found within the professions themselves? In other words, in the expanding sections of the sphere peopled by those calling themselves professionals, are there cracks that disclose something real?

When I am truly ill, my friend Karen shows up at the door. Karen is a doctor who doesn't practice conventionally because she can't stand what medicine has become in the age of managed care; she is unwilling to see people for ten-minute appointments. So she practices medicine only for friendship. In doing so, Karen is not in the world of economics, but in the world of *philia*, or friendship. Yet it goes beyond that, for Karen is not an ordinary friend; she is a trained and skilled physician. She can do for me in the realm of illness and well-being what my other friends cannot. When she is being a physician with me, she may sit on my couch drinking coffee, but she is not casual. She takes a careful and detailed history; she examines me, knowing what her eyes and hands are seeing. And then she offers me advice about what to do; sometimes, she may even provide a prescription.

Karen would agree with my hematologist cousin that figuring out what is wrong with somebody is "90 percent the history, 8 percent the examination, and 2 percent diagnostic tests." Where do the ideas Karen and my cousin share come from? It has become increasingly clear to me that even in the dense virtual reality of modern medicine, in which this ratio is inverted, there are people attempting to practice in another way, a way informed by a tradition that long predates modern medical systems. What Karen and my cousin and others do, I believe, comprises rests of an older tradition of facing illness, suffering, and death; one could once use the word professional

to describe it. But the word has been rendered useless to refer to the vestiges of ancient practices that can still be found.

Once I started to see the first of such unexpected cracks in the medical sphere, I began to see more. I encountered a urologist in Ithaca, New York, practicing in the same old house for fifty years; he keeps the Hippocratic oath on his office wall, and follows it. In his inviting office, decorated with the oil paintings he has done over the years, he seems antiquarian, bringing to mind a picture by Norman Rockwell, or the pediatrician who lugged his black bag to my bedside when as a child I had the measles. Yet he continues, no matter what his colleagues might think of his old-fashioned, “inefficient” ways.

When I persisted in clearing my eyes, I began to detect more. A few, like Karen, preserved their traditional way of working by distancing themselves far from the world of economics. But Karen is unusual; she could live in a tent and be happy. Others have found ingenious ways to accomplish the increasingly difficult task of holding the economy at bay while striving for a balance between older medical traditions and modern economics, like the Talmudic operators of the café. If one reads the various codes for medical conduct that existed in Western cultures from very early years, one can identify the specific ethical traditions these practitioners keep alive in this unlikely time.

I have found this to be true in education, nursing, librarianship, and in other professional traditions as well. It even exists in my own rarified field of psychotherapy. In a world in which today’s professionals replace older ways of healing with technologies, suffering individuals increasingly become fodder for the “mask of love” without being healed. In the modern realm of psychotherapy, one could easily conclude that there is no deep, powerful, and sensitive tradition of healing the psychic wounds that fail to respond to the balms of friendship, the general culture, or the psychiatric quick fix.

Some years ago, stepping into the dusty, antique-filled office of Dr. Carl Berger, a Philadelphia psychiatrist, how surprised I was to find a world I did not even suspect existed. Here there was no diagnosis, no psychoanalytic jargon, no trace of the modern interlocked medical and insurance systems; there was only the most careful listening and exploration. From a psychoanalytic perspective, we intently examined hundreds of dreams, thousands of tiny incidents, every change in my evolving image of him. It took time—don’t such things always take time?—but it eventually resulted in the goal of ancient Hellenistic philosophy: *eudaimonia* (human flourishing). Further, it concluded with something I had not foreseen: I discovered the gift for analytic psychotherapy in myself. I started to see patients—often deeply suffering patients—in the way I had learned from Dr. Berger. Eventually they, too, began to flower, and their suffering receded.

Although I recognized the characteristics of a rest in what Dr. Berger did, it was years before I found the tradition from which his work derived, and which he in turn had passed on to me. In this tradition, unlike the currently dominant one, which sees

mind as a secretion of the brain, viewed as an organ, the long-suppressed vigor of the self is paramount. Convincingly meaningful for me, this tradition holds that recovery of the self can take place only within a relationship, the meeting that Martin Buber calls the "I-Thou."¹⁰ It is not technology that cures, but only the face of the other, the heart of the other. Is this fundamentally different from *philia*? It may not be *philia*, exactly, but it is far closer to that ancient practice than to modern professionalism.

It seems to me that the search for remnants of cultural traditions within the professions is an area inviting new research, research based on the foundation provided by Illich. With eyes attuned to the presence of rests, it is now possible to descend into the complex and bewildering world of traditions lying behind professional caring, teaching, and all of their derivative cousins. Some potential instances will prove to be false, but among them genuine examples of what once was and which merits preserving will be found. On such remnants it may be possible to stand, to distinguish beauty from ugliness, truth from falsity. Like seeds under a blacktop parking lot in a strip mall, they may sprout through cracks in the macadam. Fragments of nearly forgotten ways people have learned to care for one another, they may awaken the courage to build on the rests of a distant past. Here and there, if one nurtures and waters them, they may even lead to the resurgence of true professional traditions of caring, but in ways fitting our time. What these might be called has yet to be named, if indeed they should be named at all.

When the doctor wades into the plague without thought for his own welfare, this is not out of the professionalism modern health systems demand. As the ancient codes of medical ethics prescribe, the physician is not to look out for himself; rather, he should make the well-being of the sick primary. This is not the medical ideology of managed care, but a rest of something almost but not completely lost in the modern world. Here and there, remnants of such traditions remain, if one has the eyes to recognize them.

Ultimately, what is such a tradition of service about? The ancient philosopher Seneca distinguished it from lesser concerns in this way:

Suppose a physician gave me more attention than was professionally necessary; that it was, not for his professional reputation, but for me, that he feared; that he was not content to indicate remedies, but also applied them; that he sat at my bedside among my anxious friends; that he hurried to me at the crises of my illness; that no service was too burdensome, none too distasteful for him to perform; that he was not indifferent when he heard my moans; that, though a host of others called for him, I was always his chief concern; that he took time for others only when my illness had permitted him—such a man has placed me under obligation, not as a physician, but as a friend.¹¹

Are rests of genuine caring in the helping professions exactly friendship? I don't think so. But there is something in the compassion, the selfless humanity, of the

healer, the teacher, and other professionals that harkens back to the *philia* that has been so central to Illich's life and work. If my analytic mentor is available personally day and night, if, in following him, my own clinic telephone rings evenings in my kitchen, it is because such practices are rests of an exemplary relationship between I and Thou tracing its origin back thousands of years. Here and there such actions endure even in this age of dense systems. Developing an eye to see these rests, and attempting to keep them alive in a toxic age, are perhaps the most important tasks of the present time.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

NOTES

1. Robert Morgan, "Wild Peavines," in his *Topsoil Road* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p. 7. First published in *The Atlantic Monthly* (August, 1993), p. 81.
2. Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of "Stuff"* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1985).
3. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).
4. Benson Bobrick, *Labyrinths of Iron: Subways in History, Myth, Art, Technology, and War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1981).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.
6. See Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).
7. Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, *Love Your Neighbor: You and Your Fellow Man in Light of the Torah* (Brooklyn, NY: Aish HaTorah Publications, 1977), p. 35.
8. *Hippocrates*, vol. 1, *Precepts*, trans. W.H.S. Jones (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), pp. v, 319.
9. Ivan Illich, Irving Zola, John McKnight, Jonathan Caplan, and Harley Shaiken, *Disabling Professions* (London: Marion Boyars, 1977).
10. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).
11. Seneca, "On Benefits," VI, xvi, 1-5, in *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 397.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Hospitality Cannot Be a Challenge

Alfons Garrigós

Challenge is a term often used in our times to characterize such issues as unemployment, education, health, development, democracy, world peace, or sustainability. But nothing is a provocation per se; there must be someone who feels offended or simply worked up: the person who confronts reality as if it were a threat. Nowadays this happens in public as much as in private. World peace, for instance, may appear as challenging as one's internal tranquillity. The result is that not only politicians, but teachers, psychotherapists, and even clergy speak about challenges. This continual naming must be more than self-interested promotion or educational rhetoric.

My thesis is simple: As long as we continue proposing the main issues of our time as challenges, offenses, or crises against which we have to test our strength, we will persist in making the same mistakes that gave rise to the problems in the first place. The intensified use of industrial tools is, for instance, largely supported by an ethos or ethical norm for which every problem, if not reality itself, is a challenge. People who feel offended or provoked vie with reality. Their main objective is to overcome their anger and display their powers. This kind of fear will hardly permit them to be fully aware of the matters at hand.

It is not difficult for technology to follow the logic of challenge. Its great efficiency in shaping reality on a grand scale is admitted by all, but this very power tends to obstruct the ability to recognize its limitations, to appreciate the point beyond which its transformations cease to promote habitable living space or truly human relations. Obligatory schooling, hospitalized medicine, a network of freeways, or long-distance communications may be technological challenges, but learning, friendship, or the discovery of another culture is not. In these actions there is something unforeseen that depends on the relation itself. This is the very sphere of the human, which a technological *modus operandi*, by its nature, is incapable of recognizing.

This is something I learned from reading Ivan Illich, although other thinkers have arrived at the same insight from different directions: Martin Heidegger, for example, when he calls our attention to the way in which the rationality of technoscience uncovers a *raison d'être* of nature by assaulting and exploiting it according to scientific calculations¹; and, in the Spanish-speaking world, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, in his penetrating reflection on the space shuttle *Challenger* as an eloquent sign of the progress and spirit of modern technological humanity.² Illich has nevertheless addressed the question with his customary broad vision. At the same time, I limit myself to proposing a reading that makes us suspicious of tasks, practical or theoretical, which are put forth as challenges, because this approach easily promotes the arrogance of the technological ethos. Indeed, technology, however efficient or dazzling, is today not a solution but the very problem to be faced.

Illich's work is a criticism of the predominance of the technological mode in Western culture. In this sense, his books recapitulate and interpret the history of the West. To situate Illich's thinking, I shall first summarize the stages of Western thought as the evolution of what the Greeks called "hubris." Then I will point out what I see as the principal features of Illich's work, and indicate some questionable interpretations that could possibly ensue. Lastly, I will propose a single key to enter his varied and dispersed thought: hospitality. In contrast to the offended and threatened feeling of the technological ethos, Illich proposes the humble but dignified and disciplined stance of the guest. Dividing these two attitudes are quite different conceptions of limit. With the former, we face a barrier against which we must measure our strength; in the latter, limit is the threshold that makes possible the most human of gestures, that of giving or receiving shelter.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

Though being offended is an ancient feeling, the same things are not always offensive. We must take into account the form offense assumes today and ask ourselves how this came about. Broadly speaking, Western thought has expressed itself in three stages: two great enterprises, the classical-medieval and the modern, followed by a period of uncertainty of the last one hundred or so years. During this third period, not only answers but the earlier questions themselves appear to disintegrate. We cannot yet say with certainty whether an age is ending or beginning, or whether the profound insights of modernity, which unleashed mighty changes in such a short time, are simply taking on new forms.

Across each of these formative ages the vital milieu of the West changed, its fundamental myths altered. Precisely because we think and act in terms of common beliefs, it is difficult to figure out precisely what is happening. Only after a fundamental change has taken place is it possible to look back and perceive what previously supported us, so that it is difficult today to see clearly the ground on which we stand. The most that we can do is speak of serious breaks in the horizons that once inspired our confidence.³

In Western and many other cultures, during the centuries of antiquity and the Middle Ages, the measure of the human was the universe conceived as an ordered, beautiful whole, changing but in a regular manner and, in any case, balanced and coherent. The Greeks called this a “*kosmos*” precisely because its order was good, beautiful, and exemplary. The maxims of ancient sages, *métro*n *áriston* (the best is the measure) or *medén ágan* (nothing in excess), were not only simple proverbs of common sense, but a clear and concise expression of the ancient conception of the universe. Thus, one ought to behave according to the measure the very universe gives us.⁴ This good law, *eunomía*, is a characteristic common to premodern societies. For Raimundo Panikkar,

Eunomía supposes a certain agreement that there is a just and good order, a *nomos*, rite, dharma, *tao*, torah, one law. Ultimately, there is a transcendence, a God, under whatever name, who is above us and to whom we have access if we follow or recognize this same order.⁵

We thus speak of societies that Louis Dumont calls “holistic,” in which all understand themselves because of the place they occupy in the whole. The world, in a physical, metaphysical, religious, and moral sense, is understood in terms of balance. This world is under a principle or law—internal and external—inexorably capable of standing firm on its own.⁶ When humans transgress the order that holds the cosmos together, they commit a sin of pride, and the cosmic law itself renders justice by returning them to their place. Greek tragedy is a public reflection on the limits of action in a new political, juridical, and religious regime, such as that of the *polis* (city).⁷ Aeschylus, in *The Persians*, has the ghost of Darius explain the defeat of Xerxes by saying that,

In the blind arrogance of childish thought,
He dreamed that he could chain, as men chain slaves,
The holy haste of Hellespontine waves,
God’s flowing Bosphorus,

attempting to build a bridge for his army.⁸ This idea resounds distinctly in each ancient thinker.

Almost 2000 years later at the gate of hell, Dante finds an inscription that gives an explanation for the origin of the place:

Justice moved my High Maker; Divine Power made me,
Wisdom Supreme and Primal Love.⁹

According to C.S. Lewis, one must keep in mind this total conception of the universe, both ordered and ordering, in order to understand literature almost up to the end of the modern era.¹⁰ The *Summa theologiae*, the cathedral at Chartres, and *The Divine Comedy* express, each in its own way, the coherence of knowledge, which is nothing else than the coherence of reality as understood by premodern peoples. The heavens and human customs are described, natural phenomena are

explained, ethical and political norms are composed, metaphysics and theology are elaborated—all together, in order and beauty, despite any appearance of contradictions in experience.

What we call modernity arises, in the first instance, when the cosmos, in its ancient and medieval sense, disappears. Reality ceases to be perceived as united and coherent in principle and is broken up into spheres, each of which, if not totally independent, is endowed with its own autonomy. Theology is no longer indispensable for politics, nor for philosophy; and philosophy is no longer necessary for science; following the same line of thought, beauty ceases to be convertible with truth and goodness.

A second aspect of modernity, coordinate with the emergence from the pre-modern cosmos of autonomous orders or spheres, is the affirmation of the modern individual with its own parallel autonomy. Dumont has described the individual, in a moral sense, as a part irreducible to the whole or a whole in itself.¹¹ It cannot be said that modernity discovered consciousness and conscience, but it has radicalized them. Modern human beings discover in consciousness their deepest roots and recognize no norms other than those subjected to their own reason. Formerly, consciousness, reason, and spirit were writ large in the cosmos or in God. Now they are seen as aspects of the individual.

Modernity thus arises insofar as reason is no longer derived from the cosmos but from human beings themselves. Humans become the measure of themselves and the world through the methods they adopt to think about reality. Michel Montaigne, René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, and Immanuel Kant are some of the great philosophical explorers of individual consciousness and conscience. Within this changed landscape there are moments of particular brilliance. One of the briefest but most intense is Pascal's fragment concerning the three orders of greatness.¹² Pascal notes the incommensurable distance separating physical from intellectual reality, and the latter from charity, each of which is independent with its own dignity but, at the same time, for Pascal at least, hierarchically ordered. Thus, although the Gospel cannot solve scientific problems, a subordination of orders is possible. Yet this subordination or synthesis is no longer found in the world itself, but takes place only intimate to the human being, in the human heart. Synthesis thus loses any definitive character: the dissymmetry of the physical world and human thought cannot be overcome.

Modernity therefore becomes the search for an inner or personal synthesis precisely because it makes possible an emancipation of diverse orders; all of which take on the form of specializations. Abandoned to their own inertia, politics, economics, art, science, and technology have nothing to do with anything superior—such as theology, philosophy, or ethics—which could govern them. What was a means becomes an end, the “great transformation” studied by Karl Polanyi.¹³ Means transformed into ends render human actions subordinate to a variety of momentums; while

humans, taken as a measure unto themselves, become committed to a process of self-overcoming. The motto “everything is possible,” which Alexandre Koyré considers the theme of the Renaissance,¹⁴ is transmuted into an ethics of challenge: The limits of reality are a provocation and defiance that human beings, searching for themselves, are called on to surpass. Reason ceases to be the principle of common sense and becomes a calculation of strategies.

Friedrich Nietzsche questioned the presumed innocence of reason, and almost at the same time Marxism, psychoanalysis, and the philosophies of language discovered another more powerful foundation: the possible end of history. Since the early part of the twentieth century, a frequent point of departure for thought has been the rejection of any common reason, that is, effectively, the belief that there is no reason at all. Some have even identified an intelligent order—whether cosmic, divine, or human—as the true cause of unhappiness. Consequently, freedom must come from mere automatism—through history, the libido, or language. It would not be difficult to find in the history of political, economic, psychological, or aesthetic doctrines of the late twentieth century examples of tools displacing workers. In these theories, reason refuses to establish ends since these are already given by the tool itself.¹⁵

Summing up with broad-brush strokes, we can say that in the West human beings found their measure first in the cosmos and then in God. In both cases, reason was ultimately subordinate to a trans-human norm indicating limitations to human action. With the birth of the individual and the fragmentation of reality into autonomous spheres, all rules now had to come from reason itself. Under such conditions all limitations of reality are perceived as challenges. Surmounting them, the human subject transcends itself until, having questioned reason as a foundation and reduced it to nothing more than a method of calculation, humans find no other end for themselves than self-transcendence per se via an extravagant self-indulgence. For people who seek to surpass themselves, reality cannot be anything other than a provocation. One sees, then, that a simplified synthesis of the Western ethos results in a unitary focus, a stance I call “technological.”

MISREADING AND READING ILLICH

Illich’s work belongs to such a time in which it is not difficult to believe that limitless horizons make people’s dreams come true. Perhaps for this reason his writing lends itself to various readings, some of which are debatable. The oppositional movements of the last thirty years—holism, ecology, feminism, indigenism, and so on—in their determination to strike a blow at the cultural projects of the modern industrial state not infrequently find extensive faults with the intellectual insights and habits that define the Western tradition. Such movements present a wide spectrum of proposals ranging from irrationalism to syncretism to relativism. Illich agrees with these people at their point of departure, namely, that the culture that reaches out to the entire

planet is paradoxically a culture in crisis. Environmental and social degradation, institutional collapse, and unsustainable growth give proof of this. But Illich's analyses and proposals are not the same as others'. His thought is rooted in certain fundamental insights of the Western tradition, and he criticizes, on the basis of these very propositions, their perversions. Hence, his analyses cannot be incorporated, *tout court*, into the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In my opinion, Illich would subscribe in large part to the observations Allan Bloom makes with regard to those who not only question the virtues of the Western tradition, but consider them a dead issue.¹⁶

Though the themes of Illich's work are diverse, they include three characteristics that give it unity: a naturalist, a historicist, and an ethical component. All three are present in his early books, but there is a progressive emphasis of the historicist and ethical in the later writings.

In his analysis of the principal industrial tools and the book on conviviality, I think the naturalist element predominates. There is a natural scale beyond which tools are counterproductive and generate all kinds of harmful effects: environmental, social, and psychological.¹⁷ In this first group of works, mythology is no shallow rhetorical device. The reference to Prometheus and Epimetheus in *Deschooling Society*,¹⁸ or to the Greek Nemesis in *Medical Nemesis*,¹⁹ is inspired by a classical vision of the cosmos, ordered and ordering. The human task consists of imitating and conserving this fragile balance in the community.

The historicist element is also present in this first group of works. Illich has always known how to defend his hypothesis with historical and cultural expositions. A reading of chapter 8 in *Medical Nemesis*, with its brief history of death, will confirm this. However, in later books such as *Shadow Work*, *Gender*, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind*, or in his study of reading in Hugh of St. Victor, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, as well as in the essays from the 1980s collected in *In the Mirror of the Past*, historicist argumentation comes to the fore.²⁰ None of our beliefs is natural or invariant; all of them arise from a process of social construction and play a fundamental role in our perception. They often make us resign ourselves to what is intolerable, or they are a genuine obstacle when we try to name it. The historian raises doubts about this pattern of thought by showing its course of formation. There is no need for Illich to speak of the future or to make proposals. His principal achievement has been to clear the field so that a new art of living can flourish. He ends *Gender* with,

I have no strategy to offer. I refuse to speculate on the probabilities of any cure. I shall not allow the shadow of the future to fall on the concepts with which I try to grasp what is and what has been. As the ascetic and the poet meditate on death and thus gratefully *enjoy* the exquisite aliveness of the present, so we must face the sad loss of gender. I strongly suspect that a contemporary art of living *can* be recovered, so long as our austere and clear-

sighted acceptance of the double ghetto of economic neuters then moves us to renounce the comforts of economic sex.²¹

Finally, though the ethical element is highlighted in his latest writings, the two others do not disappear. In his essays on *askesis*, *philia*, and “the gaze,” Illich revives virtue in the classical sense and points out how the acquisition of this interior habit, the fruit of a discipline that has integrated intellect and the sense appetites, is almost impossible when tools have been transformed into a system. With this change, consciousness is dissolved, and workers begin to form part of the technological complex as one of its components and, as such, they become objects of efficiency criteria, thereby losing their moral autonomy.²²

Thus, the fundamental leitmotiv of Illich’s thought has not varied. As a philosopher of technology, an analyst of institutions, and a historian, Illich has always spoken of virtue as a moral custom or style. At the end of the introduction to *Tools for Conviviality*, he recovers austerity as ethos:

“Austerity,” which says something about people, has also been degraded and has acquired a bitter taste, while for Aristotle or Aquinas it marked the foundation of friendship. . . . [Aquinas] defines “austerity” as a virtue which does not exclude all enjoyments, but only those which are distracting from or destructive of personal relatedness. For Thomas “austerity” is a complementary part of a more embracing virtue, which he calls friendship or joyfulness. It is the fruit of an apprehension that things or tools could destroy rather than enhance *eutrapelia* (or graceful playfulness) in personal relations.²³

In one of his speeches, Illich explains his relation to philosophy. Though he speaks of the discipline as an *ancilla* (handmaid), we can see that he deems her a medicine for threats endangering the twofold fundamental intuitions of Western culture—*Logos* (reason) and *charitas* (love). *Logos* postulates an intelligible cosmos and the human capacity to connect with it. *Charitas* points toward the inherent dignity of all human beings and their ability to live appropriately with respect and love. The West is an outcome of the often-conflicted symbiosis of these universals from Athens and Jerusalem, each of which is under attack by a kind of reductionism. Reductionism in reason takes the form a belief that the reality of concrete beings can be fully grasped by means of increasingly abstract formulae. With charity the threat is to reduce virtue to the practices of large and powerful social institutions.²⁴

The Western mind has allowed itself to be seduced by an arrogant confidence in the human ability to think and love. Greek thought and the Gospel have been perverted by the imagination of a universal without a singular, an intelligence without emotion, and a society in which a person has no face. For Illich, the present is the horror that has been born out of inestimable but fragile gifts. To protect these gifts, one must respect certain impassable limits. Today, however, a limit is not considered a symbol of protection, but one of provocation. Human pride grew, always challenging the

limits of reality. Illich directly associates pride with the modern planning of systems. The maxim "*Corruptio optimi quae est pessima*" (The corruption of the best is the worst), according to Illich, is the key to a history of the West.²⁵ But such a vision of history may lead to divergent interpretations.

We may perceive the spirit of an age or culture as an expression of the mystery of evil while forgetting that our criticism rests on criteria that this very tradition has given us. Thus schools, medicine, and modern transportation are questioned because they are discriminatory. The ideal of justice and social equality, valid for every person, independently of economic status, cultural origin, or gender, is an ideal that was spread with Christianity, and has been more firmly established in the West during recent centuries. Contemporary institutions were born of the same cosmic vision that produced the great massacres of the twentieth century. The bureaucratic processes associated with professional teachers, physicians, and urban planners are often humiliating, devious, expensive, and inefficient, but the systems arose or have been legitimated by a political will concerning justice that appears unchangeable.

The problem, however, is that modern institutions are tools that contradict their ends. This is another of Illich's teachings. Schools are the first obstacle to learning, just as automobiles are to accessibility and social mobility. Medicalized health care and industrial architecture, in their turn, wound personal dignity and lessen our capacity to live with pain, death, and friendship. These services, aside from being counterproductive, increase inequality rather than alleviate it and convert poverty into misery by depriving the poor of those means that their imaginativeness had utilized for subsistence; that is, services constitute radical monopolies.²⁶

Illich revealed the ideology behind modern institutions: People are, by definition, incompetent and needy beings. Modern systems assume that people will find their happiness in the consumption of mass-produced articles. If this is indeed a perversion of the ideal of equality, the ideal, nevertheless, continues in force. A society, therefore, that professes the right of all its members to lead a dignified life must consider whether the indiscriminate growth of modern systems of management and consumption is the best way to respect and promote the exercise of this right.

Read in this way, Illich's work does not condemn the fundamental insights of Western civilization, including their universalism. Instead, he may be interpreted as formulating a paradox worthy of G.K. Chesterton. Only one form of life is universalizable—that which gives priority to the singular sphere of the vernacular. The contemporary form of life in the West is maintained at the cost of rising and irreversible social differences; it is in no way universalizable. From this, one sees not only its ecological absurdity but also its moral illegitimacy. Whether all forms of the vernacular are equally acceptable is another issue. Illich thus aims to construct a debate about which institutions actually serve to achieve the emancipatory ideals that have been taking shape in the course of Western history.

Illich provides a key to understanding this history by placing at the base of our dreams and institutions the Gospel and its different interpretations. However, his vision of history as an expanding perversion of the Gospel message could lead to a kind of catastrophism in which there would be no other choice but to renounce the world. The temptation in this case would be to substitute a vernacular world for the market and state. But a renunciation of this kind would be fictitious. The world in which we move seems to be inseparable from the market and management. As Teodor Shanin observes, “[T]he pretense of many modern intellectuals to long for the vernacular should not deceive us. Nine-tenths of those who say this choose to live in a setting that is nine-tenths *anti-vernacular* in all its characteristics.”²⁷

The question is up to what point can a vernacular mode subsist without the public sphere? The public sector and huge institutions are not necessarily incompatible with face-to-face relations. They are distinct spheres, but they could very well be complementary. A network of libraries, streetcars, roads, telephones, or computers would exceed the possibilities of one community. As André Gorz points out, Illich’s analyses accentuate the autonomous sphere, the sphere of personal and community relations that can fill up one’s life, but they do not imply a rejection of the heteronomous sphere, that of the market and state.²⁸ The problem is which sphere is at the service of the other. What is needed is imagination and daring to take on these institutions so that rather than suffocating the vernacular world, just tolerating it on the margins, they might even promote it. Or perhaps it would be enough to keep one’s eyes open, as Gustavo Esteva does in his descriptions of the underground politics in Mexican communities of ordinary people.²⁹

Such a radical renunciation of that which overpowers the vernacular is also supported by Jacques Ellul’s analysis of the power of modern technique.³⁰ Certainly tools include an ideology. Technique transformed into a powerful ideology has metamorphosed the Western world into a “technicist” society. There is no aspect of human life that has not been affected by this conversion. Yet Ellul’s view is so totalizing that a reader may wind up seeing any technological tool as a principle of evil itself. It is more intelligent to distinguish the diversity of elements that compose a historic period, and search in the diversity for clues to move forward. We cannot ignore science, industry, the market, or the state—or cavalierly dismiss them. Rejecting technological absolutism we would simply pass over into an absolutism of the vernacular. We are faced with elements that it is difficult to conceive as other than contraries: the spheres of autonomy and heteronomy, community and society, the vernacular and the market or the state. To reject any of these would be as moot as it would be naive. In fact, if the reading of Illich turns out to be stimulating, it is in part because of his capacity to combine a conservative tradition with revolutionary points of view without rejecting any of the contraries.³¹

Finally, to attribute to Illich a vision of history as catastrophic would be to fail to appreciate his sense of humor. Toward the end of the 1970s, although none of my

circle of readers knew Illich personally, having seen his photograph on the Barral and Mortiz editions of his books or in some magazine, we were struck by his affable, amusing, and even jocular appearance. Illich was practically the only intellectual who wore a smile. Moreover, it was not a prefabricated, advertising smile, but the smile of a person who could take the course of history with a sense of humor. The preface to his first collection of essays reveals this humor with freshness:

Institutions create certainties, and when they are taken seriously, they deaden the heart and enchain the imagination. I trust that each affirmation of mine, irate or passionate, shrewd or naive, will also produce a smile and, with it, a new freedom, however costly its price.³²

Is this smile, virtuous and tender, that of a Christian? In the final analysis, the Christian knows that despite all the horror and nostalgia, the mystery of evil has been illuminated.

HOSPITALITY AS PARADIGM

Though Illich has exposed the contradictions involved in a technological culture, I do not think he presents these contradictions as a challenge. This would be precisely the way of technological ideology: to incite the talented to surpass the limits that shape reality. Reality always appears in concrete and limited forms. Unrestrained people dream of excelling by always going further. Development zeal designs its tools to conquer a challenge. This is the sense of the technological imperative: all that can be done must be done. In this struggle modern persons put themselves to the test by measuring themselves. But the ethos of challenge turns us into automatic transgressors of limits.

There must be antecedents of this ethos of challenge, but it is difficult to find them in the moral systems of the ancients. When we set up a task, be it theoretical or practical, as a challenge, we are not moved by desire for survival, or by the Epicurean search for pleasure, or by the Stoic sense of duty, even less by Christian charity that, although it includes something of both pleasure and duty, is born of a very different experience. Therefore, it makes no sense to read Illich as a person who formulates challenges for our times. All his work is full of references to limits. He speaks of them as a frontier separating the convivial tool from the superefficient, or as the mark that indicates successive transformations of space, water, text, conscience, or of relations between the genders. But limit has a positive sense in his writings: It is the condition of the possibility of hospitality. In Illich, limit is a threshold and, as such, the boundary that separates inhospitable terrain from the inhabitable, rain and storm from shelter. Without this mark, the gesture that best defines humans would not be possible: a welcoming reception.

Thus, we stand before a philosophy of hospitality. If this philosophy appears provocative, that is because it renounces every kind of arrogance. Missionaries, experts,

planners, promoters of development or democracy, for all their goodwill, are still figures of a perverted charity. Here one sees the terrible danger in every political proposal that promises salvation. Before the arrogance of the technician, Illich counters with the humility of the guest. The good guest is one who listens well and learns the silence of a language, who travels to a land whose culture is different but who makes friends there, the suffering one who accepts help, the person who comes in from the cold, who allows the mystery of the other gender to survive in the space he or she occupies, and in the chores of subsistence. In a certain sense, each of Illich's books may be read as an attempt to recover the blessings of such receptivity in some institutional domain.

The limits he points out in his works are thresholds that need not be transgressed. The question is one of not abandoning human space. Hospitality cannot be relegated to specialists, and a society that indiscriminately places its old folks, its sick, its young people, or its marginals in the hands of professionals is renouncing hospitality. Deep down in his texts, Illich cherishes the hope that people may once again cross the threshold and live in this space where it is possible to look at one another face to face. It is difficult here to speak of challenges. It seems absurd to imagine a guest and a host challenging each other to live together under the same roof. If this is no way to talk of hospitality, what then is the proper language?

The singularity of Illich's thought appears here: Although always mindful of his days as a priest in a Puerto Rican parish in New York, he has not supported his positions with the authority of sacred texts, nor has he directed himself specifically to a community of believers. It is not in the guise of a preacher that he speaks of hospitality, but with the rigor of a social scientist. In this sense his work poses the question of what extent technology and hospitality are complementary contraries. This meditation, however urgent and necessary it may be, is not a challenge; it must be understood not from the point of view of technology but of hospitality.

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NOTES

This chapter was translated from the Spanish by Joseph Doshner.

1. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

2. Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *Mientras no cambien los dioses nada ha cambiado* (Madrid: Alianza, 1986), pp. 9–15. See also, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *Ensayos y artículos*, vol. 2 (Barcelona: Destino, 1992), pp. 352–358.

3. José Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas y creencias* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1967), pp. 15–62.

4. *Los presocráticos*, trans. and notes by Juan David García Bacca (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980).

5. Raimundo Panikkar, "Fonaments de la Democràcia: força i feblesa," *Via Foral*, Ripollet (Barcelona), 1997, no. 56, p. 442.

6. Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), ch. 1.

7. Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Mito y tragedia en la Grecia Antigua*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Taurus, 1987), pp. 15–42.
8. Aeschylus, *The Persians*, 745–750.
9. Dante Alighieri, “Inferno,” in his *The Divine Comedy*, ch. 3, vv. 4–6.
10. C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ch. 2.
11. Louis Dumont, *Ensayos sobre el individualismo* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987). See the Glossary and the Introduction.
12. Pascal, *Pensées*, Br. 793; La. 308; Ch. 829, in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Gallimard, Col. La Pleiade, 1991).
13. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).
14. Alexandre Koyré, “La aportación científica del Renacimiento,” in his *Estudios de historia del pensamiento científico*, 10th ed. (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1990), p. 43.
15. José Antonio Marina, *Elogio y refutación del ingenio* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1992); and José Antonio Marina, *El misterio de la voluntad perdida* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1997).
16. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); and Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 13–35.
17. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
18. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), ch. 7.
19. Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).
20. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981); Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of “Stuff”* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1985); Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988); Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh’s Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1991).
21. Illich, *Gender*, p. 179. Emphasis in original.
22. Ivan Illich, “Philosophy . . . Artifacts . . . Friendship—and the History of the Gaze,” in Thérèse-Anne Druart, ed., *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70 (annual supplement 1996), Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association: *Philosophy of Technology*, pp. 61ff. See also William Arney, *Experts in the Age of Systems*, with a forward by Ivan Illich (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).
23. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, pp. xiv–xv.
24. Illich, “Philosophy,” p. 62.
25. See Ivan Illich’s homage to Jacques Ellul published as “Statement by Ivan Illich,” *Technology in Society* 17, no. 2 (1995), pp. 233–238. See also David Cayley, “The Corruption of Christianity: Ivan Illich on Gospel, Church, and Society,” *Ideas* (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 2000).
26. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, ch. 3.
27. Teodor Shanin, “El marxismo y las tradiciones revolucionarias vernáculas,” in Teodor Shanin, ed., *El Marx tardío y la vía rusa* (Madrid: Revolución, 1990). Emphasis in original.
28. André Gorz, *Metamorphoses du travail. Quête du sens. Critique de la raison économique* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1988).
29. Gustavo Esteva, “Autonomia i democràcia radical. El trànsit de la tolerància a l’hospitalitat,” *Via Foral*, Ripollet (Barcelona), nos. 57–58, pp. 4–33.

30. Jacques Ellul, *El siglo XX y la técnica* (Barcelona: Labor, 1960), which is the Spanish translation of *La Technique ou l'enjeu du siècle* (1954). For a shorter presentation of the thesis referenced here, see Jacques Ellul, "The Search for Ethics in a Technicist Society," *Research in Philosophy and Technology* 9, pp. 23-36.

31. Stephen Vizinczey makes a similar judgment in "Un revolucionario en Cuernavaca," *Verdad y mentiras en la literatura* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1989), p. 284.

32. Ivan Illich, *Alternativas* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1977), p. 11.

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PART IV
FACING SOCIETY

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Mess We're In: How Ivan Illich Revealed to Me That the American Dream Is Actually a Nightmare

Aaron Falbel

Reading the books and essays of Ivan Illich is a little like hearing an air-raid siren in the midst of a calm. “Why is this siren going off?” one is tempted to ask. “We are not under attack, we are not in any danger; it must be a false alarm.” But the more one reads and thinks about what this man has to say, the more one begins to see that we are indeed in grave danger—a danger entirely of our own making.

The surprising and deeply radical aspect of what Illich has to say is that the danger stems not just from the obvious sources (say, the military, or the hegemony of multinational corporations) but more fundamentally from those elements of modernity that appear to most people as undeniable benefits: education, health care, transportation, equality of the sexes, communication, self-help, labor-saving machines, economic development, and so on. Partisans of both Left and Right politics see these things as the fruits of progress and, as such, lie outside the sphere of critical debate. They constitute what Illich calls modern certainties. But Ivan Illich, almost alone among scholars and intellectuals, trains his critical gaze on precisely these unquestioned benefits, and sounds the alarm: *Corruptio optimi quae est pessima!* (Corruption of the best is the worst!).

In this chapter, I look at the two aspects of Illich’s critique that have influenced me the most, namely, his writings on technology and education. I will then examine how Illich’s emphasis on friendship can be seen as a thread that ties all his work together, and onto which we might attach some form of hope in these dark times.

ILLICH'S CRITIQUE OF TECHNOLOGY

I grew up in an era—the 1960s—in which technology was looked upon as an unqualified good thing. Earth Day, and the ecological consciousness that came with it, was yet unknown. The Apollo moon shot captured everyone's imagination and attention. True, there was the atomic bomb and napalm, but these evils belonged to the separate demonic category of warfare. Technology meant progress. It would free people from arduous, backbreaking labor. Modern conveniences would make life easier and more pleasant, and through mass-production techniques, these benefits would be made available to all. The promise of technology was the promise of a bright, rosy future.

Not so, warned Ivan Illich. "We must come to admit," he writes in *Tools for Conviviality*, "that only within limits can machines take the place of slaves; beyond these limits they lead to a new type of serfdom" (p. xii).¹ By the time I read those words, in the mid-1980s, I already knew that modern technology fostered such unwanted by-products as pollution and environmental degradation. But this news that we were being enslaved by our tools seemed surprising. Illich goes on:

An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with meaning; to the degree he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image. (p. 22)

Looking around me in 1984—George Orwell's year—I could see the truth of these words. Illich was right: human beings were remaking themselves in the image of the computer. People saw themselves, referred to themselves, as systems, or even as cybernetic organisms. Their senses provided "feedback." Food and information were seen as "inputs" or as "system requirements." Food labeling changed to reflect this: the old list of ingredients was expanded to include the list of "Nutrition Facts" we see today.

Temperamentally, I never much enjoyed driving and so never really wanted to own or depend on a car. But *Energy and Equity* opened my eyes to the ways in which cars—and other high-speed modes of transport—were truly debilitating, in every sense of that word.² And the essay illustrated the sense of limits mentioned above, in this case a speed limit, and how once these narrow limits were transgressed means turned into ends and frustrated the very purpose for which the tool was developed and adopted.

Such insights I might have obtained from reading, say, Jacques Ellul or Lewis Mumford. But Illich goes further by broadening the way he defines the word *tool*. For Illich, schools, hospitals, transportation systems, factories, and prisons are also tools. He writes,

I use the term because it allows me to subsume into one category all rationally designed devices, be they artifacts or rules, codes or operators, and to

distinguish all these planned and engineered instrumentalities from other things such as food or implements, which in a given culture are not deemed to be subject to rationalization. (p. 22)

From reading Illich's critique of tools (in this general sense), I began to see the extent to which modern society is all sewn up, so to speak. Genuinely human acts have more and more been replaced by the operation of machines, institutions, and systems. Everything—from procuring the food we eat to dealing with the excrement we leave behind, from birthing to dying, from healing to moving—has been designed, rationalized, engineered, all in the name of optimizing or improving on nature. That this engineering ethos had eclipsed and replaced our historical trust in and dependence on nature was the focus of the closing essay of *Deschooling Society*, “Rebirth of Epimethean Man.”

To the primitive world was governed by fate, fact and necessity. By stealing fire from the gods, Prometheus turned facts into problems, called necessity into question, and defied fate. Classical man framed a civilized context for human perspective. He was aware that he could defy fate-nature-environment, but only at his own risk. Contemporary man goes further; he attempts to create the world in his image, to build a totally man-made environment, and then discovers that he can do so only on the condition of constantly remaking himself to fit it. We must now face the fact that man himself is at stake.³

Tools for Conviviality, perhaps more than Illich's other writings, describes the mess we're in. The chapter entitled “The Multiple Balance” outlines five ways in which life in modern industrial society is a life severely out of balance: despoliation of the physical environment, frustration of natural competences, education's triumph over learning, social and economic polarization, and engineered obsolescence. Illich remarked once that he suffered a sort of melancholia—a depression—in the midst of writing that section of the book.⁴ He saw that the growing consciousness about environmental degradation was but the tip of the iceberg, and that the various imbalances he outlined in the book were interrelated and mutually reinforcing. A piecemeal, one-dimensional solution would be an exercise in futility. “We must face the fact,” he pointed out, “that the imbalance between man and the environment is just one of several mutually reinforcing stresses, each distorting the balance of life in a different dimension” (p. 53).

It could be argued that no scholar has pierced as sharply as Ivan Illich the depths to which we have fallen. Even the “soft energy” solutions of Amory Lovins⁵ (and others), which appear so promising to many environmentalists, are seen clearly by Illich to prop up some of the other imbalances. “Even clean and equally distributed electricity could lead to intolerable radical monopoly of power tools over man's personal energy” (p. 83). And in these days, the Internet, applauded

and championed by many “progressives” as a great democratizing force and organizing tool and as the answer to our quest for community, is recognized by Illich as the very opposite of personal relatedness, the opposite of true experience. Indeed, Illich’s friend and colleague, John McKnight, has dubbed the computer “the ultimately unconvivial tool.”⁶

Yet, technological society marches on, and the dire warnings voiced by Illich twenty-five years ago remain largely unheeded. Was Illich wrong? Was he exaggerating the severity of the situation? No, I believe he saw things plainly and accurately. But he may have underestimated two aspects of people living in commodity-intensive, institution-permeated society:

- Belief in technology is our modern-day religion. People have a strong, almost unshakable faith that we can engineer our way out of any problems caused by previous technological/institutional solutions. “If we can send a man to the moon, then surely we can . . .”
- Addiction to comfort and labor-saving tools prevents people from choosing to pursue a more simple (though perhaps more labor-intensive) way of life. Most people do not want to give up their cars or televisions or high-tech medical procedures or curriculums or computers or fax machines or air conditioners, and so on, even when the harmful social, political, cultural, and environmental effects of these tools are pointed out to them.

The first entails the sin of hubris, of pride; the second, *acedia*, or sloth.

For the most part, Illich has refused to outline a political program or movement platform suggesting what “we” should do if “we” share his critique of industrial society. (And Illich is wary of the power and violence contained in that little word *we*.) It is for each person in his/her particular place, together with friends, neighbors, and family, to figure out what he/she should do. Illich has consistently rejected the role of leader or guru who tells people what to do. This, I feel, is the proper stance to take.

Yet I also feel there are ways to address the inner void some people experience after reading Illich’s devastating critique without saying, “Here’s what you should do.” I believe in the importance of stories such as those told by writer and poet Wendell Berry, both in his essays and in his fiction. He tells of people, both real and fictional, he “knows” in his hometown of Port Royal, Kentucky. These stories, such as the one he tells in the essay “Does Community Have a Value?,” speak volumes.⁷ Several of Illich’s close friends and colleagues are consummate storytellers: Lee Hoinacki, David Schwartz, John McKnight, Gustavo Esteva, to name a few. In person, Illich is a great storyteller, but not many of these stories have made it into his writing (with the exception of David Cayley’s book, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*).⁸ Such stories can kindle people’s imaginations for what it might be like to live “a life simple in means and rich in ends,” to use Cayley’s phrase.⁹ This is one way, I believe, that

Illich's insights might be advanced or extended, made more concrete and down-to-earth without becoming prescriptive.

ILLICH'S CRITIQUE OF EDUCATION

Aside from his critique of the medical profession, Illich is perhaps best known as the man who took on the school—indeed, the entire education establishment. But few readers have followed him beyond his early criticism of schooling, expressed in *Deschooling Society*.¹⁰ Indeed, the essays dealing with education that came after *Deschooling Society* (“In Lieu of Education,” *Imprisoned in the Global Classroom*, “Taught Mother Tongue,” “Eco-Pedagogics and the Commons,” “A Plea for Research in Lay Literacy,” “The Educational Sphere,” “The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel,” “The History of *Homo Educandus*”) go much deeper and are far more radical than the original book.¹¹ Even while the manuscript of *Deschooling* was still at the publishers, Illich grew increasingly dissatisfied with the text. Reflecting on the evolution of his thinking on the matter, Illich wrote much later:

I called for the disestablishment of schools for the sake of improving education and here, I noticed, lay my mistake. Much more important than the disestablishment of schools was the reversal of those trends making education a pressing need rather than a gift of gratuitous leisure. . . . The more important question became, “Why do so many people—even ardent critics of schooling—become addicted to education, as to a drug?”¹²

He came to see that “the deschooling of our worldview demands that we recognize the illegitimate and religious nature of the educational enterprise itself. Its hubris lies in the attempt to make man a social being as a result of his treatment in an engineered process.”¹³

Thus, after *Deschooling Society*, Illich came to question not only schooling but the very idea of education itself. His plea for research not *in* but *on* education, and for research into the history and origins of *homo educandus* (that species of human born in need of education), was an attempt to invite others to examine something he had noticed, namely, that *education*, as we define the term today, is a rather recent invention, not much more than four hundred years old. It is not something endemic to the human condition but took form gradually within a certain social milieu and a particular mental topology. More recently, Illich has remarked that this very topology is undergoing a major transformation under the shadow of cybernetic, information technology. *Homo educandus* is itself becoming an endangered species, rapidly being replaced by *homo programmandus* (that species of human born in need of programming, of integration into the cybernetic system and world of virtual realities).

This type of analysis—a move from institutional critique to an investigation of the social and intellectual history that gave rise to the institution in the first place—marked a change in Illich's approach that appeared in the late 1970s or early 1980s, about the

time *Shadow Work* came out.¹⁴ Illich spent the preceding years carefully describing the mess we're in. But he became more and more curious about how we got into this mess. This led him to a historical investigation of what he calls "modern certainties," the "epoch-specific apriorisms which generate not only our mental conceptions but also our sensual perceptions and the feelings in our hearts about what constitutes social reality."¹⁵ That people need education or need to go through a process of socialization if they are to grow up properly are two examples of such certainties, as is the very notion that people have "needs" at all. But in *Shadow Work*, and later in *Gender*, Illich zeroed in on what is perhaps the root certainty of our time: the assumption of scarcity.¹⁶

Illich came to define the modern notion of education as "learning under the assumption of scarcity," that is, that the means for learning in general are in scarce supply.¹⁷ This assumption of scarcity causes people to create social mechanisms—institutions—to try to ensure that others learn certain things, or feel safe, or have a roof over their heads and enough food to eat, be cared for when they get sick, and so on. As Illich explained in *Tools for Conviviality*, *Energy and Equity*, and *Medical Nemesis*, such interventions can be helpful, up to a certain point, but they soon grow in size and intensity such that they turn means into ends and conclude frustrating the very purposes for which they were created. "Paradoxical counterproductivity," as Illich calls it, sets in.¹⁸

More personally, Illich's critique of education enabled me to look upon the "Growing without Schooling" movement, with which I became acquainted through John Holt's friendship, with new, more exacting eyes. Many of the families who started this movement in the late 1970s were influenced by Illich's early analysis of schooling, amplified and expanded by John Holt in his later books. But most of these families, who themselves make up a small portion of the larger homeschooling movement, are true believers in education, socialization, and child development. They go to great lengths to provide materials, resources, opportunities, apprenticeships, internships, and the like, all for the sake of their children's educations. Illich enabled me to see how such activities, undertaken with the best of intentions, can end up anchoring the myth of education to an even greater extent than schools do.¹⁹ He also enabled me to see how education is the generator or, more precisely, in automotive terms, the alternator of modern industrial society, keeping its scarcity-batteries charged through its own motions and operation. This dynamic often remains completely untouched under the rubric of homeschooling, free schooling, deschooling or what have you. And the more mainstream homeschooling becomes, the more diluted its revolutionary potential will be. Paradoxical counterproductivity strikes again!

ILlich ON FRIENDSHIP, HOPE, AND HOSPITALITY

What, then, is the alternative to the assumption of scarcity? I believe the answer is trust and faith in the goodness, the rightness, of nature—some would say, of God. Illich draws a distinction between the pre-scarcity notion of hope and the post-scarcity concept of expectation. He writes,

Hope, in its strong sense, means trusting faith in the goodness of nature, while expectation, as I will use it here, means reliance on results which are planned and controlled by man. Hope centers on a person from whom we await a gift. Expectation looks forward to satisfaction from a predictable process which will produce what we have the right to claim.²⁰

Hope centers on a person. If there is anything left of hope in this crumbling, decaying society, it is through the disciplined practice of friendship in the old sense of the term, in the rabbinic or monastic sense, in the sense of being fully there for that other person. Today, friendship typically means getting together with selected others over a game of tennis or golf, gabbing on the phone, sending personal e-mail updates, or perhaps going to the movies or a restaurant. But Illich goes back to Plato, and especially to the parable of the Good Samaritan, to rediscover what friendship and hospitality have meant throughout the ages. For Plato, the self has meaning only in the eye of the other. We gain ourselves as a gift from the other and the contents of that gift is all we have meant, given, and offered to that other person. The gift will be only as beautiful as the extent to which we have loved, have practiced *charitas*, toward that other. And just who is that other? Who is my neighbor whom I am enjoined to love? The message of the Samaritan story, according to Illich, is that I must decide whom I will take into my arms, whom I will care for and love in this way, whom I will invite over my threshold.

Why this emphasis on friendship? If society is marching off in the wrong direction (or perhaps the more accurate image is that of lemmings running toward a cliff), would not the correct response be to try to reverse the direction by working to form a massive political movement? Illich seems to answer this question in the negative. Though he stops short of condemning anyone who seeks to enter politics to try to bring about major social change, it is clear that he himself is quite wary of what passes for politics in this day and age. In the age of mass media, sound bites, and spin doctors, politics is invariably about popularity contests, image, money, and power. Political debates have devolved into sporting events—boxing matches, really—with the viewers and political commentators eager to see who will deliver the knockout punch. Even local politics has been corrupted in this way. It is extremely difficult for even grassroots movements to resist cooptation and corruption by powerful media. According to Illich, the only space left is in our friendships, “disciplined, self-denying, careful, tasteful friendships. Mutual friendships always—I and you and, I hope, a third person—out of which perhaps community can grow. Because perhaps here we can find out what the good is.”²¹ And in such friendships, I would add, friends can support one another in the cheerful, disciplined renunciation of those things that impinge on the good, on our relatedness to each other, on community—that is, those things to which we must say a loud, clear, “No!”

As David Schwartz, John McKnight, and others have pointed out, there are remnants of this older, deeper meaning of friendship extant today, even in the bowels of technological society—though one has to look carefully to see them. They exist

only in the cracks and crevices of modernity, for modern society militates against true friendship. The economy controls our lives and forces us to compete against our neighbors; it forces us to view ourselves as separate, independent moneymaking atoms. Increasingly, screens, loudspeakers, and the metallic shell of the automobile separate us from others. Institutions and professionals have taken over the work of caring for people which, they tell us, they can do better than we can, but which they can only do by debasing care and love. Still, in times of crisis, that which makes us human often rises to the surface. Sometimes it takes an earthquake, a tornado, a flood, war, severe illness, or some other catastrophe to bring it out, for people to act as true neighbors. That is, when the systems and institutions break down during a calamity, Samaritan impulses are awakened. But as soon as the caring machines and other social mechanisms are repaired, people revert to their normal uncaring ways.

It is hard to imagine getting to a place where this sort of Samaritan behavior is the norm rather than the exception. But one must be careful here to avoid succumbing to the megalomaniacal fantasies of the engineering ethos: thinking one can shape society toward a given end, however attractive that end may seem. If I am to avoid hubris, I must admit that all I can really control is my own behavior. Otherwise I run the risk of becoming an educator—that is, a people-shaper—myself. So what do I do? I try to be as good a friend as I can. This means living for others and, in Mohandas Gandhi's words, "reducing oneself to zero." My friends know that I will do almost anything for them, and I try to take that Samaritan story into my heart and be a true neighbor. I can only hope that such behavior is somehow infectious. Every time I give a hungry or homeless person a bowl of soup and a piece of bread, I think of myself as planting a seed both in the heart of the person receiving the gift of food and in the passerby who might take note of what I am doing. Whether either of those two seeds germinates and grows is, of course, not up to me. But I can harbor hope that they will.

Similarly, to have a trusting faith in nature—including human nature—is the opposite of education, for it is in the very being of the human animal to learn. From Ivan Illich I have come to know that to love a child (or for that matter, a person of any age) means not to mold him or her according to my expectations, but to have hope and trust in that person, to look deeply into his or her eyes, listen with full presence to her or his voice to find out who that person is, then accept that person for who he or she is, saying, "I am here for you."²²

Hope means trusting faith in the goodness of nature. The belief that we can outdo nature, overcome it, and improve on it, underlies what has been called the "technological project" that marks our era. Lack of faith in nature (again, including human nature) creates the assumption of scarcity—nature isn't good enough, won't provide enough, can't be relied on, and so on—and I've already discussed where that road leads: right into the mess we're in. No summation of technological fixes will get us out of it; on the contrary, it will only get us in an even deeper mess. The only way out, if there is a way out, is to abandon the technological project, and identify the Ameri-

can Dream as the nightmare that it is. For me, reading Ivan Illich has been more than an intriguing intellectual exercise. It has led me to take concrete steps to live a rather different sort of life. I have come to see that the way we live, the way I live, in modern society is simply no good. So I am forced to ask myself, "What is good?" and "How shall I live?"

I know that the economy sucks the life out of neighborliness and community; that it does violence to the natural environment, to people, and to culture. So I try to reduce my involvement in the money economy to a minimum. This means living on very little money, but it leaves me more time for other people, for doing things that truly matter, for what Illich terms *eutrapelia* (graceful playfulness) in personal relations.

I know that modern technology is similarly wasteful, debilitating, enslaving, anathema to community and friendship, debasing, and addictive. So I try to reduce my reliance on modern conveniences to the extent that I can: I climb the stairs, I use simple hand tools, I walk or I ride a bicycle, I talk to people face to face, I shun the mass media, I grow a substantial portion of my own food with enough to spare for others, and I try to reduce my consumption of electricity to a minimum. (I use the word *try*, because I am painfully aware of the many ways in which I fall short of these aims.)

I know that education props up the myth of scarcity, so I try to suppress the impulse to shape people for their own good, and I try to avoid discussions of peoples' educational credentials, including my own. I renounce the search for Big Solutions to society's problems, which can only lead to some sort of educational campaign. I have to trust people to find their own way in the world, even if it seems wrong to me. This does not mean that I will never intervene in people's lives or that I don't care what anyone else does. It does mean being very discriminating and judicious in one's interventions and realizing that all such interventions are both personal and risky. But I will not let myself become preacher, educator, or evangelist.

On the whole, I am not a joiner of movements. I see Illich's critique not as the foundation for a movement platform but as a call for personal action. It is a call, at the very least, for each of us to reduce his or her complicity in perpetuating the mess we're in by knowing what those things are to which one must say "No!" (One might then still be *in* the mess, but not *of* it.) And as I have indicated, this call to action involves not only the renunciation of evils but also a search for the good, the true, the beautiful way to live in a particular place. Such a search is surely a lifelong journey—one I have embarked on largely, though not exclusively, due to the influence of Ivan Illich.²³

So it is no exaggeration to say that Ivan Illich turned my life around. In 1984, when I first encountered Illich's writings, I was just starting out on a graduate program at a prestigious university, aimed at investigating the ways in which educators might use technology to improve education. I came upon Illich just in time, and that air-raid siren has been ringing in my ears ever since. I ended up questioning education, becoming deeply skeptical of technology, renouncing any privilege that a graduate degree could have afforded me, and abandoning any pursuit of a career. Looking

back, it seems as if I've come a long way—but it is quite short indeed compared to the distance I have yet to travel. And it is no easy thing to swim against the tide of modernity. But Illich's alarm is still sounding, and though I hope we will see the error of our ways, I do not expect we will find our passage out of the mess we're in. As far as I can see, virtually all of the trends seem to be going in the wrong direction.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

NOTES

1. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
2. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
3. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 154–155.
4. Personal conversation. See also the discussion with Illich on “The Politics of Friendship” in Jerry Brown, ed., *Dialogues* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books, 1998), pp. 51–62.
5. Amory Lovins, “Soft Energy Paths,” in *The Schumacher Lectures*, ed. Satish Kumar (London: Blond and Briggs, 1980), pp. 28–69.
6. See David Cayley, *Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich, Ideas* (Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 1989), p. 31.
7. Wendell Berry, “Does Community Have A Value?” in his *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), pp. 179–192.
8. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi Press, 1992).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
10. In fact, the main thrust of *Deschooling Society* lies not in its critique of schools but, as mentioned earlier, in schooling and institutionalization as indicators of the corruption of the human spirit.
11. “In Lieu of Education,” in Ivan Illich, *Toward a History of Needs* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1978); Ivan Illich and Etienne Verne, *Imprisoned in the Global Classroom* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976); “Taught Mother Tongue,” “The Educational Sphere,” “The History of *Homo Educandus*,” and “A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy,” in Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990* (London: Marion Boyars, 1992); “Eco-Pedagogy and the Commons,” unpublished manuscript, 1983; and “The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel,” unpublished manuscript, 1988.
12. Ivan Illich, “Foreword” in *Deschooling Our Lives*, ed. Matt Hern (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 1996), p. viii.
13. Illich, “In Lieu of Education.” Very few people indeed realize that this critique applies to Illich's own proposals of “learning webs” at the end of *Deschooling Society*—proposals Illich rejects today.
14. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981).
15. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, pp. 172–173.
16. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).
17. Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 165.
18. Illich, *Gender*, p. 15.
19. The extent is greater because such interventions, done for education's sake, are often subtler than their institutional counterparts, and they are also deemed to be “effective.” Few people today believe that schools are effective.
20. Illich, *Deschooling Society*, pp. 151–152.

21. Illich, in Brown, ed., *Dialogues*, p. 60.

22. John Holt wrote in the revised edition of *How Children Learn* (New York: Dell, 1967, 1983), p. viii: "All I am saying in this book can be summed up in two words—Trust Children."

23. Other influences have been Wally and Juanita Nelson; Wendell Berry; Lee Hoinacki; John Holt; Peter Maurin, Dorothy Day, and Ammon Hennacy (of the Catholic Worker); Mohandas Gandhi; Helen and Scott Nearing; Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner; Eric Weinberger; and my soul mate, Susannah Sheffer.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Letter on Studying with Master Illich

Madhu Suri Prakash

Dear Lee,

Your invitation to write for this book on Ivan Illich fills me with deep joy, anticipating delightful, even if difficult, conversations among his friends and pupils. A fabulous flow of abundance have I enjoyed at all Illich feasts, with their prodigious outpourings of ideas and thoughtfulness, of food and wine, of stories and histories. Equally, as I settle down to muse and meditate, remember and re-savor, I fear that my skill in words will not be up to the task of writing about Master Illich—a teacher whose prose-poems continue to sing to me, to nourish my imagination, to feed my courage, even as they rudely rip away and tear down all the certainties engineered and constructed by the modern mind.

Neither my current sense of joyous anticipation nor of dreaded fear is new. Both remind me of conditions acutely experienced before my arrival at other Illich feasts. How do I fully express what that crossing over the threshold of Illich’s “homes” has meant to me? Could I possibly describe my different discoveries under Illich’s guidance regarding the meaning of friendship, both as a sensual experience and the foundation for ethics and virtue? Or about re-encountering and understanding afresh the profound relevance of Illich’s insights at the grassroots, in the pluriverse of millions of peoples decried and denigrated as “uneducated” and “illiterate”? And, most particularly, could I reveal with humility my many failures in bringing the marvelous experience of studying with Master Illich to the young and old who register for my courses on education at the university? Do I have the courage to describe how and why I still fail to be a bridge over the troubled waters tumbling furiously on the jagged rocks of a chasm separating the competitive campus classroom from the warmth of feast, fire, and conversations held in the hearth of Illich’s home? He writes, “In our technogene world, exemplary

human acts that can be good or evil . . . arise only in a space of friendship shielded from Pollyanna.”¹

CROSSING OVER THE THRESHOLD

Let me then, once again, cross over the threshold into the sanctum of feast and fire, hearth and home—there where I have learned from Master Illich in the flesh the virtues of friendship and hospitality; what it means to be hospitable in the hostile world of hospitals and institutional management wearing the mask of care; of the nature of the hospitality that shares the feasts of conversation and friendship even with the stranger—indeed, especially with the stranger. The first time I crossed over that threshold over a decade ago, I was no stranger, nor a friend. I had attended quite a few Illich lectures in professional conferences, hotel halls, classrooms, and other institutional settings, talks he had given for the edification of the modern homeless mind. But in none of these settings could I even remotely conceive that within the extended family of Illich’s friends and pupils I might one day come to share friendship.

Crossing over the threshold of his rented house that first time, I suffered the natural fear of one who enters uninvited the home of another. Still, I came, beckoned to the feast by the friend of a friend of Illich. Once inside, the fear of coldness and distance meted out to the uninvited gate-crasher vanished. Immediately, the sitting circle immersed in convivial contemplative conversation silently moved and shifted to create a space that included me. Unasked for, a steaming cup of coffee appeared from somewhere. Seconds later, attentive like the others, puzzling and mulling over a yet-to-be-grasped notion, I fully forgot that I had not been invited.

Lee, you have been present at most if not all the feasts I write of. Today, I seek words to describe them as vividly as I can, to share what I have felt in my skin, my bones, the very core of my marrow. As I struggle to do so, all the tastes and smells and flavors and textures and sounds and images that lay dormant in my memory begin to wake up, to come alive. Remembering, I begin to re-member the friends who were there, as the leaves turned red, maroon, and golden, the air crisp, and Illich’s hearth filled with the heady aroma of brewing cinnamon cider and coffee. The sheer sensuality of studying in that sanctum I find myself retasting again and again every time my mind’s eye crosses over the Illich threshold. While relistening in my memory to deliberations on virtue, vice, and ethics, I gaze out at the compost heap turning our leftovers into rich soil; or at the squashes from the farmers market lying on the kitchen counter waiting to be transformed into Barbara Duden’s squash soup.

Now I relive again those past feasts of affection and friendship to offer others a glimpse of the context Master Illich and his friends create for teaching and learning. I relive cherished moments, searching for words to express the gratitude that wells up in my breast for the gifts of knowledge and wisdom generously bestowed by my

teacher. Along with the gratitude comes a renewed appreciation for the plain fact that without crossing over that threshold to break bread together, I might never have sensed the wealth of worlds Illich celebrates; I might never have touched and smelled, felt and tasted with all my senses what my intellect grasped while attending his classes at Pennsylvania State University, and then again at the Sheratons and Hyatts, where he addressed hundreds of people.

Crossing over the threshold of that home, embraced by the warmth of that hospitality, I found the barriers to understanding constructed and cemented by the industrial mind starting to erode—to come undone by the heady sensuality that can only be sensed and enjoyed in soils organic. Slowly, very very slowly, I found myself awakening to other notions of wealth, richness, abundance, privilege, still vibrant, alive and flourishing beyond the reign of scarcity, which dominates the world of *homo economicus* and *homo educandus*.

Today, in faraway New Delhi, as I remember with you and others who have shared wine and broken bread together, I find it even more amazing and incredible that this pilgrim, wandering so far away from his ancestral home on the island of Brac off the Dalmatian coast, could shower upon hundreds of students and other strangers his hospitality. All those who have opened their hearts and minds to receive of that hospitality cannot but confront seriously the challenge of rediscovering their lost commons, or of creating new commons with friends and other pilgrims. Seriously studying with Master Illich sends learners on the adventure of challenging their contemporaries, “people who look like us but in fact are not descendants of any parents” and are thus going “much further than the last generation, who believed that you could have parents without having communities of households.”²

For Master Illich teaches, like no other teacher I have yet encountered, the fundamental nature of the radical rupture wrought by moderns: “We woof our conversation into a warp that is incomparable to the warp of any other period because it’s made, so to speak, of nylon threads” (p. 124).³ With humility and hope, faith and courage, humor and affection, clarity and incisive audacity, he leads the way, revealing the multitude of paths open to those who desire to overcome the horrors of the modern epoch. Leaving arrogance behind, Illich’s genius opens wide the windows tightly closed by the academy to the vernacular worlds of our elders.

INVITATION TO A PILGRIMAGE

Studying with Master Illich, as I tasted, smelled, touched, listened, and gazed, delighting in my own aliveness, I began to get glimmers of the worlds lost that Illich celebrates without nostalgia. I found myself for the first time in my life beginning to rejoice in the inventiveness and solidity, the genius and wisdom, of my own elders, my dead—all those my education has taught me to condemn and dismiss as underdeveloped, poor, outdated, backward, illiterate, and uneducated.

For me, and those philosophers in whom I find consolation, *philia* is . . . the only remaining seedbed for possible moral action. Virtue can no longer grow into *philia* as it might have done in Athens; it can only grow out of it. If, in a world engineered around choice of values I still grope for the good, this happens between persons who love each other. . . . Virtue, the good to which I trust we hold each other . . . is separated by a gulf from the domain of values.⁴

My educated imagination—inflexible, rigid, and closed to the worlds of “uneducated” peoples—failed to follow our dead over high mountains and distant valleys as they walked for weeks and months, even years—barefoot, head shaven, *lota* in hand, a light *khadi* bag strung over their shoulders with some minimal belongings, a prayer in their hearts, and the profound yearning in their souls to drink the pure waters of the Holy Ganges. Once I had sufficient credentials in my modern survival kit, I hastily escaped my ancestors’ economy of sacred pilgrimages. I was then successfully bound for the economy of job and career. But my studies with Master Illich have freed me from these well advertised features, familiar to the highly experienced consumers and expert test takers of credentialed knowledge.

Thinking of the relevance of traditional virtues to deal with the darkness of our times, I dwell again on the many years it took me to reach the definitive points of arrival on the pilgrimage with Illich. It took me more than ten years to begin comprehending *Gender*, to learn why I had to escape the prison of “women’s liberation” in order to enjoy the freedom of work and leisure that still flourishes in a gendered commons.⁵ I needed almost ten years of teaching *Deschooling Society* to understand what it means to escape the confinement of the educated imagination.⁶ As an “underdeveloped Third World woman” consuming First World education, a full decade of studying with Illich went by before I could follow his archaeological adventures amidst the ruins of the project of global development. But he has not been a poor master, nor I an uninterested pupil. Then why such slowness in learning his central lessons about the “fast world”?

Over the years, I have pondered why Illich repeatedly professed that he is not a Socratic teacher. Even more emphatically, he has refused to stand on the pedestal of a New Age postmodern guru. The past is past, he deliberately underscores, as he systematically closes every escape route of sentimentalism and nostalgia, having been burned by the misunderstandings of scholars and students. Nor does he offer the painkilling pill, available after graduation, that promises to numb the aches that come with climbing the corporate ladder.

Thinking aloud, engaged in conversations with friends, Illich offers us glimpses of teaching and learning out of the Hebraic tradition. Speaking of his rabbinical teachers, Illich smiles; his voice is full of affection when he shares stories about them. Musing on the Hebraic tradition of teaching, he draws our attention to his own rhythmic swaying, going back and forth, again and again over the same themes, season after season, with his friends and collaborators.⁷

The past is past for Illich, but it is neither dead nor gone. Continuities are kept fully alive, as he repeatedly makes visits to learn from and pay homage to his teachers in the twelfth century: Hugh of St. Victor, Héloïse or Abelard, Alain de Lille or Aelred of Rievaulx. The past for Illich, as for all traditional peoples, lives on in the memories of those who have not lost their roots in soil. Tracing his roots, this teacher keeps clear of the dangerous ignorance perpetrated by the educated. He shows us what it is to walk backward, like the crab; back, back, back in search of the light of ancient wisdom. He persists in following the questions that puzzle him on his own life journey, his quest for the good life, lived in and through the practice of the arts of living and dying, of enjoyment and suffering. His practice of virtue calls for the practice of common sense—found in abundance outside the classroom, in spaces where nature, human and other, has not been subjected to industrialized machinations.

At professional conferences, he clowns; he knows the fool can dare to declare that for which the courtier would lose his professional ranking, privilege, and pedigree. Free of the lust for fame or fortune, he deftly reveals that the emperors who reign do not wear elegant clothes. They strut, ignorant of their nakedness, so blindly sure are they of their certainties. Those certainties evaporate under the scrutiny of Illich. But their evaporation comes not through any exercise in nihilism or postmodern deconstruction. Clearly, he finds such categories, like much else in the academy, very distasteful. Just as engaging in historical studies with Illich involves learning to walk backward in time like a crab; similarly in his quest “after virtue” he outlines a very different way of doing or studying ethics, of engaging in ethical inquiry.

Like an overloaded and driven donkey, burdened with all the ethics textbooks I had acquired through years of studying professional philosophy, I had much unloading to do before I could get anywhere with him. I discarded most of those books in order to learn with Illich the virtues grounded in soil, those learned by swimming across the gulf separating traditional virtues from the contemporary domain of values. Disarming all the post-World War II certainties by focusing his attention on their prehistory, Illich dismantles the discipline of ethics as I taught it for almost three decades. As this rabbi sways back and forth, he teaches the art of musing and muttering; of meditating on life; puzzling over contemporary/modern “certainties that amalgamate mentalities and permit the horrifying polarization that these certainties steep in darkness.”⁸ This is the rabbi who begins his address to a large group of Protestant ministers with a “formal curse,” a curse “in the strongest sense,” declaring, “To hell with life!”⁹ And to hell with the bioethics that desacralizes everything that has been held sacred; to hell with the new pagan worship of Life; the hubris of scientists who aspire to steal the cosmos from the hands of God with all their experiments in bioengineering, grasping it to re-engineer “a cosmos in the hands of man” (p. 252ff). The public virtues of humility and hope, of austerity and

simplicity, of courage and friendship, of simple decency and integrity that Illich seeks to practice shift his pupils' *pupilla*: back from the ethicists' and bioethicists' "cosmos in the hands of man" to the "cosmos in the hands of God."

How do we live the good life? How do we learn to practice the traditional virtues when we have lost our very grounding, no longer standing on soil but on concrete? When studying with Master Illich, these become profoundly practical questions, as opposed to merely abstract academic exercises. It is an entirely "other" way of engaging in ethical enquiry from anything I have encountered in my professional studies. Nor is studying with him a new version of interdisciplinarity—first breaking up knowledge in order to piece it back together with Scotch tape. With Master Illich, there are no disciplines—as they have come to be divvied up in the academy.

As one follows his historical gaze, one cannot but stand under the social processes of the last eight centuries, which have torn asunder the whole fabric of living and learning, working and leisure, healing and dying; one cannot but discover how each and every institution—as we moderns know, working or functioning within them—rips us from the soil that keeps people grounded, rips us out from our senses, breaks us off from our commons. Once commons are lost, common sense cannot be exercised or nourished. On the loss of common sense, modern institutions are erected by historians, economists, educators, doctors, medical practitioners—members of all the "disabling professions."

His critiques of modern ethics in general, and bioethics in particular, are like nothing anyone else dares to say, either inside or outside the professions. With utterly defiant audacity, he pierces with painful precision through the pretensions of the professions engaged in "apocalyptic randiness" (p. 127). In contrast to the "deeply corrupting images" that he will "not allow to enter into the conversation except to exorcise them" (p. 126), he joins others in testifying by "our horrified silence" (p. 128). In his teaching, as in writing his "pamphlets," Illich refuses to participate in the medical ethics concocted by professionals who "feel responsible for a life, from sperm to worm, or from fertilization to organ harvest, rather than for a suffering person" (p. 126, emphasis in original). Damning this gab of conspiracy in the professions, he breaks his "horrified silence" to declare, "damn life!"

For the best anecdote of Master Illich's refusal to be Socratic, I urge friends and colleagues to read one of his conversations with David Cayley. Quizzed by his interlocutor about his writings, with his quintessential humor and humility, Illich gives himself a failing grade—for not remembering his own conclusions and certainties in works published, quoted, and celebrated. That failure is inevitable with the pilgrim who neither needs nor has the time to bask in the security of his achievements. That failure equally explains why each and every conversation with Illich has an inimitable freshness, despite the strong threads of continuity that link each of his "conversations" (rather than "classes") with all those that have preceded. To taste that freshness, I have had to understand why, when quizzed by Cayley or other interlocutors

about the vast corpus of his published work, Illich reveals that the author is “a man who *has been*. It is I, yes, I take full responsibility. I wrote these books as pamphlets for the moment. . . . But they are dead, written stuff of that time” (pp. 119–120, emphasis in original).

Illich is morally incapable of regurgitating his certainties. Each conversation or class is an adventure, full of surprises, tackling afresh the establishment’s certainties of the moment. Learning with Master Illich, one is invited to join him and his friends as they chart the uncharted journey of living in the present with all the ugly challenges that the technological system places on living the good life of virtue and friendship. While daring in every class to venture into the unknown, firmly holding the rudder crafted by his own ancient masters, he teaches what it means to stand steadily, well rooted and grounded, on the cultural soil of one’s elders, one’s dead.

One of the privileges of studying with Illich comes from a master who is not compelling me toward his own answers to the old and perennial questions of his tradition—about virtue, the good life, or the arts of living and dying. His muddling through is not aimed at scholarship for the sake of scholarship. Instead, it sheds light that allows us to see through the darkness. As he humbly stands under the great teachers of his tradition, he demonstrates what is involved in healing and repairing the radical rupture. As he nourishes his own roots in his tradition, as he thinks aloud invoking the presence of his own Ancient Masters, he reveals endless possibilities for how I may begin delving deep into my own cultural soil, regenerating our dying or disappearing *guru-shishya parampara* (ancient Hindu traditions of teaching and learning).

FROM COMPETITIVE CLASSROOM TO COMMONS

“I have no expectations from technology, but I believe in the beauty, in the creativity, in the surprising inventiveness of people, and I continue to hope in them” (p. 111). With these words he opens the windows of his cosmo vision, through which I enjoy gazing upon the many traditions and cultures that cannot be confined by the rigid mechanical rituals of the professional world. I learn to become hospitable to the lives and loves and dreams of peoples still free of, still uncontaminated by, the expectations of *homo educandus*. Studying with Master Illich, I have learned to learn from those who have no access to education; who cannot get the developed person’s prescribed quota or recipe for education; or those who, having trustfully and diligently undergone the education planned for them, have by now come to know too well the bitter taste of false expectations, dubious benefits, or failed promises. From Illich, I have learned to celebrate the well-being still enjoyed in the commons and cultures of peoples living and learning at the grassroots; the social majorities who have not forgotten their diverse arts of survival and flourishing “in lieu of education.” Escaping education is critical for their success in going beyond the engineered mythmaking that supports and cements all the other modern certainties. These include the desirability of development itself; or the

myth of the individual self, seeking to climb high and clamber out beyond his/her commons; or of the universalizability of human rights in general and, in particular, to the universalizability of education as a right.

Illich's historical gaze dis-covers the radical pluralism of cultures; incommensurable traditions of study and contemplation essential to nourishing virtue for skillful, leisurely work—including my own Hindu tradition. On my journeys at the grassroots, I begin to sense the importance of Illich's writings for places and peoples where he is neither known nor read—including the dropouts, the uneducated, or the illiterates dubbed "underdeveloped"—as are those who belong to my own Punjabi tradition. Where the educated peoples' developed world ends, I discover the crisscross of countless paths made by the unshod feet of common men and women; millions continue to make these paths by walking them . . . there where neither *gyana* (knowledge) nor *kala* (art) has been commodified but both remain as communal practices: learned and enjoyed by the sharing that flourishes outside the domains of experts.

From studying with Master Illich, I have learned a genuine celebration for the gods, the diverse and incommensurable cosmo visions of common men and women all over the world. He knows how to deftly leap beyond the Scylla and Charybdis of ethical relativism and nihilism. His ethical inquiries have carried him to places where his own gods are unknown; irrelevant there are his own skills in the arts of living and dying, of suffering and enjoying. The radical pluralism of Illich's cosmo vision stretches beyond the religious to every dimension of social life, including the linguistic. Impressively multilingual, he dissects with razor-blade sharpness the bureaucratic institutions that have colluded in the creation of *homo monolinguis*. Linguistic poverty marks modern men and women as an aberration. Just as he has taught me appreciation for the many-hued worlds of *homo multilinguis*, Master Illich has shown me how to enjoy the different arts of walking; of the ways in which the gaits of people who are "auto-mobile" vary from region to region, from village to village. The Rajasthani woman who can swing her hips wildly in a dance with ten earthen water pots balanced one atop the other on her head has learned to do so from infancy; not the infancy described by the educated as "poverty," but of the richness of experiences that include bringing water home from the village well for her extended family. How fabulously different is the gracious gait of the speaker of Tzotzil in Chiapas, who carries her load of wood not on her head but tied to her back. On the tips of her toes, she surges forth, not like the erect Rajasthani woman, but darting like a deer in flight, swift and surefooted.

These radical differences in gait found every so many miles—as those of speech or weave, field or song, dancing or recitation, tilling or harvesting—reveal the opposite of poverty or underdevelopment among those dubbed "illiterate." Instead, they show the fabulous richness, the abundant wealth of the worlds of common men and women, still walking along the pathways of their dead. They have not lost the distinctive gait of their elders—as opposed to the gait of *homo transportandus*, who is not

auto-mobile, but accustomed to sitting behind the wheel, with foot addictively glued to the accelerator. Abandoning superhighways, walking once again with Illich on footpaths made by the feet of those who have not broken with their traditions, I re-discover worlds I had lost and forgotten by spending most of my years on earth in concrete classrooms. I find myself embarked on adventures I could not have imagined a decade ago: dis-covering what it means to walk again the footsteps of my mother, or my mother's mother, or my mother's mother's mother.

For my grandmother, Shakuntala Devi, it was unfathomable that I would want to buy a car just because I could afford to own one; or worse yet, to get a loan in order to keep up with the year and make of the Jones's automobile. Shakuntala Devi, like her mother, her mother's mother, her mother's mother's mother's mother, died untainted by the needs and other certainties of *homo transportandus*. Until she drew her last breath, she used her feet to do everything in her full and rich daily life: make visits to family and friends, to her beloved *gurudwara* (the doorway to her Lord), and to her vegetable markets—even there, in that strange industrial landscape of Chandigarh, the Indian city which Le Corbusier was invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to design for the development of us, the underdeveloped Punjabis. Despite the affection she shared with millions of other newly “independent” Indians for their first England-educated prime minister, Shakuntala Devi refused to succumb to his myths of development. Although living in the first French-designed city of modern India, she remained immune to the needs of developed people, just like her ancestors of many centuries. Despite the fact that very few rupees entered or left her home, she enjoyed abundance, the lack of scarcity, including that of time. Woken at dawn by the crowing cock rather than an alarm clock, she found her days full of the time lacked by her granddaughters, running feverishly to buy every possible timesaving gadget pimped by admen. That I know how to celebrate the sun and do the *surya namaskar* (invocation to the sun at dawn) every morning is thanks to my mother, my mother's mother, my mother's mother's mother. That I know today to thank them wholeheartedly is thanks to Illich.

BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

Stepping back from Illich's threshold, returning to the classroom where no *comida* is shared, Master Illich appears a misfit: hard to stomach, pretty indigestible. I am compelled to confront increasing challenges, conflicts, and acute discomforts in many different dimensions of modern life, especially that of being a professional educator. My difficulties of exploring Illich's thought in a university classroom started more than fifteen years ago, when I first included *Deschooling Society* as a course reading. After several semesters of demanding and daunting experiments teaching this work, I made many interesting discoveries. These include the brute fact that as long as I presented the book as merely one not-very-significant historical event in the onward and forward march of progress in the educational system, many students read it with only a passing interest or amusement. That reaction

vanishes, however, the moment I invite professionals-in-the-making to gaze at the text out of a radically different window, as neither outdated nor an irrelevant historical curiosity.

Much more revealing than the amusement is the rage and anger Illich's texts arouse among those whom Wendell Berry deliberately describes as "careerists."¹⁰ The more professional and career-minded the readers of *Deschooling Society*, "In Lieu of Education," *Medical Nemesis*, or *Disabling Professions*, the more certain they are that the thinker who challenges them must be a madman, a raving lunatic.¹¹ They proclaim Illich doomed to the type of extinction suffered by the Luddites—stupidly standing up against the irreversible oceanic waves of the Industrial Revolution. Invariably, the most committed future professionals refuse to imagine a world of teaching and learning, "in lieu of education." They refuse to take seriously the fact that two-thirds of people in the world today are not captured by their illusions of human needs or rights—to education and flush toilets, to health services and cell phones, to lawyers and genetic engineers, to automobiles or email, and especially to the state proffering to fulfill basic human needs and engineer the good life.

Illich continues to stretch my educated imagination without educating me. Is it un-Illichian to confront the moral imagination of students with landscapes of learning in lieu of education? This question rears its head every semester, as I reflect on resistances to the possibilities of teaching and learning that flourish beyond education. What possible paths should I traverse with readers who do not give Illich even a chance to explain himself? What should I do with those who refuse to reflect on Illich's ideas, all too quick in dismissing them as irrelevant, perhaps to be studied as the historical curiosities of a past era? How do I extend Illichian hospitality to those who react to his thought by hastily describing it as completely out of touch with (their) reality?

These are serious questions for any professor of education whose heart and mind has sensed and suffered a profound impact, a turning of the soul, after studying with Master Illich. How do I take what I have learned into the classroom? What is the best way of sharing his wisdom and knowledge? How do I invite aspiring professional educators to begin considering a different type of journey? How do I embark with them on an adventure leading across the abundant earth where two-thirds of the people still freely teach and learn from each other, uninhibited by the absence of industrially packaged, credentialed knowledge? There is a vast, daunting chasm that separates the cold, impersonal industrial classroom from the warm, personal spaces for study and friendship I have been blessed to discover in crossing over the threshold of Master Illich's home. Troubled are the waters that separate the two worlds between which I have found myself traversing back and forth, year after year.

These are not abstract queries pursued for publication in a professional journal. They have nothing to do with becoming a more efficient, effective or productive pro-

fessor of education. I have no ambition for another subspecialty: expertise on the social thought of the once-hot-superstar Ivan Illich—whose professional importance still continues to be measured by the number of references made to him in the texts and footnotes of refereed journals.¹² These problematic questions pose acute difficulties precisely because they compel me to be profoundly practical in teaching about a master of the Hebraic tradition in contexts that are rudely inimical to that very tradition.

At the end of the day, the semester, the academic year, my studies with Illich give me reasons for pause and patience. My own decade of difficulties in grasping his insights and intuitions teaches me haste-free hope. After all, given my own tortoise pace at following Illich's conversations with his friends, why do I despair when students registered for my classes systematically miss the point completely? Or dismiss his questions as uninteresting and irrelevant? Respectfully facing their anger and resistance, at my best moments I recognize that their difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that they have not enjoyed my many privileges: including those of crossing Illich's threshold, where the windows open out to the two-thirds world—there, where I was born and raised, where his intuitions and insights still sit at ease, comfortably and fully at home.

Notwithstanding the dismissive hostility of educators and other professionals toward their most insightful critic, there still remains the fabulous adventure of sharing Illich's ideas with those who are disenchanted or disoriented within the reigning institutions. Without fail, every semester, I find myself amidst some students who already know that health care does as little for human well-being and flourishing as the educational system does for joyful teaching and learning; who understand all too well that schools and universities are excellent stepping-stones into a job market that disregards the economy of virtue; that transforms public virtues into private vices; that leaves the educated completely ignorant of the arts of living and dying among our elders, our dead.

With sojourners open to the adventure of exploring an Illich text, I share an inevitable joy: of journeys that are stimulating and full of surprises; of friendships formed while traveling together through the industrial desert. I begin to discover signs of aliveness; of vitality; that certain, special look in every pupil's *pupilla*—the immensely joyful arrival at an unexpected and surprising oasis in the middle of the desert.

In the end, Lee, I remind you even as I remind myself, as well as friends or strangers who read this letter, that these few pages cannot but be a simple, small and humble offering—a little appetizer. This hors d'oeuvre, I hope, will whet the appetite for the feast that lies ahead for those prepared to enter the vineyard of Master Illich's texts.

Yours sincerely,
Madhu Suri Prakash
New Delhi, India

NOTES

1. Ivan Illich, "Captatio benevolentiae," unpublished notes (September 7, 1997), for a lecture on "The Immorality of Bioethnics."
2. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992), p. 125.
3. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*.
4. Illich, "Captatio," p. 4.
5. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982). In my first encounter with Illich, when he was receiving much feminist whiplash for writing *Gender* (see, for example, the special issue of *Feminist Issues* 3, no. 1 [Spring 1983], entitled "Beyond the Backlash: A Feminist Critique of Ivan Illich's Theory of Gender"), I eagerly joined those bashing him for being unliberated, a traditional macho male. I now feel shame for lacking the humility to see my own vast ignorance. Today I see the enormous complexity and puzzling nature of gender that Illich grapples with in his book—although I refuse to join in any reverse bashing.
6. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
7. In all his seminars, I have sensed the presence of his friends. Illich has made it clear in more ways than one that he is not addressing some abstract audience, classified as "students," or made up of individuals who sit below podiums, listening to important voices broadcast over loudspeakers or more recent media miracles. Every public conversation of Illich is a thinking aloud with at least two or three friends with whom he is engaged in ongoing conversations about questions of shared puzzlement.
8. Illich, "Captatio," p. 2.
9. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, p. 256. The complete text can be found in Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990* (London: Marion Boyars, 1991), pp. 218-231.
10. See, for example, Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989).
11. Ivan Illich, "In Lieu of Education," in his *Toward a History of Needs* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 68-92; Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); and Ivan Illich, Irving Zola, John McKnight, Jonathan Caplan, and Harley Shaiken, *Disabling Professions* (London: Marion Boyars, 1977).
12. At the same time, I cannot but acknowledge that everything and anything of consequence that I have written for my friends over the past four years has been shaped and inspired by, if not actually dedicated to, Ivan Illich. The two most recent examples, coauthored with Gustavo Esteva, are: *Escaping Education: Living as Learning at the Grassroots* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998) and *Grassroots Postmodernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* (London: Zed Books, 1998). While alluding to these and other works that draw on Illich's knowledge and wisdom, I remain fully aware that in their limitations they may fail to do justice to the teacher who inspired them. When and where they do, I hope and trust that he will forgive me.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

From the Economy to Friendship: My Years Studying Ivan Illich

Eugene J. Burkart

One summer morning in 1973 Ivan Illich was conducting his seminar “Limits to Growth” in Cuernavaca, Mexico. He sat on a wall surrounding the veranda of the Casa Blanca, an old hacienda on the grounds of his alternative learning arrangement, the Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC). I had positioned myself a little below and behind him on the stairs that led up to the veranda. As I sat there, not really following the conversation closely, I felt overcome by a turmoil of anger and contempt for this man.

For several weeks since my arrival at CIDOC, I had been trying to size up this controversial figure. Along with many others, I found him to be brilliant; his intellect was dazzling and formidable, like none I had ever encountered; he was charismatic, too. There was a remarkable presence and aliveness about him. But he was not just a man of ideas. What he had done at CIDOC was very different from any educational institution I was familiar with. It had little administration, no salaried staff, and no credits or degrees issued. Yet about the place there was a palpable air of devotion to learning. Perhaps it was closer to the original idea of a university than more conventional counterparts.

Well, this was all fine and good, but still I wondered, What was its relevance to the poor? Was Illich really concerned about them? What was he proposing to do for those living in desperate conditions, or for those suffering under oppressive military regimes in Latin America? Was CIDOC anything more than a privileged enclosure?

After much thought and many conversations with other American students at CIDOC, I made up my mind. I came to the seminar that morning having concluded the night before that Illich was a phony, someone enmeshed in his own cleverness, a dangerous distraction from the pressing social concerns of the day. Yet I must have

had some lingering doubts. How else to explain my presence on those steps and the intensity of my feelings?

As I watched Illich, I felt my anger grow with each word he spoke. And then a strange thing happened: He suddenly turned toward me. To see where I sat he had to turn quite far, but I was not sure whether he saw me because I was on the periphery of his vision; and he did not know me. I wondered, Had he sensed my anger? He continued speaking, all the while looking intensely at me, as if he really wanted me to understand what he was saying. I returned his gaze and although I did not understand a word he said, I felt the confusion of my thoughts and feelings inexplicably lifted from me. In those few moments I had the experience of intimately seeing this person, Ivan Illich, for the first time; I then knew he was someone I could trust. But I would not have a direct conversation with him for many years to come.

I went to CIDOC at the age of twenty-three. I was entering law school that fall, but I did not know where that would take me. Like many other American students at CIDOC, I came with grave concerns about my own country. This was a time of much social turmoil and unrest in the United States. The Vietnam War lingered on; the Watergate hearings had just begun. Throughout Latin America, military dictatorships were in power due to United States support. At home, protest was often met with official violence. Dissident groups—students, Blacks, farm-workers, prisoners, Native Americans—all had their casualties. Fresh in my mind were the events at Wounded Knee, Kent State, and Attica State Prison. It seemed to me at the time, as it did to many others, that violence was somehow inherent to American society.

Prior to my arrival at CIDOC, I had worked for a year as a laborer in factories: first in a carpet mill and then later in an automobile assembly plant. I needed to earn money, but I also wanted to be closer to the world of those I thought of then as being in the working class, the blue collar worker. My experiences in these factories left me thinking that a kind of violence was done to workers by mass production—to their spirit and sometimes to their bodies also; and this had something to do with the more overt kinds of violence so much in the news.

I went to CIDOC with a lot on my mind: How was I to make sense of my own country? How would I be able to live honorably in it? What kind of work could I find to do? I had decided that I would study law to work for social justice. I went to CIDOC primarily to learn Spanish (CIDOC was reported to have the best language school in Latin America). I figured that there were many Spanish-speaking people who could use a good lawyer. But I also wanted to sit in on some of the courses and lectures that seemed so interesting. Here was a place that addressed many of the questions that were most on my mind, where scholars and social activists from around the world came to discuss politics, economics, and social change. I hoped to gain some clarity in my thinking, and inspiration from those who were living out their ideals in their own societies.

For many of us at CIDOC—like myself college-educated, middle-class, and socially concerned—Illich was not what we expected. He did not speak in the usual terms of radical politics; he did not talk much of class struggle, oppressor and oppressed, or movement politics. He even seemed to question our good intentions. He would not flatter our sense of moral superiority or romanticize those we considered disadvantaged in the United States (the poor in the United States consumed far more than the majority in the Third World could ever hope to, he pointed out). How radical were we? he seemed to ask. Were we wedded to the American way of life underneath our outward display of desire for change?

Prior to my exposure to Illich, all the politics I was familiar with were based on a common premise: Social justice was seen largely in terms of distributive justice. Most of the problems in society could be solved if its poorer segments were to receive a fairer share of the output of the industrial economy. If the bloated military budget were reduced, think of how much more would be available for better housing, education, jobs, and health care for the poor. Capitalists, Communists, and Socialists all had different ideas on how to bring about a fairer distribution of goods and services, but each took for granted an industrial economy, the industrial mode of production.

Illich challenged this. Turning the political debate inside out, he claimed that it is the industrial mode of production itself that is the source of our ills. Industrial growth does not liberate, rather it forces people into a new kind of serfdom. He argued that a life of dependency on mass-produced goods and services extinguishes the very conditions for a good life. And while some were beginning to be concerned with the overproduction of goods—the waste, pollution, and glut they create—Illich went much further. He criticized those more intangible commodities: services. What everyone looked on as an unquestioned benefit—education, health care, social services—Illich called harmful and disabling.

This was all very confusing to me at the time. What was I to make of Illich's startling, paradoxical aphorisms: schools stupify, cars paralyze, medicine sickens? When listening to him I often had the experience that it was as if I were learning a new language, and with it a new way of thinking and seeing. As with learning a language, I found it difficult and frustrating, and I wondered if I would ever understand it. But through it all, I had the sense that Illich was on to something, that he had an insight into a truth I did not want to miss. Perhaps he was a thinker who was able to slice through the Gordian knot of our modern dilemmas.

When I returned to the United States, I started law school and I did not meet Illich again until eleven years later. But I began a serious study of all he had written, and all I could find about him. I also began to test out his ideas in my own life.

One thing I had a lot of experience with at that time was educational institutions; most of my life had been spent in them—seventeen years by the time I began law school. The arguments of *Deschooling Society* made a lot of sense to me, my experience

confirmed them.¹ The book was also helpful; it gave me the courage to skip most of my classes the last year of law school, so that I could work as much as possible in a legal aid office, learning the skills of a practicing attorney.

After graduating I found a job with an older attorney in a small law firm in Waltham, Massachusetts. Within a year I moved to this city (I'm still there, in the same city and law office). I had read *Energy and Equity* and knew I did not want to be a commuter.² I also wanted to know and be a part of the community where I worked; I wanted to be rooted in a place. Illich helped me to see this more clearly.

I began the practice of law in the hopes that I could use law as an instrument for social change. That some kind of radical change was needed seemed obvious to me at the time. In addition to Illich, I was reading several other perceptive critics of industrial society: Lewis Mumford, E.F. Schumacher, and Peter Maurin.³ Each in his own unique way showed the present system to be fundamentally flawed. Whether called industrialization, progress, modernity, growth, or development, this way could not but lead to more of the destructive results that were becoming so familiar: a growing gap between rich and poor, both within countries and among them; more degradation of the natural world—the earth becoming a global strip mine and dump; more dehumanizing work and addictive consumption of all kinds; the loss of traditional societies and cultures; increased anxiety and loneliness among the elites, and disorientation among the majority; finally, to keep it all together, a greater and more pervasive police and military presence.

How to find a way out of this mess? What was the alternative? While none of the authors whom I found most insightful had a blueprint, and each emphasized different things (e.g., Illich spoke of conviviality), there was a consensus among them about the general outlines of the desirable society.⁴ It would be smaller in scale, more decentralized, with fewer things, but things that are durable and repairable. It would be a society more in harmony with nature, with a close relationship between farm and city, and a better balance between work of the head and that of the hand; where mutual aid and self-sufficiency prevailed, and leisure enriched community life.

I had been particularly inspired by Peter Maurin's exhortation "build the new society in the shell of the old."⁵ This was not a call for revolution in the usual sense, but a challenge to each person to live out in his own life the change he wished to see in society. I thought this personal, grassroots approach to social change could fit in with the practice of law. I would be working directly with people, in face-to-face relationships, helping them with a specific concern. In this way I hoped to get to know people better and become part of my community. I especially thought of *Tools for Conviviality*, in which Illich had spoken of law as a potentially convivial tool, that it could be a means for challenging and even stopping industrial growth.⁶ Perhaps I could find ways to do this and foster alternatives.

Over the course of the next five years or so I was immersed in learning the ropes of a legal practice. The kind of law we did, general practice, put me in touch with the

way law affects the lives of the great majority of people: through wills, divorce, criminal defense, disability claims, auto accidents, buying and selling homes, tenant and consumer cases. While I received a lot of satisfaction from seeing a good result achieved for individual clients, I began to be troubled by something: A good result might benefit someone in the short term, but I did not see it having any larger effect. I saw that the ordinary practice of law did not work so much to make society more just but rather kept things as they were, and running smoothly. I also found that the activities that gave me the most satisfaction—involvement with a local nuclear weapons freeze group, a campaign that stopped the building of a road through a park, and advising home schoolers—had little to do with the everyday work in my law office. As I became more frustrated, I began to get a better grasp of something Illich had been pointing out for a long time.

Alone among the critics of industrialism, Illich began his analysis with a focus on the service sector. Initially starting with the Church, he moved on to education and then medicine. Each time with increasing depth and clarity he showed how services are as much a product of an industrial mode of production as goods. And most surprisingly, he argued that just as the overproduction of goods has unwanted side effects harmful to society, so too do services. Both result in something he called, “paradoxical counterproductivity,” the puzzling phenomenon of an institution or agency frustrating the very purpose it was originally designed to accomplish. For example, we see this with schools producing bored, passive, and dulled students; or with medical practices that sicken people and foster unhealthy environments and lifestyles.

I really did not understand this until I had been practicing law for a while. Besides being a licensed professional (a full-fledged member of the service economy), I was put right in the middle of the social services world by the kind of legal work I did. Regularly, I dealt with the great social service systems of modern society and their agents: social workers, doctors, counselors, police, teachers, lawyers, and administrators of all kinds. As I gained familiarity with how these systems function, I began to notice certain characteristics.

First, each system operates as a business (as does my law practice), which generates income and prestige for those working in it. Despite the lofty ideals upon which each system was founded, rarely would anyone act in a way that threatens one’s position and security within the system. Secondly, just as with any business, social service systems need markets. In this case, their customers are the potential clients for the services they provide. Through training and institutional momentum, and often with the best of intentions, service providers see people as being in need of their services. Police find more people to arrest and others to protect. Social workers classify more families and children “at risk.” Doctors diagnose more patients in need of expensive tests and treatments. All of this is good for business. It is also insidious since service systems take away from people what they could do on their own, or for each

other—or do without—and replace it with a dependency relationship. People lose the capacity to heal, learn, grieve, console, and resolve disputes without professional assistance. In this way, the more people lose self-reliance and independence, the better for the economy.

After a while, I saw the joke. When people asked me, “How’s work going?” I would answer, “Never been better. Families are falling apart, so there is plenty of divorce and juvenile delinquency; arrests are up, so I have a lot of criminal trials; auto accidents and injuries at work are high, so my personal injury caseload is huge. Business is good.” In a strange way all of us in the service economy are feeding off social decay, a kind of cannibalizing of society.

In *Shadow Work* and *Gender*, Illich explains this phenomenon as being the natural outcome of the “disembedding of the economy.”⁷ Examining the historical origins of modern society, Illich points out in these two works that all previous societies limited economic activity by weaving it tightly into the social fabric. Embedded in an intricate pattern of complementary social relations, purely economic behavior could not emerge. Once released from social restraints by modernization, however, a disembedded economy proved to be a relentless force, one that dismantled traditional societies piece by piece. The innumerable and varied ways in which people got by and got along were replaced with a life of dependency on commodities (both goods and services) and wage labor. We don’t so much have a society any longer, Illich argued, as an economy.

As I came to understand this, I found myself in a quandary. If all economic activity has a corrosive effect on society, how is one to act ethically? Modern life is tightly bound up by market relations. Illich contrasted the economic with premodern ways of living he called subsistence or the vernacular. He proposed a “modern subsistence” as an alternative to economics as a way to “break the cash nexus.” But, I wondered, where were the examples? I knew that many of those who had attempted to live outside the economy in the back-to-the-land movement failed. I admired the success of the Amish but felt no calling to their way; further, I had friends and family I did not want to leave. Also, being married, I could not just force my ideas on my wife. What could I do? Was there no way out?

At about the time when I was grappling most with these questions, and feeling a kind of despair at not being able to come up with answers, I found in the morning’s mail a flyer with Illich’s picture on the cover. The brochure, which had been sent to me due to my work with homeschoolers, announced the Maine Summer Institute, a weeklong conference featuring Illich and several of his colleagues. Organized by a friend of his and funded by the University of Maine, it focused on the theme, “The History of Economic Man.” At the conference I met Illich personally for the first time and got to see a little of how he lived his life. This was July 1984.

Held in a stately private school during its summer recess, the meeting had about it the invigorating air of CIDOC. All participants, including speakers, were

housed in dormitories and ate their meals together in the cafeteria; it made me think of some kind of gypsy camp. Here were these wayfarers, Illich and his friends (he seemed to have friends, not disciples) coming together from far-off places, pitching their tents and having a kind of party. There were jokes about “Ivan’s flying circus” and the “floating crap game.” The joy Illich felt in the presence of his friends was evident, as was theirs in him, all of which was heightened by the transitoriness of the whole event.

And then there were the conversations; most took place in the cafeteria after meals. They were lively and intense, a heady intellectual experience for me, and they never seemed to end, often running late into the night. I discovered that these discussions were really the heart of the conference, the formal presentations being a nice complement to them.

I learned that CIDOC had closed in 1976 and Illich was now teaching at a university in Germany. This gave me pause. Here was the world’s foremost critic of education and high-speed transportation teaching at a university and flying around in jets. What was I to make of that? Was Illich a hypocrite? Surprisingly, it was through this example of his life that I would get an answer to my dilemma and find an insight into a way of living in the midst of the industrial economy.

No, Illich was not a hypocrite. Nor was he a purist or puritan; he was dealing with the realities of his life. The sad fact is that there is no escape from the industrial economy; there is no way to live entirely outside it. How could one avoid riding in cars, for example, when the social and physical landscape has been reconstructed around their use? Illich seemed to say, “Let’s face up to it; let’s not delude ourselves about the humiliating conditions under which we live—we are trapped in many ways. Know what this way of life is doing to you, to others, and to nature. Don’t be seduced by the advertisers. Have the courage to recognize the ugliness of modern life—and to suffer it.”

On the other hand, Illich was not counseling despair or resignation. He believed that there were ways in which one could withdraw, at least to some degree, from the economy, taking into account the unique circumstances of each one’s life. This was a messy business; there were no hard and fast rules, nor occasions for self-righteousness. But acts of resistance and refusal were possible. Illich himself lived a very modest and disciplined life; he set a limit on how much money he would earn. He found a way to live on the margins of university life—he did not get involved with grading students, attending committee meetings, or chasing tenure. Most important, Illich used his involvement with the economy to foster its opposite: the vernacular or convivial life. With his own money, he supported friends who were doing good work. He used his lectures and discussions with students to further his critique of industrial society, and explore ways out of it. He also seemed to have a nose for finding the niches and cracks in the established order, places where he could foster, with friends and students, a certain *joie de vivre*, a sense of freedom and relatedness.

I came home from Maine renewed; I realized that I did not have to quit my job—I could simply work at it less. I soon began a four-day week, which freed me up to read and study more, and become more active in my community. I did not have to get rid of my car, but I could ride my bicycle to work. I knew I would not be self-sufficient in growing food, but I could do composting and enlarge our vegetable garden. Later, when we had children, it was an easy decision not to put them in school. I also began to see my legal work in a new light. I knew it would not lead to social change (with the possible exception of homeschooling cases), but my clients' concerns were real, they were entangled in a morass of legal and social systems. Perhaps I could be an experienced guide for them through these thickets.⁸

Starting in 1988, I began to visit Illich each year, often more than once a year. Most of these meetings were at Pennsylvania State University where he taught in the fall, but there were many other places as well, including his home in Mexico. No matter the setting, certain common features became familiar to me. There was always a house with rooms for guests, who came from near and far. There were the simple but good meals together, served with wine and embellished with flowers on the table; and, of course, the conversations. Many times a “living room” conference took place, with people coming together for several days to examine and discuss a particular topic. Illich was always the gracious host, attentive to all his guests, taking great pleasure in such humble signs of affection as making a cup of tea for someone.

For me, these visits became a kind of retreat, a way to get my bearings in the brave new world being fashioned in the 1980s and 1990s by the global economy and high technology. I came home from these trips and asked myself if I could organize in my life something like the households I visited. Could I somehow foster that kind of aliveness—that kind of presence to person, place, and moment? It was such a contrast to a society that seemed to grow ever duller and more homogenized as the allurements for staring into a glass screen became evermore powerful.

The key to the atmosphere of hospitality and celebration I experienced during my visits was clearly Illich's friendships with his guests. He was a most devoted friend to all of us; someone who had cultivated the art of friendship to a high degree—and the habits of the heart that make friendship possible. But his was not an exclusive kind of friendship. He would remind us that the friendship between two people must always be open to a third—the stranger who surprises us with a knock at the door.

The more I came to know Illich personally, the more I would see that friendship was the very center of his life and work. While he never wrote an essay or treatise explicitly on the subject, friendship is a theme that consistently appears in his writing, a connecting thread through all his books. I eventually concluded that the best way to understand Illich's work is a detailed study of the myriad and varied barriers to friendship that exist in modern life. The kinds of withdrawal and resistance he encouraged, what he later would call *askesis*, was a new kind of asceticism, practices that are a necessary condition for friendship to flower in our modern deserts.

It is all so startling really, that I continue to be amazed. No one I know has seen so deeply as Illich the darkness of our times, no one has examined with such an unflinching eye the enormity of the evil we face. Yet he rests his hope on such a humble, fragile, one might easily say foolish, task: the simple but arduous one of being present to *this* person who stands in front of me. Then, I need to define myself and act in terms of the bonds that connect me to others—my family, friends, neighbors, and whoever may stumble unexpectedly into my life. Perhaps Illich is foolish, at least in the opinion of many, but there is something about him that assures me he is right—his joyfulness.

When I think back over the years since I sat on those steps of the Casa Blanca, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. How I have been blessed! How could I ever repay Ivan Illich for all he has given me? But I know he would want me to be more precise with my language. Friendship does not lend itself to an accounting, to economics. The only way I can hope to show my gratitude is to strive to be for others the kind of friend Ivan Illich has been to me.

Waltham, Massachusetts

NOTES

1. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
2. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
3. Lewis Mumford, *Myth of the Machine*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1974); E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989); and Peter Maurin, *Easy Essays* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1984).
4. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
5. See Geoffrey B. Gneuhs, "Peter Maurin's Personalist Democracy," in Patrick G. Coy, ed., *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 47-68.
6. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, pp. 99-107.
7. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), pp. 99-116; and Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), p. 12.
8. Now most of my clients are Guatemalan immigrants.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Don Quixote in the Contemporary Global Tragicomedy

Alastair Hulbert

Where shall we go to search for a great thinker? Certainly not among philosophers of flesh and bone, but in a creature of fiction, of action, more real than all the philosophers: Don Quixote.

—Miguel de Unamuno¹

MYTHS

The church provided a good starting point for me, as for many others of my generation, from which to launch into the critique of institutions. I was fortunate to have trained for the ministry in the 1960s because in that profession, at that particular time, contradictions in the church were becoming more and more obvious. In *Celebration of Awareness*, Ivan Illich writes, “Institutions create certainties, and taken seriously, certainties deaden the heart and shackle the imagination.”² During the 1950s many of the church certainties increasingly appeared to be moribund.³ Arguments to demystify the ministry, parish structure, church bureaucracy, and hierarchy were gaining ground. Where theory passed to action, as in the Student Christian Movement—for example, when the French SCM sacked its Paris conference center in 1968 or, a few years later, the British and Irish SCM (for which I worked) abandoned its valuable, traditional headquarters in London for an alternative community in the countryside—the result was not necessarily liberation. But cultural revolution was in the air. Myth and ritual had to be decoded and exposed, not just in religion and the church, but in secular institutions too. Illich set about this in a radical, learned way, tackling schooling, development, social services, transport, medicine, and industrial technology itself.

“The Dawn of Epimethean Man,” an article I first read one glorious summer day in 1971 while lying on the grass in Edinburgh’s New Town Gardens, was in fact a kind of manifesto of Illich’s institutional politics in the “man-made pan-hygienic

environment” of contemporary society.⁴ Prepared for a symposium in honor of Erich Fromm, it analyzed different stages of European civilization: primitive, classical (Apolonian), and contemporary. His style was new—condensed and cryptic, rather than discursive—more like the political cartoonist’s than the landscape artist’s. With his astonishing references and surprising conclusions, his brilliant use of myth and symbol danced across the page of my youthful understanding of history and civilization. It was vastly romantic, yet at the same time exhilaratingly real, and verifiable from experience.

Illich remythologized history in order to demythologize contemporary society. With illuminating references to a panoply of Greek myths, the essay begins the task of exposing what he calls the “Promethian fallacy,” the “reality vision of *homo faber*,” the “story of declining hope and rising expectations.” The mythic symbol he employs in a call for institutional revolution is Epimetheus, whose name means “hindsight,” the forgotten brother of Prometheus, “foresight.”

While primitive man was surrounded by immeasurable chaos and Greek man had projected the measure of his body into the cosmos, modern man lets measuring instruments impose the same law on things and himself. Mechanics provides the stuff out of which the myths of contemporary man are made. Schooling becomes a supernational measuring stick with its grade levels and test results. Health, welfare, and social service all become measurable. (pp. 227/10)⁵

Illich saw the age of *homo faber* coming to an end. In 1970 he sensed a mood for change in the direction of a hopeful future. Inevitably, a public choice had to be made: Either to hand over control of civilization to the computer as the ultimate machine, or to use institutions and technology in another way so as to ensure the earth’s survival. The alternatives were clear. The twilight of Prometheus meant the threat of being smothered in a self-sealing box. The dawn of Epimetheus heralded an end to limitless consumption, freedom from the prescriptive nature of institutions, and a shared fullness of life.

When Illich wrote “The Dawn of Epimethian Man,” the Cold War still had nearly two decades to run. The ideological struggle between communism and capitalism continued effectively to conceal the truth and divert attention from the civilizational malaise about which he wrote. The shift in geopolitics that followed the collapse of the Soviet empire lifted the veil on his analysis. But liberal capitalism eloped across the world with a sexy technology, giving birth to an only child—the French call it *la pensée unique*.⁶ As we reach the end of a decade of the globalization of the so-called free market and the exponential growth of new technology, the moment of truth has been missed; the Epimethian alternative has slipped past.

WORKERS

In 1976 Patrick Viveret, a French “gauchist” who had become involved in political action in May 1968, published *Attention: Illich*.⁷ His book was a timely and helpful comparison of Marx and Illich, which spoke precisely to my condition as an intellec-

tual working in a factory. A few years before, I had joined that band of Christians, Maoists, and other intellectuals who sought to protest against capitalist society and show their solidarity with the proletariat by working in a factory. My wife and I were in France with La Mission Populaire Évangélique de France, a Protestant industrial mission founded by a Scottish minister in the 1870s in response to the suffering caused by the repression of the Paris Commune. I was trained and employed in the steel industry in Roubaix in the industrial northeast, and later worked for four years in Paris. There I faced the conflicting choices from the two main trade unions: the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which represented the traditional Communist stance of the French working class, and the more nuanced libertarian Socialist position of the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT), which flourished particularly in 1968. These two distinct approaches to industrial society were well represented in the book.

Viveret examines how the concepts of both Marx and Illich “might help advance an analysis of the means of production and open the way for a theory of revolutionary change.” His interpretation of Illich was based almost entirely on *Tools for Conviviality*—which is far from a systematic study of political economy.⁸ He complains that he searched vainly for a precise definition of the “industrial mode of production.” But the critical fault in Viveret’s eyes was Illich’s complete failure to deal with classic concepts of Marxist theory, such as the means of production, capital, and labor. Illich simply ignored the contradictions described by Marx in terms of exploitation. He made no attempt to express how ownership of the means of production is the basis on which surplus value is extorted from those who can only sell their labor. The concepts of class struggle and the role of the state, which were so central for Marx, were totally absent from Illich’s analysis.

Viveret concludes that, instead of a political economy, what Illich proposed is a “philosophy of man,” with autonomy as its central idea. But his withering Marxist critique does not stop him from giving the final section of his book the title “*Se servir d’Illich*” (Using Illich). Could Illich help to rediscover forgotten concepts and intuitions in Marx and so allow for some internal critique of Marx? By making a detour around the Marxist critique of Illich, could a revolutionary theory and strategy be drawn up beyond the current weaknesses of the working class movement?

Attention: Illich is a brilliant vignette on the idea of revolution in Europe after 1968. It is dated now, of course, not only because Illich has moved on in the meanwhile, but also because Marxism has been discredited—at least for the time being. Viveret’s text was not translated into English. It was too French in its problematics, too political even for a British or American readership interested in Illich. Illich was rooted in the tradition of Leopold Kohr and E.F. Schumacher, who drew attention to the scale of technology rather than to the political choice between Left and Right. His critique of technological society, while relating to the history of capitalism, could not be reduced to it. The degradation of the environment from commons to a productive resource, which did not pass unnoticed by Marx (though it was widely disregarded by

his followers), was an aspect of Illich's thinking that Viveret wished to highlight. Nevertheless, Viveret's Marxist critique of Illich stands for what it is worth. And behind all he says, Marx's haunting final thesis on Feuerbach echoes: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."

Patrick Viveret is still around. In 1994 I organized a seminar for European civil servants where he presented an intriguing study of post-Cold War anthropology in the context of three great interlocking types of change going on today: in geopolitics, information and knowledge, and genetic engineering. The final section of his paper tentatively introduced the sphere of religion into the debate in terms of the demand for meaning and identity, and spirituality as the art of living. Raising such questions is typical of the debate in Europe today. At the end of *Attention: Illich*, Viveret had referred to the "chronic powerlessness of all the 'professionals of revolution' to introduce, in whatever form it may be, into their struggle and into their own life, alternative elements to the system and mode of life they are fighting against." His position has changed over the years—as has mine. Though I was never a professional anything, the three decades of normalization that have followed 1968 have also brought me to the realization that it is impossible to change the system we are fighting against. But I can introduce alternatives.

ALTERNATIVES

For the last several years I have been working for a commission of the European churches that deals with the European Union.⁹ Our task is representation and dialogue, monitoring policy and practice, and informing the churches about European affairs. "Mission to the institutions," defined in these terms, is a development of industrial mission. Someone once called it a theology of insistence—as distinct from theologies of resistance.

The European Union is a secular political institution established in the wake of two world wars that shook Europe to its foundations. But the vocation of reconciliation and peace that inspired its founders was deeply imbued with ideas and aspirations for a Christian West. This still influences its political style, however much the original intention has been subverted by the economic means used to achieve integration and cohesion. At the same time, it offers a comprehensive, institutionalized example of that unique phenomenon of technological civilization that is the inheritance of the West. It is inconceivable that the churches, with their roots deep in Europe's history, should ignore it.

During the three years following the collapse of communism and leading up to the completion of the single European market at the end of 1992, there was throughout the old continent a feeling of bliss to be alive again. It was a hopeful period of history, full of possibilities, where the radically new and quite unexpected geopolitical situation meant that nobody really knew what to do. Openness was the order of the day. The European Commission was promoting dialogue on a host of policies with artists, scientists, academics—even with the churches.

The single market was supposed to solve the problem of unemployment. It didn't, and unemployment throughout the 1990s figured as one of the overriding political concerns of the European Union. It is a stumbling block, for several reasons: It is extremely costly, it holds back progress in other policy areas, and the gap between official rhetoric and reality is one of the main causes of popular disillusionment with the idea of Europe. Unemployment has become a symbol for all that is wrong in the establishment. At the same time, employment is the Archimedian point of the European economy from which, if only it were firm, one would be able to move the earth. Since the commission is so much at a loss, this is one of the policy areas in which it is eager to discuss matters with others.

At the same time the European Commission, as the executive of a community of nation states seeking union through economic integration, could never adopt Illich's proposal for society-wide upper limits to wealth and prolonged formal employment. Politically defined ceilings might provide an interesting conundrum for the Commission's Forward Studies Unit but not for real technocrats. The Commission's interests are vested in the dominant economic and financial establishment which, to take the example of Shell Oil, has defined its investment scenario for the next twenty-five years in terms of the TINA formula: There Is No Alternative—to liberalization, globalization, and technology. And Europe is an accomplice.

The agendas of the church-Commission dialogue meetings are mutually agreed upon. Participants are invited by each side. It would seem an obvious context in which to introduce the kind of critique Illich has worked out in such fields as unemployment and social affairs, development, environment, or new technologies. To a degree the powers that be on both sides allow such questions on the agenda, and Illich is obviously not the only critic of the system whose thinking can give substance to debate. But how to speak about essentials? How to break out of the culture of containment (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, "no salvation outside the church"—the ethos of the professional) into a politics of change?

While the booths that flank the Commission's meeting rooms are equipped for simultaneous interpretation between eleven European languages, there is no translation between the vocabulary of *the good* (use-values, autonomous activities, sufficiency, limits, civil liberty), and that of *the better* (commodity production, professional services, efficiency, growth, and civil rights). The language of Illich—radical monopoly, use-values, autonomous activities, and the like—is not easy to grasp and, like other precise and specialist languages, can easily turn into jargon. For any discussion about a trade-off between the management of society (the profession of the bureaucracy), and the autonomous action of citizens, it is hard to find officials who speak the language of the other side.

Much of the work of the European Commission is explained in graphs. Illich's essay, "The Three Dimensions of Public Choice,"¹⁰ includes the description of a graph that illustrates changes in the political sphere which took place during the

1970s. At the beginning of this period, he writes, a one-dimensional model of politics prevailed, offering two sets of options: political and technical. By the end of the decade the involvement of ordinary people and the desire among certain groups for an enhancement of their freedom, rather than more growth, added a third set of options. In this essay, Illich introduces the word *vernacular*, to his discourse, drawing on the definitions of Erich Fromm. “The tension and balance between vernacular and industrial labour—paid and unpaid—is the key issue on the third dimension of options,” he writes. “Whether a ‘left’ or ‘soft’ path leads toward or away from new forms of ‘development’ and ‘full employment’ (i.e., *homo economicus*) depends on the options taken between ‘having’ and ‘being’ on the third axis” (p. 21).

Several times toward the end of a church-Commission dialogue meeting I myself have made a forceful appeal for engagement at a deeper level. On such occasions, sages on both sides of the table nod, for a little emotion in the human-made, pan-hygienic environment of the European Commission is always appreciated. But then, it’s on with the frenetic workload until the next session! There is a note in *Always Coming Home*, Ursula LeGuin’s novel about people who “might be going to have lived a long, long time from now in Northern California,” that I quoted a few years ago in a paper about Illich’s *Useful Unemployment*, as an encouragement to persevere in our dialogue. It goes like this: “The difficulty of translation from a language that doesn’t yet exist is considerable, but there’s no need to exaggerate it.”¹¹ I have to admit that, with the political and economic normalization that has been going on in European affairs since the Treaty of Maastricht, my appreciation of the difficulty of translating what Illich means has been growing. After all, the ones with the earphones on are the “professional enemies” of what “useful unemployment” stands for.

BUREAUCRATS

When *Tools for Conviviality* was published, Illich still believed that an alternative to technocracy was possible. As time went by, however, he recognized that the question was no longer what people do with their tools but what tools in the sense of schooling, medicine, transportation, or development projects do to our view of reality—the symbolic rather than the intended instrumental effect of technique. He saw evermore clearly that once it goes beyond a certain intensity, technology inevitably turns means into an end, and frustrates the possibility of achieving its original purpose. A watershed was reached somewhere in the 1980s beyond which tools in this sense were transformed into what Illich eventually calls Moloch or “Techno-Moloch.” With this word he enters the realm of symbolic language—a necessary step for him because what he is doing now is naming evil, “a manufactured reality ever further removed from creation,” the “horror [that] threatens each of us.”¹²

It is in a “Hommage à Jacques Ellul” that Illich finally presents technological society as the result of a subversion of the Gospel, a perversion of God’s call to each person, which has been institutionalized, standardized, and managed: *Corruptio*

optimi quae est pessima (The corruption of the best is the worst).¹³ He welcomes Hugh of St. Victor's twelfth-century theological understanding of technology as the search for a remedy for the Fall—a humble, penitential activity, rather than (as it came to be understood later) an attempt to dominate the Earth. Illich points out that in the West, “The overwhelming view of what tool-making means can be summed up in the phrase, ‘making the world a better place to live in.’ But Hugh says . . . that tools are an assistance to remedy a little bit the damage we have done to the world.”¹⁴ He even employs the theological concept of sacraments as “efficacious signs” which “do, inevitably, what they symbolize,” in order to describe the negative effect of technology on the mindset of society (p. 111). Tools in this sense have taken on a “*perverse sacramentality*” as what may be called a mutation of the spirit.¹⁵ He illustrates this most lucidly in terms of what the so-called life sciences, including medicine and biotechnology, have done to life in the biblical sense.¹⁶ The modern notion of life, as an object under the care and manipulation of science and technology, is for him a perversion of the Christian message.

Raimon Panikkar's “Tragic Law of Technocratic Society” offers a helpful comparison here. For Panikkar, “whatever progress there is in the micro-social order represents a regression in the macro-social order. . . . Once we have broken the natural rhythms, balance—indeed justice—toward nature is no longer possible.”¹⁷ He gives an example: Scientific cultivation of a hectare of ground requires fifteen times more energy units than the number of calories that one could extract in the best possible harvest. When manipulated and multiplied by industrial technology, which is nevertheless fed by human creativity, progress at the micro-social level takes on the overwhelming dimension of nemesis. The concept of the rhythm, ever close to Panikkar's heart, which roots his law in nature, gives an alternative perspective on Illich's analysis of technological society. Perhaps more immediately than Illich's *corruptio optimi quae est pessima*, Panikkar's classical model of tragedy convinces us that here we are not in the realm of ethics, but of something immeasurably greater, involving human destiny.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, started speaking to the churches and other religious and humanist communities in terms of ethics. He appealed to EECCS, the Catholic bishops, Jewish rabbis, and others, in eloquent phrases that caught the spirit of the age:

We are in effect at a crossroads in the history of European construction. . . . We are now entering a fascinating time when the debate on the meaning of European construction becomes a major political factor. . . . We won't succeed with Europe solely on the basis of legal expertise or economic know-how. If, in the next ten years, we haven't managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up.¹⁸

The response that this evoked among the churches and other religious communities was enthusiastic. In fairly predictable fashion, however, the result was a flurry of

activity leading to the setting up of a fund to subsidize projects “to promote ethical and spiritual reflection about the meaning of building a new Europe.”¹⁹ Then in 1996, the European Commission subcontracted the running of this program to EECCS, of which I was appointed coordinator. It is called “A Soul for Europe: Ethics and Spirituality.”

It is a rewarding job to be in touch with grassroots groups of people in France, Italy, Finland, Germany, Britain, Spain, and elsewhere, inspired by their faith—local mosques searching for a European Muslim identity, student movements committed to understanding how the global economy works, interfaith responses to the Orthodox Patriarch’s call for a new theology of Creation. I am glad to see their conferences actually taking place as a result of the grants they get. Their efforts sometimes seem to fit the original purpose of the European Community better than more official programs. But when it comes to the consequences that Delors suggested were relevant for the European Commission, I doubt whether the institution is able to take on board the findings of such projects. What would their ethical contribution mean? Indeed, how could spirituality influence such a mega-machine?

Shortly before his death, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin wrote the following comment on a European Commission memorandum entitled “The Vocation of Europe”:

Talk about ethical and moral values is empty if it is not based on some view of what is the case. It is, in fact, one of the sure signs of a culture in terminal decline when it begins to talk about the need for moral values. . . . We cannot decide to “have a new economic system” or “promote morality” simply because these would be desirable. These things cannot be detached from the total belief-system which governs public life.²⁰

According to Illich, ethics—in a long tradition going back to Aristotle—is “a public controversy about the good to be pursued within a human condition perhaps grudgingly accepted.”²¹ Economics is built on the assumption of scarcity and throws a shadow over this cultural preserve. It deals with statistics and calculations and the evaluation of goals and so tends to reduce ethics to a question of numbers and utility. Economic society “provides seemingly unlimited fuel for a technological civilization; [and] such a civilization attempts to transform the human condition, rather than debate the nature of the human good” (p. 6).

Values, likewise, are a measure that goes with the abstract ideology of economics as a science. This does not imply that values no longer have any meaning, but that their meaning is part of an economic system that dominates and distorts reality. They can be either positive or negative; they may be moved around, manipulated, prioritized. But there is no stable criterion for choice between them—nor indeed for choice between what is a value and what is not. The concept of value formerly denoted what was useful and desirable in a particular context. It required common sense and a sense of proportion. It was judged in relation to knowledge of the truth rooted in cul-

ture. Free, autonomous action within a vital culture was what created value. But the language of values today is a generalization of economics, which leaves no room for what may be appropriate in particular circumstances.

Rereading Illich on this subject makes me realize that ethical and spiritual reflection, undertaken officially with political and economic institutions, can only lead to a further mystification of reality. It becomes a formality that confers legitimacy where it is lacking. It's not a question of the civil service willfully instrumentalizing the churches and other anxious associations of citizens, but rather that the venerable economics, our adversary, the great seducer of the modern world, once in residence, refuses entry to exiles and excludes pilgrims who have promises to keep.²² What Illich says lets me into the secret of my own particular role as an amateur actor in the contemporary European tragicomedy.

SYMBOLS

Immediately across the Rue Joseph II from my office in the Brussels Ecumenical Centre are the towering glass walls of the new Charlemagne Building, the foreign affairs headquarters of the European Commission. A short distance up the street stands the Berlaymont, for years the imposing symbol of the community. Condemned these six years, its vast structure shrouded in canvas as asbestos is extracted from inside, it nevertheless remains the official address of the Commission. Between and beyond the two I can just glimpse the Consilium, the seat of the Council of Ministers, inaugurated three years ago. Its monstrous architecture conveys a sense of mindless power and self-importance. The rear windows of the Ecumenical Centre, which used to be two narrow three-story dwelling houses, look out on a garden with a rough lawn, flowers, and trees, surrounded by an ancient red brick wall. It is typical of a discrete domestic style of urban Brussels that still exists today. We buried our cat and dog under the old pear tree in the garden.

A radical change has taken place in contemporary society, in the mental space that people inhabit. For those who have eyes to see, signs and symbols of it abound. The contrasting views of the garden and the street outside the place where I work are an architectural illustration of it, such as is thrust on inhabitants of the neighborhood of the European institutions in Brussels. Illich typifies the change in the shift between two "root metaphors": the book and the computer system.

Illich looks into history, as into a mirror, to see how western culture has been shaped by the technology of the alphabet in *In the Vineyard of the Text*, his most graceful book.²³ It tells of his love affair with another age that believed, "All nature is pregnant with sense, and nothing in all of the universe is sterile"—an expression of Hugh of St. Victor that "brings centuries of Christian metaphor to their full maturity" (p. 123). It is a commentary on Hugh's *Didascalicon*, a twelfth-century teaching tool on the art of reading. In it, Illich explains the technological transformation of the page from what it represented under medieval monasticism, as a record of speech to be pondered in the

heart, to the scholastic concept of a text accessible in silence to the reader's eye and mind. This cultural shift, he believes, throws light on a transition taking place now. "The book as symbol, analogue, and metaphor in Hugh's time is, above all, a symbol for *reading*, conceptualized and experienced as meiotic decipherment of reality by which the reader, like the midwife, brings forth—in God's invisible light—the sense with which all things are impregnated, God's Word" (p.124, emphasis in original). Later, Illich notes that "Hugh is the first who speaks about mirroring oneself in the page. . . . Therefore, the *self* can be conceived in a new way. There's an interior text. Examination of conscience becomes possible as a reading of the text that is on the inside."²⁴

In the *Didascalicon* it is still the *lumen* of the reader's eye that lightens up the text on the surface of the parchment. A hundred years later . . . the text has already begun to float above the page. It is on its way to becoming a kind of vessel that ferries meaningful signs through the space separating the copy from the original; it drops anchor here or there. However, in spite of this dissociation of the text from the page, the text maintains its port in the book. The book in turn metaphorically stands as a harbour for the text where it unloads sense and reveals its treasures. As the monastery had been the world for the culture of the sacred book, the university came into existence as the institutional framework and symbolic tutor for the new bookish text.²⁵

The bookish text, as Illich calls it, was more than just a new tool for learning. It constituted a new way of defining the mental space people lived in, something that changed the cultural mindset long before most people could read. It was a new metaphor for human existence. This age, however—the age of the bookish text, which has lasted for seven centuries—may be divided into two periods: first, when the book was written by hand and, second, when the printing press revolutionized the distribution of books. In Illich's view, the fifteenth-century discovery of the printing press was by no means as important as what happened at the beginning of the epoch of the bookish text. Knowing this "enables us to speak in a new way about another epochal turn in the social history of the alphabet that is happening within our lifetime: the dissolution of alphabetic technique into the miasma of communication" (p. 117).

The screen expels the book and replaces it with the computer as the metaphor of the new age. Seeing the page as a mirror of the mind gives way to a self-image in which the operator becomes one with the computer. Reality is reduced to a system regulated by technology, and subsumed under the various radical monopolies that dominate society. Alternative ways of being or acting are progressively excluded. Television and other forms of audio and visual communication are required to fill the gap and "to anaesthetize the pain resulting from having lost reality."²⁶ The result is a void of meaning: The computer in itself is not a source of meaning.

Illich never wrote a *summa*; rather, he employed a methodology that was always variable, employing theology, philosophy, sociology, political economy, history, even

pamphleteering and table talk, as required. Besides, his vocation to cultural revolution²⁷ and to a new sense of selfhood and meaning of the person,²⁸ contradicts to a degree the idea of a comprehensive, systematic critique of technological society. Hugh of St. Victor insisted that the scholar be a pilgrim and “exile-in-spirit” (p. 23). The bookish text is home for Illich in this sense, that the twelfth-century alphabetic revolution, which brought it into being, transformed the scholar into a pilgrim as well. Illich is a crusader,²⁹ an intellectual nomad,³⁰ yes, mentally, a gypsy.

Let me summarize what I am trying to say with words from the last chapter of Unamuno’s *Tragic Sense of Life*:

What then is the new mission of Don Quixote in the world today?

To cry out, to cry out in the desert. The desert hears, although men do not, and one day will be transformed into a sonorous forest, and that solitary voice will bury itself in the desert like a seed, producing a gigantic cedar which, with a hundred thousand tongues will sing an eternal Hosanna to the Lord of life and death.³¹

Brussels, Belgium

NOTES

1. Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos*, in his *Obras completas*, vol. 7 (Madrid: Escalicer, 1969), p. 293.

2. Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971), p. 11.

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s prison theology and Rudolph Bultmann’s demythologizing of the New Testament had put in question various theological certainties. John Robinson’s *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963) popularized the debate.

4. Ivan Illich, *The Breakdown of Schools*, *CIDOC Cuaderno*, no. 1016, p. 227/2.

5. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to the last noted reference. A somewhat different text was published as the last chapter in Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

6. Ignacio Ramonet defines *la pensée unique* as “the translation in ideological terms, which pretends to be universal, of the interests of a whole number of economic forces, in particular those of international capital.” See *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1995.

7. Patrick Viveret, *Attention: Illich* (Paris: Cerf, 1976).

8. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

9. It is called the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS), and works closely with the Commission of the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conferences (COMECE) in the European community. The two organizations are unofficially recognized by the European Commission as representing the churches in Europe. [Since writing this chapter, the author has retired from EECCS.]

10. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), pp. 9–26.

11. Ursula LeGuin, “A First Note,” in her *Always Coming Home* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1986).

12. Ivan Illich, “Health as One’s Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!” *Ellul Studies Forum*, no. 8 (January 1992), p. 3.

13. This homage was given at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Bordeaux, France, November 13, 1993, only a few months before Ellul's death, included as a "Préface" in Patrick Troude-Chastenet, ed., *Sur Jacques Ellul* (Bordeaux, France: L'Esprit du Temps, 1994), pp. 11-17. An English version, along with a statement by Jacques Ellul, is available in "Statements by Jacques Ellul and Ivan Illich," *Technology in Society* 17, no. 2 (1995), pp. 231-238. It is in this text (p. 237) that Illich uses the term "Techno-Moloch."

14. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992), p. 223.

15. "Statements by Ellul and Illich," p. 236. Emphasis in original.

16. See Ivan Illich, "The Institutional Construction of a New Fetish: Human Life," in his *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), pp. 218ff.

17. Raimon Panikkar, *1492-1992: Conquête et Évangile en Amérique Latine: Questions pour l'Europe aujourd'hui*, Actes du Colloque réalisé à Lyon du 28 au 30 janvier 1992 à l'Université Catholique de Lyon, p. 39. One beautiful May morning in 1989, Professor Panikkar explained this law to me, while walking along the beach at Tinninghame near Edinburgh where he was giving the centenary Gifford Lectures. I called it Panikkar's Law, until this text arrived!

18. *Newsletter* (Brussels: Ecumenical Centre, May 1992), whole no. 2, p. 1.

19. European Commission, "A Soul for Europe: Ethics and Spirituality," *Basic Criteria for Acceptance of Projects*, 2.2 (Brussels: European Commission, 1992).

20. Private communication.

21. Ivan Illich, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr* (Great Barrington, MA: E.F. Schumacher Society, 1996), p. 6.

22. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy uses these epithets of René Descartes in *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (Norwich, CT: Argo Books, 1938), p. 754.

23. Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

24. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, p. 233. Emphasis in original.

25. Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, p. 118.

26. "Statements by Ellul and Illich," p. 237.

27. See Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, pp. 175ff.

28. See Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, pp. 23-26.

29. Illich points out (*In the Vineyard of the Text*, pp. 23ff) that Hugh's call was just one example in the new ethos of self-discovery in twelfth-century Europe. At the same time, St. Bernard of Clairvaux was preaching the Crusades. This historical observation offers a mirror to a particular form of social mobility in post-World War II Western society, the reasons for which raise questions similar to those behind St. Bernard's call to take to the road. In this sense, the Crusades were equivalent to the Peace Corps or Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) or Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) of the 1950s and afterward, demographically necessary, and sociologically explicable as attitudes toward aliens. In this sense, the Muhammedan infidel of the twelfth century was the precursor of the underdeveloped as type of the outsider for westerners in the second half of the twentieth century. See Ivan Illich, *Toward a History of Needs* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 18ff. Like David Cayley (*Ivan Illich in Conversation*, p. vii), I was a returned volunteer who keenly felt Illich's critique of overseas cooperation.

30. The term *intellectual nomad* comes from the Scottish poet, Kenneth White.

31. Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico*, pp. 301-302.

PART V
EXTENDING INTERPRETATIONS

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Energy and the Mystery of Iniquity

Jean Robert

In 1973 the industrial world was shocked by the OPEC decision to drastically reduce oil exports until they could obtain better prices. Societies that had made themselves oil-dependent responded by taking provisional conservation measures. A few even proscribed the weekend use of private cars.

This restriction was the occasion for another surprise. An official prohibition against which the public was expected to protest, for many became a long-sought liberation. How agreeable strolling in the streets again! City dwellers rediscovered that they could walk, and even hard-bitten car drivers began to remember that their condition as bucket-seat asses was not irremediable. Two days a week, the word *equity* recovered its immediate, concrete meaning of “endowed with equal gifts,” from the Latin *aequitas*, an equality in basic abilities that is a foundation of law. Meditating on the word, it became clear to me why its Latin antonym is not *inaequitas*, but *iniquitas*, which for St. Paul meant evil, and whose presence in creation believers faced as a mystery. In light of the recovered weekend equity on streets and squares, the confused jam of vehicles competing with each other for scarce space, encroaching on pedestrians’ freedom and crippling them, appeared as a human-engineered evil. But was this intuition not an exaggeration?

The capacity to go walking where one wants is indeed the most equitably distributed ability. It is innate, a natural right by birth. Some seem to have forgotten this truth; for others, it has been suppressed; their feet, as well as their imaginations, have been disabled; they come to feel they perpetually need to be carried along at high energy costs. But they can hardly ignore that mobility based on mechanical energy can only be classificatory, that is, discriminatory: “Tell me at what speed you are carried, and I will tell you who you are” becomes a slogan of the epoch of energy-intensive transportation. Society is inevitably layered in a worldwide class structure of speed capitalists.

Equity and mechanical energy have become conflicting categories: the second can only grow with the decay of the first. However, the recovered freedom to walk

during those long-ago car-free weekends revealed that, if a society would reduce per capita mechanical power, equity would again become a practical possibility. Further, recovery of the immediate equity of near equals on foot might serve as incentive to other recoveries. This is why OPEC's decision was, for many citizens, a reason for hope—"the Arabs' gift."

Experts think otherwise. They want nothing to do with an option that would make them jobless. Instead of responding to the emerging hope, they foisted a new ghost on the world: the energy crisis. This was based on the fallacy that humans are inherently dependent on machine energy. The energy crisis shamelessly exposed the Western manqué for a drug Arab oil kings longed to sell at higher prices. Any Eastern carpet merchant could have explained that it was a bad bargain: the oil-producing countries were free to more than double their prices. Eventually, energy-intensive traffic, that is, industrial normality, was reestablished on Sabbaths and Sundays, without a single protest from Jewish or Christian authorities.

Mechanical traffic has a blinding effect on the public imagination; it cancels out other options. The louder it roars, the more it seems necessary, for why would people otherwise tolerate such a racket if it were not some imperious necessity? The noisy claim of the transportation industry to legitimacy makes it appear the only form of locomotion compatible with modernity. Further, and importantly, it contributes heavily to the economy. By contrast, walking disturbs little and, since it costs almost nothing, does not add significantly to the gross domestic product. The energy crisis was the experts' sham to make people forget that their feet could contribute to their locomotion in more genuine ways than by filling vehicles and pushing accelerators. In the twenty years between the energy crisis and Desert Storm, the Great Persuaders shaped the rich countries' public opinion to believe that, if they wanted to secure energy supplies, they had to face harsh decisions: "*Si vis petroleum, para bellum*," (If you want gas and oil, prepare for war). President George Bush could not have started the 1991 war without an ideology-stimulated hunger for energy. When industrial needs become subtle messages opening into war intoxication, the devil rejoices, because man has taken over his job. No wonder it was left to a theological mind to clarify the issue.

In 1974 Ivan Illich wrote a small book to debunk the fallacies of the energy crisis and express his agreement with the few who understood that less energy can mean more freedom in equity. Yet *Energy and Equity* is not overtly a theology of locomotion.¹ If there is some theology in the argument, it is voluntarily apophatic, non-pronounced. One of the book's beauties is the simplicity of its construction in ten short, limpid chapters. I will follow their order in my commentary.

THE ENERGY CRISIS

It has recently become fashionable to insist on an impending energy crisis. This euphemistic term conceals a contradiction and consecrates an illusion. It masks the contradiction implicit in the joint pursuit of equity and industrial growth. (p. 15)

These words were written at a time when it was becoming common knowledge that energy destroys the physical milieu. The causal relationship had been made public by the Club of Rome's 1972 book *Limits to Growth*.² Yet Illich wastes no time insisting on dismal ecological prospects. He makes only brief allusions then moves on to argue what he sees as a more frightening form of apocalypse, namely, the possibility of a catastrophic implosion of the cultural fabric. "Rich countries like the United States, Japan or France might never reach the point of choking in their own waste, but only because their societies will have already collapsed into a socio-cultural energy coma" (p. 21).

What does this mean? Whereas the Club of Rome had highlighted the fact that, beyond certain limits, energy disrupts nature, Illich wanted to show that it also corrupts society and culture. In later works, he will argue that this corruption is narrowly associated with the growth of industrial services such as "education" and "health." In *Energy and Equity* he makes the point for transportation. To face the fallacy that equity and industrial growth can be achieved conjointly, and to acknowledge publicly the contradiction between equity and energy, Illich proceeded to illuminate what the language of crisis obscures: high quanta of energy degrade social relations just as inevitably as they destroy the physical milieu.

As far as I know, no one had clearly stated before that energy-intensive industrial growth corrupts society as certainly as it disrupts the physical milieu. But it is equally true that, in the quarter century since the book was written, no one has refuted this point.

There are three ways to face the energy crisis: first, by management of scarce resources for industrial production; second, by the retooling of industry itself for greater thermodynamic efficiency; and third, by the equitable limitation of human energy consumption. The first made the headlines of newspapers at that time, the second is still discussed by an ecologically minded minority, and the third is met by a conspiracy of silence.

The possibility of [this] third option is barely noticed. While people have begun to accept ecological limits on maximum per capita energy use as a condition for physical survival, they do not yet think about the use of minimum feasible power as the foundation of any of various social orders that would be both modern and desirable. Yet only a ceiling on energy use can lead to social relations that are characterized by high levels of equity. The one option that is presently neglected is the only choice within the reach of all nations. (pp. 16-17)

From then until today, no politician has proved willing to risk a career on this commonsense proposal.

THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF TRAFFIC

In the United States, Illich points out, the carrying around of persons and goods absorbs 45 percent of the energy budget. In poor countries that follow this example, it is more, but it benefits a smaller percentage of the citizens. The main reason for Illich's

choice of transport as the paradigmatic use of energy, however, is not grounded in numbers. Mechanical conveyance of persons is the industrial substitute for the aptitude most commonly shared among humans. The way it distorts this innate ability is like an X ray of the interaction between industrial production and native capacities. Illich proceeds by distinguishing what dominant discourses blur into a linguistic magma.

The discussion of how energy is used to move people requires a formal distinction between transport and transit as the two components of traffic. By *traffic* I mean any movement of people from one place to another when they are outside of their homes. By *transit* I mean those movements that put human metabolic energy to use, and by *transport* that mode of movement which relies on other sources of energy. (p. 27, emphasis in original)

SPEED-STUNNED IMAGINATION

Most persons today tend to define themselves as clients of the transport industry, the habitual passenger.

The habitual passenger cannot grasp the folly of traffic based overwhelmingly on transport. His inherited perceptions of space and time and of personal pace have been industrially deformed. He has lost the power to conceive of himself outside of the passenger role. . . . The passenger has come to identify territory with the untouchable landscape through which he is rushed. He has become impotent to establish his domain, mark it with his imprint and assert his sovereignty over it. He has lost confidence in his power to admit others into his presence and to share space consciously with them. (p. 37)

This stunning of the imagination paralyzes politics. When freedom of movement is taken to mean one's claim to propulsion, the level of democratic process correlates to the power of transportation and communication systems. As a result, people lose faith in the political power of feet and tongue. What they demand is not more liberty as citizens but better service as clients. The habitual passenger no longer insists on the freedom to move and to speak to others but on claims to be shipped and to be informed by media. This decline is the essence of what Illich calls a socio-cultural energy coma.

NET TRANSFER OF LIFETIME

Fast transportation allows a few people to capitalize their time at an enormous rate. Beyond a critical speed, no one can save time without forcing another to lose it. The man who claims a seat in a faster vehicle insists that his time is worth more than that of a passenger in a slower one. Beyond a certain velocity, passengers become consumers of other people's time, and

accelerating vehicles become the means for effecting a net transfer of lifetime. . . . This time-grab despoils those who are left behind, and since they are the majority, it raises ethical issues of a more general nature than kidney dialysis or organ transplants. (p. 42)

But this transfer of advantages to the rich only occurs at a high cost in time for all. Beyond a critical speed limit, transport creates remoteness that it alone can shrink: the local store disappears, replaced by a remote supermarket; the hospital recedes beyond the distance a sick child can be carried; and people no longer use transportation in order to expand the horizon of their options; rather, they begin to need it because they no longer find what they want near where they live.

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF ACCELERATION

There are two classes of losers in the transport zero-sum game, but only the first has been highlighted by socially concerned researchers. First, social classification by levels of speed enforces a net transfer of power: the poor pay to be left behind by the manager who races to the airport in a company car on the tax-funded highway. For the poor are generally also taxpayers: they are the innocent third toward whom part of the costs of the transport enterprise are being exported, a phrase that meets the definition of “external costs” by economists. But there are other, nonmonetary costs: loss of ability to walk, of security, of silence, of clean air, of public space, of aesthetics.

Yet the ones in between, the middle class, suffer another sort of loss: in a society organized around the dream of high speed for all, all people spend a growing slice of their time budget for being carried around. Even the ones who have occasional access to fast vehicles suffer the rising marginal disutility of a loss of leisure time. The transport industry hides an inefficient system beneath apparent technological sophistication that also endangers life and limb for all.

Illich invites social researchers to engage in serious time-budget studies. Even from the limited data then available, it was clear that the lifetime of industrial people is cluttered with activities generated by traffic, which impair other time uses, such as being with one’s children, meeting friends, and rejoicing in their presence.

THE RADICAL MONOPOLY OF INDUSTRY

Beyond a certain critical level of speed, vehicles inevitably compete with people for the use of public space, and often exclude them from it or make crossing a square a hazardous chore. People become harried passengers who always have to reach another destination within the next half day; their time, like their life-space, has become a scarce good. Speed being an industrial output ruled by economic laws, this is no news to economists, who know that the words *economic* and *scarce* today mean the same thing. But the fact that space and time scarcity inevitably increases with speed is still overlooked by economists and transport theoreticians. Speed is a major indicator of scarcity, that

is, of the intensity of the economic nexus. It exposes the rate at which economic values—scarce by definition—are allowed to substitute for human innate capacities. In contrast with what the habitual passenger consumes, walking is an independent enterprise of transients that produces a use-value. This requires a conceptual clarification.

The total traffic of a society is the interplay or the synergy of two profoundly distinct modes of production: one autonomous (transit), the other heteronomous (transport). Beyond a certain top speed, transport hampers transit: the synergy between the two heterogeneous modes becomes negative and every new increase in transport encroaches on people's freedom to get around by using the autonomous power of their feet. The monopoly exercised by transport over transit is more pervasive than any commercial monopoly, such as the one Ford might win over the automobile market, or the political monopoly car manufacturers might wield against the development of trains and buses.

Because of its hidden, entrenched and structuring nature, I call this a *radical monopoly*. Any industry exercises this kind of deep-seated monopoly when it becomes the dominant means of satisfying needs that formerly occasioned a personal response. The compulsory consumption of a high-powered commodity (motorized transport) restricts the conditions for enjoying an abundant use value (the innate capacity for transit). Traffic serves here as the paradigm of a general economic law: *Any industrial product that comes in per capita quanta beyond a given intensity exercises a radical monopoly over the satisfaction of a need* (p. 58; emphasis in original).

Serious economists never risk their respectability on this deep insight into the nature of industrial society; economics seems to remain a training in self-serving selective blindness.³

THE ELUSIVE THRESHOLD

The dissolution of the energy crisis as well as the recovery of political imagination require placing a limit on speed. Illich tentatively proposes a limit of four to six times the celerity of a healthy person on foot, insisting that any enunciation of numbers is no more than an indication. Only a concrete political process can lead to a decision: "Reasoning can identify speed as the critical factor in traffic [not] set politically feasible limits" (p. 87).

But let's be blunt and write it in plain letters: Illich thinks that coalitions of citizens should organize for an overall limitation of all forms of transport at a top speed located between fifteen and twenty-five miles per hour. I fear that many readers who have followed the argument thus far will now turn away. The image of the young rich man of the Gospel somehow comes impiously to my mind. As Lee Hoinacki has suggested: To be a student of Illich, "to get" what he is saying, is to understand something and to do something. If Illich's proposal were taken seriously, it would mean a farewell to speed trips and magic carpets. What to do then with Japanese bullet trains, European InterCity expresses, six-lane highways, and airports? Well, close them and get rid of the

hardware for the poor's benefit. Though I strongly feel that this is the logical consequence of the "do" side of "getting what Illich is saying," no one is required to go so far all at once. Illich's argument is that self-powered transit is the natural reference point by which to judge all traffic, and that the innate right to this autonomous activity should be legally protected. If you accept that, then do what you see should be the next step. For you, it may be leaving the car in the garage two days a week for the sake of your neighbor's right to walk; for me, it was getting rid of it for good. Several shades of personal voluntary renouncements are imaginable on the do side of "getting the point."

DEGREES OF SELF-POWERED MOBILITY

At one time a certain leap was still within the reach of all poor nations: the rapid transition from insufficiency to self-limited sufficiency. Three major, but relatively simple, inventions made that shift feasible and cheap: the ball bearing, the tangent-spoked wheel, and the pneumatic tire. These three make the bicycle possible, "allowing the wheel—probably the last of the great neolithic inventions—finally to become useful for self-powered mobility" (p. 71).

Self-powered bicycle-like tools could have been implemented in all poor countries and helped them evolve in a very short time from "not enough" to "enough but no more." In this, Illich's proposal is close to Mohandas Gandhi's, for whom the example of self-powered modern technology was the Singer sewing machine (operated by a foot peddle), and to E.F. Schumacher's idea to equip India's traditional oxcarts with ball bearings.

But the same inventions that could amplify the radius of self-powered autonomy can also be aggregated into engines that hamper it. At the end of the nineteenth century, in a time span of less than fifteen years, the same basic inventions supported both bicycles and the first automobiles. It is time to disaggregate modern mechanics and to free its components for retooling society.⁴ There exists a real option between more freedom in equity and more speed; further, this option is decidedly modern.

DOMINANT VS. SUBSIDIARY MOTORS

There is a commonsense principle that, if followed, would allow a modern form of traffic to maintain the positive synergy of foot and wheel, that is, impeach the radical monopoly that transport exercises over traffic: the inalienable right of free movement should be protected against any abridgment. This means that natural human capacity for transit must emerge as the only yardstick by which to measure the contribution transport may make to traffic: there should be no more transport than traffic can bear.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT, OVERDEVELOPMENT, AND MATURE TECHNOLOGY

We live in a time in which the apparently impossible has become feasible. The feasible is a mature technology that would avoid the confines of both dependence and abundance, that is, of underequipment and of overindustrialization.

Beyond underequipment and overindustrialization, there is a place for the world of post-industrial effectiveness, where the industrial mode of production complements other autonomous forms of production. There is a place, in other words, for a world of technological maturity. In terms of traffic, it is the world of those who have tripled the extent of their daily horizon by lifting themselves onto their bicycles. It is just as much the world marked by a variety of subsidiary motors available for the occasions when a bicycle is not enough and when an extra push will limit neither equity nor freedom. And it is, too, the world of the long voyage: a world where every place is open to every person, at his own pleasure and speed, without haste or fear, by means of vehicles that cross distances without breaking with the earth which man walked for hundreds of thousands of years on his own two feet. (p. 86)

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

Energy and Equity is a radical critique of the self-defeating illusion of unlimited power and mobility generated by the industrial mode of production. The proposed alternative is marked by common sense, but had not been so clearly stated before. Where does the author of *Energy and Equity* stand? Where does that strangely authoritative and friendly, audacious and reasonable voice come from? Illich is a modern man who wants painstakingly to acknowledge the limits of his condition. This means that he wishes to live his life within the given boundaries of the *conditio humana*, the historic human condition that, with changes, but within definite parameters, has been the lot of all previous generations. As far as a modern person may do this, he acknowledges in his bodily acts that he lives within a limited horizon of space and time. For example, this means that he rejects all seductions of medical miracles, life-prolonging therapies as well as any alternative illusions of perfect health or unlimited mobility and power. For him, physical decay and death call for an art of suffering, not for therapies. Without the conscious acceptance of such limits, he sees little possibility for an ethical life.

From this place, an aspect of the mystery of iniquity would seem quite simple and no mystery at all: Modern iniquity is related to the systematic breaking of the inherited limits of the human condition or the unequivocal bondage of every individual to limit-breaking activities, the coupling of the economy to unlimited expectations of power, speed, information, and health. The decisive issue is that unless you live as a hermit, you have to come to terms with a world that has rejected all given limits and horizons. In such a world, the acceptance of those limits that bind the human condition becomes a paradox and a scandal. Renuncements can be selective, but are still a form—perhaps the only one left—of the exercise of virtue in a world beyond virtue.

Energy and Equity belongs to what some call Illich's "economic books." These include *Deschooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*.⁵ Each of them addresses a specific service-producing agency of industrial society. They are complemented by essays that

clarify concepts that emerged from the ensuing discussions: “Shadow Work,” “Useful Unemployment and Its Professional Enemies,” and “Disvalue.”⁶ But the word *economic* may be misleading here. None of these works situates itself within the field that economists consider their fiefdom. On the contrary, every one of them enlightens an aspect of that acquired selective blindness that defines modern economics.

From the beginning, the starting point of Illich’s intuitions appears to center around an old saying: “the corruption of the best, which is the worst.” If this proposition were transmogrified into a demonstration, some kind of theory, a truth that can be brandished, it would inevitably be corrupted itself. What the historian in Illich has done is to let the reader glimpse a frightful shadow falling over the maze of Western history.⁷ Here again, one gets the point, or one doesn’t. This shadow can be identified as an abyss opened by the refusal of the most gratuitous of gifts, of gratuitousness itself, or of grace.⁸ The world offers itself gratuitously to the walker, and, in a way, *Energy and Equity* is about the negation of that grace and the costs of this negation. Gratuitousness is negated when it is institutionalized. Non-gratuitous gift giving began when Christianity erected closed precincts for the distribution of a gift. It appeared in late antique Christian *xenodocheia* (hospitals), in Christian Rome’s *ma-tricula* (list of the poor to be assisted), in medieval hospices along the *camino* to Santiago de Compostela. It can occur every time special members of the community are appointed for the exercise of charity. It can perhaps happen in the distribution of sacraments by professionalized clerics, when it is a distribution similar to what we now call services. It surely happens today, when industrial agencies substitute energy-intensive services for what people have the innate ability to do for themselves and for their neighbors—like opening a path by walking it—and make these services compulsive. The corruption of the best threatens every intent to institute a social order justified by the Gospel. And this repeated intent has shaped the history of the West.

As a historian, Illich often uses the past as a point of estrangement from which to see the present in an unusually sharp light. We have to try to follow him. In Latin, the word *servitium* designates the state of a slave. Christians used the term metaphorically, to designate the gift of oneself, almost as a slave, to one’s neighbor. The Greek word *diakonia* has a similar origin. To early Christians, service was a gratuitous gift of oneself in humility, recalling the washing of the disciples’ feet by Jesus. Today, it is a keyword of economics. To shape needs for their services has become professionals’ unquestioned privilege. No idea of humility is associated with modern services.

In 1972 the Club of Rome’s answer to its own gloomy forecasts was to propose a shift from an energy-intensive economy of consumer goods to a more thrifty service-oriented economy. Illich then raised his voice to assert clearly that an intensive production of services could do more harm to culture than the high-energy production of consumer goods had already done to nature.

Skilled rhetoric includes the knowledge of whom you address. Illich wrote for a readership ready to embark on the club’s boat. With consummate logic he showed

that, beyond certain thresholds, service institutions could not but bring about the contrary of their stated goals: to exceed rather narrow limits with their pretensions, schools degrade personal learning capacities, transportation paralyzes, the pursuit of health sickens.

The idea Illich wanted to shake in *Energy and Equity* was the belief that human beings are inherently dependent on doses of industrial energy. He also wanted to point out that a service-intensive economy could be even more destructive than the present energy-intensive consumer goods economy. Finally, he wanted his readers to catch a glimpse of the concrete possibility of a society based predominantly on people's innate capacities, in which industrial production would be subsidiary. This, in the country where he then lived, Mexico, was still a feasible option.

More than a quarter century has elapsed since Illich wrote *Energy and Equity*. More than a simple generational shift, a historical landslide has occurred, something reminiscent of what Michel Foucault called an epistemological rupture. Ideas no longer move in the same topology. A profound change of mentality, of whose consequences we are still barely aware, has begun to take place. Three decades ago, "tools" as means to ends were still around, so that motorized vehicles could be considered as means to ends and compared with sandals or bicycles. Today, Illich claims that it is no longer the case.

However, he will not attempt to rephrase *Energy and Equity* for an age in which people are increasingly wired to systemic technologies that are no longer tools for people but imperatives into which people are integrated, an age in which personal action is in danger of being replaced by the notion of system-adaptative behavior. He is interested in opening other byways: ventures into the history of the body, of sensuous perceptions and what he calls "the history of stuff,"⁹ reflections on friendship and its practice, on the necessary austerity that makes it possible, proportionality, the guarding of the senses, the celebration of the blessings that are still with us.

All these byways are perhaps able to open spaces of personal liberty and of equity toward others. It is not possible to summarize the richness of such new insights and visions. I can only offer the reader an interpretation of what is at stake. Not unlike the powered wheel and the foot, technoscience and the human senses engender two very distinct apprehensions of the world. The facts of technoscience, which are now projected on the screens of the system world as virtual realities, differ as much from the reality accessible to the naked human senses as the untouchable landscape through which the habitual passenger is rushed diverges from the world open to the power of feet and tongue, of eyes, nose and touch which was once the most gratuitous gift. There is today, at least in the affluent countries and those which imitate them, a radical monopoly on the production of "reality."

Rather than be rewritten, *Energy and Equity* needs to be reread with a pencil in hand.

NOTES

1. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), originally published by Calders and Boyars in 1974. All page numbers in the text refer to the 1976 edition. It is worth remembering that one year before the “crisis,” Illich published a short version of the argument in *Le Monde*, in which he forecast the use of the linguistic monster “the energy crisis.” *A bon entendeur salut*: to forecast a monster is not to foist it.

2. D.L. Meadows and D.H. Meadows, *Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972). Recently, the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy, a German think tank whose director is a member of the club, claimed that, if Germany is “to have a future” (be *zukunftsfähig*), it has until 2030 to curb its overall energy consumption by 95 percent. See Wuppertal Institut für Klima, Umwelt, Energie, *Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zu einer global nachhaltigen Entwicklung* (Basel and Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1996).

3. But there are exceptions: For example, an economist whose reputation put him beyond that risk, Edmond Malinvaud. In a meeting in Tokyo, the famous French economist acknowledged Illich’s analysis of the negative synergy between two distinct modes of production (autonomous vs. heteronomous), characteristic of industrial societies, as a new conceptual tool, structural counterproductivity, that he admonished his colleagues to add to their tool kit, as something different from the French “*théorie de l’encombrement*” or “of goods whose value decreases with their quantity.” But he wrongly ascribed its invention to Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Jean Robert, who had restated it in their book *La trahison de l’opulence* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975). Another example is of course that alumnus of Polytechnique and the École des Mines, trained in mathematical economics, who dared to question his profession’s systematic blindness to negative synergy or counterproductivity, my colleague, Jean-Pierre Dupuy. Younger and less renowned than Malinvaud, he effectively risked his career. He then ceased to be an economist and became a philosopher.

4. See Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

5. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Pantheon, 1971); and Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

6. Ivan Illich, “Shadow Work,” in his *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), pp. 97–152; Ivan Illich, “Useful Unemployment and Its Professional Enemies,” in his *Toward a History of Needs* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 3–53; and Ivan Illich, “Disvalue,” in his *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), pp. 70–82.

7. See, especially, Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

8. *Considerate lilia quomodo crescunt, non laborant neque nent; dico autem vobis nec Salomon in omni gloria sua vestiebatur sicut unum ex istis. Si autem faenum, quod hodie est in agro et cras in clibanum mittitur, Deus sic vestit, quanto magis vos, pusillae fidei?* (Luke 12:27; Matt. 6:28).

9. Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986).

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Detour and Sacrifice: Ivan Illich and René Girard

Jean-Pierre Dupuy

I have been privileged in my life to encounter two great thinkers, whose thinking is at once powerfully analytic and powerfully prophetic. It seemed clear that both of them were saying things that were profound and true, and yet their messages appeared to be perfectly contradictory. On one side: Ivan Illich, with his radical critique of industrial society. On the other side: René Girard, with his fundamental anthropology, which, for perhaps the first time in the history of the human sciences, proposes a convincing (and earthshaking) answer to the question that should be their central question: what is the sacred, and how may we account for the fact that modern society is, of all human societies, the only one that does not rest on the sacred?¹

At the end of his book *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, Girard writes:

What is important above all is to realize that there are no *recipés*. . . . Recipes are not what we need, nor do we need to be reassured—our need is to escape from meaninglessness I hold that truth is not an empty word, or a mere “effect” as people say nowadays. I hold that everything capable of diverting us from madness and death, from now on, is inextricably linked with this truth. . . . I always cherished the hope that meaning and life were one.²

Attacking the skepticism, relativism, and nihilism that characterize current thought, he claims: “As for the unprecedented events that we are witnessing—the grouping of the whole of mankind into a single society, which proceeds apace—there is nothing to be said, nothing definite or even relevant.” He points out: “No one takes the trouble to reflect uncompromisingly about the enigma of a historical situation that is without precedent: the death of all cultures.”³

Illich and Girard agree on at least one point concerning the meaning of our current situation, of the crisis that we are experiencing: this meaning represents a direction leading us to a point that we sense is suspended between two extremes, a new Eden or a destructive apocalypse. This direction is like the direction of a panicked stampede. Nobody can escape this great moment of globalization, of world economic growth. Like Alexis de Tocqueville before them, Illich and Girard are convinced that only the language of religion is capable of conveying an adequate notion of the force covertly at work in modernity. Writing about the unparalleled development of what he called the “equality of conditions,” Tocqueville wrote: this movement “is a providential fact, it displays the principal features of such a fact: it is universal, it is durable, it evades day after day the power of humankind; all events, like all human beings, serve its development.” All human beings, and he specified: both “the ones who have fought for it” and “the very ones who have declared themselves to be its enemies.”⁴

Where Illich and Girard diverge radically is on the type of religious language that it is appropriate to deploy. For Illich, a former clergyman who went on to become one of the Church’s most vehement critics, it is the language of the sacred, meaning that of primitive religion. For Girard, a theorist of the sacred, it is that of the Gospels. This double irony is but one of the paradoxes of the intellectual adventure that I am relating.

Illich and Girard barely know each other’s work. Neither of them has been influenced by the other. It is through those who, like me, have believed they could discern words of truth in the writings of both authors, that their works, in the end more complementary than contradictory, have been able to enter into synergy. Since this is not the place for me to recount my own intellectual journey, I will limit myself to summarizing what I have drawn from both of them in such a way to bring fully to light the challenge that each constitutes for the other.

SACRIFICE AND THE LOGIC OF THE DETOUR

Illich has given us a powerfully original critique of the industrial mode of production. What defines industrialization, according to Illich, are not the relations of production, as the Marxist characterization of capitalism would have it, nor even a certain type of technological relationship to nature. Instead, the fundamental trait is the logic of the detour of production. This logic, in turn, is rooted in religion.

The work of one of the leading contemporary theorists of rational choice, Jon Elster, will serve as our point of departure.⁵ Elster brings out clearly the elective affinities that link capitalism to the philosophical system of Gottfried Leibniz. He defends, like the author of *Theodicy*, the thesis that human beings are characterized by their capacity to make detours the better to attain their ends. They are able to take a roundabout path if it will allow them to reach their destination faster, they can refrain

temporarily from consuming and invest so as to augment their overall consumption, they may refuse a good opportunity in order to take advantage of a better opportunity later, and so on. For ethologists, this capacity defines intelligence; it seems intimately tied to what Max Weber called instrumental rationality.

The praxeology established by economic theory is consistent with this thesis because it holds that acting rationally means maximizing a given value. Elster emphasizes the fact that this principle of maximization must be understood as entailing a *global* maximization rather than a merely local one. Suppose that, in the abstract landscape of our reasoning, we find ourselves atop a peak. A loftier peak is visible in the distance ahead of us. If we are not content with local maximization, then we must be willing to descend before climbing higher. The opposite attitude would amount to committing the “first-step fallacy.” If, hoping to go to the moon, one succeeds only in reaching the top of a tree, one must resign oneself to coming down to earth before resorting to a more effective technique.

Elster suggests that what we call Reason here is wholly informed by religion and ethics. Like many other authors, Elster has rightly sought in the Leibnizian *Monadology* and *Theodicy* the sources of modern rationalism.⁶ By seeing the human as that singular being able to “step back in order to leap forward,” Leibniz makes him out to be, in this regard, the faithful image of his Creator. In order to realize the best of all possible worlds, God had to allow a dose of evil to subsist, for otherwise the actual world would have been even worse overall. Everything that appears evil from the finite vantage point of the individual monad is, from the vantage point of the Totality, a sacrifice necessary for the greater good of the whole. Evil is always sacrificial in this sense, and sacrifice is a detour. Louis Dumont employs the following formula to characterize the form of the theodicy: “Good must contain evil while still being its contrary.”⁷ The verb “to contain” has the meaning here of “to encompass,” and the paradoxical form thus described is what Dumont terms “hierarchy”—using this term in its etymological sense of the order proper to the sacred—which he defines as the “encompassing of the contrary.” I have shown elsewhere that, on the condition that one understands the word *contain* in its double meaning of “to encompass” and “to hold back,” “to keep in check,” the theodicy displayed the very same form as Adam Smith’s “invisible hand.”⁸

Instrumental rationality, justification of evil, economic logic: these three forms appear to be closely linked and to constitute the matrix of modern Reason. Economic rationality is in the first place a moral economy: it entails the rational management of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a “production cost”: it is the detour indispensable to the attainment of the maximum net good.⁹

Here is the thesis I shall defend: The logic of the detour does indeed constitute a key component of modern “ideology”¹⁰ and the heart of economic rationality. However, if we abandon humanity’s self-representations, we shall find that: (1) the capacity to make detours, far from being an essential property of human

beings, is either denied them, or very difficult to mobilize, in fundamental areas of their activity; (2) this capacity, when it is actually present, far from constituting an “adaptive advantage,”¹¹ can reveal itself to be the principal obstacle to the application of instrumental rationality, even though hasty analyses of the latter hold it to be closely tied to the former.

More precisely: the logic of the detour, in ethics, is profoundly inimical to the inhabitants of our world; the Illichian critique of industrial society makes it obvious that it can be, to the highest degree, counterproductive. I shall take up these two points one by one.

ETHICS AND THE DETOUR

The ethics I am examining is our commonsense ethics, anchored in the religious and philosophical traditions proper to our culture. The intuitions of which they are made are in large part deontological, in the sense that they translate into prohibitions and obligations that are absolute—to be respected regardless of the cost involved for oneself or the world. They hold, in a Rousseauian and Kantian vein, that the highest moral faculty, autonomy, is that which consists in limiting one’s individuality by giving oneself an impartial rule or law, transcendent and fixed, and abiding by it. Such an ethics is shocking to a moral doctrine that conforms to the principle of the detour of production—such as in a consequentialist position, the utilitarian variant of which is especially close to the economic way of thinking. Consequentialism prescribes that everyone always act so as to contribute to the maximization of a global value that brings into play the entire set of interests at stake, independently of the identity of the persons whose interests they are. Consequentialist rationality is, therefore, like economic rationality, an instrumental rationality—the means find their reason in the ends. It is certainly not the same as economic rationality, since it embodies an ideal of impartiality that is foreign to the latter. However, what interests me here is not directly the relationship between economics and ethics, but the fact that an already ethical doctrine, which respects the principle of maximization, clashes head-on with our most deep-seated moral convictions.¹²

At the outset we have certain very strong moral convictions: murder is wrong, as is lying, or not keeping one’s promises. Ordinary morality erects on these convictions a system of prohibitions and obligations that demand absolute obedience from each agent: thou shalt not kill; thou shalt keep thy word; et cetera. But, asserts consequentialism, if it is wrong for an agent to commit a murder, and if it is good to respect one’s promises, the world will be all the better the smaller the number of agents committing murders, and the larger the number of agents keeping their word. That is a requirement of maximizing rationality, which, in itself, is not moral, which is even anterior to, and independent of, any morality, but which, grafted onto our convictions concerning good and evil, engenders the consequen-

tialist principle: one must aim to increase the good, and to diminish the evil, existing globally in the world.¹³

Now it happens that in exceptional cases, which constitute so many dilemmas for ethical reflection, the global maximizing aim prescribes transgression of the prohibitions and evasion of the obligations of commonsense morality. "Thou shalt not kill," well and good. But what if, by killing an innocent party, I can stop twenty-two other innocent persons from being killed? If I truly consider the murder of one innocent person to be an abominable thing, then the prohibition of the murder in this case appears to be contrary to reason. Traditional morality (Christian, Kantian, deontological) therefore seems to be guilty of irrationalism. It refuses to "step back in order to leap forward"; it does not accept the logic of sacrifice; it rejects the principle of the detour.

When authors who are critical of utilitarianism, such as Robert Nozick, wish to put it into difficulty, they frequently resort to cases of the following type.

A mob rampaging through a part of town killing and burning *will* violate the rights of those living there. Therefore, someone might try to justify his punishing another *he* knows to be innocent of a crime that enraged a mob, on the grounds that punishing this innocent person would help to avoid even greater violations of rights by others, and so would lead to a minimum weighted score for rights violations in the society.¹⁴

The argument seems to be that, since nothing horrifies us more than delivering an innocent person to the fury of a mob, utilitarianism, which justifies that, must be condemned. But must we also condemn the most basic principles of what we call reason? The situation depicted by Nozick is none other than the choice proposed by Caiaphas, who addresses himself to the pure reason of the high priests and Pharisees when he admonishes them: "You understand nothing. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation live" (John 11:49–50).

Nevertheless, it would be rash to condemn commonsense morality out of hand. Deontological ethics and the consequentialist doctrine are radically incompatible, and it is the question of the rationality of the detour (which we are calling "sacrifice") that keeps them irremediably apart. It is in religion, once again, that one may find the key to this separation. The God of Leibniz is located, in truth, poles apart from the one whose voice is heard in the Gospels: "If one of you has one hundred sheep and loses one, would he not leave the other ninety-nine in the desert and go searching for the one that was lost until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4–6; Matt. 18:12–14). This lesson is fundamentally antieconomic inasmuch as it rigorously reverses the terms of the sacrificial problematic¹⁵: the desert is the place where, traditionally, the scapegoat is abandoned to the demon Azazel so that the community may live.¹⁶ I suspect, following Girard, that the lesson in question

strongly inspires the extreme repugnance of commonsense morality toward the logic of the detour.

THE DETOUR AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVITY

Social criticism of capitalism and, beyond it, of industrial society, has often taken as its target instrumental rationality or, rather, the latter's monopolistic sway over modern reason. The imperialism of instrumental reason is supposed to result in what has been called, since Max Weber, the "disenchantment of the world," the reduction of all beings and all things to the status of simple means in the service of an end that surpasses them, the instrumentalization of nature, et cetera. One finds this type of criticism in currents of thinking as diverse as Marxism, the Heideggerian critique of technology, the Frankfurt School, postmodern theory and philosophical deconstruction, political ecology or environmentalism. It must be stated that the target is ill chosen and that what the criticism intends (or ought) to aim at is, in fact, the logic of the detour of production. Not, strictly speaking, this logic as such, but the sway that it holds over people's minds. When one is animated by the spirit of the detour one may fall into its trap and end up losing sight of the fact that the detour is, precisely, only a detour. When one steps back in order to leap forward, one must keep one's eyes fixed on the obstacle to be surmounted. If one steps back while looking in the opposite direction, one runs the risk of forgetting one's objective and, seeing one's regression as progress, of taking the means for ends. Then rationality turns into counterproductivity, it takes the form of the torture of Tantalus. The criterion that permits this tragic turnabout to be recognized is none other than that of the optimal adjustment of means to ends, in other words of instrumental rationality itself. It is therefore misguided to accuse the latter.

The genius of Ivan Illich is to have been the first to understand this. I worked with him in the 1970s on a critique of this type, which was designed precisely to expose the counterproductivity of the great institutions of our societies: the schools, medicine, transportation, et cetera.¹⁷ The radicality of the critique was accompanied by mockery, which at that time was an effective weapon. Those days are gone: a society that trembles for the future of its children is no longer able to laugh at the difficulties afflicting it. Here I would like to come back to one element of this critique, which, although peripheral, seems to me to illustrate perfectly the distinction just established: the spirit of the detour can become a major obstacle to the application of instrumental rationality. Following up on an idea of Illich's at the time, I undertook with my research team a series of bizarre but rigorous calculations¹⁸ which led to the following results. The French devoted an average of more than four hours a day to their car, whether ensconced in its cockpit on their way from one point to another, or buffing its chrome with their own hands, or, above all, working in factories or offices in order to obtain the resources necessary to its acquisition, use, and maintenance. Returning recently to the data that we had gathered to carry out this calcu-

lation, I arrived at the conclusion that the present situation is no doubt worse than what it was twenty years ago.¹⁹

If one divides the average number of miles traveled on all types of trips by the “generalized time” devoted to the car, one obtains something like a “generalized” speed. This speed turns out to be a little more than four miles an hour, somewhat faster than a person walking at an ordinary pace, but considerably slower than a bicycle.²⁰ I branded this calculation “bizarre.” It should be noted, however, that it is modeled on the calculations used by economist-engineers when they need to compare, for example, the respective net advantages of two means of transportation. What they do in such cases is to establish “generalized costs” that incorporate a “monetary value of time.” Since, as a rule, the latter is based on the hourly wage, the generalized time that we calculated is nothing other than the generalized cost of economist-engineers divided by the monetary value of time. Instead of converting times into monetary units, we converted costs into units of time.

The meaning of the result obtained, arithmetically, is as follows. On average, if the French were deprived of their cars and thus presumably freed of the need to work long hours to pay for them, they would devote less generalized time to transportation if they made all of their current trips on a bicycle—and we mean *all* of their trips, not only their daily commute between home and work, but also the weekend outings to a distant country house and the holiday expedition to the golden shores of a far-off riviera. Now, anybody would judge such an alternative scenario intolerable or absurd. And yet, it would economize time, energy, and scarce resources while going easier on what is known as the environment. What, then, is the difference that makes the absurdity of the situation patent in one case while allowing it to remain hidden in the other? For, after all, is it any less comical to spend a good part of one’s time working to pay for the means of getting to work?

The foregoing calculation assumes an hour of transportation to be the equivalent of an hour of work, each being counted as a mere means in the service of an external end. The very same equivalence inspires the calculations of the economist-engineers. One may contest it, but it should first be noted that it does no more than take seriously the logic of the detour of production. Neither work nor transportation is an end in itself. The mission of economic calculus is to tally up rigorously human pains and toil so that the sum total may be reduced to a minimum through efficient management. And, as their etymology reveals, both “travel” and *travail*—the French word for work—are sources of pain and torment: the two terms are doublets, each deriving from *tripalium* (a medieval instrument of torture).

In truth, if the absurdity of a way of life and a structuring of social space-time that leads so many people to devote so much generalized time to getting from place to place with so little average efficiency is hidden, that is because they substitute work time for travel time. Their work is, in principle—that principle we call the detour of production—only a means to obtain faster and more efficient transportation, which in

turn is only a means to something else again—for example, “bringing nearer those who are close to our heart,” to quote from an old automobile advertisement. Faithful to the logic of the detour (the better to reveal its ideological character), our calculation shows that the time spent designing and manufacturing powerful engines meant to help us save time more than cancels out the time such activities actually economize. The hare labors feverishly in the office suites and on the assembly lines, but, as in the fable, it is the tortoise who comes in first. Alas! The tortoise is an endangered species. Economics ought to mean economizing people’s pains and toil. What naivete! Who cannot see that everything happens as if the objective were, on the contrary, to occupy them without respite, even at the cost of making them run faster and faster in place?

As soon as work is divided, it constitutes the detour of production par excellence. One sees, for example, certain people work to produce engines of death to obtain the resources that will give them access to high-priced medical services, and all that to produce a value—their health—which they could have produced in large measure autonomously, by leading a healthier and more hygienic life. The spirit of the detour of production has been so thoroughly perverted by industrial society and the extreme division of labor that characterizes it, that it is the detour, its length, the energy spent traversing it, which come to be sought after as ends in themselves. This indeed is why the calculation of the generalized speed of the automobile provokes a malaise in many minds: the calculation treats work as an input, whereas work, in the form of wage labor, has become the supreme output.

Once again, the only ones who should take this calculation seriously are the professional economists. Forms of production that are commonly judged superfluous or even harmful are legitimized by the work that they furnish the population. Planned obsolescence of objects, squandering of nonrenewable natural resources, needless energy consumption, and heedless environmental pollution: no one dares do anything about them because they guarantee jobs. At the time we were undertaking our calculation, a French labor union was vehemently demanding that the Concorde program be pursued: should one surmise that it hoped to hasten the dawning of a classless society in which former proletarians would enjoy supersonic flights? No, of course not, it was only defending jobs. At about the same time, another labor union was justifying the reduction of social inequality on the grounds that stimulating “popular consumption” would promote growth and the concomitant need for work: should one conclude that it was confusing ends and means? No, the ultimate end sought by industrial society is indeed the production of a detour of production, namely, work.

If the detour of production is the mark of intelligence, then too much intelligence has addled the brain of industrial society—addled it enough to bring about its demise. That is what I held to be true almost thirty years ago, at the time of my collaboration with Illich. Today I would be more circumspect, not that my beliefs have really changed, but for prudential or practical reasons. It appears to me that this col-

lective folly we call world economic growth has a providential dimension, in Tocqueville's sense—as if the transformation, even violent and deleterious, of our planet into a single world manifested a project whose source and impetus remain a profound mystery. It is Girard's theory, to which I now come, that has enlightened me on this point. But there is one point on which my revolt has not weakened. What the technocrats who pretend to govern us—no matter whether in a suave and pedagogical manner or brutally and peremptorily—try to pass off as the “dictates of reason” is but the tragicomic height of the absurd: this is what the rationalist, which in spite of all I remain, will never be able to tolerate.

SACRIFICE AND EXCLUSION

It is on the question of social exclusion that I propose to put the Girardian critique to work. Counterproductivity, on the one hand, the “excluded,” on the other: here we have two dual aspects of the crisis of the society of generalized economy.

You who find the door closed to the principal means of social recognition, that is, work; you who find yourselves denied that minimum that even primitive individuals could provide for themselves, that is, shelter; you within whom there may have slumbered an artist, a poet, a musician, or quite simply an engineer or a computer programmer, and who will never have the possibility of developing your gifts for lack of the necessary training—all of you are the excluded, to use the convenient label that has become a commonplace of contemporary French political discourse. But have you at least been excluded for something? “At least” and “for” encapsulate the whole difficulty of the question. They will guide my reflections here.

The “at least” causes the skeptics that we have become to shudder. For in the event that the particular evil were in the service of a supposedly universal good, far from constituting an attenuating circumstance, the horror of the situation would be aggravated in our eyes. In the 1970s, the American sociologist Peter Berger devoted a book to the ideologies embodied in modern history that have justified generalized servitude and massive destruction in the name of the shining future they aimed to build. The title he gave the book is *Pyramids of Sacrifice*.²¹ Thus, according to Berger, these misbegotten masterpieces of instrumental rationality—the end justifying the means—resembled the atrocities committed at Tenochtitlán and elsewhere in the name of a divinity thirsty for blood. Immanuel Kant, already, rejected any philosophy of history that would assimilate the march of humanity to the construction of a mansion that only the last generation would have the leisure to inhabit. The triumph of *homo faber* in human affairs, analyzed in such masterly fashion by Hannah Arendt, has become intolerable to us.²²

Are the poverty and social exclusion produced by economic wealth part of the logic of ends and means? Or to put it in Berger's terms, are the excluded sacrificial victims? Like him, I am using the word *sacrifice* as a metaphor of its religious meaning, going back to Marcel Mauss's definition (and ignoring the taboo of contemporary

anthropology which, unable to grasp the nature of the sacred, ventures to conclude that it does not exist): in a sacrifice, the communication with a superior being is established through the intermediary of a victim. If exclusion is explained in terms of theft, as vulgar Marxism was liable to do, the definition is obviously not satisfied. Some have less for others to have more, but in the guise of a superior entity, we have nothing here but the egoistic interest of those who come out ahead. The conclusion is the same if it is asserted that the excluded have only what they deserve, in the manner of a no less vulgar liberalism.

As to the grand tradition of economically inspired liberal thought running from Adam Smith to Friedrich Hayek, it has not hesitated to interpret the evils committed by the market as sacrifices that one must be prepared to accept in the name of a superior interest. In the market as conceived by Hayek, for example, there is much suffering: people do not find work or lose their jobs, companies go bankrupt, suppliers are abandoned by long-time clients, speculators play for high stakes and lose everything, new products flop, researchers labor long and hard without obtaining any results, et cetera. Decried by blind fate, these sanctions are unjustified, unpredictable, incomprehensible. Yet wisdom consists in “abandoning oneself to the obscure forces of the social process”—a process driven by a beneficent spontaneity and endowed with a knowledge that is inaccessible to any individual subject. To try to oppose this dynamic in the name of social justice, or in order to repair the havoc it wreaks in its path, would mean turning one’s back on the workings of providence in the vain pursuit of a will-o’-the-wisp. Should you object to a follower of Hayek that capitalism has mass-produced misery by generalizing a form of poverty inconceivable in traditional societies, since it combines material want with the curse of being abandoned to one’s own fate—an unheard-of paradox that Karl Marx himself never managed to sort out—the answer will come back to you that if capitalism has indeed multiplied the poor, this is only because it has made it possible for a greater number of them to live, that is, to survive. Everything takes place, writes Hayek, as if evolution carried out a veritable “vital calculus”: it knows how to sacrifice certain lives here and now, if that will lead it to increase the overall vital flow.

This sacrificial logic has its counterpart in the doctrine that still dominates Anglo-American moral philosophy today: utilitarianism. Utilitarianism, as we saw previously, is the rational management of the scapegoat mechanism. For reasons which utilitarian reason does not fathom, this has become intolerable for us.

Neither Hayek’s moral philosophy nor that of Adam Smith is, strictly speaking, utilitarian. They do not make approval of an action contingent on its contribution to “general utility,” to the reproduction of society, et cetera. Nevertheless, even if human beings are not utilitarian in these masterpieces of economic thought, God, Nature, Evolution, et cetera are so on their behalf. Reason does not enlighten them directly, it acts through cunning. It is from economic thought that G.W.F. Hegel drew the schema of the cunning of reason.

There is, therefore, a great deal of coherence in these self-representations adopted by modernity, and they are inspired by economic thought through and through. Now for the interesting question: Is this coherence adequate to reality? As before, but for new reasons, my answer to this question is a vigorous "No!" No, there exists no superior entity that justifies misery, no "mutation inscribed in the future" that makes it necessary to throw the weakest overboard. No, those excluded by industrial society are not sacrificial victims.

On this question, it is difficult not to call on Girard's theory for help. To do so is not without risk, however, for hardly any other author's work must contend with such enmity and ostracism. In a book devoted to the relevance of Girardian anthropology for the question already asked by Hegel—Why is the economy the essence of modernity?—the Canadian philosopher Paul Dumouchel studied social exclusion in relation to the question of sacrifice.²³ The point of departure of his analysis is the idea that economy is fundamentally powerless to illuminate the enigma and the scandal of exclusion because it constitutes the problem and not the solution.

As far as Girard's theory goes, the first thing to note is that it is rejected largely on the basis of a serious misapprehension. Girard is viewed as a Christian thinker—which indeed he is—and thence it is concluded that his obsession with the question of sacrifice merely reflects the quintessentially Christian theme of God's sacrificing Himself for humankind, of redemptive suffering and the gift of the self. Certain anthropologists go so far as to assert that the very category of sacrifice is but an illusion, bearing witness to the dominion that Christianity still exercises over a discipline that aims for scientific status. Where Girard is concerned, one could not be further from the truth, for he has proposed an interpretation of Christianity that is radically anti-sacrificial.

Can a science of humanity exist if it abstains from posing the question of the origin of religion—if it dismisses as poorly formulated the problem of what makes all non-modern societies refer the social bond to an entity radically exterior to the human world: the sacred? Can a science of economy exist if it does not first ponder the major historical coincidence that characterizes the modern world, the simultaneous retreat of religion and apotheosis of market value? In posing these questions, Girard does no more than renew the great Franco-British tradition of religious anthropology that had been brought to a premature halt by decades of structuralism and post-structuralism.

At the heart of the Girardian hypothesis is the proposition that the sacred is nothing other than human violence, expelled, exteriorized, hypostatized. The god-making machine runs on imitation. At the paroxysm of the "sacrificial crisis," when a murderous frenzy has shattered the system of differences that makes up the social order and sparked a war of all against all, the contagious character of the violence produces a catastrophic convergence of every enmity upon an arbitrary member of the collectivity. Putting him to death is what abruptly restores peace. The result is religion in its three component parts. First, mythology: the interpretation of the founding event makes the victim out to be a supernatural being, capable at once of

introducing disorder and of creating order. Next, ritual: always sacrificial at the outset, it begins by miming the violent decomposition of the group so that it may go on to stage the reestablishment of order through the killing of a substitute victim. Lastly, the system of prohibitions and obligations, the finality of which is to prevent a new eruption of the conflicts that previously engulfed the community.

The sacred is fundamentally ambivalent: it uses violence to hold back violence. It contains violence, in both senses of the word. This is clear in the case of the sacrificial gesture that restores order: it is never other than one more murder, even if it is meant to be the last one; it is equally true of the system of prohibitions and obligations: the social structures that unify the community in normal times are the very same ones that tear it apart in times of crisis. When a prohibition is transgressed, the obligations of solidarity, leaping over the barriers of time and space (as in the mechanism of the vendetta), draw into an ever wider conflict people who were in no way concerned by the original confrontation.

These “things hidden since the foundation of the world” are not unknown to us: they have become an open secret. All one need do is glance through a newspaper: the term *scapegoat* is served up at every opportunity. Just think about it: this expression declares the innocence of the victim, it reveals the mechanism of the exteriorization of violence. Girard believes that this knowledge working through us is of divine origin—meaning that it derives from the one true God. The account of the death of Jesus on the cross is, as anthropology has accurately observed, similar to the stories one finds at the heart of so many religions. If one sticks to the facts, there is no important difference between Christianity and a primitive religion. But it is the interpretation that changes everything. Here, paradoxically, Girard must pay homage to Friedrich Nietzsche. The evangelical account is the first not to be narrated by the persecutors, it sides with the victim whose perfect innocence it proclaims—which is why Nietzsche felt justified in accusing Christianity of being a slave morality.

According to Girard, this knowledge has clogged up the works of the machine for making the sacred, damaging it irreparably. As it sacralizes less and less well, it produces more and more violence, but a violence that has lost the power to impose order on itself. Such is the modern world, described as a “low-gear mimetic crisis,” “without catastrophic escalation or resolution of any kind.” The question that Dumouchel and I tackled in this framework is the one the “Girardian system” raises, but to which it offers no answer: What gives modern societies the capacity, not only to resist, but even to feed on the growing undifferentiation of the world and the exacerbation of the resulting mimetic phenomena?

We answered: the economy. Not that we claimed it constituted a substitute for the sacred, despite what facile metaphors suggest (the “Almighty Dollar,” et cetera). But like the sacred, the economy is ambivalent in its relationship to violence: it contains it, in both senses of the word—thus reconciling Marx and Montesquieu. As for

the singularity of the economy's relationship to mimesis, one has only to remark that the business world is the one place—poles apart from the intellectual world!—where people admit to imitating their rivals.

At the heart of the economy lies what Dumouchel calls the “exteriority of third parties.” This configuration is contemporary with the general weakening of the system of prohibitions and obligations of solidarity, which many perceptive authors, and not just Girard, trace to the influence of Christianity. Once the ties of solidarity among members of the community have withered, the intensification of mimetic rivalries no longer generates the polarization against a single victim that is proper to sacrificial crises. People are more fascinated than ever by their doubles, whom they openly hate and secretly venerate, but these rivalries do not engulf the whole of the social space. The third parties are too caught up in their own fascinations not to feel themselves exterior to the rivalries of others. They do not have to take sides, and they see too clearly the truth of violence, namely, its reciprocity: nothing divides the violent from each other but their own hatred. At least they see this truth where others are concerned, even if they never see it about themselves.

People stand to one another as external third parties. Since everyone shirks their obligations of solidarity out of distraction with their private fascinations, no one pays attention to the losers being produced all around by the antagonisms of others. The economic order is the social construction of indifference to other people's unhappiness. In this order it is not the relations between rivals that are marked by the greatest violence, but the relations of each of them with the others, that is, the relations among third parties. It is the refusal of the third parties to support the losers—much more than the blows they received from the winners—that sanctions their defeat and transforms it into a veritable social and sometimes physical death sentence. Dumouchel analyzed in these terms the industrial revolution of eighteenth-century England and the resulting reorganization of landed property. It was in that era that the question was first posed that still haunts us today: Where on earth do all the poor come from, given that wealth is on the rise?

The “excluded” are not sacrificial victims because, far from being the focus of general fascination, they succumb from the indifference of everyone else. But, it will be said, are we not obsessed by the question they represent for us? Yes, no doubt, but insofar as they are victims, and that makes all the difference. We moderns are obsessed by the question of victims. In moral and political philosophy, the proof of this proposition can be found in the oeuvre of John Rawls,²⁴ that frontal assault on utilitarian hegemony which can be interpreted as a powerful anti-sacrificial machine. In this conception of justice—which Rawls dubs “justice as equity”—the priority of priorities is the fate of the most disadvantaged. It is their liberty and their welfare that must be made as great as possible, even if that means refraining from improving the conditions of the much more numerous middle classes, even if that means accepting inequalities. The principles that express justice as equity can be boiled down to the

following: any inequality that is not in the service of the worst-off is unjust, and this is true in three domains whose hierarchical ordering is absolute: first, basic rights and freedoms; next, chances and opportunities; and finally, access to economic and social resources and wealth. The worst-off, hence those who run the greatest risk of being sacrificial victims, are “sacred.” The religious metaphor is obviously awkward, since what is meant here by sacred is: *not* to be sacrificed.

We are obsessed by the question of victims, but that does not make their fate any more enviable. Victims are so important to us that it is henceforth in the name of victims that we persecute them. A comic variant on this perverse turnabout is furnished by American-style political correctness. The more signs of victim-status that you accumulate, the more assured you are of access to privileges. As Girard says somewhere, quoting Georges Bernanos, “The modern world is full of Christian ideas gone berserk.”

CONCLUSION

It is time to sum up and to tie the strands of our argument together. For Illich, the direction we are taking is that of a headlong panicked flight, the unexpected consequence of the fact that we have overstepped certain critical thresholds. Beyond these thresholds, the economic machine goes berserk and feeds on its own waste products. This, as Jean-Marie Domenach put it, is the “return of the tragic” in the modern world.²⁵ It is to Greek mythology that Illich turns in order to express what is happening to us: we are guilty of hubris, of excess; we have aroused the envy of the Gods who are putting Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, on our trail.

For Girard, what is happening to us is the paradoxical effect of the underground workings of the gospel message, a message which, when it is only partially understood—when people have yet to radically abandon their violence—produces more, not less, violence, but a violence increasingly contained and increasingly deferred. The message acts like a ruse: this growing and ever-postponed violence is leading us to a point of bifurcation in which our responsibility will be total: either the inauguration of the Kingdom of Love or else a destructive apocalypse for which we will have only ourselves to blame.

Here is how the two theories under examination may be combined to form a coherent whole. Subjected to the workings of revelation, the sacrificial system is gradually coming undone. The logic of the detour, which is of a piece with it, is going berserk. Unbridled economic growth is the most obvious manifestation of this madness. The victims, as real as they are, are not sacrificial victims.

Girard gives us the means to criticize Illich, and Illich the means to criticize Girard. Illich only sees, or only wants to see, the negative side of the headlong flight that constitutes modernity. Girard shows us that it is fundamentally ambivalent, in that it also has a prodigious and providential side. The evil is—or rather could be, if, with our freedom, we so decide—in the service of good: the good that will, or would, ensue from the full and complete recognition of the message of love.

However, it is possible to interpret the Girardian eschatology in a very demoralizing fashion, which would be a return to theodicy, and therefore, paradoxically, to the logic of the detour, to the logic of sacrifice: if evil is ultimately in the service of good, we might as well let it have its way and wash our hands of it. Illich is indispensable because he summons us to fulfill, here and now, our absolute duty of social criticism.

Paris, France

NOTES

1. Of Girard's works, one must mention above all: René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965 [sic!]); René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Michael Metteer (bk. 1) and Stephen Bann (bks. 2 and 3) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

2. Girard, *Things Hidden*, pp. 446–447. Emphasis in original.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 441.

4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 1 (1835), ch. 4.

5. Jon Elster, *Leibniz et la formation de l'esprit capitaliste* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1975); and Jon Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens: Studies in Rationality and Irrationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

6. See above all Alain Renaud, *The Era of the Individual*, trans. Malcolm B. De Bevoise and Franklin Philip (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

7. Louis Dumont, *Essais sur l'individualisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), pp. 242–243. English translation: *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective*, trans. Paul Hockings (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

8. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "De l'émancipation de l'économie: Retour sur 'Das Adam Smith Problem,'" *L'Année Sociologique* 37 (1987), pp. 311–342; or in Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Le Sacrifice et l'envie: Le libéralisme aux prises avec la justice sociale* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1992), ch. 3.

9. See Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "On the Rationality of Sacrifice," Centre de Recherche en Épistémologie Appliquée (CREA) working paper, submitted for publication.

10. In the sense Louis Dumont gives this term, which is devoid of any reference to a deliberate intent to conceal the truth of social relations or to a "false consciousness." An ideology is the system of ideas and values governing the imaginary of a given society.

11. Jon Elster goes so far as to write that in creating the human being—that being capable of reasoning strategically and not remaining content with local maxima—natural selection "transcended itself" (Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, p. 16).

12. See Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "Éthique et rationalité," in *Dictionnaire d'éthique et de philosophie morale*, ed. M. Canto-Sperber (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996).

13. See Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Samuel Scheffler, ed., *Consequentialism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

14. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974). Emphasis in original.

15. This reversal is stunningly staged by Steven Spielberg in his *Saving Private Ryan*. Captain Miller, whose mindset is utilitarian, and therefore sacrificial—he constantly weighs the

lives he is sending to the slaughter against those “ten times more numerous,” who will thereby be saved—is sent on a mission to rescue a soldier, a single soldier, almost anonymous (the American army is swarming with Ryans), for whose life he will give (not sacrifice) those of most of his men, as well as his own. The film shows admirably how this mission, which he and his men initially deem senseless, gradually appears to them as the only one able to endow their combat with meaning.

16. See Michel Serres’s fine essay, “One God or a Trinity?” *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 1–18.

17. See Ivan Illich, *Energie et équité*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Seuil, 1975), with an appendix by Jean-Pierre Dupuy, “A la recherche du temps gagné.”

18. I fear my only role in all that was to have been the one who “translated Illich into equations.” Where he stuck obstinately to his religious language, I resorted no less obstinately to logic and mechanisms. I offer an explanation in the “Introduction” to my *Ordres et désordres* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

19. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, “Le Travail contreproductif,” *Le Monde de l’économie* (October 15, 1996).

20. For the comparison to be perfectly accurate, one would have to take into account not the average speed of the bicycle on the road, but its generalized speed. However, since the cost of acquiring, using, and maintaining this means of transportation is so modest, the difference between the two figures is minimal.

21. Peter L. Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

22. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

23. Paul Dumouchel and Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *L’Enfer des choses: René Girard et la logique de l’économie* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

24. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). For a Girardian critique of this fundamental book, see Dupuy, *Le sacrifice et l’envie*.

25. Jean-Marie Domenach, *Le Retour du tragique* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Ivan Illich's Break with the Past

Pieter Tijmes

The idea of breaks in history plays a major role in Ivan Illich's thinking. Referring to modernity, Illich even speaks about a catastrophic break. In this chapter I want to elaborate on this break because, in my view, the concept must be qualified in order to avoid idealizing the past, and mistaking model for reality. I will outline how I understand modernity as a regime of scarcity, which fits with Illich's notion of a definitive historical break. But I shall also indicate a not irrelevant difference, indebted to René Girard's theory of mimetic desire.¹ Girard sharpens one's eye for the ambivalence of all human manifestations, not only those of today but also those of the past. I will then explain my use of ideal types, following Max Weber. My point is that the construction of an ideal type for modernity may be legitimate, but there is nevertheless an empirical question of how far the ideal type or model really covers reality. There is always the danger that one becomes a victim of one's own historical methodology if one takes the ideal type for reality itself. Finally, I will discuss some ideas of Illich in the famous essay "Health as One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!"²—a stance that represents the conclusion of a long journey in thinking and writing. Illich has never sought the applause of his audience; on the contrary, he knows the art of treading on people's toes. At the same time, one can find in this essay his religious heart. If I contradict him, I hope to do so in a respectful way.

THE IDEA OF MODERNITY

Recent authors have poked fun at the concept of modernity. With a face both serious and solemn, Bruno Latour declares that we have never been modern.³ I shall not contradict him, if he sticks to his idiosyncratic and limited concept of modernity. One could just as well argue that we have been postmodern since the foundation of the world. Many things are possible, but not always useful. In any case I do not care

for frivolities, because what is definitely a new pattern of human conduct in the West since the Middle Ages, as deviation from a prior traditional way of life, would thus be interpreted fraudulently.

Modernity is a distinct and different way of dealing with a basic form of human behavior, the problem of mimetic desire. By mimetic desire I mean that people do not act on authentic desires, but take their desires from others; they imitate others in their desiring. In other words, people are not born with fixed ideas, wishes, and desires, but learn them from the social and cultural environment on which they depend. In this sense it is the other who tells them what is desirable. This theory of mimetic desire is, basically, a conflict theory, because conflicts arise from the situation when one desires what the other also desires, with the result that two desires clash with each other over the same object.

How to deal with mimetic desire is also a cultural problem. In order to avoid mimetic conflicts, people have developed cultural strategies as answers to the question: How do we live in relative peace within a community, despite of the fact that the human condition of mediated desires necessarily leads to complicated entanglements? To make a long story short: In traditional society religion plays a dominant role in containing conflicts; for example, through religiously sanctioned prohibitions. These prohibitions act to prevent cultural disintegration, and ban what can be a cause of conflict: Do not commit murder, do not steal, do not give false evidence, do not covet, and so on. In a modern society, the dominant role of religion, with its prohibitions, myths, and rites, has evaporated, and scarcity has become the organizing principle. How should we understand this?

At school we learned that economic science begins with the assumption that human beings have boundless needs they want to satisfy. The means for satisfying these needs are called goods, and all goods are scarce. That is, the means to satisfy innumerable needs are always limited. Ironically, only modern and affluent societies are convinced of the importance of scarcity as a determinant of social behavior, while traditional societies tend to rest on a different conviction. In traditional cultures, wishes and desires are not seen as endless or indefinite, but as religiously and culturally constrained. Of course, traditional societies know shortages, but precisely because of a commitment to the constraint of desire, such shortages are dealt with in ways quite different from those typical of modernity. A shortage of food does not necessarily mean a scarcity of food. Food is scarce only when it becomes an issue of competition or rivalry. But in a traditional society all sorts of institutions—religious myths and rites, cultural interdictions, divisions of space—function to prevent or limit rivalries. One is pushed to avoid situations in which things become the objects of competitive desire. Neither economic laws nor maximization of self-interest but traditional norms and institutions are the primary influences on the nature and scale of production. Production is not principally for the market but for subsistence.

Shortages of natural resources do not define scarcity; to be more precise, scarcity is the social construct of a particular web of human relationships. It is in this sense that Paul Dumouchel, following Girard, contends that scarcity is the organizing principle of modern society. Scarcity entails "general abandonment of the obligations of solidarity which united the community. Scarcity is the deliberate abandonment of the religious interdictions that restricted human desires."⁴ This is the modern climate within which *homo economicus* originally appeared and flourished. In modernity, the purse strings represent the accepted mechanism for the distribution of goods. To desire as much as one can buy is a distinctly modern achievement. With a well filled purse, one is allowed to consume a great deal; one who is short of money is out of luck.⁵ Curtailment of consumption occurs, not on the basis of cultural or religious motives, but as a result of restrictions in one's private budget or purchasing power. The former religious motive for restriction has been replaced by the empirical ground of available money in the purse. This means that a real limitation of desire does not take place. For Dumouchel, this frame of reference functions primarily as a fruitful horizon of interpretation for social and political thought. For me, it also serves as a lens to examine Illich's thinking on modern industrialized society. That is, I look at his contributions with mimetic spectacles and try to understand his concepts—such as radical monopoly, counterproductivity, sex, and gender—from this frame of reference.

Important elements for a critical theory of modern industrialization are to be found in Illich's writings. All peoples of the world are, according to him, threatened by industrial development at this moment. It is clear that industrialization has been ideologically embraced as the engine or means to overcome scarcity. But *de facto* overgrowth has become a serious threat to the environment, convivial work, the creative imagination, participatory politics, and the right to tradition. By tradition, Illich here means the recourse to precedent in language, myth, morals, and judgment. He describes these threats as distinct though interrelated categories, all having in common a destructive inversion of means into ends. And to these threats he adds the pervasive frustration brought about by compulsory, engineered satisfaction.⁶ With concrete examples, he illustrates the overefficient production that results in radical monopoly. By this he means the hegemony of one type of product rather than just the dominance of one brand. He argues that industrial development results in a culture in which a translation of values into technical tasks takes place.

Illich presents a unique and distinctive way of looking at technology. He starts from the concept of tool, and analyzes what tools do to society. At the same time, he expands the concept of tool to modern phenomena such as transportation and energy supply, and also to service institutions such as schools and hospitals. He considers these rational creations as tools or engineered devices: They are tools designed as a means for an end that people initially plan, organize, and engineer. But it belongs to the very character of these tools or technologies that they convey new possibilities and

new expectations. Thus they change the plan, impede the possibility of achieving the wanted end, and turn means into ends; in his words, they are counterproductive.

Technological devices even mediate new worldviews and blot out older ones. In this sense, modernity is a battlefield where the culture of the past is relentlessly attacked. As Illich notes,

The establishment of radical monopoly . . . reflects the industrial institutionalization of values. It substitutes the standard package for the personal response. It introduces new classes of scarcity and a new device to classify people according to the level of their consumption. This redefinition raises the unit cost of valuable service, differentially rations privilege, restricts access to resources, and makes people dependent. Above all, by depriving people of the ability to satisfy personal needs in a personal manner, radical monopoly creates radical scarcity of personal—as opposed to institutional—service. (p. 54)⁷

The mimetic idea does not play an important role in Illich's thinking. He has his own approach and arguments to explain the idiosyncrasies of modernity. He often looks at the West with the eyes of premodern and traditional societies. This method of getting distance from our own situation is fruitful, because it sharpens awareness of unexamined assumptions, and liberates from Western self-importance and presumptions. But solidarity with the poor in traditional society can blind one to other injustices. The scarcity theory of mimetic origin stipulates the ambivalence of *all* human behavior. If it compares modern behavioral phenomena with traditional ones, it does not hide the contradictions of traditional societies. Even solidarity in traditional societies, according to Girardian theory, has its ambivalence and destructive power.⁸ The scapegoat mechanism is an expression of the fact that traditional societies are also built on violence.

From this perspective, there arises the following problem: If human ambivalence of behavior cannot be overcome, one may wonder whether scarcity can be overcome under specifically modern conditions. If human existence necessarily entails some form of rivalry, this alters the place to look for "solutions" to the problematic phenomenon of scarcity. The problem becomes how to create new forms of sharing in our now capitalistic and industrialized societies. It is unfortunate that Illich has not considered it his task to look for more constructive elements in society with regard to what he has criticized: education, technology, industrialization, politics, gender, and so on. Given the evidence that the modern course does not deliver on its promises—as Illich vividly points out—mimetic theory nevertheless stimulates one to turn away from the violence that was characteristic of premodern life.

IDEAL TYPES

Because of his use of ideal types or models from the past, after the tradition of Max Weber, Illich's discussion of contemporary issues sometimes makes problems more difficult and gloomy than need be. Caught up in the models, one cannot glimpse solutions. Let me illustrate with an example from his monograph *Gender*.⁹ From the

first time I read this book I found it difficult to understand, because I was puzzled by the question: What is the point of the book? Did Illich want to promote the realm of gender at the expense of the regime of sex? On the one hand, I suffered from uncertainty about the book's intention; on the other, I recognized it as one of his best books, uniting insights in an elegant coherence. I had no doubt about his perceptive remarks on the character of gender; they were revelatory and gave me a new sensitivity for such relationships. But is the book only meant to be a work of historical research that brings to light what was hidden up to now, as Illich sometimes suggests?

Most of the themes, such as education, shadow work, technology, and, above all, scarcity, return in this book on gender. The break with the past, that is, the rise of the industrial mode of production, is now described as the transition from the reign of gender to the regime of sex. In an Illichean manner, the loss of vernacular gender is conceptualized as the decisive condition for the break, the emergence of a new economic mode of production. Illich does show his cards when writing that the paradigm of *homo economicus* does not square with what men and women actually are. Men and women cannot be reduced to humans, to economic neuters of either male or female sex, he argues (p. 66).

It may be appropriate to consider vernacular gender as the foundation of ambiguous complementarity, and the sex of economic neuters as the modern experiment to deny or transcend this foundation. By reducing all interaction to exchange, the social sciences have laid the groundwork for this denial and for the legitimacy of an *economic* analysis of the relations between men and women. (p. 74, emphasis in original)

Here speaks a passionate and engaged contemporary who discloses what men and women actually once were, and how modernity represents a decay.¹⁰ "The institutional 'identity' of *homo economicus* excludes gender. Therefore, the loss of social gender is an integral part of the history of scarcity and of the institutions that structure it."¹¹

In one of the notes, Illich remarks that he writes about gender and sex as ideal types, following the manner of Weber (p. 14). This methodological position may or may not give me enough room to breathe. While approving Illich's general diagnosis of dominant tendencies, I am looking for possibilities of empirical flexibility. Weberian models do not simply describe reality, but are *rational constructions* whose usefulness depends both on an ability to reflect the facts and to register deviations. Models in Weberian terms do not mirror reality, but are useful to compare and measure. They are like Geiger counters that pay attention to specific phenomena, and expose facts that would not have been observed otherwise.

In this sense models are means to uncover reality and make it visible; they open up possibilities for understanding and explanation. In concrete cases one sometimes has to admit that the models do not clarify all the facts of a situation. Let us take as an example the hypothesis that human behavior is inspired by scarcity, "reducing all

interaction to exchange.” This model may describe very adequately something that happened on the threshold of modernity, the loss of charitable values and the rise of a new ethos without any place for almsgiving. Most interesting is David Hume’s remark in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*: “Giving alms to common beggars is naturally praised; because it seems to carry relief to the distressed and indigent; but when we observe the encouragement thence arising to idleness and debauchery, we regard that species of charity rather as a weakness than a virtue.”¹² Hume still knows about the traditional ethos but he elaborates a novel vision of virtue under the influence of the dictates of scarcity.

Living in the realm of scarcity does not mean that all human behavior can be explained with this model. Family relationships are mostly not characterized by relations of exchange. Children get their food without paying any financial compensation; parents’ solidarity with their children is evident; children receive help when in need. This means that, in the realm of scarcity, there are islands where the principle of scarcity does not reign. Although this does not invalidate the scarcity model, when too many subordinate hypotheses are required, then the original model becomes problematic. Weber always insisted that models as such cannot be invalidated. Reality itself is chaotic, and it is the human task to create order and structure out of the limitless plurality of what is being studied.

Because of their explanatory power over social and political issues, one can stick with Illich’s models remembering, however, that the model is not itself the reality. His concentration on gender roles in history is to be welcomed as extremely relevant knowledge. Without his model of gender versus sex, these relationships would remain hidden, and it would be a shame to lose them through inattention. Thinking in dichotomies of traditional and modern, of gender and sex, respectively—which help explain each other—does not necessitate that reality or history itself consists of dichotomies. Therefore, we do not argue that gender is restricted exclusively to traditional and sex to modern societies; historical reality knows finer nuances. The illuminating power of a model is an empirical question. The availability of models is not the end of the affair, but the beginning.

It is obvious that Illich does not treat gender in traditional and sex in modern societies in a neutral and dispassionate way. His preferences are quite clear. His objection to the degradation found in sex relations—due, in part, to the rule of scarcity—is quite understandable. Similarly, it should be possible to develop a keen eye for the demeaning of women under various other conditions. From the perspective of mimetic theory, the ambivalence of relationships is, in a sense, an a priori, and thus there is a good reason to search for it in history, from the past to the present. But this ambivalence does not always take the same form.

Illich often speaks about an Archimedean point outside the present from which he wants to analyze it. Unfortunately, I would argue, such a point is not to be found in history itself. Although some might put dogmatic theology forward as a candidate

for such a role, this is clearly not Illich's strategy. Uncertainty about Illich's position in this regard demands a careful study of his texts—especially when in the 1990s he puts forth an unambiguous “no” to the technological universe.

NO TO THE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSE

Consider, for instance, Illich's essay “Health as One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!” The stance expressed in it represents the culmination of a long journey in thinking and writing. The possibilities of coping positively with modernity are long past. One begins to suffer from a lack of breath. To make his theory more nuanced and less negative is probably not of interest to Illich. In a certain sense, he ultimately bases his conclusions on a religiously inspired moral interpretation of the past. His Archimedean point may not be dogmatic theology, but it is theological. Here, I shall explicitly draw attention to this dimension, and try to meet him on this ground, which will require modification of some earlier points.

In the Mirror of the Past includes an impressive address given at the Twentieth Evangelischer Kirchentag in 1983. It includes the following:

I, too, have decided to keep silent because I shall not be drawn into any discussion about genocide; because nuclear bombs are not weapons; they cannot be used except for man's extermination; because the deployment of nuclear bombs makes peace and war senseless; because silence here speaks better than words; because in discussing conditions under which I would renounce using these bombs, I become a criminal; because nuclear deterrence is folly; because I will not threaten others with my suicide; because the “zone of silence” which surrounded genocide under the Nazis has been replaced by a “zone of argument”; because only my silence speaks clearly in this zone of compulsive peace talks; because my horrified silence cannot be used or governed; because . . .¹³

These words are a breathtaking, indeed, shocking statement that, in a surprising way, articulate the mental space in which we move. In “The Right to Dignified Silence” (delivered in Tokyo in 1982), Illich had already stated that the exclusive purpose of atomic bombs is genocide; they cannot be compared with clubs, knives, or fire which are, in a sense, ambivalent, since they are suitable for horrendous acts of torture and murder, but also for peaceful purposes. There are thus compelling reasons for refusing to be drawn into a direct argument about certain topics. Getting involved in some kinds of discussions can dehumanize one's status as speaker! The decision to remain silent—the ritual “No, thank you”—allows a great majority to speak up with stark simplicity (pp. 27–31).

After viewing the nuclear arms race of the 1980s through this spiritual ethos, Illich expands and generalizes his unique perspective to a further phase of modernity in his essay on health and responsibility. The essay is so unprecedentedly radical and unequivocally without compromise that it was difficult to understand what he really

meant. He speaks about responsibility and health, but the way he treats these specific topics reveals his profound renunciation of the entire culture of the contemporary technological world, together with its assumptions and certainties. With the wisdom of hindsight we might say that the rejections implicit in his writings of the 1970s have become explicit in the 1990s. But also for Illich himself, his new insights of the 1990s appear to be a great shock. A few decades earlier, he admits, he had a different view. At that time, it seemed possible that he could share responsibility for the remaking of this manufactured world. Now he recognizes that this responsibility is an illusion.

Illich has various reasons for distancing himself from the contemporary technological universe. This universe is constructed as a global system and, as such, is a denial of the ancient belief in Creation as gift and expression of the divine goodness.

What sickens us today is something altogether new. What determines the epoch since *Kristallnacht* is the growing matter-of-fact acceptance of a bottomless evil which Hitler and Stalin did not reach, but which today is the theme for elevated discussions on the atom, the gene, poison, health and growth. These are evils and crimes which render us speechless. Unlike death, pestilence and devils, *these* evils are without meaning. They belong to a non-human order. They force us into impotence, helplessness, powerlessness, *ahimsa*. We can suffer such evil, we can be broken by it, but we cannot make sense of it; we cannot direct it. Only he who finds his joy in friends can bear up under it. Our "No!" is thus a universe apart from every "Yes!" to the secondary accompaniments of progress.¹⁴

This is a very strong statement—the conceptualization of our world, to repeat, as a bottomless evil of a nonhuman order. It requires, I think, a few remarks on Illich's standpoint respecting the nightmare of systems thinking and related problems. As the title of his essay indicates, Illich refuses to take responsibility for his health. In his view, it is senseless today to speak of health and responsibility. Health is seen as a derivation of or, rather, a subordination to, economic development. I reiterate the idea lest one misread his peculiar concept of health. In his words, "Adaptation to misanthropic, genetic, climatic, chemical and cultural consequences of growth is now described as health" (p. 4). This novel notion of health has everything to do with survival in a technical system. As such, it represents the newest stage in the history of medicine. Moreover, he puts responsibility in a specific system perspective.

In a world which worships an ontology of systems, ethical responsibility is reduced to a legitimizing formality. The poisoning of the world, to which I contribute with my flight from New York to Frankfurt, is not the result of an irresponsible decision, but rather of my presence in an unjustifiable web of interconnections. It would be politically naive, after health and responsibility have been made technically impossible, to somehow resurrect them through inclusion into a personal project; some kind of resistance is

demanded. . . . [T]he new health requires the smooth integration of my immune system into a socio-economic world system. Being asked to take responsibility is, when seen more clearly, a demand for the destruction of meaning and self. And this proposed self-assignment to a system that cannot be experienced stands in stark contrast to suicide. It demands self-extinction in a world hostile to death. (p. 4)

Illich is convinced that hostility toward death as the enemy—which is to be internalized along with personal responsibility for health—has crept into the modern concept of health. According to him, the God of all the living is blasphemed.

These sledgehammer blows arise from the nightmare experience of interconnecting systems in which the self has been extinguished, and relevant categories such as health or responsibility have become derivative connotations. When I read this exposé, I had the feeling that I live in a slightly different world. Admittedly I live in the Netherlands, Heinrich Heine's refuge. If he heard that the world was going to perish, he would rush to my country because, according to an apocryphal statement often attributed to him, everything happens fifty years later here. I have always considered a system as a collection of elements with a structure, and systems theory as a mathematical way of representing facts and their relationships. Trying to represent the whole world as system can be an interesting mental experiment. Further, I do not meet people who worship an ontology of systems. If they were to try, they would be countered by reality itself. Predictions based on a systems interpretation of reality have nearly always failed. Indeed, they are a ridiculous form of hubris and will be punished by themselves.

Of course, Illich is not worried about a methodological debate but, rather, about the internalization of systems theory into the human personality. This becomes clear when, in an interview, Illich speaks about a young woman who said, in reply to somebody who offered her a second mug of apple cider, "No, my system can't take that much sugar at once. I could be thrown off balance."¹⁵ In this reaction to the offered hospitality she seemed to be distant from her own feelings because she thinks of herself in the metaphors of her scientific education. These concepts are, in Illich's view, disembodied, and alienate her from herself. One may discuss how amusing her formulation of refusal is, but depending on the circumstances, her intention could be quite acceptable. Moreover, the young woman does not always think in these terms. Even if she is an American, one can be absolutely sure that an hour or so later—praying in church or making love in bed—she will no longer think of herself in terms of a system.

THE HUMAN BEING AS DOUBLE

It is part of the modern condition that consciousness within one person corresponds to a plurality of modes of existence. Changing varieties of consciousness might be a modern phenomenon documented by the rise and flourishing of the novel, not to speak about the history of psychology or sociology. However, it is not possible to

select among these varieties an original state of consciousness or, rather, an Archimedean point from which other states can be considered as alienations. Consciousness has always been behaviorally or, more generally, culturally mediated; it is never found in some pristine “purity.” In this sense, a material Archimedean point does not exist; only a formal one. What I hold is close to what Illich often says about history as a privileged road to an Archimedean point outside the present, but it is not the same.

Conversations between people always seek words to disclose reality, and language can be an expression of one’s creativity to discover truth. Initially, new words, expressions, metaphors, and so on are often disembodied and alienating, but they may subsequently become embodying, de-alienating, or integrated. How to understand this? The German philosopher, Helmuth Plessner, on good grounds, contends that alienation belongs to the human condition by definition. He even says: it is our nature.¹⁶ Human beings have the faculty of transcending their own context and even themselves. In transcending, they are enabled to consider their own position. Human beings are, so to speak, double (*Doppelgänger*). They are themselves, and at the same time spectators of themselves. They *are* their bodies, and at the same time they *have* bodies. Someone would like to have a mug of cider, but as spectator of herself she thinks better of it. Being a body represents a person’s “central” position; that she can look at her own body, represents her “eccentric” position.

In such a manner, the human being moves continually between these two positions, centric and eccentric. In the centric position a person remains in contact with the world from the person’s center, although the boundaries of this center are not fixed. To begin with, they coincide with the skin of the body, but there exists the possibility that this body may acquire some extensions. The blind person explores the environment with a cane, and the astronomer celestial space with a telescope. Driving a car, the driver feels the bumps of the road through the vehicle. These instruments, including the bodywork of the car, are considered as bodily extensions, and may become part of one’s body. One may feel at home with them, if one coincides with these extensions.

What is initially strange might become intimate. In other words, the centric and eccentric positions form the extremes in a continuum of possibilities. Often one is in the middle of these extremes: fully occupied in his or her activity (centric position), and at the same time conscious of what one is doing (eccentric position). It is this eccentric position (a formal Archimedean point) that represents a form of alienation: One who is eccentric is not in his or her own center, is not at home. In this theory, alienation is not a phenomenon of modernity, but a constitutional feature of human beings as such. Speaking about alienated concepts does not necessarily imply the availability of a better or more original alternative, namely, speaking in non-alienated terms. Since the foundation of the world, there is a history of alienated and non-alienated concepts. Of course, one has her or his preferences. I understand and share

Illich's love and dedication to the epoch of the book, and also his horror as a consequence of the insight that the history of the book may come to an end. Although according to Plato's testimony, the book was once a great danger, now it is our home.

I offer this articulation of centrality and eccentricity to help understand Illich's references to an Archimedean point. History as a privileged road to that point outside of the present evidently reveals limitations in the present. The idea of eccentricity, anthropologically formulated, alludes to the same movement. If history represents the eccentric or Archimedean point from which to recognize the limitations of the present, one would be inclined to add that, in principle, the present might also be an Archimedean point from which to approach the past. Both points are equally legitimate and incorporate refreshing and, at the same time, firm or fixed visions. These visions represent forms of eccentricity and are salutary alienations.

CONCLUSION

Let me summarize. First, systems thinking may be scientifically dubious when applied outside the physical domain. In that case, it should be attacked with scientific means. Second, the fallout of systems theory is not as definitive as Illich suggests; it plays a limited role in the way we think about ourselves in ordinary life. Third, most scientific terms are often amusing when used for the first time outside science, but reveal some truth; subsequently, they may become hackneyed, ugly, or minimally expressive. In the worst case, they become worthless plastic words.¹⁷ Finally, one should be aware of the distinction between alienation as a corruption destructive of conviviality, and as a form of eccentricity.

Illich rejects the concept of responsibility in modernity because he does not want to negotiate with bottomless evil. I would like to join his practice, but have reservations about his theory. According to him, responsibility makes no sense if one is absolutely powerless. The background to this statement is the contrast with a past where human beings *could* give shape to human life and society. I doubt Illich's historical judgment. Now, and in the past, many things may be traced back to humans, but this does not mean that what happened was their intention. Scholars report that history has always been full of surprises and unexpected turns. To put it more simply, whoever meditates on the Psalms, watches Sophocles' *Oedipus*, or reads modern European novels such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Kafka's *The Trial*, knows that the heroes do not have power over their lives. The truth of good novels is that they have bad endings; the great novelists remind us that we are not in control; people do not make their own history.

What does this mean for the concept of responsibility? I would say: Responsibility is simply not to "pass by on the other side." Coming upon a car accident on your way home, you know you did not cause the mishap and cannot undo the mess; it was not your fault. But none of your business? There might be a temptation to withdraw because you are not a physician. But responsibility is, in the first place, and despite all

powerlessness, to take a look to see whether you can do *something*. God knows what; maybe only to call others to help. Responsibility has to do not so much with settling things, as with being prepared to have a look. This is the first thing to do, more may come; which is exactly the way Illich has acted all his life.

Illich's way of acting has primarily been a way of thinking, speaking, and writing. More than many, he has not simply passed by on the other side, but stopped to have a look—to see what more may come. As one of those who has been called by him to stop to see what I could do, I have become involved with him in a discussion about what is going on here. But even as I disagree, I realize fully that it is my brother Illich who has caused me to stop and take notice—and to try to help.

Enschede, Netherlands

NOTES

1. René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), original French, 1961; and René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), original French, 1972.

2. Ivan Illich, "Health as One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!" *Ellul Studies Forum*, issue no. 8 (January 1992), pp. 3–5. Translated by Jutta Mason and Lee Hoinacki from a talk given in Hannover, Germany, September 14, 1990.

3. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991; Reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

4. Paul Dumouchel, "L'Ambivalence de rareté," in Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Paul Dumouchel, *L'Enfer des choses* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), p. 179.

5. Abundance in the supermarket is not a contradiction to the idea of scarcity. Scarcity and abundance can go hand in hand.

6. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 47.

7. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to the last noted reference.

8. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*; and Dumouchel, "L'ambivalence de rareté."

9. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

10. David Cayley interprets *Gender* differently. He writes that Illich's entire argument depends "on the recognition that gender was . . . a highly variable cultural construct" (Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* [Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992], p. 36). I cannot find this interpretation in *Gender*, but I would agree with what Cayley maintains is Illich's intention.

11. Illich, *Gender*, p. 11.

12. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), sec. 2, pt. 2.

13. Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990* (London: Marion Boyars, 1991), p. 32. Illich read this in Hannover, Germany, on June 9, 1983. See "I Too Have Decided to Keep Silent," in the same volume, pp. 32–33.

14. Illich, "Health as One's Own Responsibility," p. 3. Emphasis in original.

15. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, p. 6.

16. Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928). An interesting interpretation of Plessner's theory can be found in Petran Kockelkoren, *De Natuur van de goede Veerstaander* (Enschede, Netherlands: Universiteit Twente,

1992). See also his article, "The House in the Cat's Claws: A Framework for a Hermeneutics of Nature," in Wim Zeevers and Jan J. Boersma, eds., *Ecology, Technology, and Culture: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Cambridge, England: White Horse Press, 1994).

17. A notion first mentioned by Illich in *Deschooling Society*. Some years later, Illich's term *amoeba word*, was changed and expanded by Uwe Pörksen. See Uwe Pörksen, *Plastic Words* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1995).

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Quest for Past Somatics

Barbara Duden

Again and again, for two long decades, I was irritated when Ivan Illich answered inquiries about the route that led to *Medical Nemesis*.¹ He argued that the book was one more contribution to a critique of the service economy; that it was an attempt to say more about what he called “radical monopoly”; that he meant to analyze three different levels on which contemporary institutions become counterproductive; and that his reflections might just as well refer to the post office as to health care.

To most of his listeners the story sounded either whimsical or arcane, but to me it was the source of a stubborn and persistent irritation. I was annoyed by the very idea that the sluggish delivery of letters could in any way be considered commensurable with sickening medical treatment. My request that Illich write a second volume, to be called “Nemesis-2,” grew out of this irritation. I urged him to go beyond the analogies between contemporary medical care and other modern institutions and finally to focus primarily and directly on the special, incomparable symbolic effects of our medical system. The cultural effect of late twentieth-century medicine, which he is competent to elucidate and stigmatize, still lay beyond the horizon of the symbolic functions he analyzed in the mid-1970s.

I have been waiting for some time; I would like him to go beyond the paradigms of radical monopoly and symbolic counterproductivity to identify the role that medicine has played in the road to the late twentieth-century culture of disembodiment, of *disincarnation*. Through tracing the step-by-step progress toward disincarnation, the convergence of many intellectual, institutional, and symbolic characteristics of late modernity could be brought into view. Here and there in his writings, and much more in his conversations, he gives indications of being en route to such a synthesis.

Disembodiment is obviously on his agenda. This can be seen in an article written ten years after the publication of *Medical Nemesis*, in the afterword for the 1995

German edition of *Medical Nemesis*, and most obviously in the keynote address to a conference in Bologna on “Health and Illness as Social Metaphors.”² On these three occasions, Illich argued that it is impossible to understand modern health, and even more the postmodern self, without a historical perspective on the flesh and its cultural decomposition.

For “Nemesis-2,” I have in mind an answer to three questions: (1) How do we reshape research on the historicity of the experienced, carnal self to encompass those transformations in self-perception that have become obvious since about 1980? (2) How do we speak about changes in the patient/physician relationship that go beyond those described by him in *Medical Nemesis*? (3) How do we recognize, analyze, and resist the rising social demand for services—for counseling, information, lifelong education, self-examination, risk-evaluation—that promote a new type of self-perception based entirely on technically mediated observation and a hermeneutical exegesis of the self?

My argument thus has three points: (a) Only if Illich integrates his recent insights into the history of autoception will it be possible to progress from the analysis of the iatrogenesis of sickness, pain, and death, well described in the third part of *Medical Nemesis*, toward an understanding of the iatrogenesis of the body itself, that is, the appearance of the iatrogenic soma. (b) Only if he reflects on several high points of the transformation in the patient/physician relationship from the early eighteenth century to the present will he be able to render an account of the evolution in twentieth-century biocracy: from authoritarian to stochastic patient management. (c) Only by spelling out the recent shift in diagnosis from the visualization of physiological processes to the creation of actuarial profiles and the difference between the self-ascription, nay, interiorization, of these two modes of self-definition could Illich provide us with the guidance we seek on ways and means to avoid these forms of self-disincarnation.

I find myself in a singular situation. I know that it is impossible to understand his thinking during the last twenty-five years without attention to the flesh. I could not imagine my own intellectual route during this period without his collaboration on precisely this subject. I know that *Medical Nemesis* acquires its full meaning when you understand its openness toward a history of the flesh. Therefore, I am keenly aware of his intellectual preparation to proceed toward a “Nemesis-2.” But in his published work, the central importance he ascribes to the body appears only in an implicit, discrete, almost hidden way.

True, the theme of the iatrogenic body takes on contours in the “Twelve Years After *Medical Nemesis*” article, and in a seminar on body history conducted for phenomenologists in Dallas (1985), but with some reticence. He treats the flesh apophatically, and the clearer this becomes the better I understand that for him the flesh orients one inexorably toward the Incarnation, toward the mystery in the world of his faith, and ultimately toward the Cross. Only to the degree that I came to grasp the

reason for his silences, did I become ready to be convinced that the tradition of Western medicine could not be grasped without reference to the Cross and its denial; that, after all, the rituals fostering the myths of disincarnation—be they medical, hygienic, or other—had also to be understood as cultural denials of the Incarnation in a society that has grown out of the Christian West.

As a result of my understanding of the deeper layers in Illich's thought, my search for the body in his thinking and writing has opened three roads. I will first summarize his retrospective self-critical insights in the aftermath of *Medical Nemesis*. Then I will look for body references in writings that postdate this book, particularly on the history of technogenic visualization, friendship, the text, and the gaze. Finally, I will draw on a decade of lectures, seminars, and writings that deal with the epistemology of "a life," and the use of diagrammatics in the technogenic corrosion and dissolution of the flesh.

Looking back now it is surprising the degree to which Illich foresaw the loss of legitimacy of the medical profession when writing *Medical Nemesis*. In the later article, he welcomes it as something that in the meantime has become obvious: the paradoxical decline of medical legitimacy and power at a time when the demand for biotechnical, pharmaceutical, and nursing services was rising, and health-related budgets were exploding. How to explain the contradiction between the shrinkage of societal power of the healer and a concomitant growth in health-related services? How did medicine lose its defining monopoly over the definition of bodies while at just the same time the felt need for diagnosis, nursing services, and treatment snowballed in the entire population?

The key for an explanation of this paradox is the interiorization of health-related needs: "For many of our contemporaries, the pursuit of health has become consubstantial with the experience of their bodies."³ The need for health ritually insinuated by medicine has been translated into a level of demand for care that lay beyond any possibility of satisfaction, and thus became the major pathogen.

In the section on cultural iatrogenesis in *Medical Nemesis*, Illich argued that medicine had undermined the art of suffering pain, enduring sickness, and dying one's own death by promising unlimited anesthesia, cure, and life-support. But medicine had not only inculcated the myth that the human condition could be reengineered; the medical endeavor had also transformed autoception. Cultural iatrogenesis not only expropriated the traditional art of suffering, it also took possession of the subject by recreating and redefining one's body from something felt to something self-ascribed. In 1985, he wrote, "I am not dissatisfied with [*Medical Nemesis*], as far as it goes, but I am distressed that I was blind to a much more profound symbolic iatrogenic effect: the iatrogenesis of the body itself" (p. 213).⁴ He now looked upon his 1976 book as a snapshot of an epoch: the post-World War II epoch during which the professional medical establishment was able to cast a shadow over society's entire thought style and perception.

Around the middle of this [twentieth] century, the medical establishment reached an unprecedented influence over the social construction of bodies. Designers deferred to medical norms in creating new furniture or automobiles; schools and the media inundated the imagination with medical and/or psychiatric fantasies; and the structures of welfare and insurance systems trained everyone for patienthood. We experienced a special moment of history when one agency, namely medicine, reached toward a monopoly over the social construction of bodily reality. (p. 216)

In 1985, Illich was able to discern the break that was in the offing: societal loss of the traditional flesh, which goes far beyond the iatrogenic disembodiment of 1976. Not only was medicine on the point of losing its definitional power, it had also prepared the advent of a “self” consistent with the management of high-tech systems. The iatrogenic production of a body needy of treatments turned out to be a step toward the appearance of “humans” who could conceive of themselves as auto-generators. “[I]t may be one that brings forth people who experience themselves as contributors to a complex computer program, who see themselves as part of its text” (p. 217).

It was another ten years before Illich understood the degree to which he had built his basic image of health on a systems model; how in the early 1970s, before systems analysis had become part of popular logic, he had described health cybernetically as the “intensity of coping ability within a cultural program, genetic makeup, social script.”⁵ At first, most of his friends were shocked at the furor with which he repented having promoted the notion of health as the behavior of a self-referential system.

He had conceptualized the traditional capacity of accepting the human condition in system terms and, paradoxically, these are the lines most frequently quoted in medical literature, anthropology, and sociology. At a time when Gregory Bateson found it difficult to popularize systems theory, Illich succeeded in using it successfully, and also grotesquely, in connection with the most tender and perceptive passages that evoke the lost art of suffering and of dying one’s own death. Much of his research and teaching on diagrammatics, proportionality, sense perception, and common sense during the last ten years has been motivated by the need to disengage self-perception from the subtle traps tended by cybernetic notions masquerading as bearers of sense and meaning.

In “Twelve Years After *Medical Nemesis*,” he calls attention to medicine’s unique power to entice patients to a self-betrayal by cajoling them to accept themselves as iatrogenic constructs. But few colleagues were willing to listen, because this would have required that they re-embody themselves. In the historical sciences, body, especially the felt body or autoception, was not a subject for study. Even at a 1986 faculty seminar with phenomenological philosophers at Pennsylvania State University, Illich found it nearly impossible to speak of the flesh of the dead as unexplored territory. At the end of the seminar, Joseph Kockelmans agreed that philosophy, throughout its history, had been an effort to say sensible things without reference to the flesh. Illich then knew what he wanted:

As body history takes shape, we are able to understand how each historical moment is incarnated in an epoch-specific body. We now begin to decipher the body of subjective experience as a unique enfleshment of an age's ethos.⁶

For him, the history of the *conditio humana* had to be understood as that of the soma.

Arguably, the first explicit mention of body history as his project occurs much earlier. In two footnotes written specifically for the later German edition of the book *Gender*, he conceptually separated *Körper* and *Leib*, thus drawing a firm line between the flesh of experience, and the body as object of observations.⁷ He clearly saw that the "biological body" came into being only after 1800 as a result of the formation of a new academic discipline, biology, or the life sciences. He also grasped the symbolic power of medicalization when it touches the particularly vulnerable flesh of women. Illich tried to name the injuries in the embodied self when the body as "scientific fact" is turned into the frame of medical practice and self-reference. Maybe his endeavor to fathom the loss of gender in the regime of sex made him particularly sensitive to intuiting the violence done to women when pregnancy and birth are turned into the reproduction of "life." "The pregnant woman . . . is turned into a 'natural mechanism' through which life is being hatched."⁸ Perhaps this shift from a history of medicalization to an inquiry into disembodiment was triggered by Norma Swenson, a member of the Boston group that published *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.⁹ In a public discussion of *Medical Nemesis* at the Harvard Medical School, she asked him: "Mr. Illich, did you ever see a human body?" After a stunned silence, he seems to have mumbled, "No."¹⁰

Since Swenson's question, more than two decades have past. Even though his writings during that period rarely addressed the history of the experienced embodied self explicitly, ruminations about it are embedded deep within his other texts. The majority of his ventures into this previously unexplored territory of historical somatics finds voice through his collaboration in essays I have published.¹¹ In addition, many of these appear in my writing related to the body of women, above all to pregnancy, and are crucial for anyone who would like to grasp the ongoing transmogrification of persons into informational nodes. Let me touch on four of them. The first is terminological, the reasons for using "soma" instead of "body"; second, the necessity of engaging in a history of stuff; third, the recovery of a past soma as a precondition of its recuperation today; and, fourth, a history of the senses, inner and outer, and above all of common sense.

Having been socialized into a medicalized body, all of us have to recognize its elements as so many traps on our way into the past. The experienced flesh of the past was the aim of our investigations, not concepts, images, or styles of its representation that historians of art, medicine, or literature have investigated. In this quest it became obvious that "body" was so profoundly ambiguous that we could not possibly use it as a common term for what eighteenth-century women and men complained about

to their physicians, and what in the 1990s goes into the scanner. For this reason, we adopted the Greek word *soma* when speaking about that which people meant and felt when they said “I.”

In *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, a 1985 book subtitled, “Towards a Historicity of Stuff,” Illich argued that matter could reveal the perceptual landscape of a given age.¹² He convincingly showed the absurdity of writing “H₂O” when the issue is the water of forgetfulness, baptism, or a mountain brook. He opened a can of worms, stressing the gulf between the entire vocabulary used to refer to the felt, fluid, quivering, Galenic flesh and a terminological set of medical descriptions. After the appearance of that short book, the blood that froze at the sight of horror, the blood that rose in rage or shame became substantially incomparable to the blood whose pressure can be measured, whose red cells can be counted, and that can be donated. By meditating on these heteronomies, one can become free for the cultivation of what we called “heterosomatics.”

The cultivated distance between one’s own diagnosed physiology and the self upon which inner and outer senses reflect opened a new way in the study of history. The senses could now throw light in both directions—using the past for an estrangement from the present, and revealing the present in the light of the past. Illich often describes the way he thinks his history: as if he were rappelling a canyon wall, climbing down step by step past the various epochs of carnal concepts and percepts and thus gradually losing sight of modern facts about the body.

In this historical rappelling, the carnal experience that gradually disappeared in the wake of modernity could be rediscovered. In the 1980s, I studied the clinical observations of an Eisenach, Germany, physician who wrote around 1730, and this work served for years as an empirical basis for our reasonings. These complaints of hundreds of court ladies, widows, and servant girls uttered in front of their Protestant small-town doctor helped us to recover their lived *soma*.¹³ What these Eisenach ladies confided with so many personal stories to their doctor is deeply alien to modern self-perception. The voices of these women long dead, their complaints about blood, pain, burdens, and fatigue opened a road to the interpretation of a lost experience: not of a body, but of an incarnate self, sensing the upper and lower parts differently, being aware of the otherness of right and left, perceiving themselves as interior fluid movements. I discovered a self that could get along without the diagnosis of entitative diseases, a felt interior without organs fixed to their appropriate place in the anatomical atlas.¹⁴ In short, here was a somatic experience, an autoception that had not been trained and given shape through the medium of script, by way of anatomical representations, or through a professional’s authoritative exegesis of the felt experience.

In the summer of 1997, Illich had to cancel his keynote address for a conference of the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association in Prague, and asked me to take his place. I took his speech, which amounted to a full-fledged argument about the

fit between healer and sick in the long tradition of Galenic medicine based on the Hippocratic corpus. The traditional healer first had to lend his ear to the complaints of the sick; he had to listen to the stories about the experienced soma. Such healers stood firmly in the Galenic tradition of mimetic consonance, mimetic sympathy. In classical antiquity, Aristotle admonished the visitor to the theater, not just to listen to the words being uttered, but to allow himself to be moved, to be touched through the tone, the melody, the rhythm and intensity of the self's voice. Greeks obviously could be carried away by what they perceived with their innards. In a similar way, the physician well into the eighteenth century listened to his patients, allowed them to lead him through their stories; he resonated feelingly with their inner flows. The words, the voice, and the posture of the sick unlocked the state of his or her unique humoral makeup.

For more than two thousand years the centerpiece of the medical visit was this somatically rooted conversation. No matter how much the theories about humoral constitution differed in Greek, Arabic, or northern European traditions, the practitioners knew how to elicit the patient's humoral state. Up to the early eighteenth century, patients came to the physician for help in balancing their humors. The decisive break in medical practice was the disappearance of its focus on the physician's humoral mimesis with the patient. Michel Foucault has described medicine's reconstruction when it turned into a bedside anatomy of a still-living corpse.¹⁵ Foucault gave us a key to understand the new hierarchical medical gaze that turned patients and their diseases into results of observation. But while Foucault opened our understanding for the vertical view of the medical observer onto the clinical—which means layered—patient, he missed the decisive transformation that Illich has more recently tried to grasp: the abyss that separates the somatic concern of the Galenic for the lived self revealed by the patient's complaint and the body being diagnosed. In each conversation, the physician's response by way of advice, diagnosis, and remedies literally returned to patients the body orally delivered through their complaints. The Galenic physician invited the sufferers to perceive themselves in these answers. Foucault did not grasp that not just the physician's observational stance was new, but the bodies in question were incomparable.

It is sometimes disturbing to notice that Illich speaks of his past books mainly in terms of the questions touched upon and left unanswered, questions that led to entirely new inquiries that then forced him to rethink the content of the earlier writing. This is clearly the case for his rethinking *Medical Nemesis*. Illich's intuitions about the disappearance of a humoral *krasis* or composition in the course of the eighteenth century grew out of his studies into the history of proportionality,¹⁶ and into the history of the inner and outer senses.¹⁷ They also led him into investigations into an archaeology of the gaze, of traditional *opsis*, of seeing in the ages before the eye's activity had been reconstructed as the passive reflection of optical rays on the retina. Before this gradual epistemic de-anthropomorphization of vision, all learned theories about the acts of looking were based on a proportional fit between the eye and the thing

seen, the *visibile*.¹⁸ Without these studies into the history of the gaze from antiquity to Johannes Kepler, and further on into modern sense physiology, his critique of disembodied vision in late twentieth-century culture would not have been possible. From the point of view of somatic experience, he could clearly demonstrate the contrast between the visual ray that touches and caresses the visible thing, and the technogenic transmogrification of the eye into an instrument of registration and its productive usage in media culture.

These studies allowed him to recognize the heterogeneity of the flesh, the soma of old, and the contemporary technogenic science-attributed and self-inflicted body. They also informed his lectures at the University of Bremen during the late 1990s. He searched for the conditions of friendship (*philia*) and hospitality today. In the winter of 1998–1999, he attempted an exegesis of the fleshly feelings found in mercy. He continually returned to Hebrew terms to approach the Samaritan who is touched, moved in his innards, whose bowels quiver in *rhacham*, who, in his *splanchna*, is mimetically affected by the beaten-up Jew. Illich interpreted the Samaritan as the foundational parable for the revelation of a new, free, willed, carnally-fitting, mutual-loving recognition between “I” and “thou.” A historical break that most of the time is gingerly removed into the domain of theology came to the fore. He treated this as essential for understanding not only the cultural history of the West but—in the attempt to instrumentalize it—as the very foundation of modernity.¹⁹ This obviously affects his reflections on the position of health today.

To follow this, one strain of thought is still missing in my argument; I have to outline the steps Illich took toward an understanding of contemporary disembodiment. In the above-mentioned afterword for the recent German edition of *Medical Nemesis*, I find the sentences that give the clue:

I want to indict health care not as a demoralizing but as a nihilist activity. The decisive result of every brush with the health care system today is epistemic—a recasting of the ego . . . what is done in the pursuit of health boomerangs as an interpretation of the self.²⁰

Illich began to build this argument in the late 1980s, adding one element after another to clarify what he calls the recent reconfiguration of the patient’s autoception. At that time, the issue was a critical analysis of “substantive life,” “a life” appearing in lieu of “a person” in medical, ethical, legal, religious, and papal documents. In close collaboration with Dirk von Boetticher, a medical student who studied with him at Pennsylvania State University, Illich started on a critical revision of the symbolic impact of this terminological monster.²¹ He drew attention to the scandalous reduction that takes place whenever *Mensch* (the human person) is replaced by this spectral entity, a life. He realized that the current public usage of this term in fact reflected the rapid transformation of medicine into a biocratic imposition of biological notions that opens entirely new vistas to make the human *bios*, the

curriculum vitae, amenable to management. Notions of development, social improvement, and evaluation in terms of available resources, become arguable by the use of “a life” which are unthinkable as long as we speak of “a person.” “Thinking in terms of ‘a life’ . . . tends to abolish all limits that decency and common sense so far imposed on the exercise of professional tutelage” (p. 219).

In a 1989 address to the founding members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America—a merger of three Lutheran bodies—and in subsequent public debates with members of the Protestant Church in Germany, he called on the Christian churches to stand up against this “idol of life.” He stressed the churches’ obligation to vigorously and publicly distinguish between Him who in the Gospel said that He was “the life,” and that abstract figment which today in biomanagement is called a life. He pilloried as an extreme blasphemy the transformation of each human being into “a life” as an implicit denial of the one who said to Martha, “I am the life” (John 11:25).

In a conference at the University of Illinois Medical School in 1987, he met with more than 120 academics involved in so-called bioethics. Illich was personally hurt and incensed by the hard-nosed cynicism with which these exploiters of ethics accepted the transformation of medicine’s object into “lives.” Together with the Chicago physician, Robert Mendelsohn, Illich wrote a one-page statement, “Medical Ethics: A Call to De-bunk Bio-Ethics.”²² The first sentence states the aporia: “Medical ethics is an oxymoron” because biomedicine’s object has ceased to be the person. Instead, the new biocracy manages life processes “from conception to organ harvest.” In this “call,” he drew attention to the epistemic reconfiguration of the person by its reduction to something to be managed, a life, a system amenable to control and new forms of normalization. The concrete person was thus being transformed into a resource, a resource fostering and legitimating the proliferation of agents and services of high-tech biomanagement.

In his 1990 lectures on the history of the gaze at the Universities of Oldenburg and Freiburg, Illich approached the issue of disembodiment again, but this time it was not the misplaced concreteness of the person into a life, but the transformation of the gaze that was at issue. In these lectures he dealt with the symbolic effect of diagrammatic images on mentalities. He demonstrated what “visiotypes” do to professional eyes, and how they affect popular perceptions of space, time, and the concreteness of things; their power to reify, to concretize entities that had never belonged to the realm of *visibiles*; not only what screens and photographs do, but the symbolic power of visual quantitative representations to give to the abstract the semblance of concreteness.

Illich reviewed examples taken from one hundred years of diagrammatics, and retraced biological diagrammatics, such as drawings of the immune system, and graphic registrations of the heartbeat or brain waves. With these examples, he wanted to draw attention to the symbolic effect of biological diagrammatics on contemporary autoception: the mathematization of the self who identifies with the measurements that

were taken from his *physis*. Illich wrote up the results of his research into a history of the gaze and the disembodiment of *opsis* in an article that summarizes his argument.²³ From his lectures and these essays we can understand that modern health consciousness cannot be fully grasped without an awareness of the transformation of the senses in the service of clinical rituals that professionally transmit a disincarnate ego through the medium of graphically recorded data from the body.

What really fleshed out this view were his commentaries on my historical research into the cultural transformation of pregnancy. He saw evidence for the concrete effects of a break from the Christian past, because for him faith in the Incarnation, grounded in Mary's pregnancy, gave a new, physical sense of that state which was the epitome of good hope. In close collaboration with him in 1991, I argued that life, the abstraction, takes on the semblance of tangible reality when it is projected into the entrails of a pregnant woman. Life perceived on the ultrasound screen of a pregnant woman's body is, so to speak, the supreme instance for misplaced concreteness. Also, the visualization of the unborn and its media-mediated publicizing as a public fetus in cultures that had been Christian gives a sacrilegious halo to this technogenic fabrication.²⁴

In looking back, I could only briefly sketch the most important steps Illich has made toward an understanding of the deep transformation of the self in the age of systems. I had to omit other aspects that should be given due attention, such as his early insights on how the current popular usage of communication and information inadvertently transforms the speaker into a transmitter; his constant invitation that I should rethink the transformation of the female body during the last two decades; his studies in the history of the *instrumentum* (the tool), which allowed him to postulate the epistemic break that opened up in the age of the computer. This last insight gave me a clue to a deeper and clearer understanding of the transformation of the female body into a system. The contraceptive pill, as well as lifelong chemical and hormonal normalization of female physiology during menopause and after, reconstruct the female body into a field of manageable hormonal states, amenable to constant readjustments.²⁵ All this lays the basis for a new model of the disenfleshed ego: the replacement of the always tragic human condition by a technogenic condition set on improvement, of hope by expectations. One is offered pain management in lieu of the art of suffering, technomorph conditioning in lieu of historically embedded virtuous practices.

As I wrote these reflections on the importance of historical soma in Illich's thinking, it began to dawn on me that my hope for his writing a second book on medicine in the age of systems might be an unjust one. As I reread Illich, as I reconsidered his intensive collaboration with friends and their writings on the subject, as I reflected on his lectures in Bremen, it seemed that, in an unexpected way, the job has been done. There is nothing missing for a second look at *Medical Nemesis*, especially the profound changes in social and psychic axioms, for a person willing to listen. Still,

there is a particular and unique perspective on sickness, impairment, pain, and death that Illich brings to all of us, more keenly than ever, and that should be stressed.

The certainty and hope orienting his interpretation of the modern health system for more than thirty years is his faith in the Incarnation. From his perspective, systemic disembodiment is disclosed as a *corruptio optimi*, a poignant instance for the transmogrification and denial of faith; disembodiment is the other side of belief in the Incarnation and its celebration in Christian liturgy.²⁶

Bremen, Germany

NOTES

1. Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).
2. Ivan Illich, "Twelve Years after *Medical Nemesis*: A Plea for Body History," *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 6, no. 1 (1986), pp. 19-22, and included in his *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), pp. 211-217; Ivan Illich, "Nachwort," in his *Die Nemesis der Medizin* (Munich, Germany: Beck Verlag, 1995), p. 206; and Ivan Illich, "Health and Illness as Social Metaphors," unpublished manuscript, 1998.
3. Illich, "Twelve Years After *Medical Nemesis*," p. 211.
4. Here and following, whenever a page reference appears in parentheses in the text, the citation is to the last noted reference.
5. Illich, "Nachwort," p. 206.
6. Illich, "Twelve Years After *Medical Nemesis*," p. 213.
7. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); and Ivan Illich, *Genus: Zu einer historischen Kritik der Gleichheit* (Reinbek, Germany: Rowohlt Verlag, 1983), n. 86 and n. 87, pp. 216-223.
8. Illich, *Genus*, p. 221.
9. Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book by and for Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976).
10. Private communication.
11. Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, trans. Lee Hoinacki (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
12. Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of "Stuff"* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Institute of the Humanities and Culture, 1985).
13. Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
14. Barbara Duden, "Medicine and the History of the Body: The Lady of the Court," in Jens Lachmund and Gunnjar Stollberg, eds., *The Social Construction of Illness: Illness and Medical Knowledge in Past and Present* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Steiner Verlag, 1992), pp. 39-51.
15. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).
16. Ivan Illich, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr* (Great Barrington, MA: E.F. Schumacher Society, 1996).
17. Ivan Illich, "Guarding the Eye in the Age of Show," Working Papers no. 4 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Studies, 1994).

18. Ivan Illich, Lecture at the University of Bremen, 1997. Unpublished typescript.
19. See Ivan Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," published in this volume (chapter 20).
20. Illich, "Nachwort," p. 212.
21. Ivan Illich, "The Institutional Construction of a New Fetish: Human Life," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, pp. 218–231.
22. Ivan Illich, "Medical Ethics: A Call to De-bunk Bio-ethics," in his *In the Mirror of the Past*, p. 233.
23. Barbara Duden, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, "The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze: A Plea for the Historical Study of Ocular Perception," Working Papers no. 6 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Studies, Nov. 1995).
24. Duden, *Disembodying Women*, pp. 99–110.
25. Barbara Duden, "Von 'der Pille' und unserem 'Zustand,'" in Gisela Staupe and Lisa Vieth, eds., *Die Pille: Von der Lust und von der Liebe* (Reinbek, Germany: Rowohlt Verlag, 1996), pp. 67–79. See also Barbara Duden, "Askesis as Precondition for a History of the Soma," unpublished transcript, February 1999.
26. This essay was written in close collaboration with Ivan Illich.

PART VI
EPILOGUE

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CHAPTER TWENTY

The Cultivation of Conspiracy*

Ivan Illich

On November 16, 1996, I arrived at the library auditorium of Bremen University just in time for my afternoon lecture. For five years I had commented on old texts to trace the long history of Western *philia*, of friendship. This semester's theme was the loss of the common sense for proportionality during the lifetimes of John Locke, Gottfried Leibniz, and Johann Sebastian Bach. On that day I wanted to address common sense as the sense organ believed to recognize the "good," the "fit," and the "fifth." But even before I could start I had to stop: The roughly two hundred auditors had planned a party instead of a lecture. Two months after the actual day, they had decided to celebrate my seventieth birthday, so we feasted and laughed and danced until midnight.

Speeches launched the affair. I was seated behind a bouquet, in the first row, and listened to seventeen talks. As a sign of recognition, I presented a flower to each encomiast. Most speakers were over fifty, friends I had made on four continents, a few with reminiscences reaching back to the 1950s in New York. Others were acquaintances made while teaching in Kassel, Berlin, Marburg, Oldenburg, and, since 1991, in Bremen. As I grappled for the expression of gratitude fitting each speaker, I felt like Hugh of St. Victor, my teacher. This twelfth-century monk in a letter compares himself to a basket-bearing donkey: not weighed down but lifted by the burden of friendships gathered on life's pilgrimage.

From the *laudationes* at the library we moved across the plaza to the liberal arts building, whose bleak cement hallways I habitually avoid. A metamorphosis had occurred in its atmosphere. We found ourselves in a quaint café: some five dozen small tables, each with a lighted candle on a colored napkin. For the occasion, the university

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department of domestic science had squeezed a pot into the semester's budget, a pot large enough to cook potato soup for a company. The chancellor, absent on business in Beijing, had hired a Klezmer ensemble. Ludolf Kuchenbuch, dean of historians at a nearby university and a saxophonist, took charge of the jazz. A couple of clowns performing on a bicycle entertained us with their parody of my 1972 book *Energy and Equity*.

The mayor-governor of the city-state Bremen had picked a very old Burgundy from the treasures of the *Rathskeller*. The lanky and towering official handed me the precious gift and expressed his pleasure "that Illich at seventy, in his own words, had found in Bremen 'einen Zipfel Heimat,'" something like "the tail end of an abode." On the lips of the *Bürgermeister*, my expression seemed grotesque, but still true. I began to reflect: How could I have been induced to connect the notion of home with the long dark winters of continual rain, where I walk through the pastures along the Wümme that are flooded twice a day by the tide from the North Atlantic? I who, as a boy, had felt exiled in Vienna, because all my senses were longingly attached to the South, to the blue Adriatic, to the limestone mountains in the Dalmatia of my early childhood.

Today's ceremony, however, is even more startling than the previous revelry, because your award makes me feel welcomed by the citizenry rather than just by a city father. Villa Ichon is a manifestation of Bremen's civility: neither private charity nor public agency. You, who are my hosts in this place, define yourselves as Hanseatic merchant citizens. On the day Villa Ichon was solemnly opened, you pointedly refused to let a city official touch the keys to this house, this "houseboat for the uninsured and vulnerable among us," as Klaus Hübotter has called it. By insisting on your autonomy you stressed the respectful distance of civil society from the city's government. I am touched that this annual award, meant to honor a Bremen citizen, should today go to an errant pilgrim, but one who knows how to appreciate it. As the eldest son of a merchant family in a free port city—one that was caught between the contesting powers of Byzantium and Venice—I was born into a tradition which, in the meantime, has petered out, but not without leaving me sensitive to the flavor of the Hanseatic hospitality you offer.

I first heard of Bremen when I was six, in the stories told me by my drawing teacher, who came from one of your patrician families, and in Vienna was homesick for the north. I adopted the tiny, black-dressed lady as Mama Pfeiffer-Kulenkampf. One summer she came along with us to Dalmatia, to paint; her watercolors still grace my brother's study. From her I learned how to mix different pigments for the contrasting atmospheres of a Mediterranean and an Atlantic shore.

Now, a long lifetime later, I am at home in her salty gray climate. And not just at home; I fancy that my presence has added something to the atmosphere of Bremen University. When Dean Johannes Beck led me from the *aula* through the rainy plaza into the makeshift café, he made a remark that I accepted as a gift. "Ivan," he said,

“this feels like an overflow of Barbara Duden’s house.” Dean Beck put into words the accomplishment of something I had aimed at for decades: the plethora of our dining room conviviality inspiring a university *aula*; the aura of hospitality in our Krefingstrasse house felt well beyond its threshold.

Even before my first Bremen semester started, Barbara Duden got a house in the Ostertor Viertel, beyond the old moat, just down from the drug corner, the farmers market, and the Turkish quarter. There Barbara created an ambiance of austere playfulness. The house became a place that at the drop of a hat accommodates our guests. If, after my lecture on Fridays, the spaghetti bowl must feed more than the two dozen who fit around the table made from flooring timber, guests squat on Mexican blankets in the next room.

Over the years, Krefingstrasse has fostered privileged closeness in respectful, disciplined, critical intercourse—friendships between old acquaintances who drop in from far away and new ones, three, even four decades younger than my oldest companion, Lee Hoinacki, who shares his room with our encyclopedias. Friendship makes ties unique, but some more than others bear the burden of the host: Kassandra, who lives elsewhere, with a key to the house, brings flowers; and Matthias, the virtuoso drummer who lives downstairs in a room that opens on the tiny garden, belong to the dozen who graciously welcome the newcomer at the threshold, stir the soup, orient conversation, do the dishes, and . . . correct my manuscripts as well as those of one another.

Learned and leisurely hospitality is the only antidote to the stance of deadly cleverness that is acquired in the professional pursuit of objectively secured knowledge. I remain certain that the quest for truth cannot thrive outside the nourishment of mutual trust flowering into a commitment to friendship. Therefore I have tried to identify the climate that fosters and the “conditioned” air that hinders the growth of friendship.

Of course I can remember the taste of strong atmospheres from other epochs in my life. I have never doubted—and it’s even more true today—that a “monastic” ambience is the prerequisite to the independence needed for a historically based indictment of society. Only the gratuitous commitment of friends can enable me to practice the asceticism required for modern near-paradoxes, such as renouncing systems analysis while typing on my Toshiba.

My early suspicion that a certain atmosphere was necessary for the kind of *studium* to which I had dedicated myself became a conviction through my contact with post-Sputnik American universities. After just one year as vice chancellor of a university in Puerto Rico, I and a few others wanted to question the development ideology to which Kennedy no less than Castro subscribed. I put all the money I had—today the equivalent of the prize you just gave me—into the purchase of a one-room wooden shack in the mountains that overlook the Caribbean. With three friends I wanted a place of study in which every use of the personal pronoun, *nos-otros*, would

truthfully refer back to the four of us, and be accessible to our guests as well; I wanted to practice the rigor that would keep us far from the “we” that invokes the security found in the shadow of an academic discipline: we as sociologists, economists, and so forth. As one of us, Charlie Rosario, put it: “All departments smell—of disinfectants, at their best . . . and poisons sterilize aura.” The *casita* on the road to Adjuntas soon became so obnoxious that I had to leave the island.

This freed me to start a “thinkery” in Mexico, which five years later turned into the Centro Intercultural de Documentación or CIDOC. In his introductory talk for today’s celebration, Bundestag deputy Freimut Duve told you about it. In those distant years, Duve was an editor at Rowohlt Publishers, cared for the publication of my books in German, and several times visited me in Cuernavaca. He told you about the spirit prevailing in that place: a climate of mutually tempered forbearance. It was this aura, this quality or air, through which this ephemeral venture could become a world crossroads, a meeting place for those who, long before it had become fashionable, questioned the innocence of “development.” Only the mood that Duve hinted at can explain the disproportionate influence this small center exerted in challenging the benefits of socioeconomic development.

CIDOC was closed by common accord on April first, ten years to the day after its foundation. With Mexican music and dancing we celebrated its closing. Duve told you about Valentina Borremans, who had organized and directed CIDOC from its inception. He then spoke about his admiration for the style in which she ended its work with the mutual consent of its sixty-three collaborators. She realized that the soul of this free, independent, and powerless thinkery would have been squashed soon by its rising influence.

CIDOC shut its doors in the face of criticism by its most serious friends, people too earnest to grasp the paradox of atmosphere. These were mainly persons for whom the hospitable climate of CIDOC had provided a unique forum. They thrived in the aura of CIDOC, and wholly rejected our certainty that atmosphere invites the institutionalization that will corrupt it. You never know what will nurture the spirit of *philia*, while you can be certain what will smother it. Spirit emerges by surprise, and it’s a miracle when it abides; it is stifled by every attempt to secure it; it’s debauched when you try to use it.

Few understand this. In Mexico, I recently opened the mayor’s bottle of Burgundy with Valentina to celebrate one of them. We drank the wine to the memory of Alejandro Del Corro, a deceased Argentine Jesuit who lived and worked with me in the early sixties. With his Leica he traveled around South America, collaborating with *guerrilleros* to save their archives for history. Alejandro was a master at moderating aura. When he presided, his delicate attention—whether toward a U.S. civil servant, trash collector, *guerrillero*, or professor—meant that each felt at home with the other around the CIDOC table. Alejandro knew that you cannot lay a claim on aura; he knew about the evanescence of atmosphere.

I speak of atmosphere, *faute de mieux*. In Greek, the word is used for the emanation of a star, or for the constellation that governs a place; alchemists adopted it to speak of the layers around our planet. Maurice Blondel reflects its much later French usage for *bouquet des esprits*, the scent those present contribute to a meeting. I use the word for something frail and often discounted, the air that weaves and wafts and evokes memories, like those attached to the Burgundy long after the bottle has been emptied.

To sense an aura, you need a nose. The nose, framed by the eyes, runs below the brain. What the nose inhales ends in the guts; every yogi and hesichast knows this. The nose curves down in the middle of the face. Pious Jews are conscious of the image because what Christians call “walking in the sight of God” the Hebrew expresses as “ambling under God’s nose and breath.” To savor the feel of a place, you trust your nose; to trust another, you must first smell him.

In its beginnings, Western civic culture wavered between cultivated distrust and sympathetic trust. Plato believed it would be upsetting for Athenian citizens to allow their bowels to be affected by the passion of actors in the theater; he wanted the audience to go no further than reflecting on the words. Aristotle respectfully modified his teacher’s opinion. In the *Poetics*, he asks the spectators to let gesture and mimicry, the rhythm and melody of breath, reach their very innards. Citizens should attend the theater, not just to understand, but to be affected by each other. For Aristotle, there could be no transformation, no purifying catharsis, without such gripping mimesis. Without gut-level experience of the other, without sharing his or her aura, you cannot be saved from yourself.

Some of that sense of mimesis comes out in an old German adage, *Ich kann Dich gut riechen* (I can smell you well), which is still used and understood. But it’s something you don’t say to just anyone; it’s an expression that is permissible only when you feel close, count on trust, and are willing to be hurt. It presupposes the truth of another German saying, *Ich kann Dich gut leiden* (I can suffer [put up with] you [well]). You can see that nose words have not altogether disappeared from ordinary speech, even in the age of daily showers.

I remember my embarrassment when, after years of ascetical discipline, I realized that I still had not made the connection between nose and heart, smell and affection. I was in Peru in the mid-1950s, on my way to meet Carlos, who welcomed me to his modest hut for the third time. But to get to the shack, I had to cross the Rimac, the open *cloaca* of Lima. The thought of sleeping for a week in this miasma almost made me retch. That evening, with a shock, I suddenly understood what Carlos had been telling me all along, “Ivan, don’t kid yourself; don’t imagine you can be friends with people you can’t smell.” That one jolt unplugged my nose; it enabled me to dip into the aura of Carlos’s house, and allowed me to merge the atmosphere I brought along into the ambience of his home.

This discovery of my nose for the scent of the spirit occurred forty years ago, in the time of the DC-4, belief in development programs, and the apparently benign

Peace Corps. It was the time when DDT was still too expensive for Latin American slum dwellers, when most people had to put up with fleas and lice on their skin, as they put up with the old, the crippled, and idiots in their homes. It was the time before Xerox, fax, and email. But it was also a time before smog and AIDS. I was then considered a crank because I foresaw the unwanted side effects of development, because I spoke to unions on technogenic unemployment, and to leftists on the growing polarization between rich and poor in the wake of expanding commodity dependence. What seemed hysteria then has now hardened into well-documented facts. Some of these facts are too horrible to face. They must be exorcised: bowdlerizing them by research, assigning their management to specialized agencies, and conjuring them by prevention programs. But while the depletion of life forms, the growing immunity of pathogens, climate changes, the disappearance of the job culture, and uncontrollable violence now make up the admitted side effects of economic growth, the menace of modern life for the survival of atmospheres is hardly recognized as a terrible threat.

This is the reason I dare to annoy you with the memory of that walk in the dusk with my nose full of the urine and feces emanating from the Rimac. That landscape no longer exists; cars now fill a highway hiding the sewage. The skin and scalp of Indians is no longer the habitat of lice; now the allergies produced by industrial chemicals cause the itch. Makeshift shanties have been replaced by public housing; each apartment has its plumbing and each family member a separate bed—the guest knows that he imposes an inconvenience. The stench of the Rimac has become a memory in a city asphyxiated by industrial smog. I juxtapose then and now because this allows me to argue that the impending loss of spirit, of soul, of what I call atmosphere, could go unnoticed.

Only persons who face one another in trust can allow its emergence. The bouquet of friendship varies with each breath, but when it is there it needs no name. For a long time I believed that there was no one noun for it, and no verb for its creation. Each time I tried one, I was discouraged; all the synonyms for it were shanghaied by its synthetic counterfeits: mass-produced fashions and cleverly marketed moods, chic feelings, swank highs, and trendy tastes. Starting in the 1970s, group dynamics, retreats, and psychic training, all to generate an atmosphere, became major businesses. Discreet silence about the issue I am raising seemed preferable to creating a misunderstanding.

Then, thirty years after that evening above the Rimac, I suddenly realized that there is indeed a very simple word that says what I cherished and tried to nourish, and that word is *peace*. Peace, however, not in any of the many ways its cognates are used all over the world, but peace in its post-classical, European meaning. Peace, in this sense, is the one strong word with which the atmosphere of friendship created among equals has been appropriately named. But to embrace this, one has to come to understand the origin of this peace in the *conspiratio*, a curious ritual behavior almost forgotten today.

This is how I chanced upon the insight. In 1986, a few dozen peace research groups in Africa and Asia were planning to open a common resource center. The

founding assembly was held in Japan, and the leaders were looking for a Third World speaker. However, for reasons of delicacy, they wanted a person who was neither Asian nor African, and took me for a Latin American; then they pressured me to come. So I packed my *guayabera* shirt and departed for the Orient.

In Yokohama I addressed the group, speaking as a historian. I wanted first to dismantle any universal notion of peace; I wanted to stress the claim of each *ethnos* to its own peace, the right of each community to be left in its peace. It seemed important to make clear that peace is not an abstract condition, but a very specific spirit to be relished in its particular, incommunicable uniqueness by each community.

However, my aim in Yokohama was twofold: I wanted to examine not only the meaning but also the history and perversion of peace in that appendix to Asia and Africa we call Europe. After all, most of the world in the twentieth century is suffering from the enthusiastic acceptance of European ideas, including the European concept of peace. The assembly in Japan gave me a chance to contrast the unique spirit of peace that was born in Christian Europe with its perversion and counterfeit when, in international political parlance, an ideological link is created between economic development and peace. I argued that only by de-linking *pax* (peace) from development could the heretofore unsuspected glory hidden in *pax* be revealed. But to achieve this before a Japanese audience was difficult.

The Japanese have an iconogram that stands for something we do not have or say or feel: *fūdo*. My teacher, Professor Tamanoy, explained *fūdo* to me as “the inimitable freshness that arises from the commingling of a particular soil with the appropriate waters.” Trusting my learned pacifist guide, since deceased, I started from the notion of *fūdo*. It was easy to explain that both Athenian *philia* and *Pax Romana*, as different as they are from each other, are incomparable to *fūdo*. Athenian *philia* bespeaks the friendship among the free men of a city, and Roman *pax* bespeaks the administrative status of a region dominated by the Legion that had planted its insignia into that soil. Thanks to Professor Tamanoy’s assistance, it was easy to elaborate on the contradictions and differences between these two notions, and get the audience to comment on similar heteronomies in the cultural meaning of peace within India or between neighboring groups in Tanzania. The kaleidoscopic incarnations of peace all referred to a particular, highly desirable atmosphere. So far the conversation was easy.

However, speaking about *pax* in the proto-Christian epoch turned out to be a delicate matter, because around the year 300 *pax* became a key word in the Christian liturgy. It became the euphemism for a mouth-to-mouth kiss among the faithful attending services; *pax* became the camouflage for the *osculum* (from *os*, mouth), or the *conspiratio*, a commingling of breaths. My friend felt I was not just courting misunderstanding, but perhaps giving offense, by mentioning such body-to-body contact in public. The gesture, up to this day, is repugnant to Japanese.

The Latin *osculum* is neither very old nor frequent. It is one of three words that can be translated by the English “kiss.” In comparison with the affectionate *basium*

and the lascivious *suavium*, *osculum* was a latecomer into classical Latin, and was used in only one circumstance as a ritual gesture: In the second century, it became the sign given by a departing soldier to a woman, thereby recognizing her expected child as his offspring.

In the Christian liturgy of the first century, the *osculum* assumed a new function. It became one of two high points in the celebration of the Eucharist. *Conspiratio*, the mouth-to-mouth kiss, became the solemn liturgical gesture by which participants in the cult-action shared their breath or spirit with one another. It came to signify their union in one Holy Spirit, the community that takes shape in God's breath. The *ecclesia* came to be through a public ritual action, the liturgy, and the soul of this liturgy was the *conspiratio*. Explicitly, corporeally, the central Christian celebration was understood as a co-breathing, a con-spiracy, the bringing about of a common atmosphere, a divine milieu.

The other eminent moment of the celebration was, of course, the *comestio*, the communion in the flesh, the incorporation of the believer in the body of the Incarnate Word, but *communio* was theologically linked to the preceding *conspiratio*. *Conspiratio* became the strongest, clearest and most unambiguously somatic expression for the entirely nonhierarchical creation of a fraternal spirit in preparation for the unifying meal. Through the act of eating, the fellow conspirators were transformed into a "we," a gathering which in Greek means *ecclesia*. Further, they believed that the "we" is also somebody's "I"; they were nourished by shading into the "I" of the Incarnate Word. The words and actions of the liturgy are not just mundane words and actions, but events occurring after the Word, that is, after the Incarnation. Peace as the commingling of soil and waters sounds cute to my ears; but peace as the result of *conspiratio* exacts a demanding, today almost unimaginable, intimacy.

The practice of the *osculum* did not go unchallenged; documents reveal that the *conspiratio* created scandal early on. The rigorist African Church Father Tertullian felt that a decent matron should not be subjected to possible embarrassment by this rite. The practice continued, but not its name; the ceremony required a euphemism. From the later third century on, the *osculum pacis* was referred to simply as *pax*, and the gesture was often watered down to some slight touch to signify the mutual spiritual union of the persons present through the creation of a fraternal atmosphere. Today, the *pax* before communion, called "the kiss of peace," is still integral to the Roman, Slavonic, Greek, and Syrian mass, although it is often reduced to a perfunctory handshake.

I could no more avoid telling the story in Yokohama than today in Bremen. Why? Because the very idea of peace understood as hospitality that reaches out to the stranger, and of a free assembly that arises in the practice of hospitality, cannot be understood without reference to the Christian liturgy in which the community comes into being by the mouth-to-mouth kiss.

However, just as the antecedents of peace among us cannot be understood without reference to a *conspiratio*, the historical uniqueness of a city's climate, atmosphere,

or spirit also calls for this reference. The European idea of peace that is synonymous with the somatic incorporation of equals into a community has no analogue elsewhere. Community in our European tradition is not the outcome of an act of authoritative foundation, nor a gift from nature or its gods, nor the result of management, planning, and design, but the consequence of a *conspiracy*, a deliberate, mutual, somatic, and gratuitous gift to one another. The prototype of that conspiracy lies in the celebration of the early Christian liturgy in which, no matter their origin, men and women, Greeks and Jews, slaves and citizens, engender a physical reality that transcends them. The shared breath, the *conspiratio*, is peace, understood as the community that arises from it.

Historians have often pointed out that the idea of a social contract, which dominates political thinking in Europe since the fourteenth century, has its concrete origins in the way founders of medieval towns conceived urbane civilities. I fully agree with this. However, by focusing on the contractual aspect of this incorporation, attention is distracted from the good that such contracts were meant to protect, namely, peace resulting from a *conspiratio*. One can fail to perceive the pretentious absurdity of attempting a contractual insurance of an atmosphere as fleeting and alive, as tender and robust, as *pax*.

The medieval merchants and craftsmen who settled at the foot of a lord's castle felt the need to make the conspiracy that united them into a secure and lasting association. To provide for their general surety, they had recourse to a device, the *conjuratio*, a mutual promise confirmed by an oath that uses God as a witness. Most societies know the oath, but the use of God's name to make it stick first appears as a legal device in the codification of Roman law made by the Christian emperor Theodosius. Conjuratio, or the swearing together by a common oath confirmed by the invocation of God, just like the liturgical *osculum*, is of Christian origin. The *conjuratio* that uses God as epoxy for the social bond presumably assures stability and durability to the atmosphere engendered by the *conspiratio* of the citizens. In this linkage between *conspiratio* and *conjuratio*, two equally unique concepts inherited from the first millennium of Christian history are intertwined, but the contractual formality soon overshadowed the spiritual substance.

The medieval town of central Europe was indeed a profoundly new historical gestalt; the *conjuratio conspirativa* makes European urbanity distinct from urban modes elsewhere. It also implies a peculiar dynamic strain between the atmosphere of *conspiratio* and its legal, contractual constitution. Ideally, the spiritual climate is the source of the city's life that flowers into a hierarchy, like a shell or frame, to protect its order. Insofar as the city is understood to originate in a *conspiratio*, it owes its social existence to the *pax*, the breath, shared equally among all.

This long reflection on the historical precedents to the cultivation of atmosphere in late twentieth-century Bremen seemed necessary to me to defend its intrinsically conspiratorial nature. I wanted to show why independent criticism of the

established order of our modern, technogene, information-centered society can only grow out of a milieu of intense hospitality.

As a scholar I have been shaped by monastic traditions and the interpretation of medieval texts. Early on I concluded that the principal condition for an atmosphere propitious to independent thought is the hospitality cultivated by the host: a hospitality that excludes condescension as scrupulously as seduction; a hospitality that by its simplicity defeats the fear of plagiarism as much as that of clientage; a hospitality that by its openness dissolves intimidation as studiously as servility; a hospitality that exacts from the guests as much generosity as it imposes on the host. I have been blessed with a large portion of it, with the taste of a relaxed, humorous, sometimes grotesque fit among mostly ordinary but sometimes outlandish companions who are patient with one another. More so in Bremen than anywhere else.

Bremen, Germany, and Ocotepc, Mexico

Contributors

Gesine Bottomley studied political science and philosophy, as well as library and information sciences. She lived in Canada for sixteen years and was employed in libraries in Toronto and London, Ontario, and in Fredericton, New Brunswick. She returned to Germany and built up the library of the *Wissenschaftskolleg* (Institute for Advanced Study) in Berlin, beginning in 1981, where she continues today. She taught the course “Research Methods in Libraries” at the Philipps University in Marburg during the winter semester 1985–1986, while Ivan Illich was a guest professor there. In 1992–1993, she taught a similar course at the University of Bremen, again in conjunction with Illich’s lectures.

Marion Boyars (1928–1999) entered the publishing field in 1960 when she joined John Calder to create Calder and Boyars Publishers. For more than fifteen years, this firm published the works of such avant-garde writers as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Henry Miller, Peter Weiss, Hubert Selby Jr., Georges Bataille, Raymond Radiguet, Witold Gombrowicz, and Julio Cortázar. She was among the first to publish eventual Nobel Prize winners Heinrich Böll, Elias Canetti, Eugenio Montale, and Kenzaburo Oe; she also published the writings of modern composers and works of social criticism. In 1975, her collection of authors was transferred to the new firm of Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd., which continues her special tradition of selective publishing and keeps in print the most complete backlist of Ivan Illich books available in English.

Eugene J. Burkart met Ivan Illich in 1973 while attending language school in Cuernavaca. When he returned to the United States, he became a lawyer and settled in Waltham, Massachusetts, with the idea of working for the have-nots in our society. In the meantime, reading the writings of Illich, Burkart came to doubt conventional certainties about economic justice. He writes, “I eventually concluded that the best

way to understand Illich's work is as a detailed study of the myriad and varied barriers to friendship that exist in modern life."

Barbara Duden, professor of sociology at the University of Hannover, Germany, writes that she has "been challenged by Ivan Illich's critique of institutionalization, professionalization, and the promises of progress." Through Illich's perspective, she sees modernity as singularly "Janus-faced when one turns to women." Moreover, as a result of her studies of women's somatic experience in the early eighteenth century, she has learned "from women long dead, the older meaning of biology [as] the narration of one's *curriculum vitae*." In her writing and teaching, she describes herself as "keeping away from feminist constructivism or postmodernism, taking a stand with nonacademic, nonprofessional women's ways of knowing."

Jean-Pierre Dupuy, born in 1941, is professor of social and political philosophy at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris. In 1982, he founded the Centre de Recherche en Epistémologie Appliquée (CREA), the philosophical research group of the Ecole Polytechnique, and serves as its director. He is also a professor (one-third time) at Stanford University. His current research program focuses on the paradoxes of rationality, or the classical philosophical problem of the antinomies of reason in the age of rational choice theory, analytic philosophy, and cognitive science.

Aaron Falbel first encountered the books and ideas of the education critic John Holt in 1984, and it was through Holt that he says he was led to Ivan Illich, "whose critique went beyond schooling and even beyond education." For Falbel, Illich offered "a critique of *society*, of the certainties and axioms, the mental topology that made such a society possible." According to Falbel, around 1990 he "made the decision to become a war tax resister. This meant to live a life of voluntary austerity (relatively speaking) to avoid having to pay federal taxes that would be used to murder people in Iraq (among other places)." He has maintained his connection with Holt's ideas of "unschooling" through his wife, Susannah Sheffer, former editor of the magazine *Growing Without Schooling*, which was founded by Holt in 1977.

Domenico Farias was born in 1927 in Reggio Calabria, Italy. He has studied problems of philosophy, politics, and law characteristic of highly developed scientific and technical societies. His recent research has focused on current creationist theories of natural law, on a search for their origins in Philo of Alexandria, and on an evaluation of their importance in relation to present-day discussions about the principles of law. Presently, he teaches at the University of Messina. He met Ivan Illich in 1948 when they were both students at the Gregorian University in Rome. At that time, he and Illich pursued their spiritual formation at the Capranica (l'Almo Collegio Capranica), where they lived.

Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J. (1913–1995) set out on the path of many Catholic youth in Depression-era America to serve the church. As a Jesuit, he singularly distinguished himself as an advocate, on many fronts, for the Puerto Rican community, both on the island and on the mainland. Fitzpatrick achieved a remarkable synthesis in his life—as priest, scholar, and activist. Countless people remember the zeal and solicitude of his priestly ministrations. Former students at Fordham University, his academic base, speak for his dedication to the intellectual life. Many people, in various places, are grateful for his fight to secure justice and respect for all immigrants to America. A year after his death, a collection of his writing was published: Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *The Stranger Is Our Own: Reflections on the Journey of Puerto Rican Migrants* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1996).

Alfons Garrigós writes that he discovered Ivan Illich's books during a visit to Mexico City in 1977 when he was eighteen. Returning to Spain, he became involved with a community of friends who he says "thought about, discussed, and, as far as we could, put into practice the suggestions of Illich." Today he sees Illich "somewhat as a spiritual guide who helps me perceive the spaces where people can meet, celebrate, and remember." Recently, he concludes, "I discovered a relationship between this way of living and an attentive, respectful reading of the great authors: Homer, the Greek tragedians, the Bible, Lucretius, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes; and modern authors who do not try to outshine them. One need not be a scholar to understand them; any unlettered person, and any child who has not watched too much TV is fascinated by them. It is sufficient to read aloud, paying some attention. One of my most gratifying activities is to teach young people who desire to read in this way."

Lee Hoinacki, in 1960, was sent as a Dominican priest to Puerto Rico to learn Spanish; the director of the language school turned out to be Ivan Illich. During three months on the island, he says that he "formed a lasting impression of the man." In 1962, he was with Illich in Cuernavaca. Two years later, after working in Chile, he returned to Mexico. In 1967, he petitioned for a dispensation from the priesthood, married, and entered graduate school in the United States. "I went on to become a university teacher, then a subsistence farmer, and, after that, took on several dead-end jobs. During these years, Illich and I would meet in the United States, Mexico, or Germany. In the last decade, I have accompanied him to those places, sharing in his work of teaching and writing."

Alastair Hulbert studied theology in Edinburgh during the 1960s, then moved from one place to another. During 1963–1964 he was an English teacher with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in West Pakistan. A few years later he says that he "came across an essay by Ivan Illich, advising volunteers like me not to do what I had done because of its negative cultural impact." For him this was the beginning of an understanding of the

significance of development, which Illich analyzed in depth. Along with Illich, “Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy’s *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* is an old companion of mine”; he admits to relying “more and more on poetry as an antidote to the bitter physic Illich has to offer.”

Ivan Illich was born in Vienna in 1926, studied in Europe, and was ordained to the priesthood in Rome. He emigrated to New York, and worked under Francis Cardinal Spellman. In 1956, he was appointed vice rector of the Catholic University in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Moving to mainland Latin America in 1961, he founded language training centers in Petropolis, Brazil, and Cuernavaca. Disagreements with Pope Paul VI led to his renunciation of any public exercise of his priesthood. In 1967, he withdrew from the Petropolis center, and in 1976 closed the one in Cuernavaca. Since the late 1970s, he has lectured at a variety of universities and institutes, principally in the United States, Germany, Italy, Japan, and India.

Robert Kugelmann notes that although in the summers of 1967 and 1968 one of his jobs was distributing leaflets announcing the Fiesta de San Juan Bautista, inaugurated over a decade earlier by Ivan Illich in New York City, it was not until 1985 at a “History of the Body” seminar in Dallas, Texas, that he heard Illich himself for the first time. Kugelmann recalls, “The most unsettling thing he said was that most of us (Dallasites) will die of medicide, and that we would not die healthy. I found some of my fundamental assumptions challenged.” Up until that time he had wanted to help “humanize” medicine by retrieving the psychological dimensions of illness. “But I have had to abandon the presumptuous quest to humanize the treatment of the sick and dying.”

John L. McKnight describes himself as born to a clan of Scot reformers “who believed that if the majority of people agreed with you, you must be wrong.” From this dissenting tradition, he found his way into the civil rights movement. “In the midst of our struggle for reform of the schools, I met Ivan Illich. He asked me, quietly, why I wanted to reform schools. As he questioned me, I began to see that my hidden curriculum had become the defense of institutional production embedded in a reform agenda. Reflection on my own education, that of my children, and on the dead eyes of college students I encountered during twenty years, verified Illich’s critique.” The result was to *recall* his dissenting ancestors, and “I have followed their voices ever since. They are the sound of the vernacular.”

Carl Mitcham originally discovered Illich through his early bibliographical work on the philosophy of technology when he read *Tools for Conviviality*. He says that it was “incredibly fortunate to become a friend, when Illich and I turned up as colleagues at Pennsylvania State University in the late 1980s.” Ever since, he notes that he “has felt challenged to think the historicity of the whole notion of technology as *instru-*

mentum or tool,” recognizing his “failure adequately to do so in *Thinking through Technology*” (which was published in 1994). It was at Penn State, also, that he met Lee Hoinacki and the two began to conspire to edit the present book.

Madhu Suri Prakash has enjoyed studying with Ivan Illich for more than ten years at Pennsylvania State University. Reflections coming out of this relationship have led her to delve deeper into the exploration of her own culture, using Mohandas Gandhi’s thought as a ladder. In her puzzling over North American culture, she has been profoundly influenced by the writing of Wendell Berry. Currently, with her son, Raimundo Krishna Esteva, she is studying “movements” and initiatives at the grassroots level, including Swadhyaya in India and neo-Zapatismo in Mexico.

Jean Robert is a Swiss architect who emigrated to Mexico in 1972. He writes that there his “contact with a culture in which so much can be achieved with so little radically questioned my professional certainties.” The first person to help put his “culture shock into words” was John Turner, whom he met in Cuernavaca. Turner “pitilessly dismissed my pretensions of understanding what was going on in so-called popular or ‘informal’ settlements.” With Ivan Illich’s guidance, Robert started to examine traffic—a major shaping force of urban spaces in the industrial age. “Thanks to gifted students and friends, I had the chance to introduce a workable dry toilet on the Mexican scene. I believe that people should empower themselves with a firm control on the elements of the modern material civilization and that this empowerment is our time’s major political endeavor.”

Barry Sanders writes that sometime during the 1970s he remembers looking at a photograph in the *Los Angeles Times* that showed “the governor, Jerry Brown, with two books in his right hand. With a magnifying glass, I could discern: E.F. Schumacher’s *Small Is Beautiful* and Ivan Illich’s *Tools for Conviviality*. I knew his *Deschooling Society* well, so I dropped him a note. He answered quickly and took up my invitation to come to Claremont, California, where he gave a lecture on a topic he called ‘gender.’ He changed forever the way I look at the world, and he gave me the great privilege of writing a book about the Middle Ages together. I owe him a lot, and salute him in these pages.”

David B. Schwartz has, he says, “been following Ivan Illich’s traveling circus ever since I first met him a few years ago. I was immediately captured by his thoughts on the history of hospitality. What he said related to the work I had been doing as director of Pennsylvania’s Developmental Disabilities Council: asking ordinary people to befriend others with disabilities. I began translating certain aspects of Illich’s observations into practical action and public policy. The possibility that persons with disabilities could receive hospitality even in this modern institutional age became a crack through which

to peer at remnants of hospitality throughout the society. Most of my efforts are confined to a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, neighborhood: offering a main-street psychotherapy practice; attempting to stimulate capacities of neighbors to help each other; organizing campaigns to preserve the neighborhood from development.”

Pieter Tijmes was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1936, and studied theology in Utrecht from 1955 to 1962. He writes, “After a few years, my theological development came to a halt and, according to the wisdom of modernity, a standstill means decline. In 1970 I joined the University of Twente, and became a member of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences. My teaching centered on social and political philosophy, mainly as service education to students in technology. My field of research became the philosophy of technology. One source of my philosophical orientation is the idea on mimesis of René Girard. His reading of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, and the new paths he opened in the understanding of human relations greatly impressed me. Girard’s theory is also an elegant explanation of the phenomenon of scarcity, which has been haunting modernity in the last few centuries.”

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