

**Paul Kennedy**

Good evening and welcome to *Ideas*. I'm Paul Kennedy with the final program in our series on Ivan Illich.

**Ivan Illich**

We have to engage in the asceticism which makes it possible to savournowness and hereness — here as a place, here as that which is between us, as the Kingdom is — in order to be able to save what remains in us of sense, of meaning, of metaphor, of flesh, of touch, of gaze.

**Paul Kennedy**

Throughout this five-hour *Ideas* series, Ivan Illich has spoken about what modern Western people have lost during the era whose arc he traces from the twelfth century to our own time. The origin and source of this age, he believes, has been the Roman Catholic Church. "My kingdom," Jesus had said, "is not of this world." But from the Middle Ages onward, the Church attempted to build an earthly Christian order, reinforcing faith with power in an attempt to regulate charity, guarantee hope and insure salvation. And this attempt, which Illich calls "the corruption of Christianity," has been the model for the major institutions of modern life. All of these institutions — of medicine, law, education, politics and economy — promise a state of blessedness, which can only be understood if one sees that this promise was originally underwritten by Christian faith.

But the age which was dominated by the Church and its secular descendants is now giving way to a new age, the age of systems, Illich claims. This watershed is his subject tonight, as he addresses the character of this new era and the renunciations he thinks will be necessary to live with hope in this new time.

Both in how he has lived and how he has spoken publicly during a career of nearly 50 years, Ivan Illich has taken his stand outside of modern assumptions. His denunciation of the modern has been so passionate and his critique so penetrating that many have thought

of him as a prophet, a voice of one that cries in the desert, like the prophets of old. But Illich gently sets aside this name, preferring he says the vocation of the friend.

**Ivan Illich**

I think that the vocation which I try to exercise, which I try to live, one would rather than call it prophetic, call it friendly. The time of prophecy lies behind us. The only chance now lies in our taking this vocation as that of the friend. This is the way in which hope for a new society can spread. And the practice of it is really not through words but, essentially, through little acts of foolish renunciation.

**Paul Kennedy**

Ivan Illich's vision of friendship and foolish renunciation in the age of systems is Part 5 of "The Corruption of Christianity" by David Cayley.

**David Cayley**

Twelve years ago, in the fall of 1988, I drove to State College, Pennsylvania to meet with Ivan Illich and spent a week there, recording the lengthy interview that would become the basis for an *Ideas* series called "Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman," and for a subsequent book called **Ivan Illich in Conversation**. I carefully prepared myself for this encounter by re-reading all of the books Illich had written to that point. But, when we sat down together, I found that he wasn't particularly interested in reciting what he had written in the past or re-hashing the proposals for social renewal he made during the '70s in books like **De-schooling Society** and **Medical Nemesis**. Things had changed, he said, since he wrote those books. "Sometime during the mid-'80s" — I'm now quoting his exact words — "there was a change in the mental space in which people live. A kind of catastrophic breakdown of one way of seeing things has led to the emergence of a different way of seeing things." "Today," he went on, "people increasingly occupy a new dimensionless cybernetic space, and this space is discontinuous with the past, unconnected to the certainties by which people

formerly lived.”

I was impressed by this assertion, not least because much of my own work for Ideas during the 1980s had put forward a much sunnier, less catastrophic vision of the coming age. But, as our friendship grew and our conversation deepened, I came to share Illich's view that some sort of catastrophic change was in progress around me. Then in the summer of 1997 and again in the summer of 1999, we found the opportunity to record a second long interview, from which this series is drawn, in which we dwelt much more on how he sees the world today.

The characteristic idea of the new age, Illich believes, is system, not system in the old sense of a system of thought or a system of bookkeeping, but system as the term came to be used in the new science of cybernetics, system as the comprehensive metaphor for the world of computers, genetic engineering and the information revolution. The emergence of this new world view marks the end of what Illich calls “the age of instrumentality,” the age during which our relationship to the world was primarily mediated by our tools. Using the word ‘tool’ in its largest possible sense, as any engineered, instrumental means, he argues that what characterizes a tool is the way in which it remains separate and distinct from its user. A system, he says, lacks this distinction.

### Ivan Illich

When Plato or when Plinius speak about tools or devices, they call them *organon*. They call the hand an *organon* and the hammering hand an *organon*. The tool is an extension of the human body. In the twelfth century, partly under Arabic influence, an increasing awareness appears that certain material objects can incorporate, can be given human intentions. The intent to perform, to do something, can pass from the hand into the hammer. A hammer can be seen as something made for hammering and the sword something for killing, no matter if the hammer is taken into the hand of a craftsman or a little girl or a mill — it's that

way that in the twelfth century they begin to speak about it. And the sword can serve for killing or for war-making, no matter if he who touches it is a noble born to the sword or any peasant trained to a sword. This is an idea which is characteristic, I believe, for the epoch which I claim comes to an end with the 80s. There is a distance — I use the term distality — between the hand, the operator, and the instrument which performs the task. This distality disappears again when the hammer and the man are conceived of, or the dog and the man who holds the leash, as a system. You cannot any more say that there is a distance between the operator and the device because, according to systems theory, the operator is part of the system within which he operates and regulates.

### David Cayley

So long as there is what Illich calls distality between the tool and its user, the tool can incorporate the user's intention, whatever it may be. Tools exist at our free disposal, as means to whatever end we appoint for them. This not true, he thinks, of systems. Systems incorporate us in the purposes for which they were designed. We act within the system's parameters.

The significance of this change lies in the way it shifts our understanding of ourselves and the world. When the world is conceived as a vast, interconnected system extending from the microscopic realm of the cell to the macroscopic systems of the biosphere, the ground is cut out from under us. A system has no ground, and no external standpoint from which we can observe or influence it.

The computer offers a ready example of this shift. During little more than a generation, it has become the primary metaphor for self- and world-awareness. Just as the wheel once suggested the wheel of fate and the book, the book of nature, the computer now suggests a cybernetic world-image — the world as network, the world as ecosystem, the world as genetic text. And this new image fundamentally

changes the self-understanding of human beings. We no longer stand with one foot outside the world, as tool-users, readers of the book of nature, or persons with an eternal destiny. We have become part of the system.

This change in world view is often hailed as a return to an older, more organic conception of human beings—as a re-embedding of the body in nature. Illich vehemently disagrees. He sees the systems view as abstract and disembodied. For him, it moves away from the sensual body of old and into a purely theoretical realm that is inaccessible to our senses. This disembodiment, as Illich understands it, poses a deep threat to personal relationships because, for him, it is only as suffering, embodied persons that we can turn and face one another. The example he has used as his touchstone throughout this series is the gospel story of the Samaritan. Jesus tells this story in response to the question: Who is my neighbour? It concerns a Samaritan, a foreigner, who is moved by the plight of a Jew who lies beaten up in a ditch beside the road and who goes out of his way to take care of the wounded man. What is important about it, in our present context, is the emphasis Jesus places on what the Samaritan actually felt when he faced the injured Jew lying in his path.

### **Ivan Illich**

The gospel story says, in that story, “He felt moved in his belly,” his entrails. The Greek word for this is *esplagchinisthe*, which, that part when you sacrifice an ox to a god, you put aside as impure because there’s too much shit in it. The non-noble parts of the sacrifice. The Samaritan felt touched in his innards would probably be the most respectable way of saying it in English. He felt this sense of dis-ease in his belly when he looked at that Jew, that beaten-up one provoked in him a bodily sense of dis-ease. This dis-ease was a gift from the other. He understood that this guy was in a state of misery. I carefully avoid saying “in need” because, through the attribution to myself and to others of needs, I imply that what I can give is need satisfaction

and that really doesn’t have to be personal. That doesn’t have to come from me. That most probably comes with more effectiveness, efficiency and competence if we call in the right professional or let the right agency do it. We are, therefore, in a situation in which the disembodiment of the I-thou relationship has led into a mathematization, an algorithmization which supposedly is experienced. And, during the last couple of years, I have come to think that the main service I still can render is to make people accept that we live in such a world. Face it, don’t try to humanize the hospital or the school but always ask what can I, at this very moment in the unique *hic et nunc*, now and here, in which I am, do to get out of this world of need satisfaction and feel free to hear, to sense, to intuit what the other one wants from me, would be able to imagine, expects with a sense of surprise, from me at this moment.

### **David Cayley**

The other, for Illich, is always unique, particular, unrepeatable. He is this Jew, in this ditch, on this road, not an instance of a social problem to be solved or a need to be satisfied. Need, risk, problem are all categories that tend to disembody the relationship between the Samaritan the Jew. They imply a planned and administered response, not that gracious, free, undue, inward stirring which provokes the Samaritan to take his traditional enemy into his arms. During the modern era, Illich believes, Samaritan agencies of various kinds have been the typical response to perceived social needs. But today, Illich says that he senses a growing disillusionment with this type of social outreach, and, as its corollary, a resurgence of that free, anarchic spirit in which the original Samaritan acted. One index of this disillusionment, he says, is the changing meaning of the word responsibility.

### **Ivan Illich**

Responsibility as a moral obligation, as a feeling which should influence ethical judgements, appears — you can look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary and its

supplements, and you have to look very much into the supplement at the beginning of our century. Twenty years ago, even ten years ago still, but let me say twenty years ago, among the people with whom I usually deal — that's of course a very peculiar type of people — it was impossible to question that those children whom they saw in the ads of the Children's Fund with hunger-blown-up bellies were their responsibility. They were scandalized when I talked to them about responsibility being the soft underbelly of fantasies about power, that the responsibility they felt was a way of justifying their sense that because they were from a rich country, they had some power to plan, to organize, to change the rest of the world. This responsibility, this ugly justification of blown-up power fantasies, is something about which — from experience I know this — during the last few years I can make people laugh, laugh about themselves that they fell into this trap. A new sense of impotence is around. The future which seemed something appropriable in terms of planning, designing, policy-making, the very idea of policy-making and policy execution, is receding very fast. It still finds expression with U.S. bombing of Milosevic or Qaddafi or Iraq into a recognition of the human rights of their own citizens and it still nourishes the new book by W.W. Rostow about the need of maintaining American police power worldwide as a condition for the survival of democracy. But the people who speak to me, as opposed to those who spoke to me, or the way they spoke to me twenty years ago, do recognize that there is a fallacy, that the world in front of which they stand — not the future world but the present world — is built on assumptions for which they haven't found the appropriate names yet. I speak with people who are beginning to understand that the language about the organization of power prevalent between '50 and '80 has no hold on reality any more. And this is true no matter if they are people who come from an attempted philosophy of power structure — let me say Michel Foucault — or if they come from the Rostow corner. Twenty-five years ago, I argued to Foucault's face, and also with others, that, in

spite of my great admiration, Foucault assumed the existence of something, namely power, along the lines on which, after 1840, the idea of energy was socially constructed for the physical world with power being something metaphorically corresponding in the social domain. People considered me evil, David, when I did this. But now there is a recognition that we cannot help but renounce power, not because of a Gandhian or Christian spirit of renunciation to violence but because the power which we sought ten or twenty years ago reveals its own void, its own illusory characteristics.

### David Cayley

This new feeling of impotence, of a void where the power to change the world was once thought to be is for Illich the characteristic experience of the new age. The world now confronts us as something unmanageable, as a complex, chaotic system of which we can never form a comprehensive view because we are inscribed within it. Such a world, Illich believes, gives us rise to strange, compensatory fantasies and reassuring rain dances which hide our helplessness. We dream of a return to earth and a rebirth of Mother Nature, of ethical capitalism and global citizenship, but these fantasies, he says, only distract us from our fundamental powerlessness. Illich suggests a different path, a return to what he calls *conspiratio*. The *conspiratio* was the kiss by which early Christian communities mingled their spirits and sealed their communion with one another. It was practiced at a time when Christians still sought to imitate their Lord's absolute refusal of power, a time when the Church had not yet made itself into the prototype of the modern state. To Illich, it symbolizes the way of love without power, free self-giving love, that meets no need and expects no guarantee, the love that stirred in the Samaritan's belly when he saw that half-dead man lying by the road. This way, Illich says, has re-opened, as the modern project of underwriting love with power has failed and the modern institutions in which this project was embodied have ceased to inspire

faith.

### **Ivan Illich**

The credibility of the world constructed with the idea of citizenship, of responsibility, of power, of equality, of need, claim and entitlement, the credibility of these as ideals for which it is worthwhile to consecrate your life is declining, in my opinion, very fast. Most people see this as a serious danger, which it is, for the survival of a democratic order. I want to suggest the possibility of seeing it as the end of an epoch, just like the Roman Empire at the time of Augustine, and as an entirely new access, credibility, ease of moving into the world of *conspiratio*, knowing that it can't be contractually assured, insured. A renunciation to insurance.

### **David Cayley**

I believe," Ivan Illich once told me "that the future is in the hands of God...I cannot let anybody insure either the material or the spiritual future for me. I know I live in a world where the greater our ideals are, the greater the insurance companies will become. Historically, this has already happened. And this includes, especially, the churches. They are insurance companies, taking the place of Christian virtue, the virtue of loving."

Renouncing insurance, on this view, means renouncing the substitution of institutions for the virtues that they supposedly make more efficient and reliable. And this is what Illich, in his own life, has tried to do, not just as a writer and lecturer, but as a teacher and friend. Nearly forty years ago, when he was still a practicing Roman Catholic priest, he wrote an essay called "The Vanishing Clergyman," in which he suggested the abolition of a professional clergy and its replacement by a

lay ministry. At the Centre for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, which he founded in 1960 and which continued until 1976, he presided only on the basis of what he once called "unquestioned influence" and not through the exercise of any managerial power. Since 1976 he has worked at the margins of various universities, accepting only temporary appointments and always trying to create a hospitable space outside the institution for his students and colleagues.

### **Ivan Illich**

I usually trusted that people who seriously followed a semester or several semesters in a row would also become guests around my table and find out for themselves the way in which I tried to proceed. First of all, this is not easy because the university, particularly as this institution has developed, has changed during the last hundred years, has become almost an enemy to the type of procedure, collegial procedure, which I've tried to cultivate. Yes, I have made my living out of the university, I have soberly milked that sacred cow in order to nest with the hand-outs I could get since I left the rectorship of the Catholic University in Puerto Rico, which is now thirty-seven years ago. I have never accepted a normal university job but only a semester at a time at different institutions or at one institution, as now at the University of Bremen for the seventh or eighth year, or at Penn State for the twelfth year, and that has provided me with the wherewithals to have a hospitable table. A good tax lawyer found a way of making it credible to IRS that a certain number of cases of ordinary but good and clean wine are my major teaching tool and can, therefore, be written off from taxes.

**David Cayley**

Illich's approach to teaching and to university life generally, was to cultivate friendship as the most important condition for the disciplined pursuit of truth. Friendship, for Plato and other classical authors, was an outgrowth of civic life and was inconceivable without such a context. Politics, understood as a relationship between citizens, was what made friendship possible. Modern persons, Illich thought, are in the opposite case. For us, who lack a city in the Greek sense, friendship has to come first, and civic virtue only as its consequence.

**Ivan Illich**

Friendship, *symposion*, which means drinking together, in the Greek city, could be conceived of as the flowering of civic virtue, as the crown of the practice of civic virtue because virtue could be understood as the appropriate behaviour, the fitting behaviour within the context, the ethos befitting the *ethnos*, the ethics, the environment of that place at that time with that given tradition. For Plato — I'm taking Plato but I can take any classical text of antiquity — friendship presupposes an *ethnos*, the environment into which my nativity has placed me. Friendship, in the old sense, was based on the presupposition of the limits within which it could be practised. Friendship today, I at least have not been able to seek as a flowering of a neighbourhood life. That has not been my destiny as a wandering Jew and as a Christian pilgrim. But if there was an ethics which developed around the circle of my friends, it was the result of our practice, our search for friendship. We stand here, therefore, in front of a radical inversion of what *philia*, friendship could mean for Plato and what it can mean for me. For me it is the source of a possible coming about of a context of like-mindedness and of commitment. But for Plato it could be the ultimate result of the practice of something which befits the citizen.

**David Cayley**

This inversion in which ethics are founded on friendship rather than friendship on ethics is, in Illich's view, thoroughly Christian. It was Jesus

himself, he says, who disrupted the traditional basis for ethics, both by the example of his crucifixion outside the city's walls and by his teaching about the Samaritan's freedom to love beyond the limits established by his culture.

**Ivan Illich**

Again comes that major disturber and fool, that historical Jesus of the gospels who says the Samaritan, the Palestinian, will be the only one who will act as a friend towards the beaten-up Jew. He opened a new unrestricted ability to choose whom I want, or to let myself be chosen by who wants, for friendship. When I speak about the cultivation of friendship, I try to understand how, after Jesus's disruption of the frame that limits the possibility for friendship to appear, I can see one aspect of the history of the West and of the Church as the creation of new, voluntarist, chosen forms, lifestyles within which friendship can be practised. Certainly the history of the monastic ideal in the West is one of the roads, if not the most privileged road to explore how changing social conditions, changing thought patterns have changed the way in which people tried to create lifestyles within which friendship with freely chosen others can come to flower and how, around it, some kind of community can grow.

**David Cayley**

Monastic community was based on a life that integrated work and worship, meditation and mutual commitment. And by the light of this example, Illich thinks, we can see what the modern university has lost. Knowledge has been divided from virtue, the head from the heart. Illich does not dream of a restoration of these traditions but he is inspired by them and he has tried, as a scholar, to repair the rupture between academic study and the mutual commitment of friends who follow this life.

**Ivan Illich**

I saw it as my task to see in which way intellectual inquiry, loving truth, the disciplined and methodical joint pursuit of clear vision, can be so lived that it becomes the occasion for the

kindling of *philia*. Let me use the word *philia* instead of friendship because it has such funny implications today in different modern languages. I wanted to see whether it would be possible to create truly, deeply committed human ties on the occasion and by the means of common investigation. And second, how precisely the search for insight — I'm using the word because to say the search for truth would make many people with whom I have to deal smile and say, you sit back somewhere in an old world; I do — how the search for truth can be pursued in a unique way, precisely by being conducted around a dining table, around a glass of wine, and not in the lecture hall. The lecture hall, the public forum — whoever offered me a chance for it, when I was young, I grabbed it — can serve to bring people together who then say may the three of us come to see you? And I say yes, but why don't you come when the other two whom I would like you to meet are also there? Therefore, integration can immediately happen. So my idea was that the growth of *philia* is the presupposition of the search for truth. This *philia* must find an atmosphere in which it may bud and cannot be assumed to be the outgrowth of civic virtues. It must be very carefully non-restrictive, always a candle lighted, with the certainty that somebody else will knock at the door, and the candle stands for him or her. God knows who comes to the door. I have sought the growth of an open group of people who are moved by fidelity to each other as persons, and dare to maintain fidelity even if the other one becomes a heavy burden. But, if truth is pursued with the presupposition that it starts from a "we" which is arbitrary, which is unique, which cannot be put into any class — I speak of the "we," the "I," first person, in the plural, something which slowly emerges — if the search for truth is based on the creation of the "we," then we have to shed a certain number of university, academic forms of appropriateness, etiquettes or even disciplinary and methodological convictions which are very sticky. It is to be assumed — I know it from my experience — that people who are truly committed to risk

such a route of research will already have, in my generation, people born after 1925, will already have had considerable what they call socialization within a university and academic milieu. Not all, but many of them. The university is oriented towards disciplinary gatherings. The conviction that only that can be of importance which I can share at least with some others whom I love first and then want to talk with challenges this academic socialization and requires me to put my insights into ordinary language.

### David Cayley

The practice of friendship which Illich has just been describing is a possibility that he thinks has opened up for people in a new and surprising way during the last generation. This opening has occurred, at least in part, as a consequence of the decay of institutions like the university. Earlier he spoke of a whole complex of related ideas like responsible citizenship, that he believes has lost credibility in a similar way and are now in decline. With this fading of the institutions that have structured modern life, Illich believes, a new access has been created to what he calls the world of *conspiratio*, the world that existed before that seminal period in the high Middle Ages when the Roman Church made itself into a sort of modern state in embryo. But this in no sense implies a return or a stepping back into an earlier time. The events that have changed our world have changed it forever and Illich would be the last to argue that what is past can provide us with consolation. Indeed, the image of him as a historical romantic prettying up the past and crying down the future is probably the most prevalent misconception about his thought. It is Illich's view that the waning of the credibility of modern institutions brings Christianity before us as never before and this for a paradoxical reason. Modern institutions perverted faith, but they also prolonged its presence and held back the consequences of its disappearance. It follows that it is only now, in the sunset of these institutions, that the world we have actually made can finally come to light.

We live, therefore, according to Illich in an apocalyptic time, a time of revelation. He made this clear when I suggested, near the end of our conversations, that we might now be living in a post-Christian world. His rejoinder was sharp and decisive. Declining confidence in modern institutions, he said, expresses not the end of Christianity, but the unveiling of that mysterious evil that came into the world with Christianity. This evil was identified by the writers of the New Testament as Antichrist, an evil, that they claimed, would ripen within the church as the intimate and ever-present possibility of a betrayal of the gospel by those who would falsely claim to speak in its name. The Antichrist, in other words, was precisely that perversion about which Illich has been trying to speak. Only now, he says, its consequences lie fully revealed.

### Ivan Illich

I do not believe that it is a post-Christian world. That would be consoling. I believe that it's an — it's so difficult to pronounce — it's an apocalyptic world. At the very beginning of our conversations we spoke about the *mysterium iniquitatis*, the mystery of evil, the nesting of an otherwise unthinkable, unimaginable and non-existent evil and its egg within the Christian community. We then used that word Anti-christ, the Antichrist which looks in so many things just like Christ, teaching global perceptions, universal responsibility, humble acceptance of teaching instead of finding out by yourself, guidance through institutions. The Antichrist, or let's say the *mysterium iniquitatis* is the conglomerate of a series of perversions by which we try to give security, survival ability, independence from individual persons to the new possibilities that were opened through the gospel, by institutionalizing these. I claim that the *mysterium iniquitatis* has been hatching — I know too much of Church history to say and that's now breaking the shell — but I dare to say that it is now more clearly present than ever before. Therefore, to ascribe to me the idea that this is a post-Christian era would be completely wrong and I'm certain that you

asked the question only to provoke me into this, as I listen to what I just said, slightly angry response. I believe this to be, paradoxically, the most obviously Christian epoch which might be quite close to the end of the world.

### David Cayley

The imminence of the end of the world has been a Christian belief from the beginning of the Church and it has always been seen as mandating a life of detachment. Christians, St. Paul says, should be *in* the world but not *of* it. Medieval Christians symbolized this condition by taking as their emblem the mythical figure of the flying fish, a creature both in and out of its element. Renunciation was the sign that one could do without the world even as one lived in it. And renunciation, Illich says, is today more crucial than ever, as a way of preserving the capacity to love and be free.

### Ivan Illich

Renunciation has been, from the beginning, the logical precondition for the practice of love. I think I would be starting a little bit too high if I began now to speak about Jesus's absolute request that if you came from solid, middle-of-the-road, practicable Judaism into his little sect, you renounced the freedom to separate from your wife, you renounced an opportunity, which the Jew had. That's part of the symbolic way in which one usually would discuss this. You renounced the need to belong to the "we" in which you find your I. The place outside of Jerusalem, Golgotha, where the cross was put up, became the symbol of it. You renounced the power to change the world, as Jesus did in the temptation. And Christians very soon discovered that little practices of renunciation, of what I won't do even though it's legitimate, are a necessary habit I have to form in order to practise freedom, not only to be poor, but to practise freedom. What a beautiful, happy, innocent world it was when people could find renunciation in not eating chicken soup on Friday! I still remember that world. It wasn't European during the Second World War because there weren't chickens around. It didn't make any sense and one forgot about it.



But, when I came to New York, I found out that people really were concerned about not eating meat on Friday. It taught them, if they really wanted, during six weeks of Lent to give up something which was hard for them and, therefore, to give up other things. I remember my boss on the first days of Lent which I spent in the United States. We sat down for breakfast and he was as grouchy as anything and I asked him twice, Sir, did I do something wrong? No. Did I offend you? No. So I said, do you feel badly? Yes. It's Lent and I have given up smoking my cigar. Well, it was a funny way of punishing me for his renunciation, but I love to think of it because of the many things in the modern world which we can give up — and not give up because we want a more beautiful life but because we want to become aware of how much we are attached to the world as it is and how much we can get along without it. These things have multiplied so much that you can't easily give a social shape to them. Some people will give up writing letters on a computer, not because it's bad and not because they don't like to be called upon to give an immediate answer to a letter which they got e-mail, and other people will give up the services of physicians or, as somebody whom I know has done, having children of whom he guarantees that they'll get degrees. The certainty that I can get along without is one of the most efficacious ways of convincing yourself, no matter where you stand on the intellectual or emotional ladder, that you are free. Renunciation, self-imposed limits are the basis for a practice that prepares people, perhaps even politically, to discuss what kind of limits do we want to impose on ourselves as a group of 2, 5 or 12 friends or perhaps as a neighbourhood. Realizing that we can do that, realizing that we can practice renunciation — I have seen it, I can witness to it, for the last 15 or 20 years — is for many people who suffer from great fears and a sense of impotence and depersonalization, a very simple way back to a self which stands above the constraints of the world.

**David Cayley**

A contemporary practice of renunciation, Illich says, is the opposite of mortification or asceticism or any of the other terms one might associate with ideologically-founded self denial. Rather, it is a pre-condition for enjoyment, for a sober joy in those things within my personal reach. By renunciation we open ourselves to what Illich calls gratuity, the spirit in which we receive a gift. And it is in this spirit of praise and thanksgiving, he says, that he hopes to live.

**Ivan Illich**

Since I live in this world, I couldn't find a better world to live with those whom I love. And those are exactly people who overwhelmingly are aware of the fact that we are beyond a threshold, who are not any more so deeply imbued by the spirit of utility or instrumentality that they wouldn't be able to understand what I mean by gratuity. I do believe that there is a way of being understood today when you speak about gratuity and gratuity, in its most beautiful, flowering is praise, mutual enjoyment. And what some people, such as those who propose a new orthodoxy are discovering, is that the message of Christianity is that we live together praising the fact that we are where we are and who we are and that contrition and forgiveness are part of that which we celebrate doxologically.

**David Cayley**

With praise?

**Ivan Illich**

Yes.

**David Cayley**

I have no more questions.

**Ivan Illich**

Thank you.

**David Cayley**

Do you have any more answers?

**Ivan Illich**

I hope nobody takes what I said for answers.

**Paul Kennedy**

On *Ideas* tonight, you've listened to the fifth and final program of "The Corruption of Christianity: Ivan Illich on Gospel, Church and Society." Tonight's program was produced and presented by David Cayley with the assistance of Richard Handler. David Cayley is also the author of **Ivan Illich in Conversation**, published by House of Anansi Press.

Technical operations and studio direction were by David Field. Associate producer, Catherine Hughes. Special thanks to Jutta Mason for her help in the preparation of these programs. The executive producer of *Ideas* is Bernie Lucht. I'm Paul Kennedy.

Transcript by Susan Young. Editing by David Cayley.